

Reflections on the Future of International Relations

By

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Closing Remarks

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Dear friends,

We have come to the conclusion of our deliberations. I will try to pull together some of the threads that I felt were running through our concerns and our expositions. Clearly this is not a summary, for no simple short statement could do justice to the richness of the deliberations of the last two days. So let me take up some of the items that I think worthy of reiteration at the end of these proceedings.

Let me start with special thanks to our host, President Aliyev, who launched us on our way, and to all the eminent people who gave freely of their time and shared their viewpoints and their wisdom, thereby creating our lively sessions and our informative discourse. Also, I would like to salute our young leaders for their participation and their willingness to share their views, the excellence of the manner in which they presented these important views, views of the millennial generation with us ...

Allow me also to thank the organizers for the excellence of the background paper framing many of the questions, and of course the eminent participants who gave us the benefit of their insights and their wisdom.

I have selected only six points out of a plethora that could have been selected. Allow me to say a few words about each of them.

First: did we frame the issues correctly?

I do believe that we have framed the issues correctly. That the current times pose great challenges and the old established world order is badly frayed and is changing the structure of the international relations that appeared to be consolidated by the end of the Cold War in 1989-1991, from the fall of the Berlin wall to the collapse of the Soviet Union. While the UN Security Council could not be reformed to allow a better concordance with the changing reality that is no longer captured by the configuration of 1945, we did see the creation of the G-20, and we saw the world reach broad agreements: from the rejection of terrorism, to the agreement on the Global SDGs and the Paris accords for CC.

But latent problems were present. And these came to the fore... The western democracies are in a growing crisis, where people question the administrative burden of European integration, even though they appreciate the benefits of that amazing construction, from the peace and security it has provided, to the economic and free movement across the unified market. But the Brexit vote in the UK uncovered the precariousness of the current political mantras in Europe, while the US presidential elections have uncovered the alienation of the public from the political elite, and the parties that support it and make it work.

Four currents prevailed in the American elections in a very marked fashion.

- The first is a strong rejection of globalization and trade, which many in the public consider responsible for inequalities and loss of jobs.
- The second is a rejection of multiculturalism and immigration.
- The third is fear of terror, especially seen as Jihadist Terrorism perpetrated by Muslim radicals, and that feeds into xenophobia and racism.
- The fourth is a rejection of the elite that governs America (the fabled 1% of Wall Street fame) and that is coupled with a profound distrust and disgust at the political establishment that governs America.

These four strands of political sentiment are also increasingly found in Europe where extreme right-wing parties have taken up the populist torch and draw on these same perceptions to swell the ranks of their supporters.

All this is bad for democracy, bad for the countries concerned and bad for the global order that we are all trying to build, a global order based on collaboration and mutual respect, as well as adherence to a system of values and support for institutions that promote peace and avoid conflict.

Second: Emerging Features of the New World Order:

The old World Order, produced by the victors of the Second World War, and supported primarily by the US and the Europeans, was acquiesced into by the rest of the world, who did not really participate in creating it. The New World Order will have to involve all the parties in its construction.

Russia, drawing on its past history, its size and its military, seeks to reaffirm its global role. How can it be accommodated in a constructive and positive fashion? We recognized that China, already the second economy in the world, and growing... It is now a prime participant in the design of the emerging world order. But what are the norms that china will seek to enforce in the global system if the USA is now increasingly disinterested in defending the open trade, globalized regime that it has fashioned and defended over the past 70 years? It appears that China will be a supporter of the global economic and trade regime, even as it seeks to expand its influence in the south China sea and elsewhere.

Third: Terrorism and how to fight it:

Although the current wave of terrorism is labeled in the press as Radical Islamic Terrorism, it was essential to remember that terrorism involves activities that are contrary to the teachings of Islam, and of any religion.

But it is true that there are substantial convulsions that are taking place in the Muslim world today. Thus despite the high-profile coverage of all terrorist attacks in the West, *Da'ish* and *Al Qaeda* and their ilk are killing infinitely more Muslims than non-Muslims. It is primarily Muslims who are fighting the war against *Da'ish*: it is their boots that are on the ground in Syria and Iraq as well as the other theaters of confrontation from Sinai to Afghanistan. Remember that whether they are Arabs or Kurds or Turks or Iranians or Afghanis or Pakistanis or Egyptians they are all predominantly Muslims. And ultimately it is Muslim scholars who have to bridge the Shia-Sunni divide and who have to recast the prevalent religious discourse from one where the radical extremist doctrines manage to insinuate themselves, into the open, tolerant and peaceful Islam that leaves no doubt that all killing of innocents can never be condoned, and that violence has no place in a religion of peace. Ensuring powerful voice to this open discourse, that scholars refer to as the "true Islam" will delegitimize the extremist dogma being preached by the terrorists and their supporters.

That being said, it is essential to look into the contextual roots of the rise of such movements as *Al-Qaeda* or *Da'ish*.. They did not originate in a vacuum and they all had – at some time – financial and weapons support from some sources.

But whatever the issues before us, we all agree that the correct response to the challenge of terrorism needs to be a comprehensive one. It will have to include a military confrontation to these forces of darkness in all the theaters where they have a presence; as well as a security response, to prevent terrorist actions in societies where they are acting underground. But it must also include a broad cultural response. By that we mean the values that are imparted by the family, the school and society at large. It is essential to remember that from High-school to graduation from college is the period of profound transformation for our youth. They go from being a child to an adult, they go from a dependent adolescent to a responsible citizen, thus it is important to ensure that this period also includes the political growth and maturation of the youth, not just their acquisition of “marketable skills” as some national systems of education and training are concerned about.

Today, the new technologies in ICT have opened new avenues for both the promotion of terrorism and for fighting the terrorists in that virtual domain as well as we do in the physical theaters of active confrontations. But there are two special aspects of this confrontation that

All democratic societies that value the liberties of their citizens, are content to declare that a crime is an act, not a thought, and is punished after the fact, and indeed such societies have constructed elaborate legal and judicial procedures to ensure that police and prosecutors actually punish the guilty party after proving that they are responsible “beyond a reasonable doubt”. They prefer to let a guilty party go free than to incarcerate an innocent person.

Terrorism poses a different challenge. The public wants the government to prevent the act of terror from occurring. To do that will require broadened surveillance and police powers, and the ability to act on suspicions of conspiracy rather than to wait until terrorists execute an act of terror, and then capture the guilty party. That sets us on a dangerous path, where our liberties are at risk. Recall that the US “Patriot Act” passed after 9/11 to give government powers to fight a “War on Terror” produced Guantanamo, preventative detention, torture and the systematic murder by drone attacks.

Thus finding a proper balance for our “Democratic Security” is one of our fundamental challenges.

Fourth: Migration and Pluralism:

It has been pointed out on more than one occasion that the demographic realities of an aging Europe and declining populations in many countries of the west, and the continuing demographic rise in the developing countries, especially in Africa will make the inflow of migrants into Europe a needed reality, as will the improvement of the living conditions in the south to avoid the uncontrollable influx of migrants as the African population – according to the UN consensus forecast of 2015 – will multiply to reach over four billion persons by the end of the century.

But over the next 5-15 years, the issues of pluralism and immigration will remain dominant features of our political debate. This will require not only deft political handling, but vision and wisdom as well, true leadership.

Fifth: Going Forward:

We all agreed that to move towards a new system of international relations, towards a peaceful and more equitable world, we need to recognize the differences between societies and make room for these differences.... Remember that John C. Marshall, author of the Marshall plan, already thinking about the post-war order as early as 1942, said in a speech in NY:

We must take the nations of the world as they are, the human passions and prejudices of people as they exist, and find some way to secure [...] a peaceful worldⁱ.

Furthermore, Marshall also pointed out that short term political gain was not the purpose of his great initiative. He rightly said:

Our policy is directed not against any country or doctrine but against hunger, poverty, desperation and chaos. Its purpose should be [...] to permit the emergence of political and social conditions in which free institutions can existⁱⁱ.

Is that call to action not as correct today as it was 75 years ago?

Sixth (and last): What Have We Learned from All These Discussions?

We learned again what in our hearts we already knew. That the values we hold dear must be defended again and again, from potential enemies whether in our own community or from another. Today we need to actively promote the values of

civility and pluralism, humanism and liberty, and to join security and freedom for the benefit of all, and we need to do that against threats from extremists and populists alike.

We recognized that the powerful magnifying power of the new media needs to be viewed with caution, for it can spread falsehood as well as truth... never has Gandhi's statement been more apt:

An error does not become truth by reason of multiplied propagation, nor does truth become error because nobody sees it.

-- Mohandas Gandhi

As the ICT revolution increasingly transforms our lives, we should remember that we must use these new tools to promote the values that we believe in.

We learned that if we are to defeat the extremists and the terrorists, the populists and the demagogues, political leaders must rise above the immediate short-term political fixes and complement those with actions of vision and determination, as was the case with the famous Marshall plan articulated 70 years ago, or with the launch of the European project a decade later.

We are today at an important moment in world history. Where the established democracies must fight for their values and prevent the rise of the populist political right wing with its drift towards "illiberal democracy", while we who are on the front lines in the Arab and Muslim countries of the Middle East and North Africa, reshape our societies as we bring security and freedom to our peoples. Together, we must design and implement that inclusive new world order, where all can participate in a framework of mutual respect. A framework where the rich and the poor, the weak and the powerful, all working hand in hand to design the instruments of the future for the benefit of all... so let us each go back to our societies and as we return to our regular lives, let us think of the unborn, remember the forgotten, give hope to the forlorn, include the excluded, reach out to the unreached, and by our actions from this day onwards lay the foundation for better tomorrows.

Thank you.

ⁱ Extract from George C. Marshall's address to the Academy of Political Science at the Astor Hotel in New York on November 10, 1942. Quoted in Mark Perry, *Partners in Command*, The Penguin Press, NY, 2007, p.137

ⁱⁱ Remarks by George C. Marshall, op.cit..