

I Predict: The Worst is Yet to Come
By: Talal Abu-Ghazaleh

Digital Transformation:

I have emphasized on previous occasions that digital transformation is an inevitable phenomenon, whose control over human life is accelerating to a degree that may exceed human adaptability, if we do not take the necessary measures to keep pace with it. As a result, all interactions between countries and individuals will become “digital”; without human contact. A lot of developments in this regard have been achieved so far, but more is yet to come, including all activities and practices, either to fully digitize activities that were partially digitized, such as education, administration, trade, transportation, and others or to take over new human activities that have not yet moved from their traditional framework to the digital framework.

Given this, we must prepare for the digital revolution in all its manifestations so as not to fall behind and widen the gap between traditional practices, which are out of date, and modern ones, which represent the future. It is a race against time and there is no room for waiting and slackening.

The Struggle over the Unilateralism of the International System:

Unilateralism - or the international system subject to unipolarity - simply means that a superpower controls the fate of the rest of the world, by controlling the United Nations and its decisions. This is the worst situation that can afflict our world in terms of the practices that are neither subject to international law, nor the principles of proper interaction between states, nor to standards of justice, or respect for the rights or legitimate interests of other countries. Therefore, unipolar practices may lead to wars, aggression, enforcing sanctions, domination, and imposing control using blackmail, threats, intimidation, and so on. This phenomenon is familiar to us in the Arab world as a result of the domination inflicted on our countries by greater powers, either individually or collectively.

Is "dualism" the solution? That is, "the rule of the two poles". The answer is a resounding "No".

During the Cold War era (before the collapse of the Soviet Union) the international system was subject to bipolarity; with the Soviet Union and its allies on one side, and the United States and its allies on the other. Bipolarity created some balance in

terms of one of the poles confronting any action by the other that affects its interests, or the interests of its allied countries. This mutual response prevented individual intimidation, preventing harm but not necessarily achieving justice, or even benefit in the case of disagreement on a specific position. However, there are instances where the two poles agree on procedures and policies that do not fall under international law. In such cases, the international organization was controlled by the majority rule of the major powers and issued unfair and illegal decisions against weaker countries.

The Dollar as an International Currency:

When the Soviet Union collapsed in the last decade of the previous century, control of the entire international system rested in the hands of the other pole, that is, the United States and its allies. US control has strengthened the subjugation of the entire financial system to the US dollar, which has become the only reference for all currencies and transactions between all countries of the world. This put a lethal weapon in the hands of the United States to silently wield it by imposing sanctions to paralyze any disobeying country that conducts any financial transactions without using the dollar...no sale, no purchase, no import, no export, and no ability to benefit from the national currency of the sanctioned state.

The phenomenon of economic sanctions and the dominance of the dollar has been exacerbated to the point where it has cast dangerous shadows on all economies of the world without exception, including the US economy.

BRICS Currency as an International Competitor:

Naturally, this provoked reactions from the affected countries and motivated them to take countermeasures, beginning with Chinese efforts to offer an alternative to financial trading on the dollar to the concerned countries, and then expanding to include others.

We are now witnessing what Russian President Vladimir Putin revealed; that work is underway to create an international reserve currency based on the currencies of the BRICS countries, during a speech to the participants in the BRICS Business Forum that was held recently. The word "BRICS" is an abbreviation of the names of the countries with the fastest economic growth in the world: Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa. During the forum, he stated, "Together with BRICS

partners, we are developing reliable alternative mechanisms for international settlements. The Russian Financial Messaging System is open for connection with the banks of the BRICS countries.”

He added, “The Russian MIR payment system is expanding its presence. We are exploring the possibility of creating an international reserve currency based on the basket of BRICS currencies... It is important that, despite all the problems and difficulties, BRICS business circles have been consistently enhancing mutually beneficial ties in the areas of trade, finance, and investment.”

Challenges and Dangers of War:

The world is now facing successive disasters either as a result of wars and conflicts and instead of the international organization and its influential members working to extinguish them according to international law; it is satisfied with empty statements and vain declarations, while its members race to pour fuel on the fire of successive wars, the latest of which is the war we are witnessing between Russia and Europe. We have not seen any sincere international effort to stop this war, nor to stop the destruction, death, devastation, siege, sanctions, and disasters that we witness every moment. We only see the different parties racing towards incitement, imposing a siege, sending weapons and mercenaries, destroying communication, wasting all kinds of resources, and creating suffocating crises all over the world without any justification.

In light of such a paralyzed international system, and as the United Nations refrains from exercising its duty, every country works to protect itself from stronger countries and secure its needs and interests. Then, those countries are forced to waste their resources on arming and entrenching instead of spending what they have on construction and improvement and the development of life for the better. Since no country can secure sufficient protection for itself, the international system, represented by the United Nations, was established to provide protection, security, and peace to its members and to absolve them of the task of doing so unilaterally.

Deglobalization:

Unfortunately, this is the situation at the moment. As a result, countries work to protect their interests and their existence, retreating from the framework of globalization towards: "My country above all else."

“Globalization” is the state that resulted from the disappearance of distances and barriers that separated the countries and regions of the world as a result of the development of different means of transportation and communication. Hence, all regions and countries of the world opened up to each other, and peoples converged, and it became easy to travel, deal, cooperate and exchange interests to the extent that the entire globe became akin to a single village.

Naturally, globalization was not completed for objective and understandable necessities. However, communication is increasing, despite the efforts of extremism, violence, and malicious groups that took advantage of the removal of barriers and were able to cross borders easily to commit crimes and atrocities against innocent people, forcing many countries to re-impose restrictions on movement that were previously removed.

Positions regarding globalization differed. Some condemned it and held it responsible for the chaos that prevailed, and others consider it a natural and inevitable phenomenon, and if we had made use of its advantages wisely, in light of an effective international system, there would be no chaos. So, globalization should not be classified as either a good or bad phenomenon. It is a natural phenomenon and it is not responsible for any misuse that occurred in its wake.

International System Failure:

If any failure can be attributed to globalization, it will be the result of the chaos resulting from the failure of the existing world order and the impotence of the United Nations. When the international system is reformed, many other issues will be fixed along with it. Then, we will move on from the time of wars, conflicts, the arms race, backwardness, the spread of epidemics and human tragedies, the spread of the phenomenon of asylum, the destruction of the environment, the waste of all available resources, the spread of hatred, extremism, blind terrorism, and the threat to the lives of individuals and societies, no matter how far from the areas of conflict to a world of security, prosperity, progress, happiness, and noble dealings between all the peoples of the earth under the protection of an honest, wise, and effective international system.

The Worst is Yet to Come!!

1. The challenges of the Chinese rising dominance

2. The scourge of war
3. Famine and scarcity of food and medicine
4. Energy wars and outages
5. International currency challenges
6. Technical gap risks
7. An unfair world order
8. Social crises
9. The crisis of depression and high prices
10. Internet governance and the challenges of alternatives
11. Environmental pollution is getting more serious by returning to coal
12. Water crisis
13. Epidemiological challenges
14. Unilateral sanctions and their repercussions
15. The unemployment and poverty crisis
16. Disputes over the principles of intellectual property rights
17. Supply chain issues

The Solution: The Need for Democratization between Countries and Within Countries:

The solution to all these and other dilemmas is a democratic international system committed to the United Nations Charter, which provides all states with equal rights and the necessary international protection against every aggression or transgression by any party.

This situation will not be achieved without sincere agreement between the so-called superpowers to respect the international organization, its law and its charter, and the abolition of the veto right that distinguishes five countries over the rest of the more than 193 member states of the international organization. Otherwise, the international system will remain paralyzed and unable to achieve any of the requirements of the Charter, the most important of which is the peace and security of the two countries. Therefore, wars, conflicts, and economic crises spread without the United Nations making one move. Consequently, the destruction of the environment continues as a result of the non-compliance of the influential countries

with the necessary measures to protect the environment as these basic measures conflict with their industrial, commercial, and economic interests in general.

A Call to the Wise Figures around the World:

We have become accustomed to "it gets worse before it gets better", meaning that agreement between different parties is only achieved after wars and their dire consequences and resulting destruction. When the warring parties despair, they are forced to go to the negotiating table. Why not reverse course and wisely negotiate instead of resorting to arms first, or resorting to destruction rather than building?

All I say is that if the leaders fail to agree on an international system to be implemented by the United Nations and its various organs, then the wise figures of this world should have their say. They have to come together to set a system and a law for our world and present it to the leaders so that they may see the best course of action to take.

In conclusion, continuing on the same path that led us to where we are is a dangerous endeavor, and what awaits us is much more hazardous than the horrors that we have already witnessed. We must, therefore, not go down the path of destruction and seek a different route.

In my capacity as Honorary President of the international research forum "Bosphorus Summit" since its establishment ten years ago, I will call on its next conference to invite an international team of (non-governmental) world figures to form a council to study the major international contentious issues and propose solutions for the decision makers at the negotiating table after the war, as is done at the end of every war.

This is because, through my previous knowledge, there is little hope of any meaningful negotiations before the end of the war.