

## **52nd Pugwash Conference on Science and World Affairs**

*Science <—> Sustainability <—> Security*

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### **Report of Working Group 4 International Governance and Security**

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Working group 4 focused on three issues: (1) [The phenomenon of terrorism](#); (2) [Resources and conflict](#); and (3) [Strengthening multilateral security cooperation](#).

#### **The phenomenon of terrorism**

The group agreed that the tragic events of September 11, 2001, had a profound effect on the international scene, as well as on the psyche and foreign policy of the United States. It was pointed out that as a result of attacks, many people lost their sense of security and stability. There was a wave of suicides, and use of antidepressant drugs. Irrational non-specific fear produced symptoms of paranoia and anxiety. There were also realistic fears that a global civil war might be starting.

The response of the Bush Administration was also worrying. There was an initial worldwide outpouring of sympathy for the US and for the families of the innocent victims of the attacks, but this sympathy was soon combined with alarm when President Bush claimed the right to unilaterally initiate war against potential enemies and when civil liberties began to be eroded by antiterrorist measures.

In discussing the phenomenon of terrorism, we found it hard to agree on a definition. One of the participants proposed that by definition, terrorism has to be committed by a non-state actor, that the act must be indiscriminate, the victims innocent, and the purpose politically motivated. However the majority of the group members felt that limiting the definition of terrorism to non-state actors ignored similarities and causal relationships linking state terror to non-state terror. For example, in the conflict between Israel and Palestine, there is a circular causal relationship between the use of helicopters and tanks against unarmed civilians by

Israel and the suicide bombings by Palestinians. Most of us felt that states can also act as terrorists, when they maintain their power by fear rather than by democratic principles, when they violate human rights, or kill large numbers of their own citizens, when they invade foreign countries, or when they produce massive destruction by strategic bombing. States normally have a monopoly on the use of force, but under normal circumstances this use of force is constrained by the safeguards of law and the principles of human rights. When states act outside the law, it was felt, they act as terrorists.

We agreed that in combating terrorism, it is extremely important to examine the reasons why people become terrorists, and to eliminate those causes. One cannot get rid of terrorism by killing or jailing individual terrorists, since others will spring up in their places. Our only chance is to understand and to correct the root causes of the phenomenon, remembering, of course, that no motivation can possibly excuse violent acts directed at innocent people. It was pointed out that the September 11 attacks against the United States were apparently motivated partly by anger and frustration over what was perceived to be US bias in favour of Israel, and partly by anger caused by US troops stationed in Saudi Arabia.

Terrorism often arises as the result of unbearable situations, which cannot be corrected in any other way. To suppress terrorism, we have to strike at the base, at the unbearable situation that fuels the fanaticism. Religion is often an excuse, where poverty, ignorance, injustice, dictatorship and hopelessness are the real reasons.

Because of the enormous increase in global communication, the world is now a fishbowl. The lifestyle of the rich is exhibited in a frustrating way to the poor, who have no chance to emulate it. The have-nots of the world have nothing to hang onto except their ethnic identity, because material goods are not available to them. Terrorism is the poor man's weapon - a way of waging an unsymmetrical struggle against a superior power.

Finally, we noted that in spite of its powerful psychological impact, terrorism is statistically a minor problem compared with many others. Globally, the numbers of deaths involved are extremely small compared with the mortality from AIDS or starvation. We must not allow the issue of terrorism to distract our attention from the other very serious problems that the world is facing.

### **Resources and conflict**

Conflict is often found where communities compete for a source of wealth. Thus, the accelerating demand for water, oil, timber and mineral resources may be important sources of conflict in the 21st century. Both population growth and the increased use of automobiles will greatly increase the demand for resources.

Among the "loot-seeking wars" which were mentioned in our discussion were conflicts in Angola, Sri Lanka, Liberia, Congo, Indonesia, East Timor, Fiji, Colombia, Chechnya, Zimbabwe and Uzbekistan. In many cases, indigenous people have been intimidated and driven out of their traditional lands, for example by the use of fire, so that the resources of these lands may be seized.

A discussion paper presented to our group focused especially on the conflicts over oil which threaten to develop during the next few decades. A report was published by the US National Energy Policy Group on May 17, 2001. In this report (known as the "Cheney report" after its principal author, Vice President Dick Cheney) it is estimated that by 2020, the United States will have to increase its imports of foreign oil by 60%. Most of this oil is only available in regions, which are either politically unstable or else unsympathetic with the United States. The discussion paper linked the Bush Administration's increased military spending and wish to project military power into these regions with its desire to insure future availability of oil for the US.

The group noted that during the colonial era, military power was often used by industrial nations to obtain natural resources, under the cover of improving the lot of people in the less developed countries. Colonization started to end with the founding of the United Nations, but now we are facing a new avalanche of massive power, outside international law, and outside control.

Oil is important for the United States, but it is also important for the rest of the world. Pugwash should raise its voice against the use of unchecked unilateral military power to monopolize resources. We should use international law, and especially the International Criminal Court, as the medium for guaranteeing justice. No country is above the law.

On a more positive note, our group thought that resources can in some cases be a source of cooperation rather than of conflict. For example, it is predicted that the population of the Nile Basin will triple during the next century. In order to support this increased population, cooperation in the field of water resources will be needed. Mutual planning of water use could lead to other forms of cooperation within the region.

### **Strengthening multilateral security cooperation**

Our working group discussed a paper which emphasized that the goal of all those who desire a peaceful world must be to substitute the rule of law for the rule of force in the domain of international security. The paper noted that this goal is the same as that embodied in the United Nations Charter, but that as we survey the current international scene, we seem to be veering away from it.

Our multilateral institutions have been weakened by the Bush Administration's reluctance to accept the constraints of international law and international treaties. Examples of this include withdrawal from the ABM Treaty and initiation of a national missile defence program; withdrawal from the Rome Treaty establishing the International Criminal Court; postponing action on the Biological Weapons Convention Protocol; rejecting the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty, and the proposal for developing a new class of nuclear weapons.

The unilateralism of the current US Administration is only thinly disguised by its eagerness in seeking coalitions on an issue-by-issue basis, for example in dealing with terrorism or in combating international drug traffic. The discussion paper proposed that other nations, who wish to see our multilateral institutions strengthened rather than weakened, might act by refusing to join such coalitions unless the US participated in building norms that cumulatively would constitute an international rule of law. Several examples were given:

Turkey, Jordan, the Gulf States, and Saudi Arabia might make participation in a coalition against Saddam Hussein's government in Iraq conditional on the authority of the Security Council. In the absence of a Security Council mandate for action against Iraq, they could refuse to allow the US to use their land bases or air space. This example touches the broader question of "unilateral preemptive self-defence", which is prohibited under the UN Charter.

A second example given in the discussion paper was participation in anti-terror programs. This could be made conditional on withdrawal of US objections to the International Criminal Court and US participation in other multilateral institutions. The jurisdiction of the ICC might even be extended to cover crimes of terror.

Finally, the discussion paper stressed the important role of NGO's in working to replace the rule of force by the rule of law. These organizations have shown their effectiveness in the past, for example in environmental and human rights issues. Their help is now needed to prevent the erosion of our multinational institutions and to support the authority of the United Nations.

In discussing this paper, our group added that Pugwash, as an NGO, must do its part in strengthening both the United Nations and the International Criminal Court. The efforts of Pugwash could be coordinated with those of other NGO's. Pugwash could be made more open, and it could make efforts to influence public opinion.

Much of the discussion of the paper was related to the current concentration of power in the hands of the US. One of the group members remarked that empires are not necessarily a bad thing, and that the United States would be his choice for the country best suited to have an empire. The majority of the group, however,

thought that unilateral international power is inconsistent with the principle of equality of nations and of peoples. The group also felt that within the United States, the country's traditionally egalitarian principles are now at risk. The danger of the fight against terrorism is that it entails invasion of privacy, restraints on free movements of people and ideas, and control of communications (phone-tapping, e-mail supervision, press censorship) that may in the end compromise democracy. The more the US becomes an empire, we felt, the less it will be a democracy.

The planned attack on Iraq was thought to be potentially catastrophic because of the vision which motivates it. It was noted the "power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely". However, our group felt that the United States is many things, and that there are many voices within the US which disagree with the unilateralism of the present Administration. We should appeal to these voices of dissent, and encourage them.

Regarding the threat of a US invasion of Iraq, and a consequent threatened destabilization of the Middle East and Southeast Asia, it was suggested that it might be useful for Pugwash to send a delegation to Iraq to discuss the situation informally with Iraqi scientists. During the Cold War, such informal channels of discussion proved useful, and this might be the case again. However, it is possible that Pugwash scientists would be prohibited from talking directly to scientists employed by the Iraqi government, since this was the experience of a recent delegation sent to Iraq by International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War.

Looking towards the more distant future, we discussed ways in which the United Nations might be improved and made more effective. A future United Nations might have a legislature, which would build up a system of international laws, guided by the principle of subsidiarity. These laws, acting on individuals rather than on states, could be enforced by an expanded version of the International Criminal Court. The notion of state security might be replaced by concept of security for peoples. An Assembly of Peoples, with delegates directly elected by popular vote, could be added to the General Assembly. Thus a bicameral system could be established, analogous to the Senate and the House of Representatives.

We also noted that there is a need for reforming international monetary organizations, such as the World Bank, and the International Monetary Fund. These institutions are, in fact, a part of the United Nations, and their influence ought to be used to help the poorer countries, but this has sometimes not been the case. Debt relief for the less-developed countries is urgently needed.

Finally, we concluded that ethical considerations and altruism, combined with respect for human rights and the environment, are urgently needed in our

increasingly technological modern world. We need to achieve ethical and political maturity to match our scientific progress.