

**SPRINGS, EARTHQUAKES AND CRISES**  
**THE YEAR THE WORLD CHANGED**  
**JAVIER SOLANA / LLUÍS BASSETS**



## Table of Content

Cover Springs, earthquakes and crises. The year the world changed

# Springs, Earthquakes and crises The year the world changed

A new conversation after *Vindicating Politics*.

Javier Solana hasn't changed. But the world has, and remarkably so. Since he left Brussels, in December 2009, the pace of his life has relaxed: he still spends the day connected, with almost the same volume of information that he dealt with in Brussels, but with much more time and tranquility to process and digest it. His ideas haven't changed, nor has his outlook on reality, nor his pro-European stance. He still travels a lot, although less than in the period where he racked up three million kilometers around the world. But it is no longer the frenzy of events that decide his schedule each day, as was the case when he held a post in the European Union, when an erupting conflict, a difficult negotiation or any number of political mishaps would force him onto an airplane.

For many years he was the visible face of Europe, and still today his presence is required at many meetings even though he no longer holds a European post, simply because he was so essential to the creation of Europe and because he continues to firmly believe, in the midst of serious problems, that Europe

does and should exist. Solana has defended on many occasions the legitimacy of action. It was his method for endowing Europe with a voice and a face, and even a political position that was reached by hard-fought consensus behind the scenes. Now, this desire to be proactive persists, but has the opposite affect: instead of promoting Europe's existence, it seems to highlight its inexistence or lack of potency. It even, and above all, points out by contrast the lack of skill and dedication of Europe's current high-ranking officials working for its existence. If Solana's trajectory vindicates Europe, his words do so with even more emphasis and passion. And he makes clear that he will continue, even if he ends up the last pro-European standing. Nothing annoys him more than the current trend of denigrating Europe.

This man is living proof that history is made by human beings, and that institutions can serve to consolidate the work but not to ensure it if there is no continuity of intent and action. The design, first in the unratified Constitution and then in the Treaty of Lisbon, of the post of High Representative was made with Solana's mold. No one could have better filled the niche carefully designed by Solana than Solana himself. And it could have worked out that way if there hadn't been so many delays and difficulties when reforming the treaties. At the end of the process, in December of 2009, after many deferrals, the 27 looked to fill this and other vacancies, the new high posts of the European Union, precisely among those who couldn't quite fill the shoes. While before we had somebody that used absolutely all of the resources available to him, later we found ourselves with new leaders who had too many resources for their limited ambition.

It is clear that he now has more time to discuss, reflect and dig deeper into topics, that he now reads at a more relaxed pace and without the demands of a pressing decision to be made. The anxiousness is gone, or it's changed pace, as his life has. His anxiety is no longer focused on the next minute, now it is more strategic. We see more moral and intellectual concern and less somatized tension. His anxiety is now directed at the European political and economic crisis, at the inaction toward the Arab uprisings and the growth of populist political forces and Europhobia.

Solana has been and continues to be one of the best-informed people in the world, with a very full and varied schedule that allows him to be up to date on the analyses and breaking news on the international scene. Although he holds no official posts, he is still a regularly consulted person who is called on to attend the most exclusive meetings in which the problems of Europe and of the world are tackled with the highest rigor and severity. In all this time he has kept up his active participation in Spanish, European and global debate. Spanish President Zapatero asked him to head up the team that drafted the "Spanish Security Strategy", the first ever in Spain's history. The Council of Europe asked that he, along with a group of "eminent people", write a report on the threat to the coexistence of diverse groups within Europe, which was published in May 2011, under the title "Living Together". He's also taken part, as member of the Global Commission on Drug Policy, in the drafting of another report, published in June of 2011, which declares the failure of the war against drugs and suggests a strategy to control criminal organizations, decriminalize users, give priority to treatment and experiment with legalization. And he wrote, along with the philosopher Daniel Innerarity, the book *A Threatened Humanity*:

*The Government of Global Risks* (2011), on the threats looming over our societies. He also heads up the Center for Global Geopolitics and Economy at the ESADE, the business school in Barcelona, from which, in addition to teaching, he continues to promote intense debate and reflection on the construction of Europe and international relations.

The conversation transcribed below rounds out and brings up to date those that we had in early 2010 when he ended his term in Brussels. Those conversations were published as *Vindicating Politics*. This conversation took place in the summer of 2011, and the final corrections were made in September. The pace of events is dizzying, but the profundity of the subjects discussed ensures their interest. In any case, resuming the dialogue with Javier Solana about the difficulties our world is facing, and particularly about the European Union, is a true journalistic and intellectual pleasure. It was certainly a stimulating experience for the author of these lines, and he expects that will also be the case for readers.

LLUÍS BASSETS: *Something truly exceptional has been happening since the start of this year, 2011. We were already in a moment of profound geopolitical changes, of movement and transformation of world power, but suddenly it seems that everything has accelerated and we've entered a period of tectonic shifts. They began with an earthquake, the Fukushima earthquake, and with a series of revolutions, the Arab Spring, that are radically changing the profile of the regimes in that region. I wanted to start with a small reflection on the magnitude of the transformation and the surprise, to gauge what has happened in this half year. Could we say that this year has already brought us a new world?*

JAVIER SOLANA: It's true; the first months of 2011 have been furiously fast-paced. A chronological review allows us to see them in perspective. The Arab revolutions filled with hope. The tsunami in Japan with human and technological consequences. The strategic repercussions of the death of Bin Laden. The economic crisis that continues in the developed countries –in the

United States, Japan and the Eurozone—while the emerging nations maintain world growth. The overwhelming appearance of the Tea Party and the reshuffling in the highest ranks of the Security department of the United States. The shootings in Norway. The downgrading of the American triple-A debt rating. And many more things between the lines. This simple list, in a certain way, answers your question about the depth of the events and the surprise factor. Practically none of those events were expected to happen in such a short period of time. Is a different world emerging? I think that it forms part of an extraordinary transformation that began a decade ago —the exact date is insignificant to this reflection—and in my opinion is a part of the enormous transfers of power that are happening in our globalized world and whose consequences we are as of yet unaware of. We are moving forward practically blind. And as we move forward, simultaneously, we are trying to explain what has happened.

LB: *The eye of the storm, in any case, is located in the Arab world.*

JS: Many things have been said about the Arab revolutions, and said well. But it is still difficult to imagine how they will evolve. They are countries with different histories and with differently configured regimes prior to the beginning of their “Spring”. I would like to point out two things. The first is how it began. In the throes of an economic crisis, the uprisings made mostly political demands. The young people in Tunisia and in Cairo’s Tahrir Square were calling for dignity. But I believe that deep down they felt marginalized by the global historical process, they wanted to make up for lost time and participate in its benefits. And in order to do that they sensed that they had to start with politics. From that point of view, the success is spectacular. Those who had never known any other leaders in their lives –Mubarak, Ben Ali—were able to topple them in a matter of weeks, peacefully. It was unthinkable. My second point is about where all this is heading. Since 1989 we have witnessed several political transitions. Almost all of them had, regardless of the difficulties of the process, a specific, discernable goal. For the transitions of the Warsaw Pact countries, their natural destination was the European Union and the transatlantic institutions. In the case of the Arab countries, the destination is unclear. There is no regional framework to approximate, nor is there a clear national experience that can act as a model. Is Turkey their model? Is Indonesia? Will it be Egypt itself that creates its own model? How will the monarchies evolve? How will the Muslim Brotherhood behave?

*LB: The Arab Spring, which affects the petroleum and gas producing countries, is actually linked to the Japanese tsunami, which means a setback to the nuclear industry with very serious consequences on the energy markets.*

*JS: The tsunami in Japan was a huge natural catastrophe. It destroyed towns and there was a vast loss of lives and homes. Seen from just that perspective it would have been a terrible disaster, but the fact that it so dramatically affected several nuclear power stations gave the tsunami new meaning. Confidence in Japan as a technologically capable and rigorous country vanished in a matter of a few days. No one could have imagined that it would be in Japan where the limitations of technological safety would be so clearly made evident. There are conceptual consequences like those Daniel Innerarity and I discussed, but also geostrategic ramifications. The blow it dealt to nuclear energy just as it was starting to recover from the Chernobyl disaster caused a tidal wave in the energy sector in the midst of an economic crisis and serious concern for climate change and CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. The debate about the energy mix was once again put on the table with other parameters. It is still too early to say how this will be resolved.*

*LB: There is a related issue that I want to bring up. Rising prices of petroleum and gas and doubts about the nuclear industry lead to a return to coal. The cleanest energy mix we had come up with has blown up in our faces. It's best not to even mention Kyoto. It's completely disappeared from public debate.*

*JS: Merely due the economic crisis, such a basic issue such as environmental preservation and reduction of CO2 emissions has unfortunately taken a back burner. That's without adding in Fukushima and the Arab crisis. Nor are we now expecting any big technological change, as has happened on other occasions when certain technologies, such as communication technologies, were on the verge of a big development. Many of us thought that the control of emissions and a greener world would arrive on a new technological wave that would resolve the climate problem and give us an economic boost. That was the dream expressed by Thomas Friedman in his 2008 book *Hot, Flat, and Crowded*.*

*LB: The green exit strategy, of course. In 2008 people believed that there would be a green way out of the crisis and that green was the only right direction.*

JS: And that remains true, although we haven't found the path. Now there is a lot of hope placed in shale gas, which, we are told, is going to provide enormous gas reserves to many countries, beginning with the United States. We'll see what happens, but you have to keep in mind that, besides the fact that it doesn't solve all the problems, it poses some new ones. Its exploitation could have real environmental implications, of unknown scope, to another scarce resource: underground water. The environmental politics pose a very serious problem. In our lives we can make a plan A, and if that fails we have a plan B prepared... But we have a planet A and there is no planet B that can take its place. There is no alternative, we have to save the planet because it's the only one we have. And it is true that this battle is taking second stage. President Obama, who started as a real champion of emissions reduction, a few weeks ago made some decisions that weren't reassuring in the least.

*LB: Along with the Arab revolutions, another news item this year is Bin Laden's death, just a few months from the tenth anniversary of the September 11th attacks on the Twin Towers that made him Washington's number one enemy.*

JS: That is another momentous event that requires an exercise of memory to put it in perspective. When the attack was carried out in Abbottabad, almost three years had passed since they had lost Bin Laden's trail in the Tora Bora mountains. It all began again when Obama became president; he included it among his priorities. Remember that during the electoral campaign, Obama had discredited the war in Iraq as a distraction from the fight against terrorism. In order to avoid criticism of his possible lack of military commitment, he took Afghanistan as his theater of operations, which some called his war, Obama's war. The capture of Bin Laden was fundamental for the president. It would settle his position against Iraq, allowing him to begin the withdrawal from Afghanistan with arguments that the American people could understand. In August 2010 they recovered a possible lead that finally led them to him. From October to May —much has been written about it—with enormous discretion and stealth, the CIA, along with the armed forces, carried out one of their most complex operations. We must remember that the Director of the agency was then Leon Panetta and the general at the helm in Afghanistan was David Petraeus: the two people most implicated in the matter aside from the president. Avoiding any filtration was essential. There was no confidence in Pakistan's cooperation. And this is where one of the political decisions that has most interested me comes in, in terms of Obama's coldness in decision-making. On April 28, the President announced that in June Leon Panetta would be named Secretary of Defense and that General

Petraeus would succeed him as director of the CIA. The announcement of Gates's stepping down as Secretary of Defense, although it was known that he had asked to be replaced, was a big surprise to the media. It was key because of his responsibility in the withdrawal of troops from Iraq and Afghanistan, which could rub military men the wrong way, and in some unavoidable cuts to the Defense budget. The figure of Gates seemed ideal for both matters, because of the general regard for him and because he was the only Republican on his team who had also served under Bush. Of course, the Bin Laden affair continued, under the media's radar. Seen in perspective, and knowing what we now know, it still surprises me how Obama handled the timing.

LB: *The announcement came exactly three days before the attack on Bin Laden's mansion.*

JS: Exactly, very close to a possible conclusion to the Bin Laden case, the change that the president wanted to make in the security structure was limited by his consideration of the outcome: if the operation was successful, he didn't want it to be interpreted as a compensation for two of the main players; if, on the other hand, it failed, the appointments were announced, and accepted, and no one would dare to criticize them. I don't know if this interpretation is correct or not. But «se non è vero è ben trovatto». As we know, the operation was a big success for Obama, not without some minor criticism in the United States over Bin Laden's death and much more criticism outside the US, particularly in Europe. I happened to be in Washington at the time. I had dined with the president and vice president of the Brookings Institution –Strobe Talbott and Martin Indyk, two Washington insiders—and we'd talked about the international political agenda, the situation in the United States, and everything imaginable except Bin Laden. I remember that I arrived at the hotel, turned on the television and they were starting to release the rumors of a presidential address and what it would be about. I called Talbott on the telephone and he was as clueless as I was. Shortly afterward, Obama addressed the nation to inform about the operation.

LB: *It was a military action whose consequences were difficult to gauge.*

JS: There were numerous consequences. In the Islamic world, with very few exceptions, there was a feeling of relief and liberation. Al Qaeda was seen as weakened –remember their complete absence of a leading role in the Arab uprisings—and this blow could put an end to them. In the rest of the world there was mostly a similar feeling, qualified by the worry of revenge *in extremis* from Al Qaeda. In the United States, Obama's popularity surged. I remember that someone told me that if it had been a failure, it would have dipped so low it would take him a long time to recover, but that a success would buoy him up, even if the popularity was short-lived. As was to be expected, the harshest response came from Pakistan. The way its air space was violated, even using stealth helicopters, and the news that Bin Laden had been living for several years in the same place where the Military Academy is located, it all badly damaged the relationship between the two countries.

LB: *We can't forget about its repercussion in the American plans to withdraw from Iraq and Afghanistan.*

JS: Before moving on from this topic I wanted to go back to Panetta and Petraeus. During this period of Obama's presidency, the operations in Pakistan and Afghanistan took a turn that went beyond the surge of troops in the Afghan country. There was a spectacular increase in the use of drones, unpiloted planes, in what is called the fight against the insurgency. Among the advantages of drones are their high shooting precision and a decreased risk of civil and military casualties. It is a fundamental shift in the asymmetrical war of our time. But in order to use this new weapon well, cooperation between the army and the

intelligence services is essential. Identification of the objectives is carried out by ground intelligence and the drones merely implement from a distance of minimum risk. Having said that, one understands the close relationship established between General Petraeus and the services of the CIA. And it makes more sense that a four-star general —one of the most brilliant—would end up as Director of the CIA. It would be an exaggeration to say that in these new circumstances it is difficult to tell if it is the army serving the CIA or the CIA serving the army. But the relationship is changing. It remains to be seen how it will develop in the future. In my opinion, this change will be led by the Panetta-Petraeus duo, among others. This type of asymmetrical combat presents many problems about the concept of war, its laws, its legitimacy and its legality, unwanted casualties...

*LB: As a result of this action the news circulated, although it was immediately denied, as happens sometimes with rumors, of the eventual construction of a large Chinese naval base in Pakistan, which in military terms means a very clear demonstration of a desire to control and to replace the United States in the region.*

*JS: Yes, the tension between the United States and Pakistan provoked a spiral of mutual distrust. A few days later, and as the highest sign of the distancing, the prime minister of Pakistan, Yousaf Raza Gilani, was officially received in China, Pakistan's historical ally. As I see it, that was a visit that the Chinese were not particularly wanting but that was hard for them to avoid. It was important both on a symbolic level and from a practical perspective. Certainly there were declarations of friendship "in all circumstances", but also arms contracts and even conversations about a possible Chinese naval base in Pakistan that would break up the balances in the Indian Ocean with India and with the United States. The matter dragged on until just a few weeks ago, when it was confirmed that the Pakistan army had allowed the Chinese to analyze the remains of the helicopter downed in the operation against Bin Laden in Abbottabad in order to better understand its technology. A few days later, China officially denied it. But someone had an interest in maintaining that tension.*

LB: *China has remained on a secondary plane in this furiously paced year, but its importance has been intense.*

JS: While this was happening between the United States and Pakistan, and to a lesser degree with China, we have to keep in mind that one of the biggest less visible news items of those months has to do with relations with emerging countries. First of all, a new tension between Brazil and China, for the moment a contained one, it's true, but highly relevant, over the model that Beijing should follow in its relationship with an emerging super-power like Brasilia. The Chinese want to do the same thing as they've done with other countries, particularly African ones: massive importation of raw materials and not manufactured products, but the Brazilians refuse, of course. Secondly, a new, or at least renewed, tension in Asia, particularly in the South China Sea, that also has to do with the exploitation of natural resources; with China giving Vietnam a warning, that has to be taken into account.

*LB: The other crack opened up by this political earthquake as a result of the revolutions in Tunisia and Egypt is located in the Gulf region.*

JS: The wave of vindications arrived very quickly to bordering countries, Saudi Arabia, Yemen and Bahrain particularly. Torn apart by a fratricidal war, Yemen is a country whose instability threatens Saudi Arabia, an instability that was accentuated by the winds of change, and that the Saudis seem intent on counteracting. In the end, the president, after being wounded, headed to Riyadh for treatment; his recent return after four months absent has provoked serious riots. More important from a strategic perspective is the arrival of the winds of change to Bahrain, a small monarchy of Shiite majority –70 percent of the population—but run by Sunnis. This is another of the sources of accumulated tension in the region: the confrontation between Sunnis and Shiites and as a result Iran's getting into the game, in its way. Iran is the regional Shiite power, and had previously been absent from the Arab Spring. The confrontation has also had internal affects on Iran's regime. Musavi, the presidential candidate, is still under house arrest and tensions are growing between the Guide to the Revolution, the Ayatollah Khamenei, and President Ahmadinejad.

*LB: But even before the uprisings started in Bahrain, the Saudis had begun to distance themselves from Washington.*

JS: King Abdullah wasn't pleased with the Arab Spring. He saw its spread as a threat to his country and he interpreted the fall of Mubarak as a betrayal by the West to an ally they'd had for decades and as the beginning of serious instability in the region that could lead to nothing good. It goes without saying that he also saw it as a threat to his own kingdom, which is overdue for re-

forms. Relations with the United States cooled and not even Obama sending a personal letter via his National Security Advisor could make him change his mind. After accusing Iran of fueling the revolution in Bahrain, he entered the country, accompanied by the police force of the United Arab Emirates. To further complicate the situation, Pakistani forces discreetly came to his aid. It was a moment of maximum alarm in the region. The collected tension between Shiites and Sunnis could brim over.

*LB: It's been like dominos falling, with the last piece, for the moment, being Gaddafi's Libya.*

*JS: When it rains, it pours. From the death of a young Tunisian in Sidi Bouzid in December of 2010 to the fall of Mubarak and Ben Ali, two presidents for life, and including Bin Laden's being taken out, which damaged relations between the United States and Pakistan, along with the rising risk of tensions between Shiites and Sunnis, and the cooling of relations between Washington and its strategic allies in the region. And showing, once again, the importance of the strategic Sunni alliance between Saudi Arabia and Pakistan. The former has the legitimacy of the most holy sites—Mecca and Medina—and the latter has nuclear weaponry.*

*LB: There is also a wide range of political situations. JS: The winds of change have blown everywhere, but some countries present more problems. Libya and Syria are two extreme examples. In the case of Libya, Gaddafi's resistance to change was well known throughout the world. Libya is a large country, two and half times the size of France and seven times larger than the United Kingdom, although much of that is uninhabited desert, with a tribal society around two areas, Tripoli and Benghazi, who have never gotten along. Therefore, it is not an easy country to call to action. Although Gaddafi had been banned for years from the international community, he had now recovered his credibility after fulfilling his promises regarding terrorism and non-proliferation. This situation and the petroleum allowed him to think that he would have carte blanche to repress anyone who challenged his power. When the mobilization began in Benghazi asking for the opening up of the autocratic regime, the reaction was unequivocal. All the diplomatic efforts for a*

negotiation between the sides were in vain and the idea was discussed of creating, through a resolution of the Security Council, an aerial protection zone as a way to end the tragedy. Russia and China, who didn't have any special sympathy for the Arab Spring and had never willingly supported a military action in a third country, were opposed at first. In order to unblock the situation the Arab League's position was of maximum importance. In the emergency meeting they called for action from the Security Council, appealing to the responsibility to protect, a concept approved in the reform of the United Nations during Kofi Annan's last term, with one limit: that there were no foreign troops on the ground. The operation lasted longer than was expected, but finally the rebel troops arrived in Tripoli. The question posed now is if the rebels will be capable of uniting for the reconstruction and organization of their countries. We hope they can.

*LB: Many now reproach the United Nations for Syria. Why is there no resolution and intervention to protect the Syrian population?*

JS: The situation in Syria is very different. It is a very complex country but without internal divisions in the security forces and governed by an almost clan-like minority group. In these circumstances, external action is almost impossible. Besides, neither Russia nor China would even allow the matter to be discussed in the Security Council. There were condemnations and sanctions, which didn't stop the regime's brutality. Turkey increased its condemnation, which might have been what made Iran declare its disapproval of the situation. Now, isolated from his two regional allies, Assad had no way out. What will be the future of Syria? We don't know, but it will continue to be an important player in the region and Turkey and Iran will continue to fight for influence over the country.

*LB: On the other hand, the petroleum pact between the United States and the Saudis has been broken.*

JS: In addition to the unease produced in Saudi Arabia by "Mubarak's betrayal", there was an important change in the American dependence on Saudi petroleum. For years, the relationship between the United States and Saudi Arabia was based on American petroleum dependence and the corresponding security that Washington guaranteed. This balance has been weakened by the change in dependence on petroleum. While the American dependence on Saudi petroleum has decreased to about 12 percent, India and China depend on Saudi Arabia to the tune of 60 and 70 percent, respectively. But the Saudis know that neither of those two emerging powers is going to provide them with the security they require. This is another of the changes in the world's strategic relationships.

*LB: On few occasions in recent decades have so many momentous events happened in such a short period of time, each of them a very vivid symptom of the changes taking place.*

JS: Yes, it's been six months that have been as full as six years, as has been said. From a global perspective, what has happened has been extraordinary: the Arab Spring; the continuing economic predicament in Western countries, a crisis in the environmental policies with the resulting breakdown in hope for a technological solution, which no longer looks like the way out of all these problems; and an event as exceptional and transformative to international relations as the death of Bin Laden, ordered by the president of the most powerful country on the planet. And let's not forget that the Security Council, because of the uprising in Libya, approved the resolution to allow intervention in favor of the Libyan rebels against Gaddafi.

LB: *Recovering the right to intervene and the obligation to protect, after the disaster in Iraq.*

JS: It is the first resolution that explicitly recognizes "the responsibility to protect", a term incorporated into the Charter of the United Nations in 2006 that is also linked to the reactivation of the International Criminal Court, entrusted with the prosecution of the crimes committed by Gaddafi and his people. Another sign of the serious changes that are taking place is that the resolution was the cause of division among Europeans. In the Security Council vote, Germany abstained along with China and Russia, while the United Kingdom and France voted in favor and were supporters of the resolution.

*LB: It's a pessimistic moment, with unclear horizons.* JS: One can only hope that the rest of the year lightens tensions, especially in regard to the economy. But it doesn't seem that we're headed in that direction. One can only hope it will change, because we need a break. For the coming year we already have an agenda of important changes that we need to start thinking about. There will be a new shift in power in Beijing, the arrival of the fifth generation of leaders, with military, political and even academic and intellectual changes. Approximately 70 percent of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China will be replaced. There will also be change in Russia, after the struggle between Medvedev and Putin has set the latter as the favorite in the March elections.

And in France, where the socialists now seem to have a better opportunity against a weakening Sarkozy and a rising National Front. In January there will be a new government in Spain, and there will also be change in Italy. And the most visible and prominent, elections will be held in the United States, with Obama trying to win a second term, and we'll have to see what happens in the American Congress. The 2012 elections will clarify the debate we have been seeing in recent weeks about social cuts, military spending, taxation and, all in all, the role of the state in the American economy and society.

*LB: The problem of global governance has been another of the questions that has gotten worse in the last six months.*

JS: Clearly. The institution that had begun to create great expectations, the G-20, has also disappeared from the front pages of newspapers. Throughout these six months in which so many things have happened, in regard to the euro, the Arab

Spring, the American budget debate and the crisis in the leadership of the International Monetary Fund, the G-20 has also been absent. This lack of a leading role should make us think about its solidity. It was strong in the early moments, with the first summit meeting in Washington [convoked by George Bush, on November 14th and 15th, 2008], when it halted the recession, with the coordination of policies against the crisis, particularly all the stimulus plans to get out of the recession, but later the divergences --among developed and emerging countries, and among Europe and the United States--proved greater than their common goals. It still functioned well in the meetings in London [April 2nd, 2009, the second summit, this time convoked by Obama] and Pittsburg [September 24th and 25th, 2009]. However, in Seoul, [fifth meeting, November 11th and 12th, 2010], when it was time to reorganize and reconstruct the world economy, it showed its limitations. Each country had gone its own way, the big players and even the members within the European Union. And on this point we cannot forget the new absent and passive attitude of Germany, a decisive country in this whole process. In November there will be another meeting of the G-20, presided over by France, in a crucial moment, in which they'll have to find the balance between stimulating growth and employment and fiscal cuts, which is the great debate of our time.

*LB: Let's return for a moment to Fukushima, to discuss the problem of governance, and let's consider it as a symptom of what is happening in the world in regard to the governments. Tokyo has had six prime ministers in five years. It is unusual for a country like Japan to show such a deep distrust, such a widespread belief that their leaders are not telling the truth, that they are constantly manipulating the people. This is even more striking in a society with such conscientious and disciplined citizens, who are so polite and obedient.*

JS: That's true, and that's without taking into account the vast corruption linked to those governments of the long-ruling party, with sometimes shady ties to corporations, and committed to nuclear energy and to all the national regulators of the sector and filled with former heads of the big companies. What happened in Fukushima is, on another scale, the same thing that happened with the economic crisis: the controller can't do his job because he is infected by the same thing that needs controlling.

LB: *Fukushima seems a little bit like a futuristic catastrophe, a collapse of the system, as if it were the announcement of what awaits us in the 21st century when a system failure affects all of society's functioning.*

JS: Well, we still know very little, or to be more exact, we know nothing. Just look at the new levels of emissions inside the power station registered in August, which are higher than the initial levels. We have had few experiences so tremendous. Chernobyl, of course, but there no one expected transparency; quite the opposite, there was an expectation of concealment, following the Soviet regime's regular practices.

LB: *It's to be expected that such negative experiences as the Fukushima disaster give rise to opposition to the system. What continues to be surprising is that this opposition isn't greater.*

JS: Remember that, the fall of Lehman Brothers announced the

need to revamp capitalism. Sarkozy said it. It seemed that we were entering a period of big changes promoted from above.

LB: *A sort of enlightened leftism, promoted even by the right.* JS: Yes, grandiloquent words were heard from the mouths of unexpected people. There was fear. I remember the meetings of that period, with businessmen and bankers, in which they bandied about dramatic and drastic ideas about the relationship between the state and capital, the future of the market economy, the role of the state.

LB: *They recovered from their fear quickly.* JS: Indeed, they recovered quickly and we moved into the next phase in which we've forgotten about reforming the system and, instead, we have a widespread feeling of inability to action and lack of leadership. That is what has led to the "indignant" protests, which surprisingly have not spread further, because it is really a big blow that we've received. And one whose effects will be seen for years to come.

LB: *And which forces us to make changes in strategy that we have yet to come to terms with.*

JS: We are still not aware of the enormous transformation that is going to happen in the developed world. Just look at the evolution of South Korea from the perspective of Europe. South Korea is a leader in information technology with Samsung, winner of a competition to build a nuclear reactor in the Emirates over the French world leader Areva, and a country where there will no longer be books in schools by 2014, replaced by digital media. Not long ago we were obsessing over the shift in where textile goods and shoes are manufactured, which are old

subjects and without much added value, but now things have changed and we are facing very strong competition in the latest technology in sectors such as energy, transportation and telecommunications. Korea is the country with the most patents registered in those fields and many others. It is also one of the countries with the best education according to the OECD, along with Singapore and the Shanghai region. This is a country where the television, at any time of the day or night, instead of the reality TV, broadcasts programs that teach you math or foreign languages for every level. It is a country much more competitively prepared than we are; we continue in a «dolce far niente», a blissful state of inaction. That is the underlying problem, which we don't want to recognize.

*LB: In three years, from the fall of Lehman Brothers to now, there has been a 180-degree turn. The way out of the crisis isn't green, it isn't anticapitalist, but it does involve a very profound reform of the welfare state, with cuts that affect precisely those most underprivileged.*

*JS: The welfare state is a rare thing. In a world like the one we have today, the countries with welfare states are in the minority, they are in the West and they are the exception. Theoretically, there are two options: the better one, that we all move toward the welfare state, which would be extraordinary and something we would all like to see, or the worse option, that the minority has to get rid of the welfare state. This second alternative is inadmissible. The most likely is that there will be an intermediate option in which we all converge, in a welfare state reformed for everyone. What we do not know is what the journey that will get us there will look like. But it is obvious that in China, sooner or later, the citizens, the workers, the consumers will have something to say. This summer we've seen civil reactions against the Chinese authorities because of the lack of transparency in the high-speed train accident and the citizens' protests for the opening of polluting factories. There'll be changes there for sure.*

*LB: The problem is where the two sides will meet. If they will have an acceptable welfare state or an insufficient, minimal one.*

*JS: I believe that it is still possible to maintain it in Europe. But the reforms must be very deep in order to be able to compete in the global world and not become just a museum for tourists. Social democracy and the welfare state are confined to a unique continent and set of historical circumstances. Is it reasonable to think that it will spread and function in the entire world or that our historical experience will repeat itself? A few months ago, I had a long conversation with two Chinese young men who worked in Europe in financial institutions of global scope before returning to China, and I asked them why they went back. "In Shanghai I can feel the ambition, dynamism and dreams for the future, here I can't" one of them told me. We see China with eyes from the past, but for the Chinese it is a completely new society that has a mix of Confucian harmony and brutal capitalism, where competition is fierce. They are capable of setting up a "dimestore" in twenty-four hours. We Europeans know it and we don't want stores open on Sundays, while they have them open day and night, Sundays and Mondays and every day of the week and year.*

*LB: This idea also brings into question social democracy, its role and its future.*

JS: One of our biggest inabilities has been that our message hasn't surpassed the realm of nation-state. As much as we have acted in the International and European Socialist Party, we haven't launched a single message whose visibility goes beyond the nation, a realm that is increasingly small and difficult to manage. We haven't thought about the global institutions beyond the national borders. What can the European social democrats teach the Chinese young people, besides the most general humanistic objectives, human rights, liberties? Since we haven't told them how to create a more social democratic society, their leaders hide behind one argument: avoiding the recognition of workers' rights helps them to be more competitive and export.

LB: *In these notes on the first half of the year of the earthquake, we still need to talk about technology. Its role also seems paradoxical. In 2001 it was responsible for the bubble, and ten years later it's the pinprick that pops the bubble. Then we came to believe that it was the panacea to ease and even, for the more optimistic, eliminate the economic cycles. Remember those fabulous Internet companies that we couldn't say what business they were in, but which were worth fortunes on the stock market.*

JS: Well, remember what Terra was in our country. Where's Terra now? But, what's more, let's remember the response to the technological bubble of 2001. Rates and taxes went down, instead of adding a tax to pay for the war against Al Qaeda. That's where the whole problem comes from; the derived financial products came from that. And the increase in public spending, too. The newspaper *Der Spiegel* published a sensational graph on the portion of the current American debt that corresponds to each president, and it turns out that George W. Bush was responsible for 42.7 percent, Obama 16.8% and

the previous presidents even less: Clinton, 9.8; George H. W. Bush, 10.5; Reagan, 13.2; and 7 percent is attributable to earlier presidents.

*LB: Now technology acts in the opposite way, it is what has burst the political bubble. In the Arab world particularly, but to a certain extent everywhere. Besides the fact that the social networks introduce economic dynamism and influence businesses, it is clear that they are also playing a large role in mobilizing citizens of all stripes and in all the countries, from tyrannies like Iran and Syria to Europe and the United States, and including the case of China that we already mentioned, and let's not forget the crucial role they had in bringing down Ben Ali and Mubarak.*

*JS: Okay, but let's not exaggerate. In those countries not many people are active on social networks, especially outside of the big cities. Apart from Cairo and to some extent Alexandria, nobody is on social networks in Egypt. Access to the Internet is still very restricted, only 22 percent, and the television remains the medium that offers the most information. In Egypt alone it has more than two hundred channels. In the Arab Spring it was this technology, television, that had the most effect. Without Al Jazeera it is impossible to understand what happened. Its relationship with the Arab nation is more important than the one Nasser himself had. Parents allowed their children, especially their daughters, to go out into the streets because in Al Jazeera they saw what was happening and because it gave them the model of behavior. Al Jazeera is from Qatar, which allows me to mention the role that the Emirate of Qatar has played recently, including its participation in the application of the Security Council's resolution in Libya.*

*LB: Al Jazeera has played an important role in the building of a general awareness, but what counted in the urban mobilization were the cell phones, the text messages, the viral diffusion of tweets, the hashtags like #ArabRevolution and #Tahrir that mobilized an entire country and were created by some clever person on his telephone or laptop. That type of technological Leninism is absolutely new.*

*JS: Its use was decisive in the protests; now it remains to be seen how it can be used to build politically, which is much more difficult. They are a good instrument for opposition, but we don't know how to use them to build.*

*LB: It also happened to Obama. He used technology very well for the electoral campaign and then, when it came time to govern, everything got more complicated.*

*JS: It is true that we can all potentially be leaders, but in reality we need mediations and representations. That brings me to the need for and the value of representative democracy. It is impossible to reach consensus, find solutions and move forward without representation. Representative democracy in the end is consensus, someone has to give in, we all have to give in, and that consensus cannot only be done directly. If it is already difficult with representative institutions, imagine what it would be like with direct democracies. It has to be said: you are free to not like the system, the parties, politics, but vote, you have to vote, and you have to choose your representatives.*

*LB: The question is how to introduce elements of deliberative democracy and participatory democracy into a representative system. And in this technology can be useful.*

JS: But there are two things that must be maintained: the vote and the delegation. You can't govern by doing referendums all the time.

LB: *There is also a generational element in the Arab Spring and in the "indignant" protesters here in Spain.*

JS: More than generational. I would go so far as to say that there is almost a global mood, if such a concept works. There has been "indignation" in the Arab world; in several European countries; if pressed, I'd even say in the United Kingdom, although it had a reprehensible violent expression; in China with the incipient protests we've already mentioned regarding the train accident and the pollution from some factories; even the Chilean student movement belongs to the same genre of social movements; and the highly interesting case of Israel, where the largest demonstrations in its history have been held against inequalities and economic conditions. The Israeli indignants are mobilized against internal domestic inequality, but we shouldn't lose hope that they reflect and include the inequalities suffered by both Israeli Arabs and Palestinians. If that happens, it would be an enormous boost from inside for the peace process and put direct pressure on Netanyahu. I am aware that the specific causes can be very different, but in every case there is the same feeling among many citizens around the world who find themselves excluded by global political and economic elites who are very well connected amongst themselves. It is a reaction by those who feel marginalized from the benefits of globalization and now want to be a part of it. This collective and global indignation marks one of the moods of 2011...

*LB: In September 2008, when Lehman Brothers collapsed and we saw that the crisis would be global, we also believed that the guilt, in the crudest sense of the word, was only American. The fault of their subprime or garbage mortgages and the lack of controls and regulation. Now here in Europe we are realizing that it is also our fault, for not having done things right with the euro, for living beyond our means and for not having been able to foresee the risk that came along with any unstable situation.*

*JS: In May of 2008 in Europe, the debate was only on inflation and the price of food. Around that time Gordon Brown invited us to dinner in Chequers, the summer residence of the British Prime Minister, as part of a group of people that included the then-president of Chile, Michelle Bachelet; the president of Senegal, Abdoulaye Wade; the director of the World Trade Organization, Pascal Lamy, and the recently named director general of the International Monetary Fund, Dominique Strauss-Kahn. The entire conversation was about the problem of the price of food and the news that was coming out of Washington about the early signs of the crisis. The main argument was that Europe wouldn't follow the path of the United States. Almost all the leaders believed that. The most widespread belief was that it wasn't going to hit us. Big mistake. Look at how wrong we were.*

*LB: Zapatero was wrong, there doesn't seem to be any doubt about that at this point. But in hindsight we are realizing that everybody was wrong. First of all in the diagnosis. And secondly in how to tackle it. In everything.*

*JS: Indeed, it's true, but not everyone in equal measure.*

*LB: Let's look at the management of the crisis in Europe. In how it arrives and how we are unable, once it has gotten here, to act, to solve and before that to make a good diagnosis that helps solve the situation.*

*JS: It arrived gradually, on the margins, in Ireland, in Iceland, without us fully realizing. The first serious impact was brought about by the Greek crisis. This whole process is well known, but allow me to make some political reflections. From the European institutional perspective no one was prepared for what was happening. The Commission, with unclear competence in financial matters, was practically absent, which left too much room for the Council's action. But, lacking European vision, the Council offered solutions that had too much of a national focus. So, from the beginning the European component was diminished. And the Central European Bank became the institutional axis. We found ourselves lacking leadership, with an empty chair. I can't imagine Delors, Mitterrand, Kohl or González in a similar situation, being so politically resourceless and slow. I recognize the difficulties, but in Brussels they shouldn't have allowed things to go so far.*

*LB: What happened in the European Union happens to everyone who should react, from the United States to the G-20.*

*JS: It's true, but let's not forget the first big European struggle was to see who was in the G-20. And later, when the number of European chairs was increased [a total of six, the four official members: Germany, France, the United Kingdom and Italy, and two "guests": Spain and the Netherlands], it can't be said that the increase in the attendees exactly contributed to increasing respect for Europe. More like the opposite, because in the G-20 there were so many Europeans that people began to wonder*

about the meaning of it all. Or they disagreed, or just repeated what had already been said, and it was useless to have so many chairs. Notwithstanding, I fully understand that all the countries wanted to avoid missing their chance to hold a seat.

*LB: It is paradoxical that all the countries wanted to be in the G-20, which has ended up being the stage for European weakness and fragmentation.*

*JS: Clearly very valuable time was lost with the petty internal tensions of the European Union about the attendance and preparation of the meetings... From the institutional perspective, the en-tire process created some friction. Of course, it wasn't too important, but we should keep in mind the mood entering into the debate. On the other hand, the European financial system wasn't transparent, it wasn't clear what was inside; in fact, if that had been better known, it would have been obvious what all those garbage mortgages represented and who had them. They were mostly in Germany, because the banks needed to do business with credits and commissions investing the savings, and since they didn't have a real estate bubble, they bought what the bubbles gave them, which offered very high interest rates. With very low interest in the euro zone, they gave money to the countries that needed it at a very low interest rate. And from there begins the divergence, with the defaulters on one hand, and the virtuous countries, with Germany leading, on the other; the Catholics, spendthrifts and bad money managers, up against the Calvinists, good at managing their money and saving. Each with its own characteristics, of course: Ireland with its real estate bubble and its banking crisis; Greece with its manipulated public accounts revealing unsustainable government finances; Portugal with prolonged stagnation, and Spain with the real estate bubble and excessive debt, particularly private debt.*

*LB: At that point the lack of European leadership was not yet clear, although there was the curious circumstance of Gordon Brown, the Prime Minister of the UK, a country that doesn't use the euro, being the one who invented the formula for halting the crisis with the nationalization of banks.*

*JS: Gordon Brown was perhaps the one who had most deeply considered the globalized economic system. The creation of the G-20 was his idea, born as a meeting of Ministers of Finance. When the Greek crisis exploded and their debt had to be bailed out, it was the moment when Germany and France became fundamental factors. Then all the German introspection about where we are headed, what role we play, why do we always have to foot the bill, etc, came to light. But these topics weren't new ones, they came from the approval of the Treaty of Lisbon and the judgment at Karlsruhe, the interpretations that the judges in the German Constitutional Court made of the treaty: there would be no more transfers of sovereignty, any European move forward would have to go through the Bundestag and be subjected to the jurisdiction of the court, etcetera.*

*LB: Putting a sort of end to European construction, that connects to Angela Merkel's speech in Bruges, on November 2nd, 2010, known as the "method speech", where she deemed obsolete the community method centered on the Commission and the Strasbourg Court and declared herself in favor of what she calls the "Union method", merely intergovernmental and by unanimity, where decisions are made by the national parliaments and their corresponding constitutional courts.*

JS: Exactly. This change in Germany's position was predictable. They dug in their heels and made us shift from the EC method to the "Union method".

LB: *When you left Brussels, in December 2009, France and Germany's votes were crucial; now, it is only Germany's.*

JS: We are seeing a more complex Germany, which is different from the one we knew before. It is no longer the Germany of the Franco-German axis, which gave equal and simultaneous Euro-Atlantic priority.

LB: *Paris plays at the fiction that the Franco-German axis still exists. It seems that Sarkozy is trying to save face, but he ends up as Merkel's fig leaf.*

JS: We all knew and recognized that Germany was going to play a different role after the reunification. The problem is how it takes on this new role, without the others becoming the bad guys.

LB: *Europe has to be reinvented, in a way. Thinking about how it should function from now on, when the Paris-Berlin axis no longer works to create the big accords, the big appointments.*

JS: It's not a reinvention. I don't like that word. Europe is already invented, because it has already been made. I find the term 'reinvent' a little unsettling. Germany has weight and occupies the most prominent space, undoubtedly, but look at how much it has given up on many different issues. They started by saying that the Central European Bank is theirs, it will be in Frankfurt, governed by German rules and a German president, and they end up accepting an Italian to succeed Trichet. The balance of power is not always so cut and dry.

LB: *Germany in Europe plays a role similar to that of the United States on the world stage: its strength is overwhelming, but it cannot do anything without creating consensus and without the help of others.*

JS: Sure, although it doesn't have military strength, which in Europe isn't really necessary. Who has military might and who doesn't is a minor matter in the governing of the European Union.

LB: *In any case, what is unsettling about Germany is its lack of a calling, its withdrawal. It is always waiting to see what will happen, thinking and saying we'll solve that later. Germany is central, without it no one can do anything, but sometimes Germany prefers to do nothing. Wait, just wait. We saw it with the euro.*

JS: There was a big lack of responsibility there, because if the Greek debt problem was solved more quickly we wouldn't have gotten so deep into the crisis. There are two playing fields that are difficult to coordinate, between internal politics and European politics, which puts Germany in an awkward position. Its leaders have not been able to handle well the domestic and European time frames. My hope is in that, beginning with the last elections in September, there will be almost two years without domestic elections scheduled. That and the last judgment from the court in Karlsruhe authorizing the rescue plans for the Greek debt should allow Germany to concentrate more on its role within Europe. I don't want to be naïve, but that is how I read Chancellor Merkel's speech in the Bundestag on September 7th, where she made very clear that her political future is tied to the future of the euro.

*LB: Isn't the demand, coming mostly from Germany, of writing budgetary stability into the constitutions excessive?*

JS: Let's first state clearly that there is a commitment undertaken by all the countries in the euro zone to comply with the objectives of the Stability and Growth Pact. The euro-zone countries have already accepted limiting the size of the deficit and debt. Those objectives have been breached several times by some members, among them Germany and France. Once the crisis arrived, and the conviction that the Stability Pact could not be breached again, Germany made the decision to force itself by writing the commitment into its constitution. There is an alternative to this route, and it is that the Commission has full capacity to control and impose sanctions automatically to the countries that are in violation. The experiences we've had up until now point us toward the other route, that the countries self-regulate and express their maximum commitment, via the German model of writing it into their constitutions. With this measure there is not only a mutualization of the trust among the member states, but also of the euro in relation to other currencies. If we really want to have a strong, respected currency, it has to be a currency that generates confidence. This is essential.

*LB: Let's return to the application of the Treaty of Lisbon, which coincides with the arrival of the crisis to Europe and instead of making things easier, makes them more complicated.*

JS: I think that Europe's presence as an international player has declined just in the moment when it should have the tools for global projection. In a certain sense it's logical, because the number one priority, on which all efforts have been focused, has been the economy. Everything else has been pushed onto the back burner.

*LB: There is the impression that, a year and a half after you left Brussels, at least part of your legacy as High Representative has been ruined.*

*JS: It's not my place to evaluate or assess that at this point. It is true that in my era we worked with great political determination, on everyone's part. But it is no less true that we were starting from scratch, there was nothing. It isn't easy to fuse bureaucracies and it is very complicated if there isn't a desire to take it a bit further. In any case, I don't want to say a single word in detriment of Europe and the European dream, which I share. I don't like hearing that Europe is dead. And even less that it would be better to put it out of its misery or even that it is the root of our problems. It's not true; it's not dead. We have serious problems, but the solution must include Europe, it means more Europe.*

*LB: We have some sort of euro-catastrophism, much worse and more destructive than the euroscepticism and euro-pessimism that we had seen before.*

*JS: Europe continues to be the solution. There is no other. As big as the problem may be, the way out continues to be more Europe. We saw it this summer. Although we have often fallen short, Europe always ends up reacting. Just look at the effort made on July 21st in the Council of Europe with the approval of the second rescue package to Greece. The bad thing about the European Union is that everything is slow and difficult. A lot of time is needed to get so many members to reach an agreement.*

*LB: We'll have to see if all this can hold out. The approval of some parliaments is still needed, where there are many parties and populist and xenophobic, anti-European ideas abound.*

*JS: The problem isn't only anti-Europeanism, but the lack of a strong pro-European sentiment. The last analysis by the CIS regarding to what point Spaniards are willing to help Greece had very dubious results. Like in other countries, in Spain there is a tendency to think that any aid should be approved by the parliament. Just like in other countries, we want to be Greeks when it comes time to receive aid, but not when it's time to tighten our belts to help them.*

*LB: Does the public need to be made more aware? JS: The problems are ours and their solution depends on our abilities to return the money. Of course, in order to return the money, one has to save; but without growth and jobs, one can't save or pay back debt. The only think that you can ask for is more time. But you must pay. And there has to be awareness that we have been living above our means. This is the lesson that hasn't been taught.*

*LB: Did Zapatero make a mistake on May 9th? JS: Yes. Not in his decision, but in his presentation of the plan for cuts. He should have explained it better, and even asked for a Congressional vote of confidence.*

*LB: And as for the euro, we were satisfied when we left the July 21st summit, but in August we were already under attack from the markets again. Is what the 27 agreed on enough up to this point?*

*JS: No, it is a step, it is not the end. We have to go to a much*

deeper economic intervention, to the emission of Eurobonds. And it's been shown that it's not impossible: the central bank has made decisions in the limit of its powers, and it's been fine.

LB: *A High Representative for economic policy?* JS: No. First we do things, the name will come later. But we have to move forward in that direction, and I believe that it is something that is accepted by everyone. And if we do it right, we can get the United Kingdom to join. If it is all done well, it can touch the heart of London's interests.

LB: *Public opinion continues to be very hostile toward the European Union.*

JS: Yes, public opinion is hostile, but the realities are very harsh. Outside of the eurozone things are going to get very tough. If the euro works it will become an alternative. And Murdoch, the euro's main enemy, is no longer what he was.

LB: *If we save the euro, is it feasible to think that the pound will disappear and be integrated into the euro?*

JS: I don't think it's impossible. Gordon Brown wrote an article in early July entitled "Why Europe Slept" which, if we didn't know who wrote it, we would think it had come from the pen of a hard line Europe supporter. The Gordon Brown of that article is pro-European. I don't know what I could add to his observations and proposals. I believe it is a crucial text in terms of the evolution of things in the United Kingdom. The idea that this crisis isn't a problem of each of the affected countries, but rather a "pan-European" emergency, the decision to deploy Eurobonds and tax transfers and a European strategy that favors employment, all that is extremely pro-European. It is much easier for Denmark to try to organize itself and exist in its niche directly within the global market, disregarding Europe, than it would be for the United Kingdom.

*LB: Is it possible to seriously think that any European Union member could aspire to live in a globalized world while being outside of the Union?*

JS: No, not a member country. But Norway, which isn't a member, is doing it with petroleum and maintaining a very close relationship with the European Union. And Switzerland, who has one foot in and one foot out. You open up borders when you want to, you still live with the rules of a single market, although later everything is a bit of a cheat.

*LB: Those countries that want to be in the global world without being in the Union are the ones that close their borders, demand the reform of the Schengen Treaty and drive Europe in a direction opposed to its values and principles. And not only those countries. In Berlusconi's Italy and Sarkozy's France there is a virulent reaction against immigrants, gypsies and even refugees. And there we have the success of Thilo Sarrazin's book against immigration in Germany. Attitudes that are also arriving here. We are facing a sullen, unrecognizable Europe, in which populisms have increasing voice in parliaments, gain seats in governments, and impose their agendas.*

JS: Europe means diversity, and it is absurd to go against diversity. However, it is true that there is growing intolerance in Europe, which affects and endangers the truest European values, just as we denounced in the document «Living Together», which the Council of Europe commissioned from a group of political figures.

*LB: Do you believe that the massacre in Oslo can lead us to reflection or will it just be another incident in the jumble of this world in flux that only responds to immediate stimuli and the basic electoral demands?*

JS: The massacre in Oslo was a terrible blow that reveals many things. One of them, which can be extrapolated to other countries even if they have never had a similar tragedy, is the scant attention paid to the extreme rightwing movements, movements that can turn into terrorist movements. This is not the first time we've seen this.

*LB: You yourself received very serious threats from the American right wing, from an apocalyptic Christian militia that considers you the Antichrist.*

JS: Yes. And there have been many more that not shown their faces or have kept a low profile. The politicization of the anti-terrorist struggle in the Arab world has led us to neglect some areas of our own security. That is serious, first because that type of movements are in a process of growth, something that in and of itself does not improve our societies, and secondly because their level of fanaticism can be extreme. I know Utoya, the island where the shootings took place, because it is a common meeting place for the Norwegian Social Democrats. Attacking this island and Social Democratic teenagers is truly repugnant. I loved the courage with which the Prime Minister, Jens Stoltenberg, acted. He is someone I know well, since we have had dealings, when he was Minister of Commerce of Norway and I was the Spanish Foreign Minister, over the conditions of Norway joining the EU, as we had particular reservations in terms of fishing. It was a difficult negotiation that we resolved satisfactorily, although it didn't lead to a happy ending, since a

later Norwegian referendum ruled out their joining and the country preferred to remain outside of the European Union but with its petroleum.

*LB: Another subject we should touch on is the sudden change, a 180-degree turn, that has happened in the European and American foreign policy regarding Arab dictatorships. It is one of the most extraordinary changes we have seen in history. One that was forced, obviously, by events.*

*JS: I experienced very directly that period and that policy. As part of my work I have had to meet with Mubarak on many occasions. He would receive me as soon as I arrived in Cairo. And I've met with Ben Ali as well. I've been with Bourguiba and with Ben Ali. Israel played a very important role in this network of relationships. Also the United States, of course. All of Europe has been a mere follower of those policies. All of us. And still today we don't play well on that field. I don't understand why the meetings about Libya are held in Paris, one of the former colonial powers. They should have gone to Madrid or Cairo. The young Arabs have shown us that the dilemma between Jihadism and dictatorship, that seemed so clear following September 11th, was radically false. Europe, the colonizing continent, comfortably continued its own historical inertias. They taught us a real lesson.*

*LB: Moreover, in Europe we are left with no Arab policy. Because, now that we are reinventing it, it is a disjointed policy, in which each member goes its own way, each one has its own interests, but there is no European policy. JS: The desire to have an Arab policy is real. Let's not forget that the European Union just named a Spaniard, Bernardino León, for political matters relating to the Arab world as a result of the revolutions. And he has political and economic responsibilities. Moreover, the European Union is giving aid, particularly financial.*

LB: *But it is just going through the motions, without many strategic demands or plans for the future.*

JS: Europe has to be consummately careful, you see, because they don't want you showing your face too much over there. We are the former colonial power.

LB: *First the colonial power, and then later the ally of the tyrants. Isn't this also, in a way, raising awareness, also in the US, about how to combine the promotion of human rights with international actions?*

JS: Yes, of course. But we have made progress on that point. The International Criminal Court has played and will play an important role. For the first time the responsibility to protect has been used and we still have to make a change in the way we aid development. Soon, in South Korea, an international meeting of ministers and non-governmental organizations will be held, in which we will begin to address the relationship between the rule of law and development aid. The three vectors, the right to protect, the prosecution of the criminals and the international aid, must go together. There has been much progress because the most radical proponents of food aid argue that this type of action is just humanitarian aid and is therefore independent of any policy. But aid is much more than that, and must also pursue the establishment of a good government.

LB: *And what should we do with NATO? It seems to be on its last legs. Afghanistan was said to be its acid test. And now we have the case of Libya, with Germany staying out.*

JS: NATO continues to be an important forum where members gather and discuss. It has carried out actions outside of its area, but it's true that it has hit a wall. Its future could be a big pact

with Russia. The problem with that is that it might make China nervous, because Russia and NATO together are a huge bloc. We are faced with a very difficult decision for which we don't yet have enough facts. We don't know if we are heading into a world of confrontation or a world of cooperation. I choose interdependence, no doubt.

*LB: What was Kissinger actually proposing in his book about China? That China and the United States do what Europe and America did in World War II and the later peace.*

JS: The Chinese have an open debate about what their role should be in multilateral organizations. In the G-20, for example, they tell you: this isn't our house, and we still don't know how to behave in that house: we have a place at the table, but it isn't our table. Perhaps there has to be a leap taken and recreate the global order with China's full participation as a founding member. We aren't recreating it now, let's be clear about that. We are opening up our order to those who weren't there when it was created, but nothing more. The rules we made can be corrected or amended, but that doesn't mean that a new rule has been created. I don't know if we are going to be able to smooth out our historical differences, our cultural differences, our varying political perspectives. If we don't sit down together, have a debate and reach a consensus, we certainly won't. We need to work together to make the rules. Are we talking about a clash of civilizations or about cooperation? That is what we haven't yet clarified and come to a decision on: how do we want to organize our future, from a place of confrontation or a place of cooperation?

*LB: And then we have the issue of incorporating the Arabs into this script. Where are they headed? Toward China or toward Europe and the United States? How do you see democratic progress in the Arab world?*

JS: Very slow and difficult, but promising. It is going to move forward. The Muslim Brotherhood is going to have a lot of influence in Egypt. Although they can evolve. The problem is going to come from Hamas. We can't have a relationship and dialogue with the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and not do the same with Hamas.

*LB: That leads us to the tragedy of the interrupted negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians and the struggle for the recognition of the Palestine state, which Netanyahu opposes with all his might.* JS: The death of Bin Laden gave President Obama a break in his plunging popularity. Although he was aware that the break wouldn't last long, he considered it a good moment to get involved in the Middle East again. On May 19th he gave a very good speech evaluating, in the new context, events in the Arab world, which was generally very well received. He committed to giving them important financial aid and to accompanying them in this new adventure; he recognized mistakes made by, at times, putting security before the people's quest for freedom; a misconceived idea of security. Well received in general, but some sectors called him an "idealist". The problem with the speech was not the analysis of the Arab Spring but rather its treatment of the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. Many people –including myself—were hoping for more power and clarity. It seemed the perfect moment to do it. There was a better climate between the two sides, there had been a very long time without any incidents between Israel and Palestine, and a new political discourse had

been constructed in the neighboring countries from which terrorism, Al Qaeda and Iran were absent. As was Israel. In none of the demonstrations was a single Israeli flag seen and none of the proposals mentioned it. In that new context, some of us thought that, in spite of the uncertainties, that it was time to take a stand for a new future and give shape to it with a more ambitious proposal. I understand that this debate also went on within Washington, in the White House and the State Department. In the end, the mention was brief but clear: immediate resumption of negotiations, to define two states based on the 1967 borders. So, nothing revolutionary, although the president stressed and reiterated that the 1967 borders had to be the basis of the negotiation. The applause had barely died down in Washington when Bibi Netanyahu expressed his disagreement in an unpleasant way. No smile, not even a forced one, toward the young people in the region who were looking for democracy, and a firm *niet* to the 1967 borders.

LB: *Another slap in the face for Obama.* JS: Yes, it is difficult to understand why Israel gave this political slap to the president of the United States at that moment. I was in Washington at the time. I could talk to people on both sides. Sentiments ranged from surprise, anger and dismay. Only days later, on May 24th, Netanyahu was going to be in Washington. The new Republican head of Congress had invited him to address a joint session of congress. His success was assured. A recently elected congress would applaud him heartily even if –as someone said—he read from the D.C. phonebook. And it was true. He had formally friendly words for Obama, but a speech designed for the Congress: a mix of Israeli politician and Republican activist doing domestic politics. He took advantage of the occasion in the short term, but he created a breach in a sector of moderate public opinion. In a discussion we had at the Brookings Institution I remember one of the most respected collaborators of George Bush Senior commenting on his indignation at the Congress manipulating an international leader against the President of the United States, breaking an unwritten rule of institutional unity of foreign policy in such circumstances. We are still suffering the consequences of that disagreement. Once again, an opportunity was lost. I remember that some time ago a phrase coined by Abba Eban about the Palestinians was heard regularly: «They never miss an opportunity to miss an opportunity». I'm afraid the shoe's on the other foot now and the phrase should be applied to the other side. And they are guiltier of it, since they have more power. With those days in May and June wasted, the economy and political polarization in the United States absorbed so much energy that there was little left to focus again seriously on this grave problem.

LB: *Where do we find ourselves now?* JS: Backed by the new Egyptian leaders, the Palestinians have made some progress in an internal reconciliation, although not much. But having grown tired of the failures to comply, the Palestinian Authority proposed a United Nations resolution recognizing the Palestinian state. The United States will veto, as they have announced. It will be a train wreck that no one will come out of unharmed. Many hopes nurtured in this six-month period will be disappointed. A few days ago, walking in Washington, one of the more respected people in the world of American foreign policy and security told me: «Face the facts, we know the terms of a fair peace and we insist that they negotiate it between themselves. They won't get there. They aren't equal parts. In order to compensate the imbalance, the United States or the Quartet [the United Nations, the United States, the European Union and Russia] must participate in the negotiation. Every time I hear that they should negotiate it amongst themselves, I know there is one side that doesn't want to do that. We have squandered too much political capital.»

LB: *And what happens after the train wreck?* JS: The question is who will lead that new situation. Not to mention the consequences it could have for Obama. All his speeches addressed to the Arab and Muslim world will be cancelled out by the facts. They will have been useless.

LB: *After the neocons we have the Tea Party, which is even further from the old Republican generation that favored realpolitik in foreign relations, such as Bush Senior, James Baker, Ben Scowcroft, Henry Kissinger and many others.* JS: Those people are something else, very stubborn and different, and with a lot of congressional power. They have a vision of the world and they want to apply it, without any concessions, as was seen in the negotiation and voting on raising the debt ceiling in the United States.

LB: *In the end they aren't very different from those who want the Greek rescue to go through Parliament or who demand a referendum.* JS: In Spain, in our world, all this is a manifestation of a lack of confidence in politics. In the United States it is a lack of confidence directly in the federal state in favor of the smallest state possible. They have, and want to have, the right to own and carry arms, they want law and order, but they don't want healthcare for everyone: whoever wants healthcare should pay for it. He who works should get paid, and he who doesn't have a job should get his act together. Why should I pay for somebody who doesn't work? Taken to the extreme, it could be the position of the True Finns, but they are better and more moderate than the Tea Party. They still believe in the state, they believe that their country should have Social Security... what they don't want is to pay for someone from another country. In any case, they

are ideologically very powerful, very simple, and they are all in the Congress, they aren't a fringe group. We are still in a situation so fluid that seen through a wide-angle lens one can just make out the beginnings of a new era. We don't yet know where we are headed. But in times of uncertainty we must remember, as Albert Einstein said, that in order to pose new questions, open ourselves up to different possibilities or try to solve the old problems from new angles, imagination is more important than knowledge.

**Javier Solana** is currently the Distinguished Senior Fellow of the Brookings Institution (Washington DC), President of the Centre for Global Economy and Geopolitics of ESADE (Barcelona -Madrid), Honorary President of the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (Geneva), President of the Executive Committee of the Global Health Institute of Barcelona, member of the board of the International Crisis Group, the European Council on Foreign Relations and Human Rights Watch, and visiting professor at the London School of Economics, where he was awarded a Honorary Doctor-ate in December 2010.

**Lluis Bassets** is a senior editor at El País, in charge of the op-ed pages. He's been the paper's senior correspondent at Paris and Brussels, and headed the Barcelona edition. He's the author of "La oca del señor Bush" and has a daily blog "Del alfiler al elefante".

Original title: *Primaveras, terremotos y crisis*

© 2011, Javier Solana y Lluís Bassets © 2011 Random House  
Mondadori, S.A. Travessera de Gràcia, 47-49. 08021 Barcelona ©  
2011, Mara Faye Lethem, por la traducción

Cover design: Marta Borrell / Random House Mondadori Cover photo: ©  
2011, AFP

ISBN: 978-84-9992-160-0

Digital composition: [Barcelona edicions digitals.](#)

[www.megustaleer.com](#)