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Article 1.

TIME

Obama talks About the Changing Nature of American Power

Fareed Zakaria

January 19, 2012

Fareed Zakaria: When we talked when you were campaigning for the presidency, I asked you which Administration's foreign policy you admired. And you said that you looked at George H.W. Bush's diplomacy, and I took that to mean the pragmatism, the sense of limits, good diplomacy, as you looked upon it favorably. Now that you are President, how has your thinking evolved?

President Obama: It is true that I've been complimentary of George H.W. Bush's foreign policy, and I continue to believe that he managed a very difficult period very effectively. Now that I've been in office for three years, I think that I'm always cautious about comparing what we've done to what others have done, just because each period is unique. Each set of challenges is unique. But what I can say is that I made a commitment to change the trajectory of American foreign policy in a way that would end the war in Iraq, refocus on defeating our primary enemy, al-Qaeda, strengthen our alliances and our leadership in multilateral fora and restore American leadership in the world. And I think we have accomplished those principal goals. We still have a lot of work to do, but if you look at the pivot from where we were in 2008 to where we are today, the Iraq war is over, we refocused attention on al-Qaeda, and they are badly wounded. They're not eliminated, but the defeat not just of [Osama] bin Laden, but most of the top leadership, the tightening noose

around their safe havens, the incapacity for them to finance themselves, they are much less capable than they were back in 2008. Our alliances with NATO, Japan, South Korea, our close military cooperation with countries like Israel have never been stronger. Our participation in multilateral organizations has been extremely effective. In the United Nations, not only do we have a voice, but we have been able to shape an agenda. And in the fastest-growing regions of the world in emerging markets in the Asia Pacific region, just to take one prominent example, countries are once again looking to the United States for leadership. That's not the exact same moment as existed post-World War II. It's an American leadership that recognizes the rise of countries like China and India and Brazil. It's a U.S. leadership that recognizes our limits in terms of resources, capacity. And yet what I think we've been able to establish is a clear belief among other nations that the United States continues to be the one indispensable nation in tackling major international problems. And I think that there is a strong belief that we continue to be a superpower, unique perhaps in the annals of history, that is not only self-interested but is also thinking about how to create a set of international rules and norms that everyone can follow and that everyone can benefit from. So you combine all those changes, the United States is in a much stronger position now to assert leadership over the next century than it was only three years ago. We still have huge challenges ahead. And one thing I've learned over the last three years is that as much as you'd like to guide events, stuff happens and you have to respond. And those responses, no matter how effective your diplomacy or your foreign policy, are sometimes going to produce less-than-optimal results. But our overall trajectory, our overall strategy, I think has been very successful.

Mitt Romney says you are timid, indecisive and nuanced.

Ah, yes.

I particularly like the third one. What do you say?

I think Mr. Romney and the rest of the Republican field are going to be playing to their base until the primary season is over. Once it is, we'll have a serious debate about foreign policy. I will feel very confident about being able to put my record before the American people and saying that America is safer, stronger and better positioned to win the future than it was when I came into office. And there are going to be some issues where people may have some legitimate differences, and there are going to be some serious debates, just because they're hard issues. But overall, I think it's going to be pretty hard to argue that we have not executed a strategy over the last three years that has put America in a stronger position than it was when I came into office.

Romney says if you are re-elected, Iran will get a nuclear weapon, and if he is elected, it won't. Will you make a categorical statement like that: If you are re-elected, Iran will not get a nuclear weapon?

I have made myself clear since I began running for the presidency that we will take every step available to prevent Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon. What I've also said is that our efforts are going to be ... Excuse me. When I came into office, what we had was a situation in which the world was divided, Iran was unified, it was on the move in the region. And because of effective diplomacy, unprecedented pressure with respect to sanctions, our ability to get countries like Russia and China — that had previously balked at any serious pressure on Iran — to work with us, Iran now faces a unified world community, Iran is isolated, its standing in the region is diminished.

It is feeling enormous economic pressure. And we are in a position where, even as we apply that pressure, we're also saying to them, There is an avenue to resolve this, which is a diplomatic path where they forego nuclear weapons, abide by international rules and can have peaceful nuclear power as other countries do, subject to the restrictions of the [Nuclear] Non-Proliferation Treaty.

But the way, the Iranians might see it as that they have made proposals — the Brazilian-Turkish proposal — and that they never go anywhere. They aren't the basis of negotiations.

Yes, I think if you take a look at the track record, the Iranians have simply not engaged in serious negotiations on these issues. We actually put forward a very serious proposal that would have allowed them to display good faith. They need medical isotopes; there was a way to take out some of their low-enriched uranium so that they could not — so that there was clarity that they were not stockpiling that to try to upgrade to weapons-grade uranium. In exchange, the international community would provide the medical isotopes that they needed for their research facility. And they delayed and they delayed, and they hemmed and they hawed, and then when finally the Brazilian-Indian proposal was put forward, it was at a point where they were now declaring that they were about to move forward on 20% enriched uranium, which would defeat the whole purpose of showing good faith that they weren't stockpiling uranium that could be transformed into weapons-grade. So, not to get too bogged down in the details, the point is that the Iranians have a very clear path where they say, We're not going to produce weapons, we won't stockpile material that can be used for weapons. The international community then says, We will work with you to develop your peaceful nuclear energy capacity, subject to the kinds of inspections that other countries have agreed to in the past. This is not difficult to

do. What makes it difficult is Iran's insistence that it is not subject to the same rules that everybody else is subject to.

Suppose that with all this pressure you have been able to put on Iran, and the economic pressure, suppose the consequence is that the price of oil keeps rising, but Iran does not make any significant concession. Won't it be fair to say the policy will have failed?

It is fair to say that this isn't an easy problem, and anybody who claims otherwise doesn't know what they're talking about.

Obviously, Iran sits in a volatile region during a volatile period of time, and their own internal conflicts makes it that much more difficult, I think, for them to make big strategic decisions. Having said that, our goal consistently has been to combine pressure with an opportunity for them to make good decisions and to mobilize the international community to maximize that pressure. Can we guarantee that Iran takes the smarter path? No. Which is why I have repeatedly said we don't take any options off the table in preventing them from getting a nuclear weapon. But what I can confidently say, based on discussions that I've had across this government and with governments around the world, is that of all the various difficult options available to us, we've taken the one that is most likely to accomplish our goal and one that is most consistent with America's security interest.

When you look at Afghanistan over the past three years — the policies you've adopted — would it be fair to say that the counterterrorism part of the policy, the killing bad guys, has been a lot more successful than the counterinsurgency, the stabilizing of vast aspects of the country, and that going forward, you should really focus in on that first set of policies?

Well, what is fair to say is that the counterterrorism strategy as applied to al-Qaeda has been extremely successful. The job is not finished, but there's no doubt that we have severely degraded al-Qaeda's capacity. When it comes to stabilizing Afghanistan, that was always going to be a more difficult and messy task, because it's not just military — it's economic, it's political, it's dealing with the capacity of an Afghan government that doesn't have a history of projecting itself into all parts of the country, tribal and ethnic conflicts that date back centuries. So we always recognized that was going to be more difficult. Now, we've made significant progress in places like Helmand province and in the southern portions of the country. And because of the cohesion and effectiveness of coalition forces, there are big chunks of Afghanistan where the Taliban do not rule, there is increasingly effective local governance, the Afghan security forces are beginning to take the lead. And that's all real progress. But what is absolutely true is that there are portions of the country where that's not the case, where local governance is weak, where local populations still have deep mistrust of the central government. And part of our challenge over the next two years as we transition to Afghan forces is to continue to work with the Afghan government so that it recognizes its responsibilities not only to provide security for those local populations but also to give them some credible sense that the local government — or the national government is looking out for them, and that they're going to be able to make a living and they're not going to be shaken down by corrupt police officials and that they can get products to market. And that's a long-term process. I never believed that America could essentially deliver peace and prosperity to all of Afghanistan in a three-, four-, five-year time frame. And I think anybody who believed that didn't know the history and the challenges facing Afghanistan. I mean, this is the third poorest country in the world, with one of the lowest

literacy rates and no significant history of a strong civil service or an economy that was deeply integrated with the world economy. It's going to take decades for Afghanistan to fully achieve its potential. What we can do, and what we are doing, is providing the Afghan government the time and space it needs to become more effective, to serve its people better, to provide better security, to avoid a repetition of all-out civil war that we saw back in the '90s. And what we've also been able to do, I think, is to maintain a international coalition to invest in Afghanistan long beyond the point when it was politically popular to do so. But ultimately, the Afghans are going to have to take on these responsibilities and these challenges, and there will be, no doubt, bumps in the road along the way. From the perspective of our security interests, I think we can accomplish our goal, which is to make sure that Afghanistan is not a safe haven from which to launch attacks against the United States or its allies. But the international community — not just us; the Russians and the Chinese and the Indians and the Pakistanis and the Iranians and others — I think all have an interest in making sure that Afghanistan is not engulfed in constant strife, and I think that's an achievable goal.

As the Chinese watched your most recent diplomacy in Asia, is it fair for them to have looked at the flurry of diplomatic activity — political, military, economic — and concluded, as many Chinese scholars have, that the United States is building a containment policy against China?

No, that would not be accurate, and I've specifically rejected that formulation. I think what would be fair to conclude is that, as I said we would do, the United States has pivoted to focus on the fastest-growing region of the world, where we have an enormous stake in peace, security, the free flow of commerce and, frankly, an area of the world that we had neglected over the last decade because of our

intense focus on Iraq, Afghanistan and the Middle East. So if you look at what we've done, we've strengthened our alliances with Japan and South Korea — I think they're in as good of shape as they've ever been. We have involved ourselves in the regional architecture of — including organizations like ASEAN and APEC. We've sent a clear signal that we are a Pacific power and we will continue to be a Pacific power, but we have done this all in the context of a belief that a peacefully rising China is good for everybody. One of the things we've accomplished over the last three years is to establish a strong dialogue and working relationship with China across a whole range of issues. And where we have serious differences, we've been able to express those differences without it spiraling into a bad place. I think the Chinese government respects us, respects what we're trying to do, recognizes that we're going to be players in the Asia Pacific region for the long term, but I think also recognize that we have in no way inhibited them from continuing their extraordinary growth. The only thing we've insisted on, as a principle in that region is, everybody's got to play by the same set of rules, everybody's got to abide by a set of international norms. And that's not unique to China. That's true for all of us.

But do you think they're not?

Well, I think that when we've had some friction in the relationship, it's because China, I think, still sees itself as a developing or even poor country that should be able to pursue mercantilist policies that are for their benefit and where the rules applying to them shouldn't be the same rules that apply to the United States or Europe or other major powers. And what we've tried to say to them very clearly is, Look, you guys have grown up. You're already the most populous country on earth, depending on how you measure it, the largest or next-largest economy in the world and will soon be the largest

economy, almost inevitably. You are rapidly consuming more resources than anybody else. And in that context, whether it's maritime issues or trade issues, you can't do whatever you think is best for you. You've got to play by the same rules as everybody else. I think that message is one that resonates with other Asia Pacific countries, all of whom want a good relationship with China, all of whom are desperately seeking access to China's markets and have forged enormous commercial ties, but who also recognize that unless there are some international norms there, they're going to get pushed around and taken advantage of.

You think it's inevitable that China will be the largest economy in the world? It's now the second largest, even on PPP.

Well, they are — assuming that they maintain stability and current growth patterns, then, yes, it's inevitable. Even if they slow down somewhat, they're so large that they'd probably end up being, just in terms of the overall size of the economy, the largest. But it's doubtful that any time in the near future they achieve the kind of per capita income that the United States or some of the other highly developed countries have achieved. They've just got a lot of people, and they're moving hundreds of millions of people out of poverty at the same time.

You have developed a reputation for managing your foreign policy team very effectively, without dissention. So how come you can manage this fairly complex process so well, and relations with Congress are not so good?

Well, in foreign policy, the traditional saying is, Partisan differences end at the water's edge, that there is a history of bipartisanship in foreign policy. Now, obviously, there were huge partisan differences during the Bush years and during the Iraq war. But I do think there's

still a tradition among those who work in foreign policy, whether it's our diplomatic corps or our military or intelligence services, that says our focus is on the mission, our focus is on advancing American interests, and we're going to make decisions based on facts and analysis and a clear-eyed view of the world, as opposed to based on ideology or what's politically expedient. And so when I'm working with my foreign policy team, there's just not a lot of extraneous noise. There's not a lot of posturing and positioning and "How's this going to play on cable news?" and "Can we score some points here?" That whole political circus that has come to dominate so much of Washington applies less to the foreign policy arena, which is why I could forge such an effective working relationship and friendship with Bob Gates, who comes out of that tradition, even though I'm sure he would've considered himself a pretty conservative, hawkish Republican. At least that was where he was coming out of. I never asked him what his current party affiliation was, because it didn't matter. I just knew he was going to give me good advice.

But have you been able to forge similar relationships with foreign leaders? Because one of the criticisms people make about your style of diplomacy is that it's very cool, it's aloof, that you don't pal around with these guys.

I wasn't in other Administrations, so I didn't see the interactions between U.S. Presidents and various world leaders. But the friendships and the bonds of trust that I've been able to forge with a whole range of leaders is precisely, or is a big part of, what has allowed us to execute effective diplomacy. I think that if you ask them, Angela Merkel or Prime Minister Singh or President Lee or Prime Minister Erdogan or David Cameron would say, We have a lot of trust and confidence in the President. We believe what he says. We believe that he'll follow through on his commitments. We think he's

paying attention to our concerns and our interests. And that's part of the reason we've been able to forge these close working relationships and gotten a whole bunch of stuff done.

You just can't do it with John Boehner.

You know, the truth is, actually, when it comes to Congress, the issue is not personal relationships. My suspicion is that this whole critique has to do with the fact that I don't go to a lot of Washington parties. And as a consequence, the Washington press corps maybe just doesn't feel like I'm in the mix enough with them, and they figure, well, if I'm not spending time with them, I must be cold and aloof. The fact is, I've got a 13-year-old and 10-year-old daughter, and so, no, Michelle and I don't do the social scene, because as busy as we are, we have a limited amount of time, and we want to be good parents at a time that's vitally important for our kids. In terms of Congress, the reason we're not getting enough done right now is you've got a Congress that is deeply ideological and sees a political advantage in not getting stuff done. John Boehner and I get along fine. We had a great time playing golf together. That's not the issue. The problem was that no matter how much golf we played or no matter how much we yukked it up, he had trouble getting his caucus to go along with doing the responsible thing on a whole bunch of issues over the past year.

You talked a lot about how foreign policy ultimately has to derive from American strength, and so when I talk to businessmen, a lot of them are dismayed that you have not signaled to the world and to markets that the U.S. will get its fiscal house in order by embracing your deficit commission, the Simpson-Bowles. And that walking away from that, which is a phrase I've heard a lot, has been a very bad signal to the world. Why won't you embrace

Simpson-Bowles?

I've got to say, most of the people who say that, if you asked them what's in Simpson-Bowles, they couldn't tell you. So first of all, I did embrace Simpson-Bowles. I'm the one who created the commission. If I hadn't pushed it, it wouldn't have happened, because congressional sponsors, including a whole bunch of Republicans, walked away from it. The basic premise of Simpson-Bowles was, we have to take a balanced approach in which we have spending cuts and we have revenues, increased revenues, in order to close our deficits and deal with our debt. And although I did not agree with every particular that was proposed in Simpson-Bowles — which, by the way, if you asked most of the folks who were on Simpson-Bowles, did they agree with every provision in there?, they'd say no as well. What I did do is to take that framework and present a balanced plan of entitlement changes, discretionary cuts, defense cuts, health care cuts as well as revenues and said, We're ready to make a deal. And I presented that three times to Congress. So the core of Simpson-Bowles, the idea of a balanced deficit-reduction plan, I have consistently argued for, presented to the American people, presented to Congress. There wasn't any magic in Simpson-Bowles. They didn't have some special sauce or formula that avoided us making these tough choices. They're the same choices that I've said I'm prepared to make. And the only reason it hasn't happened is the Republicans were unwilling to do anything on revenue. Zero. Zip. Nada. The revenues that we were seeking were far less than what was in Simpson-Bowles. We've done more discretionary cuts than was called for in Simpson-Bowles. The things that supposedly would be harder for my side to embrace we've said we'd be willing to do. The whole half of Simpson-Bowles that was hard ideologically for the Republicans to embrace they've said they're not going to do any of them. So this notion that the reason that it hasn't happened is we

didn't embrace Simpson-Bowles is just nonsense. And by the way, if you talk to some of these same business leaders who say, Well, he shouldn't have walked away from Simpson-Bowles, and you said, Well, are you prepared to kick capital gains and dividends taxation up to ordinary income —

— **which is what Simpson-Bowles** —

— which is what Simpson-Bowles called for, they would gag. There's not one of those business leaders who would accept a bet. They'd say, Well, we embrace Simpson-Bowles except for that part that would cause us to pay a lot more. And in terms of the defense cuts that were called for in Simpson-Bowles, they were far deeper than even what would have been required if the sequester goes through, and so would have not been a responsible pathway for us to reduce our deficit spending. Now, that's not the fault of Simpson-Bowles. What they were trying to do was provide us a basic framework, and we took that framework, and we have pushed it forward. And so there should be clarity here. There's no equivalence between Democratic and Republican positions when it comes to deficit reduction. We've shown ourselves to be serious. We've made a trillion dollars worth of cuts already. We've got another \$1.5 trillion worth of cuts on the chopping blocks. But what we've also said is, in order for us to seriously reduce the deficit, there's got to be increased revenue. There's no way of getting around it. It's basic math. And if we can get any Republicans to show any serious commitment — not vague commitments, not "We'll get revenues because of tax reform somewhere in the future, but we don't know exactly what that looks like and we can't identify a single tax that we would allow to go up" — but if we can get any of them who are still in office, as opposed to retired, to commit to that, we'll be able to reduce our deficit. Now, to your larger point, you're absolutely right.

Our whole foreign policy has to be anchored in economic strength here at home. And if we are not strong, stable, growing, making stuff, training our workforce so that it's the most skilled in the world, maintaining our lead in innovation, in basic research, in basic science, in the quality of our universities, in the transparency of our financial sector, if we don't maintain the upward mobility and equality of opportunity that underwrites our political stability and makes us a beacon for the world, then our foreign policy leadership will diminish as well.

Can we do that in a world with so much competition from so many countries? One of the things you do hear people say is, You know, we have all this regulation. You're trying to make America more competitive, but you've got Dodd-Frank, you've got health care. There's all this new regulation. And in that context, are we going to be able to be competitive, to attract investment, to create jobs?

Absolutely. Look, first of all, with respect to regulation, this whole notion that somehow there's been this huge tidal wave of regulation is not true, and we can provide you the facts. Our regulations have a lower cost than the comparable regulations under the Bush Administration; they have far higher benefits. We have engaged in a unprecedented regulatory look-back, where we're weeding out and clearing up a whole bunch of regulations that were outdated and outmoded, and we're saving businesses billions of dollars and tons of paperwork and man-hours that they're required to fill out a bunch of forms that aren't needed. So our regulatory track record actually is very solid. I just had a conference last week where we had a group of manufacturing companies — some service companies as well — that are engaging in insourcing. They're bringing work back to the United States and plants back to the United States, because as the wages in

China and other countries begin to increase, and U.S. worker productivity has gone way up, the cost differential for labor has significantly closed. And what these companies say is, as long as the United States is still investing in the best infrastructure in the world, the best education system in the world, is training enough skilled workers and engineers and is creating a stable platform for businesses to succeed and providing us with certainty, there's no reason why America can't be the most competitive advanced economy in the world. But that requires us to continue to up our game and do things better and do things smart. We've started that process over the last three years. We've still got a lot more work to do, because we're reversing decade-long trends where our education system didn't keep pace with the improvements that were taking place in other countries; where other countries started to invest more in research and development, and we didn't up our game; where our infrastructure began to deteriorate at a time when other countries were investing in their infrastructure; and, frankly, where we have gotten bogged down politically in ways that don't allow us to take strong, decisive action on issues in ways that we've been able to do in the past. And so my whole goal in the last three years and my goal over the next five years is going to be to continue to chip away at these things that are holding us back. And I'm absolutely confident there's no problem that America is facing right now that we can't solve, as long we're working together. That's our job.

Article 2.

The National Interest

The Palestinian Campaign to Delegitimize Israel

Jonathan Schanzer, David Barnett

January 19, 2012 -- Israeli envoy Isaac Molho met Palestinian negotiator Saeb Erekat recently for the third time in the new year. The talks, widely praised across the international community, have been billed as a much-needed jumpstart for negotiations between the two sides. But they are actually a distraction from the real game, in which the Palestinians are working to outmaneuver Israel in the international arena.

The game began last year when Palestinian president Mahmoud Abbas launched a bid for full UN membership for a sovereign state of Palestine. Abbas sought to gain international recognition for his bureaucracy and strengthen the consensus against Israel's presence in the disputed territories of the West Bank, which Palestinians hope to claim for their national project. Abbas pursued this strategy while shunning direct talks with his Israeli counterparts.

In the end, the Palestinians fell short of the nine votes necessary for consideration in the UN Security Council. The Obama administration further vowed that the United States would veto the resolution, even if it passed in the future. As a result, the bid stalled.

But the Palestinians had another option. Indeed, they had enough votes to pass a nonbinding measure in the General Assembly.

Apparently unsatisfied with anything less than formal recognition, Abbas elected to punt.

But this does not mean that the crisis has passed.

As it turns out, Abbas has been regrouping. On January 1, several countries that would have voted against the Palestinian bid rotated off the Security Council, making way for Guatemala, Pakistan, Azerbaijan, Morocco and Togo. Notwithstanding the looming threat of a U.S. veto, these states afford the Palestinians new opportunities in the diplomatic battles that are likely to unfold this year. And Palestinians have been vague about the General Assembly option, which is still a viable one.

The Palestinians may have other strategies in store, too.

Senior Fatah official Nabil Sha'ath recently said on Palestinian radio that 2012 "will be the start of an unprecedented diplomatic campaign on the part of the Palestinian leadership, and it will be a year of pressure on Israel that will put it under a real international siege. The campaign will be similar to the one waged against apartheid in South Africa."

The Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), which has been the official negotiating partner for the Israelis since the late 1990s, is already bringing pressure to bear.

Specifically, Abbas is threatening to form a political union with rival faction Hamas, the terrorist group that controls the Gaza Strip.

Palestinians view unity as a necessary step toward independence, so his rhetoric has been very popular on the "Palestinian street." But the likelihood of a merger is unlikely. Rather, the PLO is using the prospect of a government partially constituted by unrepentant terrorists to pressure Israel into making concessions.

The message is simple: If the Israelis don't give the PLO what it wants, it could join hands with Hamas, which repeatedly refuses to renounce "armed resistance," making it virtually impossible for Israel to achieve the peace that it craves.

And while the recent outreach to Hamas may be a bluff rather than an earnest attempt to foster a strategic partnership, it is increasingly

clear that Abbas and company are less inclined to fight the terrorist group that disrupted the peace process of the 1990s with suicide bombings. Rather, they are happy to use Hamas as leverage for their demands.

With all of these moving parts, it's easy to lose sight of the big picture: Palestinian leaders seem to have no interest in talking to Israel this year. Instead, they may be gearing up for a full-scale diplomatic campaign to delegitimize it.

Struggling to stay abreast of an ever-changing political landscape in the turbulent Middle East, Western governments have yet to acknowledge this shift in strategy. Perhaps this is because the Palestinians have yet to officially recognize it themselves.

When news outlets reported on the latest attempts at dialogue in Jordan, Abbas responded that any chance at peace should be seized. Yet Erekat, his representative, stated that the meetings do not “constitute a return to negotiations.”

Such ambivalence keeps false hopes alive for peace through diplomacy while the Palestinians prepare for an entirely different—and dangerous—diplomatic campaign.

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Article 3.

The Economist

Palestinians and Israelis are talking again—but have yet to decide what about

Jan 21st 2012 -- NO ONE disagreed with the cautious assessment of King Abdullah of Jordan that “little baby steps” had been taken when Israelis and Palestinians met several times in Amman, the king’s capital, in early January to see if there were grounds to resume full-scale peace talks that might one day lead to the peaceful coexistence of two states. Even this tentative diplomatic toe-dipping was fraught. Big grown-up strides still seem a long way off.

The Palestinians have threatened to abandon further talks unless there is real progress by January 26th. They cite an agreement in September, when the Quartet of peacemaking bodies, consisting of the United States, the European Union, the UN and Russia, launched talks about talks in Amman. Both sides were to exchange “comprehensive proposals on territory and security” within three months. The Israelis dispute the Palestinians’ definition of when the Quartet’s clock started ticking, arguing that January 26th is a “non-date” and that the current crisis is “artificial”.

In any case the Palestinians have their own internal problems: they are still arguing among themselves over whether they should be dragged back to the negotiating table when the Israelis are still building Jewish settlements on the West Bank, the main chunk of a future Palestinian state. Plans to reconcile the Palestinians’ two main factions muddy matters still more.

The Palestinians have submitted a paper suggesting where the border between the two states should run. Israel has responded with a document listing 21 issues that it says must be resolved before even a

“framework agreement” can be concluded. Binyamin Netanyahu, Israel’s prime minister, told a parliamentary committee dismissively on January 16th that the Palestinian paper had “not changed a nanometre” from papers submitted before.

Mr Netanyahu’s officials vaguely “accept as a goal” that an agreement on territory and security should be struck within a year, as the Quartet suggested. But baby steps seem to be the pace that suits him, his coalition partners and hawks in his own Likud party. His foreign minister, Avigdor Lieberman, who leads the far-right Yisrael Beitenu party, and is in a last-ditch battle to avoid indictment for alleged financial shenanigans, shows no sign of leaving the government over the peace talks.

As a sweetener to the Palestinians, Israel may free some prisoners it has held since before peace talks began in 1993. Tony Blair, the Quartet’s representative, is asking Israel to hand over to the Palestinian president, Mahmoud Abbas, the customs duties it currently withholds on goods entering the Gaza Strip, which is ruled by the Islamist Hamas faction still opposing Mr Abbas.

Quite apart from his row with the Israelis over dates before real talks have even resumed, Mr Abbas is having problems as ever within his own camp. His efforts to reunite both chunks of his disconnected Palestinian realm, comprising his Palestinian Authority in the West Bank and the far smaller Hamas-ruled Gaza Strip on the coast, look unlikely to bear fruit soon. Last May he signed a deal with the head of Hamas’s politburo, Khaled Meshal, who has been based in Syria, to do away with separate governments and appoint a technocratic one instead.

Not yet a united front

But such plans have been stymied by Hamas’s sheriffs on the ground, who see little point in sharing power when the Islamist tide sweeping across the region will—they think—sooner or later engulf Mr Abbas.

As for Mr Meshal, having realised to his chagrin that Gaza was no longer his to bargain away, he declared that he would retire after 15 years in the job. But some say he may reconsider that decision. To keep Mr Abbas on the defensive, Hamas's leaders in Gaza have sought to block the joint programme he negotiated with Mr Meshal. In place of their agreement to suspend violence against Israel and to promote peaceful "popular resistance", Ismail Haniyeh, Hamas's prime minister in Gaza, has begun talks with a view to merging Hamas with Islamic Jihad, another Islamist group with a powerful armed wing in Gaza committed to fighting on. "We want peace, but Israel only understands force," says a Hamas guard outside a resort the group has opened on Gaza's beach front. It was Hamas's capture of an Israeli soldier in 2006 that secured the release of over 1,000 prisoners last year, he noted, not Abbas's so far fruitless call for non-violence.

For now, Mr Haniyeh's Hamas men in Gaza dangle the idea of reconciliation before Fatah, promising much but accomplishing almost nothing. Deadlines for exchanging their captives—Mr Abbas's faction holds scores of Hamas men, and vice versa—come and go. So do promises to let each other's newspapers be freely distributed. The head of a committee to arrange compensation for the 670 Palestinians killed and many more wounded in four years of feuding between the factions says the process will take at least three years. And though Mr Haniyeh has promised to hand back the keys to Mr Abbas's own house in Gaza, Hamas heavies stand by his front door, refusing to budge. "It's just talk," says one. "I see nothing called reconciliation on the ground," says Maryam Saleh, a Hamas member of parliament in the West Bank who was a professor before she turned to politics.

While Hamas's leaders in Gaza shore up their mini-state, Mr Meshal's power base in turbulent Syria is crumbling. Most of his

officials have fled elsewhere in the region. The portly Mr Haniyeh is encroaching on Mr Meshal's turf, touring the region with a posse of ministers from Gaza, to be hosted by heads of state. With Hamas's centre of gravity shifting back to Gaza via Cairo, Mr Haniyeh may be eyeing Mr Meshal's job.

But Mr Meshal is not finished yet. He would not be the first Palestinian leader to announce his departure only to continue to run the show for years. In recent interviews he has sounded less Islamist and more of a Palestinian nationalist. Even if deposed as head of Hamas's politburo, he may fancy replacing Mr Abbas as head of the Palestine Liberation Organisation, the umbrella that covers all Palestinian outfits, though it has hitherto excluded Hamas.

After months of promising not to negotiate with Israel unless it stopped building Jewish settlements on the West Bank, Mr Abbas's decision to return to talks without preconditions has annoyed many of his senior colleagues. "Is he speaking for anyone else but himself?" asks a fuming member of the PLO's executive committee. Last weekend a cacophony reverberated through Ramallah, the Palestinian seat of government in the West Bank, as protesters outside the newly fortified walls of his headquarters called on drivers opposed to talking to Israel to hoot. Angry Fatah members have begun plotting elections of their own.

Article 4.

The American Interest

Three Reconciliations

Zbigniew Brzezinski

January/February 2012 -- If we wish to reflect on the common challenge inherent in the ongoing transformation of global politics, we would be wise to start by recognizing what I believe to be the three fundamental facts of the present era. First, global peace is threatened not by utopian fanaticism, as was the case during the 20th century, but by the turbulent complexity inherent in the phenomenon of global political awakening. Second, comprehensive social progress is more enduringly attained by democratic participation than by authoritarian mobilization. Third, in our time global stability can be promoted only by larger-scale cooperation, not through the imperial domination prevalent in earlier historical epochs. The 20th century was dominated by fanatical ideological efforts to recreate societies by brutal totalitarian methods on the basis of utopian blueprints. Europe knows best the human costs of such simplistic and arrogant ideological fanaticism. Fortunately, with the exception of some highly isolated cases such as North Korea, it is unlikely that new attempts at large-scale utopian social engineering will arise. That is largely so because in the 21st century, for the first time in human history, the entire world is now politically awakened. The peoples of the world are restless, they are interconnected, they are resentful of their relative social deprivations, and they increasingly reject authoritarian political mobilization. It follows that democratic participation is in the longer-run the best guarantee both of social progress and political stability. In the global arena, however, rising populist aspirations and the difficulties inherent in shaping common global responses to political and

economic crises combine to threaten international disorder to which no single country, no matter how powerful, wealthy or strategically located, can effectively respond. Indeed, potential global turmoil—coincidental with the appearance of novel threats to universal well-being and even to human survival—can be effectively addressed only within a larger cooperative framework based on more widely shared democratic values. The basic fact, therefore, is that interdependence is not a slogan but a description of an increasingly insistent reality. America realizes that it needs Europe as a global ally; that its cooperation with Russia is of mutual and expanding benefit; that its economic and financial interdependence with a rapidly rising China has a special political sensitivity; and that its ties with Japan are important not only mutually but to the well-being of the Pacific region. Germany is committed to a more united Europe within the European Union and to close links across the Atlantic with America, and in that context it can more safely nurture mutually beneficial economic and political cooperation with Russia. Turkey, which almost a century ago launched its social and national modernization with Europe largely as its model, is assuming a greater regional role as an economically dynamic and politically democratic state, as well as a member of the Atlantic alliance and Russia's good neighbor. And Russia, recognizing that its modernization and democratization are mutually reinforcing and vital to its important world role, also aspires to a broader collaboration with Europe, with America and, quite naturally, with its dynamic neighbor to the east, China. The time is thus ripe for translating the values and interests that bind us together into more comprehensive ties. That requires the promotion of genuine reconciliation between historically conflicting peoples. The European Union would not exist today if it were not for the deliberate effort made by France and Germany—not only among officials but especially their publics—to foster a genuine and deeply

rooted national reconciliation. The European Union could not have embraced central Europe if a similar but more recent and ongoing effort had not been pursued between the Germans and the Poles. Turkey and Russia, though enemies in the past, are now good neighbors, and Turkey and the European Union are engaged in complicated negotiations regarding a mutually beneficial relationship. An even more interconnected Europe, however, cannot come into being without a similar and broadly gauged reconciliation between the Poles and the Russians. And America and Russia can expand their collaboration, taking advantage of the fact that on the people-to-people level there has never been any truly intense animus between Americans and Russians. In the decades ahead, larger scale cooperation among regions will be essential to global well-being. Dynamic and populated Asian states continue to emerge as major players: most notably China, earlier Japan, and soon India and Indonesia. Increasingly close Asian inter-state organizations also demonstrate the advantages of large-scale cooperation among the world's regions. Moreover, the more regional cooperation in Asia itself, the less likely is Asia to repeat Europe's painful 20th-century history, and more likely is broader cooperation between the new East and the old West. The potential for such cooperation also suggests that, if new major conflicts are averted, in the decades ahead the politically awakened people of the world may eventually share a universal political culture in which global cooperation will be reinforced (though with some inevitable local variations) by constitutionally based democratic principles. Japan, South Korea and India provide examples of the global potential for cross-cultural democratic universality. It is timely to make note of that more hopeful prospect, especially in the face of the current inclination to engage in historical pessimism. It is also time to think concretely in geopolitical terms of how we can patiently, incrementally advance

and institutionalize this more promising future. The promise before us requires a sense of historical and geopolitical direction not only from governments but also from peoples. Governments, by necessity, have to focus on more immediate dilemmas, disagreements and conflicts. Even if guided by a shared vision of the future, their time horizon is limited by the need to address contentious issues.

That is why an eventually wide-ranging accommodation that creates a more interconnected and increasingly shared democratic space could be attained through a collective effort by a team of respected private citizens. Such a team, drawn primarily from the European Union, Russia, Turkey, Ukraine and America, could conceptualize a flexible timetable—pointed toward 2050—for a step-by-step, decade-by-decade, implementation of the oft-cited slogan about a cooperative community whose geographical swath starts in Vancouver and reaches east. To be meaningful, such a non-official initiative will need to be ambitious and yet practical. The obstacles to its mission are deeply rooted in competing geopolitical interests and bitter historical memories. It will take joint as well as patient efforts to overcome residual national fears and suspicions. Flexible and evolving arrangements for eventually widening the European Union may help, in addition to some deliberate upgrading of the existing transcontinental and Transatlantic frameworks. Difficulties will persist, but Europe and the Atlantic community would not be what they have become today had it not been for the fact that, for many years, visionaries on both sides engaged in protracted, patient and persistent advocacy. We could learn from that experience to launch at some point in the not-too-distant future a similar non-official initiative to plan the architecture for wider and deeper Transatlantic and trans-Eurasian cooperation.

Article 5.

Foreign Policy in Focus

From Davos to Dystopia

Ben Zala

January 19, 2012 -- Not long ago the World Economic Forum (WEF) found itself in the sights of the global economic justice movement. At the turn of the last century, before anyone was “occupying” public spaces in protest at the growing inequalities between the top strata of society and the rest, a broad global coalition of environment, development, and peace activists were targeting the public meetings of major institutions such as the WTO, the IMF, and the G8. In September 2000, activists shut down the opening of the WEF’s Asia-Pacific Summit in Melbourne, Australia in protest against an unrepresentative and unaccountable elite gathering to set the economic agenda for the year in a region marked by enormously uneven income distribution.

A mere 12 years later, in an intriguing reversal, the WEF has released a new report calling for a “shift in mentality” to address a looming crisis typified by rebellion, protest, and political violence sparked by inequality and marginalisation across the world. The seventh edition of the organization’s Global Risks report highlights the increasing importance of marginalization as a security issue over the coming decades. It describes the “seeds of dystopia” threatening both social and political stability across the world.

“As the world grows increasingly complex and interdependent, the capacity to manage the systems that underpin our prosperity and safety is diminishing,” the report declares. This conclusion presents perhaps the most radical call to arms from what would normally be considered a key player of the global political “establishment,”

After decades of entrenched poverty, massive debt and struggling against an unfair global trading system, those who languish on the margins of the global community are in revolt. Yet our existing frameworks and reference points for building a response to this sort of global insecurity provide little assistance. To put it simply, Washington, Brussels, even Beijing and New Delhi have been caught off guard. The time for some radical thinking is upon us. That such calls are now coming from one of the engine rooms of neoliberal economics is a sign that we may be reaching a tipping point.

Revolt of the Masses

A number of actors in the defense and security realm have begun to explicitly make the connection between marginalization and insecurity. For example the U.S. National Intelligence Council's Global Trends: 2025 report predicts that in the years ahead "increasing interconnectedness will enable individuals to coalesce around common causes across national boundaries, creating new cohorts of the angry, downtrodden, and disenfranchised." Similarly, the chief of the UK Defence Force, General Sir David Richards has discussed the Naxalite insurgency that has spread rapidly across India in recent years as a conflict with a "sense of hopelessness and economic envy at its core." The effects are no longer merely local. Richards warns that "these are powerful instincts that today can be inflamed and communicated to other similarly dispossessed groups across the world at the touch of a button."

Yet, thus far, the guardians of the global economic order have not begun to think through the long-term and serious consequences for peace and security of prolonged inaction on global inequality. This new analysis of the risks associated with the "seeds of dystopia" in the WEF report could be Davos finally catching up.

The WEF describes dystopia as "a place where life is full of hardship and devoid of hope." The reality is that after years of unequal growth

and a growing divide between elites and non-elites both between and within countries, this description has become a reality for the majority of the world's population. The neoliberal economic consensus which has dominated the WEF's own discussions for so long has finally come up against the long-term consequences of a global free market unable to effectively price externalities (be they social, environmental or even now, strategic).

The report's analysis of the interconnections between a number of risks reveals "a constellation of fiscal, demographic and societal risks signalling a dystopian future for much of humanity." This echoes the work a number of more progressive and forward-looking think tanks such as the Oxford Research Group, Institute for Policy Studies, and the Center for American Progress over the last few years. These groups have focused not only on large-scale trends affecting global politics but also on the ways in which these trends interact and the implications for policymakers trying to make sense of a more complex world. For example, dealing with a growing division between elites and non-elites on a global scale is difficult enough without the effects of a warming global climate. As *The Nation's* Christian Parenti puts it:

Between the Tropic of Capricorn and the Tropic of Cancer lies what I call the Tropic of Chaos, a belt of economically and politically battered post-colonial states girding the planet's mid-latitudes. In this band, around the tropics, climate change is beginning to hit hard...as a result, in this belt we find clustered most of the failed and semifailed states of the developing world.

Yet the risks are not just confined to the developing world. The WEF report warns that this dystopian future could extend to "developed economies where citizens lament the loss of social entitlements, emerging economies that fail to provide opportunities for their young

population or to redress rising inequalities, or least-developed economies where wealth and social gains are declining.”

The report is part of a growing awareness of the linkages between events and flashpoints such as the Arab Spring, the Occupy movements worldwide, and civil unrest in countries from Thailand and Chile to Israel and India. The link, according to the report, is a common and “growing frustration among citizens with the political and economic establishment, and the rapid public mobilization enabled by greater technological connectivity.” This frustration and resulting mobilization together create a much larger global trend. As such, ad-hoc national approaches are no longer sufficient for genuinely addressing the challenges of a marginalized majority world.

Beyond Davos

It is one thing to examine a number of interlinked global trends which add up to a dangerous – or dystopian – global picture. It is quite another to have the courage to genuinely rethink the foundations of the global order that has produced them. Unfortunately there are no easy answers to the question of how to reverse these trends, particularly at a time of truly global economic crisis when the temptations of short-term, voter-friendly fixes are so tempting. This makes the potential role of organizations such as the WEF aimed at promoting dialogue and leadership even more important if used in the right way. A summit focused not on growth and competitiveness but on practical steps on issues such as debt reduction and institutional reform would be a good first start. Central to this must be real attempts to tackle the seeds of dystopia at their source – even if this means asking difficult questions and hearing uncomfortable answers in the major financial capitals of the world. If the dominant response to the risks outlined in the WEF report follows the formula of the last decade’s ‘war on terror’-- attempts to

control insecurity through the use of high-tech military power -- then we best get used to living in a dystopian world. If however, global leaders and the citizens they represent can create responses that are aimed at addressing the underlying drivers of disenfranchisement and violence, then 2012 could be seen as the year that gives rise to a truly sustainable security. Then, when the powerful meet in Davos, they won't simply be trying to save the old order but working cooperatively to create the new.

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