

The Millennial's New World Order

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By Stefano Tijerina

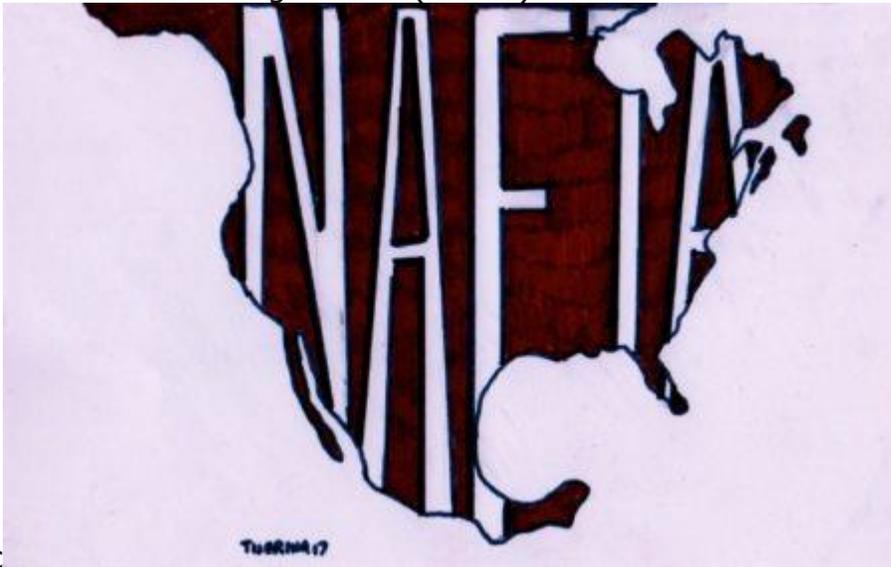
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This past weekend I was once again lucky enough to attend the 31st Annual [Camden Conference](#), a nonpartisan citizens' forum that puts our state at the epicenter of global debates. This year's focus, "New World Disorder and America's Future" allowed the general public, high school, and college students to reflect on the current dynamics of the international system and its impact on the United States. Influenced by the current nationalism and protectionism marketed by the current administration, the expert's "glocal" approach constructed a present and a future reality that oscillated between darkness and dim light. In between those two parameters it was still clear that, from their perspective, the future would continue to be Western-centered and that the United States would continue to be important in this new world order. I am curious how non-Western experts would approach the definition of this new world order? That is left to our imagination and creativity, but it is clear that we construct the past, the present, and the future according to our own individual and cultural biases that are dominated by our worldview.

Perhaps the most objective position came from American diplomat, Chas W. Freeman, who said that we were indeed in a historical process of international readjustment and that a new world order was under construction; one that would move away from the nation-state and toward a regional bloc system. How this regional system will look like is not yet clear because it is under current construction. His visual graphic suggested that Canada and the United States would be one of these regional blocs and that the European Union (EU), without the United Kingdom, would be another one. The exclusion of Mexico from the North American bloc lead me to think that perhaps the current administration's pressure to build the border wall and to revise the North

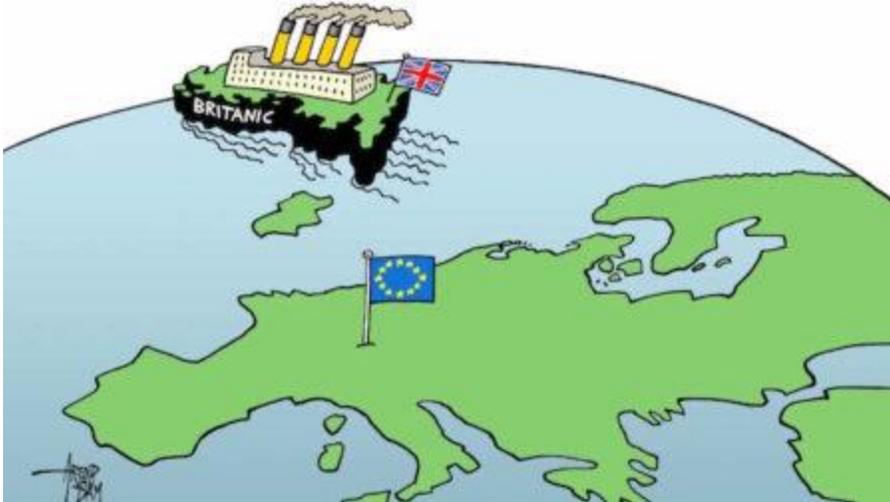
American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) are initiatives to redefine the North American



bloc

We tend to think that we live in a stable international system, but as one of the members of the audience said, the system is always under construction and adjustments and therefore unstable; we have always lived under “disorder,” to which Mr. Freeman responded that maybe the Cold War was a period of anomaly where the system achieved some level of order and stability. This might be true for the West but for the rest of the nation-state members it has always been a chaotic world.

If we are indeed moving toward a regional system as suggested by Mr. Freeman, and we agree that this historic process takes decades if not centuries, then the United States is the first experiment toward the construction of a regional bloc/market. I asked Dr. Matthew Goodwin, one of the foreign speakers, if the United States was a positive example of the construction of a regional bloc and he agreed that it was, but that it could not be compared to the European Union because the initial independent states never had time to develop strong identities or cultures as in the case of Europe. His presentation did argue that Brexit was part of this readjustment process, and when questioned by French journalist, Natalie Nougayrede, about its slim chances of success, he responded that this was exactly what the EU members were hoping for but that this was not going to be the case.



In a new world order of regional blocs, the EU seemed to be a failing in its attempt because, as suggested by Dr. Goodwin, strong national and cultural identity within the region impeded the present and future cohesion of the bloc. The economic, social, and political disconnect between Baby Boomers and Millennials explained the lack of traction within the EU and the internal rupture within member states that lead to outcomes such as Brexit. From his perspective more Brexits within the EU would eventually result in a failed experiment of building a cohesive bloc. If that is the case then this would mean the beginning of the end of the Western world or at least that world engineered and constructed by the European powers before the times of colonial expansionism.

Natalie Nougayrede presented a positivist view of the future of the EU. From her Euro-centric perspective, the election of President Trump had forced Angela Merkel and Emmanuel Macron to “emancipate Europe” from the United States and retake the leadership of the Western world. From her point of view there was no new world order taking shape but just a temporary roadblock that impeded the West from moving forward with the advancement of the globalist liberal experiment. Perhaps the key word is “temporary,” because once the Trump administration is over then the epicenter of Western power would shift back to the US so that they could once again resume the costs of constructing and securing the global system. From her perspective Trump and Brexit were temporal issues that now forced Europe “to hold the front;” the United Kingdom would eventually return to the EU and the US would return to the internationalist status quo after the Trump administration.

I would disagree with her perspective, and instead favor the idea that Brexit was a response to the future failure of the EU experiment and that Trump’s interest in holding the EU accountable for their own security were signs of how the Anglo alliance was

playing their cards under a new regional bloc system that no longer placed Europe at



the center of the world.

President Trump's move away from the traditional internationalist Western-centered status quo and his new approach toward relations with Russia, India, China, Canada, Australia, the United Kingdom, and other key strategic partners seems to indicate that the new world order demands new alliances and partnerships that perhaps do not favor the interests of Euro-centric powers. This may be the end of the Euro-centric Western world and the beginning of a new western construct that is less dependent on the prosperity of Europe and more dependent on the prosperity of other strategic regional blocs.

Contrary to what was suggested by Dr. Stephen M. Walt, I believe that Russia will continue be influential under the New World order, striving for the development of its own bloc via the development of interdependent relations or by force, if necessary. I also disagree with Evan S. Madeiros' view that China's rise as a regional power will be hampered by internal problems, including its structural imbalance, debt, energy dependency, demographic growth, income inequality, long-term political uncertainty, ethnic conflicts, and environmental degradation. These Realist views that deny agency to other emerging regional powers impede our intellectuals and foreign policy advisors from accepting Mr. Freeman's theory that we are entering a new world order of multiple regional powers with equal leverage and maneuverability that will eventually lead to the construction of a more interdependent international system.

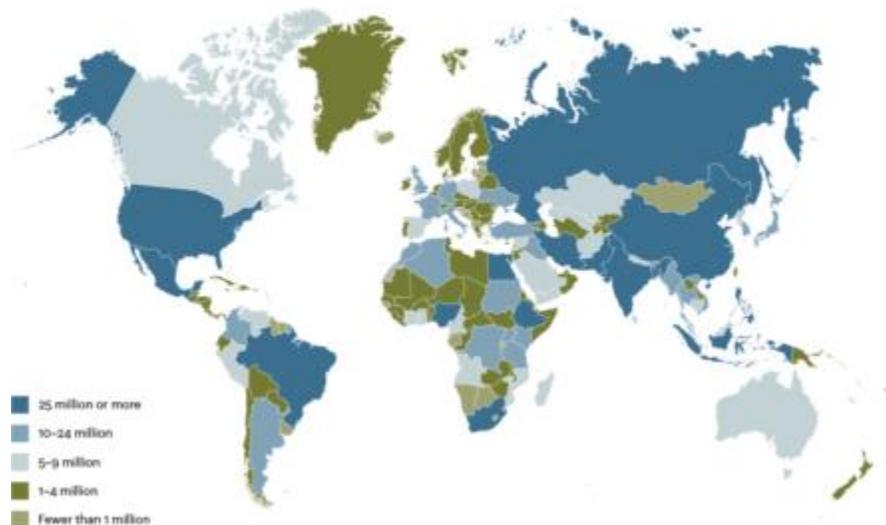
I envision a system that continues to rely on a capitalist economic development model and that therefore preserves the current tendencies of a world of winners and losers; nevertheless, a more interdependent system where the winners and losers may no

longer be defined by the nation-state order but by the internal dynamics of distribution of wealth within each regional bloc. Some may assume more distributive policies, others will adopt more authoritarian means to run their government structures copying the Chinese model, and others will implement new legislative and institutional mechanisms in order to adapt to the challenges imposed by the global market system on local economies. Nevertheless, the focus will be on the regional bloc and less so on the nation-state. It is impossible to predict its dynamics but it will be a different world order where private actors (corporations) will have more influence than political actors and where citizens will have to redefine their role.

It is within this new system that the Euro-centric Western world will cease to exist, as we currently know it. A system that will redefine alliances and partnerships based more on capitalist interests than on religious, ethnic or cultural heritage. A system constructed by Millennials and not Baby Boomers, where war is less of a priority and where other agendas will dominate, including environmentalism, social justice, and human rights. This is not to say that this will be a left-leaning Millennial world because, contrary to the generational stereotype advanced by the presenters at the Camden Conference, Millennials see the world from the Right, the Center, and the Left. They share a common worldview not only at the local or regional level but at the global level because they are the product of the world that was handed to them by the Baby Boomers; the same world that we are currently transitioning away from.

Figure 1

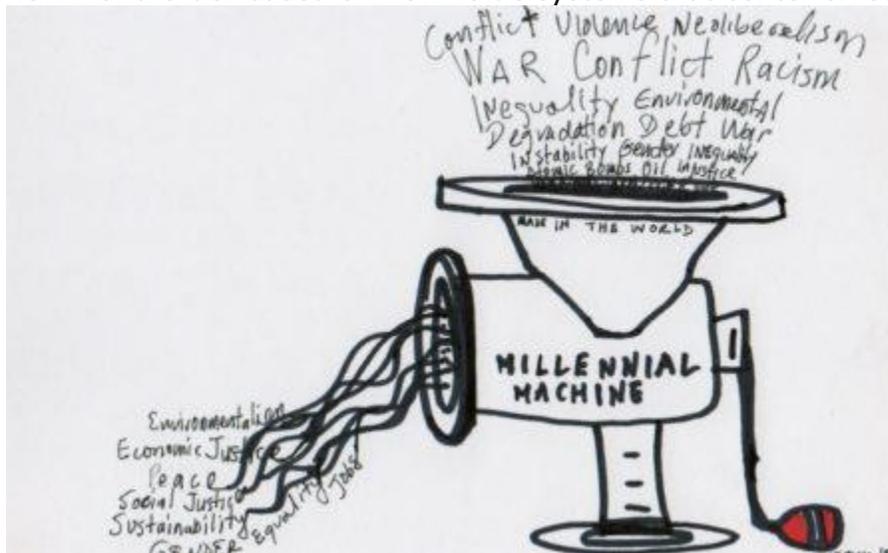
Global Millennials are located in the world's largest countries, with the greatest concentration in Asia



Sources: UN World Population Prospects 2015; A.T. Kearney analysis

It does not have to be a "New World Disorder" as defined by the conference but maybe a new world order where global environmental, human rights, and social justice issues may lead to a more interdependent world among regional blocs. As indicated by Dr.

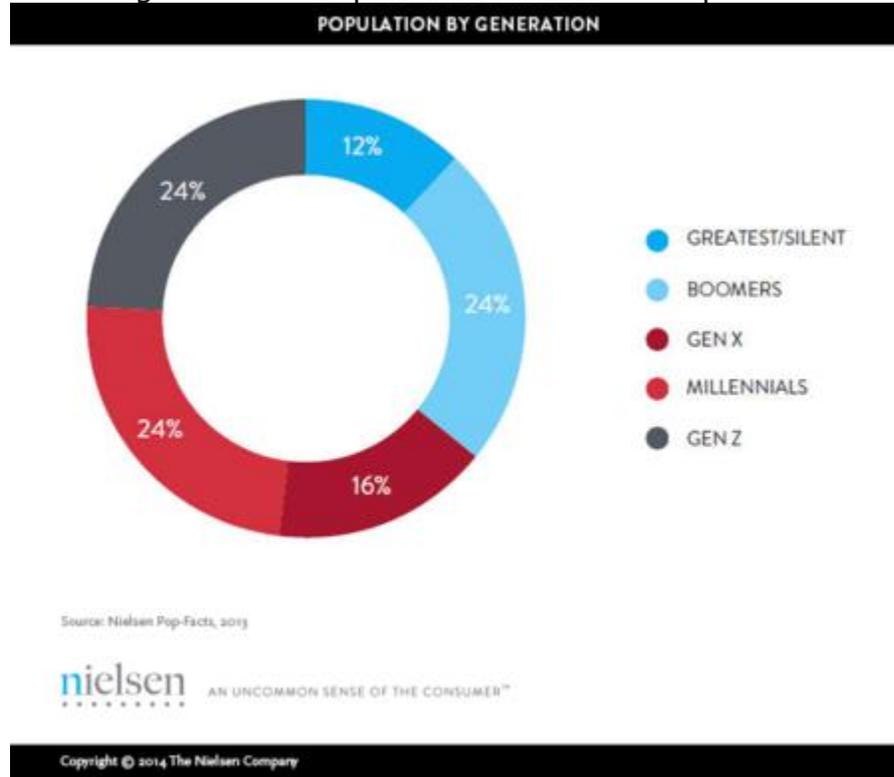
Cleo Paskal and Thea Mei Lee, President of the Economic Policy Institute (EPI), a world of new realities that now impact rich and poor countries alike, be it rising ocean levels, social displacement, poverty, gender rights and labor rights; issues that require “glocal” solutions. A new world order where political ideology is less relevant in the decision making process, and where doing the “right thing” becomes more prevalent. Capitalism may continue to be the predominant model of global economic development but Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and new ethical and moral value systems that are reflected in the worldview of the Millennial generation will replace current labor-business relations and other current organizational realities that were inherited from the world constructed by the generation that is currently in power. A world less dependent on debt, consumerism, environmental degradation, and violence may be replaced by a new world order based on new value systems that center on sustainability.



It was disheartening to hear the paternalist sentiment from the presenters when referring to Millennials, advising them to vote “for the right party” or follow “the right career” as if the younger generations were even marginally interested in repeating the same mistakes or constructing the same hierarchical world enforced on them. I was surprised that the panelists did not realize that the younger audience was there to be inspired about new ways to change the world and not to be encouraged to perpetuate the westernization of the world.

From the Right, the Center or the Left, they agree that a non Euro-centric world is OK, even among European Millennials. That a more interdependent world is OK, that a less powerful USA is OK, that a greater role in the design of the new world order from the emerging markets is OK, and that social justice, environmental responsibility and

human rights is more important than wealth and power.



To some, the new dynamics of the international system seem to lead the United States into a “New World Disorder” but to Millennials it might just be the beginning of a new world order that will be shaped and transformed by their worldview. A world where politics and bureaucracies will have a lesser role, as they are replaced by private and non-state actors that will have greater mobility and flexibility within the regional bloc system. As a member of the Generation X, I share their views and see the glass half full and not half empty.

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About Stefano Tijerina

My name is Stefano Tijerina and this blog’s objective is to connect Maine’s social, environmental, economic, cultural, and political issues to the global system, centering on how the local impacts the global and how the global impacts the local or what is known in Global Studies as the “Glocal” effect. In our present era of globalization it is crucial for the general public to understand how the new dynamics of the international system impact our lives here in Maine and how our local decisions impact the earth.