

Towards An Enabling Multilateralism:
Rethinking the Current World Order

By

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Introduction: Warning Bells!

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen

It has become a truism to say that security must involve human security, not just the security of states and their boundaries. Yet the true and fullest meaning of this simple statement is profound; for it raises a host of other questions about the Multilateral System and the global order we live under. Allow me to articulate a personal view as to the evolving world order, the role of the UN generally and the SC specifically, and the challenges that loom ahead, challenges that will require clear thinking and deft diplomacy to bring about the kind of improvement in the multilateral world order that we hope to see.

Twenty years ago, exactly twenty years ago, in August 1995, I stood in Stockholm and warned that if the wars of the 20th century had been about oil, the wars of the 21st century would be about water. “Water Wars” was a theme picked up by many, and I still stand by that warning: if we do not change how we manage our affairs, that is what will happen. To those who still occasionally challenge me, I point out that the century is far from over... but we still have time to change our ways.

- We still have time to change our ways to avoid a collapse of the existing world order – and to bring about a new multilateral order that is inclusive and empowering to all the smaller and medium states;

- We still have time to recognize that the security of states is based on the security of the individual and that combatting terrorism is everyone's concern – and to recognize that if military action and muscular policing are required to confront the tides of extremism and violence, we must even more recognize that it is a battle of ideas that is required for we must defeat ideas with ideas;
- We still have time to redesign our economic agenda to take into account the needs of the poorest and the most neglected of the human family – the ruthless allocative efficiency of the market must be tempered by a nurturing and caring international society;
- We still have time recognize that the real wealth of nations lies in their human and social capital, and to give globalization a human face as we renew our fight to limit poverty and abolish hunger;
- We still have time to reverse our destructive ways and protect our environment, to nurture our natural capital and to recognize that the wonderful ecologic system on which we all depend requires our attention and support;
- We still have time to adopt meaningful restraints on our actions that impact on the environment, even if that time is getting shorter and shorter as we squander it away in petty jealousies and minor differences; and
- We still have time to nudge the existing multilateral system into an enabling, inclusive collaborative global system that is flexible yet firm, malleable but strong, where all contribute to the common goals of humanity.

To achieve this, we are here gathered to discuss with candor and openness, with imagination and boldness, and to develop common threads of ideas and directions that combine creativity with realism, and that take us closer to our goal of creating a more enabling multilateralism.

The Unraveling World Order:

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

That enabling Multilateralism will have to take on unprecedented challenges, far removed from the heady idealistic days of the early UN, or the stiff standoff of the cold war, or the exuberance of the end of colonialism. Today, the global political Agenda has become incredibly intertwined with a host of other issues from sustainable development to global economics, from the protection of cultural diversity to the promotion of security in the face of mounting waves of extremism and terrorism. Asymmetric conflicts are becoming the norm, extremist views are becoming common, collapsing governments and failed states are plentiful, and millions are being displaced as countless thousands are being killed. In parallel, we continue to pollute the earth, the oceans and our atmosphere, to rend the gossamer fabric of our natural environment, as greed widens the gaps between the rich and poor in every society.

At the same time, the challenges and opportunities on the international scene have increased by an order of magnitude by the enormous transformation of the world today. The day before yesterday was the first day that more than a billion human beings were simultaneously logged onto Facebook. The volume of information produced by humans which had been estimated at 256 exabytes in 2007, is now being increased by 1-2 exabytes every day! What is an exabyte? It is one billion billion bytes, but that does not mean much. Let me put it that way: it is more than 100,000 times the total amount of text available in the Library of Congress in the USA. And that is being added to our stock of information every day. All this raises all sorts of challenges on privacy and security of individuals and states. It also raises important issues on the traditional meaning of sovereignty: “control of a piece of land and of the people on it”, as increasingly the Internet creates trans-boundary connections both for NGOs and for individuals, as it allows the ethereal movement of funds and ideas across the planet.

Exciting times, exciting challenges, all pointing to the need to think boldly and imaginatively, to seek creative new solutions to old problems... But that ICT revolution and its consequences is a discussion for another day.

So, we are gathered here today at a critical moment in world history. The world order that had so patiently been erected in the last seventy has become unraveled. It is not the end of history as Fukuyama claimed, nor is it the clash of civilizations as Huntington believed... it is much worse.

Today the present world order with its expected norms of behavior for the member states of the United Nations, is being severely challenged.

Today, the specter of war in Europe has been awakened, while on the other side of the Mediterranean the specter of barbarism has been resurrected...

There the world of the middle ages is upon us as the so-called Islamic State wages all-out war and seeks to claim the legacy of the Ottoman empire, if not beyond.. The Fanatics are everywhere from Boko Haram in Nigeria to Al-Qaeda in the Sahara and the Maghreb to the mountains of Afghanistan...

They are trying to impose by force and intimidation their own vision of a state that is medieval in outlook and modern in its weaponry and technology...

That project, and those of somewhat better disguised Islamists, turned the Arab spring into an Islamist winter, as the humanist forces of modernity in those countries fought back.

The Egyptian people, in a magnificent example of people power, came out in their tens of millions and rejected the Islamist project, while Egypt, resurrected, battles fanatics in the Sinai and terrorism at home. And all around Egypt war rages: in Libya, in Yemen, in Sudan, in Syria, in Iraq, in Somalia, and in the vast Sahara...

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen

The world order is in crisis. Democracy is weakening with crises of confidence between people and their elected governments. Fresh thinking is required. I have had the honor to present such analyses and ideas to distinguished gatherings of world leaders at meetings organized by the Nizami Ganjavi Center of Azerbaijan. Let me articulate some of these thoughts here.

Today as our world order lies in shambles we have to try to understand why? What went wrong?

Before we make recommendations for rebuilding the World Order, perhaps we should briefly consider two themes:

- Where did the current world order originally come from? What were its founding principles and ideas?

- Why is it in crisis today? What are the key challenges that we need to address to rebuild trust in a fragmented world?

Allow me to say a few words about each of these questions, before I return to the idea of an empowering multilateralism.

The Foundations of the Current World Order:

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen

The current world order was largely crafted by the western allies after WW2, and there have been **three views of the international order** that have co-existed without any of their contradictions ever being fully sorted out.

One view is the view that emerged from the treaty of Westphalia in 1648 which basically recognized **sovereign states as the building blocs of international legitimacy**, and assumed that governments that had full control of that territory were the legitimate partners for discussions led by authorized representatives of these governments.

But after WW2, Europe changed, and we witnessed **Europe's march toward a Union**. But it did not become the United States of Europe with a unitary central government. Undoubtedly a magnificent experiment to create a community of nations bound together in a supra-national Union, through a series of alliances and relying on soft power to achieve their objectives. That, of course produced its own contradictions, and the variable geometry of the overlapping treaties made these both subtle and complex. It made pursuit of a clear strategy difficult for the union as a whole while important nations had their own agendas to pursue their interests as they saw them.

The second view consisted of a belief in **the peoples of the world**, and assumed that governments that controlled their territories by force, were not necessarily legitimate. This view, captured in “we the peoples”, was articulated in the charter of the UN, and is echoed in the Charter of UNESCO and in other documents. It implied some attention to the forms of governance being exercised in member states was needed. That view held that people are inherently reasonable and inclined toward peaceful compromise and common sense; and it meant that the spread of democratic governance was an, if not the, overarching goal for building the new international order. Ardent supporters of globalization argued that free trade and open markets would uplift individuals, enrich societies and substitute

economic interdependence for traditional international rivalries. That view was buoyed by the collapse of the Soviet Union and the transformation of Eastern Europe.

The third view which did not survive much beyond its initiation, was that multilateral constructs: starting with the UN, with its Security Council, plus the International Court of Justice, and subsequently the International Criminal Court, not to mention other multilateral bodies like the IMF, the WTO and the World Bank, should be the forums where norms are elaborated to govern the behavior of nations, and that all must abide by the international legal regime created by the sovereign nation states acting in consort through these multilateral bodies.

The coexistence of these three points of view has created inherent tensions and conflicts that have never been formally resolved in the last seventy years. But the general thrust of the new world order, that replaced the Cold War, emerged largely with a dominance of the first two viewpoints at the expense of the third. The G-7 or G-8 was replaced by the G-20 but the Security Council remains as it was in 1945. Sovereign states still run their foreign policies and jealously guard their sovereignty (except in Europe where the EU is a somewhat different beast) and increasingly the pressures of certain nations and civil society ask for legitimacy of regimes to be manifested by some form of participatory democratic process.

The Emerging paradigm that came out of the interaction of these three points of view is what we have inherited today.

It became fashionable to argue that with the spread of liberty and democracy there would be a global order that would provide just and lasting peace for all. Globalization and economic interdependence would dissolve traditional international rivalries.

The cold war consolidated that view into the dominant ideological construct. Towards the last decades of the 20th century, the vision seemed to be coming to fruition: The dictatorships of Latin America had largely been replaced by democracies, and with the collapse of the USSR, Eastern Europe was transformed and largely joined the consort of the European nations, forging their ever more perfect Union.

So as the 20th century gave way to the 21st, and for a brief moment, we had the hope to formalize a new world order that would favor democracy, human rights, and open markets and trade and communications. The Internet revolution and

mobile telephony were promising new miracles every day, and the idea of global peace seemed to be within our reach, and we designed the Millennium Development Goals to deal with the burdens of poverty and under-development.

Five major Contradictions

So: What's wrong with that picture? What went wrong?

Well, there are at least **five major contradictions** that have come to a head and make this moment of crisis one of the most serious in history.

The first contradiction is that this set of concepts and ideas is a **totally western creation** and the vast majority of **the rest of the world acquiesced but did not participate in formulating or implementing these visions**. For many, the nation state remained sovereign, and the premium of non-interference in domestic affairs was important, and they started behaving like the European powers of an earlier age.

The second contradiction is the **rise of Muslim fanatics**. These forces have disturbed the stability and order of countries from Indonesia to Nigeria and pose a different challenge than past terrorist movements or rogue states, and now pose a real threat to Europe and America. They are actually trying to undo the existing world order – the “lines in the sand drawn by the Sykes-Picot agreement” during WW1 – and to establish a religious state based on a barbaric, fanatic ideology. They kill far more Muslims than non-Muslims. They are waging fierce wars, create failed states and displace millions of persons.

The challenge here is an ideological one, reminiscent of the rise of other totalitarian ideologies such as communism and Nazism in the early 20th century. Today there is a specter haunting the world and it is the specter of these fanatics. Response to that challenge requires profound rethinking about many things, from diplomacy to military action, from intellectual responses to the relationship of America and Europe to the Muslim minorities among their citizens, all the way to the role of the Muslim majority countries in the new world order. That is a complex topic that deserves a separate discussion on another day.

Third, is the nature of the state itself – which is still the basic formal unit of international life – has been subjected to many pressures.

The challenge in Europe is special. The magnificent creation of the European union out of the ashes of WW2 by combining the erstwhile enemies into a collaborative community of nations is a superb achievement. But Europeans have not yet resolved all the tensions between their union and its component parts. It is a creation that is only half completed, with many new members being integrated into the constructs created by the original six, and more members-in-waiting who have not even crossed the threshold into the EU sanctum. But the EU does not yet have the attributes of a unitary sovereign state. Moreover, the variable geometry of the various military, financial, economic and political treaties that tie different members in different configurations makes for an EU that still lacks the ability to act as a single block on foreign policy. A foreign policy based primarily on “soft power” cannot be very effective in moments of crisis if it lacks the commitment of its member states to a unified strategy.

At its heart, the EU was a means of replacing balance-of-power politics by agreed concepts of legitimacy, and to project a common foreign policy based on “soft power” rather than military threat. The forces of NATO still relied extensively on American arms for their credible deployment.

The challenge in Asia is the opposite of Europe's: Balance-of-power principles prevail unrelated to an agreed concept of legitimacy, driving some disagreements to the edge of confrontation.

The challenge in West Asia and North Africa (WANA) stretching into the horn of Africa is the rapid collapse of the nation states into warring sectarian and ethnic militias with foreign powers backing them as they violate borders and sovereignty at will. **Failed states** unable to control their own territory have no ability to speak as sovereign states in balance-of-power constructs nor do they have the credibility to act on the basis of a conceptual legitimacy.

The fourth contradiction is between Politics and Economics. It is between the development of the international economy with ever freer trade, more Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) and the political institutions that try to govern it. The international economic order is increasingly global and the international political order is still built on the sovereign nation state. Economic globalization and the Internet ignore national political boundaries. The sovereign state reaffirms them, and foreign policy serves the interests of the sovereign states, even as it proclaims its intention to reconcile conflicting national aims with the ideals of world order.

The still incipient international order thus faces a paradox: Its members are pursuing their prosperity by furthering and deepening globalization, but the process produces political reactions that often work counter to these aspirations. Soon, the governments of individual countries are forced to respond to the felt needs of their citizens when these feel the pressure of imports of cheap goods, expensive energy or plentiful immigration.

The fifth contradiction is the obvious need to reinforce the UN and the SC and empower them to play their central role in the global multilateral architecture of the new world order. The efforts to seek an alternative design or forum where the great powers can address the most pressing challenges of our time will only weaken the existing structure further without producing any viable alternative.

Occasional joint declarations at exclusive forums cannot produce a contemporary structure of international rules and norms. A new world order, if it is to prove relevant, cannot merely be affirmed by successive G-20 forums, or leaders' photo-ops and civil society media events; it must be fostered as a matter of common conviction, by supra-national mechanisms that have acquired a legitimacy to make decisions and that can mobilize the muscle of international public opinion, buttressed by collaborative national actions, to shepherd into the consensus the recalcitrant parts of the global world order. Only the UN and the SC can play that role.

For all its faults and weaknesses, and all the desiderata that each of us could address to the United Nations, it still remains the only source of international legitimacy, the only hope for international order, the only forum for civilized discourse of all nations...

Within the Multilateral architecture that has been the mainstay of the international world system since the end of WW2 and within the improved Multilateral architecture that we all hope to develop, the UN, as concept and as organization, dominates the aspirations of all... to reform it is our wish, to strengthen it is our aim. And within the UN, the Security Council stands supreme. Before it, will come all the great issues of our time, and its deliberations will make the difference between a system governed by principles with rules that are adopted by consensus and conviction, and a system where double standards prevail, and might makes right. The SC by what it chooses to take up and what it leaves to others, by how it deals with the issues, is gradually building up a body of decisions that mark the directions of the evolving international world order. It is a slow process, but a lasting one.

To the Future:

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen

Any effort to design a new world order with wider security arrangements must address that legacy of the collapsing world order of today. To do so, **we must address the five major contradictions and the challenges that brought us to this unhappy point.** Otherwise, it is probable that we shall simply drift into letting major regions be dominated by the regional powers with their own perceptions of the role of the sovereign state. Tensions between these major regions, or spheres of influence, will inevitably arise as the frictions at their periphery will become tests of strength and determination to expand each regional power's claim of dominion over more territory.

The UN is the only international body that has overwhelming international legitimacy. Even today, with all we know about its structural problems due to the carry-over of constructs designed at the end of WW2 into the rapidly changing new century, we have not produced any other institution that even remotely comes close to the UN in terms of its absolute legitimacy as the true forum for the consort of nations and the articulation of the aspirations of the world's peoples.

But recognition of these legacy issues, especially in the construction of the Security Council, means that we should be making special efforts to give more voice to the developing countries and the small and medium countries. To ensure the presence of members who empathize with the problems of the developing world, can articulate their viewpoints, and yet can build bridges with the industrialized countries of the world. Egypt is such a bridge-builder and consensus seeker. We are committed to the idea of an empowering multilateralism that will engage each member of the international community, large or small, rich or poor, to value their views and seek their involvement.

I hope that this distinguished gathering will bring to bear the full breadth and depth of its experience in the discussions ahead. I do hope that we will through today and tomorrow take some significant steps towards more clarity for the road ahead, the arduous road towards building that desirable empowering multilateralism that can, in the famous phrase of yore: "Go forth and fashion the wise constraints that make people free".

Thank you.