INAUGURAL TALK
ROYAL ROADS HUMAN SECURITY AND PEACEBUILDING PROGRAM

GLOBAL DISORDER

By Gordon Smith
Director, Centre for Global Studies, University of Victoria
May 6th, 2003

It is a great honour to be asked to give this address. Royal Roads is to be congratulated for its decision to initiate a program on human security and peacebuilding. I would like to single out the work of Jim Bayer and Paz Buttedahl for commendation. They are both very committed and energetic people. They have produced a credible program in very limited time. I would also like to congratulate the learners on having decided to enrol in the program. I truly believe they will be better equipped, as a result of completing it, to making this a better world.

Let me take you back fifteen years to the end of the Cold War. I, like many of you, grew up in a world where the divisions between East and West had no apparent end. It was also a world in which the divisions between North and South were becoming increasingly evident. We seemed locked into a particular paradigm. Of course, things were not quite that neat. But it was very hard for many of us to imagine how we could evolve into a more secure and prosperous world. It was probably easier to imagine how the situation could deteriorate.

With the dramatic end of the Cold War in the second half of the eighties, there was a new found hope that we would move towards a “new world order”. The first President Bush

used that term, albeit without much of a definition, to describe what he foresaw. Certainly the world was generally seen as becoming more benign. Force would be replaced by peace and justice. We could focus on the security of individuals.

Regrettably, I don't see that vision of a new world order happening any time soon. Indeed, I see global disorder as more likely than a new order for a number of years. That does not mean that I necessarily see violence everywhere, "The Coming Anarchy", to quote the title of the book by Robert Kaplan. Anarchy can and hopefully will be avoided, Rather I see ahead more of a "Turbulent Peace", the title of another of the books I shall be using in the course I have been invited to give during the Fall Residency. But the learners will also read The Coming Anarchy.

Tonight I shall talk about how I see the world evolving and why I think that people with skills in human security and peacebuilding will be very much needed.

Globalization is widely recognized as one of the major forces in the world today. Globalization is much more than the impact of new technology in the economic sphere. A critical element of what is happening is captured in the title of Professor James Rosenau's latest book – Distant Proximities. Events occurring geographically far away are really not all that far away in terms of their impact on us.

The world's population is going to increase by two billion people in the next quarter century. Most of the increase will, at least initially, be in the already overcrowded cities

of the South. There will be a huge growth in young males, with many of them feeling their lot is hopeless. There is a strong statistical relationship between young, unemployed males and levels of violence. It seems likely that serious environmental, economic, social, migration as well as security problems will ensue. These problems will not just be confined to their countries of origin. They will also migrate.

Globalization is therefore about more than economics. Global security – in the sense that our security is tied to that of others - has been an obvious reality ever since the advent of nuclear weapons and their means of delivery over long ranges. Culture is being globalized; this is not just a consequence of American films, food and music flowing in one direction – there is a counter flow throughout the world. In the environmental area two of the most important global challenges, challenges with huge implications for the future of life on this planet, are climate change and declining biodiversity. Major environmental challenges are very much global.

There are other elements as we look at the causes of conflict. The Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict noted that "a significant source of conflict is to be found in the competition to fill power vacuums, especially during times of transition within states …." The Commission goes on to say that "mass violence almost invariably results from the deliberately violent responses of determined leaders and their groups to a wide variety of social, economic and political conditions …."

We live in a world in which there is substantially increased "mutual vulnerability". This phrase was coined, incidentally, by Jorge Nef, one of the Faculty for this program, and Ivan Head when both were at the International Development Research Centre. I now have the privilege of chairing the board of IDRC which has had for several years a program in peacebuilding. Mutual vulnerability is a continuing theme to IDRC's work.

Clearly we are increasingly inter-connected with each other – for better or for worse, as the case may be. I would argue that, on the whole, it is very much for the better – it provides for a richer world, providing we sort out some major problems before they arrive on our door step.

Robert Kaplan has stated that "two dynamic classes will emerge under globalization – the entrepreneurial nouveaux riches and, more importantly, the new sub-proletariat: the billions of working poor, recently arrived from the countryside, inhabiting squatters' settlements that surround big cities in Africa, Eurasia and South America". These people are not all going to remain passively in such circumstances for long. Some have charged Kaplan is too pessimistic, but before dismissing him, read what he has to say – look at the increasing prevalence of gated communities.

Let me give you one more quotation, this time from Samuel Huntington, best known for his book The Clash of Civilizations, although this quotation does not address that controversial hypothesis. He has written that "the world is a dangerous place, in which large numbers of people resent (American) wealth, power and culture, and vigorously

oppose our (he is again referring to American but perhaps it applies to Canadian as well) efforts to persuade or coerce them to accept our values of human rights, democracy and capitalism". It is and will indeed continue to be a messy and dangerous world.

Just a word on the "clash of civilizations" – I think it is overstated, but not inconceivable if we make a sufficiently bad mess of things. Rather than dismissing Huntington, let us work together to ensure the unattractive world about which he writes does not occur. As with Kaplan, he issues a warning call to us all.

Violations of human rights are a very good indicator of prospective conflict. They can be the first sign that human security is threatened. The United Nations has not been very effective in this area, owing in significant part to the number of human rights violators who are members of the organization, and some of which inevitably, it seems, find their way on to UN human rights bodies – not doing anything for their credibility. Calling attention to human rights violations is an essential first step. There are, however, even more complex questions about what is to be done about them. Canada played a leading role in a recent commission on intervention and state sovereignty which tried to grapple with these issues, underlining the "responsibility to protect" of governments.

In short, I would assert important root causes of conflict in the world are very much still with us. The lack of opportunity, discrepancies in wealth, ethnic and religious differences, environmental problems – quite apart from questions about who has power and what motivates them – represent critical challenges. On ethnic conflict, one of the

most important causes of conflict, I might add Royal Roads is fortunate to have one of the world's leading experts on its faculty in the person of George Irani.

The means of pursuing conflict are also changing. These means are becoming increasingly lethal. The knowledge and material to construct chemical and biological weapons are increasingly dispersed. While chemical weapons may be difficult to use against civilian populations on a large scale, the same is not true for biological agents. The former may be hard to deliver, but the latter are not. The knowledge and material for nuclear weapons are, however, more difficult to acquire than those for CB, but not impossible.

The perpetrators of conflict are, obviously, no longer just states and their armies. The rise of non-state actors is an important development at both the state and international level. There is no question that al Qaeda wanted to acquire weapons of mass destruction and would have been prepared to use them. Al Qaeda may be a leader in this area, but is not alone.

Not only is it a dangerous world, but different elements of it are taking on greater importance. Failing and failed states cannot just be forgotten, although it is often difficult to know what to do. Wars cannot go on interminably, although it is often difficult to know how they can be stopped. Conflicts need to be resolved or at least managed. The basis for peace must be built. Canada can help, although I must say I worry about the increasing impact of the various Diaspora in that they push our political leaders to take

sides rather than to pursue peacebuilding. This is a very important issue. As someone of Scottish background, am I missing my calling, not fulfilling my clan responsibilities, by not advocating Scottish independence?

Some people focus too exclusively on the instruments of conflict in their efforts to improve the world. Let me state very directly that, while it can be argued the world would have been better if nuclear weapons had never been invented, the genie cannot be put back in the bottle. Nuclear weapons will be with us forever. They are too easy to build, too small and perceived as too necessary to a few states for their security for them to be renounced. What we need is to reduce numbers, to control the weapons themselves and to ensure that further proliferation does not occur. We need to ensure that nuclear weapons will never again be used.

Nor is it possible to eliminate the small arms which kill so many non-combatants in the world today. The tragedy of child soldiers and children as victims is enormous. The image of a twelve year old with an AK-47 and a necklace of bullets is one we have seen much too often. We can and should reduce access, but these weapons will also always be around. We need to do much more to reduce the causes of conflict that motivate people to want to kill each other.

I believe that we are far better off to invest our energy and money in tackling the roots of conflict, in controlling – as distinct from trying to eliminate - in feasible ways the instruments of conflict, and above all in building peace. We need to develop our conflict

management capabilities and increase training in this area. This, of course, is the subject matter of the Conflict Analysis and Management program at Royal Roads. The emphasis on analysis is worth underlining.

More and more people are becoming involved in initiatives to protect human security and build peace. The UN, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the World Bank and others are deeply engaged. There are non-governmental organizations also engaged. We need to build on best practices and increase the number of capable people to do this critical work. The new Royal Roads program that we are inaugurating is designed to address that need.

We know what we have to do. Do we have the will? That is the question. I commend to you all the superb work of the Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict. It is the best single report of its kind. The report lays out a very clear prescription for what needs to be done. It concludes that we need to advance a culture of peace. It seems there is some way to go before we can declare the task accomplished.

I shall be using the Carnegie Report in working with learners in this program. We need to develop practical skills and not doctrinaire approaches. The Human Security and Peacebuilding program is designed to do just that.

So we have a world in which there is disorder – too much of it. Roots of conflict remain. They may even have been fertilized as a consequence of recent developments. We need

what the Carnegie Commission calls both structural – systemic - and operational – more immediate - policies to confront these risks. We need more qualified people prepared to devote their efforts to increasing human security and building peace. Our education system needs to be changed in consequence, and I am proud to be affiliated with an institution attempting to do just that.

There is, of course, a major question on everybody's minds these days – what about the United States? Is the US a rogue state? Is the United States now an imperial power? Is its objective Pax Americana? Has the United Nations been rendered impotent? Is "regime change", as prescribed in Washington, what the future holds? The answers to these questions will have a great deal to do with the environment for people working in the field of human security and peacebuilding. I shall now offer my perspective on these questions.

For a long time the US felt itself to be invulnerable to attack. While there was a fear of a nuclear attack during the Cold War, it was generally felt deterrence worked. The last time the continental US was attacked was almost two hundred years ago. The attack, of course, came from Canada and was launched by the British Imperial power, with one consequence being the burning of the White House.

Americans have not before experienced the widespread feeling of foreboding that is present today south of the border. The United States today no longer feels invulnerable. Nine/eleven changed all that. The US now sees enemies, often shadowy networked ones,

who want to get their hands on WMD and attack the US in a way that threatens its very existence. Regardless of the background, the history of US foreign policy, how we arrived here, that is where we are today. The US will act on that basis.

I believe, by the way, there is no question but that these threats are real. There are people in the world with the will and the capability to wreak great damage on the United States.

That is not to say everyone in the US – much less the world - is agreed as to what should be done. There are many Americans who would strongly prefer that the US acts with its friends using multilateral approaches. But there is general agreement that the United Nations botched its opportunity in the Iraq crisis. Few Americans that I know would now be prepared to put their security in the hands of that organization. Actually few would have done so at any time during the last half century. The US clearly has the power and the will to act unilaterally when need be. It will do so, particularly when feeling it is confronted with an existential threat, unless there is a credible multilateral alternative available. This is an important area for Canadian foreign policy initiatives, but that would be the subject of a different talk.

In short, the US has become an empire. Of course, most Americans are deeply offended at the idea. This, however, is a denial of reality.

Empires are not new. Power politics have not disappeared. The previous predominant empire, the British Empire, did not end that long ago. Although there is nothing new in

empires, their character has changed. Holding territory is now of less importance. Economic objectives remain, for example, with respect to oil, but the foreign territories being held are not being taxed, as they were by most previous empires. Homeland security objectives may be more important as motivating factors than they were for empires of other epochs. Empires go on.

There are actually interesting parallels between the British Empire and those who see the "21st Century as belonging to America". Both rely on military dominance and hard power. Both connect economic interests and foreign policy. You might have thought "shock and awe" was something new. In mid-Victorian times the British tactic was known as "butcher and bolt". Neither empire counts deaths of their citizens and those of their enemies in the same way. Neither have doubts about who has superior culture and values. Finally, there was never a doubt on which side God could be found.

The US is seeking or already has "full spectrum dominance" in the military sphere, but is less dominant in the economic and cultural spheres. The US believes that, not only as a consequence of its military power but as a matter of right, it is an exceptional country which has a duty in the world to advance democracy and respect for human rights, as well as an economic system based on free markets. The US should therefore not be constrained by multilateral rules except where it is in American interests. This doctrine has its roots with Benjamin Franklin, and its current manifestations can be seen from Kyoto to the International Criminal Court.

The important thing is not to waste one's time lamenting what is not likely to change. The best is usually the enemy of the good in this imperfect world. What we need are practical approaches to real life problems.

The media has forced the realities of human security into our living rooms. Who can look at little Ali, twelve years old, missing most of two arms and one leg and not shudder – if not cry. What did he do to deserve such an awful fate? The international community has rallied to help poor Ali – at least the Ali we know – but how many more Alis are there out there?

Iraq also brings home to us the realities of peacebuilding. It is one thing to defeat Saddam and his awful regime. It is quite another to build peace in that country. And speaking of "country", is it one except as devised by the victorious powers after World War I in Paris and maintained by a series of more or less repressive regimes ever since? How does one build a democracy in the wake of Saddam? When can elections be held? This is not just a technical question but one of how best to build a stable society. Who decides who should be in the interim regime? What happens if many people (at least those who express their view) want an Islamic state based on Sharia law? Is Fareed Zakaria right in believing there are pre-conditions for democracy in the level of GDP per capita and, even more important, in the presence or absence of a legally based liberal society? If these conditions are not met, Zakaria foresees something akin to mob rule.

There are clearly questions of law and order in Iraq. Here the record of the liberators/invaders in Iraq is less than sterling. Surely the problems which occurred could have been foreseen. Now what is to be done? Can one use police from the previous regime? Does the level of policeman matter in answering this question? What kind of assistance can the outside world offer? As Tom Friedman and others rightly ask, how long should and how long will the commitment of outside assistance last?

These are the kinds of questions that our learners will be examining. There are no easy answers. Our learners will be doing more than examining these questions. They will be working on doing something practical about them. They will draw on their experience. They will build on that experience in the courses being offered in the residencies and by distance learning.

Clearly conflict prevention is to be preferred to conflict itself. Conflict prevention is also to be preferred to post-conflict rebuilding. But that will not always be possible. Sometimes international will can only – perversely – be mobilized after conflict has already begun. The challenges of peacebuilding are huge. The skills required are impressive.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you tonight. My best wishes go the learners in this program. I look forward to working with them.