GLOBALISATION TRENDS: CONSIDERATIONS AND THE ROLE OF THE UNITED NATIONS

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In the 1970s, I was asked by my government to direct a centre similar to the Centre for Strategic Research in Ankara. This was a centre just like yours. A centre where, in all freedom, academics and diplomats, professors and politicians, could meet to analyse Egypt's foreign policy and to debate its future orientation. The centre's views were published in a quarterly which I edited from the 1960s: As-Siyassah ad-Dawliyyah.

Since then, my career has taken many turns. But time and again I have returned to the Centre to discuss future directions in foreign policy with colleagues and friends. This is why I am extremely pleased to share some thoughts with the members of the Centre for Strategic Research in Ankara. You have invited me to return to what I consider an essential part of my life's work: building bridges between theory and practice in international affairs.

I should like to share some thoughts on the longer term perspective in international relations, with particular reference to the nature of globalisation.

Globalising trends are at work, shaping the world in which we must function, preparing the world of the twenty-first century, and challenging the inventiveness and the resources of the United Nations. But globalisation is not a homogeneous phenomenon. The word 'globalisation' is shorthand for a series of phenomena.

Globalisation can be beneficial: financial and information flows take place along a non-hierarchic web of contacts. All that is required is access to a personal computer and a telephone line. Vast sums of money are transferred from one account to another and from one continent to another. Whole libraries are open to researchers everywhere. Fast-breaking news, from the financial markets to the latest election results, are instantly available with a few strokes on the keyboard. There is no single source for this information, and there is practically no way to control it. If knowledge is really power, then this power will be available more equitably, and to more people, than has ever been possible in the history of humanity.

Just as there is beneficial globalisation, there is also criminal globalisation that ignores not only the frontiers of states, but the very limits of legality. The globalisation of an underground economy is proceeding apace, taking advantage of a technology originally developed for service to humanity. The traffic in illegal drugs, terrorism, the illegal trade of small arms, missile parts, and components of weapons of mass destruction, and the laundering of money generated by these nefarious activities, are all related. There is a global crime economy which cannot be broken by one state alone, or even by a group of states. It will require global awareness, global commitment, and global action.

The third type of globalisation is a result of human or natural catastrophes, which threaten the survival of our species and the sustainability of development. This is the globalisation of environmental degradation, deforestation, air and water pollution, the spread of epidemics, and the political and social dangers posed by unregulated movements of population. Such problems are not the doing of one state. They cannot be solved by a single state. These global problems of humanity require the collective effort of humanity. They require the development of global norms and standards such as internationally agreed pollution control measures, global agreements, and efforts like the joint Conference on Refugees and Migration held at Geneva under the auspices of the United Nations High Commission for Refugees, the International Organisation for Migration and the Commonwealth of Independent States. The latest international effort for the development of global norms and standards is the International Conference on Human Settlements. Habitat II addresses another great global issue –the problems of urbanisation and human settlements.

There are not only different kinds of globalisation but also different rates of globalisation. While certain globalising trends are rapid, such as the development of information networks on the positive side, or trade in material for nuclear weapons on the negative side, other trends are slow. Global warming is relatively slow, but its ultimate effects may be even more devastating than some faster-moving trends. Differing rates may require different time frames for response. Governments may need rapid cooperative action against the international trade in illicit drugs. Other trends may require a longer time frame, such as reductions in carbon emissions or changes in the modes of production and consumption on a planetary scale.

Despite all the differences in these globalising trends, we still can focus on two common features:

First, globalisation is characterised by the weakening of state control over a variety of sectors: finance, information, transport of goods and services, the environment, and population movements.

Second, the strains of globalisation have led to the fragmentation of states and societies, the rise of violence and civil conflict, the marginalisation of entire groups within a particular society and of entire states in the globalised economy.

The world is not powerless in the face of these globalising trends. The states of the world, and their peoples, have at their disposal an instrument which has been carefully prepared for fifty years to deal with the various strains of globalisation: the United Nations. To address global issues, the United Nations can be useful in three areas:

First we must strengthen the role of the United Nations in bringing about a common vision, and common norms and agreed policies on the issues confronting the world of tomorrow. Invariably, these will be global issues that can only be addressed at the global level: the regulation of the use and allocation of communication channels, water, the spread of illegal arms, terrorism, diseases in newly virulent forms, massive population movements. The global action of the United Nations reinforces the sovereignty of states even as it reduced the dangers of globalisation.

Second, the United Nations must develop the means to prevent the fragmentation of states and societies. This can be through enhanced economic cooperation, through the development of regionalism, and through efforts at the democratisation of the international environment. Above all, the UN will be central to reversing the marginalisation of entire societies, and sharing with them the benefits of globalisation.

Third, the essential building block of the international system must remain the state, which alone is capable of preventing the chaotic breakdown of order caused by the strains of globalisation. In doing so, the system of states must allow for increased representation of new global actors: NGOs, business, academics, parliamentarians and municipal authorities. These are the actors that will bridge the gap between the global and the local levels.

The United Nations is responsive both to the needs of state sovereignty and to the increasing welfare needs of the world population. It is a forum where states and their peoples bring their problems for discussion. It allows for the expression and competition of a variety of ideas and experiences. From this global exchange of perspectives, there can emerge a general policy statement, an agreement on the nature of the problem and on the elements of a solution.

This is the meaning of the world conferences and summit meetings which the United Nations has held in recent years. The issues of sustainable development, of children, of the environment, human rights, population, social development and marginalisation, transnational crime, the problems of small island states, the advancement of women, trade and development policy and, in Istanbul, human settlements and urbanisation. All these

major global issues have been debated, and programmes of action have been agreed. These conferences have brought together representatives of states and of civil society, governments and NGOs. Heads of state and government have attended in unprecedented numbers, as evidence of their commitment to the United Nations.

This global movement is producing a growing body of agreements. They represent a programme for the nations of the world. By setting clear norms and standards, and measurable goals, the states of the world have given themselves instruments to counter the negative effects of globalisation while enhancing their positive benefits. Through the medium of the United Nations conferences and summits, states are regaining control of the process of globalisation.

At the same time, the United Nations must address the negative consequences of globalisation: fragmentation and marginalisation. The fragmentation of the world system of states can be seen in the largest number of civil wars and internal conflicts since the creation of the United Nations fifty years ago. From a total of three peace-keeping operations prior to the end of the Cold War, the United Nations must now deal with twenty-one such operations.

As states fragment, bands of irregulars led by warlords bring death and destruction to innocent civilians. There is scant hope of peace negotiations when governments are unstable alliances of warring factions, divided along ethnic, tribal or clan lines. Peacekeepers must now venture into potentially hostile situations, broker ceasefires, provide relief to the civilian population, protect convoys of humanitarian supplies, and assist refugees and displaced persons lost in the chaos of internal conflict. When wars end, the United Nations tries to consolidate the fragile peace by offering development assistance, help in the organisation and conduct of elections, and support for the resettlement of civilians returning home. These are the consequences of fragmentation on the ground. These are the present and future tasks of the United Nations as a collective mechanism to correct the negative aspects of globalising trends and their accompanying social strains.

Turkish peacekeepers have seen the costs of chaos and fragmentation in Somalia and the former Yugoslavia. Turkish peacekeepers have given their life in Somalia and Bosnia-Herzegovina. Your peacekeepers are seeing today the benefits of multilateral action: on the border between Iraq and Kuwait, in Georgia, in Bosnia and in Croatia, and in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. Turkish military observers, officers and civilian police are participating in the construction of the post-Cold War international system. They can tell the world about the costs of fragmentation. They can tell us of the benefits of peace. They, and the country they serve, are the pride not only of their own land, but also of the United Nations.

The world is entering a phase at once pregnant with opportunity, and yet full of danger. The United Nations is the only organisation with universal membership, and with the capacity to work at the same time for peace, for development and for democratisation. The United Nations is waiting to be used as it was designed to be used. Institutions such as the Ankara Centre for Strategic Research can help bring to the United Nations the scholarship, and the practical advice which are essential at this watershed of human history.