



# NEW REALITY



Bled  
Strategic  
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4 – 5 September 2017  
Bled, Slovenia  
[www.bledstrategicforum.org](http://www.bledstrategicforum.org)

## Leaders' panel

The world is rapidly changing, with globalisation and digitalisation significantly increasing the pace of our lives and bringing us closer together than ever before, as well as presenting profound challenges to our self-perception, politics, the economy, security, and society.

Established political, economic and social elites are losing ground. Populist, nationalist and extremist movements are on the rise. It is difficult to keep up with the vast amount of information that bombards us daily, let alone evaluate its true value or meaning and put it in a proper context.

Wars and conflicts in Europe's immediate neighbourhood and in Africa, the Middle East, and Asia challenge our views on morality, norms, and values. Terrorist attacks fuel fear in our lives and societies, and the fact that there are millions of refugees worldwide deepens our sense of insecurity.

With the world order possibly at breaking point, we need a strategic vision, strong democratic leadership, and perseverance. We need to adapt to the new reality, but always remember the foundations on which our modern societies were built. It is vital to ensure that human rights and fundamental freedoms, democracy, and the rule of law continue to be respected, as well as everything else we have built through the decades.

## The European Union in a changed world

The economic and financial crisis, unstable eastern and southern neighbourhoods, migration pressures, and a generally deteriorating security situation, combined with an upsurge in terrorist acts in Europe, have in recent years eroded trust between the Member States and caused a shift in relations between EU institutions. Such developments are occurring at a time when major global players are turning away from multilateralism and considering economic protectionism.

Some Member States advocate the full implementation of the single market, while others shy away from the liberalisation of the single market in services. Developments accompanying the conclusion of agreements with the United States and Canada (i.e. TTIP and CETA, respectively) have spotlighted a plethora of reservations among politicians and the public in various Member States alike.

The world is on the brink of rampant protectionism. Will the European Union be able to consolidate from within and re-establish itself on the global stage as a bastion of multilateralism and free and fair trade?

## Global nuclear governance: Quo vadis?

The global security situation is more unstable and unpredictable than at the end of the Cold War. The increased tensions are further aggravated by public statements about the possible use and modernisation of nuclear weapons, as well as military exercises that simulate their deployment, including unannounced drills. Developments in other regions around the globe are also a cause for concern.

This new reality calls for more attention to global nuclear governance, and highlights the importance of preserving the integrity of the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT) and achieving its universality and full implementation. It also shows the need for the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) as an important pillar of global security.

Furthermore, efforts to make the world safer and more protected from the nuclear threat are important for the continued peaceful use of atomic energy, while global governance should also be strengthened to keep pace with evolving challenges and threats, including the possibility of cyber attacks against nuclear installations.

## Human rights in times of change

Changes, rising insecurity, or the heightened perception of insecurity, coupled with the fear of the unknown, often give rise to human rights violations.

History teaches us that protecting human rights and dignity helps prevent conflict, dispel ignorance, instil respect for others, and build better societies that are more resilient to threats from within and from without. So in times of change and insecurity, we should seek to strengthen respect for human rights, not the opposite.

What is the role of human rights in today's society, why do we need them, and how they can help us face the insecurities of modern times? These questions will be answered in a conversation with the person responsible for human rights protection at the global level, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein.

## Water for peace and security

The uneven distribution of freshwater in the world, its vital importance for life and development, as well as factors such as population growth, urbanisation, and climate change, all determine the relationship between water and peace, as well as increase its relevance. Some states have already demonstrated their commitment to preserving this vital natural resource for future generations; nevertheless, global awareness of the importance of the nexus between water and peace still lags behind current pressing trends.

The protection of water in armed conflict, the mechanisms of hydro-diplomacy, and the role of water as an instrument in reconstruction and reconciliation processes in post-conflict situations have not been extensively explored. International institutions lack effective instruments to prevent water-related armed conflict and to use water-related mechanisms for maintaining sustainable peace.

The success of international initiatives will depend on continued and comprehensive awareness of the urgent need to address the challenges that water poses for peace and security. Furthermore, commitment and progress in dealing with security-related questions regarding water scarcity will also help address other water challenges, including the Sustainable Development Goals.

## Western Balkans: EU enlargement – Is pretending the name of the game?

It should have been clear by now that it is in the EU's strategic interest that the enlargement process has no alternative, as the Western Balkan countries are surrounded by EU Member States. The European Union must be the actor in the region, setting an example, offering opportunities, cooperation, connectivity, support and, when necessary, facilitation.

Last December, the Union failed to agree on the Council's traditional conclusions on enlargement. Additionally, this year, the European Commission will not publish its annual enlargement reports. Such inaction could easily be interpreted as a reflection of the lack of the EU's interest in continuing the enlargement dynamics.

Despite the engagement of many experts and many regional processes and initiatives, we are witnessing a lack of implementation of agreements. This may be a consequence of the fractured relations in the region, the internal political situation in individual countries, the situation in the EU, and the slow pace of the enlargement process.

## Realistic hope – How transformation happens faster than one thinks

We are polluting our water; robots will take our jobs; we are eating ourselves to an early death; the old-age pension and health systems are making governments bankrupt, and the immigration crisis is affecting the European integration project. A growing list of nightmares, perfect storms, and global catastrophes fuel fear of the future.

But there is another way of looking at the future. We do not have to be pessimistic or optimistic; we can simply have realistic hope, like future-oriented thinkers and doers who do not ignore reality, but take these challenges into account when exploring the possibility of making a better future for many more generations.

## Digital diplomacy in the 21<sup>st</sup> century: To Tweet or not to Tweet in foreign affairs?

Never before in the history of foreign affairs or diplomacy have heads of state had a method of such immediate and uncensored communication at their disposal as they have today with social media tools such as Twitter.

We saw social media play an important part in the Arab Spring, and recently in Turkey during an attempted coup. However, political leaders nowadays bypass traditional forms of communication and conduct foreign policy in 140 characters or less via Twitter, without reflecting on their action or its consequences.

Some argue that foreign policy should not be conducted via Twitter, while others feel that Twitter and the vast array of social media tools available today could launch a new form of public diplomacy, called Public Diplomacy 2.0. To Tweet or not to Tweet in foreign affairs, that is the question.

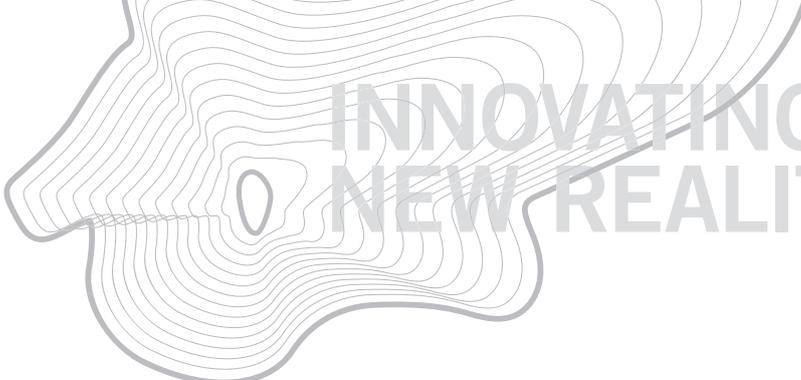
This panel discussion will be held in cooperation with the Global Diplomacy Lab (GDL), an initiative by the German Federal Foreign Office and several private foundations and an international cross-sectoral platform for exploring a more inclusive diplomacy which goes beyond traditional politics.

## Night Owl Session – Fake news, and do the media still need editors?

The growing use of the Internet and social media platforms, where anyone can share their version of the truth and spread misinformation, has fragmented the commonly agreed basis for reality and led to the polarisation of public opinion.

While the ‘fake news’ phenomenon is not at all new, the alternative facts phenomenon, along with media hacking, the changed rules of the political game, and the role of the media, is now in the forefront of mainstream debates.

Until we find an effective way of detecting manipulated versions of the same content and protecting ourselves from them, the truth, contrary to public interest, will continue to be tailor-made for and by every user, every company, and every government.



# INNOVATING NEW REALITY



Business BSF

5 September 2017

Bled, Slovenia

[www.bledstrategicforum.org](http://www.bledstrategicforum.org)

Organised in cooperation with the Ministry of Public Administration, the American Chamber of Commerce in Slovenia (AmCham Slovenia), and the German-Slovene Chamber of Commerce and Industry (AHK Slowenien), the 2017 Business BSF will focus on the role of innovations.

The world is changing rapidly. It no longer suffices to understand these changes solely on the basis of past experience and to adapt to a new reality with traditional approaches. We need to create and implement new business, economic and social concepts and new approaches in order to successfully address the challenges of our new reality. The future is not something that will happen tomorrow; it is happening today. So innovation may also be understood as an act of adapting to an already changed reality. To successfully adapt, transform, and reap benefits, the business sector first needs to be aware of global developments. What are the key disruptors, and who will be the winners in the transformational race?

## **Business breakfast with Peter Schwartz (TBC)**

How can the gap between reality (awareness) and the near future (new reality) be bridged?

The business breakfast will discuss this gap and future challenges. In the second part, breakfast will continue with a presentation of the Red Monkey theory and a discussion on bridging this gap.

## **The role of innovation in a new reality**

The innovation movement is growing and acquiring a global dimension, and the new reality demands a genuine effort to achieve sustainability. What role does innovation play in the new reality and how does it manifest itself? How and to what extent are organisations embracing innovation, and what is the impact of innovation in the light of competitiveness? What are the benefits of innovation? What are the catalysts for shifting the mind-set from focusing solely on stability/certainty to emphasising experimentation as a constant learning process and recognising the importance of the failure culture?

## **Innovative innovations – Social innovations**

In themselves, the most visible and successful technological innovations are not enough to drive change, but can, however, act as a trigger. Transformation in its broadest and real sense entails changing both the mind-set and culture in a particular organisation or society as a whole. For this, social innovations are needed.

What new social innovations have new benefits and have the most effect? How can we establish and nurture partnerships between various fields, organisations, and countries? How can we build trust as a basic precondition for successful social innovations and forward-looking optimism? Do we have the ability and courage to step out of our comfort zone and deliver better and more?

## **Innovative Europe – Opportunities for a new breakthrough**

The rapid ongoing digitalisation and technological transformation of the economy and society holds many promises, but also brings disruptions, transforms our societies and the way we live and work, and opens new issues on regulation.

What opportunities arise for Europe in the context of a single digital market and innovation? What are the main obstacles to, and/or catalysts for, a new breakthrough in the field? How does the business sector perceive these opportunities for Europe as a whole? How can we speed up the process of transformation, and what is the role of smaller countries in it?

## **Tourism panel – Collaborative economy: opportunity or threat?**

The fourth industrial revolution and digitalisation will force us to reprogram our ways of operating. Consumer behaviour is already heavily dependent on access to online networks and data, which is pushing the tourism industry to operate in the context of a new reality. Global supply and demand are more interrelated than at any other point in human history, while modern technological platforms connecting supply and demand are already assuming the roles of accommodation providers, tour operators, taxi drivers, tour guides, and restaurants.

The needs, wishes, and motivations of consumers, which are at the centre of attention from the perspective of designing and marketing tourist products, have changed considerably, and are no longer satisfied with conventional tourist offers.

This year's tourism panel will discuss the opportunities and threats of collaborative economy, and, in cooperation with experts in the field and partners from the tourism industry, try to find answers to the question of what are the fair rules of the game for all stakeholders in tourism in the existing system and how to establish effective cooperation in the process of reviewing solutions and adaptations at the national level.



# (DIS)CONNECTED REALITY



1 – 3 September 2017

Ljubljana, Slovenia

[www.bledstrategicforum.org](http://www.bledstrategicforum.org)

We live in interesting and turbulent times, which seem to reflect a quotation from *Alamut*, a novel by Slovenian writer Vladimir Bartol: “nothing is real and everything is allowed”. In this sense, the different ‘realities’ of our physical world seem completely disconnected from the reality that our societies actually live.

For the first time in human history, we are facing the phenomenon of ‘mixed reality’. Are people losing touch with material reality at the expense of actually living in a virtual one? Is life without virtual ‘connectedness’ even possible in our post-modern world? Can ‘modern humanity’ exist without (dis) connected realities in the realms of electronics, the environment, and the economy (the 3Es)? Is any reality even possible without a ‘connected’ reality?

The 2017 Young BSF will give visionary young leaders an opportunity to form real, connected, or virtual partnerships and networks. This goal-oriented forum will seek to prompt discussions and create synergies between different ideas, turning them into connected or disconnected realities of, and for, everyone.

## Bled Strategic Forum (BSF)

The Bled Strategic Forum is a leading conference in Central and South East Europe that provides the needed high-level platform for discussing pressing regional and global issues. Attracting some one thousand participants, including heads of state and government, ministers, diplomats, businesspeople, scholars and the media from around the world, the Forum is also a unique opportunity for bilateral and multilateral meetings with the foremost regional and global stakeholders and offers the possibility of extensive networking among political and business leaders of today.

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