BUCERIUS SUMMER SCHOOL ON GLOBAL GOVERNANCE

2023 CONFERENCE REPORT

A Shifting World Order:
Challenges for Rebuilding Global Governance
11–21 August 2023

A Shifting World Order: Challenges for Rebuilding Global Governance

From 11 to 21 August 2023, the **ZEIT-Stiftung Ebelin und Gerd Bucerius**, in cooperation with the **Observer Research Foundation** and the **Karl Schlecht Foundation**, held its twenty-second annual Bucerius Summer School on Global Governance (BSS). The overall aim of the Bucerius Summer School is to foster leadership qualities in young professionals by involving them in an international dialogue on current political, economic, social, and juridical questions. Georg Mascolo, Journalist, and Eberhard Sandschneider, Partner, Berlin Global Advisors are the deans of the Bucerius Summer School. The Bucerius Summer School has always been more than just a high-profile conference. It is about building networks and enhancing cross-cultural cooperation of representatives from all walks of public life. To follow up on the annual meetings, we run an active alumni network.

An initiative of the **ZEIT-Stiftung Ebelin und Gerd Bucerius**, Hamburg, in cooperation with the **Observer Research Foundation**, New Delhi, and **Karl Schlecht Stiftung**, Aichtal

Moderators: **Georg Mascolo**, Journalist, Berlin
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Rebuilding Global Governance —
What the next generation of leaders thinks

Over the course of 22 years, most things inevitably change. That's especially true for the many moving parts of the system of global governance, which the Bucerius Summer School has focused on since its inception in 2001. Then, the attacks on the Twin Towers had not yet taken place, with the deadly convulsions that followed, mainly in the Middle East, and the world looked like a more peaceful and orderly place — at least, in hindsight. Now, Russia's bloody war against Ukraine dominated much of the group's discussions, followed by the global effects of the Covid-19 pandemic, the now-discernible trends towards de-globalisation, and the rise of artificial intelligence (AI). Clearly, the issues have changed, even though the lens through which to analyse them — global governance — has remained.

However, it's not just that the challenges today are different from back then, but the system itself has undergone a substantial transformation. If the American invasion of Iraq in 2003 was illegal under international law, that's because the U.S. administration tried (with lies and deception) but failed (rightly so) to get a green light from the United Nations (UN) Security Council. Now, that body has little relevance at all in the context

of Russia's war of aggression: Moscow does not even bother with the pretence of international legitimacy if it can use propaganda vis-à-vis its own people and pressure on other states to impose its views. And that's coming on the heels of the pandemic where the UN was conspicuously absent from the effort to fight the disease, and years of blockade at the World Trade Organisation, which is unable to maintain open global trade flows.

Finally, the world's modus operandi appears to also have changed. Over the past years, a principled willingness to cooperate across loose political groupings on shared challenges has given way to unabashed competition between hardening blocs. This is mainly, though not exclusively, driven by the superpower rivalry between China and the United States. Yet, there's resistance forming to that duopoly: While some countries feel that their natural place is on one or the other side of the new divide, many more are adamant not to be forced to make that choice.

These trends contribute to the more unstable global order, which to assess 50 young professionals from all corners of the world came to Germany for. With their extensive experience in politics, business, civil society, academia, and the military, they participated in roundtable discussions, workshops, simulations, and site visits in Hamburg as well as in Berlin and Lübeck. The gathering's goal was not just to foster leadership qualities through an informed international dialogue on current political, economic, and social questions, but also to integrate the participants into a tightly knit network of alumni. This way, the organizers aim to

help create strong partnerships among upcoming leaders that will serve humanity in the future.

This report collates[1] not just the new global challenges the group discussed, the way the system has begun to change, and how widening competition compels governments to choose sides. It also presents the participants' ideas, in areas as diverse as health, urban living, and personal leadership, on what could be done to begin fixing the system. Being at the threshold to enter the main part of their professional careers, the participants are very aware that it will be upon them to help shape the future world order. The time in Hamburg provided them with some inspiration for this daunting task of rebuilding global governance.

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1. New challenges: Of wars, trade, and technology

The Russian assault on Ukraine has been a blow to European security as much as a challenge to the global order. For the first time, a permanent member of the UN Security Council invaded a neighbouring country purely for territorial gain, thus violating the foundational principle of the UN Charter: non-aggression. Worse, Moscow has repeatedly threatened to use nuclear weapons to achieve its war aims, thus making a mockery of the guardianship bestowed on the five official nuclear powers in the context of global peace and security.

Against this backdrop, the group focused on three elements regarding that war: a clear reconstruction plan for Ukraine, the question of prosecuting war crimes, and the broader international divide over the response to the war. Regarding the first, they pointed to the importance of the "security-recovery nexus", to be understood as an international

framework for military support, aid coordination, domestic political and economic reforms, and sufficient public financing. The world's continued investment — whether in terms of weapons deliveries, public funding, or business ventures — hinges on the viability of such a long-term plan, beginning with peace negotiations once Ukraine has gathered the upper hand all the way up to the country's eventual EU accession.

A second aspect mentioned was the international prosecution of war crimes, as the atrocities committed by the aggressors have largely gone

unpunished so far. Already, the International Criminal Court came out with an arrest warrant for Russian President Vladimir Putin for the alleged war crime of deportation and transfer of Ukrainian children to Russia. However, an actual court case is, for the moment, unlikely, as Putin cannot be tried in absentia. To establish an accountability mechanism for the many officials that have ordered or committed war crimes or crimes against humanity, an international — or internationalized — tribunal for Ukraine is needed.

Thirdly, the group pointed to the rift emerging over the Ukraine war between "the West" (i.e., the United States, the EU, and like-minded countries) and countries from the Global South. After the former's rather selfish handling of vaccine access during the pandemic, its near-singular focus on Russia's aggression on the European continent has entrenched a widely-held belief that Westerners, despite all their talk, do not really care for the rest of the world. This provides an opening for other actors, namely Russia and China, to follow their own hegemonial agendas, but clouded in benevolent rhetoric. The West needs to better explain why victory for Russia's imperial project would endanger state sovereignty worldwide — and do a much better job at taking other countries' concerns seriously.

This also holds true for the violent conflict in Afghanistan. Just as a reminder, the "never-ending war" there had begun long before today's participants had even been born, i.e., with the Soviet invasion in 1979. Still, due to the West's post 9/11 involvement, the country has been a

constant feature of the Summer School discussions over the past two decades. In a reckoning now, two years after the take-over by the Taliban following the botched withdrawal of international troops, the group saw both robust social political transformations and a number of key mistakes, in particular in the military realm.
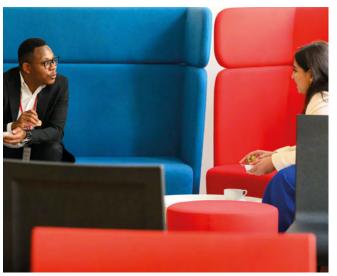
On the positive side, Afghanistan saw repeated transfers of political power and the institution of a judicial system, while providing education for twelve million students, forty percent of whom were girls, and access to basic health for the population. The primary mistake, in contrast, was the shifting of goals from defeating Al Qaeda in response to the 9/11 terror attacks to the building of democracy in Afghanistan. While the latter may have been laudable in principle, the concurrent pursuit of two divergent goals produced strategic confusion. Moreover, the international military coalition did not pay enough attention either to the Afghan society's fabric and historical allegiances or to the role of neighboring states. First and foremost, this means Pakistan's unwavering support for the Taliban. In addition, the country's long-running entanglement with corruption turned into an actual and widespread socio-political disease once huge amounts of Western money poured in.

The geo-economics of a more divided world was another topic the group discussed in more detail. For years now, countries have questioned the capability of institutions like the World Trade Organisation and the International Monetary Fund to deal with systemic crises and to help negotiate new agreements on challenges like rising protectionism or intellectual property disputes. Then, the disruptions and recrim-

inations around the global pandemic resulted in further loss of confidence in the multilateral trade and financial system. The resulting trend of "friendshoring" towards trusted partners along supply chains will lead not to "de-globalisation", but simply to a more expensive form of globalisation. This shifting landscape provides opportunities for some middle powers to play both sides of the emerging global economic divide.

That said, the real challenges to the world economy go beyond geopolitics, and they each represent the return of an issue of some decades back. First, there's inflation: Real interest rates have rapidly increased as monetary policy has tightened in response to price hikes following the reopening of economies after the pandemic. Then, industrial policy is raising its head again. Indeed, politicians across the world are reconsidering heavy-handed economic interventions to bolster jobs and (green) investments. Finally, the rising debt burden in particular of African countries is back on the agenda. Their increased external debt undermines their governments' ability to channel funds into the economy and spur development, from basic services to education to research and technology.

The third overarching global challenge stems from the impact of AI and its various tech applications on international politics. As participants were acutely aware themselves, the fast-paced nature of recent AI innovations underlines a growing need for a global approach. While AI provides many opportunities to the world, including through better operating energy consumption, taming wildfires, content moderation on social media, and debunking disinformation, it also poses significant risks: from

the power of 'deep fakes' to all-round surveillance to possibly cutting out humans from AI-driven military applications.

However, achieving the right balance between regulation and innovation is difficult. The current regulatory landscape is patchy at best, with little binding work done at UN level and the EU being most advanced in unilateral legislation. More generally, the private and public sectors often disagree on the designing of new regulation, given that many use cases are only developed now. It seems that only multilateral settings bringing together decision-makers from politics and industry, civil society and labor, tech and academia can find approximating answers that at least preliminarily help resolve these challenges.

2. As the system is changing, order becomes weaker

Looking at the performance of global governance over the past two decades, the euphoria of the 1990s clearly has given way to deepened disappointment. The "end of history" (Francis Fukuyama) as symbolized by the fall of the Berlin Wall marked the triumph of democracy over autocracy, free markets over the state economy, and freedom over oppression. Yet, it has proved to be only temporary. Instead, the post-World War II, post-Cold War 'liberal world order' has failed to deliver on many fronts, whether on equitable growth, climate protection, or political representation.

Today, the consensus-building framework of global governance established nearly 80 years ago is tearing at the seams due to three inherent crises: the failure of the system to adequately represent a large part of the global population; differing prioritizations of national sovereignty vs. the value of collective benefits; and a crisis of identity with a rising economic and cultural backlash against globalism and global elites. All of these have questioned the relevance of global institutions and liberal ideals — at a time when the confrontation between autocracies and democracies additionally impedes cooperation.

Moreover, democratic leaders struggle to earn the trust of their citizens, which is a precondition for a democracy to function. Autocratic leaders, in

turn, rely on the control of their people, which has been greatly strengthened by technological means of surveillance. So, it is the same tools, often developed in Western countries, that help autocrats stay in power while also weakening social cohesion in democratic societies. The handling of the Covid-19 pandemic can be seen as a particular breaking point, giving rise to populist movements inside democracies and authoritarian regimes worldwide claiming to strive for a new, more effective order.

It is in this setting that both the rise of China and the re-emergence of what has been termed the Global South need to be seen. China's global ambitions span nearly the entire economic, technological, military, and political realm, and they are influenced by various factors, including ideology, domestic politics, and the country's economic conditions. Having

worked in the background for decades, Beijing under President Xi Jinping has begun to use its clout to shape international standards. The Belt and Road Initiative on infrastructure, the Global Development Initiative, and the Global Security Initiative are only the most prominent examples of how China tries to enhance its geopolitical influence in strategic areas.

To create a multipolar — as opposed to US-led — system of global governance, China establishes alliances within international organizations bolstering its standing and influence. Its support for African Union membership in the G20 can be seen in this context, as Beijing seeks to garner support from African countries for its positions on human rights, climate change, and other issues. Likewise, its efforts to enlarge the BRICS group

to middle powers from the Global South is an exercise in expanding strategic cooperation to enhance the multipolarity of the international system and to win direct economic and trade benefits.

While China presents itself as the leader of the developing world, the latter does not see China as part of the Global South — but as China, period. Beijing's opening to, and support of, global trade mainly provides these countries with an alternative to the West. Being able to choose a better deal provides them with agency; and if they choose China, they do so for the good price, not necessarily because they subscribe to its for Communist, anti-Western leadership. India, in contrast, is from the Global South, and is actively trying to give a positive notion to this oftentimes rather reductive term. It aims to help bring about the South's own

self-definition, not the description foisted upon it by others. That means, countries from the Global South have to claim the issues that matter to them most and frame them according to their interests, be it climate justice, sustainable trade, digitalisation, or lifestyle.

Even though the world appears to be fundamentally selfish, it was argued that more global cooperation is needed, not less. Only global governance, imperfect as it may be, has the capacity to solve the world's major problems — not national parochialism. However, to really reform world order, decision-makers need to confront reality with a vision and an attitude to think beyond their own borders.

3. From cooperation to rivalry — and what "Zeitenwende" has to do with this

Another major global shift, that from an established order centred on cooperation with a set of common values to a contested one marked by competition and confrontation, poses significant challenges to Germany in particular and to Europe more broadly. True, it remains an open question whether an approach based on a narrow definition of national interests, often coupled with nationalism as an ideology, can actually deliver prosperity and fairness to the global population. However, countries that have in the past banked on open and largely cooperative system now face calls to stiffen up their defences.

This re-orientation goes beyond the "Zeitenwende", or sea change, ushered in by Germany's Federal Chancellor Olaf Scholz just days after Russia's invasion of Ukraine in late February 2022. Often seen as a radical reorientation primarily of Germany's foreign and security policy, it is — or, rather, should be — a reckoning both with the failed policies of the past 30 years (think accommodation of Putin's revisionist ideology) and with the changing present. At the same time, the past 18 months have shown that a bipolar world — divided between the United States and its allies on one side, and China, Russia, and their followers on the other — is not in Germany's interest. Instead, with its economic model depending on open and free trade, the country is a clear proponent of a multicentric, rules-based world order emphasizing multilateral partnerships and cooperation.

Whether Germany can maintain a position of relative — mainly regional, i.e. European — leadership depends not only on developing and shaping a more proactive, and sustainable, approach to emerging geopolitical challenges, but also on managing the expectations of its allies. Therefore, the public debate needs to move from a discussion about the scope and nature of supplies delivered to Ukraine and the urgently needed modernisation of the Bundeswehr — important as these are — to defining Germany's position in a new, still-emerging world order that is both appropriate to its capabilities and characteristics. The need to reinforce Germany's engagement within the EU and NATO was highlighted on several occasions during the summer school. This includes the strengthening of European defences against Russia while reducing vulnerabilities vis-à-vis China. It also means to maintain a strong transatlantic alliance

while preparing European countries for a possibly reduced U.S. commitment in the (near) future.

In a similar way, development policy — defined as a contribution to sustainable security policy — is an important part of "Zeitenwende". The main challenge here is to formulate conditionalities for value-based development assistance under the current geopolitical dynamics. One major initiative surrounds the implementation of a feminist foreign and development policy, which views the empowerment of women and girls as an investment for peace and stability. Another is Germany's new Africa Strategy, which drives forward the 2030 Agenda with African partners for a more sustainable, more social, and more environmental world. Finally, German efforts to support refugees and displaced people throughout the world, to provide food security, to accelerate climate and environmental action, and to harness the potential of AI for a 'better-tailored' development policy are both ends in themselves and means to achieve a better understanding with countries from the Global South.

These foreign policy efforts notwithstanding, Germany — like all democracies — is also plagued by internal divisions, which speakers and participants alike did not hesitate to address. Both the fragmentation of the political landscape and increased individualisation within society are expressions of the country's foundational pluralism. At the same time, these trends force politicians to build new coalitions just as populism is on the rise due to widespread frustration and uncertainty among the citizens. In fact, populist movements have gained ground across Europe, posing a significant challenge to democratic norms by exploiting public dissatisfaction with traditional political elites to undermine the credibility of democratic institutions. As people replace facts with opinions and feelings when debating divisive issues, liberal democracies risk losing one of their key ingredients. Trust — whether between people and politicians, or among the population itself — is easy to undermine, but hard to rebuild.

These challenges linked to fundamental shifts in the global order put Europe even more squarely at the centre of Germany's national interest. That's because the country needs the support from fellow democracies in the domestic struggle against populism and in the global rivalry with autocratic regimes. So far, EU countries have remained united in their

response to Russia's aggression, even though the challenge of reorganizing the continent in political and security terms, with membership coming up for Ukraine and Moldova as well as the Western Balkans, has only just begun. Much will depend on whether EU member states can successfully even out the tensions between national sovereignty and European integration. When they do, they also set an example for how to preserve individual identities while cooperating on collective matters at the global level.

4. Cities, health, and leadership — what solutions could look like

Beyond the plenary discussions with high-level speakers, the group also enjoyed a number of hands-on activities that allowed them to work on practical ideas that could help improve global governance in the long term.

One such issue is the question of sustainable urban housing. About two thirds of the world's population are expected to live in urban areas by 2050, making innovative, sustainable, and people-centric approaches to city planning and housing infrastructure essential. Urban housing design processes need to be based on democratic participation, including with local authorities, politicians, interest groups, and citizens' representations. Rather than just indulge in futuristic city designs, a fundamental rethink of how cities are "crafted" is required. This includes evolving global concerns like the impact of climate change and increasing migration, both from rural to urban areas within countries and from conflict-prone areas to safer ones. In many instances, this implies the tackling of thorny issues like land ownership and resettlement, which, if badly handled, are likely to spark new — or intensify existing — social cleavages.

Another practical session focused on how nutrition relates to people's wealth and health. For one, there are countless inequalities around food access and affordability, especially of healthy foods, meaning that poorer people all over the world often have either little food at all, or a cheap and unhealthy diet. In fact, many societal health issues stem from this divide, so it has to be tackled at its roots. For another, food can serve as one of the easiest ways to reconstruct an identity after migrating to another country. Immigrants enrich lives of people in the countries they migrate to by bringing their dishes with them and thus contributing to more diverse cultures overall. Regardless of those policy questions, the group experienced the concept of home cooking and eating together as a community, which in themselves help to contribute to a healthy life.

Finally, international leadership was a topic close to many participants' hearts. As a symmetric, goal-oriented process of influence, the concept touches on the roles of a leader, of followers, and of the context in which they operate — including personality traits, expertise, social positions, hierarchy, and the societal environment. On the one hand, participants

learned about different concepts of respectful interaction, involving an acceptance of differing standards for what is fair and unfair, or considered to be good or bad. On the other, they confronted very personal notions of care and vulnerability, which help leaders to be honest and conscious of their lapses. Leadership vulnerability manifests when leaders admit their errors, accept feedback, listen to followers, and strive to improve as a result. All in all, no bad career advice, it seems.

The group also learned about the social dimensions underpinning global governance at the international, national, and local levels. It is in these sub-systems underpinning not only government but also societies writ large — the media, business, academia, civil society etc. — that real leadership can be shown. Not surprisingly, participants appreciated this session's focus on individual development in the context of becoming leaders in their workplaces and communities — that micro-scale within the much broader scope of global governance.

There's still a long way to go to make the world a better place. At least this group of young leaders appears well equipped to do their part.

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