

Ian Bremmer Transcript

Mila Atmos: [00:00:00] Thanks to Avast for supporting Future Hindsight. With Avast One, you can confidently take control of your online world by helping you stay safe from viruses, phishing attacks, ransomware, hacking attempts and other cybercrimes. Learn more about Avast One at [Avast.com](https://www.avast.com).

Mila Atmos: [00:00:22] Welcome to Future Hindsight, a podcast that takes big ideas about civic life and democracy and turns them into action items for you and me. I'm Mila Atmos.

Ian Bremmer: [00:00:40] In coming years, humanity will face viruses deadlier and more infectious than COVID. Intensifying climate change will put tens of millions of refugees in flight and require us to reimagine how we live our daily lives. Most dangerous of all, new technologies will reshape the geopolitical order, disrupting our livelihoods and destabilizing our societies faster than we can grasp and address their implications.

Mila Atmos: [00:01:06] That's an excerpt from our guest, Ian Bremmer's new book, *The Power of Crisis: How Three Threats and Our Response Will Change the World*. And it sounds pretty terrifying, right? But I promise you, this episode is not going to be an anxiety inducing downer. I mean, a little panic goes a long way. And Ian's book is a surprisingly upbeat take on that idea. In *The Power of Crisis*, Ian explores how we might tackle the major challenges humanity is facing. And it's laced through with hope. Hope that these crises might spur us to create a new world order to work against these common threats. Ian Bremmer is a political scientist and he's the founder and president of the research and consulting firm Eurasia Group. Ian, welcome to Future Hindsight. Thank you for joining us.

Ian Bremmer: [00:01:54] Thank you, Mila. Good to be with you.

Mila Atmos: [00:01:56] So let's start with the status quo. I see a world order that's increasingly incapable of responding to the multiple crises we face. But tell me, what do you see?

Ian Bremmer: [00:02:06] I agree that we lack global leadership. And one of the interesting things about this book, if I'm going to provide solutions or possible solutions, they have to be solutions that we can actually implement. So the first chapter of the book is in some ways the least hopeful, where I say, look, no matter what you expect, we're not going to get the US government suddenly becoming functional and bipartisan in the next ten years. And no matter what you expect, you're not going to get the US-China relationship to become more friendly and trusting. And yet, despite those two things, we are still both able to imagine and already starting to see the world come together and reform and rebuild its institutions and architecture in response to a series of big global crises that are in our faces today.

Mila Atmos: [00:03:05] So that's really interesting because when I read your analysis of the ways in which our global institutions are not fit for purpose, there are echoes of this kind of calcification or to use your word, stickiness, when we think about US domestic institutions and how their legitimacy is really being eroded. Can you talk us through that?

Ian Bremmer: [00:03:26] Yeah, calcification is a that's a more challenging word than stickiness, right. Because it really does get you to this. "Wow. They're unmovable. They're brittle." It's just something that you don't want it. Maybe it's in between the two because of course, the fact that institutions are sticky doesn't mean that they're useless. It just means that they don't serve our purposes as well as they had. Why not? Because they don't reflect today's balance of power the way they used to. And that's obvious with the UN Security Council. Literally, we have a country that is led by a committed war criminal that has a permanent veto in the Security Council. Can't do anything about it. We have two countries that are the most committed advanced industrial democracies to rule of law and human rights and the UN values as enshrined in the Charter, and we can't bring them onto the Security Council because they lost World War II. And we're talking here, of course, about Japan and Germany. You and I can sit here and we can say, well, that's ridiculous, right? And it is ridiculous. But unless there is a big enough shock that forces us to create a new Security Council, we're just not going to reform it. And the interesting thing is we look at the world around us is we see stocks like that today, every day. We see them with climate change and the way it affects our lives. We see it with the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the way it affects Europeans lives in particular. And we've seen it in the pandemic over the course of the past two and a half

years. And, you know, we really do need, pardon the language, a kick in the ass to force us to both reform and rebuild institutions that are fit for purpose in the 21st century. And so for the last ten, 15 years, most of what I've been writing and certainly the books that I've published have been various views on how it is that our former US-led global order is coming apart. This is a book that is saying, okay, that's happened. But now we have the crises that will allow us to take action and imagine what a new global order is going to look like. That's really what the book is about.

Mila Atmos: [00:05:53] Yeah. That's the allure of this book, right? You're saying that essentially here are the crises that are going to galvanize people around the planet to come together and create a new world order that really serves everyone. Or at least this is the opportunity.

Ian Bremmer: [00:06:10] I'm even going further than that. I'm saying that I already see it happening. In other words, some of the seeds that need to be planted to grow into these institutions are already in front of us. They're occurring literally on our watch right now, and that's pretty cool when you recognize that NATO and the European Union are getting stronger than they used to be in ways that no one would have thought possible precisely because of these crises. When you see that the world is moving towards a post carbon environment and spending far more than anyone would have expected in that direction precisely because of this crisis. I wouldn't say it makes you optimistic, but at least makes you hopeful. It makes you hopeful.

Mila Atmos: [00:06:56] Right. Right. Well, that's the beauty of this book. It's hopeful that we are already cooperating in some aspects and some of these areas. I wanted to go into what you describe as the disruptive technologies, because when we talk about climate change, I think we know it's here. I mean, we talk about the pandemics and future pandemics. We know that that's here also. And in some sense, we have an idea about these things that are going to happen and how we can work together. But disruptive technology, I think, is something that is not so much on the radar for a lot of people. It's a crisis. It's an area that many of us are less aware of. So why don't you go ahead and scare the crap out of us here about the dangerous technologies being developed?

Ian Bremmer: [00:07:42] Well, there are bunch of them. It's anything from lethal autonomous drones that would have the ability to take out any target around the world if they were in the hands of a rogue state or organization. It's cyber offensive weaponry that are increasingly diffuse that could bring down a major economy or prevent critical infrastructure of a nation from working. It is quantum encryption and quantum computing that would make all of your security mechanisms for your data and for your country's data and your company's data obsolete. I mean, there are many such disruptive technologies and they're coming real soon to a theater near you. And the right context to think about this is when you and I were growing up, there was one disruptive technology that worried us the most, and it was nuclear weapons. And I remember when I was in high school, we all had to watch *The Day After*, and the next day we didn't have classes. We actually had an entire day where the whole high school came together and had lectures and talked about what we saw and what we learned and what we thought about nuclear holocaust that basically was pictured in Lawrence, Kansas. But it affected, of course, the whole world. And I will tell you that that film petrified me. I had bad dreams for months, but we all knew that these weapons were so dangerous that they couldn't be used after the United States did in World War II, and that we needed to do everything we could to prevent their proliferation into the hands of countries and terrorist organizations that would have no such strictures on using them to pursue their aims.

Ian Bremmer: [00:09:28] And also that even the Americans and the Soviets, who had no trust for each other, in fact wanted to defeat each other, needed to talk with each other, to limit what kinds of nukes and defenses against nukes that we developed, as well as the size of our arsenals and over 80 years. We actually had not full success, but a fair level of success in preventing the spread of these unthinkable damaging weapons. Now, the disruptive technologies that I'm describing right now are absolutely, over the course of the next 5 to 10 years, capable of wreaking just as much, if not more, damage on humanity on this planet. And yet we have not yet even begun to have the conversations to create the institutions that would limit the proliferation of acquisition of these technologies, and that is an unthinkable dangerous position for our species to be in. So you're absolutely right, Mila, this is -- of the crises -- the only one I describe in the book that is not yet obvious and apparent to everyone reading it. And yet it is completely clear that it's coming real soon and that we need to treat it as the crisis that requires us to take this action before it's too late.

Mila Atmos: [00:11:02] Well, one of the things that you mentioned in the book, which I thought was interesting, is that you think we should have an intergovernmental panel like the IPCC. And it's a little bit of a crossover between thinking about the environment and the climate and what you predict to be a real crisis for us with these technologies. And so what would this panel do?

Ian Bremmer: [00:11:21] Well, let's talk about the IPCC, which is the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. And what's amazing about the IPCC is despite all the disinformation out there, despite all the bad actors, all the polarization, all the dysfunction, all the people looking out just for themselves politically, that 195 countries get together every year and agree, here is the state of the climate. Here is the state of the planet. We all agree there's 1.2 degrees of warming that's already happened. We know it's caused by human beings. It's not a cyclical, just result of nature. And it comes from carbon and methane in the atmosphere. And we can all measure parts per million exactly what that level is. The entire world agrees. And what's really interesting about that is it means that even though the Americans and the Chinese don't trust each other at all, and frankly many times don't even trust themselves, everybody knows what the problem is. And it turns out that when everybody knows what the problem is, even if the solutions are not coordinated, you end up rowing in the same direction. So the very fact that the Chinese are spending so much money to develop solar power and wind power and electric vehicles and the supply chain of rare earths around the world means that you can be someone who doesn't care at all about climate change in Washington and say, My God, if we don't take further action, China is going to become the energy superpower and the US will be left behind. And so what you see is whether it's the US or China or the European Union or Japan or different mayors or governors or banks or corporations or NGOs or Greta Thunberg, it doesn't matter. Everyone that's doing anything doesn't need to be coordinated. The competition turns out to be virtuous. And so what I'm suggesting for the proliferation of disruptive technologies is something that should be fairly straightforward and simple, but is a necessary first step. It is that the world needs to identify the problem, and the way you would do that would be to create an Intergovernmental Panel on Artificial Intelligence, or you could call it an Intergovernmental Panel on disruptive technologies. I don't care what the name is. And you'd have all these countries getting together and say, Let's identify what is the state of play, of the disruptive technologies that exist in the world today? How close are we to

them becoming threats that could really impact the trajectory of humanity? Who are the actors that matter? Who has access to these technologies? Who might gain access to these technologies? How close are we? Is it five years? Is it ten years? Define it in the same way that, for example, on climate change you define there are different aspects, you've got biodiversity challenges, you have deforestation challenges, you've got methane, you've got carbon, you've got carbon trading, you've got the investment in new technologies. And by the way, for each of those subsets of climate, there are different sets of actors that are problematic, different sets of actors that are really invested and have the resources to make a difference.

Ian Bremmer: [00:14:41] But once you've defined it, you can actually break the problem into narrower subsets and some you'll have more success in, and some you won't. But the first thing you do is get people to identify. We haven't done that yet. So I actually think that a big step towards resolving the disruptive technologies challenge is in some ways the easiest. It is literally get everyone together in an institution to define the state of the world as it relates to disruptive technologies. And that will be not only a necessary first step, but that will bring you a significant portion of the way to people starting to identify, Oh, if we don't resolve these problems, they're going to get bigger. We're going to start putting resources towards them just to defend ourselves, just for our own insurance, just for our narrow self interest will get people to work together in a way that if you don't define the problem in the same way, if you define the problem in very different ways, you will be at cross-purposes. I mean, imagine as a husband and wife, if you both think that the challenge with your kids comes from radically different places and the solutions are radically different, then even if you love each other, it's really hard to get to the right place. But if you know what the problem is and you both identify the problem similarly, then any step you take, whether you talk to each other or not, is going to be towards that solution. That's precisely what I'm suggesting for disruptive technologies.

Mila Atmos: [00:16:06] We are going to take a break to hear from our sponsor. When we come back, Ian is going to tell us why he thinks one of the biggest challenges humanity is facing--the climate crisis--is a, quote, Goldilocks crisis and what that means for our response.

Mila Atmos: [00:16:20] But first. Avast is a global leader in cyber protection for more than 30 years and trusted by over 435 million users and prevents over 1.5 billion attacks every month. Avast empowers you with digital safety and privacy. No matter who you are, where you are, or how you connect, enjoy the opportunities that come with being connected on your terms. Avast's new all in one solution, Avast One, helps you take control of your safety and privacy online through a range of features. Privacy features keep your identity and actions hidden. Security Solutions stop malware, phishing and virus attacks. Performance Products clean up and speed up your devices and Avast's award winning antivirus stops viruses and malware from harming your devices. I'm a fan of Smart Scan, which finds and removes viruses and resolves the most common privacy and performance issues through an optimization scan. Thank you Avast for supporting Future Hindsight. Confidently take control of your online world with Avast One. It helps you stay safe from viruses, phishing attacks, ransomware, hacking attempts, and other cybercrimes. Learn more about Avast One at [Avast.com](https://www.avast.com). Now let's return to my conversation with Ian Bremmer.

Mila Atmos: [00:17:44] I'm glad that you talked about the IPCC and climate here, because none of these crises are small. Right. But does the size, the sheer scale of the crisis matter? Because climate in particular feels like a really huge interconnected and kind of everything problem, you know, like it sweeps in in every aspect of our existence. And yet the US response seems to continually hang in the balance with the size of action, at the kind of scale and speed that the size of the crisis demands, always just out of reach. But you've actually described climate change as a, quote, Goldilocks crisis. What do you mean by that? And why does it matter?

Ian Bremmer: [00:18:23] Not so big that we curl ourselves into a ball and feel like we can't do anything about it, ignore it. Not so small that we kick it down the road because we can't be bothered. I mean, gun violence in the United States, I hate to say this, it's too small because it doesn't actually affect policymakers enough to make them take the steps that would be inconvenient and uncomfortable for their own constituencies. So they take these performative, oh, my God, thoughts and prayers. Oh, my God, we have to do something. And they don't. And why is that? Because the vast majority of gun violence in the United States is black on black, in poor territories, with people that don't have a lot of money or influence over their congressional representatives. That's the reality in the United States. If it were different, they might take bigger action. Now, you

say climate change feels like a really big challenge. Of course, it didn't feel that way 30 years ago. The interesting thing about climate change, it tracks very similarly to the Russia Ukraine crisis. 2014, Russia invades Ukraine. Invades it! Takes over Crimea and sends little green men into southeast Ukraine. And the response of the international community is virtually nothing. It's a level of anger and it's a level of sanctions, but it doesn't change the EU or NATO or US leadership. We don't do anything. Why? Because it doesn't bother us enough. And then Putin on February 24th invades Ukraine, tries to take out Kyiv, tries to take out Zelensky. And that was a Goldilocks crisis that was big enough to galvanize a US led response of all of the allies. The EU got stronger and brought Ukraine in, right? I mean, the Europeans have now said unanimously 27 countries that the Russian invasion into Ukraine is a European war, which is a huge deal and NATO has gotten stronger. It has expanded. The Germans are spending 2% of their GDP now on defense going forward. They would have never done that, given pressure from Democratic and Republican US presidents, all of that because the crisis got big enough for the rich democracies to respond. And furthermore, not only is everyone on one side on this issue, but the more the crisis plays out, the more the priors of those countries have been confirmed. So they continue to lean into their decision to do something about it together.

Ian Bremmer: [00:20:53] Climate change is very similar. 20, 30 years ago, climate change, we all pretty much knew it was going on. There was definitely climate deniers out there, but the world still understood what the problem was, and yet it was something that was seen to affect polar bears and the Maldives. And so you got some tree huggers and you got people out there that were activists that really cared. But for the average citizen with influence, they weren't willing to do much beyond the performative. I'll go vegetarian for a week, right? But I'm not going to really do anything. And yet, over time, the crisis became just like Russia invading Ukraine. The crisis became big enough, whether it's unprecedented wildfires in California, unprecedented drought in Australia, or it's record temperature levels in Kentucky or London or Paris, everyone around the world is now seeing this is only going to get worse. And every day that goes on, your priors are being confirmed. And that's galvanizing action. It's galvanizing action even in a Democratic Party with the narrowest, only 50 seats majority in Senate. And yet they're able to come together to support a piece of legislation that brings you most of the way to Biden's commitments for US carbon emission reduction by the year 2040, with Biden at his lowest levels of popularity of his entire administration. How is it possible that you

could get such a historic piece of legislation done? And the answer is because the crisis is big enough, because it's a Goldilocks crisis. I think that's a really big deal. Now there's a huge difference between 1.5 degree Centigrade warming and 2.5. And I want to recognize that right now the world is trending towards 2.5. And the reason for that is because Americans and Europeans and Japanese and even Chinese do not see poor countries as equivalent in terms of human suffering. And so if you're not going to redistribute serious wealth with a country like India with 1.4 billion people, many of whom can't work outside after 10 a.m., because it's too damn hot and losing trillions of man hours of work, well, their response is going to be, we're going to just use more coal unless countries are going to pay them not do it. Same thing with Brazil and deforestation. You were more than happy to put coal carbon into the atmosphere when you were exploiting us. But now that we want to have a chance to become wealthy, you're saying, no, no, no. It's too late. Well pay us. Pay us to do that. I'm very sympathetic to those arguments. But absent a level of severe redistribution and absent a crisis from those countries, that directly affects the wealthy countries, and there are lots of ways that could happen. Massive refugee expansion, eco terrorism, you name it, then it's unlikely we get to 1.5. But having said all that, I do believe that we are now on track for a majority of the world's energy to no longer come from carbon within one generation. And no one would have said that even five years ago. I think that's extraordinary. And that shows that we as humanity, are preparing to actually beat climate change.

Mila Atmos: [00:24:21] I agree that I think these forces are in play, that probably in one generation, in 20 years we will have different sources of power. But 20 years is a long time. You know, you talked about humanitarian aid earlier, what are the avenues for cooperation in terms of helping actual humans? You mentioned in your book something called a Green Marshall Plan. What is the Green Marshall Plan? How does it work?

Ian Bremmer: [00:24:45] Well, I mean, the interesting thing is that so many of the even most progressive supporters of climate change in the United States talk about a Green New Deal that focuses overwhelmingly on investment inside the United States. And I get it because they're American politicians. But we need to understand how narrow our political spectrum is, because supporting Americans almost exclusively and leaving only crumbs for poor countries around the world means your policy is oriented towards rich people because Americans, even the poor Americans, are globally very wealthy. And,

you know this as someone who originally came from Indonesia, right? I mean, we just don't think a lot as Americans about Indonesia, about India, about sub-Saharan Africa. We just don't. We don't use our resources for them. But again, if you want to have a real conversation about climate change, there are three things, perspectives we need to understand. The first is that there is only so much carbon in the atmosphere the planet can handle before humans get cooked and every other species. And the more carbon we put in the atmosphere, the faster we get to that level. And right now, China is emitting more than twice what the United States emits heading towards three X, and that makes them the biggest carbon emitter on the planet. So if you want to reduce the dangers to humanity, you've got to address China before you address anything else. It's absolutely critical. That's one way to look at it. And it's an important way. A second way to look at it is that historically the United States and the wealthy economies are responsible for the overwhelming majority of carbon and methane that is in the atmosphere now. And so if you want to have a conversation about equity and how we get to 2.5 degrees, and if we're already at 1.2, in other words, halfway there and you want to be at 1.5? Well, I mean, doesn't it matter that the reason we're at 1.2 is not China. It's the US and Japan and Europe. And so that would argue that most of the resources to ensure that you stay at 1.5 and you don't get to 2.5, have to be paid for those that are most responsible for that. And then third is the issue of individual human beings, the per capita carbon emission and footprint of the average American or European. And it's much less in Europe than in the United States or, let's say, Gulf State citizen, where it's particularly high. Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the UAE among the highest on the entire planet. But small populations, they should have to do a lot more. If you value human beings equally, if you think that all human beings have an intrinsic right to human development, and I think that all three of those arguments have validity. All three. But we do not act as if all three of those arguments have validity. A Green Marshall Plan would accept the validity equally of those three arguments and would recognize that the wealthy countries of the world, led by the United States, the world's largest economy, has an obligation to redistribute significantly greater wealth than we have ever considered before to ensure to pay for a renewable transition of developing economies to post carbon. Now, I talk to people in this field all the time. As you know, the secretary general of the UN, John Kerry, who used to be on Nantucket where we're talking right now. Not anymore. Now he's on the island that we can't speak of and he is on cabinet and is responsible for America's climate policy. And he's very capable and he's very intelligent and well-networked on this issue. The last time I spoke with John,

which was about a couple of months ago, he was very honest about this with me. He said, look, there isn't money for what I'm talking about. A Green Marshall Plan is never going to happen. He said, we're not going to spend the cash for the mainstream developing countries. What we can do for them is invest so much in new technologies that the price will come down so that they can invest more easily themselves. The money that we have, we're going to have to spend on mitigating the climate damage to the poorest countries of the world. The Bangladeshis, for example. By the way, I think that that is probably an accurate assessment of where the United States is right now. But that is why I believe that we will end up at 2.5 degrees and not at 1.5 degrees. And Kerry needs to say publicly that if he's still saying that we're going to get to 1.5 and that's the goal, then what he's saying about the resource availability doesn't get you there. Period. Why? Because a Green Marshall Plan accepts the truth, the fundamental validity of the three different carbon arguments that I just made. And the Americans only pay attention to the former. And by the way, not just the US, also the other wealthy countries around the world, but since we're the most powerful, we have the most impact.

Mila Atmos: [00:29:50] Right. Right. Yeah. I mean, that's depressing, obviously. But I like that you outlined that the Green Marshall Plan really does accept all of these things as true. And it's really, it's really something that we have to accept. You know, like the reality is here we already have climate refugees. You know, we already have people who have had to escape, move away from where they live because it is no longer livable.

Ian Bremmer: [00:30:15] We do, but not many.

Mila Atmos: [00:30:16] Not many. But that's only going to increase.

Ian Bremmer: [00:30:18] Yes, that's right. And most of them will end up in poor countries that are neighboring countries that have failed, that are slightly better governed. So, for example, countries like Uganda, countries like Jordan, countries like Turkey, I mean, these are the countries that have massive refugee crises, not the United States. Why? Because we are removed enough and powerful enough to be much more effective at defending our borders in those countries. So that's precisely the problem for the United States and the rich countries. Getting us to 1.5 is not a

Goldilocks crisis, but resolving the carbon disaster before we cook ourselves is a Goldilocks crisis. I mean, remember 10, 20 years ago, you had activists out there that were saying plausibly that the world was on a path of three, four, five, even maybe six degrees centigrade of warming. And I mean, thinking about what would happen to us as a planet and to the species on the planet, these were apocalyptic outcomes. That is no longer where we're heading. So I'm not suggesting that 2.5 is okay. And I'm very grateful that we still have people like the secretary general of the UN out there talking about how urgent this crisis is, because he understands that there are literally hundreds of millions of lives in the balance and trillions and trillions of dollars to play for between 1.5 and 2.5. I'm simply saying that we're presently on a path for 2.5 that looks like the most likely outcome.

Mila Atmos: [00:31:56] Yeah, I wish people would say that everywhere. You know, like honestly, we're really heading to 2.5. We're at like 1.5. We have already missed the boat. So the challenge that is the climate crisis has so much already baked in. So we're built to deal with fallout. Right. And we're really terrible at prevention, though, as we've just discussed the Marshall Plan. After World War Two was about rebuilding. And a Green Marshall Plan is so much more invisible in terms of do you think that things are bad? Imagine how much worse they could have been. And so we're really not that good at using imagination in that way. Right. And so, you know, your conversation with John Kerry. At what point does the Green Marshall Plan become something that actually people will talk about and be like, we need to do this. I mean, I know we're at that point in terms of the actual crisis.

Ian Bremmer: [00:32:51] But I take your point, though. I take your point. So one thing that could make it more imminent and likely is if a series or even an individual developing country starts to take geoengineering into its own hands, says, look, you guys are not doing enough to make a difference for us. It's getting hotter. We can't live with it. We're losing our ability to build our economy. Our people are dying. They're being forced to migrate to other countries. We're going to take a flyer on emitting sulfur particles into the atmosphere that will reflect the sunlight and will cool our part of the world, and that will have impacts on other countries. Too dangerous technology, not adequately proven, relatively inexpensive. What you're talking about is basically mimicking what happened with a massive volcano when the temperature of the entire planet cooled significantly for a period of sort of generations. That's what you're talking

about. That would be one such thing. And actually, Kim Stanley Robinson wrote a book called *Ministry of the Future*, which I highly recommend to people who care about this sort of speculation, where India had a massive die-off of millions of people because of an extraordinary heat event, wet bulb event, where human beings just can't live because they can't actually sweat out given the humidity in the air and the temperature. And as a consequence of that, the Indians had decided themselves that they were going to start geo-engineering. And this creates a lot of tension. Another thing that could happen would be eco terrorism. I don't know if you noticed, but in New York City just a month ago, there were 40 SUVs that had their tires slashed. And there were these little leaflets, pamphlets, that were put on the windshields that said it was an eco radical organization that just wanted you to be aware that they were responsible because you're putting too much carbon into the planet. And would that move people faster to take more seriously that there will be impacts on you? I mean, what if it's not that? What if it's much more dangerous? Right. In other words, there are carrots and sticks that get people to pay attention to these sorts of things because people that are suffering a lot more than we are and people that don't feel they have the opportunities that are afforded to us are prepared to take more radical and untested decisions into their own hands. And if the existing cost benefit analysis for Western leaders, we don't have the money to actually help these people before we get to 2.5 at some point, some of those people and governments will start to try to change the cost benefit analysis for those with the money. That is that's how you think about this. And so and of course, that has happened since time immemorial in response to many different sorts of crises. But sometimes those people just lose. I mean, if you think about the Palestinians who have been trying to get a state for themselves for how long with support from the United States and other countries around the world, and they've tried negotiations and some have also tried terrorism and it hasn't worked. They've actually lost power over the years. And the Israelis have a much better geo-strategic position in the Middle East. They now have direct relations with the UAE and with Morocco and Bahrain and increasingly with Saudis as well. And the Palestinians have just failed. So again, the response to your question might be they don't do very much. What they do is largely limited to their own backyards and hurting their own governments. And that doesn't matter to the people with real power. And we just continue on to 2.5. I mean, that's also a very plausible outcome here.

Mila Atmos: [00:36:49] Mm hmm. Well, basically, if the crisis is still too hot or too cold, carrots and sticks can make a Goldilocks crisis even more Goldilocks ish, so to speak, potentially.

Ian Bremmer: [00:36:59] Yeah. I think we just need to recognize that a Goldilocks crisis still has roadkill. I mean, think about how many people are suffering because we couldn't get our acts together until the crisis came along. And that's not any individual's fault or responsibility, but it is the reality. I mean, how many hundreds of millions had to suffer unnecessarily before we are prepared to really invest into post carbon transition? How many? 44 million many Ukrainians are having to suffer because we didn't take this crisis seriously in 2014 when the Russians invaded. I don't think Putin changed in the last decade. I think he sensed opportunity, division and weakness in the West, and that's why he decided in February that he was going to try to wipe the Ukrainian nation off the map. And no matter what we do in response, the Ukrainians are suffering intolerably for our inability and unwillingness to respond earlier. And all we can do now is do our best to make sure that their losses, their tragedy, are not in vain. Not without purpose. And I actually do think that the way that they're doing a fair amount.

Mila Atmos: [00:38:13] Yeah. So let's talk about that. The invasion happened after you wrote the book. Right. And so.

Ian Bremmer: [00:38:18] Actually, no,

Mila Atmos: [00:38:18] It was an addendum.

Ian Bremmer: [00:38:19] No, no, no, no, no. I mean, I was told that I had to submit the final draft on February 26th. So I had 48 hours.

Mila Atmos: [00:38:28] Two days. You wrote the addendum in two days. Yeah, but so but this is a big disruptor to the world order. I mean, you had essentially written the book and then you added this on.

Ian Bremmer: [00:38:37] That's right. That's right.

Mila Atmos: [00:38:37] So if you were writing the book today, how would the war in Ukraine figure?

Ian Bremmer: [00:38:41] The Russia-Ukraine crisis is exactly what I'm talking about in the book. And if it had happened months before, it would have been four crises that I was talking about, as opposed to three and a half. Putin did not read this book. It's pretty clear, because if he had, he would have understood that when your opponents, when your adversaries are busy dividing themselves, do not give them an excuse to come together and galvanize. And that's, of course, exactly what he did. It was the worst misjudgment that I have seen made by any major leader on the global stage since 1989 when the Wall came down. It is that big. Why? Precisely because on the back of the Russian invasion, everyone in the West said we are not standing by. And that has helped to ensure that Zelensky is still in power. But it has also helped ensure that Russia will be forcibly decoupled, for all intents and purposes, permanently from the G7. And that's never happened to a G20 economy before. It's never happened where you've said, We're going to make you into a pariah in terms of the rich countries. You you will no longer do business. You will not have access to our markets. We will freeze your assets. No one thought that was possible that the West would come together like that. And indeed they have. And I think irrespective of how much land Russia ends up able to take and annex in Ukraine, that will continue, that unity will continue, irrespective of how much pain the Russians are able to cause to the Europeans in terms of cutting off their energy. I think that unity will continue. I think that's a really big deal.

Mila Atmos: [00:40:28] Yeah. So well, I think the obvious follow up here is how much longer this is going to last, because at what point does Russia essentially run out of money and not able to fund this war, even if they take a lot of territory?

Ian Bremmer: [00:40:40] Yeah, well, I mean, they can fund a lot of damage, even if they can't fund the kind of ground invasion that they have managed in the first six months. Russia is a major, major commodities producer. And while the West is united in response to the Russian invasion, the developing world is not. They are mostly neutral. Some are hostile, but they're mostly neutral. And what that means is that India has increased their oil purchases from Russia since the invasion at a 30% plus discount, 2,000%. Now, India is supposed to be a friend of the United States, are part of the Quad Strategic Partnership and all the rest. But when the Indians needed US help on climate

change -- not getting very much, we just talked about that one. When the Indians desperately needed vaccines from the US, they didn't get a plane load. So I mean, when the Indians are saying, well, we can keep buying oil and we're a lot poorer than the Americans are, so we're not going to listen to them. You can hardly blame them, right? I mean, you can understand if we're going to answer the Green Marshall Plan with well, no, we only care about one of those three. Well, then of course, I mean, the poor countries are going to do the same thing. So I think that the Russians will still have access to all sorts of people on a global market that will buy their fertilizer and their food and their fuel. What they won't have is the human capital to manufacture advanced products. What they won't have is access to the supply chain from the West. They won't be able to be the second largest arms exporter in the world anymore. They will end up like Iran, a larger version of Iran.

Mila Atmos: [00:42:19] That's a good analogy.

Ian Bremmer: [00:42:19] Where, you know, Iran over the last ten years, their economy has contracted by about 40 to 50%. With Russia, I'd say it'll be 30 to 50%. But we're talking about a depression, a depression that is induced onto the Russian economy by the West as a direct consequence of their decision to engage in an illegal invasion and occupation of Ukrainian territory.

Mila Atmos: [00:42:44] Right. Well. I want to pivot here and talk about a couple of factors that you termed collision courses, which are dysfunction and polarization in the US and relations between China and the US being completely devoid of trust. First, tell me about how you kind of pulled these two things out and decided to not make them crises in and of themselves, and then tell us how you see them playing out. Do you see any glimmers of hope?

Ian Bremmer: [00:43:13] I mean, for me, they're kind of structural preconditions here. We're talking about the actors themselves as independent variables. But the reason why these crises are so interesting and potentially galvanizing is because they're truly global. Right? In the case of the United States, we have watched as our institutions have eroded the legitimacy of our national election, for example, the legitimacy of our Supreme Court, the politicization; the legitimacy of our political parties; legitimacy of an impeachment process we've watched over the last 30 years of all of those things have

eroded, and yet they haven't fallen apart. It's not revolution. It's not civil war. So you wouldn't call it a crisis. You'd call it this slow drift, this unmooring from the values and principles that we believed informed who we are as a nation in the United States. And yet the US is the most powerful country in the world. So my point is we're watching this drift. It's happening slowly. We're not going to fix it. We might fix it over a generation or two, but it's a supertanker. And so I could have written a whole book. And many people have, over the nature of that drift and the sorts of things one could do to steer the ship in a less troubled direction. We could talk about term limits for Supreme Court justice. We could talk about ranked order voting in elections that would reduce polarization significantly in the kind of candidates you have. We could talk about overturning Citizens United and reducing the level of money for special interests for the Democratic and Republican parties that are vastly greater than anything we see in other G7 economy. I could talk about all of those things. We know that none of those things will dramatically change the US political system in the next ten years. So my point here was we should take that, this big like erosion, this big drift, take it as a constant that no matter what we do, we're not going to move it much in the near term. It's unlikely to break, but it's certainly not going to get fixed. By the way, it's unlikely to break because we have so much invested in it and also because there are lots of buffers. So, for example, the Supreme Court decides to rip up Roe versus Wade, but that means that the states take power and the states actually have a lot of power, and some are red and some are blue, and people move there and self sort on the basis of where they want to live and all these things. The US-China relationship is very similar. On the one hand, there's no trust. The relations are tense. There are numbers of areas of potential crisis, but there's a massive amount of interdependence economically between them. And the powers in both countries that want that interdependence to continue are overwhelmingly strong. So you're not going to have a Cold War with the Chinese in the next few years. You're certainly not going to have a hot war unless there's massive miscalculation. Nobody wants that. And yet you also can't build a relationship of trust. So the most powerful bilateral relationship in the world between the two most powerful countries is eroding. It's adrift. And there are things we could talk about that would fix it over time, but not in the next 5 to 10 years. And since this book is about, can we create the sorts of institutions or reforms the ones we have in a way that will actually make the world more livable, make human development more sustainable? And the timeline for the book is 5 to 10 years. I take both of these things off the table. I could write an entire book on how to fix US-China relations. It would be a longer term book. Same thing

would be true on US political dysfunction. It would be a longer term book and so much has been written about that. And I also wanted to write more broadly, not only because this was meant to be a more hopeful book, but also I am actually more hopeful about where the planet is going, even if in the near term. I don't think we can fix some of these things. So we know how angry Americans are about the other party. We know how tribally angry they are. We know how one of the few things that unites Americans is their willingness to be angry at the Chinese. I was trying to write a book that avoided things that were going to get people spun up over something that fundamentally wasn't going to change no matter what their anger, and rather have a longer term, constructive conversation about progress that we are already making and progress that we are capable of making.

Mila Atmos: [00:47:43] Right. Right. Well, I'm glad you wrote the book because I was trying to explain it to a friend of mine last night, what the book is about. And I said, you know, really, these are the things that are hopeful in a way, because these are the things that we're facing together. And here is our chance. So your time horizon, as you just mentioned, is kind of medium term, right? You're looking for solutions over the next 5 to 10 years. So what are the institutions we need to build in the next ten years to tackle these crises? What do they look like beyond the ones you've already mentioned, like the Green Marshall Plan?

Ian Bremmer: [00:48:13] Yeah, yeah. Because we thought disruptive technology is the one I'm most excited about because I think it can happen in 2 to 3 years and the Secretary General of the UN actually supports it. You know, his quote's on the back of the book and we've talked about it a lot, which would be awesome. And I mean, I think that for someone like me, the necessity of using my platform to call for the kinds of solutions that we could actually move on. And that's kind of why I'm here. That's why I do what I do. I'll give you another one that I think is plausible. That can really happen. We've talked about the pivot to Asia a lot over the last 5 to 10 years, how the Americans focus on the Middle East or they focus on Europe and then they focus on Asia. That means they ignore the other countries. I think in response to the Russia-Ukraine crisis, the ability of the Americans to align a G7+ together. In other words, the world's advanced industrial economies to all be in a common way, concerned about global security threats from rogue states like Russia and rogue organizations in terms of disruptive technology, cyber and the rest. I see that happening. When I saw the

Japanese and South Korean leaders for the first time ever show up at the NATO summit in Madrid a couple of months ago and recognize that what's happening in Ukraine and with Russia is not just a trans-Atlantic challenge, but it actually matters in Asia, too, and it matters for China and Taiwan and precedent-setting and that standing up for rule of law and the sovereignty and self determination of a democratic country, something we all believe in together, that is an institution I think, that we could create. So in other words, not only is NATO no longer brain dead or obsolete or adrift, as so many leaders, including our own, have said over the past decade, but rather it is increasingly becoming the beginning of a global alliance that can bring all countries that care about rule of law together. I think that would be a really big deal, and I think that would create more stability in the world. It would also be more multilateral in the way you'd respond. By the way, another institution that's getting a lot stronger -- it's not a new one -- is the European Union. But it's getting a lot stronger. It's getting stronger because of these crises. It's because of the pandemic that the EU decided that they're going to actually coordinate on redistributing wealth from the wealthy countries in Europe to the poor countries. So they would be better able to respond to the massive shock that was the pandemic. And that means that even in poor countries like Greece and Poland that had been much more skeptical of the EU. They want that money. You don't see the same Euroscepticism, as a consequence. The Russia-Ukraine crisis has been so great that it's made the Europeans recognize they need a stronger, more integrated EU. They need a European defense policy that is strong enough to stand up for the Europeans and do more lifting that is in an integrated NATO, which they weren't doing before it. And even Macron, who used to talk about strategic autonomy, what we might have to do it ourselves now that is more in service of a stronger, more united NATO. I think that's happening. And then finally the response of the Europeans to disruptive technologies where the EU, without having big tech companies themselves, but they're taking by far the most thoughtful and assertive approach in creating regulations on data and privacy that other countries around the world and other states in the United States are starting to take on themselves because they recognize this is important. So here we have the European Union that many ten years ago thought was actually going to fall apart, that in a period of global crisis where people are really worried, we don't have leadership, we don't have our institutions, we know the right governance. The EU is getting stronger on the back of those crises. I think that's a really positive thing.

Mila Atmos: [00:52:02] Yeah, well, here it is. The proof is in the pudding, right? Stronger NATO, stronger leadership in the world. It feels a little bit like this book is, you know, like an add-on to your previous work critiquing globalism. And it feels like it seeks to reboot globalism to try to make it work. And in some sense you've already explained that it is and in which ways. But what's your vision for globalism in the future?

Ian Bremmer: [00:52:27] Well, the problem of globalism and my last book was called *Us Versus Them, the Failure of Globalism* is that the proponents of a globalist policy were people that were largely indifferent to the well being of the have nots in their own countries, and basically said, well, as long as you have open borders and free trade, they'll get theirs at the same time that they were taking advantage of their access to power to help perpetuate and even widen the absence of equality of opportunity that was increasingly being faced. And we've seen that over 50 years for developed world. That's how you got so much populism and how you got anti establishment. That's how you got Brexit. It's how you got Trump. It's how you got Bernie Sanders, how you got all these different things. You're now even seeing that in developing countries because the global middle class that has been the biggest success of globalization with an absence of necessity of labour to drive capital formation because of automation, because of robotics, because of deep learning and big data. And also, as governments in the wealthy world are focusing more on ensuring and friends sourcing, suddenly, even in countries like Mexico and Colombia and Brazil and India and Malaysia, you're seeing more populism saying, no, we need to focus more domestically, we need more protectionism. And that, of course, will lead to more poverty globally because it is inefficient and it is a tax on doing good business around the world. I am absolutely pro globalization because I think that in order to respond to the global challenges that we have, we desperately need more access to funds and resources, more capital. And so you want the process that will generate the most capital. But globalization is an economic process. Globalism is a political process. And globalism failed. Globalism failed because it wasn't global.

Mila Atmos: [00:54:28] Do you think that now with NATO being stronger and the European Union being stronger, that globalism is on the table again? If it is, is it a new kind of globalism?

Ian Bremmer: [00:54:38] Well, I mean, globalism has been attached to a particular group of people in a particular ideology during the rah-rah go-go globalization days that, you know, really I think we need to bury that word, right? I mean, look, there were two things that happened as a result of 50 years of globalization. One was economic, and that was the incredible expansion of a global middle class. The other was economic and political, which was the incredible enrichment of the 0.01%. And they got far more than anybody else in the world. Frequently at the expense of their own middle classes in their own countries. And that is what globalism facilitated. And we have to do something about that. And whether I'm talking about the Green Marshall Plan or whether I'm talking about a stronger European Union. The reason those things are working is precisely because they are recognizing that a greater level of equity for human beings on the planet to redress what's happened over the last 50 years is absolutely indispensable. And that's objectively very hard to do outside of a crisis. There's an interesting book that I remember reading about five years ago called *The Great Leveler*, and it was by a historian from Princeton. I want to say it was Schnabel. And he basically said that when over time, we find that individuals with access to power, they facilitate greater and greater inequality because they learn the system and then they pass on that information and influence to their own sort of sons and daughters who get better at gaming the system for themselves. And so whether it's a democracy or an authoritarian regime, you end up getting more and more inequality. And there are only three exceptions, and the exceptions are revolution, famine, and international war. And maybe you'd add pandemic to that today if it was big enough. And so what my book is trying to assess is to what extent can you have an impact that is constructive in changing the course of that inevitable greater inequality short of something truly devastating for humanity? Because, frankly, with the kind of tools of destruction that human beings have at our hands today, international war is unthinkable. Revolution is scorched earth for a country for decades. We can't afford to wait until you have those three great levelers. So what can we do to create a reasonably great leveler for the world today? And are the crises in front of us sufficient? And he didn't have that data. We're creating it and we'll see. But I mean, certainly there's reason to think that we can.

Mila Atmos: [00:57:51] Mm hmm. Well, so here's my last question. I probably should have said this up top. But I think, you know, because we're here, a podcast is fundamentally about civic engagement. And I also believe that civics doesn't end at national borders, and we ignore our roles as global citizens at our peril. But really, is

there anything everyday people can do here? You know, I always ask each guest for two things an everyday person can do.

Ian Bremmer: [00:58:18] Well, for me, the most important thing is to have access to good information so you don't drive yourself crazy, and then to engage with your friends and your family and community members in ways that are not oppositional, but that actually brings you closer together. And so, yeah, I think you can do that. I think, for example, if you are a regular CNN watcher, don't watch Fox. If you're regular Fox watcher, don't watch CNN. It will just drive you crazy. You will hate watch it. It's not going to change anything. No. The right thing to do is watch the CBC. The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, like a half an hour a week, because the Canadians are overwhelmingly impacted by the United States. They know us, they understand us, but they're confused by what's going on and they have a much more objective take of it. And you won't go crazy after listening to half an hour of the Canadians, right? I mean, it's like a puppy. You can't kick them. But but but it will make you think, oh, my God, that's how we're perceived by other people. Maybe I should rethink that. And those are useful conversations. They're long form conversations. They may not be the most exciting. They're not breaking news all the time, but people need to spend a little bit of time informing themselves better. They need the tools and mechanisms to do that. And then they need to reach out to the people they care about again in a way that is not hostile anti-Trump or anti anti-Trump, but instead is more "this is a topic that I think is worth us thinking about" and everyone can do that. And you have to particularly do that for the people you love that otherwise are getting spun out of control. And we all know those people. We've all seen it happen. We've seen it happen through social media, seeing it happen through cable news, through talk radio. We've seen it happen also through civic engagement. If the people you're engaging with have all drunk the same Kool-Aid, not useful. On my Twitter feed, my pinned tweet, which I've had up now for a very long time, for years, says, "If you're not following some people you dislike, you're doing it wrong. I'm happy to help." I put that up on November 23rd in 2016. It felt like a useful time to have it there. I've kept it up there ever since. Millions and millions of people have seen that, and I hope millions and millions more will. And I try to live up to that every day. I think we can all do that.

Mila Atmos: [01:00:40] This is all good advice and very doable for everyday people. Well, Ian, thank you very much for joining us on Future Hindsight. It's a pleasure to have you back.

Ian Bremmer: [01:00:48] My pleasure.

Mila Atmos: [01:00:50] Ian Bremmer is a political scientist, and he's the founder and president of the research and consulting firm Eurasia Group. Next week on Future Hindsight, we are turning to the rough and tumble of electoral politics. We're joined by Steve Pierson, the host of the *How We Win* podcast. He's an activist, community organizer and trainer who started as a class of 2016 volunteer. Steve formerly worked for the grassroots organization Swing Left, a Southern California field director and training manager. He's currently an elected California Democratic Party delegate and chairs their organizing committee. Steve's going to talk to us about the nitty gritty of get out the vote, whether phone banking works, and a whole host of other boots on the ground politics as we head towards the midterms. That's next time on Future Hindsight. This episode was produced by Zack Travis and Sara Burningham. Until next time, stay engaged.

The Democracy Group: [01:01:57] This podcast is part of the Democracy Group.