

**NATIONAL SOVEREIGNTY & UNIVERSAL CHALLENGES:
CHOICES FOR THE WORLD AFTER IRAQ**

POST-CONFERENCE THOUGHTS

NEXT STEPS

The intent of the conference was to provide a microcosm of the larger state of the debate between the United States and the world community in the post-Iraq situation. The participation of a strong group of American conservatives and an equally strong group of speakers from Europe and the global south allowed us to do this successfully. The debate was clear and differentiated on a range of issues. The conference closed with a general recognition that there are many powerful but mutually exclusive views on important issues such as security, nation building, international cooperation and the nature of U.S. leadership.

What was clear to all participants is that the problems confronting the international community are getting more serious, not less so, and that the wide divergence between the United States and the wider world community does not auger well, at least in the short term, for effective responses to these problems. The world situation is complicated by the fact that most of the issues confronting the human community are global in scope, requiring communal discernment and collective action. Global warming, HIV/AIDS, overpopulation, ageing, terrorism, organized crime, failed states, weapons of mass destruction, loss of bio-diversity, deforestation, water scarcity and overfishing all exemplify problems that are well known. They are chronic in most cases, acute in several, and yet the prevailing international institutions seem incapable of effective response. It is not because of ill intent that this is so, but because these institutions were not designed to handle the complexity of the problems currently challenging the international community.

And yet there was also agreement among participants that concerted efforts must be made to develop innovative methodologies for effective global problem solving.

In that spirit, the next steps for the State of the World Forum and the Commission on Globalization, working with the various institutions represented at the conference as well as others, will be to explore how to better understand the nature of the new operating reality, characterized by complexity and critical global challenges with minimal institutional capacities to solve them. The intended outcome of this collaborative enterprise will be to develop a deeper multi-disciplinary understanding of complexity and to implement what Jean-François Rischard called “global issue networks” that bring to bear cross-sectoral intelligence on selected issues needing solution.

Jim Garrison

President, State of the World Forum and Chairman of the Foundation in Support of the Commission on Globalisation

THE DESTRUCTION OF A RULING MYTH

In the weeks since the conference, the security and political situation in Iraq has continued to grow more complex. US and British casualties mount, but there is now at least a provisional Governing Council of Iraq. Leaders in both London and Washington are politically enmeshed in the justification for intervention, given the absence of weapons of mass destruction. It is therefore a difficult moment at which to draw either medium or long-term conclusions.

In the short term the response to the conference has been overwhelmingly favourable. Those participants filling in evaluation forms seem to have found the event useful and to want more debate, more tightly focussed and with a more globally representative grouping. Overwhelmingly both speakers and participants, whatever their nationality or ideology, seem to have been stimulated by the conference and would wish to continue the dialogue. Some want more time and more speakers; others want more breakout sessions and fewer speakers. Most agree that in any continuing discussion focus should be on solutions, with a concern to explore the rules for intervention and the nature of failed and failing states being the most popular subjects. I detect a sense of wishing to move beyond the raw rhetoric of Robert Kagan into the richer and more complex territory of Lenin's question: "What is to be done?"

Maybe we have passed the high water mark of US hubris and European denial, and are learning to accept and grow beyond the differences in American and European approaches to global problems. Reading the excellent "Al Qaeda and what it means to be modern" by John Gray, I am struck by the power of his opening under the heading "What al-Qaeda destroyed":

'The suicide warriors who attacked Washington and New York on September 11th 2001 did more than kill thousands of civilians and demolish the World Trade Centre. **They destroyed the West's ruling myth.** [My emphasis] Western societies are governed by the belief that modernity is a single condition, everywhere the same and always benign. As societies become more modern, so they become more alike. At the same time they become better. Being modern means realising *our* values – the values of the Enlightenment, as we like to think of them. No cliché is more stupefying than that which describes al Qaeda as a throwback to medieval times. It is a by-product of globalisation.' [Page 1]

Tom Spencer
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The Hague, 14 July 2003

"RECESSIONAL"

Rudyard Kipling wrote his poem, "Recessional", for Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee in 1897, at the very height of British imperial hubris. Its cadences have lessons still for all the world in the agony of its choices.

'God of our fathers, known of old,
Lord of the far-flung battle-line,
Beneath whose awful Hand we hold
Dominion over palm and pine –
Lord God of Hosts be with us yet,
Lest we forget – lest we forget!

The tumult and the shouting dies;
The Captains and the Kings depart:
Still stands Thine ancient sacrifice,
A humble and a contrite heart.
Lord God of hosts, be with us yet,
Lest we forget – lest we forget!

Far-called, our navies melt away;
On dune and headland sinks the fire:
Lo, all our pomp of yesterday
Is one with Nineveh and Tyre!
Judge of the Nations, spare us yet,
Lest we forget – lest we forget!

If, drunk with sight of power, we loose
Wild tongues that have not thee in awe,
Such boastings as the Gentiles use,
Or lesser breeds without the Law –
Lord God of hosts, be with us yet,
Lest we forget – Lest we forget!

For heathen heart that puts her trust
In reeking tube and iron shard,
All valiant dust that builds on dust
And guarding, calls not thee to guard
For frantic boast and foolish word –
Thy mercy on thy people, Lord!