Democracy after terror: Kim Campbell interviewed

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openDemocracy: What for you would be the ideal outcome of the Madrid summit?

Kim Campbell: There are two outcomes to the summit I would like to see. The formal outcome would be the adoption by the Club de Madrid of the Madrid Agenda on combating terrorism through democracy, and protecting democracy from the threat of terrorism. I hope that all the expertise, goodwill and experience going into creating the Madrid Agenda will produce a document that is pragmatic and practical, something which countries of the world can rally around and which can further the agenda of securing democracy and making a safer world.

An International Summit on Democracy, Terrorism and Security [1] will be held on 8-11 March 2005, sponsored by the Club de Madrid [2] and the Varsavsky Foundation [3]. Ahead of the summit, a new **openDemocracy debate [3]** explores how best democratic states and citizens can respond to terrorism.

To find out more about the Madrid summit visit safe-democracy.org [4], please register to receive information here [5] – and add your own views to a vital dialogue.

The informal outcome I would like to see is the creation of synergies [6] and opportunities for cooperation and intellectual growth that are the result of bringing together an extraordinary group of knowledgeable and experienced people from around the world.

Every process has a goal but often some of the greatest gains are the informal ones, the ones that happen over conversations at lunch, when people find opportunities to cooperate and work creatively together.

That's my dream for the March summit.

openDemocracy: If that is the dream, what is the reality? What have been the main tensions and difficulties you have faced so far?

Kim Campbell: First of all the time to plan the conference was short. The Club de Madrid [7] had been talking about doing some kind of international meeting on democracy for some time. The Madrid bombings of 11 March 2004 clarified the vision and made us realise that a discussion of this sort on democracy, terrorism and security was a natural – but that if we wanted to commemorate 11-M [8] we really had to get busy. I suppose the other difficulty is that the issue of terrorism is fraught with many political implications and divisions. It touches on ideological divisions and differences [8] of vision between the United States and Europe and its other allies. It touches on the difficult question of religious fundamentalism, and a lot of issues dear to peoples' sense of identity that can make them feel defensive. Our goal is to have a discussion that acknowledges these differences but tries to transcend them.

Our experts have been told that in their reports the idea is to identify differences, not try to force consensus where none exists – because in the real world policy-makers must govern in the face of those genuine differences. The whole idea of democracy [9] is to celebrate difference of opinion. What makes democracies great is not that everyone thinks alike but that people agree to solve their arguments through peaceful means, through political processes. So our goal here is not to articulate something that everyone will necessarily agree with, but to identify irreconcilable differences and find a path forward for security and the protection of democracy, that is realistic and possible to achieve.

openDemocracy: What can we learn about our failings as democracies from the existence of terrorism?

Kim Campbell: One of the subjects we are looking at very deeply in this conference is the roots of and contributing factors to terrorism. Conventional wisdom tells us that poverty causes terrorism, yet we see that a lot of terrorists are not at all poor and often are not disadvantaged. We need to look very seriously at the roots of terrorism [10] and locate the factors over which we might have some control. What, for example, might reinforce a sense of alienation, or a person's susceptibility to a belief system that justifies something which seems so horrible, such as the targeting of civilians and innocent people to make a political point.

We have to look at public policy and the decisions we make, which may seem sensible at the time but in the long-term increase our vulnerability by alienating people in our own societies and increasing the likelihood of violence.

We find an example in the difference between Canadian and European immigration policy. I live in a country that was built on immigration. When people come to Canada [10] we assume that they are on the road to becoming Canadians. Europe has had a very different history. Many foreigners came to Europe as "guest workers" because Europe required their labour-power. This status has allowed communities to be ghettoised in areas from which there is no reasonable prospect of escape, where even economic wellbeing does not guarantee that you will transcend that poor community.

The most important lesson we can learn from looking at terrorism around the world is not to simplify this complex phenomenon but to understand that there are many aspects to it and perhaps many "terrorisms [11]", ranging from the Ku Klux Klan, to terrorism in Ireland.

Certainly those who think they have a monopoly on the truth can often find a justification for any type of violence, whether it is those in the United States or Canada who think it legitimate to kill abortion doctors, or those, in other countries, who think that it is legitimate to kill people who do not share their religious values.

To ask where terrorisms come from is not a simple question. We must engage with each type of this phenomenon for what it is, try to understand what steps might be taken to forestall it and how we might develop the capacity for early detection of dynamics that could lead to the growth of terrorism.

openDemocracy: Is this still a dialogue between democratic nations? What are the possibilities, do you think, of there being a dialogue between "terrorists" and democratic nations?

Kim Campbell: I think terrorists by definition are people who have rejected democratic means of solving their problems. That may be because in some cases they don't have democratic means to solve their problems. Our purpose in this particular conference is to bring together the

community of democracies and to argue that whatever differences they might have, they must cooperate and collaborate if they are to protect democracy.

One of the things democracies have to think about is the relationship between democracy and terrorism. It is clearly not the case that you never have terrorism in democracies. Nor is it necessarily the case that democracy is the best way to fight terrorism – that is a proposition that needs to be demonstrated, and it is one that our experts are discussing. But I would argue that democracy is the very best context for human development, for the capacity to live freely and explore one's human potential. The fundamental premise is the value of democracy [12] in and of itself and the goal is to find ways to secure ourselves without throwing out that very value.

I think that bringing together a really extraordinary group of people from around the world to share their wisdom at the Madrid summit [13] will give us a very good chance of helping to create this kind of understanding.