

“Human Rights trumps Security”

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FOREIGN POLICY REVIEW

What are our values, interests, priorities and concerns?

Do the Three Pillars: Security, Prosperity, Values and Culture make sense?

What should our relationship be to major international organizations?

I'm glad the government has chosen to begin to frame this debate as a question about values. Robert Bolt's *A Man for All Seasons* protagonist, St. Thomas

More's leit motif was “when statesmen forsake their own private conscience for the sake of their public duties ... they lead their country by a short route to chaos.” A society without core values, just as an individual, cannot, and does not deserve to, survive long.

We are told that we can't afford to live according to historical Canadian policies and principles, that we have to live in the REAL WORLD, that the world changed with 9/11 and that “THEY'll go ahead and do IT anyway, and may retaliate against us if we don't go along”.

I respect and love Americans, some of whom are my relations. We do share elements of culture and way of life, but we have fundamental differences.

Their President wants ‘regime change’. He proclaims, “they hate us for our democracy”; “if you're not with us, you're with the terrorists.” With \$400 billion spent on defence and half of the world's economic power; ‘Are they making themselves, or us, more secure?’

What has hard power got them? The stated goals in Afghanistan one and a half years ago were minimal- get Bin Laden and dismantle Al Qaeda; in Iraq they were to prevent Saddam from using his weapons of mass destruction and to disrupt connections between Saddam and Al Qaeda. Prior to both the Afghanistan and Iraq wars, I wrote about the folly of each, and sadly my predictions seem to be coming true. How about their secondary goals?

Are Afghans better off? Prime Minister Karzai is unable to travel outside of Kabul without US military escort and government ministers are seemingly killed monthly. In the rest of the country the opium trade resumed, cluster bomblets continue to maim children, fundamentalists are often in charge, women have no more rights, and the war with Hekmatyar and remnants of the Taliban, continues unabated.

In ‘Ask the Right Questions’ I asked: What would the war do for the Iraqi people? What would it do for the region? Would it enhance our own security? What

would it do to international institutions and international law? and Might there be more cost-effective ways to make us more secure?

This week we see disorder so rampant in Iraq that the US has already had to fire Jay Garner, the retired general in charge of restoring order and services and a few more Al Qaeda attacks have taken place in Saudi Arabia.

Saddam Hussein and Osama Bin Laden, two creations of the US who, one to two decades later need to be destroyed. WHO then, IS BEING NAÏVE?

Ariel Sharon's attempts to reduce suicide bombings to make Israel more secure, by sending in the military to occupy, demolish homes and kill many innocents (one third children). Twenty years ago, as military commander he instituted a similar policy in Lebanon, resulting in massacres at Sabra and Shatilla and ultimately was judged by Israelis as an abject failure. The Russian approach to Chechnya reaps similar results.

We now face choices: unilateralism or multilateralism, respecting or abandoning human rights and international law, exploiting the environment and other peoples, or living in harmony with them?

Which brings me to the question, 'What can doctors add to the debate?' First I must protest the appropriation of health terminology: surgical strikes, international cancers. I probably am exposed to more of the 'real world' than most of the decision-makers in Washington. My own patients come from all socio-economic groups, from many religions and from most parts of the world and include Iraqis who were tortured or exiled by Saddam Hussein.

Pre-emption, prevention, attempts to dominate with super-drugs produce superbugs. Side effects, iatrogenic illness, unintended consequences, collateral damage. Boils must be ripe to be lanced. Time itself, is often the greatest healer. Not all cancers benefit from treatment. The operation was a success but the patient died.

The great German anatomist and politician, Rudolf Virchow stated "*Politik ist weiter nichts als Medizin im Grossen*" –*Politics is nothing more than medicine in the Big Picture.*

Child psychiatrist, Joanna Santa Barbara recommends a holistic approach relating causes and treatment to interpersonal cycles of violence to group or national violence. Approaches to peace among children begin with an assumption that all are equally valuable, and that no one should dominate another. It fosters values and structures of kindness, respect, cherishing diversity, sharing, helping, cooperation and nonviolence. The currency of influence over others is persuasion, not violence. Conflicts are dealt with by collaborative problem-

solving or mediation. The aim within the system is the cooperative achievement of group goals. When all feel secure each nation may feel secure.

The organization I led, Physicians for Global Survival, has as its Mission statement: Because of our concern for global health, we, the physicians for Global Survival, are dedicated to the abolition of nuclear weapons, to the prevention of war, to the promotion of non-violent means of conflict resolution and attainment of social justice in a sustainable world.

Compare this to the security prescription offered by some. Since we are morally superior we are allowed to use methods that others would consider immoral, we can threaten the use weapons of mass destruction; we can kill hundreds of thousands with sanctions, we can violate the sovereignty of other countries; we don't have to respect international institutions or treaties; we reserve the right to unilaterally intervene when something appears against our interests. Nuclear weapons are OK for our friends. Lack of democracy is OK for our friends. We can deceive our own people to get endorsement of war they otherwise might not support.

I was born in India. Both of my parents fled what is now Pakistan when India was divided, afraid of Muslim extremism. Few Canadians would suggest that the proper approach to Sikh or Tamil extremism and assassination of two Indian Prime Ministers would involve massive violations of human rights, or that direct attacks on the Indian Parliament by Al Qaeda-associated operatives based in, and supported by, Pakistan would be best dealt with by a military strike or invasion of that country.

Developed by Joseph Nye, the concept of Soft Power, based on intangible or indirect influences such as culture, values, and ideology is 'getting what you otherwise might not'. Nye feels that the countries that are likely to gain soft power are those closest to global norms of liberalism, pluralism, and autonomy; those with the most access to multiple channels of communication; and those whose credibility is enhanced by their domestic and international performance, in short, countries like ... Canada.

The Human Security Agenda promoted by the Canadian government is “a people-centered approach to foreign policy which recognizes that lasting stability cannot be achieved until people are protected from violent threats to their rights, safety or lives.” It considers both military and non-military threats to safety and well-being; and points to human rights; democracy; dignity of peoples and human development as key building blocks of security. How would we implement these values?

Support the UN, international law and international accords such as Kyoto, the Chemical and Biological Weapons treaties, the International Criminal Court, the Landmines Treaty, and forbidding cluster bombs, which may act as functional

landmines. Help to eliminate nuclear weapons as mandated by both Article VI of NPT and the International Court of Justice; meanwhile stop the ridiculous and unnecessary procedures of Alert status or Launch on Warning of Nuclear Weapons, continue the CTBT and implement Fissile Materials Control.

The International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS), sponsored by the Canadian government is based on Just War theory as well as the best principles of medical practice: A war to prevent an imminent or ongoing genocide must have a Just Cause, be sanctioned by recognized international institutions, not with one power acting as judge, jury and executioner. Regime change, violating national sovereignty because of massive ongoing human rights violations, must only be done on right authority, with right intention, after the use of all plausible non-military options first; they should have reasonable chances of success; the international community has a responsibility to prevent, react and rebuild. Imminent threats of terror or weapons of mass destruction might be dealt with in the same way.

To his credit, our Prime Minister, states that security cannot be at the expense of others, that root causes for conflict may involve injustice. Without rules or principles such as the UN Charter, governing the behaviour of nations, he asks 'Who is next?' Unfortunately not all leadership candidates and parties are on the same wavelength.

Let us continue to work towards respecting the values we profess. This is indeed, the only way to our future, common, sustainable security.