

# Speech: The World Order Today: Is it fit for purpose?

When I first met my husband, in 2002, I was doing my Masters in international relations at the London School of Economics. He came to my housewarming party, and his chat up line, his opening gambit, was about Francis Fukuyama and the end of history: had liberal democracy really won the battle of ideology? To be honest I didn't know, I thought it quite odd as a chat up line – but I liked him anyway.

And when I think back to that time, there was a real sense of optimism about the world order. It was after the UK's successful intervention in Sierra Leone, after NATO's intervention in Kosovo – and before the misadventure in Iraq. Humanitarian interventionism was riding high; the Responsibility to Protect principle was gaining traction.

Yes – 9/11 had been a shock, a reminder of the threat posed by non-state actors – but there seemed to be a broad consensus amongst state actors on the direction of travel. And that was:

- greater democratisation,
- increasing globalisation, and
- a sense of universal values and rights that would and could be protected – even across borders.

Today that optimism has gone. The world feels more insecure and less stable and we are all – rightly – concerned: about resurgent nationalism, about whether “America First” signals a US retreat from the liberal world order; China's ambitions in the South China Sea, Russia's invasion of Crimea, hostile states using cyber to interfere in other countries' democracies. Terrorism, nuclear war, water security. Our collective failure to stop the devastating conflict in Syria. The worst migration crisis since the second world war; five famine alerts.

All suggest that the world order is not equipped to deal with the problems of the modern age.

But to assess whether that is really the case, we need to know what we mean by the world order.

I take it to comprise of three things. First, the architecture of the international system. That is, international organisations with truly global representation: the UN, the WTO, the IMF, the World Bank; and also quasi-international organisations with sub-global representation: NATO, the EU, the Commonwealth, APEC; and so on.

Second, the laws, and rules that govern international affairs, sometimes, but not always, enforced by international courts like the ICJ, the ICC, the Permanent Court of Arbitration.

And third, but less easily defined, the shared values that underpin that international architecture and international law. They are, I suggest: – A shared commitment to reward cooperation and negotiation and to punish aggression and hostility; – A shared belief that human life should be protected and human dignity respected; – a recognition that our mutual prosperity depends on our mutual engagement and mutual trade; – AND a recognition that we live on a shared planet with finite, common resources that must be managed for the benefit of all.

So: architecture, law, values. It is a system which emerged from the aftermath of the Second World War and the horror of genocide. It is designed to prevent a third global war, and to reduce bloodshed from international conflicts. But it is also directed at raising living standards and enhancing life chances globally.

On those most basic indicators, it has been a resounding success.

There are proportionately fewer violent deaths today than there have ever been in history.

Levels of education are steadily increasing.

More and more countries are becoming democratic, and global extreme poverty tumbled from 44% in 1981, to less than 10% in 2015. Every day, 137,000 people come out of extreme poverty. No one tweets that, but it's an amazing statistic.

And that is the success of the world order: international architecture; international law; and shared values all contrive to prevent a Hobbesian state of nature, and instead encourage dialogue and co-operation for the better.

But that is – in large part – the success of the 20th century. What about the 21st?

In some respects, the challenges for the World Order in 2018 are the same as those in the 20th century:

- Hostile and belligerent states such as DPRK remain a threat to peace and stability.
- And the Rohingya crisis shows us how hard it is to respond, internationally, to sudden and systematic ethnic cleansing.

But there are also very real differences between the post-war world, and the world today.

First, there are new and emerging threats to the world order: from non-state actors like ISIS; from climate change; water scarcity; mass migration; cyber.

Secondly, the global balance of power is shifting. We are moving from a unipolar to a multipolar world: the singular dominance of the United States is diminishing; Russia is back as an assertive presence in what it considers its neighbourhood, including the Middle East; and China is gaining global

reach in terms of economic and political influence, and is aiming at vastly increased military capability.

And thirdly, ideas that we thought were shared and settled are once again up for grabs. For instance, resurgent nationalism and populism challenge the assumption that globalisation and free trade, and the multilateral institutions that support them are necessarily good: the Brexit vote and the vote for President Trump had multiple roots. But they were as much votes for the nation state as they were against anything else.

And there are certainly signs to suggest that the World Order is no longer functioning as it should. – In the UN, Russia's cynical use of the veto on Syria has undermined the most basic task of the UN system: the provision of humanitarian aid, and the investigation of the use of chemical weapons. – And on global trade, the Doha round beyond stalled; and the US has withdrawn from TPP and wants to renegotiate NAFTA.

So is the world order broken?

We need to be careful not to add 2 and 2 to get 5. Just as Fukuyama was wrong to believe in a global narrative which irresistibly led to liberal democracy, it is also wrong to tell a story of decline or collapse of the world order today.

In addition to the peace and prosperity gains of the 20th century, there have been real, tangible successes of international co-operation of late.

In the security field, the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action on Iran has made the world a safer place; and co-operation on aviation security since 9/11 has denied terrorists the grand spectacle they crave.

On climate change, the Paris Agreement has shown that the world's nations can come together to tackle its most pressing challenge. Importantly, the US withdrawal did not spell the collapse of the agreement; if anything it emboldened others to meet their commitments and show leadership.

So the world order is clearly not broken. But if it is to survive in an era of resurgent nationalism, and a shift in global power, it needs three things: reform of its architecture; an update to its law and rules; and a reinvigoration of the values that underpin it.

First, reform the architecture. The international architecture is anachronistic – it reflects mid 20th century power structures, rather than the reality of the world today. So:

(1) the UN needs reform. The Security Council should be expanded – the UK supports permanent seats for Germany, Brazil, India and Japan, as well as permanent representation for Africa. And the existing P5 must agree to exercise veto restraint if the integrity of the UN system is to survive..

(2) NATO needs to reform. NATO members need to respond to President Trump's challenge by meeting the 2% spending target of the Defence Investment Pledge. Decades of unprecedented peace in Europe is testament to NATO's success; but

it has also given rise to a complacency that the current security situation does not warrant.

(3) The international system of globalised free trade must also reform, from the WTO down. Trade is a global good – and not just in economic terms; it also enhances bilateral relations and ensures a level of cooperation and interdependence that reduces the risk of conflict. But we must not ignore the rise in populist parties across the Western world, and elections which have broken the traditional centrist consensus. Many feel uncomfortable with the pace of change, they feel left behind. There is a perception that free trade, open borders, and multilateralism work for the elite but no-one else. So: free trade agreements of the future must champion progressive principles; ensure adequate worker and environmental protections; and reflect the continuing relevance and needs of the nation state.

Other organisations also need to adapt and evolve. We need to reinvigorate the Commonwealth. And although the UK is leaving, I would argue that the EU, too, needs to reform. It needs to think carefully, reflecting on the Brexit vote, about how much more pooling of sovereignty its members and citizens will accept.

Moving now to international law, we must ensure that it keeps pace with change in international affairs. Two areas in particular are in need of clearer international law: a. Cyber. The UK wants to see the full application of existing international law – including the UN Charter – to cyberspace; b. The environment. The impacts of climate change, marine pollution and other environmental hazards all require urgent and collective action: and international law has a key role to play.

And, finally, our shared values.

The principles of that we hold dear -democratisation, multilateralism, and human rights – are under threat in the global system: in the west and elsewhere.

So we need to increase our efforts to make the case for the norms and values which underpin the international order. We should never assume consent.

First, in the face of growing protectionism, we need to make the case for International Trade, emphasising that our mutual prosperity depends on it – while taking seriously the needs and concerns of those who feel left behind.

Secondly, we need to reemphasize our belief in human dignity and the importance of protecting our shared resources. The global goods as we see them – human rights, tackling climate change, protecting the taonga of our wildlife and natural resources, gender rights, tackling poverty, tackling modern slavery – are not just good things to do in an altruistic, fluffy kind of way: they make sense in terms of the economics, and national self-interest of a country. If you don't educate and empower women then – as Obama once said- you are leaving half your team on the bench. If we don't tackle climate change now, it will cost us far more in life and treasure to respond to it later down the track.

And finally, we need to reinvigorate a belief in multilateralism. International terrorism, climate change, nuclear proliferation, cyber attacks all require global multilateral solutions. But those solutions will only be achieved if we can base them on shared values: and if we can demonstrate the benefits of such co-operation to our citizens.

To conclude: the international order has delivered peace and prosperity beyond the imaginings of my grandparents. But if it is to endure, it must adapt and evolve. And it is for countries like the UK and New Zealand – close friends with shared values, and a shared stake in the international system – to work together to make the case: for reform of the architecture, an updating of the law, and a reinvigoration of the values underpinning the world order.

Thank you.

---

## **Press release: PM welcomes Western Balkans Heads of Government to London**

At a reception also attended by the Foreign Secretary, Home Secretary, Minister for Europe and the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster the Prime Minister briefed the visiting leaders on the UK's objectives for the upcoming Summit. She also sought their views on achieving our shared goals for the region.

Our relationship endures because all of us in this room share the same vision for the future of the Western Balkans. We want a peaceful, prosperous and democratic region – one anchored to European values and systems and contributing to European security.

The countries of the Western Balkans have tremendous potential. And it's the people here in this room tonight who have a crucial role in harnessing that potential. By putting in place the governance, rule of law and institutions to support prosperity and by building relations between your countries that shape a promising future for all.

The UK will support you in that. Your challenges are our challenges. European security, serious and organised crime, illegal migration, terrorism and extremism; these are all threats that go beyond borders. So I want to deepen further our security partnership to address these shared threats.

At the Summit we will take forward a bold agenda. One that promotes economic stability and fosters co-operation on the security and political challenges that the region continues to face.

We will continue the good work begun by previous Summits, taking forward initiatives countering corruption, serious and organised crime, and other issues that deter investment and economic growth.

I look forward to working with you to shape a positive, productive, prosperous future for the Western Balkans, for the UK and the whole of Europe.

---

## Speech: Call for Security Council Members to Vote in Favour of Resolution on Yemen

Thank you Mr President.

The Security Council has long recognised that the situation in Yemen threatens international peace and security. It has caused the world's largest humanitarian crisis, which gets worse by the day. The conflict creates ungoverned spaces in which terrorists can operate, poses security threats to countries in the region and international shipping, and fuels regional tensions. While international attention is rightly focussed on the horror that continues to unfold in Syria, this Council must not ignore the appalling situation in Yemen.

We have a duty to respond using all the tools at our disposal. We must show unity of effort and purpose to put an end to this terrible and destabilising conflict. That is why we have tabled this resolution before us today.

Mr President,

The UN sanctions regime is a critical tool that we must use to pressurise the individuals and organisations bent on undermining peace and security in Yemen.

We welcome the work of the Panel of Experts, who have played a key role in supporting the Sanctions Committee to carry out its mandate, including through the provision of recommendations regarding the implementation of measures decided upon in Security Council Resolutions 2140 and 2216. It is vital that this work, the work of the Panel of Experts, continues.

Furthermore, we in this Council must not ignore the growing ballistic missile threat emanating from Yemen, which gravely threatens international peace and security. Attacks such as those launched on 22 July, 4 November and 19 December against civilian targets in Saudi Arabia are unacceptable. They undermine the prospects for peace, prolong the conflict, and put civilian lives at risk. This Council must speak out with a united voice against such

attacks. We can do this by voting in favour of the resolution before us today, which strongly condemns these attacks.

The United Kingdom is deeply concerned that Iran has failed to take the necessary measures to prevent the direct or indirect supply, sale or transfer of short-range ballistic missiles, missile propellant and unmanned aerial vehicles to the then Houthi-Saleh alliance, as reported by the Panel of Experts. We agree with the Panel's assessment that in light of this, Iran is in non-compliance with paragraph 14 of Resolution 2216.

Iran – and other states who violate the Security Council Resolutions – must be held accountable for this. This Council needs to stand firm in the face of state non-compliance and send a clear message that it will not be tolerated. This is what the UN Charter demands from us: to respect the obligations arising from treaties and other sources of international law.

Mr President,

We are also deeply concerned by the growing humanitarian crisis in Yemen. A record 22.2 million people are now in need of assistance – 3.4 million more than last year. Last year's UN humanitarian appeal was only 70 per cent funded, and this year's appeal stands at \$2.96 billion. We encourage all member states to respond fully to this appeal. Restrictions on vital humanitarian access continue to be imposed by all parties to the conflict. The impact of access restrictions on the people of Yemen are made clear by the UN Panel of Experts and therefore this resolution before you calls for full and unfettered access for humanitarian and commercial cargo through all of Yemen's ports, including Hodeidah and Saleef, and for supplies to be increased beyond pre-November levels.

This year is an important year. With a new UN Special Envoy in place, it is vital that the international community redoubles its efforts to achieve a political solution to the conflict. We call upon all parties to the conflict to resolve their differences through dialogue and consultation and refrain from provocation. Until an enduring political settlement is reached, we must maintain the sanctions regime to deter those who would otherwise use violence to achieve their political aims.

The United Kingdom has worked hard with all Council members in order to reach consensus on a resolution which responds to our concern at all the ongoing political, security, economic and humanitarian challenges in Yemen, and the threats arising from the illicit transfer and misuse of weapons. Today we have spent over five hours in detailed talks with delegations, and have proposed a number of compromises. I am personally grateful for all of your patience today. We have sought to agree a text which provides a balanced and impartial assessment of the situation in Yemen but which does not shy away from calling out those whose actions undermine international peace and security. Today we need to show that we in this Council are unified against the threats to Yemen's future. We must also send a clear message that we support the independence and integrity of the UN Panel of Experts. We in this Council rely on these independent expert international panels. We may not always like all of their reports. We may find their conclusions politically

inconvenient. But if we want the United Nations to function, we need to support them in their work.

Those who do not vote in favour of this resolution today are preventing us from sending a clear message to those that seek to undermine the peace and security in Yemen and the region beyond. They are also failing in their duty to do all they can to uphold the international rules-based system and hold those states that violate resolutions agreed by this Council to account.

With this in mind, I strongly urge now you now to vote in favour of the resolution before you.

Thank you Mr President.

---

## **[News story: Middle East Minister Alistair Burt issues stark warning as the number of people affected by humanitarian crises doubles over decade](#)**

The UK has renewed calls for the international community to reform the global humanitarian system to ensure aid continues to get to the 100 million people in desperate need of help right now.

Speaking on a visit to the Riyadh International Humanitarian Forum in Saudi Arabia, Middle East Minister Alistair Burt warned that the number of people affected by humanitarian crises has doubled over the last ten years. By 2030 more than half of the world's poor could be living in countries affected by conflict.

He demanded that global leaders act now to better support those affected by brutal and relentless conflict.

Alistair Burt said: "Whilst the number of conflicts is in decline, those that persist are becoming more complex, harder to resolve and lasting significantly longer. From Syria to South Sudan, merciless conflicts rage on and over the last few years, we have seen that people who are forced to flee their home countries become refugees for over ten years on average.

"The UK's focus is on bigger, better and faster humanitarian responses. We are already improving preparedness in emergency including investing in financial programmes such as disaster risk insurance schemes that help provide cheaper, faster and reliable finance when crises hit. But this is not



enough, and international coordination is vital if we are to continue getting aid to those most in need together with an urgent examination of the failure of current intended processes to prevent, or bring to a conclusion, the conflict doing so much damage.

“Alongside this we must all take a longer-term approach to protracted crises, including supporting those countries and communities which host significant numbers of refugees who have fled relentless violence. This will help foster stability and security which is firmly in all our interests.”

Mr Burt’s comments come on a visit to Saudi Arabia’s launch of the inaugural Riyadh International Humanitarian Forum. The UK welcomes this initiative by Saudi Arabia, permitting global leaders to discuss a range of humanitarian demands.

The Minister raised the dire humanitarian crisis in Yemen with his counterparts, reminding all parties of the need for permanent unhindered access to the critical ports of Hodeidah and Saleef to ensure lifesaving food, fuel and medical supplies continue to enter the country. He also pressed for renewed engagement with a political process, underlining that there is no military solution to the conflict.

#### Background

- The Riyadh International Humanitarian Forum, hosted by King Salman, is the first conference of its kind pulling together high level humanitarian representatives from across the Middle East region and further afield.

---

## [Press release: PM call with Prime Minister Abe: 26 February 2018](#)



A Downing Street spokesperson said:

This morning the Prime Minister spoke to Prime Minister Abe of

Japan. The leaders noted the positive impact of the Prime Minister's visit to Japan last year and the significant progress made in a range of areas. In particular they welcomed the meeting between UK and Japanese Foreign and Defence Ministers and the first UK-Japan Industrial Policy Dialogue, both of which took place in December last year.

The Prime Minister updated Prime Minister Abe on her meeting with senior Japanese business leaders at Downing Street earlier this month and reaffirmed the Government's commitment to ensuring the UK remains welcoming to Japanese companies.

They discussed the Prime Minister's recent visit to China, and in particular North Korea, where they agreed on the need for the international community to continue to work together to maintain pressure on North Korea to cease its destabilising activity. The Prime Minister reiterated that the UK will continue to support all efforts to maintain and properly implement sanctions.

Published 26 February 2018