

THE MCDUGAL LECTURE: NATIONAL STRATEGY, COLLECTIVE SECURITY, AND THE GLOBAL COMMON

SENATOR GARY W. HART*

The answer we give to three questions will largely determine whether the United States will flourish or decline in the 21st century. First, will we anticipate events or merely react to them? Second, will we form new alliances to address new realities? Third, how rapidly will we adapt to transformational change? These questions share an assumption: the world is changing and it is changing fast. Our national predisposition, however, has been to rely on traditional institutions and policies and to use them to address unfolding history on our own timetable.

We are also inclined to employ a simple, all-encompassing, central organizing principle as a substitute for a national strategy. During the second half of the twentieth century that principle was “containment of communism.” After 9/11 it became “war on terrorism.” Unfortunately, the period in between, the largely peaceful and prosperous 1990s, was not used to develop a comprehensive strategic approach to an almost totally different new century that was emerging.

One lone effort represents the exception. In January 2001, the U.S. Commission on National Security for the 21st Century produced a road map for national security for the first quarter of this century. It was almost totally ignored and, one decade later, of its fifty specific recommendations only one—the creation of a Department of Homeland Security—has been adopted.

There are reasons for our lassitude, our false sense of security, and our reliance on reaction. Between 1812 and 2001 our continental home was not attacked. And because we are a large island nation, we have felt ourselves to be invulnerable. Our economic expansion between the end of World War II and the first oil embargo of 1974 created a very large, productive, and secure middle class. We have possessed economic and military superiority for more than half of a century.

For most of our history, strategic thinking and planning, especially on the grand scale, has been an enterprise confined largely to the academy. Instead, our policymakers would deal with events as they arose. Further, as a dominant power

* Senator Gary W. Hart, a retired U.S. Senator (1975-1987), was a co-chair of the U.S. Commission on National Security for the 21st Century. Since retiring, he has focused on international law and business as a strategic advisor to major U.S. corporations, and as a lecturer at Oxford, Yale, and the University of California. Currently, he is Wirth Chair Professor at the University of Colorado and Distinguished Fellow at the New America Foundation. These remarks substantially follow the McDougal Lecture that Senator Hart gave at the 44th Annual Sutton Colloquium on November 5, 2011 at the University of Denver, Sturm College of Law, but the editors have made some necessary changes for the print version.

in the nation-state era, we could always try to rely on protectionism and tightened borders to keep the turbulent world at bay. No longer. Isolation and a policy of reaction are impossible in the 21st century.

I. HISTORIC REVOLUTIONS AND NEW REALITIES

Multiple revolutions will continue to remake the world for decades to come. Globalization—the internationalization of finance, commerce, and markets—is making national boundaries economically redundant. Notice the mounting, unresolved struggles within the Eurozone. Further, information has replaced manufacturing as the economic base of our nation, and it is furiously integrating global networks. Together, globalization and information are eroding the sovereignty of nation-states. And this erosion has contributed to the transformation of war, and the changing nature of conflict.

As the Arab Spring has demonstrated, the state no longer possesses the ability to control the free flow of information. Also the nation-state no longer possesses the monopoly on violence that was the principal product of the Westphalian settlement in the mid-17th century. On September 11, 2001, the most powerful nation on earth could not guarantee the protection of its citizens. A world accustomed to a two dimensional chess board suddenly found that a third dimension had crystalized. Our nation had organized its international relations on the plane of the nation-state. In a heart-beat we are now forced to recognize the new dimension represented by the stateless nation.

In large part because of these multiple political, economic, and social revolutions, a host of new realities characterize the 21st century. These include: failed and failing states; mass south-north migrations; proliferation of weapons of mass destruction; the rise of ethnic nationalism and religious fundamentalism; the emergence of tribes, clans, and gangs as alternatives to the nation-state; the threat of pandemics; energy interdependence; climate change; and many other new phenomena.

It might be argued that this plethora of new realities dictates a wholly pragmatic, case-by-case response. It might better be argued, however, that now more than ever the United States requires a grand strategy that seeks to consistently apply its powers and resources to the achievement of its large purposes over time. That was the definition of grand strategy provided by Basil Liddell Hart following World War II. A new grand strategy is required because the new realities I have listed share two qualities: first, they cannot be adequately addressed by military means; and, second, they cannot be solved by one nation alone.

Further, as events accelerate, response times shorten. Once a threat is immediate, deliberation formation of ad-hoc responses and coalitions, and sifting through alternatives all become luxuries. In this century events and their repercussions will not wait for us to organize ourselves and our allies. A strategy of ad-hoc reaction will not work. This being true, deduction alone dictates a strategy that is internationalist, one that appeals to the common interests of the like-minded, that is to say democratic-nations; one that anticipates, and one that

requires burden-sharing among those who occupy a global commons. For it is the notion of a global commons, both actual and virtual, that must characterize America's 21st century grand strategy. National goals now can be achieved only through increased international integration and collaboration.

II. ELEMENTS OF A NATIONAL STRATEGY: THE GLOBAL COMMONS

Three guiding principles might structure such a U.S. strategy: economic innovation, networked sovereignty, and integrated security. First, the United States cannot play a constructive global leadership role in organizing the virtual global commons without a fundamentally restructured economy. Global diplomatic engagement and international security cannot be financed with borrowed money. Neither true security nor leadership can be founded on debt. The only way for the United States to reliably pay for its international engagement and its security is by revenue it generates through its own creative economic activity.

For the time being, the United States will remain superior in economic, political, and military terms. But we can maintain our leadership position over time only through economic innovation and creativity. We cannot continue to finance our military establishment with its far-flung operations—including in two current wars—by borrowing money from the Chinese and from future generations.

Though it is becoming a somewhat worn theme, it is nonetheless true: we must invest public funds and private capital in science and technology, our universities and laboratories, corporate research, and multiple facets of innovation both to drive our own economic expansion and to market our innovations to the world. Through the realignment of fiscal incentives and disincentives, the United States must transform itself from a debtor, consuming nation to a creditor, producing nation. Governments and peoples around the world will find an economically creative U.S. an attractive model to follow. That attraction ensures U.S. international leadership. That leadership can organize the security of the global commons.

Second, founding America's role in the world on the notion of a global commons requires identifying common threats *before* they become toxic, and it means identifying common interests requiring common pursuits in advance of those threats. The primary resistance to the notion of a global commons is located in the concept of national sovereignty. But, as NATO prosed following World War II and throughout the Cold War, shared security is not a threat to national identities and notions of self-governance.

There are a number of illustrations of how the security of the commons might work. First, the public health services of advanced nations can be networked through common databases and communications systems to identify and quarantine viral pandemics before they spread, and can be used to organize medical response teams and regional stockpiles of immunization agents to facilitate containment. Second, an international constabulary force can be created, possibly under NATO auspices, to manage failing states and tribal conflicts while diplomats negotiate restructuring agreements. Rwanda, Darfur, and Kosovo in the

past, and Somalia, Sudan, and Libya today all suggest conflicts that could have been anticipated and might be managed with much less loss of life.

Third, the existing International Atomic Energy Agency could be strengthened to become the indispensable agency for inspection of suspected manufacturing and stockpiling of weapons of mass destruction. Its mandate should be enforced and expanded, as it was not in Iraq, by the U.S. and the international community. Fourth, it is not too soon to design an administrative and enforcement mechanism for an international treaty on carbon reduction: a climate treaty will not be self-enforcing.

Fifth, the most unstable region of the world, the Persian Gulf, is the source of one quarter of U.S. oil imports and a substantial amount of the importing world's supplies. Currently, the U.S. is the *de facto* guarantor of those oil supplies as well as of the broader sea lanes of communications. As a loose consortium of nations with shipping interests now seeks to control piracy off the Somali coast, so a more tightly-knit consortium should share responsibility for policing the Persian Gulf and guaranteeing all importing nations' oil supplies.

All these issues, and many more, represent the world of the 21st century, much more a global commons than a hodge-podge of fractious nations and percolating conflicts in constant tension. Stable nations will increasingly find common cause in reducing and where possible eliminating local conflicts through threat reduction and confinement—*before* they mutate and become toxic.

The central principle at work here is “networked sovereignty,” the willingness of participating nations to link their governing agencies and institutions with those of other friendly nations. Nations, especially powerful nations, will continue to arm themselves. But they will find it appealing, politically and financially, to network their military assets in pursuit of common security interests. As NATO represents the triumph of collective security in a Cold War century, new realities now require new alliances beyond the capabilities that NATO represents.

Forming new alliances with emerging regional power centers offers several advantages. Regional powers—China, India, Russia—should be made responsible partners rather than antagonists or rivals. Identifying mutual and collective security interests with the U.S. and formalizing a collective approach to securing these interests empowers regional leaders further, and signals that the U.S. respects their legitimate concerns.

Formal regional security alliances create diplomatic and administrative structures that anticipate, rather than react to, new realities and threats in their respective regions. Thus, a third pillar of America's 21st century strategy is integrated security. While a creative economy provides the resources, we pursue our global security in and through the global commons which we lead. A strong consortium of twenty to thirty nations can anticipate and minimize threats from non-military realities and can confine local conflicts before they become viral.

Nations not sharing democratic principles and institutions will find it profitable to begin to adopt these principles and institutions as the price of shelter under the security umbrella of the global commons. Political accommodation to enter the commons will more than pay for itself in enhanced shared security,

including protection from pandemics, control of dangerous weapons, climate stabilization, isolation of terrorism, guaranteed oil supplies, and stabilization of disintegrating states.

For example, there is every reason to create what I have called a “zone of international interest” in the Persian Gulf whereby a collection of major oil importing nations guarantees continued distribution of petroleum resources from the region regardless of almost inevitable instability within and among producing states. There are many reasons for having an international rapid deployment force to intervene in failing states both to prevent civil wars and, if necessary, to create a security environment in which diplomats can manage a peaceful restructuring of nations. Likewise, if climate damage creates massive dislocations due to increased coastal water levels, decreased water supplies, and crop dislocations—as predicted by senior retired military officers—the United States should now take leadership to create international institutions and capabilities to anticipate and limit the disruptions and instability these conditions will create.

A strategy of the global commons is anticipatory rather than reactive, appreciating that major disruptions will occur globally so rapidly that reliance on extended time to react is unrealistic. Diplomatic exchanges that took six months to transit between the United States and Europe at our founding, or six weeks a century ago, now take fewer than six seconds.

III. NATIONAL SECURITY IN THE 21ST CENTURY

Within the context of organizing the global commons as a diplomatic platform and security establishment, the United States will find it necessary to make several unilateral adjustments to its security policy to account for the new realities of the 21st century. The United States is an island nation not a continental power. As an island nation we will require greater maritime assets, both for increased open-ocean operations as well as closer-to-shore conflict resolution and rapid-insertion operations.

To achieve these and other security objectives, however, we must acknowledge the political limits represented by organizing our security operations on an outdated statutory base. The Cold War national security state was established by the National Security Act of 1947 that unified the Army, Navy, and the Marine Corps under a new Department of Defense, and added a new service, the U.S. Air Force. It established the Central Intelligence Agency and created the National Security Council. For sixty-four years, with some notable exceptions, that legislation has served us well.

But, as Thomas Jefferson famously wrote, to expect each generation to govern itself with the laws and policies of previous generations is to expect a man to wear the coat he wore as a lad. Times change, and laws and policies—as well as institutions and the human mind—must keep pace.

Historic nation-state wars, though always plausible, are declining. Irregular, unconventional warfare involving dispersed terrorist cells, stateless nations, insurgencies, and tribes, clans, and gangs are increasing dramatically. Pakistan—whose instability imperils regional and possibly global security—is threatened by

indigenous religious fundamentalists. Mexico is endangered by indigenous drug cartels that are *de facto* private armies. Iraq's and Afghanistan's ancient tribal and sectarian conflicts will continue for decades. Our massive military superiority cannot resolve these and a number of other conflicts by its sheer size and power.

Extended discussion on future security within the broader security community and public at large should encompass at least these questions: (1) what is the nature of the threats we face, and which of these require military response; (2) is the intelligence community properly coordinated and focused on emerging realities; (3) are new international coalitions needed for non-military concerns—such as failed states, radical fundamentalism, pandemics, climate degradation, energy dependence, and resource competition; and, (4) does our government require new legislative authority to achieve national security under dramatically changing conditions? All of these considerations, and more, should lead us to debate and adopt a new National Security Act for the 21st century. Oddly, no discussion of this necessity is taking place.

VI. CONCLUSION: A LONG-OVERDUE STRATEGY PROJECT

To summarize, a new century characterized by a host of new realities requires us to think anew—in other words, to think as creatively as the great statesmen who organized the post-World War II world between 1945 and 1948. Our new national strategy requires an economy based on innovative investment and creative productivity that will finance the diplomatic initiatives involved in organizing a 21st century global commons composed, at the outset, of democratic nations. That consortium's principle objective will be to anticipate non-military threats and unconventional conflict, and reduce their impacts. The United States will qualify to lead this new era of internationalism by revitalizing its economy and by strategically adapting its own statutory and institutional systems to the world of today and not the one of yesterday.

The net result of the comprehensive undertaking proposed here will be a 21st century grand strategy for the United States, underwritten by a new statutory base, that matches our economic, political, and military powers to the achievement of the large purposes embodied in our continued international leadership. The principal product of this strategy will be the establishment of a 21st century global commons to provide stability to the international community in this turbulent new century.