

SIOR 2009 FALL WORLD CONFERENCE GENERAL SESSION SUMMARY

ProLogis Speaker Series Presents: The Age of the Unthinkable



Featuring: Joshua Cooper Ramo



We are living in a revolutionary period of time. What can we learn from it? From the Chinese perspective, September 11th and the collapse of Lehman Bros. are signals that the U.S. foundation has cracks. Other signals include the financial market loss of \$3 trillion in three quarters and the continuing loss of jobs. China holds \$1.6 trillion of U.S. debt and will urbanize 300 million people over the next 15 years.

We cannot continue to look at the world in traditional ways. The most expensive war on terrorism has created more terrorism. Traditional problem solving ideas have backfired. We are living in a complex world and must think creatively when solving problems.

Classical power includes rational actors, nameable threats, war and peace, and balance of power vs. deterrents. In today's world, actors are not necessarily rational or nameable, things that can be used for good may also be used for evil, and there is no necessary need for cooperation.

For thousands of years, who your parents were and what they did determined your life and what you would be. This is no longer true. What you do for a living constantly changes and people are continually re-inventing themselves. Imagine a young woman in Hezbollah who is a fan of Madonna, but who also roots for the destruction of the U.S. This sort of dichotomy leads to unpredictability and unbelievable complexity in today's world.

We must attempt to understand this new world order and not simply think that the spread of capitalism will make everyone the same throughout the world. For example, the term "mash up" comes from the music world where two forms of music combine to make a new sound. This concept can apply to other things, like giving a cell phone to a Peruvian farmer to change his life for the better. This same cell phone can also be used to detonate a bomb. This mash up takes something that looks harmless and turns it into something new and perhaps dangerous.

Chinese philosophy is rooted in stability and order. Western philosophy explores abstract thoughts, including honor and decency. We need to change our narrow focus and look at the world more broadly. Most importantly, refine your instincts... before you have to use them. Manage chaos.