

Notes for a Presentation

by Paul Heinbecker

on Foreign Policy and National Security

for an International Workshop on Hazard

Mitigation and Disaster Management

University of Ottawa

June 22, 2006

Check Against Delivery

**Dr. Patry
Dr Shibayama
Murat Saatcioglu**

Introduction

PH asked to set an international context

**Most of the papers today will, not surprisingly,
focus on Mitigation and Relief**

**My own remarks will focus on prevention of man-
made catastrophes, specifically terrorism,**

and other preventable disasters.

Three points:

- 1. There is precious little consensus in the world
on security or what security priorities are or
should be**
- 2. Foreign policy, has both a preventive and, in
its broadest dimension, a mitigative role to
play**

3. Very few countries have the proportions between military spending and foreign aid right

For reasons of time, my presentation is going to have to be more assertive than argued, and more impressionistic than detailed, or comprehensive.

What I will try to do is look broadly at the world and confine myself to a few comments that I hope will be pertinent to your deliberations.

The Absence of Consensus

You are meeting in a troubled time, much more troubled than most people imagined when the Cold War ended.

For some, especially for Americans, the War on Terror is a real war.

For others, it's a metaphor, or even just a tactic, albeit a heinous tactic.

Where you stand famously depends on where you sit.

Danger and vulnerability look different if you live in Kandahar or Copenhagen, or Nyala, Najaf or Nablus -- or New York or New Orleans.

There are common fears that run through everyone's experience, of course, but the differences are enormous

and there is little international consensus on what constitutes the priority danger and less sense of shared fate.

Small arms and light weapons killed at least 300,000 people in 2004, predominantly in the poorer countries. (source, Keith Krause, director of the Geneva-based small arms survey project).

Pregnancy-related causes killed more than 500,000 women die of each year, 99% of them in the Third World. (source, the WHO),

HIV-AIDS killed more than three million people last year, again overwhelmingly in the Third World, (source, UNAIDS),

natural disasters killed 244,500 people last year, the vast majority in poorer countries.

The potential exists for truly major catastrophes to happen. There are about a dozen cities worldwide with populations greater than 8 million situated along major

earthquake belts or tropical cyclone tracks, mostly in the Third World. (source, the ProVention consortium).

It is not surprising, therefore, in these circumstances that people in the poorer countries regard terrorism,

especially terrorism directed at rich countries,

as a secondary priority to them, at best.

The presumption, therefore, that there is any international consensus on a hierarchy of threat and especially that what threatens “us”, the West, merits priority treatment, is a delusion.

As has been very evident in recent efforts to reform the UN, there is no agreement on a hierarchy of threats

and, worse, the countries of “North” and ”South” have been virtually indifferent to each other’s insecurities.

It is worth recalling, in this light, the report of the High Level panel appointed by Secretary General Kofi Annan to advise the UN membership on Threats, Challenges and Change.

The elder statesmen who wrote the report came from most of the existing and emerging major military powers from around the world,

including all five permanent members of the UN Security Council.

The report was remarkable for the consensus it was able to achieve

– all its members endorsed the outcome –

and significant for its comprehensiveness and its insights.

The panel saw six clusters of threats with which it said the world had to be concerned, now and in the decades ahead.

They were, in order,

- **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 vast and varied experience of its authors, that list is standing up well.

Many of the issues on today's conference agenda are on that list somewhere,

What is significant is that the High Level panel stressed prevention,

not in the military sense of action against a presumed emerging danger,

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

To prevent conflict, not to trigger conflict.

The panel headed its list with economic threats because its members 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 does have the virtue of aligning the interests of rich and poor.

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

Third World development increases security for the West by diminishing the number of lawless havens in which international terrorism can be and sometimes is incubated.

It, also, strengthens Third World public administrations that otherwise strain to cope with modern challenges of interest to us as well as them, such as preventing the incubation of pandemics, for example, Ebola, SARS and the next mutant bird flu,

any one of which is potentially not much more than one airline flight away for many of us,

as the people of Toronto found out the hard way a couple of years ago.

Yet there are very few western countries in which the balance between overseas aid and military budgets recognizes the reciprocal character of these strategic policy instruments.

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

It is as if domestically in our countries, police budgets got the lion's share of the available money, and health and education were just nice-to-do's.

To paraphrase Andrew Bacevich of Boston University, a Vietnam veteran and the author of "The Militarization of America", when it comes to funding diplomacy and foreign aid, parsimony reigns.

He was talking about the US government but his remarks apply in practice if not in scale to most western governments, (mine included).

(In Canada's case, by the way, I have been advocating more military spending and more foreign

aid spending, both, as well as a better balance between them.

And it looks like our new government is cognizant of the need for all three.)

In any case, foreign policy stove-piping and imbalances strike me as unwise, expensive and, ultimately, dangerous.

More ought to be done about Third World poverty, disease and internal conflict 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 United States that American Tsunami relief achieved.

The point is that in thinking about transformation, military spending needs to be re-considered in terms of both marginal bang-for-the-security-buck and opportunity costs

