

**Present day foreign policy dilemmas and getting the structures which work**  
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We have all become familiar in recent years with the idea of globalisation as an economic and financial reality. Like it or not, and there are plenty of voices raised on both sides of that debate, we have to respond to and to try to manage its symptoms and consequences. Less familiar but no less real is the concept of the globalisation of foreign policy dilemmas. And yet, if one looks around, one sees a world dominated by global threats and challenges to which only global responses are likely to be adequate or effective; and one can see too that those responses will need to be mediated through multilateral institutions and to be applied on a rules-based, equitable foundation if they are to be sustainable. Climate change, trade policy, extremes of poverty, pandemic diseases, the problems of failing and failed states, natural disasters, the spread of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction. The list is long, the global outreach of each is not seriously in doubt and the policies and methods which so far the international community is employing to deal with them are inadequate.

It is twenty years now since the harsh, bi-polar realities of Cold War diplomacy collapsed with the fall of the Berlin Wall, the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the end of the apartheid regime in South Africa. Since then we have passed through a brief, uni-polar moment, when the United States was the only super-power left standing. We live now in a multi-polar world, with considerable shifts in power and influence taking place between countries and groups of countries, the most notable being the emergence of rising powers, of countries like China, India and Brazil. In theory, at least, it should be easier to organise multilateral responses to the global challenges that face us in that multi-polar world than it ever was in a bi-polar or a uni-polar situation. No single power can handle these challenges on its own, nor is the world frozen by the rivalry between two super powers. But will it prove easier in practise? That remains to be seen. In trying to answer that question I would suggest that we should not be distracted by such theoretical concepts as a G2 composed of the US and China. Those two countries will be of the greatest importance in shaping up the international community's responses but they are not on the point of emerging as a global directorate.

Nothing is more futile than to try to find solutions to these dilemmas through purely institutional fixes - a new multilateral institution here, a reformed voting system there, an enlarged core group somewhere else. But it is equally futile to believe that you can build a policy consensus and implement it effectively without solid international institutional underpinning. So let us move from the theoretical to the practical and consider how we can hope to balance these considerations in specific policy areas.

Take first climate change. The Copenhagen Accord was certainly a step forward. But it fell well short of what is needed in terms of cutting back developed countries' carbon emissions and of reducing the rate of increase in such emissions by developing countries; in terms of the commitment of resources to help developing countries adapt to low carbon emissions; in terms of research and technology transfer; and in terms of international machinery to verify and monitor the commitments entered into. Without some form of binding legal agreement in these areas the approach is likely to remain inadequate and unsustainable. That is the challenge we all face between now and the December meeting in Mexico City. It will mean avoiding the chaos and confusion that characterised the Copenhagen meeting as a result of leaving too many crucial decisions

until the last moment, and it will mean making full use of smaller group meetings such as the G20 to shape up some of the building blocks for a comprehensive outcome.

Then, secondly, take trade policy. The Doha Round remains in the doldrums, becalmed by lack of political will among the main players, in particular the United States. And yet the distance which separated the negotiators when the negotiations stalled was not great. So far the major financial and economic crisis, from which we are just beginning to emerge, has not led to a major outbreak of protectionism. But we are far from being out of the woods yet, with unemployment continuing to rise in many developed countries. So any serious exit policy from this crisis must surely involve the resumption and conclusion of the Doha Round. And that too will require careful preparation among the main players if a global solution which will bring real benefits to developing countries is to be achieved. Another task perhaps for the G20?

And then, thirdly, look at the twin issues of multilateral nuclear disarmament and strengthening non-proliferation. Two big conferences are looming, one in Washington in April on nuclear security and one in May in New York, the five-yearly review of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. Will the international community avoid another fiasco like the last Review Conference in 2005? Will the recognised nuclear weapons states put behind them the disarmament hiatus of the last decade and resume meaningful progress towards nuclear disarmament with the final objective of a world free of nuclear weapons? Will it prove possible to strengthen the safeguards machinery of the International Atomic Energy Agency, to make its Additional Protocol universal, to make withdrawal from the Non-Proliferation treaty a costly rather than a cost-free option? Can the renaissance in civil nuclear energy, which the world needs if its climate change objectives are to be achieved, be secured without increased proliferation risks? Some of the answers to these questions will require bilateral agreement, for example between the US and Russia who have 95% of the nuclear weapons; some will require concertation between a small group, the nuclear weapons states; and some will require much wider support in the Board of Governors of the IAEA. And looming over these conferences will be the nuclear ambitions of North Korea and Iran who are swimming against the tide and risk undermining both regional and global security.

Fourthly look at the problems of failing and failed states. There have been no lack of examples of such states in recent years - the former Yugoslavia, Afghanistan, Rwanda, Haiti, Somalia; and no lack of appalling consequences in the form of genocide, ethnic cleansing, terrorism and massive humanitarian crises flowing from such states' failure. In every case the international community's response has been inadequate. Only a facile optimist would assume there will not be more such cases in the years to come. So we really do need, surely, to reflect more carefully and to act more promptly to make a living reality of that Responsibility to Protect to which all member states signed up at the UN Summit in September 2005. The Responsibility to Protect needs to be seen not as a recipe for external military intervention but as a toolbox for prevention.

I have looked at four examples of policy areas where the dilemmas which face the international community are real and immediate. There are many others - the need to avoid allowing achievement of the Millennium Development Goals to fall victim to the recent global financial and economic crisis, the need to improve our collective response to natural disasters so painfully illustrated in Haiti, the need to re-shape the regulatory systems which guard against a world financial crisis of the sort which caught us all unaware in 2008. There are some common features to all of them. None will be resolved by the sort of verbal jousting between developed and developing countries

which has so often passed for international discourse, most recently in the run-up to the Copenhagen climate change conference. All require countries to take a broad rather than a narrow view of what affects their national security and of what international responsibilities they can be expected to bear in a multi-polar world. And in all of them Brazil, a rising power, will play a more significant role than it has done in the past.

Should we be looking for some single overarching institutional reform to carry this massive agenda forward? Should we be talking about a new world order? I doubt it. That sort of approach was aired at the end of the Cold War; and then was tried in Kofi Annan's attempt to reform the UN system in 2003-5, which produced some moderate changes but also induced reform fatigue. Better I would argue to approach those institutional changes from a more sectoral and a more evolutionary angle. In some cases we will indeed need new institutions. One such is the G20 which has now, belatedly in my view, emerged as the principal forum for coordinating global economic responses to the policy dilemmas we face; the challenge is to turn that new forum into one which systematically prepares such responses. It will need to steer between the two extremes of becoming a mere glorified photo-opportunity for world leaders and of usurping the taking of binding decisions which need to be reached on a global basis. Another case of innovation will be required to provide the institutional underpinning of any binding agreements reached on climate change. In other instances existing institutions will need to be pretty radically adapted. That is true of the International Monetary Fund where new functions such as those dealing with financial stability need to be grafted on to existing structures and where a substantial shift of voting weights needs to be carried out to give more say to the emerging countries, Brazil among them. In the case of the UN Security Council whose enlargement to give it greater representability and legitimacy is, in my view, long overdue, it may be necessary to proceed through a transitional phase in which a new category of longer term and renewable but still rotating members is created before agreement can finally be reached on new permanent members. That alternative was put forward in 2004-5 but at the time was not seriously considered. The UN can ill afford continued deadlock on this issue or a further failed attempt to reach agreement on new permanent seats. And then there is a third category of policy areas where the unwieldiness of the existing virtually universal membership institutions has raised serious concerns about their capacity to reach substantive decisions at all. That problem has arisen at the World Trade Organisation and in the climate change negotiations. A twin track approach may be needed there whereby smaller groups of the main players could help to shape up, but not to take, the decisions required, and whereby also the practice of taking all decisions by consensus could be changed to one in which votes could be taken, thus avoiding the outcome of the negotiations being frustrated by a few spoilers. This after all is the practice in the UN General Assembly.

I have tried to cover a lot of ground in a short time. The subject matter is important but difficult. What we need, I believe, is a much more open process of international debate on all these issues, such as we are having this evening, and much greater expression of political will by our governments to put their weight behind the search for solutions to the policy dilemmas which face us.