

COMMENT BY INSULZA ON KISSINGER

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Thank you for your kind introduction.

I have to begin with an excuse. I am making these comments without previous warning and without a written paper to refer to. These are some instant reactions to what one of the international scholars I have most admired in my professional life has just said, and I am a little overwhelmed by this responsibility.

I think we can all share two very comprehensive and sensible ideas that open Dr Kissinger's presentation: if you are going to deal with the challenges of the present, you have to look at history and look at the long perspective, but always balance these views with a certain notion of urgency for the problems of today. If we just look at the long-time future and do not address the instant problems we have today, we might not get there. It is true that the world is also global in this sense: the problems we face today are of such magnitude that they compromise the future of all mankind.

We have spoken of globalization or *mondialisation* many times before and have referred to recent large confrontations as 'world wars' (the Second much larger than the First). But for the first time in history it is real that everything depends on everything else. And the fact that it is instantaneous, as Dr Kissinger pointed out, that several of the processes that are taking place now, such as global warming or nuclear war, were not present before with the size and urgency they have today, as threats to the whole world, makes this era very global.

There may be some trends towards protectionism and other issues may still seem regional, but this global nature of world politics is not going to change.

I also agree that some of the basic orientations that were addressed by the Peace of Westphalia into the future and lasted for centuries have changed now. Among them are the notion of sovereignty and the nation

state. Now, I think that we must consider something that Dr Kissinger said about the formation of the nation state: there is a process of transition from a sovereign country to a sovereign state or a nation state, and this process is not universally completed. On the contrary it is still a challenge in several countries and regions of the world.

Nation state is a European notion; it was born, as he said, when the geographical borders coincided with ethnic or religious borders, under which most people were more or less unified under at least one of these characteristics. That is what really permitted us to speak about nation states, and it was true in all Europe except in one place: the Balkans, in which the borders did not coincide properly with ethnic and religious divisions; that is why its troubles remained until very few years ago and we cannot be sure that they will not come back.

As Neal Ferguson has said recently, some of the most lethal conflicts of the last years, such as Rwanda and other places in Southern Africa, and in Iraq, are of this nature. They take place in countries or in geographical places where there is very low homogeneity among the people who live in them and therefore, as Dr Kissinger insinuated, (though he did not put it as a fatality), the ethnic and religious issues that prevent the formation of a nation state, are going to have to be addressed and solved before we have stability in those countries.

That is precisely the main problem in Iraq, which was considered in the Gulf War fifteen years ago, and was neglected in 2003. That is why a negotiated solution is still pending in Iraq, in which the neighbouring countries first, and then the main Muslim countries should be called to play a role. I very much believe in a negotiated solution for Iraq, in a conference for Iraq, with all the countries, to which the border countries should be called, and in a second moment all the main Muslim countries. I agree with that, but it may not be enough: the Kurds are going to remain there, and the Shiite majority will remain there and the Sunni minority will remain there and the issues will be arranged for some years but will not permanently. As long as ethnic and religious divisions persist to a degree that many people think they are worth dying for, there will not be a unified Iraq. In many places of the world, especially in Asia and Africa we deal with similar situations that delay or prevent the formation of nation states as such.

It is true that the Pacific is becoming the centre of the world, as has been that was prophesised for the last thirty or forty years, after Japan became an economic superpower, and even more now with the rise of

China and the Asian tigers. But I would like to make a couple of comments on this. First, I disagree with the view that never before a nation had risen so fast as China has in recent times. In fact this did happen before and probably at a faster pace, in the United States in the half century after the Civil War, in which the expansion (economic, geographical, and political) seemed endless. Leo Huberman has defined this era in his book 'We, the People', in two masterful chapters titled in a manner that clearly conveys this idea of endless progress: 'Money, Machines and Men' and 'More Money, More Machines, More Men'. This cycle finally ended, but the expansion continued abroad and placed the US on the road to where it is now. The US, a self proclaimed liberal nation, joined the international power came instead of subverting it, because that was now in its interest.

The same might happen to China in the near future, but this does not necessarily pose a geopolitical threat. In his works on détente Dr Kissinger called our attention to the possibility of reaching understanding with the new subversive power, the Soviet Union, precisely because as soon as the USSR became a central power, the preservation of world order was also in its interest. Major powers, he said and wrote, are more interested in preserving the system that exists than in trying to destroy it. I think that the same may be true of China in the future, as this nation becomes a central power in the international system.

How soon that will happen depends of another aspect that has to be considered. I cannot imagine China becoming a world power with a larger number of poor than any other place in the world. There are still 700 million Chinese poor. The need to promote an internal development that takes the majority of that population out of poverty will rise also, and it will be placed as a condition by the same leadership that will want to play a more conservative role in world politics. And certainly an inward development will strengthen China more, but it will delay a little bit its coming to world power.

India will face a similar problem. Its rise to central power will have to confront the fact that, together with its growing presence in the world of modern technology, they have the same rate of malnutrition as Sub-Saharan Africa. Sub-Saharan Africa, coupled with a rate of illiteracy of 49%. So at some point they will have to deal with those problems too. And probably that will give way also to a generation of leadership interested in preserving peace and in working towards a more humane society.

About the Middle East, I must be very frank. Some of the problems have to do with this lack of coincidence between borders and ethnic or religious identification, or with the lack of state consistency in some countries. But we cannot avoid recognizing that by far the main issue in the Middle East is the Palestinian. Before President Bush Sr. confronted Iraq, before Saddam Hussein, the major problem was already there and it lies in the absolute unwillingness of western powers to force Israel back to its 1967 borders. It is true that forty years ago, the Arabs were not willing to accept Israel and they went to war twice for that. But now this situation has changed: many in the Arab world would accept a solution that guarantees Israel's right to exist, as long that it exists in its pre 1967 borders. As long as the powers that maintain an influence in Israel are not willing to understand this simple truth and allow and sponsor the formation of a really viable Palestinian state, with the Palestinian people living in it, there will be no permanent peace in the Middle East.

As for the nuclear matter, which is the last one I am going to address, I still believe in the need to preserve and strengthen the Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty, that brave effort that has been successful for forty years. At the moment in which the NPT was signed, there were over 25 countries in the world that had the technology to develop uranium enrichment. They still have that capability, but the non proliferation regime has permitted to keep the nuclear club in a small and predictable number of nations. Of course there has been a major failure, which is that super nuclear powers have failed to live up to their promises of negotiating a 'genuine' nuclear disarmament or reduction. The treaty inherently carried different obligations, something highly irregular in international instruments, where all sovereign states are supposed to be treated equally. But in this Treaty they agree to be unequal: the countries that did not have nuclear weapons agreed not to create them, while the nuclear powers agreed not to transfer technology and to engage in meaningful negotiations. They began doing that in the time when Dr Kissinger was Secretary of State, but they did not continue on that path. That has not helped strengthen the non proliferation regime; so it is going to be hard work to get it back in line. But to at least begin to make it possible, to at least slow down nuclear proliferation, everyone, beginning with the nuclear superpowers, has to take their obligations more seriously.

Of course, this kind of strategic reasoning has its limitations. In the end, the real solutions lie in the governments' ability to bring about solutions to the problems of inequality, injustice, violence, environmental destruction

that continue to plague the world at the beginning of the 21st Century. Several years ago, Henry Kissinger said in an interview that the big powers can be compared to two persons in a cellar, holding 10,000 matches in their hands, with a floor drenched in gasoline. Of course, he said, it is very important to reduce the number of matches, but the main question is how to dry the floor. Putting an end to them, through negotiation, cooperation and solidarity is the only real path to permanent peace.