

Globalisation and Terrorism

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Contemporary history, it has been said, begins when those factors that are important in our own lives first began to take shape in our imagination. With the benefit of hindsight we can glimpse an intimation of the events of September 11 in a remarkable novel by Joseph Conrad which was published as long ago as 1906. Central to the story is a plot to blow up the Greenwich Observatory. Conrad was inspired to write the novel by a real event, an incident in Greenwich Park in 1894 in which a bomb exploded killing the anarchist sympathizer who was carrying it.

Conrad's book is set in London but it is a metropolis which is not at peace with itself. For London, the centre of the world in the early 20th century, harbors an anarchist cell whose members are intent on the destruction of the bourgeois way of life. Conrad captured its spirit in the person of Mr Vladimir, the shadowy puppet-master who uses the anarchists for his own cynical ends. Cynical or not, he is a true nihilist in spirit. In conversation with the double agent Verloc, Vladimir waxes lyrical. What is needed, he muses, is a set of outrages that must be sufficiently startling to astonish the bourgeoisie. What act of terror would disconcert them the most? Not an attempt on a crowned head or a President - that would be mere sensationalism; not a bomb in a church otherwise that might be construed wrongly as a crime against organised religion; not blowing up a restaurant and the people eating in it for that might be dismissed as a social crime, the act of a hungry man. Not an attack on the National Gallery for no-one in England would miss it. But what of an attack on reason? Pity it was impossible to blow up pure mathematics. The next best thing was zero longitude, on the one hand a very unreal concept, on the other something that was very real for the commerce and communications of a world centred on London. Such an outrage, Vladimir concludes, would be an act of ‘gratuitous blasphemy’ against the modern age.

Blasphemy is the vernacular of the weak. It is expressive, not instrumental for it is not intended to change the world. To be blasphemous in a secular or irreligious age an act of terror must be aimed at the civic religion of the hour. In this case the act was designed to strike at the heart of the heady confidence of Edwardian England in progress. As a ‘gratuitous’ or ‘meaningless’ act it challenged its invincible faith in the future.

Conrad's novel addresses the *anxiety* that all ‘senseless’ acts inspire in the complacent and sensible. Edwardian society was not frightened, or fearful of anarchism. It was anxious. Today the terrorist targets our anxiety in the risk societies we have become. For

we too find violence meaningless and irrational. Terrorists play on our uncertainties and anxieties; our anxiety about the side effects of our own technological advances, and in the case of September 11 our anxieties about the underside of globalisation. “For the foreseeable future”, claimed the US Defense Secretary a few years ago “there are few who will have the power to match us militarily ... but they will be dedicated to exploiting the weakness of our very strength”. The more globalised the more vulnerable we apparently become. As we introduce more sophisticated technology new risks proliferate at an exponential rate. The information technologies of the 1980s facilitate international crime and assist terrorism. And it is now a commonplace idea that the risks we face are more catastrophic than those of the past because they are global. We live in an age of globalisation.

Globalisation

We may not live yet in a single world society but every aspect of social reality is simultaneously undergoing globalization, witness the emergence of a world economy, a cosmopolitan culture, and the rise of international social movements. And this global inter-connectedness runs much deeper than the interdependence of states discussed in the 1950s when academics identified for the first time the rise of transnational organizations such as multinational corporations.

Globalisation also involves an increasing cultural awareness of global interconnectedness. It fosters the consciousness of the world as a single frame of reference. Global theorists like Roland Robertson have emphasized the ways in which the language of globalization captures the increasingly widespread conscious awareness of the interdependence of local ecologies, economies and societies.

Any definition of globalisation, however, presents us with a dilemma. Indeed, the word itself presents us with two problems: the first is the ‘global’; the second is the ‘-ization’. The implication of the first is that a single system of connection notably through capital and commodity markets and information flows and imagined landscapes (global civil society) has penetrated the entire globe; the implication of the second is that it is doing so now; that we have already entered a ‘global age’. Neither of these propositions is true.

Instead, what we are witnessing is the impact of globalisation on a series of existing global systems, such as the global market and global politics. The sum of these systems does not yet constitute a system itself. Instead, we should see globalization as a process which transforms without eradicating the institutions and features of the political landscape in which it is at work. It does not entail the end of territorial geography or ethnicity, much less so religion: these still co-exist in complex inter-relationships. It may be changing the nature of social structures such as the state and the nation but neither the state nor the nation have been replaced. And religion has a tenacious hold on the imagination especially of the Islamic world.

Secondly, not everyone is living through the global age. If Renato Ruggiero, the first Director General of the World Trade Organization (WTO), was right to describe globalization as a reality which 'overwhelms all others' we must still ask how 'real' it is for many people. For the impact of globalisation has been unequal: greater in the North than the South; in the younger generation than the older; in the professional class than manual workers. At present the gap between the globalised and the unglobalised is the greatest of all cultural divisions. It is much profound than any 'fault lines' between civilisations for it cuts across age, class and gender. Neither side understands the other. To the globalised the other often seems marginal; to the marginal, the globalised appear uncaring and exploitative. This difference is likely to be a growing source of tension in the future.

Globalisation and Terrorism

For a long time, however, globalisation was not discussed much, if at all, by the security community. Strategic concerns seemed remote from a world which had been conditioned to believe that the market was the source of contemporary history. The success with which the West achieved its material goals in the 1990s removed the impetus to enquire too deeply into the obverse side of globalisation: the discontents to which it gives rise and even more the strategies of the discontented. Just because war and its avoidance was the great topic of the twentieth century, many political economists argued, was no reason to expect that it would be of great interest in the twenty-first.

How quickly we forget the lessons of history, or the warnings it throws up. 'You may not be interested in war' warned Leon Trotsky, 'but war is certainly interested in you'. This was true for the victims of the 11 September World Trade Center attack. In that sense, Trotsky may have been speaking for our age as well as his own - a sobering thought.

The globalisation of terror has also changed in character as the world moves away from the state sponsored phenomenon of the 1980s. The statistics tell their own story. Between 1968-89 the incident rate of terrorism was 1,673 per year. Between 1990-6 there was an increase of 162% on the Cold War years (4,389 a year). The percentage increase would now be closer to 200% given the escalating number of conflicts since 1996. More alarming is that the new terrorism is primarily conducted against citizens not governments. Fifty thousand people died in terror attacks between 1990-96 (according to the Rand Corporation) and the main reason people are targeted is that terrorists no longer distinguish between limited and restricted uses of violence.

Secondly, globalisation is encouraging religious fundamentalism. Thirty years ago there was not a single religious cult or religious terrorist movement in the world. As recently as 1980 only two of the world's 64 known terrorist groups were animated by religious belief. Since then Shia Moslem groups have accounted for a quarter of all terrorist related deaths.

Thirdly it is also producing new network centred terrorist organisations. Thus Al-Qaeda is largely a franchising agency which functions through religious internationalism and state-less networks rather than through the Cold War mechanism of sponsoring states.

The majority of terrorist movements in the Middle East are not transnational despite links with similar movements in neighbouring countries. But some like Al-Qaeda are truly global in their reach. The assassins responsible for the death of the Afghan warlord, Ahmed Shah Masood prior to the September 11 attack were Algerians with Belgian passports who had visas to enter Pakistan issued in London. The death of Masood shows how radical Islam does not reject the means of globalisation, only its message. Paradoxically, while denouncing globalisation it relies on it to reconstruct a Moslem community beyond national boundaries. Its use of English, the internet and satellite phones is an authentic product of a modern globalised world, even if they serve a movement that is fundamentally in conflict with it. And this is particularly true of radical Islam.

Radical Islam indeed thrives on globalisation: on Saudi and Gulf state funding for mosque building programmes and the rapid spread of information and communications technology. Both empower the *ummah* (the world wide Moslem community). But for radical Islam (as opposed to the mainstream Moslem world) the message is different; they wish to construct, not a Kantian cosmopolitan order, but a world order (*al nizam al-islami*) based on fundamentalist values and the duty of *jihad* (religious war).

As Anatol Lieven contends, the danger to world order comes not from ruling elites that are integrated into world society but those numerous social and economic groups who for whatever reasons (culture, history, geography) are unable to take part in the global success and produce new political pathologies which are profoundly anti-global. 'This is the dark side of the global village – the ability of that village's alienated minorities to hit out at their perceived oppressors over huge distances'. Some of these groups have proud cultural traditions which make it difficult for them to accept second class status. Others have strong fighting traditions that give them a distinctive edge in certain kinds of warfare. And religion gives them an *expressive* instrument such as suicide bombing.

This is one of the paradoxes of globalisation. It engenders terrorism: the wish to protect traditional cultures; it creates a sense of powerlessness for those left on a planet where there is no viable alternative to the orthodoxies of the World Bank. It focuses even more attention on America and 'Americanisation' seeping out of the satellites and cable networks like toxic waste. It creates, when it works, strong opposition to violence between states and even between communities, and so to a lower incidence of *instrumental* violence for political ends. But it also engenders the need for *expressive violence* (ritualistic, symbolic and communicative). The expressive violence of the World Trade Center attack had meaning for the victim (anxiety and humiliation) and for the perpetrator (status, prestige and reputation in the Islamic world). And the choice of target, the World Trade Center, a global icon, shows how globalisation gives expressive violence greater symbolic force than ever.

Catastrophic Terrorism

Writing in the 1950s the German philosopher, Karl Jaspers concluded that World War Two had produced a single history for the world. Until then, history had been ‘a dispersed field of unconnected ventures... now it is the totality which has become the problem and the task’. Jaspers was writing in the shadow of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The threat of nuclear war posed a true existential crisis for it involved the globe for the first time.

Fifty years later Jaspers’ fears of global catastrophe – on one level – seem unfounded. One of the great successes of the Cold War era (and perhaps even of the Cold War itself) was the absence of weapons proliferation. The Superpowers managed not only to avoid using nuclear weapons against each other; they also succeeded in persuading the majority of countries to sign the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and a long list of international agreements intended to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons. After fifty years the most striking feature of the nuclear age is that there are so few nuclear states, far fewer, in fact, than predicted by virtually every expert and policy-maker at the time. Of the 31 nations that started down the nuclear path, 22 changed course and renounced the bomb. More importantly, the rate of proliferation has actually declined. After peaking in the 1960s, the number of new nations joining the nuclear club each decade has fallen steadily and several of the nations that built or inherited nuclear weapons – South Africa, Ukraine, Belarus, Kazakhstan – have chosen to renounce them.

Indeed, in the ten years since the end of the Cold War there have been no new nuclear states. India and Pakistan acquired their nuclear weapons capabilities in the 1970s and 1980s. Iraq and North Korea were near-misses but in the earlier decades the rate of near-misses was even higher. Indeed despite all the talk about the dangers of the post-Cold War era the past ten years have been marked more by renunciation than proliferation. Simply put, the absence of widespread proliferation by states may be one of the great successes of globalisation.

But in recent years the WMD issue has acquired much greater global significance because of the very success of non proliferation. For the more obvious US predominance the more nuclear weapons may be used for asymmetric purposes. The former Indian Army Chief of Staff General Sundarji is reported to have said that the principle lesson of the Gulf War is that if a state intends to take on the United States it should first acquire nuclear weapons. And there is now a global trade in nuclear material for states or non-state actors that wish to do precisely that. It is this development which justifies Daniel Bell’s prediction in 1980 that proliferation would become one of the most likely sources of ‘future world disorder’.

And it is the threat from terrorist movements that is perhaps, the most alarming. Unfortunately, the nuclear dimension is the least of it. During the 1990s concerns arose

that terrorists might use chemical, biological or radiological agents. In the 1980s terrorist groups could have developed such weapons but chose not to do so, apparently calculating that their use would make public support for their cause less likely. But far from steering away from such agents, the new terrorists might find these weapons attractive precisely because they can kill tens of thousands. This was the goal, fortunately unrealised, of Aum Shinrikyo's chemical attack on the Tokyo subway in 1995. Indeed, there's evidence that some new terrorist groups, including Al-Qaeda, have tried to acquire biological and chemical agents. Moreover in the 1990s information about them became widely available on the internet.

In the wake of the September 11 World Trade Center attack the World Health Organisation (WHO) felt it 'prudent', not 'alarmist', to bring forward the release of its report that had been due later in the year on preparing for biological or chemical attacks. The organisation thought it important to warn governments of the potential danger. As a spokesman for the WHO was quoted as saying with regard to a terrorist small pox attack, 'the unthinkable is no longer unthinkable'. The risks we run are greater than ever.

The Risk Society and the War against Terrorism

It is a commonplace belief of our times that we think we are subject to risks that are potentially more catastrophic because they are global. Risk became central in our thinking and behaviour once we entered a global society. For globalisation has drawn us out of our self-contained national or local communities into a larger world which offers none of the old protections. It is impossible to offer private insurance against many, if not most, of the risks we now face; the market sets us free of the local but leaves us exposed to the global.

The collapse of concepts such as the New International Economic Order in the 1980s, and the New World Order in the 1990s, merely confirms an innate scepticism that risks can be eliminated or even significantly reduced. Instead, all we can do is manage them. We no longer seek to insure against them by constructing new world orders or putting together new security systems as we did in the past. The principle military rationale is now 'preventive defence' against a myriad of dangers, most of them abstract and undefined. 'There is a universe of potentials we have to deal with', declared the US Homeland Security Chief, Tom Ridge, after the World Trade Center attack. 'When I was coming up', claimed George W Bush on the campaign trail in 2000, 'it was a dangerous world and we knew exactly who they were. It was us versus them and it was clear who them was – Today, we're not so sure who they are but we know they're there'. In his tortured syntax, Bush expresses the abiding reality of the hour.

Compare this with his father's speech on the campaign trail in 1988 when he promised the American people that the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) would offer them 'an exit from history'. In those (now remote) days, it seemed possible, to offer people a

permanent solution to the problem of nuclear war. Today there are no solutions, only risk management strategies. What George Bush offered in 1991, a 'new world order', is no longer on anyone's lips.

Instead of managing security, we manage insecurity (both nuclear proliferation and terrorism) through *pre-emptive* action. In this world of uncertainties and risks the only option open to governments is to police the world. And in a globalised age we see the emergence of a new concept of policing which takes its cue from the domestic model, where people have moved from 'community policing' to 'policing communities of risk'. In many western societies 'disciplinary' techniques are no longer aimed at altering individual behaviour. Policing is no longer corrective or transformative. We have replaced the old moral and clinical description of criminals with a risk one: cost. There is no longer concern with treating individual offenders or even rehabilitating them, but instead of classifying groups according to the dangers they pose to society and managing them accordingly. The target group is no longer the criminal but the community of potential victims. Hence the interest in 'zero-tolerance' policing, 'moving on' criminals or potential criminals, and the constant surveillance of those potential criminals, individuals or groups, in order to make policing more effective.

If constant surveillance has become the vehicle of risk management at home, it is also the vehicle of global management. Where rogue states (rather than situations) are identified they are designated members of 'risk groups' and are subject to constant surveillance by satellite. Various described as 'rogues', 'pariahs', 'outlaws' and most recently 'states of concern' they are all part of the new strategic lexicon. Iraq heads the list but others are not far behind. The surveillance of Northern Iraq is aptly named 'Operation Northern Watch'.

Air power is the preferred medium by which risks are policed. It began with the No-fly zones in northern Iraq above the 36th parallel, and in southern Iraq below the 33rd. Both were established after the 1991 war to protect the Marsh Arabs and Shi'ite Moslems in the south and the Kurds in the north from Iraqi reprisals after uprisings in both areas of the country had failed to unseat Saddam Hussein.

No-fly zones are justified by UNSCR 688 (5 April 1991) which deems the Iraqi repression of these minorities "a threat to international security". In the course of time the air missions have become less an instrument for protecting the Kurds (they have little impact on Iraqi actions on the ground) so much as constraining Saddam Hussein's freedom of action. By the end of the 1990s the US and Britain had launched 200,000 air sorties in all. By then the policing had become permanent. When Bush sanctioned the first air strike of his presidency in February 2001 he described the mission as 'routine'.

And when we do turn to the military option we do so to reduce the opportunities for bad behaviour, to prevent them from posing an even greater risk in the future. The style is one of containment, confinement and dissuasion. And since there is no end to the problems (as opposed to the enemies) we face, since there is no end in sight to nuclear

proliferation, managing insecurity will probably continue well into the future. It is the only insurance we have.

New Prudentialism

The war against terrorism raises another important issue. In 1997 the US' *National Security Strategy for a New Century* declared one of the principal aims of a security policy should be "to prevent, disrupt and defeat terrorist operations before they occur". This principle is embodied in environmental law. A variety of precautionary principles are in use ranging from soft to strong formulations. A relatively soft formulation appears in the 1992 *Rio Declaration on Environment and Development* which states that:

to protect the environment a precautionary approach should be widely applied by states according to their capabilities. Where there are threats of serious or irreversible damage, lack of full scientific certainty shall not be used as a reason for postponing cost-effective measures to prevent environmental degradation.

In other words, regulators can take cost-effective steps to prevent serious or irreversible harm even when there is no certainty that such harm will occur.

A stronger formulation is set out in the 2000 *Cartagena Protocol on Bio-safety* which states that:

lack of scientific certainty due to insufficient... knowledge regarding the extent of the potential adverse effects of living, modified organisms on the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity in the party of import, taking also into account risks to human health, shall not prevent that party from taking a decision as appropriate with regard to the import of the living modified organisms in question....to avoid or minimise such potential adverse effects.

This latter formulation drops the requirement that prevention be cost-effective and shifts the burden of proof for safety onto exporting countries.

When dealing with threats such as terrorism risk communities too may find the 'precautionary principle' attractive, the consensus that whenever a threat arises it is important that precautions be taken against it. The case made by the United States for attacking Taliban specifically invoked the concept of 'anticipatory self-defence' (the right to defend itself against anticipated attacks in the future, a new concept that many Americans would like to see enshrined in international law). Thus, the importance attached to positive proof that bin Laden was responsible for the World Trade Center attack which led NATO to invoke Article Five of the Washington Treaty for the first time in its history may no longer be required in the future.

The problem is compounded by the fact that risk communities are pre-disposed to engage not in deterrence but in dissuasion. States may be increasingly inclined to threaten others in a different way from the past: not so much 'if you do this such an action will happen but if you don't do this the consequences could be dire'. In a proactive and pre-emptive age the alliance may no longer react to threats, so much as attempt to pre-empt them. Whether the rest of the world could ever be brought round to endorse this – on all or any occasions - is a moot question.

Policing Risks at Home

I have already alluded to one aspect of risk management in our increasingly anxious society. As we grow more anxious as witnessed by the exponential rate in the private protection business, so policing has changed its ethos. And not always for the better. In the war against terrorism a whole series of new issues have been thrown up which bear upon the future of liberal democracy. For there is a danger that in addressing the security lapses that allowed September 11 to happen we compromise our own liberty. Already we have seen a tightening up of asylum procedures across the European Union; restrictions on immigration; special military courts in the United States and draconian anti-terrorist legislation in Britain that critics claim strike at the heart of the government's commitment to civil society.

Given our increased sense of vulnerability we have to ensure an adequate balance between improving security which may require necessary restrictions on some civil liberties, and ensuring that civil liberties themselves are not compromised. Perhaps, the best way to protect them is to be prepared to cope with the modern world, to better buttress our defences and that means working on things that do not inhibit the latter: such as liability laws or tort law practices which have prevented the government in the United States from putting in more wire taps, for example. Do such legal adjustments put our civil liberties at risk or are our civil liberties more at risk when defences fail, and their failure impels the state (and often the citizen) to demand restrictive practices such as martial law?

But there is another question still and it was raised in a previous conflict: the Cold War. To take one example, from an early period in that struggle, Cord Meyer, a retired Marine Officer, published an article in the June 1947 issue of The Atlantic entitled 'What Price Preparedness?', and elaborated on what was involved in the strategy of 'peaceful preparedness for war'. The United States, he warned, might have to maintain the world's largest arsenal of atomic weapons, it might have to guard against "atomic or biological sabotage" by creating "the most efficient intelligence system in the world" and "a very large security police armed with sweeping powers to search and arrest". The irony would then be that in preparing for its showdown with the Soviet Union the United States might become like its enemy, a regimented state. The idea that the Cold War confrontations could transform America in such a way that the nation might come to resemble its opponent had been expanded much earlier by Lewis Mumford, a consistent opponent of

state power, and other critics mostly, but not entirely, on the left, who were fearful that the United States might become a national security state.

The same concern should animate us now. Back in the 1980s analyst made much of Egypt's new anti-terrorist law, an act that was entitled 'The Defence of the Home Front'. Today the United States has a Chief of Homeland Defense and may soon have a CINC – or Commander-in-Chief – assigned to the United States or North America as a whole. It must be careful in the legislation it enacts so as not to infringe its own freedoms – and that remains true for other countries as well.

Conclusion

'The Third World War began on Tuesday September 11 on the East Coast of the United States' – so began the French magazine L'Express two days later. But judging the historical impact of any event is difficult and made more so when we live so close to events: even more so when we live through them. Whatever the long term implications of the World Trade Center attack our societies are changing as they respond to new threats or old threats in new forms, or as they are forced to reconceptualise security policy and even the defence of civil liberties at home. The problem is clearly identified or identifiable. The solutions are not always and that will be the main task of this conference.

At least there is some hint of optimism in Conrad's tale. Near the end of the book we read "the thought of a mankind as numerous as the sands of the seashore" appal the anarchists. There were too many ordinary people intent on going about their lives for them to be vanquished. In countering terrorism in the future the trick is to ensure that the ordinary lives continue. It is the ordinary person, after all, that the state exists to protect.