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**11<sup>TH</sup> HWA CHONG ASIA PACIFIC  
YOUNG LEADERS SUMMIT**

**STUDENT DIALOGUE**

**WRITE-UP**

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## SUMMIT THEME: *CONNECTING THE DOTS OF AN UNCERTAIN FUTURE*

*“Uncertainty is the only certainty there is, and knowing how to live with insecurity is the only security.”*

*- John Allen Paulos*

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The last decade of the Hwa Chong Asia-Pacific Young Leaders Summit (HC-APYLS) has allowed generations of young leaders from across the globe to convene with their stories, experiences and aspirations for the future. From considering how to navigate a world with simultaneously porous and impenetrable borders, to engaging our disparate communities in their respective struggles for change, the Summit once more offers the opportunity to bring openness, mettle and hope to the global youth conversation.

Such a conversation is arguably more urgent and relevant today than ever before. Within the past year, political and social forces have morphed our world into one beyond recognition. 2016 has seen our societies around the world become arguably more divided, with fissures erupting along lines of race, religion, politics and socioeconomic class. Most notably, we have seen leading superpowers polarised by Brexit and the US Presidency. In addition, crises of globalisation, immigration, terrorism and the environment continue to illuminate the fragility of cooperation and interdependence. Values we once hailed as universal such as tolerance, sensitivity, respect and cooperation, have suffered the incursions of hatred and suspicion. Self-interest and bigotry have threatened our ambition and resolve on global issues like climate change and the migrant crisis. Nations increasingly find themselves juggling their national interests with their obligations to the larger international community; locally, individuals struggle, vacillating between liberalism and conservatism, rationality and irrationality. With the age-old global orders that we have grown accustomed to suddenly being uprooted, the gaping holes left behind have accentuated our world’s many vulnerabilities and threaten to undermine the progresses made to date.

At a time when the acronym “VUCA” (Volatile, Uncertain, Complex and Ambiguous) is commonly used to describe the world we live in, both the young and old have begun finding themselves wrestling with growing doubt and disquiet. Fed lately on a diet of polarising,

## HC-APYLS 2017 Student Dialogue Write-up

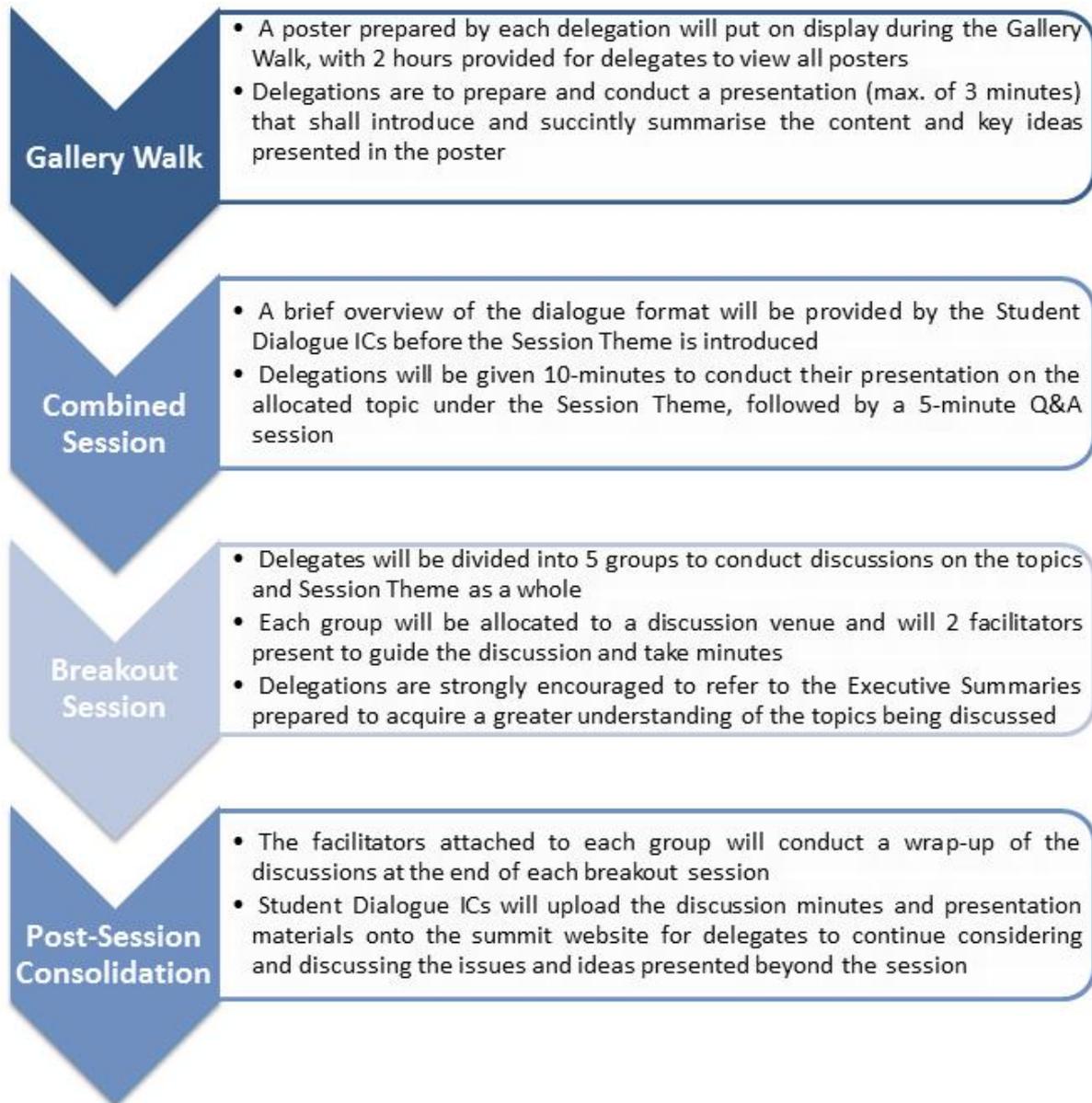
confusing, and disheartening world events, much more seems unclear and more complex than we remember. Uncertainty, it seems, is our only certainty.

However, even as we march towards a future that may seem completely unpredictable, that does not mean that we must necessarily resign to our “fate” and succumb to forces beyond our control. Rather, if history has taught us anything, it is that we have always found strength from our innate transformative potential as a species. Remembering that as individuals and communities we have always succeeded in robustly steeling ourselves, especially in the face of flux and doubt, is an important start.

Hence, no matter how turbulent the times, we have to believe that mankind will once again prove its ability to not only adapt, but also take charge of whatever might lie ahead. The 11th HC-APYLS, in gathering the brightest young minds from countries all over the world, will offer this much needed insight and introspection to reinvigorate and counterbalance what sometimes feels like an increasingly disoriented global community.

Through understanding different perspectives and exchanging ideas, participants at the 11th HC-APYLS, will reach a better understanding of global challenges and opportunities to confidently prepare us for what lies ahead. In The Path, together we will dance on the edge of exciting times and chart the constellations to light The Path towards what the future holds.

## STUDENT DIALOGUE SESSION OVERVIEW



## ALLOCATION OF TOPICS

<b>Session 1: Man and Technology</b>	
Cyber security: Hacktivism's New Game	South Korea
Artificial Intelligence: Decoding the Black Box	Australia
Biotechnology: Overcoming Limits	Singapore
<b>Session 2: A New Epoch in Politics</b>	
Populist Extremism: A Resurgence	France
Post-Truth Era: Facts or Alternative Facts	United States of America
New World Order: Power Shifts in the 21st Century	China
Accountability: Selfless Service or Self-Service	Indonesia
<b>Session 3: The Next Economic Frontier</b>	
Isolationism and Protectionism: Against the Tide	United Kingdom
Slowing Economic Growth: Charting the Next Step	Japan
Technological Change: Redefining Boundaries	India
<b>Session 4: Civilisation's Path to Unity</b>	
Imagined Communities: National Identity's Place in a Globalised World	Malaysia
Trust in Civil Institutions: What Binds the Fabric of Society	Philippines
Cultural Values: Bridging the Old and New	South Africa

## SESSION 1: *Man and Technology*

*“If we continue to develop our technology without wisdom or prudence, our servant may prove to be our executioner.”*

– Omar N. Bradley

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We live in a golden age of technological progress, with rapid advances in scientific fields today catalysing the development of technologies for our benefit. However, humanity’s capacity to grapple with such unprecedented rates of technological advancement remains severely lacking. From the compromising of ethical standards to the undermining of institutions through cyber threats and our ignorance of artificial intelligence systems, humanity has shown that it still has a long way to go in mastering the use of technology for its benefit.

Where are our technological advancements taking us? Are there any boundaries that we are not meant to cross? In this session, delegates will be invited to look at the uncertainties that have bred among scientific and technological communities, and decide on a course of action for mankind as we foray into the technological unknown.

## Session 1: Man and Technology

### Cybersecurity: Hacktivism's New Game

In December 2016, the South Korean government accused the North Korean regime of infiltrating and hacking into their military cyber command. In a world where malware technology and digital capability systems are increasingly sophisticated and difficult to crack, individual or organised vigilante groups such as Anonymous are able to use a range of methods to undermine organisational and institutional apparatuses.

Hacking exposes an institution to many vulnerabilities. For instance, organisations and countries that have fallen victim to a hacking operation stand to lose critical and confidential information: ranging from research and business strategies to top-secret classified documents. This may cost the organisation their competitive edge or result in the country having to compromise their current operations. Regardless, both ultimately lead to grave and damaging consequences.

Therefore, given the ever increasing threat that hacking poses to pre-existing technological infrastructure, it is now more urgent than ever for organisations and institutions to develop new digital capabilities to cope with the evolving threat of cyber-attacks. One response to this new threat is the employment of what is known as “white hat hackers” – ethical computer hackers, or computer security experts – who specialise in penetration testing and other testing methodologies to ensure the security of an institution's information systems.

However, even as such capabilities have been conceived in the hopes of addressing current threats, it remains unclear whether these new safeguards carry with them inherent risks. Can solutions devised with good intentions inadvertently exacerbate current problems, or in the process, imperil other domains of technology?

Some questions to consider:

- How has the cyber security landscape changed and why is it increasingly difficult to track online attacks?
- What are the necessary steps to ensure that endeavours to strengthen our cybersecurity frameworks are effective?
- What are some other cyber security threats that can subvert institutional operations and how can these be addressed?

## Session 1: Man and Technology

### Artificial Intelligence: Decoding the Black Box

As humanity continues to delve into the field of artificial intelligence, we find that its gradual integration into our everyday processes has become inexorable. In fact, from self-driving cars to facial recognition, the development of computer systems able to perform tasks requiring human intelligence, has already yielded results, surpassing even their human counterparts in some cases.

Yet, even though artificial intelligence is the brainchild of humanity's research into the sciences, its unprecedented rate of development has made keeping pace with it exponentially harder.

In recent years, artificial intelligence research has exploded into a field of vast complexity and application, with the advancement of artificial intelligence accelerated by deep learning. A technique loosely inspired by the idea of neural networks, deep learning enables artificial intelligence through analysing and classifying inputs that aid it in future decision-making, a process completed without human involvement and intervention. It is through deep learning that artificial intelligence has been able to mimic human learning, achieved by changing the strength of simulated neurone connections based on experience.

However, even as the creators of such networks, our understanding of artificial intelligence and its learning processes are preliminary at best. This has indubitably bred fears, as researchers believe that it is only a matter of time before computer systems develop the capabilities to display elements of imagination and creativity equal or superior to that of Man. So how can we be sure that the work of artificial intelligence will not end up undermining our interests?

Hence, delegates may consider the following questions:

- Can artificial intelligence ever be completely trusted?
- What precautions should we take in preparation for the likely future proliferation of artificial intelligence?

## Session 1: Man and Technology

### Biotechnology: Overcoming Limits

Biotechnology today is a burgeoning field that has leveraged on our understanding of pure biological sciences to develop technologies in a plethora of sectors. For instance, it is through biotechnology that the alteration of genetic material has been made possible, giving rise to genetically modified organisms that exhibit characteristics not found in them before, such as pest-resistance or immunity to diseases.

As observed, biotechnology's ability to harness cellular and biomolecular processes has revolutionised the way humanity meets challenges, granting us control over entities we once thought were impossible to change (i.e. the human genome). However, the growth of the biotech industry has been met with increased scepticism, scepticism that may hamper the growth of the biotech industry should it persists.

First, ethical considerations have to be foregrounded. In looking at genetic modification, undoubtedly, we have long asked ourselves whether humanity even has the right to manipulate the genome of living organisms – to play “God”. Should we be allowed to alter our environment to suit our needs, or are we perverting the fundamental laws of nature to further our interests?

Secondly, has biotechnology delivered what it has promised? Biofuel, a product of biotechnology, has long been assumed to be carbon neutral. However, a study published by the University of Michigan in August 2016 has contested this widely held assumption.

Looking ahead, this requires us to review the viability of biotechnology, and debate its relevance to sustainable growth.

Hence, it is hoped that delegates would consider the following questions:

- Who are the relevant stakeholders benefiting from biotechnology and what is the extent of their rights?
- Who is responsible for holding the biotech industry to ethical standards and how can the field of biotechnology be advanced in an ethical manner?
- How can we ensure that the development of biotechnology is aligned with humanity's best interests?

## SESSION 2: *A New Epoch in Politics*

*“A week is a long time in politics”*

– *Harold Wilson*

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In a political landscape where the dynamics have shifted rapidly as a result of landmark global events, Wilson’s words uttered over half a century ago, seem today almost prophetic. Indeed, the world is experiencing drastic changes to the post-Cold War order, which was marked by general Western dominance. Both in domestic and international frontiers, the world as we know it is facing dramatic transformation. 2017 has seen marked anti-globalisation sentiments on the rise and non-establishment leaders are taking office in key positions of power across the world.

This session invites delegates to explore these shifts: the rise of populism and its resultant power dynamic. How should the world best respond?

## Session 2: A New Epoch in Politics

### Populist Extremism: A Resurgence

Across the world, populists on both ends of the political spectrum have gained considerable ground and appeal amongst voters. In Spain, Podemos – a left-wing political party founded just three years ago – holds today 67 out of the 350 available seats in the Spanish Congress, making it the third largest party in the country. In France, Marine Le Pen – leader of right-wing party National Front – mounted a strong challenge to the recent presidential campaign, gaining a record 10.6 million votes before eventually losing to Emmanuel Macron.

Their rise to favour is unsurprising in a climate of increased cynicism and apprehension owing to the rapid changes the world is undergoing. In the West, many people feel left behind by technological change, the global economy, and growing inequality. Horrific incidents of terrorism have fanned hatred and distrust. Many today around the world are uneasy with societies that have become more ethnically, religiously and racially diverse. Moreover, there is an increasing sense that governments and the elite are ignoring public concerns.

Simultaneously, from the flagrant violation of human rights in Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte’s ‘War on Drugs,’ to the sentencing of ex-Jakarta Governor Basuki ‘Ahok’ Purnama on charges of blasphemy and violent provocation, leadership around the world of late has inverted traditional models and expectations.

Today’s new generation of populists, claim to speak for “the people,” and promise to defend the nation from perceived threats and evils. They privilege the declared interests of the majority and validate public discontent over the status quo – scapegoating refugees, immigrant communities, and minorities in the process. Truth is a frequent casualty, while nativism, xenophobia, racism, and Islamophobia are arguably on a marked rise.

In light of these trends, delegates should consider the impact and implications of growing populism:

- Discuss the reasons why populism is on the rise in Europe, the United States and Asia respectively.
- Is there any good that comes out of populist politics?
- Is the trend likely to last?

## Session 2: A New Epoch in Politics

### Post-Truth Era: Facts or Alternative Facts

When Trump Administration's aide Kellyanne Conway referred to the Bowling Green Massacre in a live interview in 2016, viewers were puzzled because no such incident occurred. Conway was later found to have fabricated the story. It is no wonder that Oxford English Dictionary's word of the year in 2016 was 'post-truth'. In a media-saturated world where facts and logic are increasingly secondary to rhetoric and emotions, fertile ground has been sown with the seeds of 'fake news'.

Besides the US and Western nations, fake news has seen its mark across Asia-Pacific countries too. For instance, as social media becomes the number one news source for young Cambodians, the spectre of 'fake news' has haunted everything from food contamination rumours to political slander. Denouncing earlier this year that 'the plague is false and fake news,' Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Razak exhorted the media to exercise greater responsibility to the truth. Many countries like Australia, Japan and Singapore are also not taking any chances – actively taking steps to review and strengthen its existing media laws.

Besides legislative action taken by governments around the world, public and corporate stakeholders have joined the fight against 'fake news'. Non-partisan fact checking websites as well as advanced algorithms employed by companies such as Facebook have played a crucial role in reducing its propagation. This bodes well for the future as it demonstrates a concerted effort by all spheres of society to rally against the proliferation of 'fake news'.

When examining and critiquing the scourge of 'fake news', delegates may consider the following questions:

- To what extent can the media be relied on to report the truth? Are they alone in this responsibility?
- What safeguards can countries put in place to combat the nuisance that is 'fake news'?

## Session 2: A New Epoch in Politics

### **New World Order: Power Shifts in the 21st Century**

The turn of the 21st century has seen a marked change in the balance of global power.

The USA, a traditional powerhouse, led now by President Trump, has demonstrated of late, several inconsistencies in her foreign policy. In the run-up to his presidency, Trump had denounced coalitions like NATO numerous times and threatened to go ‘tough’ on China. Although he has since recanted, such vacillations in foreign policy, like many others, have unsettled the international community, offering more confusion than clarity in a climate that is already unpredictable.

Meanwhile, the rise of Asian giants like India and the People’s Republic of China has tipped the playing field in global power monopolies. With her rise in power, China has been cementing her geopolitical influence. Given increasing room to manoeuvre and forward its national agenda, it has, for example, stood fast to its nine-dash line claim in the South China Sea despite a ruling by the Hague Tribunal at the Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA).

To further add to the complexities, the Russian Federation has shown a willingness to resort to military force in order to maintain a semblance of influence around the globe even as its own economic growth has slowed greatly. This can be observed multiple times over, as with the annexation of Crimea from Ukraine, and its support of President Bashar Al-Assad’s dictatorial regime in Syria.

All these developments serve to highlight the increasing unfamiliarity of the new world order where there is arguably no longer a singular dominant force, but many different national interests forwarded in multiple ways.

Therefore, in light of the complexity of current global powers wrestling for dominance, delegates may consider the following points for discussion:

- To what extent do shifting power dynamics affect diplomacy?
- What does the changing world order mean for nations big and small alike?

## Session 2: A New Epoch in Politics

### **Accountability: Selfless Service or Self-Service**

As the old saying goes, "It's not what you know but who you know." The corruptive notion of who one knows can manifest differently in different countries. In Japan, an illegal 'amakudari' crony ring was exposed earlier this year, implicating the education ministry and three top bureaucrats in a problem that has been described as 'epidemic.' Meanwhile in South Korea, scandal roiled the country in January, focusing public scrutiny on the power of the presidency and its symbiotic relationship with family-controlled conglomerates like Samsung.

Leaders are vested with the public's trust and mandate and are expected to make decisions for the greater good of the country and its society. However, favouritism, cronyism, and nepotism all interfere with fairness because they give undue advantage to someone who does not necessarily merit this treatment. And yet everyone can point to instances where cronyism or nepotism is an accepted fact of life in the political sphere. Former US President John F. Kennedy, for example, appointed his brother Robert as attorney general and served as the closest adviser to the President from 1961 to 1963.

In the event that public servants act contrary to the expectation of serving the public good, the other two branches of government – the judiciary and legislative – often act as watchdogs to protect the people's interests, but not always are these measures sufficient. South African President Jacob Zuma continues to remain in power even after South Africa's highest court found in 2016 that he had used public funds to upgrade his home.

Ultimately, corruption weakens morale in the government service, not to mention public faith in the integrity of the government.

In light of these examples, delegates are invited to consider the following questions to guide their discussion:

- Discuss some reasons why corrupt leaders continue to remain in office.
- What are the avenues for public recourse and how should the everyman safeguard his interests? Examine how this differs from country to country.
- How can a culture of zero tolerance for corruption be created?

## SESSION 3: *The Next Economic Frontier*

*“The economy of tomorrow must be one where wealth is shared”*

*- Sharan Burrow*

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In an age of rapid change and constant technological innovations, the economic climate is even more uncertain than before. Britain’s rupture with Europe, the election of Donald Trump and the rising reversal of globalism, signal increased dissatisfaction over how the fruits of economic growth have been inequitably shared over the past few decades. The trend of globalisation and liberalisation of economic sectors have indubitably been beneficial for many, but the fundamental premises of these trends, such as the potential of globalisation to bring about inclusive growth, the benefits of mutual cooperation and the benefits of establishing trade relations with other countries, are now being questioned by those who have been left behind by change and progress.

Yet, paradoxically, the world has witnessed the greatest rise in upward social mobility and opportunities in the last few decades. Nonetheless, if we fail to act in time, the broadening gulf of inequality may also threaten to undermine all that we have achieved in fostering shared growth and trust in governance. Ultimately, how to transform challenges into opportunities and share the fruits of growth in an equitable manner will prove to be the defining challenge of the next decade.

## Session 3: The Next Economic Frontier

### Isolationism and Protectionism: Against the Tide

Increased calls for the complete rejection of the existing liberal economic order, the retraction of free trade agreements, the repudiation of liberal immigration laws and threatening calls for multinational corporations to shift operations back to their country of origin, is what isolationism looks like today.

The crisis of confidence in globalisation and multilateralism will only increase so long as nothing is being done to reverse the trend of growing socioeconomic inequality. If nothing is done, the rising tide of isolationism would utterly devastate established norms of international cooperation, stultifying the once-bustling Western-led economic landscape and undermine economic growth prospects globally.

If the trend of isolationism continues to grow and fester, it may inadvertently stunt the development of the country itself – 6 million jobs in the United States depend on trade with Mexico alone, and imposing stricter tariffs or regulation on trade can adversely impact these jobs. Other problems such as the loss of top talent due to tighter restrictions on immigration can also prove detrimental to the culture of innovation in liberal democracies such as Canada or France.

By raising trade barriers that in essence puts an end to globalisation and suggests the beginning of a trade war, as was the case in the 1930s, how urgently must a fundamental shift in the way in which we view trade and its impact on the economy, get underway?

Delegates can consider the following questions:

- What are the root economic causes of increasing calls for protectionism?
- How can those disenfranchised by the global economy be supported to find their place in it once more?
- What are the short and long term economic gains and/or dangers of an increasing number of countries turning inward?

## Session 3: The Next Economic Frontier

### Slowing Economic Growth: Charting the Next Step

As China's economic engine begins to run out of steam, growth has significantly slowed in almost all parts of the world. In countries whose economies depend on commodity exports, such as Australia, Brazil, Canada, and Indonesia, the slowdown could have a negative impact on Gross Domestic Product (GDP). On the other hand, the fall in commodity prices could bring about benefits for commodity-importing countries, such as the United States and resource-scarce countries like Singapore.

The reasons for a slowdown in global economic growth are multi-faceted. China's economic transition from a manufacturing-based economy which imported and exported heavily to a consumption-driven one, signifies a slowdown in trade volume. The protectionist policies and inclinations of certain Western countries also represent higher barriers to trade than before.

Useful to note is how the impact of a slowdown in the global economy extends far beyond the economic sphere. No longer able to rely primarily on economic growth as a key underpinning of political legitimacy, the way and manner in which China copes with the new dynamics in its economy will have vast implications on its political stability, at least in the short to medium term. The ripple effect or tidal waves experienced by most other economies, especially those which rely heavily on the Chinese economic machine, will inevitably force political change and some level of adaptation in these nations.

In the same way that countries were able to ride the wave of globalisation to reap increased economic benefit, they now need to adapt to chart new frontiers of economic growth in order to improve the lives of their people.

Delegates can consider the following questions:

- Discuss the economic good, bad and ugly of globalisation. Is globalisation's golden age over?
- Is slowing growth an inevitable feature of the global economy after sustained growth for over the past 30 years?
- What are potential areas of new growth and where do they come from?
- Is a slowdown in economic growth necessarily a bad thing?

## Session 3: The Next Economic Frontier

### Technological Change: Redefining Boundaries

The advancement of technology in the past few decades has ushered an era of transformation in all sectors. Tesla's use of software to control more features of its cars, for one, is an example of the upcoming paradigm shift in the automobile industry. Other on-demand service start-ups such as GoJek in Indonesia, Scooterino in Rome and Mapool in France all offer the promise of transforming the transport industry.

These changes brought about by disruptive technology will force the hand of traditional industry players to adapt and upscale operations to match this increased competition. This is not necessarily a worrying situation – if employees can successfully improve their skillsets to take on more sophisticated and higher-value tasks, it means the work produced would yield greater value, thus facilitating the advancement of Man.

As the development of innovative solutions to Man's problems continues to pick up speed, new moral dimensions inevitably come into play. The susceptibility of implanted medical devices to the meddling of hackers, the potential of 3D printing to produce automated weapons and the increasing usage of automated systems operating without human control to fight wars are just the tip of the iceberg when it comes to the problems posed by technological change.

As new technology emerges, past inventions and fields will become obsolete. In the rapidly diversifying and changing world that is ours, technological revolutions will certainly result in certain jobs and skills becoming obsolete. However while jobs are lost, the process of creative destruction implies that new fields will be created to supplement new jobs. The pace of the destruction and creation may not be in equilibrium, but it would seem that with increased diversification and skills upgrading, we can combat this situation.

Delegates can consider the following questions:

- How can governments better prepare individuals and corporations to cope with the increased competition from new technological innovations?
- How will technology continue to change our lives and business operations in the future?
- Have we maximised the potential of technology to benefit human lives?

## SESSION 4: *Civilisation's Path to Unity*

*“Throughout the centuries there were men who took first steps down new roads armed with nothing but their own vision. Their goals differed, but they all had this in common: that the step was first, the road new, the vision unborrowed, and the response they received —hatred. ”*

*- Ayn Rand*

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Over the years, many have sought to analyse and project the future and endpoint of human sociocultural evolution. Will cultural groups meld rapidly to form areas of commonality, characterised by shared values or will the path towards unity be met with significant dissent as echoed by Ayn Rand’s words? Growing social divides (eg. racial, socioeconomic and religious divides to name a few) have increased movement towards cultural isolation. In such a climate, what will become of the future – will it be a state of disarray, a melting pot or something entirely different? These are pertinent issues that require examination of the divisions and tensions in our society.

This session calls delegates to reflect on the state of the socio-cultural fabric that binds people together. In the face of the raging winds of dissent and division, will society be able to stay united, weathering the winds of change or will our divide enlarge? Will civilisation undergo fusion, or clash?

## Session 4: Civilisation's Path to Unity

### **Imagined Communities: National Identity's Place in a Globalised World**

Globalisation: a hegemonic discourse that continues to shape the cultural evolutions of the nations it envelops, in areas such as identity, culture, and collective action. In the wake of 'softening' identities by an ever-expanding access to a variety of worlds, do the shared systems of meaning that cultural groups aggregate around, such as national identity, have a place in society anymore?

Blamed more for its role in diminishing national unity than enhancing national identity, globalisation has seen people of late respond strongly to this pressure by adopting arguably a stronger sense of nationality. National cultures seemingly under threat, have seen the rise of popular anxiety about globalisation and the distrust of elites, characterised by increased latent feelings of resentment against immigrants and culturally different newcomers. In Australia, surveys conducted by the Scanlon Foundation over the last 30 years indicate that the levels of intolerance and rejection of cultural diversity are in the range 25% to 30% of the population. This seems to be symptomatic of the idea that a national identity is geographically defined – one must be born in a country to call that country home.

As nations reap the economic benefits of globalisation, accommodations have to be made to assuage pressing anxieties over culture, identity and indigenous ways of life. As such, delegates should consider the following questions:

- What is a national identity in this day and age?
- How can a modern nation maintain its construct of 'national identity' given its potential dilution and change?
- Is one's national identity antithetical to his global identity?
- Is the idea of nationality and national identity soon to be an outdated concept?

## Session 4: Civilisation's Path to Unity

### Trust in Civil Institutions: What Binds the Fabric of Society

In the current socio-political climate, nations are witnessing a global implosion of trust. With increasing dissent, trust in the government's ability to execute the demands of the people is dwindling. This distrust has even extended beyond the government to other civil institutions such as the media and the judicial system. To that end, the Edelman's 2017 Trust Barometer revealed that 53% of respondents bear the perception that the current system has failed the population and bears minimal hopes for a prosperous future.

Stability can only be preserved via trust networks between the various sectors and members of society – religious sects, judiciary, patron-client ties, and many others. However, rising inequality has increased doubts on the ability of institutions to improve their situation. Furthermore, factors ranging from corruption to the perception of the government's ineptitude in dealing with fiscal and financial challenges have led to distrust among the public.

While a certain degree of scepticism is healthy for politics, high levels of distrust are a sign of system dysfunctionality. For example, the phenomenon known as politics of rage is the broad-based rejection of moderate parties that is being witnessed in advanced economies today. This is symptomatic of reduced trust in existing institutions and is often exacerbated by a perception of inequality which undermines society's solidarity. Beyond governance, perceived 'unethical behaviour' by the media and judiciary, institutional racism and prejudice are also examples of injustice unamenable to transparency, openness and trust.

Will this trend continue to persist in light of an already thinning social fabric? Recognising that trust is an essential for a fair and cooperative society, delegates can consider the following:

- Is there an eroding trust in civil institutions? What are factors that have led to this state of affairs?
- Can these be mitigated and addressed?

## Session 4: Civilisation's Path to Unity

### Cultural Values: Bridging the Old and New

Cultural values encompass the principles, standards, concepts and beliefs upheld by members of a community, thereby determining the norms, practices and morals it stands by. Yet, traditional cultural values once enshrined by communities are now being eroded by global forces, with increasing homogenisation of cultural values taking root instead.

Values of the West have become greatly assimilated into other communities, the pervasiveness of which is detailed by the transformation of cultural values to reflect Western ideas and philosophies. Traditional cultural values, for one, have lost their relevance in Africa's tribal communities. As its members continue to receive a post-colonial Western education, their value systems have also been changed. This has caused the sense of community, a traditional African cultural value that has long shaped the communal life and extended family systems of tribes, to become viewed as primitive and increasingly replaced by Western individualism.

Will traditional cultural values meet its demise though? Or is a new global cultural value system in order? What does this mean for traditions and cultures that have arguably been compromised enough?

Delegates are invited to consider the following questions:

- How has globalisation changed local social structures and values?
- Are global cultures necessarily harmful to native communities and their value systems?
- How receptive should communities be to cultural values that contradict their own and does it warrant the integration of these values?
- Should the cultural values of communities be sacrificed for an overarching global cultural value system?