

MKAY Bykeli Selim Yenel'in Kolombiya San Carlos Diplomasi Akademisi'nde
Verecekleri "How Regional Changes Have Affected the Global Order" Bařlıklı
Konferansı İin Konuřma Taslađı:

Dear Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is indeed a great pleasure for me to be in Bogota and to be able to address such an esteemed audience. I extend my sincere gratitude to all those who have contributed in realizing this meeting.

It is not often that an official from the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs gets the opportunity to speak at the San Carlos Diplomacy Academy.

For years, we may have had all sorts of excuses for not being able to fully realize the potential of relations between geographically distant countries like Turkey and Colombia. Well, in today's globalized world, we simply ran out of excuses and had finally got the opportunity to further diversify and deepen our relations.

Indeed, immense changes world-wide have rendered distances meaningless and certain values as universal. The new era ushered in by events like the dissolution of the Eastern Bloc and the collapse of the Soviet Union, is one in which the effects of globalization and the fruits of the information age are reshaping the world in a way unprecedented in history. The Arab Spring that we are witnessing these days is yet another example of this shift.

This reshaping -so to say- has provided ample material for academicians who try to label it in precise terms. Since the bipolar structure of the Cold War became history, discussions continue about the nature of the contemporary world order. There are those who claim that the Western led liberal world order is defeated and is being replaced by a new global order in which the emerging powers like China, Brazil and India represents a completely different mindset promoting new rules and principles.

Professor John Ikenberry of Princeton University thinks otherwise claiming that "... today's power transition represents not the defeat of the liberal order but its ultimate ascendance". He goes on to saying that the contemporary emerging powers including Turkey and Colombia, will have more say in shaping and making the decisions of this new world order, but this does not mean that they are going to change the basic rules of the system since it is within that system they have flourished and reached their current power status.

I tend to concur with this argument and believe that despite the fact that global power is shifting towards East and South, we are witnessing a broadening of the power basis, rather than a shift in values and principles. Indeed today, there is a need to reform the institutions of global governance, but not to the effect of altering their fundamental operation principles which

promote liberalism in every sense, but in the way of making it more representative, more transparent and more democratic or accountable.

And amidst such dynamics, we have reasons to be optimistic.

To begin with, increasing liberties and greater adherence to democracy, human rights and the rule of law have now become the hallmarks of a civilized and modern society, although not all nations enjoy the same level of accomplishment in that regard. These concepts, together with increased economic cooperation, trade and human-to-human contacts are allowing us to hold out the hope for a better future; one that will be defined as much by the notions of sustainable development, stability, peace, harmony and tolerance as by freedom, pluralism, transparency and accountability.

This evolved nature of global dynamics also necessitates us to set aside our differences, and concentrate and unite on our similarities and mutual interests. It is clear that we are better off when working together than when we are in rivalry and opposition. The universal values and principles which we all uphold already provide a sound roadmap for the journey ahead of us.

Having said these, however, I must also underline that this is not an easy task.

Regrettably, humanity's progress towards a more stable future is still fraught with dangers. Many parts of the world are still grappling with local conflicts, crises, and unresolved issues. The total peace, security and stability we all yearn for remains elusive. The sad news delivered by media networks about war, social tensions and instability from different corners of the globe are unfortunately frequent and can sometimes be overwhelming.

Furthermore, such problems are not confined to security issues at all. Quite the contrary, these so-called asymmetric threats are plenty in number with the financial crisis, energy security, illegal migration, epidemic diseases, climate change, organized crime, cross cultural and religious intolerance, extremism and terrorism probably being the first ones to come to mind.

In the international arena, there are no isolated cases any longer. In today's world what happens in a certain place will surely have regional consequences that would inevitably trigger global repercussions. The same is also true for peace efforts; for such efforts in the regional scale will surely create a synergy that will encourage similar efforts elsewhere.

In short; change brings about new change. I think the ongoing events in the so-called "Arab Spring" are solid testament to this fact. So if I can strike in with the subject matter of our discussions, yes; regional changes do affect global order very much.

Therefore one can argue that the way to solve many problematic issues actually boil down to creating positive building blocks in different corners of the world with a view of eventually uniting them in an overall peace seeking enterprise.

How do we do this?

For starters, every country must have the courage and the will to solve its own problems by owning up to them. They must actively work towards establishing functional regional orders that are conducive to peace, stability and development. They must all aim for the highest standards in every field, while keeping abreast of the changes, transformations and winds of reform that are driving globalization.

We must tackle intermingling challenges in an all encompassing manner. As I have underlined a while ago, no one has the luxury of being a mere spectator in international relations any more. We must be proactive; aiming first at preventing rather than solving when it comes to crises. Working the way from the regional to the global level is also imperative. In the Turkish case, we have started to work by trying to free our relations with our neighbours from all problems. We like to label this as “zero problems with our neighbours”. It is an ideal; but it also clearly lays down our good intentions.

If I can elevate the issue from the bilateral and regional to a more global context. I can say that we reject all tendencies for categorization and stereotyping based self-righteous rhetoric when dealing with matters related to peace, security and stability. We think that this in itself is a source of tension. It is precisely because of this constructive stance that we are, in many cases, in a better position to talk with others, to listen and to convince. We strive to make this standing point the cornerstone for conducting international relations. We believe that this will help the “common” to develop and prevail over the different. We don’t believe in “us” and “others”.

Referring back to the topic of today’s discussion, I can say that all our efforts aim at producing conducive regional changes that carry the potential of gearing the global evolve for the better.

Probably there is no better example than the current Arab Spring which requires these principles to be put into action immediately and effectively.

First ownership. It is indeed the countries in the region themselves who need to be in the driving seat to steer their transformation.

A functional regional order in the Middle East and North Africa, which will have a vital impact on global peace and stability, can be achieved only if we can have functional systems of democratic governance in each and every country of the region. Given the differences prevailing in each country, there will surely be different processes changing in pace and even substance. But rule of law, respect for human rights and accountability of governments must be the common denominators of each process.

Secondly, the international community must be there to help the regional countries at this crucial moment. We must see this process as an opportunity, rather than a threat and act in a true spirit of partnership with the countries in the region, given the stakes involved for the entire international community. Indeed, the success of the transformation in a way that addresses and meets the legitimate aspirations of the people for dignity and democracy will in fact be the

success of the entire world since this will make our planet a safer and more prosperous place to live.

And thirdly, we must make sure that no group or actor is excluded or alienated in this process. Democracy works best when it is inclusive and comprehensive. Therefore, we must not oppose certain groups based on past stereotypes and give everyone a chance to participate in democracy. To this end we should reach out to all interlocutors and share our experiences in order to help them find their own way.

This is certainly what we do in Turkey. We see the Arab Spring as a historic opportunity and do our best to help these countries move forward in their democratization processes. We believe that this is precisely in tune with our “zero problems” approach, and think that with democracy taking root in our wider neighbourhood, we will come even closer to reaching this ultimate objective. We are also firmly convinced that such an outcome of the Arab Spring will not only be confined in this region, and that it shall trigger a worldwide wind of reform that will engulf all the countries and regions sharing similar conditions and aspirations.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Arab Spring is indeed a prime example on how regional changes can affect the global order. But as I said, in today’s world where advances in communication technology make the whole world more interconnected, we also have the ability to influence almost every development, local or regional. After all, Facebook and Twitter today are among the most powerful means of interaction; making borders and distances irrelevant. That said, this should not be interpreted as a loss of importance for conventional diplomacy, since diplomacy is the flag bearer of a number of different mechanisms of dialogue that aim at producing fruitful results.

And in the ever changing world where we reflect on regional developments and contours of the new global order, it seems quite fitting to discuss this topic today at the Academy of the Colombian Foreign Ministry.

Yes, diplomacy today is enormously different from what it was in the 19th and even the 20th Century. But that does not take away the fundamental function diplomacy and diplomats play to enable dialogue and manage the change towards positive ends.

First of all, the increase in the number of states in the last two decades has made diplomacy a more diverse and multi dimensional endeavour, especially with the end of the Cold war, where it was easier to take decisions on the basis of bloc policies. Now every country and region matters bringing new challenges to us diplomats.

Along with this increase, states are no longer the sole actors in international relations. Non-governmental organizations, corporations, press, academia, think-tanks and so forth are fortifying their dominance in the shaping of overall global relations.

Diplomacy is also not an isolated policy field detached from the public in general any more. It is affecting the masses. Today, diplomacy is very much a national issue, which has to be planned, brewed and implemented with popular support.

Contemporary diplomats face the important quest of meeting these needs.

In fact, I believe that the challenges that diplomacy has to tackle today are much more daring than they used to be.

Diplomacy has a greater task of shaping international relations. It cannot confine itself to mere reporting and message delivering. It has to help understand and make reason of.

Achieving conciliation is a task that unfortunately got tougher. At first thought, one may presume that it should be the other way round. However, it is such a shame that societal gaps can become wider and fault lines can become clearer as the world gets smaller.

I think that turning this around is the biggest challenge diplomacy faces in the near future. Diplomacy should play a pivotal role in the creation of a global governance system that can effectively address this threat.

Naturally, the immediate concern for diplomacy is to assist in creating an international environment that can adequately deal with the evolved nature of security challenges. But parallel with the evolving international environment, diplomats must also strive just in issues like a better global economic structure, stopping the degradation of the environment, combating terrorism and other forms of cross border criminal activity as well as maintaining energy surplus and security.

Diplomacy, this ancient art of conducting international relations, is even more relevant today and will surely continue to evolve and change in the future. It has to, if it is going to meet the challenges and demands ahead. I believe it will be the timely, constructive and easing endeavours of diplomacy that will critically help states to cooperate with each other and people to understand each other. Hopefully, this approach will gradually free mankind from many of the problems impeding its mutual betterment.

I believe being diplomats from two countries that are perhaps distant in geography, but similar in mindset, both Turkey and Colombia can peruse a bottom to top peace initiative working from regional to global to achieve our common goal which is true global peace.

This is precisely our objective in Turkey. And this is precisely why you see a more active Turkish diplomacy in recent years. With our increased responsibility and enhanced means, we are trying to generate peace, stability and prosperity in our wider region with a view to contributing to the larger picture. We work from our region to the broader context of global politics and that is what brings us here today to cooperate with a country from the other side of the world sharing the same objectives and energy.

Thank you.