

**AT THE GLOBALISATION FORUM 2003  
“DEMOCRACY AND SECURITY IN THE GLOBALISATION ERA”**

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I would like to thank the Institute for International Socio-Economic Studies for this invitation to give this keynote address on a subject that is most relevant to the present situation in the world – the globalising world, democracy and security.

2. As we, the nations of the world come closer together, through jet travel and instant telecommunication worldwide, the old international relations, the world of competing and antagonistic blocs and regimes, has become less and less capable of handling the problems arising from the technologies which move people at jet speed and instantaneous communications over vast spaces. A new world regime is obviously needed to handle at least some of the problems brought about by these technological advancements. Globalisation is thus an idea whose time has come, but the interpretation given to it presently is not necessarily right.

3. As a result we seem to be handling these problems wrongly, motivated largely by greed and a desire to dominate on the part of the strong and the rich. Consequently ideas about globalisation are coming not from the international community as a whole but from the powerful countries, principally the ethnic European countries, the same countries which at one time dominated the world through their empires. Not surprisingly the agenda which they have set for the globalised world, focus on ideas and strategies which they have obvious advantage, and the particular problems which plague them.

4. Thus the globalised world is expected to accept only one ideology and political system – democracy – and one security problem, that which is about securing the world from attacks by terrorists.

5. But it must be admitted security from terrorist attacks is very important. The September 11<sup>th</sup> attack must never be allowed to happen again. For this the whole world must cooperate, cooperate in detecting and identifying the terrorists, taking action to prevent them from carrying out their acts of terror, exchanging information about them and doing whatever is needed in order to reduce their numbers and therefore their threats, if not to eliminate them altogether.

6. We the countries of the world are cooperating now because acts of terror can take place in all our countries. We have already seen them taking place in the United States, in Palestine and Israel, in Southeast Asian countries, in Japan, India and Pakistan, in Afghanistan and Iraq, in numerous African countries, in Latin American countries, in fact everywhere.

7. And we are cooperating also because terrorists are not too particular about whom they kill or what damage they do to their own countries even. The concept of collateral damage is very much accepted by them. And so many more of their own countrymen are being killed in comparison with their apparent enemies. Their own countries suffer more from their attacks. The economies of their countries have gone into recession and have brought untold sufferings to their poor countrymen. And the pressure by the powerful countries on their governments because of their presence would literally make a mockery of their independence. But the question is, will this cooperation and security

measures succeed in blunting the attacks of the terrorists and will they actually succeed in stopping terrorism?

8. The world is getting paranoid and the most powerful countries are the most paranoid of all. The security measures taken have themselves cause more damage than the actual attacks by the terrorists. People are being harassed especially when they travel. Shoes are being examined and metal cutlery banned in passenger aircraft. And frequently travelers are pulled aside and subjected to humiliating body search. The result is people are not only afraid to travel but dislike doing so. This causes severe losses by the tourist industry, bankruptcies of airlines, reduction in business travel and foreign investments and generally worldwide economic recession or inability to recover economically.

9. The cost of these security measures and their effect is enormous. And it is going to cost more in the future because the moment security is relaxed, terror attacks may recur. And the terrorists are getting more sophisticated, making security measures more costly.

10. More regrettably, instead of reducing the front against the terrorists we are actually seeing the front being widened. The attacks against Afghanistan and Iraq have brought about more security problems. Where before there were no terror attacks in Iraq and there was no proof that Iraq was involved in terror attacks, now we hear everyday terror attacks taking a toll on the coalition forces. Where before foreigners were relatively safe in Iraq, now even the Red Cross personnel and United Nations staff are not safe. Now Iraqis and Afghans have produced more recruits for the terror gangs. Clearly we are not decreasing the number of terrorists or reducing the number of their attacks, we are actually worsening the situation.

11. Yet there is now talk of extending the war to Syria and Iran. Do we really believe that the Syrians and Iranians would behave differently from the Iraqis if their countries are invaded and occupied?

12. It would seem that the greatest powers in the world have got no capacity to learn from the past, from their own recent experience even. The lessons of Vietnam have been forgotten and more recently the lessons of Afghanistan and Iraq have taught them nothing. That is why there is talk about attacking Syria and Iran even Lebanon, Sudan and Libya.

13. The world has obviously failed to be secured by all the paranoid security measures that have been taken. The world has certainly not been secured by the attacks against and occupation of Afghanistan and Iraq. And the world will certainly not be safer by opening new fronts against the terrorists.

14. The fact is that even the most fanatical terrorists are human, especially with regard to deliberately killing themselves during their acts of terror. There must be something very powerful that moves them to tie bombs to their bodies and blow themselves up, or to fly aircrafts into buildings and die a horrible death. We are not sympathising with them but we do have to know what motivates them, and knowing, we have to remove these motivations, no matter how wrong they may be. The longer we ignore the causes of their willingness to commit often self-destructive acts of terror, the longer the world will live in insecurity and terror. We have to know the causes, and we have to remove the causes, even as we upgrade our security measures.

15. The general assumption is that it has something to do with the conflict between the Muslim Arabs and the Jews. Is it a religious conflict? Are the Muslims anti-semitic? Is it that they just want to kill Jews because of this? This is ridiculous. The Arabs are also semitic people. They cannot possibly be against the Jews because of anti-semitism.

16. Anti-semitism is a European thing. For 2000 years, the ethnic Europeans had persecuted the Jews of Europe. Europeans perpetrate inhuman pogroms, inquisitions and the holocaust. And in the past when Jews were persecuted in Europe they invariably sought refuge in Muslim countries, in Morocco, Algeria, Egypt and the Turkish Ottoman empire. The Jews would not seek asylum in Muslim countries if the Muslims are anti-semitic. Indeed the golden years of Judaism were when the Jews lived in Muslim Spain. Muslims are not anti-semitic. Europeans were and can be. If I may say so, Malays are even less likely to be anti-semitic. But we reserve the right to condemn anyone who is oppressive whether they have been the victims of oppression or not.

17. In Palestine the Jews had lived for centuries alongside Arab Muslims and Arab Christians. There could have been tension between them but certainly there were no terror attacks as we see them today.

18. The reality is that the conflict between Jews and Arabs began when the Europeans, in their attempts to solve their Jewish problem, encouraged the Zionists to seek a homeland in Palestine, to create the state of Israel. Palestine was chosen because 2000 years or so ago the Jews, upon expulsion from pharaonic Egypt set up their state there. If this basis is legitimate for making Palestine a Jewish homeland then the red Indians should claim the United States and Canada, the aborigines claim Australia, and the Maoris, New Zealand.

19. But whatever may be the basis of the claim, there is no doubt that it precipitated the conflict between Arabs and Jews that we are seeing today. It is not religion at all. It is territorial; it is about expropriating Arab lands in order to create the State of Israel. No people in the world would allow their land to be expropriated and given to other people.

20. The first terrorists in Palestine were actually the Zionists and their terror squads, the Irgun Zvai Leumi and the Stern Gang. They bombed King David Hotel where the British were ensconced very much like the attacks on the foreign occupied hotel in Baghdad recently. Incidentally it is interesting to note that one of the leaders of the Israeli terrorists was Menachem Begin who later became Prime Minister of Israel, a classic case of how the success of terrorism can wash away the crimes of terrorists.

21. The United Nations which had very limited membership, at that time, was mainly under the control of the victors of World War II, aided and abetted the physical split of Palestine, the expropriation of Palestinian land, and the expulsion of the Palestinian people, to live as refugees in squalid camps to this day.

22. In the past the Europeans had calmly expropriated land belonging to native people in order to set up European nations all over the world. Where there was resistance, the natives were simply exterminated. At best they were confined to reserves, to watch their resources and wealth being exploited by the people who had robbed them of their land. There was and there is nothing they can do to claim back their heritage.

23. But it is wishful thinking on the part of the Europeans and the Zionists to expect the Arabs of the 20<sup>th</sup> century to behave like the native people of America and Australia. They are not so docile and besides their cousins living nearby are quite numerous. Genocide is not a feasible option for the promoters of Israel.

24. What we are seeing today is therefore a fight to regain the land that the Palestinian Arabs had lost. Having failed in conventional wars assisted by their cousins against Israel because of European support for the latter, they launched the stone-throwing Intifada. The Israeli response was simply to shoot and kill the children who threw the stones. The consequence is the escalation of the Intifada to ever increasing violence. It has now taken a life of its own. Individuals and groups take the law into their own hands and launch terror attacks. The Israelis should not be surprised because their own response to the British attempts at an acceptable solution to the creation of a Jewish state was also to resort to terror tactics.

25. It is logical to expect that the Palestinians would continue to mount terror attacks until they get redress for their territorial loss. How this can be tackled will need the understanding and appreciation of the problem by the international community. But certainly it will not be resolved by taking sides, especially by the most powerful nations backing Jewish aggression against the Arabs.

26. But to return to the subject of security, it is not about protection from terror attacks alone. Protection from attacks by predatory neighbours near and far need also to be dealt with. Small countries do not feel secure any more. Their domestic affairs are being interfered with by the big powers, their independence undermined. They are being told what to do and how to do it. If they fail then all manner of punitive actions would be taken against them. These range from media attacks to actual invasion and occupation. The powerful countries are secure from such interference and punitive actions, whatever their record.

27. The United Nations was created in the belief that it will provide protection for weak countries from attacks from any quarter. But we have found that the United Nations is not free to decide or to act. The United Nations is under the control of the five victors of the last great war. Any of the five can veto anything including the action to protect the independence and the security of small weak nations. But worse things have happened lately. Powerful nations have ignored the United Nations altogether and invaded and occupied countries under false pretexts.

28. For the small countries there is now no security. Their governments and their states can be undermined through propaganda, through economic sanctions, through political subversion with the objective of putting in place compliant governments or individuals which would be totally subservient to the powerful. In other words the neo-colonialism that President Sukarno used to talk about is real.

29. To legitimise all these economic and political subversion, the big powers invoked human rights and democracy, in particular democracy. Every country must now be democratic. No other system is allowed. Failure to democratise can result ultimately in invasion and occupation.

30. Democracy is a good system of government, the best that man has devised so far. But it is not perfect. It has many defects and weaknesses, which can result in serious and insoluble problems for the newly democratic countries, inexperienced in its practice.

31. A multi-party democratic country can result in weak minority governments. Post-election coalitions often fail. A two-party system is more likely to succeed but the pre-occupation with remaining in power deflect from the good administration the country needs.

32. Corruption is rife in democratic countries. In one powerful country money must be paid to lobbyists in order to influence the government. Huge sums of money are needed for election campaigns and invariably the donors corrupt the parties contesting. No matter who wins, the winner would be corrupt politicians. And the government they lead would be corrupt. We see this in the old democratic countries as much as in the newly democratic countries.

33. Democracy is not a religion. It cannot solve all society's problems. Certainly it cannot ensure security for its practitioners. A democratic country is just as likely to attack another democratic country as an authoritarian country. In fact lately we are seeing democratic countries attacking, invading and occupying an authoritarian country and totally destabilising it. Is this democratic?

34. Being democratic does not prevent a country from being accused of not being democratic enough. But an autocratic country subservient to a powerful democratic country may be left alone and may even be supported by the democrats. Clearly democrats are hypocrites. They even go so far as to excuse the sufferings of the people in a democratic country, which they would not tolerate in an undemocratic country. In other words, to them, democracy is more important than the well-being of the people. And so democracy, which had been devised to protect the people from oppression, has now become the cause of the sufferings of the people.

35. The globalisation era is here but it has not created the ideal world that modern science and technology seem to promise. The obsession with free trade has not brought about an equitable world. So far what we are seeing is a world in turmoil, in economic recession, in political instability. The benefits of globalisation are not being enjoyed because globalisation is being promoted by the rich and greedy for their selfish self-interests only. Security and democracy alone will not create a modern global civilisation.

36. We need democracy but we also need justice and fair-play. We need not just free trade but more importantly, fair trade. Unfortunately in the globalisation era, the obsession with democracy and security against terrorists have negated the benefits which the globalised world should enjoy from the advances in the technology of flight and communication.