
Security Cooperation 2001 Conference

By

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[The following are excerpts of the remarks of the Honorable Henry J. Hyde presented to the Security Cooperation 2001 Conference, September 26, 2001.]



With the September 11, 2001 attack on the United States, we have once again been awakened to the reality that the U.S. has mortal enemies. The enemy does not desire compromise; they are not interested in negotiation. The U.S. suffering does not give them human pause; indeed, they celebrate it. They do not seek the U.S. mere defeat. They are intent on the U.S. destruction.

The United States' most immediate task is to hunt down and destroy those who participated in these cold-blooded assaults. However, because the U.S. purpose is not merely to extract revenge but to ensure its security, the U.S. cannot stop there. Instead, the U.S. goal must be to strike at and eliminate all those engaged in planning future horrors. The U.S. must accept that the U.S. has many implacable enemies in this world, and the U.S. must not shrink from doing what it needs to do disable or destroy them. I hope that the U.S. has taken that lesson to heart.

Without question, the U.S. was unprepared for what took place, despite the many warnings that now seem obvious in retrospect. The U.S. efforts must now concentrate on ensuring that it is fully prepared for whatever assaults may yet come. But in examining the reasons for the U.S. unpreparedness, one which seems particularly prominent to me is the false sense of security that has arisen from the U.S. enormous political, military, and economic strength. That great strength gave many the fatal illusion that the U.S. was invulnerable, that its enemies were vanquished, that it faced no real challengers, and that the U.S. was free to act or react as the we saw fit. The End of History, some termed it. But the U.S. unwillingness to deal with the world as it is, rather than as the U.S. hoped it might be, has greatly encouraged those who seek to do us harm. I fear the U.S. may have forgotten the great lesson of the past century: that the price for tolerating aggression is paid in blood and destruction.

The implications of this attack are so extensive that they will occupy the attention of the U.S. government and society for years to come. But in addressing the newly prominent threat posed by terrorism, the U.S. must not make the mistake of forgetting that the United States has many other interests around the world and that it faces many other threats. The U.S. may encounter many more unpleasant surprises unless we begin to prepare for them now.

Even as the U.S. reacts to this crisis, the larger question before us is how will we use the enormous power the U.S. currently possess to secure the future for our country and the generations to come. The wealth of opportunities the U.S. currently possess are not permanent; its choices may in fact become increasingly narrow as the world evolves. The U.S. may have once believed that it would always be above the fray, untouched and untouchable by the forces of destruction at work in this world. But that has now been demonstrated to be a dangerous illusion.

Once again, the United States agenda has been set for us instead of by us. Once again, the U.S. is responding to the world instead of shaping it.

The principal problem, the one which the U.S. must begin to address in a more disciplined manner, is that the U.S. has no long-term strategy, no practical plan for shaping the future and thereby no plan for advancing and defending our interests, a task that must include identifying and disabling our potential opponents before they can do us harm.

Nearly a decade has passed since the collapse of the Soviet Union, and without question the world is a vastly better place because of it. But as that empire fell, it took with it what had been the central organizing principle of our foreign policy for the last half-century. Now I have read and heard many learned discourses and debates on what the new U.S. agenda should be, but I confess that I have yet to see a compelling path identified, much less mapped out, regarding how the U.S. should proceed, how the U.S. should use the power it currently possess to bring into being the world that the U.S. might want.

Instead of a firm course, I see drift. Instead of shaping the evolution of events in pursuit of long-term objectives, the U.S. has been busy responding to problems as they arise, guided by an agenda that has been thrust upon the U.S. by circumstances rather than one the U.S. has it self constructed.

That is not to say that many splendid things have not been accomplished in the past decade—the dismantling of the Soviet empire and the liberation of the eastern half of Europe; the expansion of North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO); the passage of the *North American Free Trade Agreement*; the continued spread of democracy; the resolute defense of our allies and the containment of our enemies around the world.

But these and other successes cannot substitute for a long-term vision. Not only does the U.S. risk leaving the future to chance, the U.S. risk losing fundamental things it has grown accustomed to taking for granted. Let me illustrate my point with couple of examples.

I believe the U.S. is watching the beginnings of an unraveling of the Atlantic relationship. By the Atlantic relationship, I mean something more than just NATO. I mean the entire complex of connections between North America and Europe, the close identity of interests, that we and our allies have constructed out of the ashes of World War II. This relationship is the very foundation of the post-war international system, the irreplaceable center on which the stability of the globe depends. It is from this core that the democratic and economic revolution now transforming the world has spread.

That relationship is fraying. Slowly, quietly, it is being hollowed out, even as the responsible officials solemnly reaffirm their commitment.

Closer to home, there is Mexico. Our two countries have kept each other at arms length for virtually our entire histories, and both countries are the poorer for it. But we cannot escape the fate that geography has decreed for us; there is no other country on the planet which has the potential to affect us so broadly, so immediately. Whether or not our respective governments choose to cooperate, our societies have already begun to interweave themselves, and we are in the process of transforming one another. Mexico is currently undergoing the most hopeful revolution in its long history, the success or failure of which will have a profound impact on the United States. They cannot be allowed to fail.

Now, the President is to be congratulated for his understanding and recognition of Mexico's importance, signified by his use of the term "a special relationship" to characterize our ties, a

designation hitherto reserved only for our closest allies. But when I look more closely at how we actually intend to assist Mexico's entry into the ranks of the developed world, I have trouble identifying any guiding strategy on the United States part.

As for Asia, that giant continent veers between great hope and great chaos. China's rise to a world status commensurate with the immense resources of its people is a certainty. That rise, and the aspirations which must accompany it, cannot but impact the system the U.S. and our allies have brought forth and maintained in East Asia since World War II. The U.S. hope is that democracy will, in time, tame this potential challenge, but there is no guarantee that the U.S. will win that race, and the U.S. may be faced with difficult decisions much more quickly than our planners have assumed. In Asia, one can point to many areas of progress, and many areas of concern, and I have no doubt that the U.S. attention will be sorely taxed by the current and future problems that region will unfailingly produce. But again I ask: what is the U.S. long-term strategy toward this region? How does the U.S. goals there fit into its global objectives?

A similar inquiry can be constructed for every region: the Middle East, South Asia, Latin America, and Africa. And there are a long list of other concerns: terrorism, the many assaults on human rights, the stability of the international financial system, and on and on, as many as one would care to list. There are far more than enough to overwhelm our attention and to keep the U.S. and its successors busy indefinitely. So I say again: what concerns me most is that, in the crush of the present, there is little or no evidence of the development of a long-term strategy, no identification of a clear destination toward which the U.S. should be heading. Instead, for all of our undoubted power, the U.S. often seem to be at the mercy of the currents, carried downstream toward an uncertain destination instead of moving toward one of its own choosing. And while the U.S. attention is transfixed on the latest crisis that CNN has decided must be dealt with, the underlying structures are shifting, and historic opportunities fading.

Despite the U.S. power, it must resist the temptation of believing the U.S. can fix every problem, indulge in every wish. Part of the U.S. strategy must be to decide what it cannot do, what it chooses not to do, and to ensure that others take up their responsibilities.

I raise this issue not because I have a ready solution to offer, but because I fear that no one else does, either. I'm not sure anyone in our government is even thinking about one. But a practical, long-term vision is sorely needed; it is a prerequisite that we dare not continue to put off until some more convenient time. I say this not as a Republican; indeed, there is no hope of success unless it is broadly bipartisan. To accomplish that, we will need consensus in the Congress and in this city, as well as the support of the American people.

So, even as the U.S. responds to the challenge of terrorism, my great hope is that the U.S. will also use this new-found awareness of the world's dangers to plan for the future, unhurried, uncoerced, but mindful of the task at hand, aware that the U.S. opportunity to do so may fade and vanish altogether. The choice is clear: The U.S. can either shape the future or simply accept what a capricious fate may deal us.

The terrorists' actions have imparted a new realism to policymakers in Washington and to American society as a whole. Many illusions have vanished. In their place is a new willingness to acknowledge the dangers that the world presents us and a new resolve to take action to counter them. I think that gives the U.S. a good place from which to begin.

America has faced many enemies in her history, and she has triumphed over them all. I have no fear that the U.S. shall do so again with the newly prominent enemy of terrorism. But our task does not stop there. The new century will present the U.S. with many unpleasant surprises and

many dangers, some familiar, others wholly new. The U.S. cannot simply wait for these to ambush us; we must prepare ourselves to meet them on U.S. terms and not those of our enemies.

A century ago, Britain stood majestically at the height of her power; within forty years, the knife was at her throat, and she survived only because the United States was there to rescue her. But the U.S. must always remember that there is no one to rescue us. That is why the U.S. must think long and hard about how it can use the opportunities that providence and the labors of two centuries have provided us to so shape the world that the need for rescue never occurs.