

Presentation by

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At the

THE STATE AND NEW SECURITY CHALLENGES

First International Symposium,

Hertie School of Governance,

April 22-23, 2004

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Introduction

I personally am not attracted by the idea of labelling states as post-modern (by the way, we used to think Canada was post-modern) or modern, or “Kantian” or “Hobbesian”, or whatever. For me the best that can be said of labels is that they sell books, not an insignificant matter, but not necessarily enlightening.

Like Minister Schilly, I think, I believe that the nation state will remain the central organizing principle of international life, especially as regards terrorism, and that the state’s most basic role will remain the protection of its citizens. Governments are unlikely to cede this responsibility because in most places, at least, electorates hold their own elected officials accountable.

When SARS happened last year at this time in Toronto, for example, Canadians turned to their own governments, not to the WHO. That would be the case in spades if there was a terrorist attack on Ottawa, for example.

While states almost certainly will have to cope with terrorist attacks, for most states this will not be an existential challenge, as war between states could well be. The challenge will be, rather, to protect the citizenry, not the state.

In fact, the security of people, human security, will likely assume progressively greater importance in an age of globalisation and of media-generated awareness. The United States will not for these reasons alone be able to adopt the 1920 British tactics in Iraq.

With respect to combating terrorists, we will likely see greater global subsidiarity, with some things being done nationally, for example, enhancing and reorganizing intelligence assets. Other things will be done bilaterally or regionally, for example

tracking coastal shipping. And still others will be done globally, for example, “wholesale” counterterrorism action.

While the U.N. has become an easy target, in fact the U.N. General Assembly has passed a dozen counter-terrorism treaties, for example on aircraft- hijacking and explosives-marking, and the Security Council has established prohibitions against cooperation with terrorists and an oversight committee to monitor behaviour.

These treaties are progressively absorbed into domestic law and norms are thereby established. Short fuse matters obviously require direct action and purpose-built arrangements need already to be in place. Long fuse issues, e.g., capacity building for Caribbean coast guards, will likely best be organized by the U.N. and/or development banks, in cooperation with more capable countries.

Much longer term issues, such as the UNDP’s efforts to enhance governance in the poorer countries will obviously take even more time. Poverty is probably not a root cause of terrorism but failing states, in our view, do provide conditions in which terrorists can operate, e.g., Afghanistan and Kenya.

Well-governed states, even relatively poor ones rarely generate refugee flows, disease, organized crime and terrorists. Here there is plenty of room for individual and collective state action.

One of the institutes for whom I now work, CIGI, is cooperating with the World Economic Forum and others in providing report cards on the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals. The efforts of international organizations, governments, business and civil society have been given a failing grade on all seven goals.

I will not attempt to discuss in any detail what Dr. Daalder has called “the Bush foreign policy revolution”, except to establish some necessary context.

The Context Is Profoundly Difficult

It is certainly an understatement to say that the context for multilateral cooperation has rarely been as unfavourable as it has been in the past year. I doubt that there is more than a minimal common understanding of an international threat and I am sure there is no consensus on how to respond.

The Transatlantic drift has become the Transatlantic rift as the gulf between the Americans and almost everyone else, the product of diverging values and an “exceptionalist” world-view in Washington, widens.

In declaring war on terrorism, that is, on a tactic, rather than on, for example, al Qaeda and related or discrete fundamentalist terrorist groups and networks, the U.S. has put itself in a no-win position.

In attacking Iraq and conflating all of the Middle East issues under one heading, terrorism, the United States has, as one Arab observer put it, swallowed a razor blade. Nothing it can do to remove the blade will be painless or cost-free. What is not yet clear is whether the emerging conflict between the propagation of American principles and the revival of Islamic fundamentalism is morphing into a new security paradigm, the West against Islam.

As a minimum, Iraq has catastrophically undermined American credibility not only in, but especially in the Moslem/Arab world and made cooperation with the United states more difficult.

The Djerejian report said that the bottom has indeed fallen out of support for the United States and Pew Research Centre polling indicates that a year after the war international discontent with the United States and its foreign policy has intensified rather than diminished. In some Moslem countries, support for the U.S. has fallen to single digits.

Whatever its motivation, some welcome self-correction appears to be underway in Washington insofar as Iraq is concerned, (but not, however, vis-à-vis the rest of the Middle East), a belated recognition that even U.S. power does not create its own reality and that even the revolution in military affairs is not an adequate response to asymmetric action.

Summary and Conclusion

Here are eight suggestions for what nation states should do.

First, we absolutely must insist on much greater clarity on what the terrorist security challenge actually is. It is radical, fundamentalist Islamic terrorists. So long as Washington portrays the threat in sweeping, monolithic terms, (a terrorist is a terrorist, never mind the circumstances).

Second, we have to use not just hard power or soft power but smart power. The response to terrorism cannot be primarily a matter of unilateral application of military force rather than of international law or cooperation.

Third, we need to address U.S. insecurities, as Kofi Annan has urged and as the Security Council under U.S. leadership is doing. The U.S. does have a point on the nexus of WMD and terrorists. But that, also, means much more thorough and urgent efforts to clean up Soviet era stockpiles and wastes.

Fourth, the US's friends, allies and neighbours will have to perform a difficult balancing act.

We will need to cooperate fully with the US and with each other to prevent terrorist actions and to defeat terrorist organizations in order to ensure each other's security. At the same time, we will need to maintain independent decision-making and take care not, ourselves, to feed the growing impression of a nascent West-versus-Islam paradigm. One thing, for example, that European governments could do is to admit a Moslem democracy B Turkey B into the Union. To do otherwise while admitting Eastern European countries that are Christian but less attached to democracy will be seen for what it is.

Fifth, we need to be much more aggressive in engaging the Third World and assisting them with their security.

Sixth, we need not to give up on the U.N.; it is indispensable, its well documented problems notwithstanding. The UN Charter was written in another age, for another age. A contradiction has grown up between the most basic aim of the Charter, “to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, and its most sacred principle”,...Non-intervention in the internal affairs of member states. But, in the 21st Century, what happens inside states is at least as important as what happens between states.

We must get behind Kofi’s Blue Ribbon panel and revisit the prohibitions against intervention in the internal affairs of states and decide when, and how to intervene. E.g.,

- for humanitarian purposes
- For WMD/terrorism purposes
- For governance purposes

Seventh, we can promote the International Criminal Court. The Court is targeted not at U.S. G.I.’s but at the world’s monsters. Making it work will end impunity for the worst crimes and will be stabilizing.

Eighth, we can transform the G-8 summit into a much more representative group, perhaps a G-20 at leader’s level. It could bring leaders together to resolve major issues of broad concern, e.g., agricultural trade, or HIV-AIDS, or terrorism/WMD, or climate change, or even U.N. reform. By including major southern countries, a leaders’ G-20 would diminish the legitimacy and effectiveness deficits of the current G-8. It would, also, make the UNSC work better, including on security issues.