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INTRODUCTION

In a year characterized by violent conflict and intensifying geopolitical rivalry, global governance is being tested. From the implosion of Syria and the rise of the self-proclaimed Islamic State, to the aftermath of the Ebola outbreak in Africa and

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Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the gap between the lofty goals of global governance and the ability of international institutions to achieve them is widening. Moreover, states are struggling to adapt to what may be the fastest diffusion of power in history, not only as emerging and developing nations gain influence, but also as nonstate actors wield unprecedented power around the globe. In order to consider how to address these challenges, delegates from twenty-three countries gathered for the Council of Councils Fourth Annual Conference in Washington, DC, on May 10–12, 2015. What follows is a summary of the conversation, which was conducted on a not-for-attribution basis.

MANAGING THE CRISIS IN UKRAINE—GREAT-POWER RELATIONS AND THE FUTURE OF SOVEREIGNTY

The conflict in Ukraine has shaken international order. Russia's annexation of Crimea, its destabilizing role in eastern Ukraine, and the predictable failure of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) to respond to these developments appear to foreshadow a weakening of the post–World War II international order, which is predicated on state sovereignty, nonintervention, and the prevention of the acquisition of territory by force. Participants expressed varying opinions about the urgency of addressing the crisis in Ukraine. On the one hand, the conflict has been portrayed in the United States as a return to the Cold War, and in Eastern Europe and former Soviet republics it is considered an existential threat. However, West European powers have more pressing concerns. As such, Russia's incursions in Ukraine are testing the European Union, whose member states have shown uneven willingness to adopt sanctions against Russia. In addition, the crisis is straining the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), which has struggled to project unity and strength. One participant argued that Russian President Vladimir Putin is less interested in acquiring Ukrainian territory and is merely aiming to convey to the West that Russia remains a global power. However, declining living standards in Russia could threaten the legitimacy of Putin's government.

Participants also discussed the implications of the Ukraine crisis for other regions, such as the Middle East and the Asia-Pacific. One participant commented that the claim that the North favors intervention and the South favors sovereignty is an oversimplification. Strong states intervene when it is in their interest to do so. For this reason, China may need to rethink its historical stance on nonintervention. As a major power with global interests, confronting increasingly transnational threats, Beijing can no longer afford to insist on the unconditional maintenance of absolute sovereignty.

Suggested Policy Prescriptions:

- Despite heightened tensions between the West and Russia, states should maintain cooperation on issues of mutual concern, such as counterterrorism and the nonproliferation of nuclear weapons.
- Regional organizations should complement the UNSC, particularly when it is gridlocked. If regional organizations are not equipped or willing to address a crisis when the UNSC is hamstrung, coalitions of likeminded actors may be preferable.
- As states increasingly adopt sanctions as a form of punishment, they should be cautious to avoid inadvertently creating a "club of pariahs" that cooperates and acts outside the bounds of established international norms.

COUNTERING TERRORISM AND VIOLENT EXTREMISM

More than thirteen years after the terrorist attacks of September 11, terrorism and violent extremism continue to threaten international peace and security. However, that threat has evolved. The fragmentation of al-Qaeda, the emergence of so-called lone-wolf terrorists in the West, and the advent of new, more extreme organizations such as the self-declared Islamic State highlight the increasingly complex nature of transnational terrorism. Meanwhile, the Internet has become a breeding ground for radicalization and terrorist recruitment; social media and other online platforms provide terrorist organizations with a global platform to propagate violent extremist ideologies, disseminate propaganda, and prey on disaffected youth around the world. Consequently, tens of thousands of foreign terrorist fighters—including from North America, Europe, and Asia—have flocked to the Middle East to join ranks with the Islamic State and other extremist groups involved in the Syrian civil war.

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Despite the evolution of terrorism in recent years, participants voiced concern that Western policymakers continue to rely on the counterterrorism policies adopted after 9/11, such as military operations and intelligence gathering. These "hard-power" tools are essential, but they are not sufficient to counter the underlying violent extremist ideologies and defeat groups that can rely on a steady stream of recruits to replace killed combatants. One participant argued that the ease with which the Islamic State has recruited young people reflects a broader identity crisis among Muslim millennials worldwide. Participants emphasized the importance of empowering local, grassroots efforts to combat the spread of violent extremism; ultimately, rooting out extremist culture must come from within societies, not imposed by external actors. One participant posited that perhaps nationalism could serve as an antidote to violent extremism.

Suggested Policy Prescriptions:

- Counterterrorism policy should draw on the tools of hard power, such as military operations, intelligence gathering, and law enforcement, but focus more on "soft-power" tools, including countering violent extremism (CVE) programs, grassroots initiatives, and community-based outreach.
- The public and private sectors should focus research on identifying successful grassroots, community-based CVE initiatives, in order to concentrate resources and improve fundraising prospects.
- International efforts should dedicate greater resources to identifying the factors that have enabled some postconflict states to successfully counter violent extremism.

The Ebola outbreak in West Africa exposed weaknesses at all levels of global health governance. Public health is the responsibility of sovereign states, but Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone—debilitated by years of civil war, distrust of government, and poor infrastructure—did not have the capacity to detect, contain, or treat the Ebola epidemic of their own accord. Meanwhile, the World Health Organization (WHO), hampered by budget cuts, a lethargic bureaucracy, and indecisive leadership, failed to heed early warnings of the severity of the outbreak. Moreover, the crisis underscored that the International Health Regulations (IHR)—the legal regime that sets minimum public health standards and governs responses to public-health emergencies of international concern (PHEICs)—are dangerously inadequate. The WHO did not declare the Ebola epidemic as a PHEIC until August 8, 2014, by which time the virus had claimed nearly one thousand lives and spread to a fourth country, Nigeria. Moreover, the Ebola crisis revealed that the WHO failed to learn lessons from previous PHEICs: in the aftermath of the pandemic H1N1 influenza of 2009, a review committee concluded that the world was "ill-prepared" to respond to a PHEIC and recommended that the WHO establish a global-health emergency workforce and a contingency fund from which it could draw in the event of a future PHEIC. However, the WHO ignored these recommendations and subsequently reduced its outbreak-response capacity. Meanwhile, the majority of WHO member states have failed to come into full compliance with the minimum outbreak surveillance and response standards set out under the IHR.

Some participants argued that the WHO's poor response to the Ebola outbreak has cast doubt on the relevance of the organization. One participant noted that recent U.S. public health initiatives demonstrate that Washington has lost faith in, and intends to circumvent, the WHO. For example, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recently assisted the African Union in establishing an African CDC. More important, in February 2014, the United States launched the Global Health Security Agenda (GHSA), a coalition of forty-four countries and several international organizations that aims to accelerate implementation of the International Health Regulations (IHR). Unless the WHO demonstrates that it is committed to implementing reform and strengthening accountability, one participant noted, the GHSA and other initiatives could leave the WHO behind. While some argued that competition among global health initiatives drives progress, others insisted that though the WHO may be flawed, it is a necessary institution that the world would seek to create if it did not already exist. At the same time, the discussion highlighted the importance of integrating public health concerns more widely across UN agencies, particularly for those in postconflict countries like Liberia or Sierra Leone.

Suggested Policy Prescriptions:

- In addition to establishing a global-health emergency workforce and contingency fund from which the WHO can draw in the case of a PHEIC, the WHO should strengthen accountability of its regional and country offices to headquarters in Geneva. To that end, leaders of regional and country offices should be selected on the basis of expertise and competence, not politics.
- Member states should increase funding to the WHO's outbreak surveillance and emergency-response capacities to ensure that they function efficiently and effectively in the event of a PHEIC.
- Other organs of the United Nations, such as the UN Peacebuilding Commission, should ensure that public health considerations are integrated into peace-building and postconflict reconstruction agendas.

CURRENCY MANIPULATION AND INTERNATIONAL TRADE

As countries have struggled to recover from the international financial crisis of 2008, many governments have turned to extraordinary monetary policy tools, exacerbating debates about currency manipulation and misalignment. Yet there is no international consensus about the extent of currency misalignment. Indeed, even the term remains undefined—though some participants noted that this may in fact provide much-needed flexibility for countries responding to the

unconventional monetary policies being implemented globally. Moreover, participants noted that currency manipulation is a political issue that touches on sovereignty concerns. Frustration with the failure of existing institutions—specifically the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the World Intellectual Property Organization—to resolve cases of currency manipulation has encouraged efforts to address currency debates in alternative forums, including ongoing trade negotiations such as the Transpacific Partnership (TPP) and Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP). Yet, as several participants emphasized, regardless of the WTO's lack of action on currency manipulation (not to mention its apparent inability to negotiate new rules for trade) the organization's effective dispute-settlement mechanism remains fundamental to international trade, and provides a potential example of how countries might negotiate rules on currency management and submit to international arbitration.

Although several participants did not consider TPP and TTIP negotiations to be the appropriate forums to address currency manipulation, a number of people argued that attempting to include currency-manipulation clauses in these deals would not scupper negotiations. Furthermore, new regulations could be introduced and tested first in these plurilateral negotiations, and then integrated into global institutions, after securing the approval of certain states. Notably, some participants suggested that the International Monetary Fund (IMF) would be a more promising institution to govern currency disputes than the WTO, given recent struggles in the WTO to make progress in negotiations. However, others considered that the IMF lacks the necessary credibility to develop guidelines to which states will adhere.

Suggested Policy Prescriptions:

- The Group of Twenty (G20) rather than the IMF or WTO should develop currency-adjustment guidelines to prevent currency disputes from escalating.
- States should establish a clear demarcation between domestically oriented monetary policy (which would not fall under currency manipulation) and internationally oriented monetary policy (which would be considered currency manipulation).
- States should coordinate internationally to improve credit channels and thereby reduce reliance on exchange-rate channels to stimulate markets, reducing the attractiveness of currency manipulation.

DILEMMAS OF HUMANITARIAN INTERVENTION: THE CASE OF SYRIA

As the crisis in Syria continues and fuels conflicts across the region, international efforts to halt the violence and address the resulting humanitarian crisis have been delayed and insufficient. The crisis has exposed the limits of the UN Security Council, and thus UN efforts have focused on humanitarian relief for the victims. Participants discussed whether UNSC behavior could be reformed, and certain participants dismissed the French proposal of the Permanent Five (P5) members' (China, France, Russia, United Kingdom, and United States) "responsibility not to veto" UNSC resolutions in cases of mass atrocities as wildly unrealistic. Several participants argued that the lack of U.S. leadership has hindered the international response to the crisis. Others argued more broadly that an international consensus on the threshold criteria for armed intervention in cases of mass atrocities remains elusive.

The greatest challenge to humanitarian intervention is the uncertainty surrounding the outcome of an intervention.

Given the international failure to intervene in Syria despite more than two hundred thousand civilian deaths there, participants discussed the continued relevance of the responsibility to protect (R2P) doctrine. Participants emphasized that the greatest challenge to humanitarian intervention is the uncertainty surrounding the outcome of an intervention, which increases states' reluctance to act. In a similar vein, some suggested that redirecting resources from conflict management to humanitarian aid might be the practical compromise between the humanitarian concerns of R2P and the reality of international refusal to commit to large-scale, long-term military interventions.

Several participants voiced concern that refugee camps are becoming permanent settlements and emphasized that international organizations and external actors are exclusively focused on short-term humanitarian relief efforts without planning for the long-term challenge of reintegrating refugees into society after the conflict. Participants stressed the need to also address the "lost" generation of Syrians that will not have had access to education.

Suggested Policy Prescriptions:

- The international response to the humanitarian situation in Syria should focus more on refugees and internally displaced persons' long-term needs, recognizing that their displacement is not likely to be temporary but could last for decades. Neighboring states that have taken in large numbers of refugees need additional international support and funding to assist them.
- In the context of R2P, if states are to intervene in an internal conflict, they should do so at the beginning of a conflict, when there is a narrow window of opportunity for effective action.
- The conditions for humanitarian intervention should be predicated on a clear intent to commit crimes against humanity, rather than on a threshold of numbers of people killed.

CONTROLLING NUCLEAR WEAPONS: REVIEWING THE NONPROLIFERATION TREATY

In tandem with the 2015 Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT) review conference taking place in New York from April 27–May 22, participants assessed the effectiveness of the NPT. Though the nonproliferation regime as a whole has largely succeeded in preventing nuclear proliferation, expectations for the NPT have grown, and participants argued that policymakers and experts should call attention to the limited scope of the treaty. Certain participants rejected the idea that the NPT is a "grand bargain" between nonproliferation and disarmament, stressing instead that it is primarily a bargain among different responsibilities for nonproliferation. Turning to the growing campaign to ban nuclear weapons on humanitarian grounds, a number of participants were skeptical that it would carry much weight with nuclear weapon states. Others noted that many of the nonnuclear weapon states involved in this humanitarian initiative continue to rely on the United States to guarantee their security. Consequently, while decision-makers in these states may verbally support accelerated disarmament to appease their citizens, they are unlikely to take action to disrupt the current balance between nuclear weapon states and nonnuclear weapon states.

Several participants emphasized that geopolitics will ultimately guide states' decisions to pursue nuclear weapons. Some highlighted an apparent trend in which states that give up their nuclear weapons (e.g., Libya, Iraq, and Ukraine) are subsequently invaded, and stressed the need to avoid a narrative in which nuclear weapons are perceived to be the sole guarantor against invasion. Similarly, others suggested that the Ukraine crisis demonstrated how states with nuclear weapons can use these weapons to bully or violate the sovereignty of nonnuclear weapon states. In this light, some participants emphasized that the future of the nonproliferation regime may depend on the credibility of U.S. extended-deterrence commitments. If the latter are called into question, the regime will suffer.

Suggested Policy Prescriptions:

- Nuclear weapon states should increase the transparency of their nuclear arsenals to mitigate the tensions between nuclear weapon states and nonnuclear weapon states and should take steps to underscore that nuclear energy remains an option for nonnuclear weapon states.
- Nonnuclear weapon states should underscore their commitment to nonproliferation by accepting extensive safeguards and other transparency measures on their peaceful nuclear programs.
- The United States should enhance its diplomatic outreach to convince regional allies in the Middle East (e.g., Israel and Saudi Arabia) that the deal between the P5+1 (P5 plus Germany) and Iran is a worthwhile one.