

Notes for a Presentation

by Paul Heinbecker*

New Dangers, New Vulnerabilities

NATO Conference ,

Norfolk, Virginia,

April 20, 2004

Check Against Delivery

* Paul Heinbecker is Distinguished Fellow, International Relations, at the Centre for International Governance Innovation, Waterloo, and Director of the Centre for Global Relations, Governance and Policy at Wilfrid Laurier University. He served as Canada's Ambassador to the United Nations (2000-2003) and Germany (1992-1996). This paper does not necessarily reflect the views of the institutions above.

I) Introduction

Where you stand famously depends on where you sit.

Or, in the case of “new dangers and new vulnerabilities”, the subject of today’s deliberations,

What you fear depends on who you are.

Your sense of danger and vulnerability is very different if you live in Kandahar or Copenhagen, or Nairobi or Nablus -- or, where I lived on 9/11, New York,

Or Norfolk, where the world must loom particularly ominously for many people.

Security needs vary from place to place, as do priorities.

There are common threads that run through everyone’s experience but the differences are enormous and there is little sense of shared fate and less consensus on what constitutes danger.

This is a gloomy but realistic starting point for setting the stage for the panel discussions to come.

I will discuss the new dangers and vulnerabilities—according to the Oxford dictionary at least, they are close to synonymous—

And I will suggest some responses that I think or, at least, hope hold the prospect of agreement on the way forward.

It will not surprise you, given my nationality and my professional background, if I argue that cooperation is going to be more availing than confrontation

and that multilateral cooperation, including the United Nations and the international treaty-based system of international law and norms, adapted to the 21st century, will be indispensable whatever your fears.

New Dangers and New Vulnerabilities

About 18 months ago, the High Level panel appointed by Secretary General Kofi Annan to advise the UN membership on Threats,

Challenges and Change tabled its list of threats to international security.

And its suggested responses.

The panel was comprised of elder statesmen from most of the existing and emerging major military powers.

The US member was former National Security Advisor to President George H. W. Bush, General Brent Scowcroft.

The report was remarkable for the consensus it was able to achieve—all endorsed the outcome – and significant for its comprehensiveness.

It saw six clusters of threats with which the world has to be concerned, now and in the decades ahead.

- **Economic and social threats including poverty, infectious disease and environmental degradation**
- **Interstate conflict**
- **Internal conflict, including civil war, genocide and other large scale atrocities**
- **Nuclear, radiological, chemical and biological weapons**
- **Terrorism**
- **And transnational organized crime.**

Not surprisingly, given the quality of its authors, that remains a pretty good list.

The issues on today's agenda are all in there somewhere, although today's list is more specifically tailored to a military audience or, at least, to a militarily savvy audience, Wehrkunde to use the apt German term.

What is significant is that the High Level panel stressed prevention, not in the sense that it is sometimes used to justify military action against a prospective danger,

But in the sense of statesmanship, of the world's leaders coming together to act early, decisively and collectively against all of these threats.

It is conflict-prevention-oriented not conflict –generation oriented.

The panel headed its list with economic threats because they saw economic development as the indispensable foundation of a collective security system that takes prevention seriously.

And because they saw economic development as a complementary security strategy to enhanced military capacity.

Whether you agree with that perspective or not, and I do agree with it, it has the virtue of aligning the interests of rich and poor alike.

Development saves lives in the poorer countries as it lowers infant mortality rates, increases education levels, raises employment levels, reduces the significance of small arms and diminishes intrastate conflict.

It, also, increases stability and diminishes the lawless havens in which international terrorism is incubated.

And improves the inadequate public administrations that strain to cope with modern challenges, such as preventing the incubation of diseases, such as SARS and the next mutant bird flu.

And yet there are very few western countries in which the balance of the overseas aid and the military budgets recognizes these compatible strategic interests.

Instead, they are often seen as scarcely related policy fields, one for doing nice things and the other for doing necessary ones, not as the complementary policy instruments they actually are.

I am emphatically not making a pacifist argument.

The militarization etc

Just flying into Norfolk is enough for anyone to see that military capacity costs a lot of money.

But it is as if police budgets got the lion's share of domestic budgets, and health and education were just nice-to-do's.

Such foreign policy stove piping and imbalances strike me as unwise, expensive and, ultimately, dangerous.

In any event, a lot more people die every year from poverty and disease than from terrorism or inter-state wars.

More ought to be done about that even if there were no strategic case for doing so—but the strategic case is compelling and comparatively cost-effective at the margin.

Consider the turnaround in Indonesian attitudes towards the US that American Tsunami relief achieved.

WMD proliferation is featured at this conference, rightly, although it is not really a new issue in and of itself.

Fear of its potential nexus with terrorism is new

And is what is causing a lot of people to risk jettisoning the law and treaty regimes we had developed over generations to cope with proliferation.

The 2005 World Summit, held in New York last September, achieved very few worthwhile outcomes

(one notable exception being agreement on the Responsibility to Protect doctrine).

But, in Secretary General Annan's memorable words, the most disgraceful of the Summit's failings was its inability to agree on any language at all on non-proliferation and disarmament.

Why did member States not live up to the world's expectations at a time when the fear of terrorists acquiring WMD seemed so urgent?

Principally, it was because member States simply did not have the political will to make the compromises necessary to achieve progress.

At the UN summit negotiations in the fall, too many delegations had brought too much ideology with them.

There were wide doctrinal disagreements between the nuclear weapons states, principally but not exclusively the United States, on the one hand and much of the rest of the NPT membership, that is to say, most of the rest of the world on the other.

These disagreements continue, and go to the heart of the NPT bargains, primordially that of disarmament.

Some believe that disarmament has always been little more than a delusion on the part of the NNWS, a necessary pretext that there would one day be a quid for the quo they were giving in renouncing their own nuclear weapons aspirations,

a quid on which the NWS never really intended to make good.

In this light, everyone would be better off just to drop the pretence.

Moreover, the NPT's non-proliferation undertakings were in any case not just a bargain between the NWS and the NNWS, but also a binding commitment among the NNWS themselves.

They had, undertaken to each other as well as to the NWS not to acquire nuclear weapons.

Further, arms control agreements had been ineffectual with respect to India, Pakistan, Israel, North Korea and, prospectively, Iran.

They, also neither deterred nor much delayed A.Q. Khan in his activities.

Counting on their effectiveness was equally delusional and downright dangerous.

The counter arguments derive from the famous observation by President Kennedy, the only President to face a full fledged nuclear crisis,

that "We must abolish the weapons of war before they abolish us."

Those arguments hold that ridding the world of nuclear weapons will necessarily be a goal for the very long term but that it ought never be abandoned,

against the possible day that political attitudes and security perceptions with respect to nuclear weapons might change,

The existence of a longer term goal frames near term decisions in such a way as not to preclude ultimately reaching the goal.

Further, non-proliferation can only be achieved cooperatively

Treating the NNWS as inherently and eternally inferior entities, therefore, is unlikely to serve the near term goals of compliance and enforcement.

Times are changing but the Iraq experience suggests that it is very unlikely that the world can be run by coercion.

As for the effectiveness of the ACD regime, particularly the NPT, there are fewer than half as many governments in 2005 with nuclear weapons programs as there had been in the Sixties and more countries have given up nuclear weapons than had illicitly acquired them.

Not insignificantly, each arms control agreement codifies an additional global norm and provides the international legal framework that underpins behaviour.

Sam Nunn etc

Terrorism as a tactic

Conflation