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Future of Global Security: Challenges and Strategies

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Introductory remarks:
The first point I would make is that assessing future global security challenges is more of an art than a science and therefore what is diagnosed must be viewed with a certain degree of scepticism when it comes to policy formulation.

The second general point I would make relates to the ways in which security challenges, and therefore risk, is calibrated. Our strategies in dealing with our challenges will have much to do with our calculations about the imminence of threat. We therefore must develop a 'horizon' for understanding global security challenges if we are to develop viable strategies for dealing with them.

For me then, the short-term, medium- and longer term have an operational value as much as conceptual value.

Global security challenges:
- In today's globalized world and interconnectedness, we will need to try and contain the impact of insecurities at regional level from escalating – to try and minimize their influence on global security, in other words. Most noteworthy amongst these, I would suggest are:

  In Africa – developments in the CAR, Zimbabwe, Kenya, Nigeria, Chad, Sudan, Somalia.

  In Latin America – disputes between Venezuela and its neighbours, succession in Cuba.

  In East and Southeast Asia – developments in Burma, North Korea, China-Taiwan relations.

  In South Asia – stability of Afghanistan and Pakistan, Pakistan-India relations.

  In Middle East & North Africa – lack of peace in Palestine, developments in Iran, Iraq, Lebanon and Palestine.

- Preparing for the changing relationship (and global role) between China and the United States.
- Preparing for the broad drift towards the 'Asianization' of the international system, and what this means for the global role of Western-created institutions (such as OECD, NATO, IMF, World Bank...).

- Containing the threats posed to the flexibility and integrity of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and the monitoring regime it has spawned.
- Preventing the proliferation of nuclear weapons and weapons know-how on the back of the scramble for nuclear technology and power.
- Not being able to create the basis for making energy sources and their use sustainable and affordable globally.
- Ensuring that elections do not become a short-cut for neo-authoritarianism and an alternative for real and meaningful political change – recent examples of degenerative electoral politics in Iran, Kenya, Venezuela and Zimbabwe suffice to demonstrate the point!
- Finding creative and inclusive responses to the planet's population explosion – in terms of food security and movement of people, if not the competition for the planet's finite resources.
- Finding as soon as possible realistic and fully costed responses to the impact of environmental change on our very existence.

Security challenges with regard to the MENA region:
- The fall-out from the region's failing, failed and fragile states – Iraq, Lebanon, Palestine, Sudan, Somalia – all fit this category.
- The impact of the region's two 'missionary states – Iran and Israel – on their wider environment.
- Managing Iran's regional rise and the knock-on effect of this on the regional balance of power and also on Israel's strategic calculations.
- Proliferation of WMDs and weapons delivery systems.
- Radicalization through religious mobilization.
- The on-going crisis in Palestine and the tense relationship between Israel and Palestine.
- Overcoming the threat of Sunni-Shia divisions.
- Access to food and water supplies.

Strategies:
Many of these challenges do not have a simple or single solution to them. They are by definition inter-national and as such require a response at the international level. Responses to a degrading environment and climate change, for example, must take place at the international level, and with the full participation of all the key and main actors. In this context, I would suggest that there is much that can be learned from the EU states' responses to climate change – in terms of energy efficiency drives and diversification of energy sources to include an increasing proportion of renewable sources – as well as those of Japan and a number of US states (like California and New York).

Other challenges – like the rise of China and the changing relationship between the US and China as global actors, threats to the NPT regime, and the rise of electoral neo-authoritarianism – are matters that can be more readily managed through existing international instruments. We all have to accept and help in accommodating a rising China, providing that we are content that it plays by the established conventions of the international system. But whether we can convince China to fully accept and therefore champion the (largely Western-driven and Western-oriented) values of the same

international system is yet to be seen. It is in this regard that I wonder if we should not be thinking about the consequences for the international system of its gradual but inevitable 'Asianization'. The weight of the global system is shifting eastwards and this has to be managed, but also its wide-ranging consequences have to be incorporated into our discourses before we can usefully develop our strategies towards it.

I also think that the desire for reversing the apparently growing trend of electoral neo-authoritarianism is something that should be focused upon at the global level, but ultimately mediated at the regional level and through the empowerment of legitimate regional organizations. The international community has much to lose from the policies that will follow the establishment of such neo-authoritarian regimes and international institutions should therefore respond to this challenge through a mix of engagement and dialogue and containment. The principle of carrot, on the one hand, and solitary confinement, on the other, come to mind! But at their core, strategies must be based on even-handedness and transparency.

Of further particular concern also is the damage being done to the NPT regime in the course of the IAEA's efforts to moderate the disputes over Iran's and North Korea's nuclear programmes. The politicization of these disputes has challenged the integrity of the NPT as a global security instrument and has raised questions over the position of the IAEA with regard to aspirant nuclear states. North Korea's case is being managed, so the real worry is over Iran. Iran's fixation with being allowed to satisfy its 'rights' under the NPT, in the face of quite robust international concern and opposition is one side of this complicated coin; and the other is the United States' rather one-dimensional and apparently hypocritical response. These two actors are, it seems to me, in effect threatening to undermine the most essential element of the NPT regime, namely its flexibility, for the sake of their own narrow-minded political posturing. This stand-off will, more than likely, help fuel tensions and also the trend towards proliferation. It could also provide the impetus for military action.

Strategies with regard to the MENA region:
Strategies for dealing with the MENA region's most pressing challenges are already in place; the problem lies in their half-hearted or piece meal implementation. The full implementation of the Road Map with regard to Palestine, and that of Annapolis (and also the Arab peace plan) with regard to the Arab-Israeli conflict more broadly provide the clearest way forward. A just and lasting peace in this theatre will also help progress being made on other fronts. Lebanon and Syria will be co-opted into the process, which on the one hand will help in the stabilization of Lebanon, and on the other, encourage Syria to help in the healing of Iraq and Lebanon and also the building of a truly independent and viable Palestinian state.

Other regional challenges, like the rise of Iran and Sunni-Shia tensions, can only be managed through comprehensive dialogue at the regional level and also the creation of inclusive regional fora for mediating tensions of this kind.

More existential challenges, like proliferation and that of food and water security, are by their very nature over-arching problems and must therefore be addressed at a higher level. But it is the regional actors who must initiate the dialogue in the first place.

Finally, to reduce radicalization its root causes must be found. These are, to be sure, deep but are also apparent. The situations in Afghanistan, Palestine, Iraq, all help radicalization, but social, economic and cultural tensions across the MENA region also contribute; as indeed do the political or security vacuums in such strategically located countries as Somalia, Chad, Sudan, Iraq... In the absence of legitimate and authoritative central governments radical forces can roam these territories free and also freely recruit for their destructive causes. Without addressing the root causes of radicalization it is unlikely that we will be able to contain the terror that follows.

Final word:
We live in a complex, dangerous and interconnected world. As such many of the security challenges that emerge cannot be dealt with in isolation or without international input. Poverty, hunger, high fuel prices, crisis in the financial markets, danger of proliferation, war and conflict, these are all challenges for all of humanity and can potentially affect all of us.

In this situation, it is imperative that not only we learn how to identify the most immediate security challenges facing us but also appreciate how to prioritize dealing with them. And where and when we do decide to do something about them, or a crisis is foisted upon us that would need action, then our actions should be based on sound judgement – first – and implemented in accordance with international norms and in co-operation with as many of the varied stake-holders as possible. The one lesson that the experience of the last 15 years show us is that successful mitigation and mediation can only come through inclusivity in an interconnected and networked world.

END.

ABOUT THE SPEAKER:
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His recent book-length publications include:

Reform in the Middle East Oil Monarchies (co-editor) (Reading: Ithaca Press, 2008), 309pp, *Globalization and Geopolitics in the Middle East: Old Games, New Rules* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 258pp, *Iran and the Rise of its Neoconservatives* (with Mahjoob Zweiri) (London: I.B. Tauris, 2007), *The Middle East's Relations with Asia and Russia* (co-editor) (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2004), 166pp, *The Foreign Policies of Middle East States* (co-editor) (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2002), 380pp, *Iran's Security Policy in the Post-Revolutionary Era* (co-author) (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2001), 113pp, *Iran and Eurasia* (co-editor) (Reading: Ithaca Press, 2000), 221pp.