

RESTORING

TRUST

IN A

FRACTURED

WORLD



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	2
Restoring Trust in a Fractured World	3
MATTHEW BISHOP	
Companies Should Say What They're About — And Act on It	9
CHARLES CONN IN CONVERSATION WITH RIK KIRKLAND	
The Developing World Expects Trust That Is Verified	15
DR. VERA SONGWE	
A New Foundation for Trust in Technology	19
NANDAN NILEKANI AND TANUJ BHOJWANI	
Building Trust The Gen Z Way	24
MANU MEEL	
The Key to Crisis Preparedness in a Low-Trust Era	28
DR. SETH BERKLEY	
Can Western Governments Learn From the New Asian Values?	32
PARAG KHANNA	
Toward Media We Can Trust	37
VIVIAN SCHILLER	
Why It's Time For Business to Lead With Purpose	42
HUBERT JOLY	
Reviving International Cooperation in an Age of Distrust	46
GARGEES GHOSH	
Acknowledgments	51

INTRODUCTION

Around the world, polarization is tearing at the seams of our social fabric. So how can we rebuild trust – in institutions and in one another – to repair these fractures?

To help answer that question, the Edelman Trust Institute presents our second annual publication, “Restoring Trust in a Fractured World,” which caps off the year and looks forward to the launch of our 2023 Edelman Trust Barometer.

Matthew Bishop, former business editor of the Economist, curated and edited essays, and Rik Kirkland, former editor of Fortune and ETI Advisory Board Member, advised. This digital compendium of nine pieces penned by leaders from business, media and civil society offers insights into what is tearing us apart and how increasing trust can reunite us.

Restoring Trust in a Fractured World

BY MATTHEW BISHOP

So much for 2022 being an uplifting year of putting the pandemic behind us. From geopolitics to cryptocurrency, the news headlines have provided precious few reasons to trust our leaders more, or at times our fellow citizens. This was a year that began with key measures of trust already at low levels in much of the world.



**Matthew
Bishop**

Journalist
and innovator

In May 2020, early in the pandemic, an 11 market survey found that three of four institutions were trusted, according to the 2020 Edelman Trust Barometer Spring Update. In January, the 2022 Edelman Trust Barometer showed that business was the only trusted institution, across a 27-market average. No doubt there were positive developments below the surface. But for now, what Edelman calls the “cycle of distrust” seems to be continuing its worrying downward spiral.

Promising his fellow world leaders that he would not invade Ukraine right up until he did, Vladimir Putin was this year’s grimmest reaper of trust. Among the consequences of his utterly needless war so far: death and misery for many citizens of both countries, a further loss of public confidence in the multilateral governance system established after World War II (though perhaps not in NATO) and the return of two ghastly specters people hoped were forever stranded in the early 1980s, soaring inflation (though others also contributed here) and a heightened

fear of nuclear war. But the signs of societal fragmentation and falling trust can be found everywhere, from the spread of election-result denialism in Brazil to Britain's governing Conservatives ousting not one but two prime ministers because each had lost the trust of the public (and in the second instance, that of the financial markets, too), to the arrest of conspiracy theorists plotting a coup against the elected government in Germany.

acquired by the world's most discombobulating billionaire, social media, for example, had established itself firmly as a society-fracturing force that encourages an exaggerated sense of difference. Such polarization is often self-reinforcing. It rewards leaders for spreading misinformation and using other strategies to undermine trust in society's broad-based institutions while talking up the trustworthiness of their own tribe's sectional interests.



No wonder the 2022 Edelman Trust Barometer found the default tendency of 59 percent of global respondents (the majority in 24 of 27 countries surveyed) is to distrust. Reversing this is a huge and urgent challenge, which is why this second annual edition of essays from the Edelman Trust Institute is dedicated to exploring how to maintain and rebuild trust in the key public and private sector institutions of our currently fracturing world.

Our authors, drawn from business, civil society, academia and the media, focused in particular on two big themes. One is the growing challenge of polarization. Even before Twitter was

The second big question is the extent to which today's low level of trust in government is justified because of genuine failures to perform. Lax economic policy-making shares, along with Putin, are a big part of the blame for the soaring cost of living in many countries. And as the worst days of COVID-19 recede into the distance, it is easier to see the obvious handling failures of national governments. Though some performed much better than others, none avoided significant mistakes — the “white paper” protests in China being but the latest expression of public distrust in how political leaders are responding to the pandemic.

Must do better

Recent events in China notwithstanding, the Edelman Trust Barometer has generally found higher levels of trust over time in government in Asian countries. In an essay asking what western governments can learn from this, Parag Khanna points to the emergence of a new set of Asian values, including “an almost scientific approach to governance, one that applies trial and error methods to deliver utilitarian outcomes.” Higher trust in Asia, he argues, is generally grounded in tangible results — from better infrastructure to improved education and social inclusion.



The flag of Ukraine flies in the central square of Maidan in the Zhytomyr region.

Ruslan Kaniuka/
Ukrinform/
Future
Publishing via
Getty Images

Even before Russia (which holds veto power at the United Nations) invaded Ukraine, the pandemic and its aftermath had demonstrated how little the world should trust a multilateral governance system that still reflects the global power balance after World War II. Three of our authors draw lessons from the seriously flawed global response to COVID-19. The cost, as Dr. Seth Berkley reports, was at least 1.3 million people who might not have died in the first year had our collective response been better. Dr. Berkley, a key leader in global public health, proposes several ideas to make the world better prepared for the next pandemic, including a system for pre-testing innovative vaccines that can be quickly tweaked to address whatever particular virus comes after us next and the establishment of a pre-funded mechanism for buying essential vaccines for developing countries.

For Dr. Vera Songwe, who was head of the UN Economic Commission for Africa until recently, the rich world's selfish behavior early in the pandemic undermined much of what remained of the developing world's trust in a multi-lateral system supposedly built on a commitment to mutual co-responsibility.

Not only did poorer countries not get the vaccines they were promised, they received little by way of financial support from the rich world for their economies, which were badly hit by lockdown policies. In her essay she calls for rich countries to restore that trust by reforming the global financial architecture and by investing in helping those countries transition to a post-carbon world.

Offering words of encouragement, Gargee Ghosh of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

notes in her essay that some of the greatest past examples of international cooperation began in times of geopolitical polarization. These include the eradication of smallpox and the saving of the ozone layer. She argues that the same could happen now, rebuilding trust through decisive collective action on challenges such as ending the world's hunger crisis and, here again, reforming the global financial architecture.

Getting down to business

Corporate leaders are now more trusted than government leaders, according to the 2022 Edelman Trust Barometer, yet they also face high expectations from the public in terms of helping to solve society's biggest problems. Roughly half of those surveyed say business is not doing enough to tackle issues such as climate change and economic inequality, for example.

That won't be easy. While Russia's invasion of Ukraine saw some firms act decisively to stop doing business there, others did not. In America, the Supreme Court's overturning of abortion rights put many CEOs in a tricky position given polarization on this issue among work-

ers and customers. Florida's decision to revoke some historic tax breaks for Disney after the company criticized the state's new law restricting discussions of homosexuality in schools seems to have made some formerly outspoken bosses more circumspect. And taking seriously Environmental, Social and Governance performance has quickly turned from being a badge of good corporate behavior into standing in no man's land on an increasingly polarized battleground. CEOs found themselves attacked on all sides, accused of superficial "ESG washing"

Polarization is often self-reinforcing. It rewards leaders for spreading misinformation and using other strategies to undermine trust in society's broad-based institutions while talking up the trustworthiness of their own tribe's sectional interests.

by those who want firms to go further and deeper, and of being “woke capitalists” who put causes before profits by those who prefer their capitalism the Milton Friedman way.

it is “woke capitalism” to take a stand on social issues. Don’t “view this as purely a left or right issue,” he says. “When people line up to buy at a Chick-Fil-A to buy that sandwich, they’re also

doing that partly because they want to support a company that reflects the values it does. I don’t agree with those values, but I’m for that transaction. I’m for a world where companies are explicit about what they stand for.”

Perhaps technology companies should take note. In his essay with Tanuj Bhojwani, Nandan Nilekani, a co-founder of Infosys and architect of India’s Aadhaar digital ID system, argues that in developing countries such as his, trust in new digital technology is high because the sector has prioritized delivering dramatic improvements to the lives

of the public, especially those in greatest need. He argues that Silicon Valley and other western temples of tech can rebuild the trust they have lost over privacy and other side effects of the commercial platform economy by embracing more seriously the cause of building “digital public goods.”

Another trade besides tech which has experienced low trust is the media. In her essay, Vivian Schiller, a seasoned old and new media executive, argues that reviving local news, which has traditionally been highly correlated with civic and political vitality, should be a high priority, especially in the growing number of local “news deserts.” In the absence of any prospect of meaningful social media regulation in the foreseeable future, she supports more of the vigorous “naming and shaming” of harmful social media practices that has already driven progress on issues such as the online protection



In his essay, former Best Buy boss Hubert Joly rejects Friedman’s narrow, profit-centric view of corporate purpose. Business leaders should respond to the public’s higher trust and greater expectations by rising to the occasion, he argues: “Pursuing a higher purpose, I believe, can not only help address some of the world’s most serious challenges, it can also expand a company’s growth opportunities and lift an organization’s energy as teams embrace the chance to make a meaningful difference.”

An inspiring example is Patagonia, an outdoor clothing and equipment maker famed for its commitment to the environment and paying its workers a fair wage. This summer, to ensure the firm’s mission continues after its founder has gone, ownership was transferred to an innovative structure called a “purpose trust.” In an interview with Rik Kirkland, Charles Conn, chair of Patagonia’s board, rejects the idea that



Indigenous people supporters of Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro take part in a demonstration against the election of Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva.

EVARISTO SA/ AFP via Getty Images

of minors. Schiller also sees trust-building potential in new media platforms that give people the space to talk to each other across political divides, using approaches such as “empathy at scale” and “deep listening.”

Bridge over troubled waters

Two especially interesting academic papers published this year by David Broockman of the University of California, Berkeley and colleagues support this notion that we can reduce polarization by exposing people more to the other side. The first found that video calls between people from opposing political parties could reduce what in the jargon is known as “affective polarization,” but only if they avoided talking about politics and instead bonded by sharing their feelings on safer trust-building topics such as what makes for my perfect day. The other found that paying Fox News viewers \$15 an hour to watch CNN led them to moderate their opinions on current events, policy preferences and how they perceive key political figures and parties. This effect vanished once they returned to their old diet of uninterupted Fox News.

Maybe Gen Z will save the day by building the bridges we need. After all, these are young adults who have lived their entire lives in poly-crisis, and they are desperate for something better. Manu Meel, 23, explains, “I was born

two years before 9/11, went to middle school during the Great Recession, graduated high school during the 2016 election and left college during the COVID pandemic. To top it off, 2021 began with one of the darkest days in the history of our democracy, the January 6th Capitol Riots. To put it charitably: My generation's lived experience does not reflect a thriving democracy we can trust.”

In 2017, while still a student at UC Berkeley, Meel founded a chapter of BridgeUSA, an organization that hosts meetings on university campuses

that provide a carefully curated safe space in which students can bridge differences and navigate disagreements. The organization is now growing fast on college campuses across America and is branching out into high schools. At its core, he says, “democracy depends on our willingness to trust each other enough to constructively disagree and find consensus despite our differences. We will not have a democracy if we cannot talk to each other — it is that simple.”

**For anyone
who wants to see
a less polarized world
and less fractured
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levels of trust
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We hope you find inspiration in these wise words, and others in this collection of essays, and that they lead you to action. Of course, there is no guarantee that any of these ideas can break the cycle of distrust. But for anyone who wants to see a less polarized world and less fractured societies with high levels of trust in high performing institutions the time is long past to try something new. Trust me. ■

Companies Should Say What They're About — and **Act on It**

CHARLES CONN IN CONVERSATION
WITH RIK KIRKLAND

They met “in the most natural way possible,” recalls Charles Conn, “on a river.” After sharing a rain-soaked tent on a fly-fishing trip in British Columbia, Conn, a former McKinsey partner and CEO of the Rhodes Trust, and Yvon Chouinard, the founder of Patagonia, became fast friends.



Charles Conn

Chair of Patagonia,
Co-Founder of
Monograph Capital

Conn joined Patagonia's board in 2007 and became chairman in 2020. In that role he helped the Chouinard family execute a bold decision to place their controlling stake in the multi-billion-dollar specialty retailer into a new kind of entity: a “purpose trust” to steer the company in line with the founders' values and a foundation to support accelerating the world's response to climate change. In this interview, Conn explains the trust-based thinking that lay behind the Chouinards' quest to find an ownership structure that would stay right “for all time.”



Rik Kirkland

Writer and Editor

Rik Kirkland: Patagonia's recent big move is the culmination of a much longer journey. Take us back to the beginning.

Charles Conn: Trust is deeply foundational to the Chouinard family's way of thinking. The brands that you love, you love not just because of what their product does for you — whether it exists to taste good or to keep the rain off or to connect you to your friends.

You also love them because behind that product you trust that there is somebody working on it who actually cares.

Yvon and his family would be the first to tell you that they didn't wake up at birth with this insight. They built a business over 50 years, starting by selling pitons out of a truck. Gradually, they decided that, yes, while companies are incredible engines of innovation, they have to be about something more than just making great products. Because companies focused only on profits were destroying the planet and using up the earth.

So how can we harness capitalism for good and not just count on regulators to provide guard rails? That requires, they concluded, setting down in writing our relationship, not just to shareholders, but to customers, to staff, to the communities in which we operate, to national governments — to convey our sense of duty, purpose and responsibility.

In 2012, when the initial laws were passed in California to allow Benefit Corporations, Yvon put on a coat and tie and stood with his wife Melinda on the courthouse steps to be first in line to create the state's first B Corp. It was a great thing. It allowed the Chouinards to enshrine in their charter values that they thought were important other than profit maximization.

RK: But that apparently wasn't enough. Can you walk us through the logic of the most recent governance change?

CC: The unanswered challenge was how do you ensure that such a company will thrive while remaining true to its values, after the

founder is gone? Many years ago on another river, this time in Chile, I had asked Yvon that question. He said then, 'I'm probably going to shut it down. If my kids don't want to run it [they were in their 20s then], I am not sure who we could trust to run it.' But by the time he got into his 80s, he started seriously pondering this question again and for help to think it through. The goal was to ensure the proper stewardship of the company for all time, and at the same time to release the significant value that Patagonia's success had created to help address the environmental crisis.

We looked at all the options, including taking the company public with a dual class shareholding structure. While a B Corp structure is helpful, it can be changed by a decision of two-thirds of the voting shares. And unlike in Europe, U.S. law

doesn't allow a foundation to own a public corporation. In the end, the Chouinards simply did not feel comfortable with the long-term certainty of any of these options. What we came up with, instead, was a structure that had never been used before for a big

While companies are incredible engines of innovation, they have to be about something more than just making great products.

company: a so-called purpose trust, which lays down in very precise terms what the organization values and which can only be altered by the unanimous consent of its board. Both those features help ensure future managers can't easily alter the mission. The trust holds all the voting shares in perpetuity but accounts for just 2 percent of Patagonia's economic value. A foundation holds the other 98 percent of non-voting shares and is free to use that money in any way it deems fit to fight the climate crisis.

RK: Was there also a business case for making this change?

CC: That was not the goal. But as Yvon likes to say, 'Every time we've done the right thing, it's been good for business.' It's right in the long term, for sure. But I even think it's right in the short term. We're vigorous competitors. We want to beat our rivals. When it comes to choosing a nice impermeable raincoat, folks can pick one that works, or they can pick one that works and also does the right thing. And while it might cost a little bit more, people want to feel close to brands that reflect their values.

RK: So, you don't buy Milton Friedman's famous argument that the only social responsibility of business is to stay within the law and make a profit?

He assumes perfect regulation, when, in fact, it is easy for companies to engage in regulatory arbitrage. The other thing Friedman assumed is that there are no unregulated negative externalities. And that just isn't so. Almost in our lifetimes, if you look at how the world has been transformed by naked capitalism it is almost unrecognizable. Seventy percent or more of the earth's biodiversity has been extinguished.

In the world today, we can't assume that the right answer for society is simply for companies to maximize profits, for governments to police the lanes and for individuals to make great philanthropic decisions. In retrospect, I know that view was never correct. Go back in history

and look at a company like Lever Brothers, the predecessor to Unilever. Look at how it put people first a century ago.

RK: What about the current counterargument that stakeholder capitalism is just another word for 'woke capitalism'?

CC: The idea any company that engages in social issues is guilty of 'woke capitalism' is just plain wrong. It's not 'woke capitalism' for companies to stand for something and be responsible to their communities. What's important is to not to view this as purely a left

or right issue. When people line up to buy at a Chick-Fil-A to buy that sandwich, they're also doing that partly because they want to support a company that reflects the values it does. I don't agree with those values, but I'm for that transaction. I'm for a world where companies are explicit about what they stand for.

CC: I went to Harvard Business School and was trained in what we called shareholder capitalism. When I read Friedman's 1970 essay forty years ago it made sense to me. It's well-written and reasoned. But after years of studying economics, I began to say, wait a minute. He assumes perfect competition. Yet more and more companies are showing increasing returns to scale in a winner takes most world.



The main gate of COP27 in Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt.

Photo by Matthew TenBruggencate via UNSPLASH

When you invest in a company like Patagonia, you are investing in something that has a number of characteristics. One is the margin structure and cash flows over the last five years. The other is what it stands for, the commitments it makes to the environment, to paying its people a fair wage. Why is Apple one of the most valuable companies on earth? Because they make good stuff? Sure. But they make good stuff, and it's a really good place to work. And they've taken a stand that people's data should be protected. I am happy to pay more for Apple because I think they've got my back on privacy.

More broadly, we want the innovation that comes from people taking risks, being clever and having their creativity rewarded. That's the fundamental idea behind capitalism. But don't we also want that creativity and innovation to go towards purpose and responsibility? I do. I don't want to live in a world where the government decides what products to make, or where other people tell me what to do. But I also don't want to live in Milton Friedman's pretend world of value-free profit maximization. I want to live in world where companies say what they are about — and act on it.

RK: There's a lack of trust in ESG today. Any thoughts on how to improve it?

CC: ESG is a long way from where it needs to be. Most ratings agencies don't agree on standards. It's very difficult to construct accurate aggregate measures, and there's a lot of greenwashing across those industry and company ratings. I believe the answer is to work at the product level, not the company level. When you

buy an organic cotton T-shirt today from Patagonia, you can be sure we've used the least environmentally damaging sourcing. The standards are clear. But when it comes to a fleece jacket, it's much harder. With current technology there is no environmentally perfect solution. Eventually, corporate ratings based on rolling up such nuanced individual product ratings versus constructing a misleadingly precise top-down measure may produce better, more trustworthy outcomes.

When it comes to choosing a nice impermeable raincoat, folks can pick one that works, or they can pick one that works and also does the right thing. And while it might cost a little bit more, people want to feel close to brands that reflect their values.

RK: Recent Edelman reports (2022 Edelman Trust Barometer Special Analysis: The Changing Role of the Corporation in Society and 2022 Edelman Trust Barometer) showed a clear majority 1) believed corporations can and should have a positive impact on issues like wage inequality, prejudice, climate, and joblessness due to automation; and 2) that they are not doing enough. Do you agree?

CC: It's not just consumers who think companies should stand for something. So do investors — 64 percent or

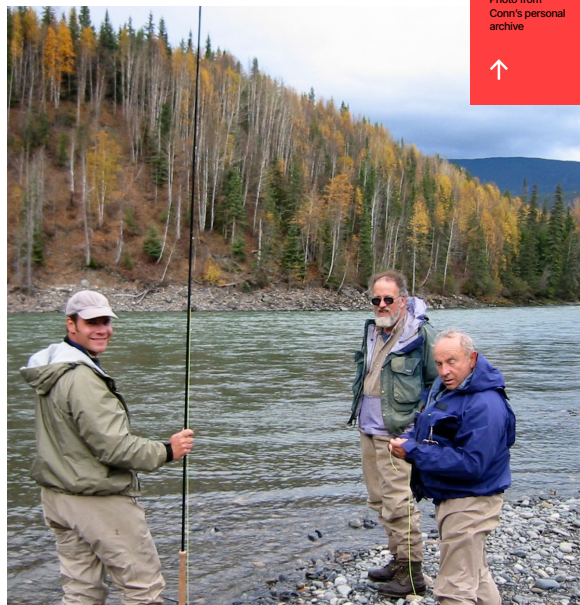
more, depending on which survey you look at. Whatever the reason — because they want to believe a soap company is trying not to pollute the water their kids drink or because it's better for long term returns, or both — sentiment has shifted.

So why are things so slow to change? It's partly because under Delaware law, which is the law of the land for most U.S. corporations, any time there is a conflict between doing the right thing by employees or the environment and maximizing profits, the courts are likely to find that maximizing profits prevails.

While Benefit Corporations are legal under Delaware law, a lot of private companies that were B Corps have found it difficult to exist as public Benefit Corporations. Shareholder activism always pushes you toward profit maximization, which is why Yvon ultimately did what he did. Even with dual class shares, the family just couldn't get comfortable that these pressures wouldn't force them to shortchange purpose.

It's also genuinely hard. Profit pressure at big public companies, measured under quarterly returns, is always a strain. Sometimes it feels like doing the right thing costs more. And sometimes it does. We pay more for the fibers used to make Patagonia clothes because we require documentation of their origins, including the energy expended and water used. Our view, though, is because we stand for something, we can also charge closer to what I would argue is the true economic cost of a garment.

Of course, it is important not to let the perfect be the enemy of the good. Patagonia is a closely held company and its family owners decided to give away all its value to fight for what they believe in. Public companies don't need to go that far to do better. But they will need to do better — their customers, communities and investors are demanding it. ■



Charles Conn (left) fishes with Patagonia founder Yvon Chouinard (right).

Photo from Conn's personal archive



A view of Mount Fitz Roy, in Patagonia, near El Chalten, Argentina.

Photo by RONALDO SCHEMIDT/AFP via Getty Images



The Developing World Expects Trust That Is Verified

BY DR. VERA SONGWE

The present period of polycrisis has provided multiple tests for the concept of global trust. To many in the developing world, the result has been damaging trust in ways that require urgent repair, if the multilateral system is to rise to the even bigger challenges ahead.



Dr. Vera Songwe

Co-chair of the
High Level Panel on
Climate Finance

In the Bible, Thomas, one of Jesus's closest disciples, refused to believe reports of the resurrection until he had, with his own eyes and hands, seen and touched Jesus's scars. Thomas's insistence underscores an aspect of trust that's as old as time: Belief is stronger and confidence is higher when trust can be verified. Unfortunately, what African and other developing countries experienced in the past few years has shaken, not verified, our already fragile faith in the implicit moral principles of trust and co-responsibility that are supposed to govern relations between richer and poorer nations.

The COVID-19 pandemic brought both a health crisis and an economic crisis, during which richer countries made it clear where their real priorities lay. Consider how industrialized country leaders behaved when the most pressing question was, "Who should we give our masks to, to prevent the virus propagating and killing more people?" It is fair to say that Africa was not first on their list. Rich countries met their own needs first.

Then, as the world waited for vaccines to tackle the pandemic, the consensus expressed by global leaders was that the new vaccines would be made available equitably to those globally who needed them most urgently – like health workers and the elderly. This was morally the right thing to do. However, the reality proved very different, as wealthy countries again bowed to short-term domestic political pressures. For Africa, in particular, the lack of access to vaccines and the hoarding of them by many partner countries was a verifiable lack of respect for a mutual commitment that severely weakened trust in the system.

countries had the financial resources to do the same for their economies. This was a moment for the world's richer countries to step up, but the collective response was so inadequate, providing further verification that the global system could not be trusted.

First, it took over a year for the multilateral institutions at the heart of the global financial architecture to acknowledge there was a need to act to support the developing world, even as the G7 countries injected trillions of dollars into their economies. The eventual response exposed serious design flaws in this global architecture, as

the tool of choice — the use of countries' special drawing rights at the International Monetary Fund — was not fit for purpose. From over \$650 billion of Special Drawing Rights (SDRs) issued, Africa got only \$33.7 billion, a tiny fraction of what was needed. Rather than strengthen trust by acting co-responsibly, the system reflected the power imbalance in place since its creation more than 70 years ago when developing countries had no meaningful voice. As a result, African and other emerging economies remained in crisis while the excessively stimulated economies of the developed world overheated.



The shutdowns that swept the world as governments fought COVID-19 severely damaged developing economies around the world, including plunging Africa into its first continental recession in over a quarter of a century. Globally, reversing years of gradual progress, over 100 million people fell into poverty. In industrialized countries, governments were able to cushion the economic blow by providing various forms of financial support and stimulus amounting to over \$20 trillion. Few developing

Our trust in global cooperation further deteriorated in 2022 following Russia's invasion of Ukraine, which, on top of the death and other misery inflicted on the country and a refugee crisis on its borders, brought both a food crisis in developing countries and an abrupt switch in rich country energy priorities back to coal and other carbon fuels. The latter implication further undermined trust in a climate change-fighting COP process that asks a lot from Africa and the rest of the emerging world



People wait for doses of the COVID-19 vaccine in Nairobi, Kenya in December 2021.

Photo by SIMON MAINA/ AFP via Getty Images

(including ending funding to gas projects which could substantially improve livelihoods and accelerate the total switch to renewables by African countries).

Unsurprisingly, the trust needed to achieve strong, agreed outcomes at the recent COP27 in Egypt proved lacking — another potentially trust-verifying event that achieved the opposite. Yes, delegates worked past the scheduled closing to agree, finally, to the long-promised, much-delayed \$100 billion fund to pay for “loss and damage” to vulnerable countries hit by climate disasters (though key details remain vague). Yet as the recent report of the independent high-level expert group on climate finance that I co-chaired with Lord Nicholas Stern makes clear, what was really needed is an ambitious set of reforms and commitments that can deliver \$1 trillion a year of external climate-transition investment in developing and emerging economies (not including China) by 2030. This, I should add, needs to be part of a broader overhaul of the global financial architecture, so there is no repeat of the unjust SDR outcome in response to COVID-19.

Rich countries now need to rebuild trust by providing the developing world with some significant verifiable evidence of their commitment to co-responsibility. At its core, co-responsibility is about the need for the global partnership

of trust to be mutual. Beyond fighting climate change, it holds the key to achieving ambitious goals for humanity, such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Without a shared commitment to co-responsible behavior in global governance, stabilizing our climate and achieving the SDGs will remain wishful thinking. Co-responsibility requires conviction from all sides that acting in the collective interest will yield a superior outcome in the long run. Right now, when it comes to reviving trust that this conviction still exists among decisionmakers in

the world's richest countries, actions will speak far louder than words.

It took over a year for the multilateral institutions at the heart of the global financial architecture to acknowledge there was a need to act to support the developing world, even as the G7 countries injected trillions of dollars into their economies.

At the same time, co-responsibility also means that African countries must work to build the elements needed to place them on a level playing field with their partner institutions and countries. Ultimately, Africa took charge of its own vaccine provision by creating the African Vaccine Acquisition Trust. Hopefully, the recent launch of the Liquidity and Sustainability Facility by African govern-

ments and the private sector will have a similar effect. At a time when the world is faced with multiple crises, trust is an essential element for addressing the challenges. Certainly, rebuilding and restoring trust will require time and it will also need verifiable actions by both parties. I am confident we have, or can create, the tools and the opportunities to use them. But do we have the will? ■

A New Foundation for Trust in Technology

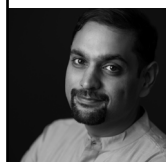
BY NANDAN NILEKANI
AND TANUJ BHOJWANI

Technology companies have maintained the perception of heady innovation and life-changing convenience. Despite this, they are now being criticized for their lack of leadership in solving societal problems, and in some cases, blamed for making these problems worse.



Nandan Nilekani

Co-Founder and
Chairman of Infosys
Technologies Limited



Tanuj Bhojwani

Co-Author of
"The Art of Bitfulness"

Yes, these companies still make many exciting, engaging, products. But the public is starting to see the costs that these products can impose on our wellbeing, on social harmony and our climate. There is also an increased threat perceived to livelihoods — both from losing jobs to automation and losing the stability of a regular income to the uncertainty of the gig economy.

The consequences have been especially striking in developed countries such as the United States, where trust in the technology sector has dropped by 24 percentage points over a decade, to a low of 54 percent, according to the 2022 Edelman Trust Barometer Special Report: Trust in Technology. Yet a different story is unfolding in parts of the developing world, where technology companies are more trusted now than they've been in the recent past. Indeed, in 2022, the technology sector remains the #1 most trusted sector in all 9 of the developing countries that ranked it as #1 back in 2016, whereas the sector has lost that status in 9 out of 11 developed countries that ranked it as #1 back in 2016. (see Fig. 1)

For an industry that prides itself on being “scalable” across geographies, this huge difference in public perceptions is perhaps surprising, until you see how even software cannot escape social context. My own experience serves as a good example of this difference.

to not see were brought under the protection of its welfare programs.

The word Aadhaar means “foundation” in a variety of Indian languages. It was envisioned always as a platform on which many other solu-

tions could be built. Today, 98 percent of India's adult population has an Aadhaar number, and that forms the basis of the Direct Benefits Transfer programme. More than \$300 billion has been transferred directly into the bank accounts of beneficiaries, reducing “leakages” and corruption. The proof of identity provided by Aadhaar has also been used to open bank accounts, issue SIM cards, strengthen the tax base and in many ways, formalize and digitize the Indian economy.



In 2009, I was asked by the Government of India to help with an ambitious project to tackle the lack of accountability to the public around the billions of dollars set aside by the government each year for welfare schemes, arising from the lack of any verified register of India's eligible residents. On paper, the welfare money was getting to its intended beneficiaries, but in practice, we never could really know if the person who collected a benefit was real or, more likely, a figment of some enterprising middleman's imagination. A former Indian prime minister, Rajiv Gandhi, once publicly stated that for every Rupee the government spent, less than 15 paise would reach the intended beneficiary.

So India started Aadhaar, a digital ID system that enrolled a billion people in just five and a half years. With this digital technology, around 400 million people who the state could hither-

The approach the Indian government took — of building a digital infrastructure that could be plugged in to multiple use cases — has become a new model for solving hard development problems with technology. Indian bureaucrats in collaboration with the private sector have worked to spread this approach from ID to payments, and now to health and even ecommerce. This infrastructure is open and freely accessible by all. We call these kinds of technologies Digital Public Infrastructure.

In developed economies, the technology industry usually offers efficiency or convenience. Typically, it enables you to do the things you already were able to do faster, better or cheaper. Yet often this efficiency comes from automation and replacing labor. Even when a service is internet native and does not eliminate jobs, often these technologies are designed to capture data and consumer



A man gives his fingerprint for a PVC plastic Aadhaar card during an event held to promote digital payment in Amritsar, India in January 2017.

Photo by NARINDER NANU/AFP via Getty Images

TECH SECTOR IS LOSING TRUST

Tech is the **#1 most trusted sector** in

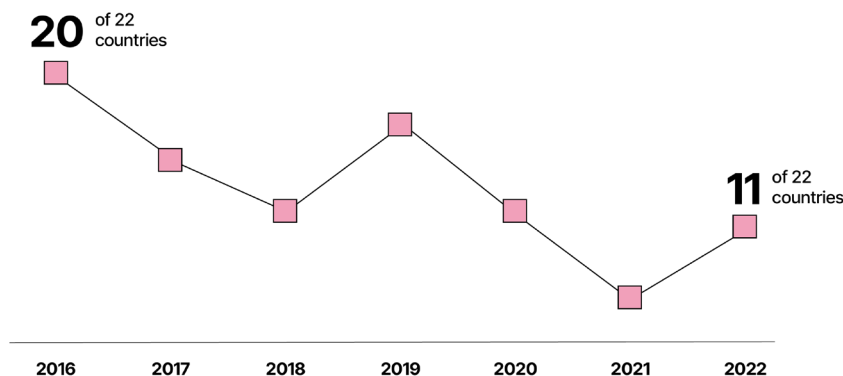


Fig. 1. Source: 2022 Edelman Trust Barometer Special Report: Trust in Technology

attention and sell ads. In countries such as the U.S. the per capita spending of the advertising sector is north of \$800. It is this advertising money that funds the creation of tech giants who are able to offer their services ostensibly for free.

In most developing economies, technology, and hence the technology sector, plays a very different role than it does in the developed world. One reason is that advertising dollars from developing nations are usually only a fraction of their developed economy equivalents. For instance, across all of Meta's products, India has the highest user base in the world. Whether WhatsApp, Instagram or Facebook, a significant number of users are from India. Yet, out of Meta's \$118 billion revenue last year, India contributed only \$2 billion. The logic of advertising and data that underpins the technology sector in developed economies does not hold as much water in developing economies.

That helps explain why a growing number of these countries are embracing the strategy of building Digital Public Infrastructure, combining digital ID systems and payment networks that allow users to transact online with much

ease. Typically, governments or philanthropies are the main investors in building out this digital public infrastructure, creating platforms on which the technology sector can build genuinely useful applications at an affordable cost.

In developing nations, digital technology allows vast swathes of the population to do things they never really could before. People really do see their lives change – technology is trusted not just because it is making living more convenient, but because it is empowering people with entirely new opportunities and access to a world they never knew. That doesn't mean that citizens of developing countries are Panglossian about technology. According to the Edelman Trust Barometer, they worry more about their data privacy (78 percent vs. 69 percent, on average) and about fake news being used as a weapon (78 percent vs. 68 percent) than their developed nation counterparts.

A report by the Bank of International Settlements in 2019 said that what India achieved in seven years in terms of expanding financial inclusion would have taken 47 years through traditional means of growth. In the pandemic, countries with digital infrastructure were

able to make relief payments directly into the bank accounts of those affected quickly and efficiently, without losses or leakages. Many developed countries, including the U.S., had to struggle with a check in the mail, which people then had to venture out in the pandemic to cash.

The Digital Public Infrastructure model of technology also addresses another key challenge of trust in the technology sector. According to Edelman's Trust in Technology report, 56 percent of respondents globally feel that government regulators "do not have adequate understanding of emerging technologies to regulate them effectively." When you build Digital Infrastructure, you can also embed in it safeguards for privacy, security and interoperability. This infrastructure can prevent the creation of walled gardens and monopolies, and encourage competition from the little guy. Regulators can enact policies directly in the technology, without having to rely on often what amount to slap-on-the-wrist fines to try to enforce them. With DPI, the threat of revoking access to the infrastructure can be a powerful tool for regulators to enforce policies promoting equality.

In terms of bang for buck, building digital infrastructure is probably the most effective intervention that developing or developed countries can make. No wonder governments around the world are increasingly asking for their own DPI solutions in digital identity and payments similar to India. The tech industry should embrace this cause. Indeed, there are one or two recent encouraging signs that some leading companies may be starting to do so, though not yet anywhere near fast enough. For instance, when the U.S. Federal Reserve decided to build a fast payments system, the

FEDNOW, due to be launched in 2023, Google wrote an open letter to the FED recommending emulating India's Unified Payments Interface (a key part of the country's DPI).

Peter Thiel, a leading Silicon Valley investor, famously said that "competition is for losers." He and many others argue that to capture value in technology nothing beats building a monopoly on a platform. Yet as Edelman's trust data shows clearly, this approach is no longer something that consumers find trustworthy. Instead, if the tech sector chose to promote digital public infrastructure, it could help strengthen trust in technology across the world.

This is not some "woke" call for industrial altruism, but rather an argument for enlightened self-interest to ensure the long-term health of the sector. Technology companies are losing trust in the developed world precisely because they are no longer solving real, pressing problems for their users and communities. By committing to the DPI approach, tech companies can empower their user instead of ensnaring them in walled gardens. As the experience of the developing world shows, this is a proven way for the technology sector to rebuild trust with the people. ■



A man checks his mobile phone as he walks past 5G advertisement written on the door of a mobile service provider store in Mumbai, India.

Photo by Ashish Vaisnav/SOPA Images/LightRocket via Getty Images



Building Trust The Gen Z Way

BY MANU MEEL

Concern about polarization in America is growing among younger people at least as much as among our elders. Gen Z, my generation, desperately craves an alternative to our current divisive politics. We have grown up in a democracy that appears to be struggling at best and rapidly declining at worst.



**Manu
Meel**

CEO of BridgeUSA

Conservative or liberal, my generation's lived experience has been characterized by extreme polarization, economic pain and division. Take me for example. Now 23, I was born two years before 9/11, went to middle school during the Great Recession, graduated high school during the 2016 election and left college during the COVID pandemic. To top it off, 2021 began with one of the darkest days in the history of our democracy, the January 6th Capitol Riots. To put it charitably: My generation's lived experience does not reflect a thriving democracy we can trust.

At its core, democracy depends on our willingness to trust each other enough to constructively disagree and find consensus despite our differences. We will not have a democracy if we cannot talk to each other — it is that simple. Around the world, [toxic polarization and tribalism are threatening](#) institutions and leaving people vulnerable to fear and division. Here in the U.S., Americans feel increasingly [hostile towards their political opposites](#).

According to the 2022 Edelman Trust Barometer, 64 percent of global respondents say that people in their country lack the ability to have constructive and civil debates about issues they disagree on. This has serious implications for any institution that depends on people collaborating. From the workplace to our schools, any setting that requires people to get along for a larger purpose is increasingly at risk.

My generation's growing resentment toward our divisive politics came home to me with life-changing clarity in February 2017. As I walked back from my freshman seminar, hundreds of people were [peacefully and violently protesting](#) about a speech at UC Berkeley by Milo Yiannopoulos, a notorious right-wing provocateur. I remember being deeply struck by the pessimism, anger and apathy that gripped my fellow UC Berkeley students all along the political spectrum.

all students, and it featured structured moderated student-led dialogues. We realized how strong the demand was to have a student-led moderated space for bridging differences and navigating disagreements, prompting us to launch BridgeBerkeley to hold weekly discussions open to all students.

I had assumed that this demand for bridge building was just a UC Berkeley fad. Yet, in the next three years BridgeBerkeley transformed into [BridgeUSA](#), with chapters on 50 college campuses and in 20 high schools. It is now [the largest and fastest growing student movement](#), changing how we talk politics and improving the state of discourse in our country. On average, we engage approximately 450 students every two weeks in BridgeUSA programming, all recruited through word of mouth as students concerned about polarization reach out to us for help building a new civic space on campus.



Strikingly, the young people who attend our discussions are not only who want compromise. Our community consists of strong ideologues, indifferent independents and folks still trying to understand their own politics. The unifying force within BridgeUSA is that our community believes in cultivating a certain temperament that exists above ideology: a temperament that values open-mindedness over closed-mindedness; empathy over exclusion; building spaces that bring people in as opposed to building spaces that keep people out.

So with a few friends, I [organized a discussion event](#) to help students grapple with and talk to each other about what had happened on campus. This discussion space was open to

At BridgeUSA, our student moderators are trained to construct an environment where participants can safely and constructively



Students participate in a BridgeUSA session.

Photo by BridgeUSA Group, BeyFamz Media

exchange ideas, share lived experiences and disagree passionately. Each discussion begins with outlining our four norms: 1) listen to listen, rather than to respond; 2) try not to interrupt or have side conversations; 3) address the statement, not the person; 4) participants represent only themselves and are not representative of social groups. Time and again, we have found that these clearly communicated norms enforced through a peer moderator transforms how people engage.

Through BridgeUSA, I have had the opportunity to travel to college campuses, meet with thousands of students and listen to the concerns of business and political leaders from across the political spectrum. The one throughline that has animated almost every one of my interactions is that people want to see bridge building in their communities and most are fearful of being able to have conversations across political differences. My anecdotal experience not only confirms but demonstrates the urgency with which we need to prioritize building bridges and facilitating constructive dialogue in our own institutions. We must create an environment that is inclusive, deliberative and open-minded.

Gen Z wants problem-solvers, not flamethrowers to lead our politics.

We want a democracy where we can disagree passionately, yet also come together to address the many problems that our generation will inherit. Democracy is only as strong as what we put into it, and young people need to be offered accessible and nonpartisan avenues that help us be the best citizens we can be.

It is not just campuses. Institutions throughout society are increasingly in need of similar spaces to help overcome polarization. In local

government, for example, officials are experiencing a rapid breakdown in communication and consensus building. That is why in 2020, our BridgeBerkeley chapter, as one of the few remaining civic spaces where leaders could have dialogue across differences, was asked to [host the Berkeley Mayoral debate](#) in a nonpartisan fashion for the public. Companies, too, are increasingly feeling the negative impacts of polarization and division. Harvard professors Julia Minson and Francesca Gino recently described [in the Harvard Business Review](#) how workforces are starting to polarize and companies urgently need to develop the capacity to manage political differences. Politics and business are no longer separate spheres: The workplace will be the next frontier in the fight against tribalism in our democracy.

BridgeUSA's goal is to scale to 250 college and high school chapters by June 2024. And we will also begin helping companies navigate politics in the workplace, while (unlike in much of American society) it is still the norm for people of different backgrounds to come together to solve collective problems.

As our ability to communicate across differences rapidly erodes, not only will companies directly experience the cost of

polarization, they will also be in a unique position to invest in bridge building as a core priority. Indeed, it will be key to their ability to recruit and retain Gen Z talent, who will increasingly demand work environments that reward problem-solving, empathy and constructive disagreement. Get this right, and business may help foster a revival of listening and collaborative skills across society; fail, and business may well be a victim of the same destructive polarization that has brought our democracy to the brink. ■

Conservative or liberal, my generation's lived experience has been characterized by extreme polarization, economic pain and division.

The Key to Crisis Preparedness in a **Low- Trust Era**

BY DR. SETH BERKLEY

COVID-19, it's now clear, did more than create the worst global health crisis in a century, alongside a major economic crisis. It also sparked a massive global trust crisis. The fault lines it generated have rippled far beyond familiar and important issues, such as vaccine hesitancy or lack of faith in the counsel of policymakers and experts.



Seth Berkley

Medical doctor,
infectious disease
epidemiologist &
CEO of Gavi, the
Vaccine Alliance

They have exposed a gaping trust gap at the very core of our modern international order.

Dealing with crises that spill easily across national borders, such as pandemics or the consequences of climate change, requires effective global solutions. No country is safe unless all are safe. And yet, according to recent research published in [Nature Medicine](#), at least 1.3 million lives were lost that could have been saved during the first critical year, when COVID-19 vaccines initially became available, had they been shared more equitably across the globe. This is a damning indictment of how self-interest prevailed.

But if the world can't come together at a time when millions of people are dying, then how can we trust governments, businesses and citizens to do the right thing when confronted with similar crises in the future? The cold hard truth is that we can't. During any kind of global disaster, even with the best will in the world, governments understandably put the protection of their citizens first.

The proper response is not despair but realism. Since national self-interest is certain to prevail in future crises, the way to obviate that is to put in place global solutions that will automatically work in everyone's best interest — and do so long before disaster strikes.

manufacturers faced a high risk that those deals might prove useless if those vaccines didn't succeed. For them COVAX represented an insurance policy, and a potential a back-up source of vaccines. For the rest of the world, it was simply a lifeline. And to ensure that lifeline

was there, COVAX included a mechanism that removed the financial barriers to securing equitable access.

Did it work? Up to a point. As it turned out, we got dozens of vaccines, not one, and in record time. To date, COVAX has shipped close to 1.9 billion doses to 146 economies, of which close to 1.7 billion — or roughly 90 percent — have gone to people in the 92 lower-income countries, who would have otherwise struggled to get vaccinated.

But where science delivered, self-interest hindered. The sheer scale of

the vaccine hoarding we subsequently witnessed, compounded by export restrictions imposed by countries on vaccines and the components needed to make them, all conspired to create huge bottlenecks in the global vaccine supply. This created those delays in getting them to lower-income countries, which caused that tragic and unnecessary loss of lives.

Had COVAX been created and fully funded before the pandemic, much of this could have been avoided. Valuable time was lost mobilizing this new organization and raising the billions of dollars it needed, putting it at a disadvantage in securing doses from manufacturers. Also, while COVAX worked because it was built on global health networks that were

Consider the case of COVAX, which I co-founded. This multilateral effort was created in the early days of the COVID-19 crisis to prevent a potential repeat of what happened during the last pandemic in 2009 when a small number of wealthy nations bought up almost the entire global supply of H1N1 swine flu vaccines, leaving little for the rest of the world. COVAX was deliberately designed to benefit every signatory, which is why 190 countries representing 90 percent of the world's population joined the effort.

Remember, at the start of the pandemic, it wasn't clear if it would be possible to produce safe and effective vaccines against COVID-19 quickly enough. Even governments with the resources to negotiate bilateral deals with



Aid workers check a shipment of COVID-19 vaccines sent to Sudan by the COVAX vaccine-sharing initiative.

Photo by Ebrahim HAMID/AFP via Getty Images

already in place, with no at-risk contingency funding or surge capacity already built in, receiving agencies like Gavi, were stretched to the limits, hampering our impact.

Here again, one key way to shore up trust and improve responsiveness in a crisis is to prepare well in advance. Many, including myself, have long argued that we ought to have the vaccines we need ready before pandemics appear. Even if we don't know the precise nature of the threat, it is possible to carry out much of the R&D and some of the human trials on potential candidate vaccines ahead of time, and then tweak them when we know precisely which virus we are dealing with, much as we do with seasonal flu vaccines.

Given that self-interest and competing national priorities are not about to disappear, whatever advance solutions we devise must be capable of working, even in the most hostile geopolitical environments. When it comes to pandemics, one way to achieve this will be to expand regional vaccine manufacturing, particularly across the African continent.

Such expansion can help reduce the impacts of vaccine hoarding and export restrictions and ensure that all countries have regional access. With climate change, we will need similar regional models and widely dispersed supply chains to ensure that future global solutions don't leave the world's poorest and most vulnerable citizens behind.

What's not in doubt, sadly, is that such solutions will be needed. Even as COVID-19 continues to spread, the risk of further pandemics is increasing, with a [2 percent chance](#) of one

occurring in any given year. That prospect will only be made worse by the rebounding effects climate change will have on public health.

To cope we must continue to build global approaches. But above all, we need global approaches that can work in a world where low

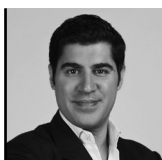
We need global approaches that can work in a world where low trust and strong nationalist responses are sure to go hand-in-hand.

trust and strong nationalist responses are sure to go hand-in-hand. Building those approaches in advance, with proper respect for the persistence of self-interest, is the best way to create solutions that will serve everyone. ■

Can Western Governments Learn From the New Asian Values?

BY PARAG KHANNA

Trust in government is fraying in the U.S., U.K. and other advanced economies, battered by decades of rising inequality, declining state capacity and partisan politics. Many developing nations are themselves wobbling or outright failing under the pressure of volatile markets, technological change and generational demands for change. In sharp contrast, much of Asia is bucking this downward slide.



**Parag
Khanna**

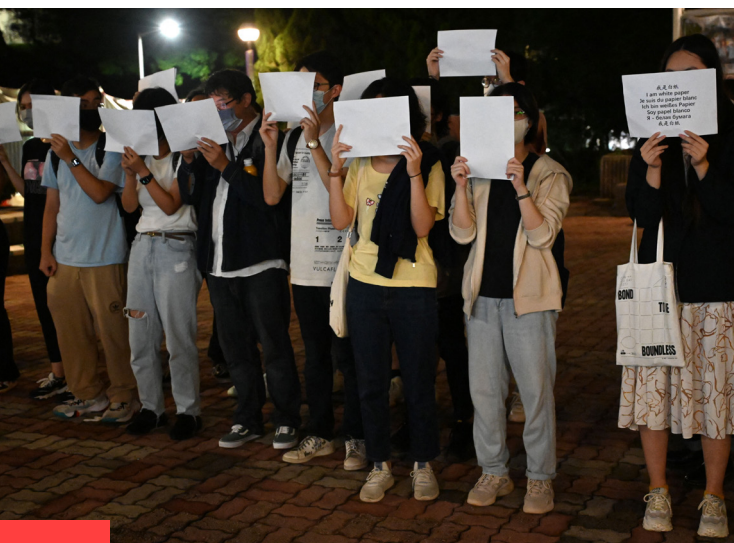
Founder & CEO
of Climate Alpha

Despite some short-term volatility, the trend-line for trust in government in Asian countries over the past decade, as measured by the Edelman Trust Barometer, has been steadily upward or stable — and remains generally higher than in Western societies (see Fig. 2). Other measures confirm this positive trust gap. Asian states have been rising simultaneously in the World Bank's Worldwide Governance Indicators ranking of government effectiveness and the Economist Intelligence Unit's scorecard of inclusiveness, as I noted in my book *The Future is Asian*.

Which raises the question: Is there something the West can learn from Asia about rebuilding trust? While it's difficult to generalize about the world's most populous region, which represents more than forty countries and a dizzying array of civilizations and cultures — some admittedly thoroughly disproved of by the West — I believe the answer is a resounding yes.

The key is to focus on a few common denominators that are noticeable across Asia, in countries rich and poor, democratic and illiberal. I call these tendencies the new Asian values. Whereas in the 1990s the term “Asian values” was shorthand for paternalism, and too often tied to corruption, today it increasingly stands for an almost scientific approach to governance, one that applies trial and error methods to deliver utilitarian outcomes.

a long-term mandate. For their part, whether the mode of their selection is democratic elections or hereditary succession, Asian elites feel strong pressure to deliver national modernization — with no excuses. They remember the late 1990s Asian financial crisis, which toppled governments that were caught off guard, and so they now focus laser-like on infrastructure investment, technology, education and social inclusion. They recruit competent civil servants, equip them with rigorous training and competitive pay and empower them to manage strong bureaucracies. Legitimacy is based on performance outputs, not just democratic inputs.



Three principles underlie these new Asian values. The first is a common reliance on technocratic governance. Don't forget that, despite the large exception of China, more people live in democracies in Asia than in the entire rest of the world. Here, too, there are competitive elections and populist pressures. With few exceptions, Asians are not afraid of their rulers and will toss under-performing governments to the curb — as has been the case in South Korea and the Philippines, for example.

But across the region, there is also a deference to executive leaders, which gives them

The second principle is a strong belief in the government's essential role in driving long-term strategic planning. This is a necessary corrective against over-reliance on free-market orthodoxy. Everywhere, government and industry collaborate to determine what segments of global value chains they seek to capture, which sectors should benefit from subsidies, where to direct R&D expenditure, which companies to target to lure foreign investment and other interventions. Even in hyper-capitalist Singapore, government-linked companies (GLCs) feature prominently in the economy. Laissez-faire is simply not in the Asian vocabulary. Asians don't want to see Wall Street vs. Main Street divisions; they want all stakeholders working towards a common purpose.

The third principle involves taking a cautious and incremental approach towards societal change, one that places a premium on maintaining social harmony. This too is a natural corrective to some of the excesses of the me-first, liberal ideology that prevails in much of the West. It's an attitude rooted in history.



Students hold up white sheets of paper on the campus of the Chinese University of Hong Kong in solidarity with protests over Beijing's "Zero-COVID" policy.

Photo by PETER PARKS/AFP via Getty Images

Most Asian nations embody a delicate tapestry of co-existing ethnicities and religions. Allowing people to shout “fire!” in a crowded theater is not something they need to test to know it’s a bad idea.

Such social conservatism, properly understood, should not provide an excuse for media censorship or discrimination against minorities on the

basis of sexual orientation or other differences, though striking the right balance remains a struggle. But it may explain, for instance, why Asians — outside of China, which is leading the way in developing authoritarian social media — are rightly cynical about the notion that social media might somehow become an ersatz democratic agora, a way to dodge focusing on the hard work of delivering real-world benefits to the public. As regulators across North America and Europe seek to rein in tech companies and other corporate giants, maybe the West will tend toward becoming more Asian rather than the reverse?

Undeniably, too many exceptions remain to both the letter and spirit of these new Asian values. China has cracked down on even the minimal forms of free expression that once seemed possible. India’s government has taken a markedly chauvinistic turn in undermining the country’s once sacred secularism. Still, the overarching pattern of stability in much of Asia reflects the critical presence of a work-

TRUST IN ASIAN GOVERNMENTS RISES

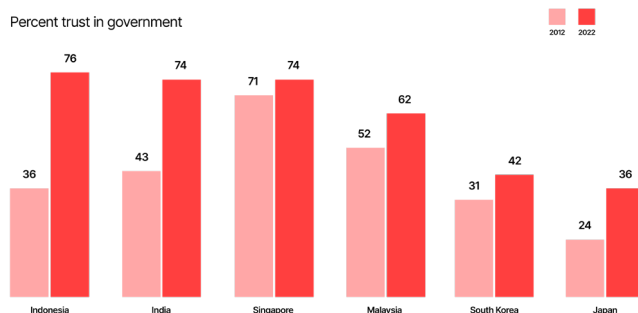


Fig. 2. Sources: 2012 Edelman Trust Barometer and 2022 Edelman Trust Barometer

able social contract, one where citizens trust that leaders on balance are striving to serve a greater good. They may prove bitterly disappointed by governments that are slow to restore democracy (such as the military junta in Thailand) or by the revolving door of democracy (as in Malaysia), but solidarity appears to remain intact.

Furthermore, despite episodes of COVID fatigue, most notably the backlash against China’s reluctance to abandon its “Zero-COVID”

policy, Asian democratic technocracy, at least, has been elevated by the pandemic in the global public mind. On balance, Japan, South Korea, Taiwan and Singapore have proven to be role models for their blend of competence and transparency. Expertise is not shunned,

law and order are respected, citizens are willing to make sacrifices for the common good and governments spared no expense to protect families, workers and small businesses adversely affected by the COVID-19 lockdowns.

**Asians don’t
want to see Wall Street
vs. Main Street divisions;
they want all stakeholders
working towards a
common purpose.**



They embody a far healthier relationship between rationalism and freedom than, say, the U.S. or Britain today.

Ultimately, we ought to move beyond the kind of parsing of East-West divides that I have just engaged in. We should strive, instead, to forge a new form of syncretism, one that combines the best of Western atomism and Eastern holism, humanism and materialism, democracy and technocracy.

What does that lofty aspiration mean when it comes to the specific task of enabling more successful governance? It means focusing less on style and more on substance, less on tweaking the mechanics of the democrat-

ic process and more on the twin pillars of transparency and accountability. These are the insights at the core of the new Asian values. Citizens have a right to know how their government operates. Feedback loops are essential to guide course corrections and promote inclusive progress. Technology should be a platform for disseminating information and gathering feedback to advance national self-improvement, not an unchecked tool for stoking communal rivalries.

We are living in what should be a golden age of cross-border learning. Both West and East have much to share in applying this kind of common sense to the essential task of rebuilding trust in government worldwide. ■



A new high-speed train rolls off for the first time during a ceremony in Qingdao, China in 2021. The China Railway Rolling Stock Corporation claims it to be the world's fastest ground vehicle currently available.

Photo by
Feature
China/Future
Publishing via
Getty Images

Toward Media We Can Trust

BY VIVIAN SCHILLER

As it turns out, I'm incredibly naïve. As a life-long journalist, I thought I was a savvy observer of the volatility and impermanence of state systems of governance. From the failed promise of democracy in Russia after the end of the Cold War to the reemergence of the Taliban in Afghanistan to the crack down on civil society in Nicaragua, I was attuned to the fragility of nations in every part of the world. Except at home.



Vivian Schiller

Executive Director
of Aspen Digital at
the Aspen Institute

To me, the system of government in the U.S. was like gravity or breathing. It was just there – it would always be there and required no tending.

I've now come to my senses. Gradually and then suddenly, democracy in the U.S. has arrived at the brink. The recent midterms brought examples of repudiation of some of the worst anti-democracy candidates, but we are far from out of the woods. And if there is to be a constitutional crisis in the coming few years, I now believe it will be due largely to lack of trust: in institutions, in our fellow citizens and, most of all, in the media.

What on earth happened?

Three forces collided to bring us to this brink.

First, news organizations are going under, especially at the local level. This slow-motion collapse of the business has [claimed 2,200 newsrooms](#) in the U.S. between 2005

and 2020 and put about [30,000 journalists out of work](#) between 2008 and 2020. Large parts of the country are now local deserts, lacking any professional reporting by members of the community for their neighbors.

There is a direct correlation between robust local news and civic participation. The act of reading a newspaper alone can [encourage 13 percent of non-voters to vote](#), according to one analysis. But at least [one-fifth of the U.S. live](#) in a community without a local news source. And when news organizations disappear, that vacuum is typically filled with junk. So-called “pink slime” websites masquerading as news spread disinformation and conspiracy theories to advance a political agenda. Facebook groups and other closed channels are fertile ground for falsehoods, further driving residents into opposing camps.

The second contributing factor to distrust is attacks on a free press from political and civic leaders. This is especially true in Central and Eastern Europe and the global South where the ability of news organizations to operate unfettered has fallen to record lows, according to [Reporters Sans Frontières](#), a journalism non-profit. Things got worse during the pandemic as autocrats cracked down on the media using the pretense of promoting public safety. Even in the U.S., former President Trump’s signature attacks on the media were correlated to an increase in assaults. American journalists [suffered a record 438 physical attacks in 2020](#), according to the Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press.

The third contributing factor — and arguably the fuel that drives the greatest distrust in information — has been the rise of social media

(where I worked for a while). By extracting the data from our movements around the web, the platforms are able to keep us online longer by targeting content — often falsehoods — that drive us further into polarized camps and, worse, down rabbit holes of hate and bigotry.

This is the fertile ground in which the January 6 insurrection took root, where genocide in Myanmar grew and where Russia advanced its baseless claim on the sovereign nation of Ukraine. Facebook has chosen to walk away from news rather than fix its content moderation challenge. And now Twitter, which has been in

some ways an essential supply line of critical information, and where I once served as head of news, is undergoing a potentially life-threatening transformation under Elon Musk. As TikTok rises in dominance, its vulnerabilities as a vector of false claims are becoming increasingly apparent. Data from the 2022 Edelman Trust Barometer shows global trust in tech continuing to fall — especially trust in social media. That is probably because that tech has seriously let us down.

If there is to be a constitutional crisis in the coming few years, I now believe it will be due largely to lack of trust: in institutions, in our fellow citizens and, most of all, in the media.

So where do we go from here?

There are no easy answers, of course, but there are some shorter- and longer-term actions that collectively can help build trust in information and media, and by doing so, increase trust in each other. Last year, Aspen Digital, the program I run at the Aspen Institute, convened the [Commission on Information Disorder](#) to address the crisis of mis- and disinformation, particularly in the U.S. This group of academics, journalists, philanthropists, elected officials of both parties, tech and First Amendment experts offered [16 recommendations](#). I draw liberally from this report here.

1. Invest in local media

We need locally owned and operated newsrooms in every community in the U.S. This is not exactly a return to the “good old days,” as even when newspapers were more ubiquitous, they underserved communities of color and other marginalized groups. Rather, as our report offered, we need “substantial, long-term investment in local journalism that informs and empowers citizens, especially in underserved and marginalized communities who are most likely to be harmed by, or are most vulnerable to, mis- or disinformation.” Making this happen will require a portfolio of revenue streams from philanthropy, local businesses, and yes, you, dear reader. When I was CEO of NPR, I witnessed first-hand the power of public engagement with local news operations. Now, newer organizations like the American Journalism Project and Report for America are showing promise by funding promising local newsrooms and incubating new sustainable business models.

2. Bridge the divides between citizens

We’re talking past each other. It’s not entirely our fault – we’ve been conditioned by all the aforementioned factors to stop listening to each other. New methodologies are emerging to help people learn deep listening and empathy at scale. This may sound like a pipedream but organizations like Polis, Local Voices Network and the Front Porch Forum are demonstrating the possibility of a news kind of platforms “in which purposeful design combined with intentional adoption by communities of users can provide communication spaces that are well suited to civic dialogue and understanding.”

3. Tech company policy change

Meaningful social media regulation is unlikely in the near future, in the U.S. at least. The factors tearing us apart make it improbable. That doesn’t mean we should let up on pressuring the leading companies to do the right thing. Naming

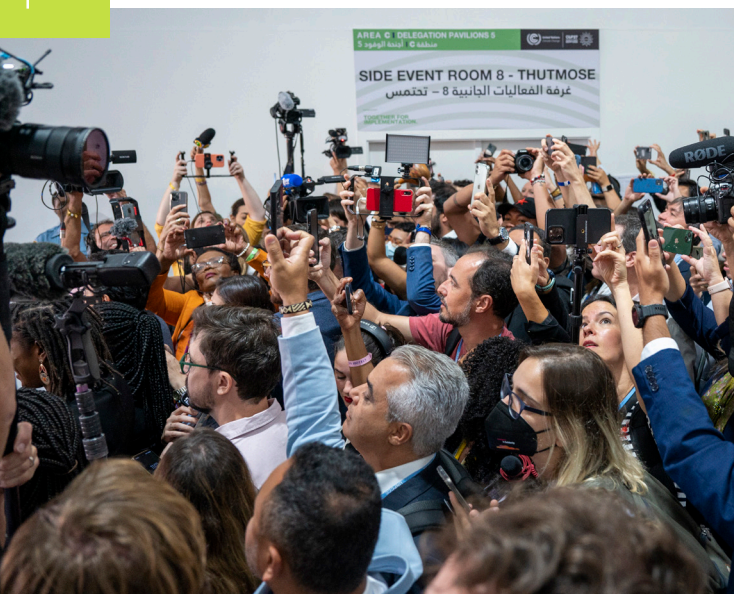
and shaming those practices that harm society has, over the years, driven changes such as stronger protection of minors online and led to generally more robust content moderation (current events at Twitter notwithstanding). But this is nowhere near enough. We must continue to demand far greater transparency and accountability. Private companies that feed the social media economy through their advertising and other spending have a big role to play here, too.

4. Media literacy

At the same time that we examine near-term solutions, we would be wise to explore the possibilities of generational change through a

Journalists take photos and videos during the arrival of the new Brazilian President Lula da Silva at the UN Climate Summit COP27.

Photo by Christophe Gateau/picture alliance via Getty Images



transformation of civic education to equip young people with far more sophisticated media literacy. To be clear, we're not talking about telling kids which news outfits to pick and choose. Neither should we expect them to become sourcing experts. But let's at least give them a grounding in how our system of government operates from the national to the local level, educate them on the critically important role of a free press and expand their radar for detecting things that sound too good to be true or are aligned too comfortably with their preconceived notions. The Commission recommends that we "expand investment and innovation in information literacy and media literacy collaborations to integrate evidence-based prescriptions directly into online interventions." Groups like the News Literacy Project are already [seeing early sign of progress](#).

5. Accountability norms

For years, meaningful accountability has been shrinking as one of the most important protections against leaders in the public and private sectors from acting on their worst impulses. As the Commission stated, we must "call on community, corporate, professional and political leaders to promote new norms that create personal and professional consequences within their communities and networks for individuals who willfully violate the public trust and use their privilege to harm the public."

This might include professional organizations holding their members accountable or encouraging advertisers to stay away from platforms that continue to sow distrust in our governance system. To reinforce this, news organizations should of course continue to hold public officials and business leaders to account when they lie.

None of these remedies alone will solve the problem of low trust in the media. But together they might start to make a dent. As the Commission has presented our report to Congress, to tech companies, to private industry and civil society groups, we have been heartened by the widespread resolve to address this unique threat to our precious and fragile democracy. Now for the hard work of turning this vision into reality. ■



↓

A member of a rifle company speaks with journalists in the Zaporizhzhia region of southeastern Ukraine.

Photo by
Dmytro
Smoliyenko
/ Ukrinform/
Future
Publishing via
Getty Images

Why It's Time For Business to Lead **With Purpose**

BY HUBERT JOLY

People have increasingly concluded that government will not, or cannot, do what it takes to address today's major issues. Their hope — their expectation — is that business can not only do what it does well — employ people, serve customers and generate a profit — but also help address society's biggest challenges.



**Hubert
Joly**

Former Chairman, CEO
of Best Buy & Senior
Lecturer at Harvard
Business School

The 2022 Edelman Trust Barometer surveyed 36,000 people around the world and found that business is the most trusted institution at 61 percent (ahead of NGOs at 59 percent, government at 52 percent and media at 50 percent), with 77 percent saying they trust “My Employer.”

For many business leaders this can feel daunting, as the problems the world is facing — from a health crisis, an economic crisis, stubborn societal issues, racial inequity, an environmental time bomb and geopolitical tensions — can appear to be beyond the reach of any individual business.

In the face of this, business leaders — any leader for that matter — have three options: They can choose to surrender and decide they are not equipped to respond to the expectation the public has of them, they can try and treat some of these issues the best they can at the margin or they can decide to make this time their “finest hour.”

Taking the higher road is not easy, and it is definitely not what has traditionally been expected from us in our business leadership roles. But pursuing a higher purpose, I believe, can not only help address some of the world's most serious challenges, it can also expand a company's growth opportunities and lift an organization's energy as teams embrace the chance to make a meaningful difference. This is true when the higher purpose is defined in a way that it can help address some of the world's pressing issues.

This view is based on more than just wishful thinking. I've personally observed this phenomenon, again and again, in my career.

First, the bigger a team makes its purpose, the higher the energy level among that team can rise. I witnessed this recently as I was spending time with the leadership team of a large insurance company. They were working on advancing a specific social impact business initiative. At some point, the discussion moved to considering a broader, more fundamental re-foundation of the company around the original purpose of their industry. Insurance, remember, was born as a way to provide society better protection against catastrophic losses. By enabling people to live a more worry-free life, it also allowed them to take more risk, which helped fuel economic growth.

What might a modern version of getting back to such a core mission entail? Imagine, when it comes to climate change, advising people and companies on actions to minimize their environmental risks and carbon footprint, using information to warn policy holders of extreme weather events ahead of time and helping them build back better by using more sus-

tainable materials and solutions. Or consider creating a health strategy that would go beyond just paying claims by offering a range of health-related services aimed at keeping customers healthy. Would it be possible to serve more customers at the bottom of the pyramid, who have been excluded from the insurance market, by tailoring products and services based on their unique needs and eliminating superfluous elements of coverage? I felt the energy level go up 10 times as the team got excited about how such a potential re-foundation could potentially improve the lives of millions.

Similarly, when I was speaking with the CEO of a company that deals with global water and its challenges, I saw the same elevation of engagement, excitement and energy once we honed

in on the company's mission and ability to "save the world." Even without changing the portfolio of activities, raising their sights changed the meaning and urgency of the work. Knowing your true purpose shines an essential and irreplaceable light that makes it easier to move forward with courage and confidence.

Knowing your true purpose shines an essential and irreplaceable light that makes it easier to move forward with courage and confidence.

Pursuing a higher purpose is not only energizing, it can also create compelling growth opportunities. By defining its business around a noble purpose rather than merely selling products or services, a company can not only capture a bigger share of the pie – it can pursue a bigger pie. Here are a few examples:

- ◆ By defining its potential market around all transactions, including cash, Mastercard has vastly expanded its market. For example, it can address the needs of poor unbanked individuals worldwide, not just serve high-net-worth credit card customers.

- ◆ PayPal's purpose of democratizing financial services aims to ensure that everyone, regardless of background or economic standing, can access affordable, convenient and secure products and services to take control of their finances. By helping the underserved and the unbanked, PayPal has opened new revenue streams while making it less "expensive to be poor."

Of course, there can sometimes be tensions between addressing an important societal need and confronting commercial realities. Specifically, business growth can be, and has too often been, a driver of negative externality. But the role of leaders is to identify the potential tensions between doing good and doing well and to lean into them to create win-win-win outcomes.

One example: I like how Best Buy's recycling program, which we grew when I was CEO and helps customers get rid of old electronics, helped develop a market in the retrieval and recycling of key components, while bringing extra traffic to our stores. Another: I admire how Ralph Lauren has made its focus on timeless style environmentally friendly by design. The latest example is its investment in a revolutionary dyeing platform that could transform how the fashion industry colors cotton – more sustainably, more effectively and faster, with the aim of delivering a scalable zero waste-water cotton dyeing system.



- ◆ By pursuing its purpose to make the world cleaner, safer and healthier, Ecolab has unlocked vast opportunities to grow its business while helping protect people and preserve vital resources.
- ◆ Because it declared its purpose was to enrich lives through technology – not simply to thrive as a retailer – Best Buy accelerated its growth strategy in part by finding new ways to help aging seniors retain their home-based independence.

None of this is easy. Getting purpose right requires leaders to develop new skills, such as the ability to embrace all stakeholders in the definition of their strategies, to innovate radically or to partner with public or private organizations with complementary capabilities.

People around the world are placing greater trust in business as a conduit to a better future. History will judge what we do and each of us has a choice to make. I believe now is a great leadership moment. Leaders can decide to help create a future that does not exist yet but needs to be better than what we have now. ■



Customers leave a Best Buy store on Black Friday.

Photo by Kena Betancur/Getty Images

Reviving International Cooperation in an **Age of Distrust**

BY GARGEE GHOSH

One of the most obvious victims of the erosion of trust and spike in political polarization in recent years has been something that that many of us came to assume was a natural feature of the post-World War II geopolitical landscape: international cooperation.



Gargee Ghosh

President, Global Policy & Advocacy, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

International cooperation has been vital in almost every area of human endeavor — from delivering mail across borders to helping the Internet function to manning the space station. International cooperation in development over the past 60 years has profoundly improved the human condition to the benefit of all, particularly the most vulnerable.

Yet, as the 2022 Edelman Trust Barometer has so effectively catalogued, disturbingly high numbers of people worry they are being lied to by leaders in their governments, business leaders and the media (see Fig. 3). Low- and middle-income countries felt like they were too often an afterthought during the roll-out of vaccines during the pandemic — not to mention the subsequent economic crisis and current global spike in food insecurity. Populations within high-income countries view each other warily across a political divide that can often feel like an abyss. Important multilateral institutions have become increasingly gridlocked as their member states wrangle amid escalating tensions.

So how can cooperation work at a time when distrust is the default? Well, history suggests that some of the most important steps forward in global cooperation came even at moments when trust was difficult to come by, and that these joint actions helped rebuild trust. And why does cooperation work even at moments when animosity runs high? In short, cooperation can work because it delivers results and is built around mutual self-interest.

Consider the case of smallpox. In 1966, smallpox was killing as many as two million people and infecting another 15 million annually. In a move that surprised even those who proposed it, the U.S., Soviet Union and the World Health Organization agreed to a joint effort to try and eradicate the disease. This was a remarkable bit of cooperation coming just four years after the Cuban Missile Crisis had brought the world to the brink of nuclear war. (But as a reminder of the thick atmosphere of lingering distrust, the World Health Organization insisted that an American be put in charge of the eradication effort because they feared it would fail and didn't want the UN to be blamed.)

By 1977, the last case of wild smallpox was recorded in Somalia and the world had succeeded in eradicating a disease for the first time. The fruits of this labor were enormous. Not only were millions and millions of lives saved, the Center for Global Development estimates that the U.S. saves the total of all its contributions to the smallpox eradication campaign every 26 days because it no longer needed to vaccinate Americans against the disease.

And why did it succeed? Well according to D.A. Henderson, the American physician who spearheaded the effort, it was certainly not because there was perfect alignment between

governments and the United Nations. Instead, Henderson and most others who have looked at the effort credit the remarkable work of the some 150,000 frontline workers who administered vaccines and the group of international middle managers who worked with them. The esprit de corps and dedication of the people on the ground — who knew the ravages of smallpox all too well — was decisive.

Another example: Amid rising scientific concern about the impact of chlorofluorocarbons on the ozone layer, UN Member states and concerned citizens gathered in Montreal in 1987. Their subsequent agreement, which aimed to protect the ozone layer by phasing out the production and consumption of some 100 ozone-depleting chemicals, was a landmark in environmental

cooperation, and the first treaty in United Nations history to be ratified by every single country on earth.

Cooperation was again a success with the agreement helping phase out 98 percent of global ozone-depleting chemicals. But before we mistake this as the product of some golden era of international trust, it is useful to remember that

1987 was the same year that President Reagan stood in Berlin and implored Soviet Premier Gorbachev to “tear down this wall!”

The agreement in Montreal did not happen overnight, and the imperative to act on chlorofluorocarbons had been most strikingly highlighted in groundbreaking research by Mario Molina and Sherwood Rowland in 1974, a full decade earlier. Patient diplomacy by Canada, Finland, Norway and Sweden helped lay the groundwork for the United States and the United Nations Environmental Program to mount a campaign to reduce ozone-depleting

History suggests that some of the most important steps forward in global cooperation came even at moments when trust was difficult to come by, and that these joint actions helped rebuild trust.

chemicals around the globe. Accounts of the successful diplomatic process give particular credit to the compelling scientific evidence, the emergence of commercial alternatives to chlorofluorocarbons, strong leadership by the United States, and the steady engagement of civil society in pushing for change.

So what would cooperation look like in today's divided environment? As in the past, focusing on steps that would benefit the world's most vulnerable is an excellent place to start. Three steps in particular stand out:

Feed the hungry

Acute food insecurity shot up around the world by nearly 25 percent last year – an increase of nearly 40 million people over the already record high of 2020. This is especially dangerous for people in poor countries in the Global South, where families sometimes spend upwards of 50 percent of their income on food. There is no more painful reminder of our collective shortcomings than a hungry child. We need to ensure that nutritionally vulnerable women and children have access to the nutrients they need and get the special nutritional products that are incredibly effective at treating and prevent-

RISING WORRIES WE'RE BEING LIED TO

Percent who worry

Change, 2021 to 2022

67%



Journalists and reporters

66%



My country's government leaders

63%



Business leaders

are **purposely trying to mislead people** by saying things they know are false or gross exaggerations

Fig. 3. Source: 2022 Edelman Trust Barometer

ing the severe form of malnutrition known as “wasting” to the people who need it the most. We also need to address the immediate need for affordable fertilizer for small-scale farmers in Africa, or else we will see incomes and harvest plunge and malnutrition spike even further. We also need to boost investment in long-term agricultural research knowing that if we don't get ahead of the impact of climate change, we will be stuck in repeated cycles of crisis.

Learn from the pandemic

While the response to COVID-19 revealed remarkable progress in some areas, particularly in the speed with which a vaccine was developed, it also starkly underscored how unprepared the world was for such a major health crisis with millions of lives lost

Volunteers pass a box of food on the destroyed bridge over the Oskil River during an aid mission to Kupiansk in eastern Ukraine.

Photo by Yasuyoshi CHIBA / AFP (Photo by YASUYOSHI CHIBA/AFP via Getty Images)



and the global economy contracting by over 4 percent and more than \$8.5 trillion in economic output and several years of development progress lost.

Now is the time, while the lessons are still fresh, to make the investments needed to avoid the next global health crisis. First and foremost, we need to strengthen health systems and invest in primary health care in the Global South so that these systems are better prepared to tackle not only pandemics but the numerous infectious diseases that remain a scourge for far too many families. In concert with this, we need to catalyze a Global Health Emergency Corps of experienced, integrated and expert response teams — a corps of global first responders for pandemics as it were — able to mobilize and contain outbreaks before they become a global threat. Such preventive, forward- thinking action would not be free, but it would cost a fraction of what has been spent on dealing with this pandemic — let alone the next one.

Show them the money

At a time when there are unprecedented demands on traditional development assistance, we need to pursue common sense reforms to international financial institutions that will free up additional resources, drive accelerated growth, address climate change and preserve vital investments in healthier and more prosperous populations. The G20, among others, building upon widespread calls for action from the Global South, is now pushing for ways to expand financing for the developing world.

This includes expanding lending to low- and middle-income countries, more flexibly re-programming money made available during the pandemic, protecting and expanding traditional grants for development and addressing the growing debt crisis faced by many of these same low- and middle-income countries. These fundamental reforms of international finance will never elicit the same emotional response as a hungry child, but they have the potential to fundamentally bend the arc of history over time.



Red Cross members help distribute cholera vaccines in Akkar, Lebanon as part of the World Health Organization's vaccination campaign launched with the support of the World Health Organization.

Photo by Houssam Shbaro/Anadolu Agency via Getty Images



In this era of mistrust, the surest way back to common ground, as the 2022 Edelman Trust Barometer rightly argues, is to demonstrate tangible progress and show that we can work together for the common good. While I may be biased, doing so to help the world's most vulnerable realize a brighter future seems like a great place to start. ■

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Matthew Bishop

Matthew Bishop spent 25 years as an editor and writer at The Economist, including as business editor and New York Bureau Chief. He also launched and moderated several Economist conferences, including on Fintech, the Future of Work, and Investing for Impact. He then led the Rockefeller Foundation's Bellagio Center, convening global experts to develop practical solutions to some of the world's most urgent challenges. He is currently a visiting fellow at the Brookings Institute; the LSE; and the Sorenson Impact Center. He has authored several books, including *Philanthrocapitalism*; *The Road From Ruin*; and *Economics A To Z*. A sought after speaker, media commentator and advisor, he has interviewed/moderated many leaders from politics, business and entertainment. He is a cofounder of the Social Progress Index, #givingtuesday and 17 Rooms. He was honored by the World Economic Forum as a Young Global Leader. He served on the Sykes Inquiry on Restoring Trust in the Investment System and on the G8 Taskforce on Social Impact Investing.

Rik Kirkland

Rik Kirkland, formerly Fortune and McKinsey & Company. As Director of Publishing, he led McKinsey & Company's global print and online activities from 2008 to June 2020, growing its audience fivefold. From 2000-2005, Rik was the editor of FORTUNE magazine, which under his leadership was three times nominated as a finalist for general excellence by the American Society of Magazine Editors and won numerous other awards. Previously he served as FORTUNE's Washington editor, Europe editor, International editor and Deputy Editor. A member of the Council on Foreign Relations, he has been a frequent guest on CNN and CNBC and a moderator at the WEF in Davos, FORTUNE's Global Forum, Bloomberg's New Economy Forum and the Microsoft CEO Summit. Currently Rik works with select clients on editorial priorities and serves as an advisor to McKinsey and the Edelman Trust Institute, on the board of the International Center for Journalists and plays in a rock band, The Prowlers.

Charles Conn

Charles Conn is co-founder of Monograph Capital, a life sciences venture firm. He was previously CEO of the Rhodes Trust in Oxford. He serves as Board Chair of Patagonia and sits on The Nature Conservancy European Council. Charles was founding CEO of Ticketmaster-Citysearch and led the company through its IPO and acquisition of Match.com. He began his career at McKinsey, where he was a Partner. He is a graduate of Harvard Business School, Boston University, and Oxford University, where he was a Rhodes Scholar. He is co-author of *Bulletproof Problem Solving: The One Skill That Changes Everything*, a bestseller.

Dr. Vera Songwe

Dr. Vera Songwe is co-chair of the High Level Panel on Climate Finance. She was previously Under-Secretary-General at the United Nations and Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa. She is a nonresident senior fellow at the Brookings Institution. Dr. Songwe has been recognized as one of Africa's 100 most influential people in 2020. She recently co-authored a book entitled *"Regional Integration in West Africa: Is There a Role for a Single Currency?"* with Eswar Prasad.

She has spent the last three years championing the cause for additional liquidity for emerging markets and the need for a new global financial architecture fit for the 21st century development challenges.

She has held a number of senior positions at the World Bank, and the International Finance Corporation. Her main areas of interest are fiscal and monetary policy, innovative financing mechanisms for development, agriculture, energy, and economic governance. She has extensive experience working in Africa, East Asia, Europe and Central Asia and South Asia regions.

Prior to joining the Bank, Dr. Songwe was a Visiting Scholar at the University of Southern California and at the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis. Dr. Songwe holds a PhD. in Mathematical Economics from the Center for Operations Research & Econometrics from the Catholic University of Louvain-la-Neuve in Belgium. She holds a BA in Economics and a BA in Political Science from the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.

Nandan Nilekani

Nandan Nilekani was Founding Chairman of the Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI), a Cabinet Minister rank, from 2009-2014. Most recently, Nandan has co-founded and is Chairman of EkStep, a not-for-profit effort to create a learner-centric, technology-based platform to improve basic literacy and numeracy for millions of children. Nilekani was born in Bengaluru. In 2005, he received the Joseph Schumpeter prize for innovative services in economy, economic sciences and politics. In 2006, he was awarded the Padma Bhushan and named Businessman of the year by Forbes Asia. TIME magazine listed him as one of the 100 most influential people in the world in 2006 and 2009. He also received the 22nd Nikkei Asia Prize for Economic & Business Innovation 2017. He is the author of *Imagining India: Ideas for the New Century* and the co-author of *Rebooting India: Realizing a Billion Aspirations* with Viral Shah.

Tanuj Bhojwani

Tanuj Bhojwani is a storyteller who codes. He holds a chemical engineering degree from IIT Bombay. He also attended Ashoka University and studied liberal arts at the Young India Fellowship. His training in the sciences and humanities allows him to craft narratives about technology that are accessible without sacrificing technical depth. As a former Fellow at iSPIRT Foundation, Tanuj worked on policy issues related to digital identity, payments, data protection and drones. Prior to iSPIRT, Tanuj has been a VC and an entrepreneur. When not reading or

writing, Tanuj spends his time obsessing over board games, digital productivity systems and magic. He lives and works in Bengaluru.

Manu Meel

Manu Meel is passionate about empowering young people to bridge divides. He believes that the biggest threat to American democracy is affective polarization and growing misunderstanding between Americans. As CEO of BridgeUSA, Manu is currently building the largest and fastest growing student movement to bridge our differences and change how we talk politics. Manu contributes to several news outlets, works on pro-democracy efforts nationally, and advises political leaders on reducing polarization. In the past, Manu interned as an associate at the venture capital firm Amplo and at the Department of State as a political analyst in counterterrorism. His work has been featured in The New York Times, The Washington Post, and other media platforms. In 2022, Manu was recognized on the Forbes 30 Under 30 list for leading BridgeUS.

Dr. Seth Berkley

Dr. Seth Berkley is a medical doctor and infectious disease epidemiologist. He joined Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, as its CEO in 2011. Gavi helps protect nearly half the world's children, vaccinating more than 1 billion unique children in just over two decades, reducing vaccine-preventable child deaths by 70 percent and preventing more than 16 million future deaths. In 2020, he co-created COVAX, the only global multilateral solution aimed at ensuring equitable access to COVID-19 vaccines for people in all countries, regardless of their ability to pay. Prior to Gavi, Dr. Berkley served as President and CEO of the International AIDS Vaccine Initiative (IAVI).

Parag Khanna

Parag Khanna is a leading global strategy advisor, world traveler, and bestselling author. He is Founder & CEO of Climate Alpha, an AI-powered analytics platform to future-proof global real estate, and Founder & Managing Partner of FutureMap, a data and scenario-based strategic advisory firm. He holds a Ph.D. from the London School of Economics and Bachelors and Masters degrees from Georgetown University. His most recent book is *MOVE*.

Vivian Schiller

Vivian Schiller joined the Aspen Institute in January 2020 as Executive Director of Aspen Digital, which empowers policymakers, civic organizations, companies, and the public to be responsible stewards of technology and media in the service of an informed, just, and equitable world.

A longtime executive at the intersection of journalism, media and technology, Schiller has held executive roles at some of the most respected media organizations in the world. Those include: President and CEO of NPR; Global Chair of News at Twitter; General Manager of NYTimes.com; Chief Digital Officer of NBC News; Chief of the Discovery Times Channel, a joint venture of

The New York Times and Discovery Communications; and Head of CNN documentary and long form divisions. Documentaries and series produced under her auspices earned multiple honors, including three Peabody Awards, four Alfred I. DuPont-Columbia University Awards, and dozens of Emmys.

Schiller is a member of the Council on Foreign Relations; and a Director of the Scott Trust, which owns The Guardian.

Hubert Joly

Hubert Joly is a senior lecturer at the Harvard Business School and the former Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of Best Buy.

He is also a member of the board of directors of Johnson & Johnson and Ralph Lauren Corporation, a member of the International Advisory Board of HEC Paris, and a Trustee of the New York Public Library and the Minneapolis Institute of Art.

Joly has been ranked as one of the top 100 CEOs in the world by the Harvard Business Review, one of the top 30 CEOs in the world by Barron's and one of the top 10 CEOs in the U.S. by Glassdoor. He has also been recognized as one the top 50 management thinkers in the world by Thinkers50 and received the organization's 2021 Leadership Award.

He is the author of the best-selling and highly acclaimed book *The Heart of Business – Leadership Principles for the Next Era of Capitalism*.

Gargee Ghosh

Gargee Ghosh oversees government affairs, economic policy, advocacy, and philanthropic partnerships in support of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation's goals around the world. She is also responsible for the foundation's regional offices and strategic presence in Europe and the Asia-Pacific region.

Her previous positions at the foundation included director of the Development Policy & Finance team and director of the Program Advocacy & Communications team. In those roles, she worked with international finance and economic decision-makers and led the development and implementation of the foundation's issue advocacy and communications strategies.

Gargee previously held senior positions at McKinsey & Company, Google, and the Center for Global Development, and she served on the board of CAMFED USA and on President Barack Obama's Global Development Council.

She holds graduate degrees in development economics from the University of Oxford and in international relations (MSFS) from Georgetown University, and she has an undergraduate degree in economics from the University of Victoria in Canada.

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Publication Editor: Matthew Bishop

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