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SPEAK SOFTLY AND CARRY A BIG CARROT

By Robert Cooper

The text builds on a previous speech by Mr Cooper, where he was speaking in a personal capacity. The views expressed here are therefore the personal views of the author.

Globalisation is no longer the fashionable subject it was a year or two ago. The tragic dramas of September 11 and after have given us other things to think about. And yet globalisation remains the basic condition of the world. September 11 itself saw terrorists from across the globe crashing jet planes into an international financial centre, with the operation directed from Afghanistan, a bizarre existence, defended by a private international army, financed by the international drug trade, fed by international aid agencies. To use my own terminology, the premodern crashing into the postmodern, proving that there is no corner of the world so distant or obscure that it may not affect us.

Globalisation has many causes. Technical progress is no doubt a big part of the story. Looked at from the political perspective I have no doubt that the cause of globalisation is peace. The first wave of globalisation came at such a time in the 16th century and it saw the Fugger establishing links with China India and Chile; the second at the end of the 19th century and brought with it the beginnings of international organisation. In peace borders; become less important, trade flourishes, nationality matters less. As borders become more porous what happens abroad matters more. At the top of the list of the things that matter are proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction, terrorism, failed states, civil wars, organised crime – the familiar list of a thousand strategy documents. We should add to that list more mundane items such as tax havens and bird flu, asylum seekers and immigration and much else besides.

The slightly paradoxical result is that foreign policy matters perhaps more in a time of comparative peace than it does in the old world of wars and rumours of war. Wars of course still go on. And they still matter. Mostly they seem to be civil wars today. They are responsible not only for countless horrors for those that have to endure them but they also bring us some of the risks listed earlier. Situations like the conflict in Palestine are no longer just the business of those directly involved: they are strategic issues for countries such as Britain. Even without actual conflict poor governance brings risks and threats for us as well making miserable the lives of those who have to live with it on the spot.

Thus we more than ever need influence over governments abroad; but not, as in classical foreign policy in the realist tradition over their foreign policies, their alliances and military policies. These still remain important as for example is the case with proliferation of WMD. But the number of countries who can pose a threat through their strength and competence is limited. Of greater concern is the number who may become a threat by their inefficiency or weakness. Thus what matters to us today is the domestic policies and forms of government of foreign countries, in most cases more than their foreign policies. Badly governed states are a threat. Today Realpolitik means promoting the rule of law, accountable government, freedom of

expression and all the other virtues of a liberal state and society. In Europe we tend to speak of *"Human Rights"*; in the USA it is *"Democracy"* but I think we are talking about the same thing. And this agenda is not just about political change. Democracy, the rule of law and reliable government will survive only in a reasonably well ordered society. So whereas once foreign policy was about changing people's policies now it is about changing their systems of government and their societies.

In the past the solution to these problems was relatively simple. If a country was badly governed one took it over and governed it oneself. Those days are gone. Occasionally we get the UN to do something like that, but not for long; some see the intervention in Iraq in that light, but this is however very different from classical imperialism. First it is multilateral – and the US would like it to be more multilateral if that could be managed; second it is unintentional – though that has been the case in older imperial ventures from time to time – but thirdly the acute anxiety to hand over sovereignty and to leave as soon as reasonably possible is very different from the imperialism of the past. In the old days imperialism was, up to a point at least, accepted and so it was inexpensive. Now the costs are far too high for any country even the USA to sustain over a long period.

I have to apologise: none of this is in the least original. It is stated clearly in the US National Security Strategy which begins by stressing that threats in the future may come from states which are too weak rather than from those that are too strong and which ends by saying that diplomats may need to acquire nation building skills. President Bush has put in vigorous language as a "forward strategy of freedom". In the European security strategy also you find that the threat from failed or failing states is underlined and it is written: "….no substitute for well governed…" "the first line of defence will often be abroad" "preemptive engagement" etc. Moreover it is visible not just in what we say but in what we do. The biggest European aid effort in terms of Euros per head has been in Central Europe, preparing countries to meet European standards so they could join the EU. The next biggest effort in terms of both military and aid is going into rebuilding the Balkans. Third in terms of spending per head is the funding of programmes around the Mediterranean – approximately one billion per year by the EU. The sums of money put into institutions like the NED or the Westminster Foundation are not gigantic but they are rising all the time and the very existence of such bodies is something new. One way or another all of this is about regime change. This is a revolutionary age and we are the revolutionaries. We are all neo conservatives now.

Or are we? I have to admit that I'm not sure I know exactly what a neo conservative is. If it is some one who thinks that military force is especially useful in promoting democracy then I am definitely not one. It is true that force is necessary to overthrow the enemies of democracy but as Clemenceau said: *"My apologies to Attila but the art of arranging how men live is more complex than the art of massacring them."* And Clemenceau was not after all squeamish about the use of force. Or Jacob Burkardt: *"Like bad physicians they thought to cure the disease by removing the symptoms and fancied that if the tyrants were put to death freedom would follow of itself".*

Force is necessary to protect freedom and to enforce law but it also has unattractive side effects: it polarises, it creates extremism; it legitimises further use of force. Foreign interventions have their uses – the Falklands war played an important part in turning the tide against the military dictators of Latin America; Napoleon set off the process of creating a United Germany – but they also have their problems. It may be that the idea that democracy is easy is the result of the particular American experience. America was born democratic. I am not sure if this is true of any other country. Most of us achieved democracy with quite a lot of difficulty: there is no European country that has not had wars, revolutions, dictatorships on the way to becoming democratic – in many cases in this century.

Some are born democratic; some achieve democracy. The question is whether some can have democracy successfully thrust upon them.

Of course force is important, even indispensable, but I do not think that in the long run the world is driven by force. Ideas seem to be more important. Communism came to Central Europe and to Russia partly by force but also by conviction. Unfortunately when the conviction was gone the force remained. But the overthrow of the communist dictatorships came not through force but through a crisis of legitimacy. And with occupying forces gone nothing beside remains around the decay of that colossal system.

Across the world the idea of self-determination has been a driving force for the last century to the point that it has swept away some of the greatest empires of history. In Vietnam the greatest military power was defeated by the Vietnamese drive for self determination, a movement that started when a kitchen worker in the Ritz Hotel in Paris petitioned the Versailles conference – that was of course a failure but the man concerned whose name was Ho Chi Minh did not give up easily.

It is astonishing to see too how the idea of democracy itself survives and mobilises in Africa and the Middle East in spite of the difficulties in its way and the failures in its practice. In some of these areas it stands alongside the idea of Islam. One of the great dramas is in the question of how the two will or will not be reconciled. It is the clash of ideas not of civilisations that matters.

In Asia perhaps we have seen the success of a certain idea of the state and its role in the economy, and an idea of the economy and its role in politics and international relations.

In Europe too I am struck by the power of the idea of Europe. This may not always seem so in Britain but from Stettin on the Baltic to Tirana on the Adriatic, countries have been transforming themselves to join the European Union. Those who were at the inauguration of the new president of Georgia in January 2004 will have seen him raise the European flag and play Beethoven's "Ode to Joy".

Of course, democracy flourish best when there is a background of security; and it is notable that these successful and benign ideas have spread in Europe and Asia under an American security umbrella.

The second proposal I should like to make is that states exist in communities and flourish in communities. There may occasionally be Hobbesian moments but these are relatively rare especially today. The strongest are the Atlantic community and the European community (in the non technical sense). There are also communities in Asia, Latin America, the Caribbean, Africa and elsewhere. I am not thinking just of regional organisations though these are the formal manifestation of such associations.

Perhaps one can explain the drive to belong in purely mechanical terms: that membership confers benefits in security and economic terms, as it usually does. But I do not think that that is the whole story. Turkey does not want to join the EU just because of the CAP, nor did Poland or Estonia. Libya's wish to return to the "international community" was not just about economic benefits. Iran also wants to end its isolation in some way. In these last two cases there are also security considerations at work but again I do not believe that this is the whole story. Man is a social animal and states are collective social animals; or at the least statesmen are.

You can see the same phenomenon in the way in which states flourish as members of associations. Ireland has escaped from the prison of its past with Britain into Europe. Spain has come alive in a dramatic fashion in the same association; Greece has shuffled off a suspicious Balkan identity and has put together a much more constructive relationship with Turkey.

Regional organisations and their rules are important. They help to build trust; and creating trust is the central purpose of international organisation as it is of domestic institutions. But perhaps more important are unwritten rules. At one end of the scale are understandings for example that members of the EU are not going to make surprise attacks on each other; at the other end – and rather less well established are rules about joining a consensus and taking account of each others domestic imperatives. I can remember laughing at the idea put forward by

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the League of Nations idealists that countries would never dare do something against world opinion: in the 1930s manifestly that did not happen. But today, in limited areas that seems to be an accurate explanation of how international society functions. As Henry Kissinger has remarked, values are the unspoken assumptions on which our behaviour is ultimately based.

The big carrot in my title is the offer of membership in an association. If you want to change domestic policy, more if you want to change the basis of politics and society then bribes and probably threats will not do it, unless you are very lucky. But the offer to share your institutions, to share your decision-making might just, though here also you need luck and good timing too. It was by redefining itself as a member of an Atlantic community that the USA changed Europe. The story that America brought democracy to Germany is nonsense but it did create the conditions for democracy to flourish by creating a regional framework for the states in Europe. If you really want to influence countries you have to get close to them: the most effective way of doing this is to form a real and permanent association with them. This is what America did after 1945 and the EU & NATO are now doing in their turn in the Balkans and in Central and Eastern Europe. The kind of change that is now the objective of all our policies will not be achieved by less.

Am I then advocating a policy of "wider still and wider" for the European Union? Not necessarily. (I am tempted by a version of the Peter Principle which would say that all organisations expand to the point at which they cease to function). But it is because of this logic that those who want change in what is now called the wider/greater Middle East grope towards engagement through the EU's network of Association Agreements or the extension in some form of PfP in the case of NATO. Personally I am not sure if this will do it. We talk of dialogue but do we really listen? We talk of partnership but there is still a them and an us. This is not because we are acting in bad faith – though there has been a certain inflation of language over the years – but it may be that there are going to be lasting differences of values and of civilisation that no amount of goodwill can overcome. If so what we should aim at will be communities of mutual toleration and respect, a more limited form of US. In that case our efforts to transform other people's societies will also have to be limited. In either case we are venturing on to difficult ground and into areas that we do not fully understand. Hence the need to speak softly. There is much to be said for courtesy in such situations.

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