
GOING FROM CHALLENGES TO OPPORTUNITIES...

Future Peace & Security Risks

Talal Abu-Ghazaleh
Keynote Speech
Global Challenges Forum

at the US Mission to the UN
21 – 23 September 2009
Geneva, Switzerland

FIRSTLY

We live in a world of endless multiplying and growing challenges to peace and security, including:

- Risks created by nature and man in partnership and in complicity.
- Risks that are cause and effect at the same time.
- But let me at the outset remind us of Article's saying: "I love Socrates, but I love truth more".
- I accordingly plead for your tolerance, and if you disagree with me, as I expect many would, remember that Winston Churchill said: "The greatest lesson in life is to realize that idiots are sometimes right".

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SECONDLY

Allow me now to list some selected challenges to global security in no particular order:

1. The financial and economic crisis, just starting, is a long lasting process of change embodying painful great risks. Is this the beginning of the end of globalization?
2. The speed and magnitude in which wealth is moving from West to East. In 2007, the West hosted 70% of global FDI. Not any more in future. Does this pose a challenge or an opportunity to global governance?
3. The emergence of a new economic World Order. Brazil, Russia, India and China (BRIC) will match the G7 in 30 years. We are witnessing Chinese – Japanese marriage, to be followed by Russia marriage. Two centuries ago Chinese GDP was 30% of the globe (Asian 60%). It dropped to 5% 50 years ago. In 30 years, China will regain its share as the super power again. Would this take place in peace?
4. Increase in violence against injustice.
5. Increase in unregulated state violence (pre-emptive strikes) and state terrorism (to suppress freedom fighters).
6. Wars for economic motives and for resources.
7. Exceptionalization of Arabs. (David Brooks in Herald Tribune, March 2006 – McCain on Obama's religious and ethnic roots).
8. Shift from democracy to benevolent dictatorship.
9. Anti-Americanism.
10. Internet Blackout.
11. Oil peak (2030?) – Post oil ambiguity.
12. Energy insecurity.
13. Marginalization of the UN.
14. Water insecurity.
15. Climate change.
16. Environment abuse.
17. Food shortages.
18. U.S. depression (from recession). And deflation.
19. Domestic vulnerabilities (by Provost Leonard Ferrari)
 - Power Grid Network infiltration.
 - Oil Supply disruptions.
 - Communication and transportation disruptions.
20. Population Growth.
21. Unemployment and social and political insecurity.
22. Wars against continued long occupation (Palestinians against Israeli forces).
23. Lesser leadership capabilities (US relative decline in strength and leverage).
24. Ambivalence (even frustration) toward international systems and institutions.
25. Growing protectionism (post WTO?).
26. A multipolar world without multilateralism . (Historically, multipolar worlds are more unstable than unipolar or bipolar worlds).
27. Nuclear proliferation (Israel included).
28. Biological weapons (of the poor).

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THIRDLY

These challenges pose some opportunities:

1. What role should global partners in Europe, the Middle East and Asia play in developing a better outcome?
2. What should the emerging super powers contribute to prevent disorder and chaos?
3. What lessons does the current global crisis offer for cooperation leading to a more stable world and perhaps avoid a real world war?
4. Will the world follow success stories of Islamic Finance and of Chinese political and economic models?
5. Will the world come up with feasible alternatives to oil before its crash leading to global economic collapse?
6. Will the world develop feasible sea water desalination technologies before a water shortage catastrophe?
7. Will there be an end to the so-called war on terror? Or is the war yet to come?
8. Will China continue to purchase US Treasuries or diversify its holdings? In other words, does China have a greater role to play in shaping the state of global development?

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FINALLY

1. Peace and Security risks constitute a “real storm” in process.
2. Cause and effect are too complex to diagnose.
3. It is likely that humanity will survive.
4. But it is questionable that human civilization will survive as we know it today.
5. We have lived through the information age. (lions more than gazelles).
6. We are struggling through the knowledge age: Using ICT for knowledge development (lions more than gazelles).
7. We are yet to go, should the world service its own self-inflected risks, into the wisdom age: the use of knowledge wisely and not destructively.
8. Churchill said: The further back your look, the further forward you see.
9. Surely I will not live to see that future.
10. Hopefully you will, and hopefully wisdom, rule of law, fairness and compassion will prevail in your future world over injustice, double standards, greed, brutality, arrogance, rule of power, abuse of nature, disregard for others and the inequality in which we live and write the prescription for peace and security risks.
11. Emerson said: *Man lives not by bread alone but with love passion and sympathy.* I encourage you in your deliberations about various challenges to global security to look past them to opportunity.
12. To that end, we need to consider what a “Global Challenges and Opportunities” Forum might look like. I suggest that it should be:
 - Futuristic
 - Research oriented
 - Focused on global cooperation
 - Security based
 - Visionary
 - Positive
13. Such a Forum should:
 - Be multi-disciplinary focusing on political, economic, social, and cultural opportunities for change.
 - Move a changing world from challenges to opportunities leading to solutions.
 - Include both short and long term perspectives.
 - Focus on risk identification and prevention.
14. The future Forum should make a special effort to move past Euro-Atlantic dominated discourse and create in Geneva a neutral venue that opens the door to participation by Chinese and Arab scholars on a large scale basis. Of course other regions should be represented too, but the voices of emerging powers have been submerged in Western dominated discourse. There are many ways to move from challenges to opportunities and I believe it particularly essential to bring China into the discussion of global security.
15. The agenda of this Roundtable allows you to explore all of these issues over the next two days. I hope that I have given you some food for thought to get you started. I look forward to our discussions.

THANK YOU

TALKING POINTS

Talal Abu-Ghazaleh
Talking Points for Circulation
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* Note: I ask my colleague and advisor Dr. Salem Al-Agtash (TAG College – GJU, Jordan) to circulate my talking points to facilitate deliberations and action, together with my written speech and concept paper, which I urge you to read.

I. THE WORLD is in transition, always – faster – now because of ICT

1. Major Geo-political-economic changes are in process
2. Global structural changes are inevitable (financial, economic, etc.)
3. A recession/ depression will be with us for the next decade
4. From liberalization to protectionism is the trend
5. The need to revisit MDG (ICT as enabler by GAID)
6. Global challenges are increasing (listed in my speech circulated)

II. WHY do we need this FORUM (my concept paper on the proposed structure is circulated)

1. To predict by shaping not by blaming
2. A global think tank of selected institutions
3. Independence by structure
4. Global inclusion
5. A forum of forums
6. Visionary, futuristic, positive, cooperative
7. Global security goals
8. Pre-emptive thinking
9. Political, economic, cultural, diversity of interests
10. Building two-way traffic bridges

(e.g. our Orient Express from China, and Silk Road from Germany revival projects)

III. NEXT: Delegate to our co-hosts to:

1. Draft charter of Forum
2. Invite willing institutions present here to be founders
3. Issue press release (as co-hosts) on this meeting
4. Select name and acronym and domain name: suggested (GOCFORUM or FOROC, or GLOCFORUM, or OCFORUM)
5. Nominate Director (Defacto: Walter)
6. Nominate Chairs/ deputy chairs/ director
7. Register Forum in Geneva
8. Establish domicile in Geneva
9. Invite selected institutions to join (US/ Europe of course) put plans BRIC/ Turkey/ UK/ Africa/ France/ Iran/ Others/ UN Organizations
10. Call for the first AGM
11. Propose operational methodology

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12. Propose agenda for the first AGM
13. Delegate to a chair cabinet (chairs and deputy chairs/ director/ venue hosting organizations) executive powers
14. Set the theme for 2010 research (crises management?)
15. Propose funding models

Let us move NOW. Time does not wait. At the AGM we can review every thing

In closing I wish to borrow Victor Hugo's wisdom:

“Nothing is worth bowing to but Genius, and nothing deserves kneeling to but Goodness”

Let us combine genius and goodness

THANK YOU