

Managing Global Insecurity

Speech by SG/HR Solana at the Brookings Institution

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Ladies and Gentlemen,

Dear Friends,

Dean Acheson's memoirs were called Present at the Creation. The story he tells is how in the post-war period, under US leadership, a system was built that put the world on a new path of international co-operation.

His generation was determined to learn the lessons of the 1930s; to avoid economic protectionism and a paralysed League of Nations.

They were committed to do better. But they were not naïve. After all, this was also the start of the Cold War. So they knew about power. But they decided to make it subject to constraints.

The title of Acheson's memoirs is fitting. The leaders at that time were not always aware of it. But they created what became known as "the multilateral system".

Co-operation would not be just ad-hoc, but based on strong institutions. For decades that system served us well.

This morning I am delighted that I am, so to say, also present at the creation of something, namely this new initiative on Global Governance.

I want to commend Strobe [Talbot] and Carlos [Pascual] for getting this project off the ground, together with the Center for International Co-operation at NYU and the Center for International Security and Co-operation at Stanford.

The aim of this project is ambitious and urgent: to launch a new reform effort for the global security system, in 2009.

As Carlos [Pascual] says, we have to analyse the capacity of the existing system to address the new threats we face; assess why previous reform attempts have not always worked; and then decide how we can build the momentum for a successful reform effort by 2009.

I am delighted to play a modest role myself.

Global governance is an awful term but a vital concept. We need it because of a simple reality: interdependence.

We live in a world where people, goods, ideas, money, threats and opportunities move at a global level and at increasing speed.

What happens half-way round the world, in Afghanistan, Gaza or DR Congo affects our own security and prosperity.

Globalisation has offered millions a chance to live better lives. But it has also unleashed forces that governments can neither stop nor control.

You all know the list: terrorism, non-proliferation, climate change, pandemics, failing states. None can be solved by a single government acting alone.

So the question is: how do we organise this globalised world? And especially how do we tackle the dark side of globalisation?

On the whole, our capacity to analyse problems is good. But even when we agree on what has to happen - take Israel-Palestine - we still don't manage to translate that consensus into results on the ground.

It is worth analysing why this is so.

Let us return for a moment to Acheson. The post-war system was very successful. We had a network of strong institutions and regimes: the UN, IMF, GATT, NATO.

Yes, the Cold War set limits on the capacity of the system. But it also prevented the Cold War from degenerating into open conflict.

Through deterrence and détente, the Helsinki agreement, and arms control treaties, we eventually brought about a peaceful end to the Cold War.

This led in 1989/90 to the outbreak of euphoria. It was the period of "the end of history"; the triumph of markets and democracy. A new world order to be managed by a rejuvenated United Nations.

It was great to live through that phase. But people were far too optimistic.

For the global system is in serious trouble. It is simply not capable of solving the big challenges of today.

In the 19th century, the problems that industrialisation brought about were solved through a series of state interventions: from safety standards to sewage systems to a ban on child labour.

We have to ask ourselves: what structures, beyond the state, do we have to solve the big problems of our times?

We are dealing with complex security challenges that defy traditional ways of operating.

We have to see the connections between different threats. In many ways, Darfur is the first time we are aware that a war is caused by climate change - and it will not be the last.

We need more integrated strategies to address these problems. In the old system, everyone was doing their own thing in their own corner.

We now know that we must bring together the world of soldiers, diplomats, judges and development experts.

More fundamentally the old system cannot cope because power is shifting away. Within political systems: to the media, markets and above all to individuals.

These days, there is less obedience. Who wants to be a follower if you are constantly told you can be what you want to be?

It is striking that in Britain, the slogan for the recruitment for the army has changed from "Your country needs You" to "Be all you can be".

Power is also shifting between political systems: from the West to new powers. China, India, Brazil, South Africa.

And yes from the US, we have seen a tendency to make its engagement in the multilateral system more selective. More narrowly focused on short-term priorities. And less willing to seek deeper trade-offs with other countries.

What to do?

The first requirement is that the US plays an active and constructive role inside the system.

I have a sense that the tide may be turning. And I hope that this project will strengthen those who argue that working through multilateral organisations is the best way to get lasting results.

More broadly, we need to make space at the top table.

Take the G-8. At present it does not really work effectively. It needs to change its membership.

Why not make it a G-10 in which the ten major countries are represented based on a composite index of international weight (GDP, aid, soldiers and civilians deployed on peace support missions)?

This would not only bring China and India in but also keep some current members on their toes...

Equally we should make space for the new heavyweights at the UN Security Council. In turn, the new powers should keep in mind that with greater global influence come greater responsibilities too.

To strengthen regional co-operation, could we have (semi)permanent seats at the UNSC for the Great Powers but also for regional organisations?

I am convinced that we need stronger regional organisations: the African Union, ASEAN, Latin American structures.

I also wonder whether the Middle East region will remain the big exception: over-armed, under-institutionalised and rife with tensions.

Then we will need to develop new bargains. On the environment and climate change. Or on forms of dialogues between cultures.

Sometimes we need to be more serious about upholding our side of the old bargain. Take non-proliferation. If we want to be credible, we have to take the disarmament side of the bargain more seriously.

In addition, the multilateral system cannot only address our immediate concerns. When we talk about non-proliferation we mostly mean WMD (weapons of mass destruction).

But for many African or Asian leaders the most urgent proliferation problem is that of small arms and light weapons.

Above all, we need to re-learn that the biggest shift in history came when we extended the rule of law. First within states and now, gradually, also among them.

We should step up what we are already doing. Regionally - most strikingly in Europe. But also globally on some aspects of international life. See the WTO dispute settlement system, or the International Criminal Court.

In short: we need to share power (with new players); re-think power (beyond the state paradigm) and tame power (extend the rule of law internationally).

Let me end with some words on legitimacy. One big problem is that we all know that we live in a globalised world. But our politics remain local or national.

This is a problem for those, like me, who are convinced that the world needs more global-level, multilateral co-operation.

For I am also a democrat in believing that power has to be accountable.

So the question becomes: how do you make global governance more effective while making it also democratically accountable?

A key benefit of acting multilaterally is legitimacy which in turns enhances effectiveness. As I said, this means bringing in new centres of power.

But legitimacy also means bringing our publics along. If decisions are increasingly taken at the international level, people have to see these as legitimate.

So we have two imperatives: to create greater effectiveness in global governance but also to uphold democratic legitimacy.

To do so is difficult. It requires new ideas and a sense of compromise. But I really see no real alternative.

Let me leave you with a quote from Jean Jacques Rousseau, from *The Social Contract*, now that we are talking about a global social contract.

"The strongest is never strong enough to be always the master, unless he transforms strength into right and obedience into duty."