

**Notes for a Presentation by Paul Heinbecker**

**on the Constructive Powers Initiative**

**at the New Alliances on Global Public Goods**

**Expert Workshop**

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*Check Against Delivery*

## **Introduction**

Good morning

I am very happy to be back in Germany, the land of good beer, better bread and the best conversation, the land of half of my ancestors.

I am especially happy to be back at a time when Germans are asking themselves what the world expects of Germany and the EU.

For my part, I would like to see, to paraphrase President Gauk in his remarkable speech to this year's Munich Security Conference, "...a Germany that reaches out more to the world..."

Such a Germany will, he said, "be an even better friend and ally.

It will also be a yet better partner within Europe."

I agree.

President Gauk's remarks stirred debate in Germany and I am very glad it did.

The world needs more Germany.

## **The Constructive Powers Initiative: the Context and Rationale.**

**Ms. Roth asked me to discuss the concept of "The Constructive Powers Initiative", how it is constituted, what it has done so far, and what its potential might be.**

**The Constructive Powers Initiative was conceived in Ottawa in the autumn of 2010 in the dining room of the Turkish Ambassador to Canada.**

**A number of us—academics and practitioners from various countries--had gotten together to talk about the faltering multilateral system of governance**

**and what remedies might be possible.**

**It was evident to us then**

**as it is even more so today—**

**that we live in the best of times and the worst of times.**

**It is the best of times because health care is improving and life expectancies are lengthening;**

**Because literacy and scientific understanding are advancing everywhere;**

**Because standards of living are rising and many people are escaping poverty to live lives of greater achievement, dignity and comfort.**

**Because international travel and social media are connecting people as never before;**

**Moreover, despite the impressions created by the 24 hour news cycle,**

**Because most of us are safer than ever before.**

The number of interstate wars and the lethality of wars have both receded dramatically since World War II, according to the Human Security Report of 2013.

A particularly telling statistic is that battle-related deaths in all wars

—interstate and intrastate —

have fallen from 240 per million of the world's population in 1950

to 10 per million in 2007.

Nevertheless, anxiety of worse days to come is prevalent,

fed by the appalling death tolls in the Syrian civil war,

the hideous barbarity of Islamist extremists in Iraq and their talk of a new, absolutely intolerant caliphate,

the struggles for preeminence in Libya and the Islamist assaults across the Sahara,

the Israeli military onslaught in Gaza,

Chinese military resurgence in the South China Sea,

Russian military incursions into Georgia and Crimea and Eastern Ukraine

the so far unstoppable march of Ebola in Africa

and the advance of illiberal democracy.

All these and many more things are made more urgent in people's minds by the 24 hour news cycle.

At the same time many advanced economies are buffeted by external financial realities and lagging economic growth

and their governments are distracted by internal political imperatives.

Short term agendas and domestic priorities are crowding out larger common interests and broader thinking.

Our attention spans

—including the attention spans of our leaders—

are stretched to cope with two crises at a time let alone a half a dozen.

The United Nations and affiliated global governance institutions and structures are struggling to keep order, prevent conflict and react to compelling human need.

In some places, even the chequered confidence that once prevailed in the UN is giving way to disdain, even contempt.

Particularly worrying is the shrinking regard internationally for the rule of law--including international humanitarian law.

Rule of law is being eroded by Alice-Through-the-Looking-Glass interpretations of the UN Charter, of the Laws of armed conflict and of the Geneva Protocols.

The perpetrators are often major powers, including some who otherwise portray themselves as law-abiding democracies.

New generations of politicians seem to pay scant heed to the lessons learned by their parents and grandparents in World War II and past conflicts.

Left unchecked they would return us to the jungle.

Further, the sheer complexity and intractability of modern challenges

such as climate change, global financial regulation, internet governance, and terrorism

each with its myriad of interests and independent actors

test existing multilateral organizations as never before.

Meanwhile, it is beyond evident that the US population is unwilling and American leadership is uninterested in responding to every crisis, and carrying every burden.

To paraphrase President Obama, there is not an American military—or political—solution to every international problem.

As he said in his speech at West Point this past May

“Just because [the US has] the best hammer does not mean that every problem is a nail.”

Nor can China or Russia or the BRICS in general be counted on to lead global reform

And nor would most of us want them to.

The G20 is a partial answer.

Its members are powerful enough to respond to most problems, but they lack cohesiveness, coherence and even will on some major issues, notably climate change.

Some important member countries are wary of investing into effective institutions they cannot dominate,

and others are not fully prepared to assume greater responsibility for effective global governance.

It is also not clear when and even if the G20 will expand its agenda to cover international political/security affairs.

The G20 meeting in Brisbane this November could at least as easily fail as succeed.

President Putin seems destined to receive a very cold “welcome” to Australia after the downing of the Malaysian airliner with so many Australians on board.

Against this challenging background, it is clear that existing global governance institutions are indispensable but not sufficient to address complex, emerging governance challenges effectively.

The times call for new constellations of plurilateral, minilateral and multi-stakeholder cooperation.

Hence the Constructive Powers idea.

### **The Constructive Powers Initiative: The Practice So Far**

We settled on the term “Constructive Powers” because we felt that that term portrayed the nature of the potential partnership better than the term “Middle Power” did.

“Middle Power” was a useful descriptor in 1945 when there were 51 members of the United Nations.

It is much less meaningful in 2014 when there are 194 members.

In 2014, in GDP terms, at least, Bolivia, Paraguay and Cameroon are middle powers.

The term is also a misnomer.

It can also be used as a cop-out,

a rationale for standing aside on difficult issues and leaving the hard work to others.



Constructive Powers,

by our somewhat arbitrary definition,

are countries that have compelling strategic interests in an orderly and prosperous world,

track records of constructive diplomacy

and the economic means to underwrite participation.

We presumed that most members would come from countries with economies worth \$1 Trillion or more

although success would require the participation of others less well endowed as well.

Nuclear weapons states have not been welcome;

they have their own club, the P5, and there is little to be gained in importing Security Council stasis and divisions into the CPI.

Participants have attended so far from Australia, Brazil, Canada, Germany, Indonesia, Japan, Mexico, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Republic of Korea, South Africa, Switzerland, Sweden and Turkey.

The CPI has brought together policy-oriented experts, i.e., scholars and former and current practitioners.

Generally, each country has been represented by two or three people drawn largely from the academy and from among current and former diplomatic practitioners.

Policy staff from foreign ministries have been participating in many cases.

The objective of including policy staffs is to create a reciprocating process that recognizes that especially in our internet age governments do not have a monopoly on ideas

and that to be effective policy is best developed at least partly openly.

The objective is also to allow policy research outside of government to be done in full awareness of governments' concerns and priorities .

Policy staff have benefitted from close interaction with academic experts and the reverse is also true.

Academics help policy staff in their challenge role of critiquing existing policy, and pointing policy thinking in new directions.

Academics are relatively stable in their employment and can provide history and context to policy discussions sometimes lacking among practitioners.

Policy staff often rotate through several jobs in the span of a few years.

With their longevity and security of tenure, academics can explore for example, the growing significance of Africa to the illegal drugs trade, with a concentration that policy staff cannot replicate.

But synergies and cross-fertilization are not automatic, and

some significant obstacles to fuller cooperation exist.

First, the most basic problem is that professional cultures of academia and government are only partly compatible:

hierarchy is often the rule in government and individuality the norm in academe.

Second, policy practitioners tend to focus on immediate and short-term problem solving, while academics generally address themselves to understanding concepts and developing theories:

scholarly concepts such as “soft power” and the “clash of civilizations” are cases-in-point.

Thirdly, policy makers need timely policy relevant research, but academe tends to privilege time-consuming, peer-reviewed research and publication.

Finally, national security strictures sometimes can be an insurmountable hurdle for academics,

limiting the sort of policy issues academics and practitioners can work on together.

As regards membership in the CPI, there is no formal process for deciding which countries or academics should participate,

and no country has actually been excluded.

Decisions on the first rounds of invitations have effectively been made by the core group of countries and institutions who hosted the first sessions.

Four workshops have been held so far—in Istanbul, Mexico City, Toronto and Seoul.

These workshops have usually been in two parts.

The first part has explored emerging global political/security/governance issues of general interest to all participants.

The second part has attempted to deepen the understanding among participants of the policy issues of particular saliency to the host government and/or organization.

In Istanbul, the regional focus was on the Arab Spring, Syria and deteriorating regional security.

In Mexico City, the regional focus was on international organized crime and the illegal drugs trade.

In Toronto, the focus was on cyber security, digital diplomacy, and internet governance.

And in Seoul, the focus was on new development cooperation paradigms and the post 2015 development goals.

The intention of these workshops has been to permit participants to deepen their understanding of emerging issues.

It has also been to explore the feasibility of inter-regional cooperation of the policy willing.

The host entity for the workshop has in every case but one been a non-governmental think tank (in Seoul, the think-tank was part of the Foreign Ministry).

We at the Centre for International Governance Innovation (CIGI) in Canada have acted as an informal secretariat of the Initiative.

CIGI has participated actively with the host entity in drawing up an agenda of interest to all participants, in facilitating logistics and where we have the means in contributing financing to the event.

### **The Constructive Powers Initiative: What Has Worked So Far; Where Does the CPI Go From Here?**

In Ms. Roth's words, what are the successes, potentials and limits of the CPI?

First, the CPI has worked well for participants and for conference hosts.

The subject matter covered has been important,

the sessions have been uniformly informative,

the gatherings have been timely

and informal networking has proceeded.

Second, the High Level Commission on Internet Governance,

chaired by Swedish foreign minister Karl Bildt,

one of the more important and promising initiatives on this politically and economically fraught issue,

directly followed from the exploration of the problem at the Toronto CPI meeting

Third, the Mexican hosts of the second CPI succeeding in conveying to influential participants in the meeting in Mexico City the burgeoning scale of the illegal drug trade and organized crime plaguing Central America and the Caribbean

and the potential dangers it poses in Africa and Europe.

These results fed into the G20 preparations for the Los Cabos G20 summit.

Fourth, the process has helped participating governments surmount problems hindering bilateral relations with each other.

That was the case with Canada and Turkey, for example, where distant relations gave way to high level engagement.

Bringing Koreans and Japanese together in a Chatham House plurilateral setting can also be helpful.

Fifth, better communications between the research and policy communities are of reciprocal benefit.

And finally if imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, the CPI participants can be encouraged by the creation last year of MITKA (Mexico, Indonesia, Turkey, Korea and South Africa).

Mitka is a ministerial contact group with a mandate rather like that of the CPI's and a membership that comprises five of the countries represented in the CPI.

It is foreseen that MITKA will meet at foreign minister level three times per year.

The group's second meeting is scheduled for New York in the coming days.

Where does the CPI go from here?

My own view is that the CPI can initially at least contribute best to governance innovation,

working cooperatively on reform of UN institutions,

notably of the Security Council

and broadening the agenda of the G20 beyond financial issues.

It can also raise awareness of emerging problems.

As for limitations, the CPI faces the same vital question that MITKA does.

Do countries with different cultures and different security and governance priorities and different habits of cooperation nevertheless have enough in common to work effectively together on important issues?.

On that question the jury is still out.

And, ladies and gentlemen, you are part of that jury, and this conference is an important part of your deliberations

Thank you

Dankeschoen