

SEÁN CLEARY

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Seán Cleary is Chairman of *Strategic Concepts (Pty) Ltd*, Executive Vice Chair of the *FutureWorld Foundation*, and a Director of Companies. He studied social sciences and law and has an MBA from Henley Business School.

He is on the Faculty of the *Parmenides Foundation*, lectures on global corporate strategy, conflict resolution and development economics in South Africa, the U.S and Europe; and national security at the *South African Defence Staff College*. He chairs the Advisory Boards of the *Global Economic Symposium* and *Operation Hope*; is a Board member of the *Salzburg Global Seminar*, the *Rocky Mountain Institute* and the *Carbon War Room*; a Trustee of the *South African Foundation for Conciliation*; and a Strategic Adviser to the *World Economic Forum*.

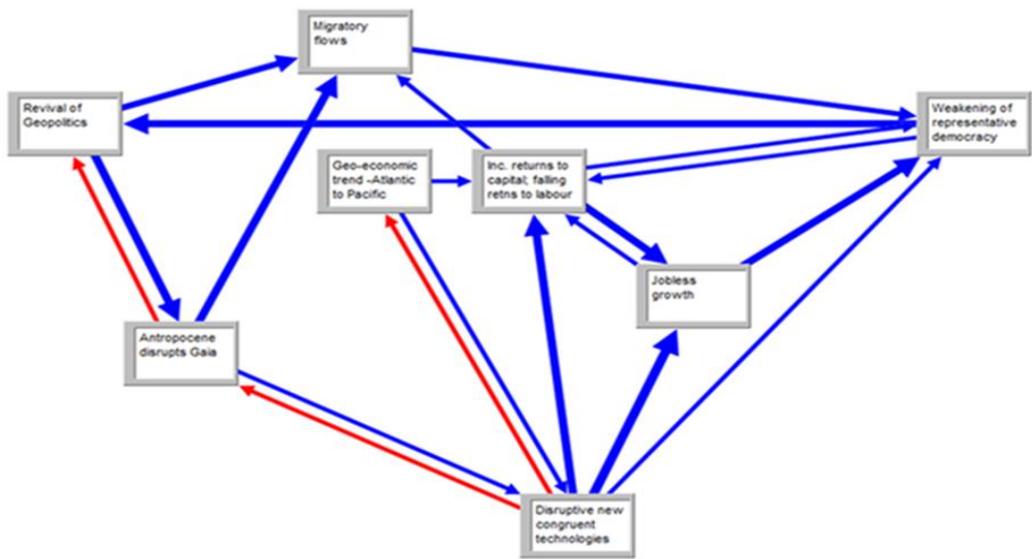
He served in the South African Navy, before a diplomatic career in the Middle East, USA and Namibia, where he initiated negotiations between Namibia's political parties, the release of political prisoners and adoption of a Bill of Rights, *en route* to independence. He was a member of the Facilitating and Preparatory Committees of the *South African Peace Accord* and Chairman of the *Working Group on the Code of Conduct for Political Parties and Organizations*, an EXCO Member of the NEPAD (*New Programme for Africa's Development*) Business Steering Group, a Member of the Board of *LEAD International*; and the *International Foundation for Electoral Systems*, and served on national Advisory Committees in Namibia, and as Senior Adviser to the Arab Business Council.

He is a recipient of academic and public service awards and has been published in South African, British, German and U.S. journals. He is the co-author, with Thierry Malleret, of two books on risk, *Resilience to Risk* (Human and Rousseau, 2006), and *Global Risks* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), and has contributed chapters to several others, including *Learning from Catastrophes* (Wharton, 2009).

Challenges of Global Complexity

Deepening cultural and geopolitical fault-lines, the financial crisis and the unconventional monetary policies employed to address it, widespread chronic youth unemployment, inequality of wealth and income, and weak governance of the commons, have eroded trust in institutions and promoted populism and sectarianism.

These are not discrete geopolitical, geoeconomic, macroeconomic, societal, cultural, legal, and technological challenges. Each is related to others in a complex system defined chiefly by extreme sensitivity to initial conditions; multiple (meta)stable states, and a propensity for self-organizing criticality. One needs to explore the relationships between long range geo-economic trends; higher returns to capital and falling returns to labour, reinforced by disruptive congruent technologies, and leading to jobless growth; the return of geopolitics prompting culturally stressful migratory flows; the weakening of representative democracy; and the impacts of humanity in the Anthropocene:



We may be facing the equivalent of a spontaneous symmetry break, a point at which the working of a complex system transitions from a symmetric but ill-defined state, into an asymmetrical state, although the underlying laws are invariant. The profound, multivariate asymmetry between the scale and depth of the global economy, the absence of a commensurate, inclusive community, and the defective state (or absence) of a global polity may make this inevitable. On a related plane – partially orthogonal to the first – the impact of a far more numerous (7.2 billion), economically and technologically empowered human species is influencing the workings of the bio-geosphere in unprecedented ways that we can identify individually, but not comprehend systemically.

This goes far beyond climate: The concept of planetary boundaries (Rockström et al, 2009 <http://www.nature.com/news/specials/planetaryboundaries/index.html>) is familiar, but despite continuing impressive research, the nature and workings of the system are undetermined. (Steffen et al. 2015. Planetary Boundaries: Guiding human development on a changing plane, Science, January 2015, <http://www.stockholmresilience.org/21/research/research-news/1-15-2015-planetary-boundaries-2.0---new-and-improved.html>),

