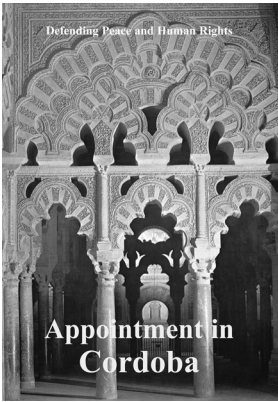


Pax Americana Fata Morgana!

Edy Korthals Altes



The first Dialogue on Peace and Human Rights in Europe and the Middle East took place in Cordoba in November (see Spokesman 77). It was jointly sponsored by the Russell Foundation and the City of Cordoba. Continuing with the publication of contributions to the Dialogue, we feature two more pieces, one from Europe and one from the Middle East (by Bahey el din Hassan).

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The document on the National Security Strategy of the United States of America, presented to Congress by President George W. Bush, constitutes a radical break with the post-war efforts to build a world order on the basis of the United Nations. In blunt language, with little consideration for the sensitivity of other nations – even of those with a long and proud history – the document lays down the claims of the United States for world hegemony, based on unparalleled military strength and great economic/political influence. From now on, the United States – and the United States alone! – aspires to lead the world on the path of peace, freedom, democracy, development, free markets and free trade. The United Nations is relegated to a marginal role.

American leadership will prevail, if necessary, with the use of military power. The National Security Strategy shows no velvet on an iron fist. In a sense it codifies the manifest tendency towards unilateralism over the past few years: repudiation of the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, rejection of the Kyoto Protocol, dropping out of the global effort to strengthen the bio-war Treaty, refusal to accept the International Criminal Court, the aggressive pursuit of the militarisation of space, and an unprecedented level of military expenditures. The heinous attacks on 9/11, together with the fear of use of weapons of mass destruction by ‘rogue states’, are given as the main reasons for the new Security Strategy. Of course, nobody will deny that these threats have to be taken seriously. But is the way the United States now intends to deal with them really the best way, or could this be counterproductive and even lead to much greater problems?

Furthermore, are these the only motives for the now proposed aggressive approach to world affairs? The military build-up has been going on for several years. And in the important document of the United States Space Command, *Vision 2020*, it is clearly spelt out that Full Spectrum Dominance is the objective, in order to protect American interests and

investments. Neo-conservative groups, concerned about the possibility of maintaining the American way of life in a turbulent world in which the gap between rich and poor is widening, launched the Project for a New American Century. Their Report was already drawn up in 2000 by Dick Cheney, Ronald Rumsfeld and others. It envisages a global *Pax Americana* in order to safeguard national security and economic interests (oil!). It advocates an aggressive grand strategy, based on a military posture which it would be impossible to challenge.

The new National Security Strategy not only undermines the United Nations but also constitutes a threat to world peace. Loyal allies should therefore speak out frankly and not hide their misgivings for fear of hurting big brother. This applies in particular to Europe, which owes so much to the great American nation, which came twice to its rescue during two world wars. Genuine solidarity, however, does not imply a meek endorsement of a line of action which will lead to a destabilisation of international relations and an inadequate approach to pressing world problems. But critical observations should be accompanied by suggestions of a more promising, multilateral approach. It is in this constructive spirit that the following analysis of some of the main points is made.

The security situation

The post Cold War period indeed poses new threats. These are, however, not limited to Terrorism and Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD), to which so much attention is given in the document. There are many other formidable threats to human security such as poverty, underdevelopment and the progressive destruction of our natural environment. What does security mean to well over a billion people who now suffer from poverty, hunger, disease, and the lack of basic health and educational facilities?

The present accent on military means is not only morally repugnant but also ignores the interconnectedness of the various threats to human security. It is a fatal illusion to think that security nowadays can be assured by the present emphasis on armed forces. The world has changed since the terrible events of 9/11. Unfortunately, political thinking still lags behind and fails to recognise three closely inter-linked and basic facts:

- the extreme vulnerability of modern society
- the apocalyptic destructive potential of modern arms and terrorist actions
- the interdependence in a global world, obliging us to practise justice and solidarity.

Confronting the manifold world-wide challenges to security requires a new approach, implying a basic correction of the momentous imbalance in the allocation of scarce resources.

The struggle against terrorism and the threat of weapons of mass destruction

At present, the emphasis is put on military means. Of course, there is a need for special security measures as well as a limited use of military means – within an

international context – to eliminate terrorist networks. But great care should be taken to avoid actions which could be counterproductive; yes, even increasing the number of terrorists! In dealing with the complex phenomenon of terrorism, a wide range of measures will be necessary. Serious attention should be given to addressing the causes of terrorism. The document, however, is rather reluctant to touch on this aspect. It limits itself to the observation that poverty does not make poor people into terrorists, although it recognises that poverty, weak institutions and corruption can make weak states vulnerable to terrorists networks. It is significant that even a hardliner like Brzezinski is pleading to focus on the political roots of terrorism.

Competing for peace

President Bush, in his accompanying letter to the National Security Strategy, announces a new approach in international affairs. He rightly sees an historic opportunity to build a world where great powers compete in peace, instead of continually preparing for war. But, frankly speaking, is this not rather a cynical statement of the President of a nation which has not only succeeded in building up a military potential of grotesque proportions – capable of fighting several major wars at the same time – but also continues to invest vast resources in a further build up? How can one talk about ‘competing for peace’ with well over \$400 billion in military expenditure and only about \$10 billion for official development aid? Even the proposed 50 per cent increase of this minimal amount will not alter much the perception that the United States – with its 0.1 per cent of gross national product for overseas development aid – is lagging way behind the United Nations objective of 0.7 per cent!

Indeed, a new approach towards global security, an effective competition for peace, is urgently needed. This should not only involve a drastic reshuffling of resources, but also lead to a revision of trade, agricultural and fishery policies affecting nations in the process of development. ‘Competing for peace’ should imply a critical reappraisal of our approach towards the problem of poverty and underdevelopment and a preparedness to adjust policies, whenever the legitimate interests of the poorer nations are harmed. This should also bring to an end the hypocrisy of many developed nations who, insisting on open markets from developing countries, keep their own markets closed to products from developing nations.

Pre-emption and counter-proliferation

The readiness to resort to military violence in confronting the threats of terrorism and rogue states gives rise to great concern. In particular, there is the notion that the United States is prepared to impose its will through the use of military power, whenever this is considered to be necessary for defence or the protection of its interests. President Chirac has rightly drawn attention to the dangerous consequences of this approach. Indeed, if one nation sets the example, others will be tempted to follow, claiming a similar right to interfere. Instead of reinforcing

the international security regime, we risk falling back into an international jungle.

The statement that deterrence and containment are no longer adequate to deal with the new security threat may apply to terrorists, but even a rogue state will think twice before considering an attack on a superpower.

A coalition among the great powers

The National Security Strategy acknowledges ‘There is little of lasting consequence that the USA can accomplish in the world without the sustained cooperation of its allies and friends in Canada and Europe’. This, however, will not be facilitated by the imposition of American policies provoking irritation and frustrations. It also remains to be seen whether ‘coalition building’ with Russia, China and India has been made easier after this analysis of their achievements and differences, telling them – from a superior position – what remains to be done. Indicative of the proposed way of functioning of this coalition is the phrase ‘consultations yes, but we will not hesitate to act alone if we consider this necessary’. The same resolve we find in Secretary of Defence Rumsfeld’s statement ‘The mission determines the coalition, we don’t allow coalitions to determine the mission’.

Repeatedly mention is made in the document of the need to establish a balance of power in support of freedom. But how should this be realised when it is made clear from the outset that the United States does not allow any challenge to American leadership? No other powers will be permitted to match them. ‘Our forces will be strong enough to dissuade potential adversaries from pursuing a military build-up in hopes of surpassing, or equalling, the power of the United States.’

‘Balance of power’ was a popular notion in bygone centuries. It has led to many bloody wars. With the founding of the United Nations it was hoped to create a different international order, offering a better perspective for peace and justice.

The role of Nato

Although the core mission – collective defence of the transatlantic alliance – remains, it becomes clear from the National Security Strategy that Nato’s relevance for the United States depends on the development of new structures and capabilities enabling it to carry out ‘appropriate combat contributions in coalition warfare’, wherever necessary. The future of Nato clearly depends on meeting a whole list of requirements, among them the pressing demand for a substantial increase of defence budgets! ‘If Nato succeeds in enacting these changes, the rewards will be a partnership as central to the security and interests of its member states as was the case during the Cold War.’

The reorientation and enlargement of Nato will be decided during the summit meeting in Prague, at the end of November 2002. Here, emphasis will be placed on its military character, in particular the capabilities/preparedness to operate

anywhere in the world. But do the European partners realise that the proposed Nato intervention force implies the full political responsibility for these actions, even if their active contribution may be rather modest? Certainly, the transatlantic partnership is very important, but not at any price! Differences between the United States and European nations do exist, not only in the appreciation of the international situation but also in the economic field. Is it really in the European interest to move from a collective defence organisation towards an instrument in the hands of the United States for military interventions elsewhere in the world, particularly in a set-up in which the possibilities to influence the decision-making process are rather limited?

Of crucial importance for the future of the Atlantic Alliance would be a common deliberation in Prague about the present concept of security. Excessive attention is still given to building up a position of military strength, assuming that this is the best way to safeguard national interests. This, however, ignores the substantial threats to security posed by pressing world problems requiring non-military means. Means which will never become available without a drastic revision of priorities in spending as world-wide military spending stands in no comparison with the means available for addressing urgent world problems. The imbalance is striking!

Freedom

Freedom is – as President Bush rightly states – indeed a great achievement and an essential element for human development. It should, however, always be embedded in an ethical context. What is urgently needed, therefore, at this critical moment, is a creative dialogue on the common path towards a just and peaceful world order. An order based on humane values such as respect for life, justice, tolerance, solidarity and compassion. This should now be the common challenge, not only for governments but also for citizens, non-governmental organisations and religions, both in the United States of America and Europe.

Conclusion

In the National Security Strategy, two lines come together. A deep sense of insecurity, yes even genuine fear, is meeting with a strong awareness of unprecedented power. It has resulted in placing exclusive trust in American strength, not in the United Nations. If this world is going to survive, a far greater imaginative effort has to be made to create the conditions for peace. The challenge of President Bush to ‘compete for peace’ has to be taken up. This should not, however, lead to a greater reliance upon the unilateral use of military means, but to a far greater common effort to address major world problems, involving a radical reallocation of scarce resources.

A structural reform of the United Nations is also urgently needed, in order to bring this Organisation in to line with the profound changes which have taken place since its founding. Our world is in dire need of strong and efficient global and regional institutions.

Unilateralism – now presented as American Internationalism – is bound to lead to deep irritation, yes, stubborn resistance, even from traditional allies. Although the United States, with its overwhelming military power, is capable of eradicating every nation on this planet, it should realise that security can only be obtained on the basis of a just and sustainable world order. Trying to keep control of the world while striving to maintain a morally and politically unacceptable social and economic situation, will inevitably lead to a fatal explosion. Unilateral imperial leadership, in our highly interdependent world, is an anachronism!

The proclaimed *Pax Americana* will not enhance security, but instead endanger world stability. It will be fraught with a great deal of turmoil and suffering. It will prove to be a *fata Morgana!*

**Don't attack
IRAQ**

**Let's have a war on
POVERTY**



John Cogger
president

Bob Crow
general secretary