

# THE NEW STATE OF FEAR AND ITS IMPLICATIONS

Kim CAMPBELL



*Kim Campbell is Secretary General of the Club de Madrid and a former Prime Minister of Canada.*

Peter NEUMANN



*Peter Neumann is Content Director of the International Summit on Democracy, Terrorism and Security.*

In March 2005, the Club de Madrid organized a unique conference, the International Summit on Democracy, Terrorism and Security. The purpose of the event was to commemorate the victims of the terrible train bombings that had taken place in Madrid a year earlier, and to formulate a practical strategy on how the threat from terrorism can be countered. The underlying theme, however, was broader: it was to address what could be described as a new climate of fear, which has come to dominate the relations between states, communities and people, and given rise to wars and conflicts.

This new state of fear has been some years in the making, though it took most of us a long time to recognize it. More than twenty years ago, in a congressional enquiry following the killing of three hundred Western soldiers in Beirut, Brian Jenkins of the RAND Corporation argued that 'the distinction between war and peace will dissolve,' and that 'we may be on the threshold of an era of armed conflict in which ... nominal peace is likely to be filled with continuing confrontations and crises.'

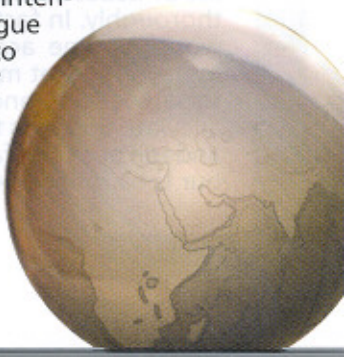
Back then, such predictions sounded fanciful. During the Cold War, the distinction between peace and war seemed clear-cut, and whether we had reason to be fearful or not was determined by the relationship between the two superpowers. As long as mutual destruction was assured, and a reasonable degree of trust existed between the governments in Washington and Moscow, there was nothing much to worry about. In fact, from a Western perspective, the Cold War years now seem like a remarkable period of peace and stability.

When the superpower confrontation ended, the Cold War logic had become such a dominant theme in people's mind that it was hard to imagine anything else. Even a distinguished scholar like Francis Fukuyama argued that this was 'the end of history,' and that democracy and free-market capitalism were on the way to becoming universally accepted truths.

Unfortunately, Fukuyama's optimistic prediction was overtaken by events. The resurgence of ethnic rivalries in states like Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union proved that conflict had not ended with the lowering of the Red Flag, and that it doesn't take any nuclear weapons, superpowers or – indeed – any states at all for violence to be organised or vicious.

It was, however, only with the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, and March 11, 2004, that the full extent of the new reality became obvious to everyone in the West. It became clear that we are all affected by the growth of anarchy, alienation, and extremism in other parts of the world. And we had to realize – in the most forceful way possible – that the new type of conflict can no longer be contained simply by sheltering from its negative consequences.

With the International Summit on Democracy, Terrorism and Security, it was our intention to launch a strategic dialogue about the new challenge and how to deal with it. This wasn't easy. After all, we were dealing with the most controversial, the most difficult question of our time, and even our friends told us that it was ab-





### Extraordinary Plenary session

surd to expect anything useful to emerge: 'There is no common ground between Noam Chomsky and Paul Wolfowitz,' they said.

Still, in addition to bringing a diverse group of people together and engaging them in a sustained conversation, the event produced a number of important outcomes. There are two areas we would like to highlight.

#### A NEW FRAMEWORK FOR DEALING WITH CONFLICT

The first concerns the framework through which we should deal with questions of international conflict and instability, and through which the new climate of fear can be countered. Conference participants agreed that we need to look beyond the violent manifestations of conflict, and address what some people call its 'roots and causes.' While our experts failed to come up with a simple formula by which the causes of conflict can be resolved, they compiled a valuable list of issues that political leaders should tackle more thoroughly. In fact, there was consensus that – in the words of one academic – 'we can do much, much more,' and that measures of economic development, social welfare, and intercultural dialogue all help to alleviate the fears that have given rise to radicalization and terrorism. In fact, they should have a firm place in our toolkit of responses to insecurity.

Furthermore, there was consensus that it is no longer sufficient to think of conflict as a confrontation between states. In the post-Cold War era, the most dangerous 'weapons' are the ideologies of hate and fear in people's minds. Consequently, our strategy needs to target not only the enemy's physical lines of supply, but also engage with the mindsets of the people that may be vulnerable to his appeals. This means that we must always consider not only the (tangible) military impact of our actions, but also the (intangible) effects they will have on people's attitudes: destroying your enemy's base may turn out to be counter-productive when, in the process of doing so, one contributes to the radicalisation of entire regions and, thus, creates more enemies in the long run.

Finally, participants agreed that it is necessary to address conflicts before they escalate. The examples of Chechnya and Israel/Palestine show that, in the new era of global fear and instability, local conflicts can have global consequences, and that the longer these conflicts remain unresolved, the more likely they are to become the source of recruits and encouragement for the kind of global jihad that has threatened us since September 11. Any new framework to address insecurity and fear should therefore have a truly global focus, reflecting the new reality that what happens in one corner of the world may come to be directly relevant to the security of another.

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## AND ITS IMPLICATIONS



From left to right: Fernando Henrique Cardoso, Chairman of the Club de Madrid; His Majesty Juan Carlos I, King of Spain; Her Majesty Sofia, Queen of Spain; José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero, Prime Minister of Spain, and Kofi Annan, Secretary General of the United Nations. (Photo: Club de Madrid).

### A NEW PARADIGM FOR THE FIGHT AGAINST TERRORISM

The second area in which our summit produced a surprising degree of consensus relates to the way in which the threat from terrorism should be fought. There was almost universal agreement that we need take the fight against terrorism seriously. Terrorism, after all, is a violation of human rights and every state has the duty to protect its citizens. The danger from indiscriminate attacks has grown in recent years, and the threat will not disappear unless we are taking determined action to catch the terrorists and destroy their organisations.

In doing so, however, we must respect the rule of law. This is not only a moral imperative, but also a practical one. If terrorism is a form of psychological warfare that aims to create fear and provoke a repressive response, it is essential to maintain the moral high ground and deny the terrorists the legitimacy for which they long.

It may be of interest that our working group on 'military responses,' which had several high-ranking members of the armed forces as participants, concluded that it was important to deal with terrorism as a crime whenever possible. Likewise, the working group on intelligence, which included prominent intelligence

practitioners from the United States and Britain, emphasised that methods such as extra-legal detention were of no practical value to the secret services.

It may still prove difficult to determine the correct balance between civil liberties and effectiveness in the fight against terrorism. Almost every European country that was affected by terrorism in the 1970s and 1980s went on to pass emergency laws that included some restrictions on civil liberties. None of them ceased being democratic – in fact, some of the people who bitterly opposed these laws in the past now hold them up as the 'European model' for fighting terrorism.

It would be foolish to pretend that the Madrid Summit came up with an easy solution for the difficult problem of balancing security and civil liberties, yet our experts developed some principles and insights that may be useful pointers for the ongoing discussion, such as the need to define limits by setting expiry dates for emergency laws and ensuring that there are no legal vacuums.

Another important element of consensus at the Madrid Summit was the imperative of improving international co-operation. With the rise of international terrorist networks, such as Al Qaeda, terrorism



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## Democracy and Terrorism 2002

Daniel Cohn-Bendit, Madeleine Albright and Robert L. Hutchings at the Plenary session. (Photo: Club de Madrid)

to address their most urgent concerns – economic, political or cultural – they have no reason to turn to the merchants of hate.

For democracy to become a societal immune system, however, it needs to consist of more than elections. It must be based on a vibrant civil society and hold full respect for the rights of ethnic and religious minorities. In this respect, even some established democracies have work to do.

## TOWARDS A STRATEGIC DIALOGUE

In hosting the International Summit on Democracy, Terrorism and Security, the Club de Madrid launched a process of dialogue about the new state of fear and its implications. We were surprised by how much agreement and insight could be achieved in less than four days. Most importantly, it became clear that the new reality required a fundamentally different approach towards questions of international peace and security. Some of the contours of this new approach have been outlined above. Detailed findings and recommendations are available in the Club de Madrid Series on Democracy and Terrorism – a set of policy papers which has recently been published and can be ordered from the Club de Madrid or downloaded from our website ([www.clubmadrid.org](http://www.clubmadrid.org)). The political document, which was inspired by these findings, is the Madrid Agenda.

However, we could not find all the solutions for all the new problems. As much as there is consensus in certain areas, there continues to be disagreement in others. We believe, therefore, that it is important to continue the strategic dialogue that was started in Madrid, and for scholars, policymakers and expert practitioners to carry on exchanging their views in a purposeful, strategic manner.

The Club de Madrid is committed to facilitate this strategic dialogue, but we will only succeed when we are supported by other organizations and institutions. We invite you, therefore, to help us in our efforts. After all, whatever its results, constructive dialogue is a necessary condition for countering fear.

has become a global challenge, and narrow national mind-sets are no longer useful. It seems only logical, therefore, that the police, the intelligence agencies, and the judiciary all need to redouble their efforts to improve international co-operation. In doing so, the guiding principle should not be political dogma, but what works best: In some cases, the most effective way of facilitating cooperation across national borders may be through bilateral agreements; in others, multilateral cooperation is a must.

The bottom line, however, is that no nation can defeat terrorism alone, particularly when it comes to questions of international peace and security. Again, this is a moral and a practical imperative: a multilateral approach not only allows the sharing of political and financial costs, it also brings the international legitimacy needed to sustain national policies in the longer term.

Perhaps the most important area of agreement among the conference participants was on the need to strengthen and deepen democracy as the only viable long-term response to terrorism. Our experts told us that while open societies make it easier for terrorists to operate, they are also less likely to see terrorists achieve their political objectives in the long run. The reasons are obvious. In societies in which people themselves determine their futures, terrorists lack the growth medium of resentment and fear on which they thrive. Where people have access to institutions