

A Regional OSC/OECD for the 'Arc of Crisis'?

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Preventing violent conflict at an early stage has never been a priority for the international community, it is now almost a truism that to prevent a conflict is far wiser and less costly in human and material terms than to try to control it or, when that fails, to deal with the consequences.) The region that I call the 'Arc of Crisis' is plagued with a score of raging and potential disputes belying a broad range of causes of conflict. At present, the Region does not have any mechanism for conflict avoidance, prevention or resolution. The international fight against terrorism should be inducted within a comprehensive vision of the Region. We should not only move against terrorism, but also work for a new international humanitarian order. The international community should place fighting terrorism as its top priority, and should realise that it can only be tackled by a coordinated world effort which supports regional efforts, the 'Arc of Crisis' being the most obvious and urgent of these.

The 'Arc of Crisis' extends from the northwestern corner of Africa to Central Asia passing through the Congo, the Horn of Africa, the Arabian Peninsula and the Indian Subcontinent. This rather expansive Region, which includes right at its crest the 'Energy Ellipse' (70% and 40% of the world's oil and natural-gas reserves), is plagued with a score of raging and potential disputes belying a broad range of causes of conflict. At present, the Region does not have any mechanism for conflict avoidance, prevention or resolution.

It is imperative to resolve disputes peacefully. The alternative is very costly. It would entail an unwelcome arms race, reduced economic and social development, and a slowing down in our collective progress towards soft security; that is, human dignity and human needs. A visible outcome of this is the out-migration of people from a conflict-ridden area to regions where they believe it is possible to realise their aspirations in terms of security and a decent human environment. Such out-migration is not only a loss for the Region itself, but can also prove to be a burden for host or receiving countries.

In spite of the fact that preventing violent conflict at an early stage has never been a priority for the international community, it is now almost

a truism that to prevent a conflict is far wiser and less costly in human and material terms than to try to control it or, when that fails, to deal with the consequences. What is needed is a "conflict prevention culture", with all that this entails. "Poverty and glaring prosperity gaps, ethnic and religious persecution and political oppression are now more common causes of conflicts than before" [*Prevent Violent Conflict: Swedish Policy for the 21st Century*, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Stockholm, February 2001].

The challenges ahead are economic, cultural, political and security-related. Their nature is such that they have interconnected aspects as well as interwoven notions and approaches. Thus, comprehensive security can only be achieved through sustainable economic growth being evenly maintained between state and market, whereupon the outcome of this growth is distributed equitably and in a way that enhances the status of the middle class, thereby enabling it to promote political stability (policies) based on the state of law where human rights are fully respected. Here, one moves from the narrow definition of civil society (*Civitas*) to a broader civilised concept (*Humanitas*). In addition, this kind of security requires activating the individual's role in building civil society – that human being who is capable of dealing and interacting with the relentlessly accelerating national, regional and global variables. Furthermore, let us not forget that peoples' culture and traditions play an essential role in the way they perceive the nature of those challenges facing them and how to cope with them.

The time has come to promote a culture of peace as opposed to the mere absence of war. Modern man is at peace neither with himself nor with his surroundings. To begin the process of peace we must learn first to be at peace with ourselves and to recognise that adversity anywhere is a threat to prosperity everywhere. This is particularly important since we live in an age where the rich are becoming richer and the poor poorer. The combined wealth of 400 billionaires is greater than the total income of the poorest half of the world's population.

We need to talk about the universality of universalism itself. And when discussing universalism one has to bear in mind that there are certain

values in the world that are inherently universal no matter what tradition you belong to. To say that one specific tradition is the progenitor or the beholder of universalism seems illogical since there are certain values that we all recognise as being universal in and of themselves. The universalist/cultural relativist dichotomy may therefore be a false proposition: whilst there may be different civilisations and cultures in the world today, all have contributed to universalism; and the values that we share today have a sound basis in many different traditions. Thus, the Western libertarian philosophy will recognise the inherent values of universalism within Ubuntu African tradition, just as Ubuntu will recognise the inherent universalist values within Islamic tradition, and so on and so forth. However, where the dichotomy exists, it is based upon how one civilisation might regard itself to be superior to other civilisations and thereby encroach upon another culture so that the other culture feels smaller, feels threatened and feels that its own input has not been duly acknowledged by the more powerful contemporary civilisation. This does not mean that such cultures are devoid of universalism. It merely means that their sense of universalism is ignored, or that the prerogative of being a dominant civilisation presupposes not acknowledging the sound bases of other civilisations.

The Baghdad Pact in the mid 1950s was a first attempt at a sort of regional organisation for security and cooperation (OSC). Its main offence, however, was an overdose of western leanings – so critics averred. The call for an OSC/OECD formula within the region of the 'Arc of Crisis' should be presented and discussed away from cameras, and in compliance with international norms. In the present lull of the aftermath of Phase-II post-NY event, present ideas should be catalysed. Why should the Region be bereft of its own organisation for security and economic development? Consider the following:

- Most people do not know that the GNP (Gross National Product) of the entire Arab world is less than half that of Spain.
- 80% of the increase in population is taking place in developing countries that have a GNP of less than \$1,200 a year.
- The level of illiteracy is 850 million throughout the world, mostly in rural areas, 70% of them women.

- 70% (representing over 2 billion people) in the developing world have no access to electricity.
- 24 people die of hunger every minute, 35 thousand every day, and 13 million die from hunger every year. Malaria is taking a toll of 2 million deaths per annum and this number will increase to reach 3 million by the end of this decade, mostly in Africa.

It is in this context that terrorism should be viewed. The problem here can be addressed by formulating a jurisprudential and humanitarian code of conduct. To start with, the fight against terrorism should be inducted within a comprehensive vision of the Region. Two moral laws are imperative here:

1. Since terrorism is a deliberate act against civilisation, anti-terrorism should be an equally deliberate act *by* civilisation.
2. The international community should place fighting terrorism as its top priority, and should realise that it can only be tackled by a coordinated world effort which supports regional efforts, the 'Arc of Crisis' being the most obvious and urgent of these.

Terrorism stands to win by not losing; whereas civilisation stands to lose by not visibly winning. Terrorism is regarded as a crime against humanity by *all* cultures. This has shaken the cage of our common civilisation. Since September 11th, a qualitative jump has occurred in our shared vulnerability and therefore in the need for our shared intra-independence for shouldering responsibility. The canvas here is an Asian-African canvas, as is clear from the Arc of Crisis. We have to attempt to destroy terrorism not only by force of arms, but through a vision as well. We should not only move *against* terrorism, but also work *for* a new international humanitarian order.

As Boaz Ganor, Director of International Policy Institute for Counter-Terrorism (ICT), states in *Defining Terrorism : Is One Man's Terrorist Another Man's Freedom Fighter?* [www.ict.org.il, September 23, 1998]: "In the struggle against terrorism, the problem of definition is a crucial element in the attempt to coordinate international collaboration...". A working definition of terrorism is that it "is the intentional use of, or threat to

use violence against civilians or against civilian targets, in order to attain political aims."

My late brother, His Majesty King Hussein, said at Sharm El Sheikh in 1996: "It is vital that terrorism is tackled at the international level. The murder and torture of innocent people is not exclusive to one race or nation or to followers of any one religion. It is vital therefore that terrorism is tackled at the international level in a multilateral way and not in a gung-ho bipartisan manner. In order to eliminate terrorism, we have to establish an international mechanism of cooperation and understanding. This must be all-inclusive so that no country is considered a pariah. Information should be shared by one and all for the sake of our common security as well as our common humanity. This involves a major shift in our ideological positions as well as a reassessment of our contemporary relations. It requires a sharing of not only of ideas, but the instruments and tools that make such cooperation viable and successful. Although many countries, not just America, have been victims of terrorism throughout the ages, including Jordan, these same countries have reaffirmed their commitment to combating terrorism; and this commitment has to be recognised by the West if it is to mean anything. Such a commitment is, in fact, part of civilisations' common adherence to human rights, civil rights, humanitarianism and democratisation."

We cannot accommodate ourselves to evil. Many have spoken of the need for a Marshall Plan to promote the development of civil society and democratic institutions in certain parts of the world. This is different from the 'Martial Plan' that seems to be gathering storm at the moment.

We need a diplomatically creative policy that will work towards conflict prevention and conflict resolution through good management. Terrorism has no quick fix solution.

There is a dire need to stop the dehumanisation process that we have witnessed during the last century. We have to ask ourselves whether we have done justice to what we inherited from our ancestors, not only in

terms of ecology but, above all, wisdom and experience – and whether we have done our duty *vis-à-vis* the future generations.

We inhabit one world, in fact, and ten thousand cultures; but unless the actors – the transnational corporations, the United Nations system, the nongovernmental organisations, civil society and individuals – are given the opportunity to fully and freely express their will, and unless organisational lateral thinking develops between these many and varied entities, multilateralism is bound to wither away and bilateralism cannot offer satisfactory global answers. One is, consequently, left with a sense of gloom.

The concept of 'solidarity' should not be limited to an appeal for support to the popular idea of 'common humanity'; nor should it be limited to altruism or do-goodism. It should be a down-to-earth approach based upon, and motivated by, 'enlightened self-interest', which should serve as the driving force behind policymaking processes relating to contemporary challenges. And there is a distinction here between politics and policies. Certainly, politicians have to win elections and only short-term policies that can yield immediate results pay off. But what is perhaps needed in most countries, particularly in the developing world, is vision and long-term policies.

In all of this, it is important to distinguish between ends and means. People are not solely economic entities; they are more than instruments for producing commodities. Human beings must not be seen merely as the means of production and prosperity. The end towards which all our common efforts are focused must surely be the quality of human life, shaped by intangible as well as material considerations.

Based on its own experience in cooperation and unity, Europe has learned that only among countries sharing the values of democracy and human rights can cooperation be viable and evolve more fully towards integration. While economics is definitely an essential element, it remains subservient to the whims of politics. Without the support of democratically elected institutions, or the political stability sanctioned

by the rule of law, all economic and political arrangements for regional cooperation will remain vulnerable and insecure.

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