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Existential Risk in the 21st Century:
The challenge to the UN and Multilateralism

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Pivotal Principle

slide 16

Risk Identification
1. *Purpose*

- Not: Frighten ourselves unduly; not alarmist

  or

  Presume to make predictions

- But: Anticipate what the future may hold; 'estimation' of risk

  and

  Prepare with scenario-planning and response strategies

2. Research

Society for Risk Analysis

Universities

Oxford	Future of Humanity Institute (Prof Nick Bostrom)
Cambridge	Centre for the Study of Existential Risk (Prof Martin Rees)
Stanford	Alliance for Humanity & the Biosphere (Prof Paul Ehrlich)

Institutes / think-tanks

Global Catastrophic Risk Analysis	Risks that can harm humanity at global scale
Global Challenges Foundation	Annual report on the state of global risks
Future of Life Institute	Risks & positive visions facing humanity
Foresight Institute	Risks of nanotechnology
Machine Intelligence Res. Inst.	Monitors the risk of catastrophe from A.I.

3. Definitions

- *'Traditional risk'*

20th c.   International peace & security (IPS) thru coll. security / coll. defence
            <u>1. Inter-state aggression (League 1920 - 39; UN 1945 - ?)</u>

1990s   <u>2. New threats to IPS (UN Security Council)</u>
            (a) Internal conflict
            (b) 'Proliferation' of WMD (nuclear, chemical, biological)
            (c) Terrorism

- *'New risk'*

21st c.   <u>3. Threats to the planet and its life-forms</u>
            Criteria: (a) scope (scale + time);   (b) severity
            Scope: individual; national; global; trans-generational
            Severity: imperceptible; endurable; terminal
                    (a) Global catastrophic risk [= global, endurable]
                    (b) Existential risk   [= trans-generational; terminal]

3. Definitions (cont'd)

Global catastrophic risk

Future event which could damage human well-being on a global scale, crippling or destroying human civilisation

Existential risk

Future event which could cause human extinction

or

permanently & drastically curtail humanity's potential

Types:

1. Bangs	*Sudden event (accidental or deliberate)*
2. Crunches	*Slow mutation in human condition*
3. Shrieks	*Surpassing human mind by other intellig.*
4. Whimpers	*Deterioration of human values (global)*

4. Sources

Anthropogenic

1. Artificial Intelligence	2. Biotechnology
3. Cyber-attack	4. Climate change
5. Environmental stress	6. Resource depletion
7. Experimental accident	8. Nanotechnology
9. Warfare with WMD	10. Over-population

Natural

1. Asteroid impact	2. Extra-terrestr. contact
3. Natural climate change	4. Cosmic threats
5. Geomagnetic reversal	6. Global pandemic
7. Pathogens	8. Mega-tsunami
9. Volcanism	

5. Probability

Risk	Probability of extinction by 2100
• Nuclear terrorism	0.03%
• Natural pandemic	0.05%
• Nanotech. accident	0.5%
• Nuclear conflict	1%
• Engineered pandemic	2%
• Total warfare	4%
• Super-intelligent A.I. [*Internet of Things*]	5%
• Nanotech. weapons	5%
• **Overall Probability**	**19%**

Source:

Global Catastrophic Risks Survey (Future of Humanity Institute, Oxford University; 2008)

['grain of salt'…]

US citizen:5 times more likely to die from extinction event than individual car crash

Source: Global Challenges Foundation (2016 Annual Report)

B. Response

Era	Geological	Political	Psychological
100,000	Pleistocene	Aspirational	Dominance
10,000	Holocene	Normative	Betterment
50	Anthropocene	Imperative	Survival

B. Response:
1. Traditional – Multilateral Rules-based Order

20th c.   League of Nations / United Nations:

Principles:

1. Sovereign equality of nation-state (193)

2. Non-aggression & collective security [among member states]

3. Judicial settlement (ICJ; but not enforceable)

Institutions

UNGA / ECOSOC decisions = non-binding;

Security Council binding (Ch. VII):

    - aggression; breach of peace, 'threat to peace'

    - climate change (2007-19): 'risk multiplier' but not 'threat to IPS'

UNGA Leadership Debate 2018
'Patriotism' v. 'Multilateralism'

Patriotism [USA plus others]

"… America will always choose independence & cooperation over global governance, control, and domination.

US will provide no support in recognition to the International Criminal Court. As far as America is concerned, the _ICC has no jurisdiction, no legitimacy, and no authority._ *The* ICC claims near-universal jurisdiction over the citizens of every country, violating all principles of justice, fairness, and due process. We will never surrender America's sovereignty to an unelected, unaccountable, global bureaucracy.

We _reject the ideology of globalism & embrace the doctrine of patriotism._
… responsible nations must _defend against threats to sovereignty not just from global governance_, but also from other, new forms of coercion and domination.

US committed to making the UN more effective and accountable.
UN has unlimited potential. As part of reform, US will not pay over 25% UN peacekeeping budget .. encourage others to step up, get involved, share in this very large burden.

…. protect our sovereignty and our cherished independence above all."

Current Leadership Debate
'Patriotism' v. 'Multilateralism'

Multilateralism (France, NZ and others)

- … <u>France promoting universal values</u> … exact opposite of the egotism of a people who look after only their interests, because patriotism is the exact opposite of nationalism: nationalism is a betrayal of it.

- In saying "our interests first and who cares about the rest!" you wipe out what's most valuable about a nation, what brings it alive, what leads it to greatness and what is most important: its moral values.

- <u>UN = guarantor of a spirit of cooperation to defend common goods</u> in a world whose destiny is inextricably linked and which has learned the lessons of the painful failures of the League of Nations.

- Old demons reappearing .. spreading chaos & death. New ideologies manipulating religions, advocating a contagious obscurantism.   … history threatens to resume its tragic course, jeopardize the peace we've inherited…

- <u>Let's again take the UN oath</u> to place peace higher than anything

Current Leadership Debate
'Patriotism' v. 'Multilateralism'

New Zealand (PM Ardern)

- This generation is a borderless one – at least in a virtual sense; one that increasingly <u>see themselves as global citizens</u>.

- We face what we call in New Zealand <u>'wicked problems'; ones that are intertwined and interrelated.</u> …

- NZ remains committed to continue to do our part to building and sustaining international peace and security; to promoting and defending an <u>open, inclusive, and rules-based international order based on universal values</u>."

But: what are the wicked, inter-related problems; how to address /solve them?

wicked problems; ones that are intertwined and interrelated ...

Anthropogenic
1. Artificial Intelligence
2. Biotechnology
3. Cyber-attack
4. Climate change
5. Environmental stress
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7. Experimental accident
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Natural
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21st c. philosophical views:

- *Cosmic* — Planet will naturally respond ('heal itself')
- *Anthropocentric view* — Human future unknown ('risk management')

2. New: *Global Risk Management*
(global governance)

Commission on Global Governance 1995
'Our Global Neighbourhood'

At the global level, governance has been viewed primarily as inter-governmental relationships, but it must now be understood as also involving

- NGOs

- citizen movements

- multinational corporations

- global capital market

Interacting with these = global mass media of 'dramatically enlarged influence'

<u>*Pivotal concepts*</u>

'Agenda 21' (1992) called for new concepts for carrying capacity

- 'Ecological footprint'   [2003; Ecological Footprint Network]
- 'Planetary boundaries'   [2007; Stockholm Resilience Centre]
- 'Existential risk'   [2005 Oxford; 2012 Cambridge;]
- 'Catastrophic risk'   [2011 GCRI]

Pivotal Principle:
Subsidiarity

- **Principle of Sovereignty**

UN Charter:

- Art 1.   cooperation for the common ends
- Art 2.   sovereign equality + domestic jurisdiction

- **Principle of Subsidiarity**

Treaty on European Union, Lisbon (EIF 2009)

Art 5 (3):

> Under the principle of subsidiarity,
>
> in areas which do not fall within its exclusive competence …

the Union shall act only if and in so far as the objectives of the proposed action cannot be sufficiently achieved by the Member States, either at central level or at regional and local level,

but can rather, by reason of the scale or effects of the proposed action, be better achieved at Union level.

Europe of the Regions

- **Multi-level Governance in Europe**

EU Charter for MLG

- In line with the **SUBSIDIARITY** principle which places decisions at the most effective level and as close as possible to the citizens, we attach great importance to co-creating policy solutions that reflect the needs of citizens. ….

- We commit ourselves to respecting the fundamental processes that shape multi-level governance practices in Europe;

Assembly of European Regions

Statutes (June 2019)

- Encouraging the application of the principles of subsidiarity and complementarity between the local, regional, national and European levels;

Also African Union

Principle of subsidiarity in the African & European human rights systems

Comp. & Int. Law Jnl of Sthrn Africa; Vol. 40, No. 3 (2007)

Global Collaboration through Local Authorities

World Organization of United Cities & Local Governments (UCLG)

Constitution (2004) recalls

- IULA (1913), WFUTC (1957)
- UDHR, Habitat Agenda, Agenda 21 (Rio 1992) + Millennium Declaration MDGs (now SDGs)

Mission:

United voice and world advocate of democratic local self-government, promoting its values, objectives and interests, through cooperation between local governments, and within the wider international community

Work Programme:

1. Increasing role & influence of local government and its representative organisations in global governance;

2. Main source of support for democratic, effective, innovative local government close to the citizen;

3. Ensuring an effective and democratic global organisation.

(Global Agenda: poverty, rising inequality, insecurity, environment depletion, climate change)

'The Planetary Interest'

'Vital national interest'

"… when highest policy-makers in the sovereign state conclude – issues at stake so fundamental to political, economic, social well-being of their country that not compromised further, even if results in military force'

Nuechterlein: *Concept of 'national interest'; a time for new approaches* (Orbis, 23(1))

'Vital global interest'

Survival / viability of humanity, contingent on maintenance of physical integrity of Earth, & protection of its ecological systems & biosphere from major anthropogenic change'.

Global solution   Legitimate national interest
                         Legitimate global power

The Planetary Interest: A New Concept for the Global Age; Kennedy Graham, Ed., (Routledge; 1999)

Subsidiarity:
Multi-layered Jurisdictional Legitimacy

**Time to start thinking about subsidiarity
at the global (UN) level**

1. Local authorities
2. Regional / provincial / state
3. Nation-state
4. Regional organization   (EU, AU)
5. Multilateral organization (UN, BW)
6. Global council   (global commons)