



BEIRUT INSTITUTE

## Transcript of e-Policy Circle 8

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**Raghida Dergham:** Good Morning Washington DC, Good afternoon Paris and Amman, and I guess good evening New Delhi right? Where Shashi Tharoor is. Welcome to Beirut Institute Summit e-Policy circle number 8, Excellencies you are friends, and everyone knows the full titles but I will go quickly through them, we have with us, H.E. Nasser Judeh, Senator in the Jordanian Upper House of Parliament, Jordan's former Minister of Foreign Affairs and of course the former Deputy Prime Minister of Jordan, welcome. We have H.E. Shashi Tharoor, Member of the Indian Parliament, India's former Minister of State for Human Resource Development, former Minister of State for External Affairs and former under-Secretary General of the United Nations and that's when I knew you in New York, welcome Shashi Tharoor. H.E. Philip Gordon is Senior Fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations where we are also colleagues and Senior Advisor at Albright Stonebridge Group, former Special Assistant to the President Barack Obama and White House Coordinator for the Middle East, North Africa, and the Gulf Region, he's the former Assistant Secretary of State for the European and Eurasian Affairs, welcome. And Phil is an always welcomed guest at Beirut Institute Summit in Abu Dhabi, you've honored us before, thank you for doing this again. We have H.E. Ambassador Christophe Farnaud and he's the Director for North Africa and the Middle East at the French Foreign Affairs Ministry for Foreign Affairs and he's the former Ambassador of France to Greece. Lucky you that you have been to Greece because I love Greece, and I love Paris too. Welcome!! It's going to be the good old usual conversation, after the four minutes for each of you, we will engage in a very smart

conversation given the level of the expertise you have. So I will start with Nasser Judeh, you have the floor for four minutes and then we will go to Shashi Tharoor.

**HE Nasser Judeh:** Thank you very much Raghida, and congratulations on these e-Policy Circle Summit, excellent reviews, and I look forward to participating in more in the future. I won't waste time, it's very difficult to squeeze in what one has on one's mind in four minutes but I will try to do that and hopefully in this discussion, we will have the chance to tackle all the angles. These meetings come under the umbrella of your title 'Stability Redefined', perhaps I can put my own twist on it and say ... 'Instability Revisited'. I think this is what we are facing these days, 'Instability Revisited' I think in our part of the world, in the Middle East, maybe at the beginning of the COVID 19 crisis ....  
[Inaudible]

**Raghida Dergham:** Excellency, Excellency, please, there are some interventions ... I think it may be due to either some cellphones around that are open.

**HE Philip Gordon:** Yeah it's feedback Raghida, the others of us need to mute while Nasser is speaking, it's just feedback from some of the others so everybody else should mute.

**Raghida Dergham:** everybody should mute till Nasser Judeh speaks. Please start again, I know you started by wanting to call it 'Instability Revisited' and thank you for your kind words but please continue from here Nasser Judeh.

**HE Nasser Judeh:** Very well, can everybody here me well now? Very Good. So I said yes, the title of your series of e-Policy circle meeting is 'Stability Redefined' I just added a twist and said, perhaps it's 'Instability Revisited', because right at the beginning of COVID-19 global

pandemic, I think, we in this part of the world in the Middle East and North Africa, put our tensions and regional dynamics in the freezer and now I think as the lockdown is easing up in many countries, we're trying to live up to our legacy of providing the world with his fair share of problems, not that there are no problems elsewhere. I just want to say that with COVID-19, it put us all in a global mode, and we were operating globally, even though each country was introducing its own measures to deal with its own domestic situation when it came to COVID-19. But as we look at the Middle East today, and I'd like to restrict my comments on the Middle East in these four minutes, and perhaps leave the rest for the discussion, but looking at the serious economic crisis that countries like Iraq, Syria and Lebanon are facing. Look at the post COVID-19 economic challenges that we're all going to be facing, look at the potential for an Israeli decision to annex almost 30% of the West Bank, which I think Israel is going to find itself if it goes through with this decision, really facing tensions and differences with the majority of the world. We've seen letters that are going from European parliamentarians, from congressmen and women, statesmen from the UN, from regional organizations... look at what's happening in Turkey. I mean Turkey has gone from Idlib-ing to Liby-ing and that situation is extremely tense and I think that in the coming phase as we look at these problems, as we look at the dynamics in the United States for example, the United States in particular now is facing the COVID-19 effects and after-effects, especially in terms of the economy, racial violence that we've seen recently, the election fever that's about to start mid-summer and perhaps the United States being busy with its own domestic issues are not able to focus as much as we would like to on our problems, so all these dynamics that are put together cause one much concern, like I said, most immediately with all the problems that are happening or potentially happening in our part of the world. I would say, the most serious is the question of the possible annexation of territories according to certain Israeli officials but looking at Israel within also, I think there are divisions there too. I mean if you look at

the different positions of Netanyahu, and Gantz, and Ashkenazi within the Israeli government, it's also something worthwhile to watch and anticipate. So I'll pause here but like I said, we've got our fair share of problems and it seems that with all that, having to deal with the socio-economic effects of COVID-19, particularly for the weaker economies in this world is going to be a serious challenge.

**Raghida Dergham:** Wonderful, you know what, I'm not going to do a follow-up question with you because I think this conversation should be had by all of the participants today, so I'm not going to speak about the annexation yet, until everyone has spoken. I think that it has to take its due attention by everyone, so I am going to move on to Shashi Tharoor, you have your four minutes please.

**HE Shashi Tharoor:** Thank you. I just wanted to say that I thought that everything Nasser said made a lot of sense. But it's too early to come up with a sort of big picture view. I will try to stick to one theme which is my concern that COVID-19 will inaugurate an era of de-globalization. I think the signs are mounting that the world is going to embrace isolationism and protectionism in a far more enthusiastic way than prior to the outbreak. Indications are evident, the pandemic has [inaudible], people rely on their governments to shield them. The global supply chains are vulnerable to disruption and are therefore unsustainable, we saw this at the beginning of the crisis. The dependence of foreign countries on essential goods such as pharmaceuticals, or even the ingredients that they are going to make [inaudible]. Nations try depressively to acquire medicines and supplies for their own people at the expense of each other. There's a rush to reset global supply chains and to raise trade barriers, there's a demand everywhere for more protectionism and more self-reliance, for bringing manufacturing and production value chains back home, or at least closer to home (...). We've seen this in the undeveloped world and even in the developed world. And then I think that this real trace to everything that

we've taken for granted in the last thirty years, the global flow for capital and investments, (...) pipelines and energy grids, international travel even across free and open borders all suddenly look very vulnerable in our present times and in the post-COVID era. The world economy has obviously thrived since [inaudible], financial crash of 2008-9, American trade war with China, but now we're hearing stories that the global, the world [inaudible]... many countries decoupled from China. Japan for example has set aside two of a quarter billion dollars in incentives to Japanese companies who pull out of that country. COVID-19 has also convinced many of the foreigners how to be feared, that strict border immigration controls are essential, [inaudible] which are suddenly going to affect the jobs of 85,000 Indians. So you can imagine that that class in India, that's a big [inaudible] (...) useful help from their neighbors and allies, that national interest should ... international [inaudible].

**Raghida Dergham:** We're having a hard time with your sound Shashi Tharoor and I don't want to lose the points you're trying to make because I think we're having a small problem from your side so maybe...

**HE Shashi Tharoor:** Will it help if I cut my video off and you just heard my sound?

**Raghida Dergham:** No no no... we need to look at you, it's much better to look at you, we will fix it. But I will stop you here because I really need to get back to the issue of China and India, and many things that you have said. But I am going to stop here so that hopefully in the meantime someone could fix your mic and I am going to go to Philip Gordon. Philip Gordon your four minutes and hopefully we don't have problems with your sound. Prayers. Go please, Philip Gordon.

**HE Philip Gordon:** Thank you Raghida, I'll do my best. And of course, you know I've had the privilege of participating in Beirut Institute Summits in person and I look forward to the next one, but in the meantime I'm delighted to be with all friends on this virtual call. So, you know if you want one issue, and maybe you'll forgive me if, as I sit in Washington with a hugely important election coming up in four months, if my angle is the US angle, because I think if we're talking about stability, then you know you could argue that US policy in the coming month and then four years after that is going to be the biggest factor of stability or instability of all. And I would argue that in a number of ways, unfortunately we've actually contributed to some instability in recent years and I know that some of the issues we want to talk about, I mean let's check them off the list, Iran, it seems to me, you know we had a situation that was more or less stable with the nuclear deal that was working and the US administration said that it would replace it, use maximum pressure to either bring about a better deal or prevent Iran from intervening in the neighborhood or maybe even change the regime. Of course, none of those things have happened, we don't have a better nuclear deal, we have an Iran that is expanding its nuclear program and nobody seems to have an answer for that, we have an Iran that continues to be aggressive in the region, tankers, drones, strikes on Saudi oil facilities, and no real prospect for change. So I think that is going to be a potential factor for instability. Shashi mentioned, and you mentioned Raghida, China which is probably the most important bi-lateral relationship in the world, the US-China right now, that's a relationship that is deeply stressed. You know we went from President Trump saying we have a great relationship with President Xi, to them no longer speaking, mutual accusations and now, essentially President Trump accusing China of being responsible for tens of hundreds of thousands of American deaths, let alone the geopolitical issues around Hong Kong, Taiwan, and so on, it's very dangerous. Relationship with our NATO allies are under great stress, the most recent factor being the unilateral decision to

withdraw troops from Germany, which apparently we haven't officially even told the Germans about yet. And we can discuss that, Christophe Farnaud may have views, but the point is that there's a real question about European confidence in the United States. I know we need to be brief for this opening but you know, I could mention climate change or the absence of US engagement on that which is going to be a huge factor in the coming years, handling the corona virus I would argue that there has been an absence of US leadership and international coming together. So I think, you know as I sit here in Washington and looking at all these factors, probably the most important thing we can do is restore faith and confidence in the United States which is sort of lacking in the moment.

**Raghida Dergham:** Thank you very much Phil Gordon, again I'm going to apply the no follow-up for the time-being until we fix all the problems that we have. I go to Christophe Farnaud, please four minutes to you.

**HE Christophe Farnaud:** Thank you Raghida. Well first of all thank you for the invitation, I am glad to join this distinguished crowd and from what I hear, I will be happy to keep in touch with you as long as I can. Anyway, just to be brief. In fact, I agree with a lot of that was said before. And first of all the fact that we clearly think that we're going through times of unprecedented challenges and precisely bringing more uncertainties and as was the theme chosen by you, more uncertainty and more potential instability. That's clearly the core of our issue and in this regard COVID just added to it, it was something which we were saying before the epidemic and clearly the pandemic has shown that it could be even worse, and in that I do not mean just the health issue, but also the global impact we have on the economy, the social field it was mentioned and we don't have time to go into the details now but clearly we have to have it on our minds which means that in this more uncertain, more unstable environment, our collective

duty and by collective I really mean collective, I think it's a key thing we have to approach today, is this collective work we have to do together, this temptation to do things on their own, including maybe great powers which are less committed to multilateralism, I think that's a key issue. I mention it now but I can get back to it afterwards. So we have to work collectively and on that clearly the Middle East is one of the key areas and maybe as a European, because I am clearly the only European today talking to you, we see it all the more so as it is our direct neighborhood, and all that is happening there, from Iraq to Iran, and of course, the Middle East like Lebanon etc., can have a direct impact on us, in everything. So this is why, and to be very brief once again, our priority then is to be mobilized in order to be able to recreate stability or preserve it as the case may be, in a slightly artificial way and maybe to make a distinction, I would say that there are areas where we have to face the crisis by dealing with the current centers for instability. For instance, I am talking about, I am thinking of Libya, Syria, of Yemen, once again just dropping the names and we can get back to it later, but on that I just want to insist that the method must not be to impose a new solution, you have to work with the local parties, it's up to them to find a solution, but we have to be around and be able to help, that's the key to understand our strategy right now and I think this is the only one. We cannot impose a solution on people, they have to decide for themselves.

**Raghida Dergham:** So let me take it further with you Christophe Farnaud and go to the very point that Nasser Judeh started out with, what are you as Europe doing to prevent the Israelis from actually executing their threat and their decision to annex the West Bank and the Jordan Valley? Are you playing an active role? Have you any promises that this will not happen in the final analysis or this simply a postponement? And I am going to go around and ask the others to engage with this conversation. Let's start with Israel's plan of annexation.



**HE Christophe Farnaud:** Well you're taking me to the, not just next, but the next next point I wanted to bring, but yes, I think it's one of the core issues today. And let me just say that, first of all, the Palestinian-Israeli issue which was center stage for years and years was recently much more in the background, at least in the media, but our analysis is that it remains at the center of the risks and of instability in the region, so this is why we remain very much committed to having a negotiated solution based on international law and on the two-state solution. A few years ago, this might have sounded very basic to even come in place, now nowadays maybe it's not anymore, so we have to say it and so that's the first answer to your question: we want to say what we see as the solution and make it clear, but for us any solution has to be based on negotiation within these agreed parameters as we say, which was not maybe that obvious anyway. So that was the first answer. The second one of course is to be clear that any unilateral action would not go, you know, without consequences and so first of all, then then we have to talk to the parties, we talk to our Israeli friends, we talk to our Palestinian friends as well, we talk to everyone, first of all to try and make sure that annexation does not happen. That's the key point now.

**Raghida Dergham:** What exact consequences are you talking about? Will France, I don't want you to speak in the name of all of Europe, but is there a threat of withholding aid to Israel if they go ahead and annex the Jordan Valley and the West Bank? Who is playing an active role in Europe, or in France, with the Israelis or with the Americans, for that matter, to make sure that this doesn't happen? Christophe Farnaud.

**HE Christophe Farnaud:** Well I cannot speak for everyone, but clearly when we speak as France, we speak on a national basis but we coordinate and we also want to be an active member of the European Union, because of the relationship we have with Israel which is a very strong one and we want it to remain very strong, it's a key partner for

us and we are key partners for Israel. It is also based on this European framework that we have. So that's the first point. And so but, you used the word 'threat', we don't want to talk about threat right now.

Precisely, we have this long relationship, long standing, multifaceted and so for the time-being, we just have discussions with them, making it clear that, as I said, any unilateral action would be detrimental to the interest of everyone, including Israel. And so that for us, it would be something against the law, international law.

**Raghida Dergham:** Phil Gordon I know that, and rightly so, you would say it is this administration, the Trump administration that has encouraged the annexation by its positions and no one, I think, will argue with you if that's what you want to say. But is it from your point of view, will the Democratic Primer Joe Biden, if he is going to be President, will he step away from that, you think? Are the Democrats actually opposed in actionable positions to the annexation, the Israeli annexation of the West Bank? Phil Gordon.

**HE Phil Gordon:** So the short answer on the latter is 'yes' and in fact it's been quite striking how clear Democrats have been even strongly, traditionally very pro-Israel Democrats, have been united in arguing against annexation, the most recent example being a letter that's being circulated in the House of Representatives now, sponsored again by strong supporters of Israel like congressman Ted Deutch and Brad Schneider basically saying that saying that this is wrong and we should oppose it. Going back to your first point, yes I would say that it's a green light from the Trump administration that has encouraged the situation and is one of the few things remaining that could stop it because curiously in the Israeli coalition agreement and even Benny Gantz as Deputy Prime Minister didn't get a veto for annexation but Donald Trump did and they still need a green light from Washington. And I think it's really important that the international community and including Israel's friends, I would even say especially Israel's friends are

clear that annexation is dangerous in many ways and actually undermines Israel's interest and I think you know you are finding that Democrats, you mentioned Joe Biden, are being very clear about that.

**Raghida Dergham:** I just want to make sure that I understand you. You really expect a President Joe Biden to stop annexation, to demand Israel to stop annexation.

**HE Phil Gordon:** Well no I don't think it's in Joe Biden's hands to stop the annexation. Donald Trump is President at least for the next six months and this is going to go ahead or not go ahead. All I said about Joe Biden is that he has been very clear, including speaking directly to APAC, that he opposes it and that it shouldn't happen and that's, I think it is important because one of the things before you move on that I think Israelis need to keep in mind is that relationship with the United States and there's always been a strong bipartisan support for Israel in United States and that is threatened because it will be increasingly difficult for Democrats, especially with the changing Democratic Party to support an Israel that is unilaterally ruling over and potentially denying rights to millions of thousands civilians.

**Raghida Dergham:** Before I go to Nasser Judeh, I have a lot of questions for you on this, I want to get Shashi Tharoor's take, is India at all interested in this subject? What's India doing on this subject, Shashi Tharoor?

**HE Shashi Tharoor:** Not very much. I think India is interested in the sense of foreign policy establishment, (...) as historically it had a big concern about this, (...) India is one of the countries that has managed to keep the relations with both sides of the equation. We had the visits to Ramallah as well as Tel Aviv and of course Modi has become very close to Netanyahu in recent years. But the truth is India is very distracted by its own (...) with China right now, and I don't think it's

spending very much diplomatic energy on the issue. I was listening with great interest to what was said and I do believe that India's public position at the UN and so on is bound to be its traditional one which is that the idea of annexing these territories is a terrible idea that will make a two-state solution impossible.

**Raghida Dergham:** Thank you, and we still have problems with the sound coming from you

**HE Shashi Tharoor:** I think I'll just turn off my video and talk, that's the only way...

**Raghida Dergham:** Stay put because I want to hear you clearly on India and China but I'm going to go to Nasser Judeh now. Nasser Judeh, is this...Is there any information that you have that this annexation may not take place during the current presidency, or I mean until the elections let's say in the United States? Do you have any assurances? And what will this do to your bi-lateral relations with the United States? And also, what will this do to your peace treaty with Israel if they go ahead and annex the Jordan Valley, well both, but particularly the Jordan Valley? Nasser Judeh, please.

**HE Nasser Judeh:** Thank you. Let me just first clarify, of course this is an informed distinguished group of people but to those out there who don't know the nuances, when we're talking about annexing the Jordan Valley, we're not talking about Jordanian territory, we're talking about the Jordanian Valley west of the Jordan river, which is, you know the area that defines the eastern border of the Palestinian occupied territory.

**Raghida Dergham:** But just to clarify Nasser Judeh, this would absolutely cut off the aspiration of the Palestinians for a state, you know better than I do.

**HE Nasser Judeh:** Naturally, but I'm just saying that there's some people who when you say the Jordan Valley confuse it with territory east of the river. We have a peace treaty that delineated the border between Jordan and Israel in 1994 but there was a very clear statement in that peace treaty, very clear article that said Jordan will delineate the border with Israel according to the following annex without prejudice to the status of territories that came under Israeli occupied- occupation in 1967 because the idea was that Jordan would delineate that border with the Palestinian state in the future. So let me say a couple of things. You asked if I have any information, I personally don't know, we're all in anticipation of what the Israeli government is going to do. I will say two things, if I may. Number one, it seems that within the Israeli government, like I mentioned in my introductory and quick remarks, it seems that Netanyahu wants to go for the full thirty percent annexation, Gantz is saying 'look be creative as we have been since 1967', I mean since 1967 there have been times when Israel imposed and applied the Israeli laws to certain areas, there are times when they created that areas A,B,C after Oslo 1 and 2 where C and D where Israeli security control, so Gantz is saying 'look maybe we can annex the settlement blocks and perhaps when it comes to the Jordan Valley maintain the status quo which is Israeli security control and then, you know, we take it from there'. In all cases and you've got Ashkenazi, the Foreign Minister of course, who's saying that, you know, 'let's hold on the whole thing and see where we had after the summer'. And take that across to the circle around Netanyahu who are telling him one or two or three things. Number one is, you know, 'go ahead and take the decision because come November, if Biden's elected, we're never going to be able to take that again, you know, you'll go down in history as the Israeli Prime Minister who passed the opportunity or missed the opportunity to annex these strategically important territories for Israel'. And there's another current that's telling him well, you know, 'look if Trump is re-elected, we are okay, if Biden is elected and we've taken

that decision, we'll get off to a bad start with them but look at the end of the day where Israel, we'll have a tiff for a few months and then everything's going to get back to normal'. I think there's a lot of domestic Israeli debate on this, Israel is not unaware of the kind of rejection by the entire world almost of this and I'm sure that they bear this in mind. Now if you go to the United States and it was very interesting to hear the statement by the US representative in the UN, Mrs. Craft, a couple of weeks ago, I don't remember the exact wording but she was essentially saying two things. Number one is that the Trump package it is not it is not set in stone, she said, in other words it can be adaptable, it can be versatile, it can be improved on and that it's a whole package that cannot be taken piecemeal. What people understood from that is that is that annexation, taken out of the context of the entire Trump peace plan is not something that they want, they want to see dialogue, they want to see even the quartet getting involved, they want to see Israeli and Palestinian Ambassadors meeting at the UN. So you look at that, but unilateral action, Ambassador Farnaud also mentioned unilateral action, we've seen unilateral action after unilateral since 1967, settlements, incursions, the holy sites, etc, but annexation of territory is, forgive the religious pun, but it's the holy grail of unilateral action. I mean if you annex territory, you're obliterating the chances of being able to go back to the, you know, the launch of the Madrid process in 1991 and then the Oslo Accords and then the ability to arrive to the comprehensive peace between the Arabs and Israel at the heart of the Palestinian issue. You're obliterating the prospects of a two-state solution.

**Raghida Dergham:** Yeah but, Nasser Judeh, I have something from a colleague, a former colleague Alistair Burt, who says, "you know, basically Israelis would say they've heard it all before, nothing happens, you know, they they've heard these things said and they got away with it, so they just feel that the facts will... the realization of their plans will outweigh such concerns, so are they right?' And his other question,

‘what would prompt Palestinians to re-engage, for re-engagement?’  
The point is, I really don't want to take too much longer on this because I have so many other subjects, but what if, two things: What will prompt the Palestinians to re-engage, and what if Mahmoud Abbas, President Mahmoud Abbas disengages from the Oslo commitments? I want a quick answer from you, Nasser Judeh. And then I am going to move on to Turkey and Libya.

**HE Nasser Judeh:** All right, just a couple of points. First of all, I mentioned, I said there's a current in the Israeli establishment that basically is pointing the direction of we're Israel and we'll get away with it as we've gotten away with many things in the past, so take that decision and even if it gets us off to a bad start with a possible President Biden, we'll get over, I mean we will have an argument and then we will get over. So there's a strong character that points in that in that direction. Of course, just looking at the letters Phil mentioned the congressional letters, the European parliamentarians again, the position of the UN Secretary-General and all that, so you know, this is something that Israel, I'm sure, has to look it. But at the end of the day they think that they're Israel and they can get away with this. Number two, and this is a very quick point. You said the Palestinian Authority disengaging from Oslo. First of all, the Palestinian Authority came as a result of Oslo. Oslo is signed between Israel and...

**Raghida Dergham:** Oslo commitments I said, not disengagement from Oslo, which means that by that they are providing security to Israel.

**HE Nasser Judeh:** That's what I'm trying to say, Oslo was signed between Israel and the PLO as a result of which the Palestinian Authority came into existence in order to sell fruit for the five-year transitional period in order to get to final status negotiations. By the way, it's not it's not the Palestinians who will disengage from the Oslo

commitments, Israel by annexing territory, is the one that is cancelling the Oslo commitments, not the Palestinians.

**Raghida Dergham:** Okay thank you very much Nasser Judeh, let me try you again Shashi Tharoor on China, on India and China because I hope that I can hear you properly now, I don't want us to spend this hour without hearing your voice of this issue. Can you tell me, how frightening should we be, because of the recent conflict between India and China? You both are big, but isn't China a little bigger than India in terms of, you know, if you want to wrestle it down?

**HE Shashi Tharoor:** You're right, and I think that if you actually look at China, in the neighborhood four times it started to (...) the economy, and I think the establishment is also pretty huge. I don't think I either side for anybody really [inaudible]. I don't think it's in the interest of (...). And for somewhere in the neighborhood in 45 years, not a single shot has been fired across this line of actual control, as it's called between the two countries. But the Chinese have constantly been probing and pushing and trying to establish new realities along the line and that was today, I think what happened on the 15<sup>th</sup> of June, twenty soldiers were killed, twenty of which we know of were killed, we don't know how many Chinese were. That was a similar incident that got out of control, I think what happened was that the Chinese essentially wanted to move into those positions [inaudible], places which were beyond the Chinese lines so far, but started at building and enduring structures, not just patrolling which the Indians have been using in the past, but actually staying put. And it's when the Indians and the Chinese had high levels ministry talks discussing these engagements, and then the Indian patrol went the disengagement hadn't happened, that's when (...) broke out, and that civilians had a loss of life. I don't think either countries (...) but what's the larger picture? I think the larger picture is trying to create a new reality on the ground, because in the longer term, China has been taking the position [inaudible] because it



knows fully well that each passing year increases China's economic, military and geopolitical strengths, vis-à-vis India. So if it has managed to consolidate the control [inaudible] easier to ensure meanwhile, all of the incidents keep things off-balance, will demonstrate to the world how challenging China. I mean I think it's a tactical exercise in the context of larger strategy of things, 'we can block India down on its border, we can frustrate larger ambitions that they have, regional and global and at the same time, we can eventually achieve what we want to go for in 1962, in the future settlement'. I mean I think this is the Chinese strategy and if it means risking driving India into the embrace of the US-Japan-Australia (...) which India has so far been very careful to ...join, I think the Chinese have decided that that's the risk they're willing to take (...), from their point of view, then losing India would be.

**Raghida Dergham:** Thank you Shashi, alas we still are not able to hear you well alas. And I hope that that gets fixed because really it's very hard, it's not fair to you that you have such a bad connection. Phil Gordon on this issue, do you think the situation between China and India is going to push India closer to the United States in any fundamental way? I know the relations are very good, of course, but I think I'm asking in the context of the developments, the scary frightening developments and potential larger confrontation. Quick council on that before we go to Libya, Phil Gordon.

**HE Phil Gordon:** Yeah I think so you know, already I think India was moving in the direction of a better relationship with the United States, in my opening remarks I mentioned how the US was losing trust and confidence of so many countries around the world but actually India is one, where you could argue, was going in the opposite direction and the India-US relationship was still in pretty fair shape. If anything, if there's any consequence on that from this, it is surely that India will want a strong relationship of the United States given the geopolitical tensions with China so yeah I think that is a reasonable conclusion to

come out of this and at the same time the US will want the relationship with India because as I said earlier the relationship between the US and China is so fraught and likely to get worse.

**Raghida Dergham:** Thank You Phil Gordon. I want to go to Christophe Farnaud and speak about Turkey. The confrontation between Turkey and France, and Turkey and Libya is one of the strongest possibly amongst the NATO allies. Can you share some light as to whether your position is exclusively French confrontation or the division amongst NATO allies has more countries on your side in this argument because I know that - the president Macron- has been very strong in criticizing Turkey's ambitions and accusing the endangering of the whole of Libya and maybe its neighbors as well. Where is the major division on this issue and what does Turkey really want? Because they say 'you want oil', maybe you would say 'they want oil'. Is Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, the President of Turkey after oil only or after cultivation of further Muslim Brotherhood, the rise of Muslim Brotherhood in Libya. Christophe Farnaud.

**HE Christophe Farnaud:** Well Raghida, thank you for the provocative question and my job is not to speak for the Turkish President but to shed more light on the issue as you wanted me to do. I think we have to think of the very key issues at stake with the Libyan issue. If you watch the map, if you look at the map Libya is 200 kilometers from the Italian coast and it's right in the middle of northern Africa so there is a huge challenge to our security in terms of migration issues, in terms of stability of the whole North of Africa with even risks of destabilization of the sub-Saharan Sahelian region. There is even the risk of destabilization of Libya itself and we are not the only ones who are concerned about it so that's the background. So this is why we are so much committed to try and help bringing, building a solution. But when I say 'we' by the way, it's not just the French and this is why I'm thinking that just focusing on the Turkish-French current tensions maybe allows

people to miss the point. The point is that we have collectively built an international framework with an UNSMIL, with UN resolutions with the commitment of many other countries European countries with the brown process to try and help the east and the west and the various Libyan parties, try and get back to get back to the political process or a solution and that's against that backdrop. The last months have seen a clear escalation and that escalation is not just due to the Libyans themselves, it is due as well to the growing interferences by foreign powers and bringing arms against the arms embargo that was decided by the United Nations and pushing for more confrontation and this is something that we cannot accept clearly and this is why we want now to bring them back to the table of negotiations and as you know there's a political side, there is the military side, risky ceasefire that will be the first thing and there's also an economic dimension, because there is an old blockade and we have to find a mechanism to solve it so this is in a nutshell where we are now and clearly the last weeks have been the reason for a growing concern on our side.

**Raghida Dergham:** But when you say this is something we will not accept Christophe Farnaud, and when the President of France says “we won't tolerate the role that Turkey is playing in Libya”, what does that mean? What are we supposed to understand?

**HE Christophe Farnaud:** Well it means exactly what it means. It means that now with, you know, you cannot just sit and look at what's happening, you know, we have to be very clear and that's what we've been doing, for instance as Europeans because the Europeans are being involved. We created this IRINI naval, a naval mission which is now in charge of trying and help implementing the arms embargo for Libya, that's a very concrete result that we have so the idea is not to contribute to further escalation, on the contrary, it's to try to say what's happening and try and find the solutions to avoid it. So talking to

people, this is why we suggested for instance, well we recommended what the Egyptians did on the 6th of June. There's a lot of things to do.

**Raghida Dergham:** Yes, but “we will not tolerate it” is a big word, are you able... are you succeeding with other NATO allies, including the United States, are you talking to the United States because the United States seems to be almost blessing Turkey’s role in Libya. I’ll understand correctly when Philip Gordon comes in, but go ahead Christophe.

**HE Christophe Farnaud:** Well, once again I won't speak for our American friends but yes we talk to them, we do talk to them absolutely as well as we talk to our German friends, our Italian friends as we talk to the Egyptians and as we talk to the Libyan parties themselves I think it's key we talk to the east we talk to the west, that’s the key job for diplomats and politicians.

**Raghida Dergham:** Phil Gordon, is the US position vis-à-vis Turkey in Libya due to a personal relationship between President Donald Trump and President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan? Or is this state to state, between country to country of NATO allies? Can you tell me how this is going to play out in case Democrats take power? And where are the Democrats on this? Do they support Turkey going into Libya?

**HE Philip Gordon:** Sorry I had to unmute myself. Look I wish I could tell you how it is going to play out. I have great sympathy for diplomats like Christophe trying to work this issue you know it's almost been a decade now since we've all been together trying to fill the vacuum that was created after Qaddafi was toppled and we've not been successful, not only because of deep divisions among Libyans but frankly because of deep divisions around the region both for geopolitical reasons and you know I defer to you and Nasser but also these divisions within the Islamic world and it's just not a coincidence about how the regional states have lined up. That plays into US policy because for a while I

think Trump was tempted to put his money down on the side of some of them and go in with Egypt, and the UAE and the Saudis and back Haftar and stabilize Libya by just choosing a side, our side and imposing an outcome but that didn't work and it partly didn't work because of these divisions within the region and Turkey was a strong enough power along with Qatar to prevent that from happening and thus you get this decade of continued instability. On your specific question about you know the US and Turkey, we're deeply divided on that question even within the Trump administration. There are those who have seen Erdogan as a hostile actor partly related to these splits that I just talked about against our friends in the region, but there are others who say 'you know what? They're playing useful role in Syria and standing up to Assad'. Trump you know just love this loves this sort of CEO to CEO, strong man to strong man relationship and always seems to want to cut a personal deal with Erdogan. And the result of that is frankly you know incoherence in our policy.

**Raghida Dergham:** Is Russia an element in this? Is there like again, and maybe this also goes to the Europeans before I go to Nasser Judeh on this to hear from his point of view, what's the issue on Turkey in Libya. But is Russia an element in these considerations, that Russia is trying to have strong foot into Libya where again those companies will go back there and they will have a larger stake and they will have more entrenchment. How much is Russia part of the consideration in the US policy towards Turkey in Libya?

**HE Phil Gordon:** I don't think it's high on the list I mean Russia's high on the list for all sorts of other regions and it is a significant player in Libya including you know supplying mercenaries on the ground but in terms of the way the US is trying to figure out what it wants to do, I don't think Russia is the most important factor, it's these others that I was referring to and their divisions just right across the border.

**Raghida Dergham:** Nasser Judeh, of course there has been a decision by the ministers, the Arab ministers on the issue of Libya, but there's also division amongst Arabs. I want to hear from you your own take on... Phil Gordon spoke of Russia bringing its mercenaries into Libya, but listen I mean it was accused of shipping a lot of the fighters in Syria into Libya and a lot of them are considered from Russia's point of view and others, the ISIS people, the Dawa'esh. Please Nasser Judeh, go ahead and tell me your take on the issue of Turkey.

**HE Nasser Judeh:** I'm surprised that nobody has mentioned Egypt this far, because I mean Christophe mentioned that the Libyan coast line is 200 kilometers away from Italy but it's right on Egypt's border and at 1,200 kilometers of that border. And I think that at the end of the day, you know, that's why I mentioned Egypt, because there's as we all know, I mean there's very bad blood between Egypt and Turkey in terms of the systems of government and there's very bad blood between Egypt and Qatar also. And the Qatari involvement of course in Libya. I, many months ago, referred to what was happening in Syria in particular the interplay between Russia, Turkey and Iran as the return of Empires because at the end of the day I mean Russia, Turkey and Iran have no love lost for each other, historically, but they all met up to try to do something about Syria. Now with the Libyan equation, with the mercenaries being taken from Syria to Libya, like I said at the beginning with Turkey shifting here from Idlib-ing to Liby-ing, you know, it's, the dynamics are very dangerous, the Egyptians, and we all saw the display of power and tough talk in the last few days but I do think that when it comes to Libya, Egypt looks at it as an existential issue, I mean right from the beginning even when we were talking about after toppling Gaddafi. I just like to refer to Christophe and say it's not just since the toppling of Gaddafi. If you remember, I mean I was at the meeting in Elysée when the decision to conduct airstrikes when Benghazi was besieged was taken, in fact the French Air Force was flying as we were speaking, so I think France's involvement historically is very much

there, whether in the context of NATO or in the context of Europe but Libya in terms of immigration, in terms of refugees, in terms of the transfer of terrorism and extremism in terms of the stability as you said in the heart of North Africa and a bridge between the sub-Saharan region and the Sahelian region, absolutely and it is got of concern even to countries that are not contiguous to Libya, countries further afield.

**Raghida Dergham:** Thank you Nasser Judeh, how.. you spoke of tough talks from Egypt towards Turkey because of Turkey's role in Libya, do you think it's going to say tough talks only or do you think there is going to be further action if Turkey just stays the course? What do you think?

**HE Nasser Judeh:** I'm not able to represent what Egypt will be considering in terms of moves in the next place but I do repeat that as far as the Libyan theater is concerned, Egypt looks and has been looking at for a long time as an existential issue it is a serious threat to its national security, it's been... the Egyptian army that is deployed in the western region of Egypt on the Libyan border has been deployed for many years not just now but they've been watching what's happening within Libya. It is existential, it does look at that situation as a very very high priority of national security.

**Raghida Dergham:** I want to give you the wrapping up because we're going to have very little time left for each of you, so maybe in less than a minute can you give me Nasser Judeh your own concerns as Jordan with Syria on your borders, with action by the United States in terms of Caesars Act and what have you, can you in one minute, I'm sorry for rushing you but we're running out of time. Give me your concerns, your take, your priorities in one minute please, I'm sorry.

**HE Nasser Judeh:** My major concern at this stage I mean I can't summarize the last few years but my major concern at this stage is the collapse of the Syrian economy and essentially you're looking at an

economy that is clinically dead, we're just waiting for the pronouncement. And when it comes to the Caesars Act by the way it's like beating a dead horse, yes I mean politically it has a lot of significance but in terms of the Syrian economy with, you know, the collapse of the Syrian pound and what's happening economically, it's not going to have much effect on the economy because it's an economy that's already almost collapsed. And a lot of people ask if Jordan is going to be affected, by the way we re-opened the land border between Jordan and Syria last year, but the trade has been one way. Syria does not have hard currency, Syria cannot afford to purchase Jordanian goods, yes it will put some restrictions on Jordanians buying Syrian goods but at the end of the day the Syrian economy is in such a bad shape that I think the Caesars Act is just of political significance more than it will have economic significance.

**Raghida Dergham:** Thank you very much Nasser Judeh. Christophe Farnaud do you think Lebanon is going to be paying the price because of its position towards Caesars Act and collapse along with Syria?

**HE Christophe Farnaud:** Well I really hope not, but I share your concern about Lebanon. By the way, I also share Nasser's concern about Syria, but I share your concern on Lebanon. As you know we are aware of the crisis and precisely now is the time for Lebanon to reform and it's a very very difficult task but precisely the more they do now, the less difficult it will be later because what's happening now might bring even more and more trouble and pressure yes but once again if, you know in a nutshell if I may say something, it's precisely, it's not just one crisis that is my concern it's precisely that we have at the same time the series of very very hard crises and precisely the simultaneous character of this crisis makes it even more difficult for us all to react and this is why and I will end on what I wanted to say, is that precisely we need more collective action really. There's a temptation now maybe to withdraw or to wait to do things on one's own, I think it's not the best answer yes



each country has to do what it has to do and it is true for the Lebanese government especially, they have to do their own reform because the international community can help them but we also have collectively to work on more solution and that's true for Syria, that's true for Libya where we want to prevent a Syrian-like management of the crisis, it's true for every crisis mentioned.

**Raghida Dergham:** Christophe Farnaud, again in 30 seconds, what would a collapse of Lebanon actually mean?

**HE Christophe Farnaud:** Well nobody really knows, and I hope that nobody will actually know, but what is for sure that it would be trouble for Lebanon in itself but it will be trouble for everyone in the region and beyond and I think that Lebanese collapse would not be just a Lebanese collapse and we are very much aware of that.

**Raghida Dergham:** What does that mean?

**HE Christophe Farnaud:** It means we need to follow that very closely and that we must collectively try and try, of course, try and make sure that the Lebanese themselves do what they have to do because it will go through their own action, we cannot do it for them, but precisely to be around and be ready to help when the time comes.

**Raghida Dergham:** Sorry, what does it mean... only Lebanon's collapse, in one sentence? You said it will not hurt only Lebanon's collapse...

**HE Christophe Farnaud:** I mean that even deep trouble Lebanon will be in trouble in every field and so knowing how small the region is, it will have consequences for the security of the rest of the region and including, and also for the economy of the region as well, we know that as little as it is on the map Lebanon weighs a lot for the region.

**Raghida Dergham:** Thank you very much Christophe Farnaud, I'm going to try, well I pray that we can listen to you well Shashi Tharoor, last words from you, I am not going to take your time because...

**HE Shashi Tharoor:** Well I was struck Raghida by the fact that some of what we were discussing did not involve any multilateralism, to multilateral solutions, United Nations and I feel that I spoke about in my earlier remarks that you couldn't hear well, about the risk of deglobalization, the point I was going to make before the sound failed us was that multilateralism by itself is not a threat, [inaudible] we don't know where it's going to go in terms of strengthening the international institutions, to keep us united, (...), [inaudible].

**Raghida Dergham:** Shashi Tharoor, I just wish we didn't have trouble with the sound, because I know that you were saying some very profound, you were making profound points and honestly it's your fault because you really should've been there for the rehearsal, technical rehearsal, I can't do anything about it Shashi Tharoor, we would have loved to have had clear sound from you, we will do it in the future thank you so much Shashi Tharoor. And I'm going to go to Phil Gordon and again very quickly Phil Gordon, do you think there's going to be an Iranian, an American-Iranian confrontation before the elections and from your point of view is this at all in the cards? And is it correct, is it true that Joe Biden is choosing not only a woman, but in fact a black woman from Congress as his running mate and some are calling him or he's calling himself the 'transitional president', if he makes it as president? You've got one minute to answer these small questions.

**HE Phil Gordon:** Exactly, three huge questions in 60 seconds. First, it's a testament to Shashi's brilliance that I agree with him when I can barely hear him but it's actually true and his point about multilateralism is highly relevant to almost everything that we had to say. On your

impossible questions Raghida, look there is a chance of an escalation with Iran before the election and for the reason that I said Trump administration has succeeded in imposing pain on Iran but not actually insulting the problem in any real way, with the New Deal or deterring Iran, or getting into the regime. I think that's not likely because I think Iran would prefer to wait it out and see if they can deal with the new administration. Secondly, you asked about the vice presidential pick which I wouldn't speculate about nor this notion of 'Biden as a transitional candidate', I wish we had the luxury of sitting back in thinking about, well let's think about 2024 and what will happen then, we have to think about 2021 or 2020 [connection lost], (...), and deal with some of the problems we've been discussing, restoring relations with our allies, dealing with climate, trying to show up and play a role in the world to contribute to stability rather than instability. I see you are frozen, either because you are listening intently or we're having a technical problem but that that's my last word.

**Raghida Dergham:** Thank you for understanding that when we freeze here, that means we lost electricity in this gorgeous country called Lebanon that has become dysfunctional because of its leaders and what they've done to it and you know people are paying the price, so when we freeze that means we have lost electricity. I'm back to thank you very much all of you. Excellencies Nasser Judeh, Shashi Tharoor, Phil Gordon, and Christophe Farnaud. And let me announce, share with you what I am doing next week, I am stepping away from geopolitics, I'm going into the direction of hosting leaders in the field of technology to know what, how they have been affected and how is the society getting affected by what they're doing what they've done in the last few months and the years to come, the months come. I will not give the full titles look them up you guys, you will know who they are, they are brilliant. We have Fadi Ghandour from Wamda Group, we have Malak Al Akeily, she is the director Golden Wheat for Grain, she's going to be there, we have Summit Jamuar and I'm sure that you would know him

Shashi Tharoor, he is the chairman and CEO of Global Gene Corp, we have Cassandra Kerry she is a tech entrepreneur and she is also brilliant like the others and I have no time to give her whole due for the titles that she owns and then I have Andre advisory firm, Pottinger, and subsequently CChange.

Mr. André Loesekrug-Pietri and he's the director of the Joint European Disruptive Initiative (JEDI) initiative.

Thank you so much for this conversation, Shashi Tharoor, really apologies for the sound that came from your side but you've honored me all of you and come to my summit come to our summit in Abu Dhabi God-willing in March. Thank you so much, it's an honor, thank you.