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The NATO Club and Afghanistan: Northern, Rich, and White Nations Defend the Imperial Palace

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War, Human Dignity and Nation Building: Theological Perspectives on Canada's Role in Afghanistan

Edited by

Gary D. Badcock and Darren C. Marks

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In fact, what is proposed here is that any UNAMA II mandate would be complementary to ISAF, for though the two could never be identical, as counterinsurgency and peacekeeping employ different strategies, the two are inherently related. Counterinsurgency has the principal goal of defeating an insurgency, and uses the building up of effective government as a means to that end. In peace operations, by contrast, both objectives exist but the order of priorities is reversed. The purpose is to build a representative government that serves the population through an inclusive peace process. One of the means to this end (and one of its consequences also) is to end the insurgency. In peacekeeping, in short, the strategy is less offensive, the method is less aggressive, and the approach is more inclusive.

Most civil wars of the past century have ended in some form of negotiated settlement. The United Nations has gained tremendous experience helping settle internal conflicts through negotiation and peacekeeping. Its track record after the end of the Cold War of successful missions to help end civil wars is impressive, including as it does conflicts in El Salvador, Nicaragua, Guatemala, Namibia, Mozambique, Angola, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Cote D'Ivoire, D.R. Congo, Nepal, and East Timor. It does have some blemished and even clearly failed missions on its record (notably Somalia and Rwanda), but the United Nations has learned from these difficult experiences. The United Nations has greatly increased its capacity in the twenty-first century. This is one more reason to give the United Nations and peace a chance in Afghanistan.

THE NATO CLUB AND AFGHANISTAN: NORTHERN, RICH, AND WHITE NATIONS DEFEND THE IMPERIAL PALACE[1]

ERIKA SIMPSON

NATO and the Imperial Palace

Since its inception in 1949, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) has grown from an American-led alliance of twelve countries, to sixteen, to nineteen allies, and most recently to twenty-eight Western and formerly Eastern European states. The entire process of NATO expansion can be likened to enlarging a club to take in more and more purportedly liberal-democratic nations that see themselves as allied with the club's leader. While the NATO club ostensibly operates according to consensus decision-making, in practice important decisions are always made by the alliance leader, in a way which has more in common with autocracy than democracy. For instance, during the first round of expansion after the end of the Cold War, the United States unilaterally decided to expand the alliance from sixteen to nineteen nations, including within it the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland. Then the U.S. delineated the territorial guidelines of the second round of expansion that accepted Baltic nations of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, along with Slovenia, Slovakia, Bulgaria and Romania, but not Albania, Ukraine or Belarus. Albania joined as late as 2009, along with Croatia. While members of the expanding NATO alliance tend to view the NATO club benignly, in Russia, every political leader and political party has consistently opposed NATO expansion as a threat to peace.[2] Yet, despite Russian objections, NATO and its near allies see it functioning as a kind of peacekeeping alliance.

[1] The author would like to thank Dr. Darren Marks and Dr. Walter Dorn for their commentary.

[2] Erika Simpson, "New Threats to the Alliance's Security and Strategies to Reform NATO," *The Transatlantic Quarterly* (Winter/Spring 2005): 47-51.

In many parts of the world such as Afghanistan, Iraq, Kosovo, North Korea, and Serbia, however, American forces in particular are seen as foreign invaders, and NATO forces are not readily distinguished from American forces. For defenders of NATO's wars in Kosovo and Afghanistan, furthermore, there seems to have been a tendency to dismiss reports of "collateral damage" in these conflicts as inconsequential, even though it includes the aerial bombing of villagers, the slaughter of uneducated peasant farmers, the house-to-house brutalization of women, and even the illegal imprisonment and torture of combatants, including in some cases child soldiers. But while those inside the NATO fold may regard such excesses as the norm, outside the fold, NATO actions have proven to be highly objectionable. Undeniably, the human tendency is to find our own reasons for undertaking war and to interpret such war as "just" in those terms, seeing our own cause as rightful. The American satirist Mark Twain wrote of this tendency in the "The War Prayer" over a century ago:

> O Lord our Father, our young patriots, idols of our hearts, go forth to battle—be Thou near them! With them—in spirit—we also go forth from the sweet peace of our beloved firesides to smite the foe. O Lord our God, help us to tear their soldiers to bloody shreds with our shells; help us to cover their smiling fields with the pale forms of their patriot dead; help us to drown the thunder of the guns with the shrieks of their wounded, writhing in pain; help us to lay waste their humble homes with a hurricane of fire; help us to wring the hearts of their unoffending widows with unavailing grief; help us to turn them out roofless with little children to wander unfriended the wastes of their desolated land in rags and hunger and thirst....[3]

In a similar attempt to frame offensive actions in our own time as justified in the sight of the Almighty, former U.S. Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld is said to have regularly illustrated his top-secret intelligence briefings for President George W. Bush with prayers from the Bible. For example, a picture of a F-18 fighter jet taking off from an aircraft carrier was accompanied by a prayer, "If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast, O LORD—Psalm 139:9-10."[4]

[3] "The War Prayer" is available online at http://www.midwinter.com/lurk/making/warprayer.html and was found after Twain's death among his papers. It was first published in Albert Bigelow Paine's anthology, Mark Twain, *Europe and Elsewhere* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1923).

[4] "Donald Rumsfeld's holy war: How President Bush's Iraq briefings came with quotes from the Bible," *Daily Mail*, 20 May, 2009, http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/worldnews/article-1184546.

Yet, as the satirist Twain saw, it is surely necessary to ask whether our time-bound and culturally-specific conceptions of justice and of the rightness of our cause (including those so confidently expressed in our prayers to God) can prevent us from seeing things more deeply and honestly. Postmodernism, for instance, might teach us that there are no universal truths or Platonic Ideals; our understanding is, rather, constructed, relative, and contextual—which means that perhaps we ought not to claim too much for the justice of what we may at times say and do. Even in classical sapiential thought, there have been legions of great thinkers over the centuries who have realized that "truth...is stronger than all things."[5] St. Thomas Aquinas' monumental treatise, *Summa Theologiae*, was composed over the years 1267-73 and still helps to form the bedrock of the Just War tradition. Yet as Sophy Burnham points out in *The Ecstatic Journey*, near the end of his life, Thomas experienced a moment of "infused contemplation," after which he said that everything he had written, thought, argued, and defined during his brilliant theological life "was no better than straw or chaff."[6] In keeping with such claims, if we approach with due scepticism all the rhetoric about NATO needing to be in Afghanistan as part of "the war on terrorism," and as part of a "just war" to defend Afghan civilians, or even as part of a justifiable strategy to root out al-Qaeda in Wajikistan, Afghanistan, and Pakistan, then we need to ask why there are over a hundred thousand U.S.-led NATO forces in Afghanistan. Could it be that there is some sense in which NATO is merely part of the structure of a kind of Imperial Palace in which the privileged reside, and thus that it is bent on protecting the existing privileges of those people—northern, rich, and predominantly white people? If that were indeed the case, then responsible NATO members would need to inquire more closely as to who the "enemy" is, exactly, and precisely why the conflict has occurred.

In the present re-examination of our *Weltanschauung*, the "Imperial Palace," as I have called it, is not of course a building, nor is it only or altogether a geo-political territory, as might be expected from the reference made hitherto to NATO, but it is also a state of mind and condition of life. The Imperial Palace can perhaps be best understood as that privileged condition that is desired by those who live in the rest of the world, or the "Global Village," as I shall call it. The Imperial Palace, as such, houses about one-third of the world's population, which lives on what is, by global standards, an extraordinarily rich income. Conversely, the Global

[5] 1 Esdras 4:38, NRSV. In a similar vein, Joseph Campbell often quoted the Vedas, "Truth is one, the sages speak of it by many names," cited in Phil Cousineau, ed., *The Hero's Journey* (San Francisco: Harper, 1990), xi.

[6] Sophy Burnham, *The Ecstatic Journey* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1997), 4.

Village, which lives outside the Palace wall, contains two-thirds of the world's population, is often shockingly poor, without adequate education, and commonly suffers from ill health and violence. In the Global Village, in fact, most people suffer in some way from hunger and malnutrition, and over half live in squalid housing or are homeless. One principal reason for this is that the Imperial Palace garners over two-thirds of the world's entire income, while the rest subsists on the other one-third. While many citizens of the Imperial Palace implicitly recognize that such injustice cannot go on forever, they are at the same time driven by fear to arm themselves, in part against the Global Village, and to spend more and more money on military defence because they cannot fathom how to live in peace with their neighbours. The leader of the Imperial Palace, unsurprisingly, is far and away the global leader in military spending: the United States of America. U.S. military spending accounted for an astonishing 41.5% of the world total in 2008, followed by China with 5.8%, and the NATO allies, France and the United Kingdom with 4.5% each.[7]

In addition to addressing some of the huge inequalities, the gaps in living standards, and the terrible injustices of the world that can lead people to become terrorists, those living in the Imperial Palace need to redefine their security at the individual, state and systemic levels. The word "security" itself is often taken to imply an absolute condition: something is either secure or insecure. But real security, this paper assumes, symbolizes something deeper which remains indefinable, and yet that is attainable at far lower levels of military spending and defence preparation. By questioning our traditional assumptions about how to achieve security from many different levels of analysis, in short, we can develop more creative strategies which actually enhance security.[8] This essay takes a systemic level approach and suggests that NATO cannot defend the Imperial Palace in its present campaign in Afghanistan, that the Alliance should instead withdraw, and that other forms of engagement are needed.

The Emperor Has No Clothes

It is a cliché (and yet a true one) to point out that old ideas about defending the Imperial Palace no longer apply. As Robert Kaplan has put it, employing the metaphor of "a stretch limousine in the potholed streets of New York City," the old ways of thinking about security no longer seem

[7] Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, "Recent Trends in Military Expenditure," http://www.sipri.org/research/armaments/milex/resultoutput/trends.
[8] Erika Simpson, 'Redefining Security,' in Alex Morrison, ed., *The McNaughton Papers* vol. 1 (Toronto: Canadian Institute for Strategic Studies, 1991), 57-75.

convincing: "Inside the limo are the air-conditioned post-industrial regions of North America, Europe, the emerging Pacific Rim, and a few other isolated places, with their trade summitry and computer-information highways. Outside is the rest of mankind, going in a completely different direction."[9] So for instance, traditional concepts about how to defend NATO's geographical territory by means of the nuclear deterrent have been made redundant by the massive geo-political changes of recent years. In a world of sub-state terrorists, in short, relying entirely on classical geo-spatial concepts such as "counter-strikes" and "pre-emptive doctrine" does not work because these concepts no longer have credibility. There have long been debates associated with the applicability of deterrence doctrine but even long-time defenders of traditional realist concepts must doubt the possibility of pre-empting terrorist attacks using weapons of mass destruction.[10]

During the Cold War, it is true, strategists assumed that by threatening massive retaliation, nuclear weapons could credibly prevent an enemy from attacking. Then the attacks of 11 September, 2001 demonstrated that the "guarantees" provided by the threats of pre-emption or retaliation cannot in fact any longer succeed in preventing attack—it being impossible to retaliate against sub-state opponents like suicide bombers. At the same time, and adding to the problem of signalling credible deterrence in this new situation, all the traditional arguments against classical deterrence still hold true. There are many ways in which deterrence and/or pre-emption could fail, including misunderstanding, miscalculation, poor communication, irrational leadership, and accident. These types of problems are only exacerbated in a multi-polar, rather than a bi-polar world.[11]

Further questions abound about how to defend the Imperial Palace in our changed situation, because the former paradigmatic differences among realists and liberals, hawks and doves, and neo-realists and liberal institutionalists no longer hold true. During the Cold War, the belief systems of both defenders and critics of the deterrence strategy were fairly stable and

[9] Robert Kaplan, *The Coming Anarchy* (New York: Vintage Books, 2000), 24.
[10] Erika Simpson, "New Opportunities to Question US Reliance Upon Nuclear Weapons," *INESAP Information Bulletin*, 28 (April, 2008): 14-19, http://www.inesap.org/node/72.
[11] Erika Simpson, "The new U.S. doctrine of pre-emptive warfare and its implications for nuclear deterrence and disarmament," in David Krieger, ed., *The Challenge of Abolishing Nuclear Weapons* (Piscataway, NJ.: Transaction Publishers, 2009), 141-154.

coherent, even if they were opposed to each other.[12] But now they are undergoing such rapid revision and change that it has become difficult to know whom to label as a hawk or dove. When classical realists such as Zbigniew Brezinski argue for intervention in Kosovo on humanitarian grounds, and when hawks like Henry Kissinger sign op-eds in favour of nuclear abolition, or when doves like former Canadian Foreign Minister Lloyd Axworthy favour NATO's bombing of Serbia, traditional belief systems have clearly been undermined. Adding to the perplexity are the contrasting arguments of "liberal-internationalists" like President Obama, who long seemed undecided about whether greater or lesser troop contributions are needed for fighting the war in Afghanistan.[13] In short, in the new world in which we live, many of our inherited, and most basic assumptions about how to defend the Imperial Palace no longer work.

The only adages that may still hold true for realists and idealists everywhere are "the security dilemma" and "common security." The first English School concept dictates that whatever offensive measures one side takes to increase its security necessarily decreases its would-be opponent's security, resulting in endless arms races and more "(in)security dilemmas" on all sides.[14] Accordingly, one way to emerge out of the security dilemma or structural "prisoner's dilemma" unscathed is to undertake only defensive measures, which are difficult to execute because the enemy tends to perceive defensive measures as offensive due to miscommunication and

[12] Erika Simpson, *NATO and the Bomb* (Kingston & Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001).

[13] It is difficult to define liberal-internationalist principles as they are nowhere written down but for some analysis of the basic precepts, see Erika Simpson, "The Principles of Liberal Internationalism according to Lester Pearson," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 34, no. 1 (Spring 1999): 64-77. Primary evidence of President Obama's liberal-internationalist beliefs can be found in many of his foreign policy speeches and election speeches but perhaps the most iconic and telling was his speech to the UN General Assembly, September 23, 2009, http://www.reuters.com/article/topNews/idUSTRE58M3MV20090923. On President Obama's indecision, see for example, "Obama Rules Out Large Reduction in Afghan Force," *New York Times*, 7 October, 2009.

[14] The concepts of the security dilemma and of common security have deep intellectual roots. See, for example, Ken Booth on the non-traditional agenda of security in Booth, *Theory of World Security* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007) and Peter Stirk on Herz's concept of the security dilemma in Stirk, "John H. Herz: realism and the fragility of the international order', *Review of International Studies* 31 (2005): 285–306. Notably Secretary of State Hilary Clinton recently reviewed deliberative efforts by the Obama administration to enhance our "common security" in her remarks at the CTBT Article XIV Conference in New York, September 24, 2009, http://www.armscontrol.org/ClintonCTBTStatement.

misunderstanding.[15] More tantalizingly, another effective way to change outcomes that has been historically-proven, though perhaps not as yet really understood within the Imperial Palace, is to change perceptions so that they more adequately reflect the underlying need for "common security." Arguably Mikhail Gorbachev understood the need for common security thinking, initiating changes which led to nothing less than the end of the Cold War. Were we sufficiently attentive to this precedent in the present situation, it might suggest to us that the citizens of the Imperial Palace and of the Global Village could also change their thinking and band together for the sake of the common security of all on planet earth.

Is this merely idealistic? Is yet another cliché in view? Or does perhaps a deeper truth beckon?

(In)Security Dilemmas and Imperial Overstretch

One of the major problems faced today is that the (in)security dilemmas experienced by the citizens of the Imperial Palace and the Global Village have been exacerbated by an imperial overstretch. Afghanistan is actually called "out-of-area" by NATO, since the allies committed six decades ago to defend each other's physical territory. What was never agreed is that they should defend countries outside of NATO's area. Indeed, not only Afghanistan, but also Bosnia and Kosovo, have all been "out-of-area" wars in which NATO was not formally obliged under Article V of its 1949 Charter to intervene. Article V declares in Three Musketeers fashion that "an attack against one of us is an attack against us all." But in fact, Article V has only been invoked once, in the wake of 11 September, 2001 when NATO allies pledged to come to the defence of the United States after the World Trade Center and Pentagon bombings. Yet the war that it is currently fighting in Afghanistan can scarcely be seen any longer as a defence of the United States. The problem here, I wish to suggest, is one of imperial overstretch—and of an overstretch that began well before 9/11, as NATO had already overreached its territorial limits by attacking Serbian President Slobodan Milosovic over ethnic cleansing in Kosovo.[16] It was this policy that it has renewed once more by choosing to fight al-Qaeda and the Taliban in Afghanistan.

[15] For more analysis of such strategies, see Erika Simpson, "Games, Strategies, and Human Security," in M.V. Naidu, ed., *Perspectives on Human Security* (Brandon, Manitoba: Canadian Peace Research and Education Association, 2001), 139-49.

[16] For a critique of NATO's out-of-area war on Serbia, see Erika Simpson, "New Threats to the Alliance's Security and Strategies to Reform NATO."

Until recently, NATO defenders have argued that NATO cannot lose in Afghanistan, not merely because of the security needs of Afghanistan, but because losing in Afghanistan would inevitably undermine NATO's credibility. The assumption was that a loss in Afghanistan—avoidance of which has become one of NATO's chief priorities from an organizational and resource standpoint—would spell the end of NATO's credibility on the world stage as the true defender of international security. Thus the prospect of defeat must not be countenanced because it would effectively mean the end of NATO itself.[17] Only in the last two years have NATO leaders and military commanders publicly entertained the idea that a gradual pull-out from Afghanistan might be inevitable. While previously the notion of somehow forsaking Afghanistan induced warnings about whole-scale abandonment and fear of NATO's concomitant loss of credibility, steady rises in the casualty rate, slow progress in the war, and the Obama administration's changed stance in particular have fuelled more public hesitancy among elite decision-makers.[18]

Until the 2008 American election, most of the elite within the Imperial Palace accepted old-fashioned realist concepts such as balance of power politics, containment and deterrence. NATO was seen in this context as an instrument of collective defence, and its members were united to defend against a threat from outside the pact. In the case of Afghanistan, the threat came from without, and was such that "peace enforcement" (i.e., warfighting) seemed to make sense. The option of first- and second-generation peacekeeping and peacemaking encountered internal resistance within the Alliance, the idea that "preparing for peace can prevent war" being comprehensively trumped by the idea that "preparing for war can ensure peace." It mattered neither that Afghanistan was not part of NATO's *Partnership for Peace* (formerly the North Atlantic Cooperation Council), nor that Afghanistan could scarcely be considered for possible NATO membership.

[17] Confidential and off-record interviews by the author of high-level NATO policymakers at NATO headquarters in Brussels in January of 2007 and various policymakers, Members of Parliament, and Cabinet Ministers, including Canada's Minister of Defence, conducted in Ottawa and Nova Scotia in February of 2006, February of 2007 and July of 2008.

[18] Space constraints prevent a full analysis of the growing divides within elite American opinion, but for a cogent overview of the different emerging perspectives see the analysis by Richard N. Haass, President of the Council on Foreign Relations, "In the Afghan War, Aim for the Middle," *Washington Post,* 11 October, 2009.

Notably, some long-time and prominent NATO defenders have advocated the idea that the alliance should consider expanding to include wealthy industrialized and industrializing countries outside North America and Europe, such as Japan, Australia, and possibly even Mexico. The underlying assumption seems to be that a "Global NATO" might be established, so as to include wealthy countries that have a history of close defence cooperation with the United States.[19] Thus the fact of Mexico's non-membership in the North American defence perimeter is becoming an increasingly relevant question.[20]

What emerges from such observations is perhaps that the boundaries of NATO's territory are largely in our minds, being associated with various preconceptions about the "us" versus "them" question. Such preconceptions, however, can rapidly change. The recent twentieth anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall is a reminder that it took only a few years, and not decades or generations, for NATO to welcome with open arms former Warsaw Pact members into its membership. Apparently the advantages for the NATO allies of drastically expanding its regional collective defence organization—possibly even at the expense of efforts to reform and extend the universal collective security afforded by the UN—outweighed the disadvantages of extending Article V protection to former Warsaw Pact countries. On 1 May, 2004, NATO enlarged to include most of the European Union, including Bulgaria, Romania, Slovenia, Slovakia, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania.

These newer NATO allies had already invested heavily to upgrade their aged defence systems so as to abide by official (and unofficial) guidelines in order to be invited into the NATO club. Thus massive military expenditure was involved in the shift. As one RAND Corporation study indicated early on, combined spending by the newer and would-be allies was expected to rise to $130 billion over ten years. How could former Warsaw Pact countries afford to spend these billions on defence, when their own economies were lagging? As the RAND study accurately predicted, those countries that lacked funds were provided with massive loans and grants by the "friendly" NATO governments. Thus it was that,

[19] General (ret.) Klaus Naumann, General (ret.) John Shalikashvili, Field Marshal The Lord Tinge, Admiral (ret.) Jacques Lanxade and General (ret.) Henk van den Breemen, *Towards a Grand Strategy for an Uncertain World* (Noaber Foundation: 2007), http://www.csis.org/files/media/csis/events/080110_grand_strategy.pdf.

[20] For more on such "impossible thoughts," see David Haglund, "Pensando lo Imposible: Mexico and the Issue of NATO Membership," paper presented to the International Studies Association, New York City, February 15, 2009.

within less than a decade, NATO expanded at great expense to include most of the former Warsaw Pact countries.[21]

It is impossible either to prove or disprove the claim that American leaders were drawn to the idea of NATO expansion because of the lure of hefty defence procurement contracts and increased influence. But clearly, there were economic as well as political advantages in the strategy taken. Several resulting contradictions in NATO policy have proved difficult to reconcile without referring to the lure of defence contracts to be gained amid this new expansion of the American empire. For example, while NATO pursued greater cooperation with new Eastern European allies, NATO expansion risked a major new security dilemma, in increasing tensions with Russia (which the end of the Cold War had seemingly resolved in the case of the old Soviet Union). There were distinct risks run that the expansion—both in its first and second rounds—could lead Russia to move its conventional and nuclear arsenal into new defensive positions along a newly-defined border, effectively a new Central Front. Expanding NATO, in short, risked inciting old hatreds, new insecurities and even more paranoid leaderships.[22] Nevertheless, the U.S. under both Presidents Bill Clinton and George Bush insisted on the policy of the rapid enlargement of NATO.

Arguably, however, it was NATO expansion that in turn incited Russia to extend its own sphere of influence into the "near abroad" of Kalingrad, Belarus, Georgia and Ukraine. The rearmament of Hungary and threat to place radar installations in the Czech Republic and Poland contributed to new tensions in Central Europe. NATO enlargement seemed merely to create a new dividing line in Europe similar to the old one that wound its way through Germany and East Berlin. Certainly it is true that the decisions taken to enlarge the American sphere of influence have increased the new Eastern European allies' sense of security. But it has not happened without price. It has led to the distressing situation in which a new generation of young defence ministers in NATO nations such as Poland are becoming some of the strongest defenders of classical nuclear deterrence doctrine internationally, and in particular of the necessity for the United States to extend its nuclear deterrence, as a security guarantee over against

[21] Erika Simpson, "NATO expansion," *International Journal* 54, no. 2 (Spring 1999): 324-339.

[22] Erika Simpson, "The greater threat from Russia," *Metro Europe*, 10 August, 1999.

Russia.[23] The Imperial Palace has thus became mired yet again in a security dilemma, one already made acute on the international scene after 9/11 and the decision to attack al-Qaeda and the Taliban, and amid the lingering conflicts in Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Wajikistan, not to mention Iraq.

The citizens of the Imperial Palace may like to delude themselves that NATO expansion will not have grave implications for future conflict prevention, management, and resolution. They may like to assume that NATO's nuclear weapons are essential, according to NATO's strategic concept, and that it is only the possession of nuclear weapons by "rogue states" such as Iran and North Korea that is problematic. They may, however, also therefore continue to think in ways that ensure entrapment in arms spirals and never-ending (in)security dilemmas. But as NATO members, should we not rather seek to strip away the old Cold Warrior's style of thinking, realizing the opportunity presented for forging new global partnerships, and find ways to become more constructively engaged?

Constructive Engagement and Withdrawal from Afghanistan

Constructive engagement—as President Obama has evoked for us so well in speeches that exude liberal internationalist values—necessarily means the pursuit of more multilateralist measures.[24] To follow this course, however, the United States and its NATO allies need to learn to look beyond themselves, and in particular to work more closely with the UN, with partner organizations such as the Middle Powers Initiative, and with new coalitions of states, such as the New Agenda Coalition.[25] One long-overdue debate that needs to take place with a view to engineering more useful forms of constructive engagement would be to consider whether or not the U.S. and NATO's defence spending might be a greater threat to world security than the menace of small-scale tyrants. Unquestionably, despicable behaviour by Taliban tribal leaders, by dictators of the world such as Saddam Hussein, or by anti-imperialists such as Kim Jong-Il of North Korea, deserve to be condemned and roundly opposed in rele-

[23] Off-record comments to the author by a high-level U.S. State Department official, in light of papers on tailored deterrence that were presented to the International Studies Association, New York City, February 16, 2009.

[24] For example, on the need for more multilateralist strategies, see his aforementioned speech to the UN General Assembly, September 23, 2009, http://www.reuters.com/article/topNews/idUSTRE58M3MV20090923.

[25] For more information on new coalitions, like the Middle Powers Initiative, see the website of the Global Security Institute at http://www.gsinstitutei@org.

vant international fora. But perhaps the greater threat to global security is the astounding fact that the 2009 U.S. budget allocated $542 billion to the Pentagon and $196 billion to Iraq for a total of $738 billion, or more than *half* the entire U.S. discretionary budget.[26] Ought we to be content with the absurd notion that nearly a trillion dollars on an annual basis be devoted to protecting the Imperial Palace—especially as the strategy is in many ways so ineffective? Where will astoundingly-high U.S. military spending, dangerously mounting debt, and constrained choices lead?

The cost of such policy is more than financial. If the United States as the alliance's leader involves its NATO allies in more and more out-of-area operations—similar to Kosovo, Afghanistan, and Iraq—then the rest of the world may come to perceive NATO troops merely as defenders of the American empire, and so very negatively. Arguably, NATO members really ought to increase their overseas commitments to peacekeeping and peacemaking—but NATO itself ought not to in the business of peace enforcement. There needs, in short, to be a return to the UN as the chief guarantor of international security.

The most recent NATO Summit Declaration, issued by the Heads of State in April 2009, makes many worthy declarations:

> Our security is closely tied to Afghanistan's security and stability. As such, our UN-mandated International Security Assistance Force mission (ISAF) in Afghanistan, comprising 42 nations, is our key priority. We are working with the Government and people of Afghanistan, and with the international community under the leadership of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan. Together, in a comprehensive approach combining military and civilian resources, we are helping the Government of Afghanistan build a secure, stable and democratic country, respectful of human rights. We stress the importance of the protection of women's rights. The international community aims to ensure that Al-Qaeda and other violent extremists cannot use Afghanistan. Today we have issued a Summit Declaration in which we reiterate our strategic vision and set out actions that demonstrate our resolve to support Afghanistan's long-term security and stability.[27]

These are all noble sentiments on behalf of the UN and NATO. All NATO members would no doubt prefer that Afghanistan and Pakistan became safe for all citizens, not safe havens from which to launch terrorist

[26] For the budget figures, see http://www.notmypriorities.org, which also notes that the budget figures are unsustainable because they do not include funds for the bail-out or the economic stimulus package.

[27] NATO Strasbourg/Kehl Summit Declaration, April 2008, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/news_52837.htm.

attacks. Nobody would dispute that Afghan ownership of their own institutions, such as their military and police forces, remain crucial for sustained progress. Strong constructive engagement by countries in the region will also be critical and, to this end, any pledges to reinforce NATO's cooperation with all Afghanistan's neighbours, especially Pakistan, should always be welcome.

On the other hand, for NATO's own sake, and for the sake of its own long-term survival and credibility, any more strong pledges by NATO to fight against the Taliban and al-Qaeda in Afghanistan should be questioned. The reason, quite simply, is that NATO's war as presently waged in Afghanistan is destined to fail. Why will NATO fail? The reason often given is that the continuing low-level war against Taliban and al-Qaeda forces in Afghanistan and Pakistan is being waged by too few forces—though, in the near future, about 150,000 U.S. troops and coalition allies will be present on Afghan soil. But were even more troops than these committed, the project would still fail, because sheer military firepower and personnel will never be the key to victory in the Afghanistan context. Nor does it fundamentally matter whether strong troop contributors, such as Canada and the Netherlands, eventually reduce their troop contributions in 2010-2011 in favour of other NATO allies taking up the burden. Indeed, the issue of whether Afghan troops can be trained to take over police and military functions is another red herring that continues to preoccupy us.[28] In the final analysis, I wish to suggest, NATO will fail because its present strategy can provide no solution to the problem of opium production in Afghanistan—without tackling which, all our efforts are futile.

The deeper structural problems surrounding the opium trade in Afghanistan get short shrift in the media and in scholarly treatments because for decades, our assessment of the threats to international security have been overly influenced by traditional American military threat analyses. We thus continue to assume that committing more troops, training more military and police, and even building more schools in the non-Taliban influenced areas of Afghanistan are viable solutions to its intractable problems. But these solutions are no solutions, or are at best very partial and

[28] This preoccupation is evident in my own work. For examples, see Erika Simpson, "Afghanistan panel recommends re-orienting Canada's mission but staying the course," *Embassy Magazine: Canada's Foreign Policy Weekly*, January 23, 2008; and Cris de Clercy and Erika Simpson, "Is Afghanistan panel just a crass bid to deflect critics?" *London Free Press*, October 17, 2007. I might also cite an excellent thesis written under my supervision by an officer in the Canadian Forces, Keith Cameron, "Risk, Cost and Control in NATO Burdensharing: Apportioning Atlas' Load'," MA thesis, University of Western Ontario, 2008.

inadequate ones. Instead, we need to unite with like-minded nations, and in conjunction with UN monitoring agencies and other international bodies, to make a more timely and accurate threat assessment that takes seriously the menace of the international drugs trade, and of the ways in which it is destroying the prospect of peace in Afghanistan. To do this, however, requires more than a campaign in a far country. In particular, the great need is to reduce the drugs trade with and within the Imperial Palace. For as things stand, we are destined to fail in Afghanistan because of the continuing global demand for opium.

One of the things that needs to be recognized in this context is that current programs aiming at opium poppy eradication in Afghanistan never work well because other types of crops need fertile land, whereas opium crops can survive on infertile land that does not need irrigation. An opium poppy crop has many advantages for peasant farmers struggling to survive, especially because it is not perishable. The opium poppy can grow almost anywhere. The product is relatively easy to transport and smuggle, and millions of willing customers exist for it in the Imperial Palace. Efforts to eradicate opium production will fail in Afghanistan so long as licit crops cannot be sold for as much money as illicit poppy seeds, and so long as the choice of impoverished farmers must be to grow the more lucrative crop merely to survive.[29] NATO simply does not have the resources to stamp out the annual Afghan opium industry—even if it is one that largely finances the Taliban.[30] Although Afghanistan's opium cultivation fell in 2009 by 22% from 2008 levels, a second annual decline, Afghanistan still

[29] I am indebted to a former student for writing a paper that illuminated the depth and breadth of the opium trade problem in Afghanistan, Eli Lipetz, "Opium and Afghanistan: New Solutions to an Old Problem," presented at the International Pugwash Conference in Cairo, Egypt in 2006, and available on the Pugwash Canada website at http://www.pugwashgroup.ca/events/documents/2006/2006.11-Lipetz_essay.pdf. For further studies developing the same line of argument, see: Frank Kenefick & Larry Morgan, *Report submitted U.S. Agency for International Development in Afghanistan: People and Poppies, the Good Evil* (Kabul, Afghanistan: 2004); David Mansfield, "The Role of Opium as a Source of Informal Credit in Rural Afghanistan," World Bank, http://siteresources.worldbank.org/ INTAFGHANISTAN/Resources/AFRFW_4_Role_of_Opium_as_Source_of_Credit.htm; and Rachel Morarjee, "Taliban Goes for Cash Over Ideology," *The Financial Times,* 26 July, 2006. It is interesting to note that the Taliban pays its soldiers well, which may explain its successes in recruiting. Taliban fighters receive twice as much pay as Afghan soldiers, and four times as much as Afghan police. See Anna Badkhan, "Afghan government failure reopens door to the Taliban," *The San-Francisco Chronicle,* 17 September, 2006.

[30] "Salvaging Afghanistan," *New York Times* editorial, February 20, 2009, A30.

grows far more opium than the current global demand, which is steady at about 5,000 tons a year. Some of that excess crop is being hoarded, the UN Office on Drugs and Crime reports, so that "stockpiles of illicit opium now probably exceed 10,000 tons—enough to satisfy two years of world [heroin] addiction."[31]

The bitter truth of the matter is that opium will continue to be produced in Afghanistan so long as the citizens of the Imperial Palace desire heroin—or until a cheap, synthetic, and legal alternative to heroin is made available to them. It may be a difficult thing psychologically for leaders of the Imperial Palace to take responsibility for their own nations' complicity in the tragedy of Afghanistan due to the failure of their domestic anti-drugs strategies. It is always easier to blame the "other." Thus we have seen various extraneous arguments about why NATO could fail in Afghanistan, rather than a sustained focus on the deeper causes for that likely failure, stemming from the worldwide drugs trade (and, indeed, the illegal trafficking in small arms and light weapons that goes with it).

The argument that NATO could fail in Afghanistan because the Soviet Union failed in Afghanistan between 1979-89 is also heard, the point being that unless the U.S. and its recalcitrant NATO allies contribute far more resources than did the Soviets, they too will fail.[32] But this too is a distraction, not least because this argument is based on a poor historical analogy. The Soviet Union deployed some 104,000 troops, but suffered far higher casualties in a rather different war; it withdrew in 1989 after almost 20,000 of its soldiers had been killed and 50,000 had been wounded. Moreover, such a high number of casualties would be unacceptable within NATO, even among its most committed allies such as Canada (which has already suffered a casualty rate widely considered to be unsustainable).[33] The argument in favour of increasing the number of forces is also irrelevant to combating the fundamental problem besetting NATO's involvement in Afghanistan, namely the drugs trade.

It is also a common distraction to argue that NATO will fail because of al-Qaeda and the Taliban's effective use of guerrilla tactics. It is to be expected that the Taliban will continue to attack rural and urban populations

[31] Matthew Rosenberg, "UN Reports a Decline in Afghanistan's Opium Trade." *Wall Street Journal,* 2 September, 2009, A9.

[32] For a recent example of this type of argument, see Sebastian L. v. Gorka, "How to Win in Afghanistan." 24 September, 2009, available on the Hudson Institute website, http://www.hudsonny.org/2009/09/how-to-win-in-afghanistan.php.

[33] On the operation's unsustainability, see for example the wide array of critics in Lucia Kowaluk and Steve Staples, eds., *Afghanistan and Canada* (Toronto: Black Rose Books, 2009).

using suicide bombers, there will be more scorched earth campaigns, and various warring tribal factions also will continue to destroy Afghanistan's infrastructure. In reply, NATO defenders will likely continue to warn, as NATO has done in the past, that NATO must commit to providing more peace enforcement (i.e. engage in more warfighting) in order to provide scope for more peacebuilding (e.g. road and school construction).[34] Both sides blame each other for contradictory behaviour and for adopting nefarious tactics, while the war escalates in terms of violence and the numbers of killed each month.

Meanwhile, al-Qaeda cells will continue to justify their violent campaigns as a jihad against the United States and the Christian West. More widely within Islam, debate will continue concerning the claim of Salafists generally that it is the duty of Muslims to engage in violent jihad to protect their religion when an outside force encroaches on Islamic land. Competition among belief systems will continue to be further intensified by interpretations of American support for Israel as an aggression against Islamic faith, and this reading of the meaning of current history will be pitted against Israeli perceptions of an anti-Zionist conspiracy to eradicate Israel as a Jewish state. Belief systems, however, though important intervening variables that help explain the severity of outcomes, do not adequately account for the fundamental structural causes of conflict.

Among those who advocate violent jihad, there is the phenomenon whereby extremist recruiters from the military cells of al-Qaeda, the Hamas, the Islamic Resistance Movement, and so forth nurture young men (and women) for the "holy war." These recruiters circulate in schools and mosques, and have notably adopted the internet to serve their cause, dropping the idea of dying for God into the conversation, and then zoom in on those who take the idea seriously, much like recruiters for cults prey on other depressed or disenchanted university students. Then their training system focuses on all the verses in the Koran that refer to the glory of dying for God. Scriptures are used in this way, and underground sermons idealize the afterlife as a carefree garden with golden palaces, good food, and even-tempered women. Potential suicide bombers get the idea they are about to sit next to God; the whole process is described as the martyr's wedding and so presented as a joyous occasion. In addition, they are reassured that their families will be given money, scholarships, and other subsidies.

[34] On the implicit contradictions in NATO's stance, see Astri Suhrke, "A Contradictory Mission? NATO from Stabilization to Combat in Afghanistan," *International Peacekeeping* 15, no. 2 (April 2009): 214-236.

Attempting to ban such recruitment methods and to quell extremist indoctrination are partial solutions to these fundamental problems. Moderate Muslims themselves, above all, need to combat the idea that the Garden of God awaits the so-called "martyrs" that al-Qaeda and the like cultivate. Over the long run, we can only hope, more humane sources arising from the depths of the Islamic tradition itself, along with the forces of education and globalization, will help to combat the idea that this perversion of the idea of martyrdom is preferable to life—just as similar forces have moderated traditional Christian belief systems concerning ideas such as Heaven and Hell. Yet one of our problems is that studies show that suicide bombers are not necessarily unified by any ideology, belief system or underlying commonalities; they seem at times to appear out of nowhere, like randomly-caused cancers. Extremists who take up arms in the hope of martyrdom, or who take the short route to that goal by becoming suicide bombers, may be young or old, rich or poor, highly educated or unschooled, male or female, and either victims of violence or very ordinary people raised in normal homes, and we do not yet know why they choose to become suicide bombers.[35] Until we understand the common causes of their behaviour, it may be premature to counsel combating the Taliban and al-Qaeda as if they were cult victims or the last vestiges of antiquated ways of religious thinking in a secular world. And among the best ways of finding out the underlying reasons for their behaviour is something that our leaders, the media and the establishment of the West generally are, for the most part, unprepared to countenance: the kind of face-to-face dialogue that alone would make it possible to hear what they have to say.

In this context, a relatively unknown factor may also be of importance. When the Taliban temporarily held power in Afghanistan, it actually opposed drug use, and established a better record than has NATO in terms of opium poppy eradication. The Taliban's drug eradication program, implemented in 2000-2001, led to a 94% decline in opium cultivation. In 2001, according to UN figures, opium production fell to 185 tons.[36] It might be that a NATO withdrawal from Afghanistan would actually slow the production of opium in Taliban-run pockets of the country. At present, admittedly, the Taliban is using hundreds of millions of dollars of profits from the drug trade to fight against foreign invaders, but previously it forbade poppy production and condemned drug use. One possible advantage of negotiation with the Taliban in Afghanistan, therefore, and perhaps of an

[35] Stuart Sim, *Fundamentalist World* (London : Icon Books, 2004), 26-27, 222.

[36] Michel Chossudovsky, "Who benefits from the Afghan Opium Trade?" http://www.globalresearch.ca/index.php?context=va&aid=3294.

eventual power-sharing agreement, might be a significant reduction in the amount of opium that is produced by Afghan farmers.[37]

It is likely also that the departure of perceived foreign invaders might lead to a significant decline of support for the Taliban in many areas. The rise of support for the Taliban can be traced back to 1979, when the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan, marking a turning point for the development of radical Islam. A number of Islamic religious leaders called for a defensive jihad, aided by the Reagan administration in the United States no less, to combat the Soviet "infidels." For example, Osama bin Laden's right-hand man Aynan al-Zawahiri was an influential Egyptian writer and physician who persuaded many Muslims to fight in Afghanistan against the Soviets. It was during that war that al-Zawahiri met Osama bin Laden in Pakistan, and then that the two realized that their skills could complement each other's. In 1988, they consolidated their groups, creating what is today known as al-Qaeda. Today, however, al-Qaeda operatives and Taliban leaders rail not against the Soviets, but against the West—and Christianity—as represented by the U.S. and NATO, the latest foreign invaders in an area that has been fought over for centuries.

As we are now the foreign invaders, we need to find a way to leave Afghanistan, taking our weapons of warfare, and our cultural domination with us. There is new prospect that the Afghan people, in an inclusive movement involving at least the more moderate supporters of the Taliban (who seem increasingly reluctant to cooperate with al-Qaeda operatives), may be able to set up their own governing councils, organize an Afghan-oriented infrastructure, and train future generations for something other than civil war or violent jihad. It might turn out that an Afghan government that had a place within it for the Taliban would be better able to provide Afghans with social services, medical attention, and schools than we imagine. In large pockets of the region, government would no doubt be very traditional in terms of its values, and even oppressive by our standards, but values can change, given time. No doubt medieval attitudes toward women in Afghanistan, concerning schooling for girls, for instance, would be slow to change—but change is inevitable when people and cultures open up to the forces of education and globalization.[38]

[37] Rosenberg, "UN reports a Decline in Afghanistan's Opium Trade."

[38] On the other hand, there are powerful arguments that the Taliban would endlessly resist the forces of globalization. Human Rights Watch has recently reported on how the Taliban uses violence and the threat of violence to shut down schools at http://www.hrw.org, and there is no question that human rights were violated during the Taliban's period in power, including rights to freedom of expression, association, and assembly, the right to work, education, freedom of movement, and health care. Some disturbing examples of current Taliban attitudes vis-à-vis human rights are evident in letters posted around rural villages. For example, one letter read: "Respected Afghans: Leave the culture and traditions of the Christians and Jews. Do not send your girls to school." See, for example, A. Widney Brown and Farhat Bokhari, "Humanity Denied—Systematic Violations of Women's Rights in Afghanistan," *Report Prepared for Human Rights Watch,* Section V, and available at the Human Rights Watch website cited.

Much of the change needed in Afghanistan in any case cannot be imposed by outside force, but can only be grown as something indigenous—sometimes painfully, no doubt, and in a process extending over generations. What is imperative is that a space in which this can happen be provided. What is clearly unacceptable is the status quo. The results of the 2009 elections in Afghanistan demonstrate that corruption still abounds at the highest levels. Meanwhile, drugs money continues to fund warlord and Taliban activity. In the vacuum generated by such destructive forces, there can be no legitimate power structures, including those provided by the corrupt and intransigent Karzai government. Responsible military withdrawal from Afghanistan is therefore needed, so that Afghanistan's own leaders, including those presently sympathetic to the Taliban, will have to face their real problems: the difficulties of state building, development, education and reform. Rather than fight NATO forces, they will need to devote their energy to strengthening their own police and military forces. Rather than blame the West for imposing corrupting educational practices, they will need to find ways to provide public education for themselves, having broad support among the people. Many more tasks, including reform of the political system, poppy eradication, and drugs and small arms interdiction will necessarily preoccupy them. They may well develop abhorrent policies in the short-term—such as we saw in the Karzai government's own draft legislation allowing rape within marriage—but domestic pressures and the response of the international community (including the international Islamic community) should stamp out such policies in the long-run.

Eventually, pre-pubescent girls in Afghanistan will not be married to old men, and girls will go to school, just as happens elsewhere in the Muslim world, even in countries with highly oppressive regimes. The truth is that the change needed in Afghanistan will likely take three generations or more to come about, which is as tragic as it is inescapable—and that it cannot happen as long as we stand in the way.[39] Thus, trusting and abet-

[39] For the argument that real change takes three generations to develop, see David Helde (with Daniele Archibugi), *Cosmopolitan Democracy* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995).

ting the forces of global change and of human progress are better options than supporting NATO's current strategy—which is merely creating enemies faster than we can kill them.

MUSLIM OPPOSITION TO THE WAR IN AFGHANISTAN: THE CASE(S) OF BANGLADESH AND TURKEY

RASHED CHOWDHURY[1]

Public Opinion and the Pain of Afghanistan

In 2008, an Ipsos Reid survey showed that 37% of Canadians wanted to see a withdrawal of Canadian troops from Afghanistan.[2] In comparison, as many as 72% of Turks were in favour of a NATO withdrawal from Afghanistan the same year, according to a Pew survey. A 2007 Pew poll (the last year for which data is available) shows that an even higher proportion of Bangladeshis, 89%, were in favour of NATO withdrawing its troops from Afghanistan.[3] Canada and Turkey are both NATO members, and both have been involved in NATO's Afghanistan mission since its inception. Yet Turkish public opinion on Afghanistan seems more akin to that of Bangladesh, with which Turkey shares not the ties of a military alliance, but rather the bonds of a common faith.

Can differences in religion explain the differences between the way a majority of Turks and Bangladeshis, on the one hand, see the war in Afghanistan, and the way the majority of Canadians see it, on the other? It certainly can, if one subscribes to the notion of a "clash of civilizations," as propounded by Bernard Lewis and popularised by Samuel Huntington. For Huntington, "a civilization is...the highest cultural grouping of people

[1] I would like to acknowledge funding provided to me by McGill University (2008-2009) and the *Fonds québecois de recherche sur la société et la culture* (2009-2010), which made this paper possible.

[2] Canwest News Service, "Support for withdrawal from Afghanistan declines, but divisions remain," *Ottawa Citizen*, 26 January 2008.

[3] Pew Research Center, "Support for War in Afghanistan: Should the U.S. and NATO keep troops in Afghanistan or remove them?" Pew Global Attitudes Project Key Indicators Database, http://pewglobal.org/database/?indicator=9&group=10&response=Remove%20their%20troops.