

**HOW TO PROTECT FREEDOM?
The strategic challenges in the Southern Arc of Crisis**

**Lecture
by
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I.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The global economic and financial crisis is difficult to manage. The crisis, however, would become unmanageable if it would be confronted with conflicts which could not be regionally confined. Crisis management has therefore also to be seen in the context of the global potential for crisis and conflict.

It goes without saying that the periphery of Europe, the southern arc of crisis, is in the forefront of our interest. The main problematic themes of security related developments are occurring in a broad band stretching from North Africa through wider Middle East and Caucasus through Central Asia. It contains the conflict between Israel and Palestine, the Iranian nuclear ambitions, the war in Afghanistan and above all the Islamic terrorism from Gaza to Mumbai. And one should not forget to mention the piracy in the Indian Ocean threatening our sea lines of communication and the emerging maritime rivalry between India and China.

II.

We are confronted with a situation that is determined by uncertainties, by demographic challenges, illegal migration, climate change, threats to bio security, decreasing energy reserves, epidemics and pandemics, by transnational crime, terrorism and drug trafficking, by asymmetric threats and strategic risks of the globalization like

- the vulnerability of the global communication structures,
- the questionable handling of potentially dangerous technologies,
- the insufficient safety of nuclear weapons ,
- the easy access to all kinds of weapons
- lack of democratic control as well as the combination of these developments.

This spectrum of uncertainties does indeed characterize the challenge to security, economies and stability.

The United Nations have to enforce peace all over the globe. Exploding crisis and imploding states have to be brought under control. Often state structures are falling apart. Failed States like Somalia and pretty soon most likely also Jemen are safe havens for terrorists.

The global Islamic terrorism, the Djihad terrorism, stands in the forefront of dangerous developments – pursuing three objectives with a long term global strategy. This terrorism will ideologically interlink action fields in North Africa, in the Near East, the Gulf region and on the Indian Sub continent. This terrorism will give ethnic conflicts an Islamic dimension. And finally this terrorism will exploit cooperation

with organized crime, money laundering, drug trafficking and trade of men and women.

It becomes obvious that all states are vulnerable in an interdependent world: Under developed countries due to their weakness and highly developed industrial countries due to their delicate structures. Any kind of international destabilization takes place on the expense of social and economic progress, ruins chances for development, initiates flows of migration, destroys resources, favors political radicalization and violence. Such dangerous developments have the potential to influence and to endanger highly developed societies in a way that may lead to military conflicts.

This situation proves the thesis that the stabilization of conflict regions cannot and should not be limited to military interventions. The new forms of terror and conflict do express an attack on the world order and require a broad and imaginative strategy that brings all dimensions to bear – the political, the diplomatic, the cultural and economic dimension - and military interventions as last resort.

All the new challenges are fundamentally transnational. For this reason, there is broad recognition that they need to be countered with the most energetic mobilization of resources for international cooperation – and it will be necessary to provide security *in and for* Europe.

III.

The conflict between Palestinians and Israel is indeed the core problem of the Near East. A solution, however, is not in sight. Presently the Palestinians are divided among themselves and therefore difficult to negotiate with. A significant part of the people of Israel is very skeptical about any chance to improve the situation at all. And the present government does not even shy away from a dispute with Washington. The situation is complicated because all determining factors are interrelated.

Israel is above all concerned about security. For Israel security means nothing less than safeguarding the sheer existence of the state on a territory for which Israelites and Palestinians do articulate an historically legitimate claim. For both of them this claim is part of their national identity. The historical experience and the holocaust trauma make security the most important issue for Israel.

Israel wants a stabile peace with its Arabic neighbors, their formal recognition of the state of Israel and an active fight against terrorism. The main objective of the Palestinians is a viable state on the West Bank and a secure link to the Gaza strip.

Syria wants control of the Golan Heights. The country wants desperately to get out of political and economic isolation. So far Syria has used the Hisbollah in Lebanon to exert pressure on Israel. If that reason would diminish Syria would not have a motive

any more to support the Hisbollah – because there is no religious reasoning for that in Damascus. This move has all the potential to further stabilize Lebanon and to weaken the Hamas at the same time - making them more ready for dialogue.

Any political and diplomatic initiative based on a package that does include Israel, Syria, Lebanon and the Palestinians will have a major impact on Iran and Teheran`s options to exert influence in this region.

The key to this approach lies in Damascus. Three criteria will determine any result: the complete withdrawal of Israel from the Golan Heights, loosening of the Syrian ties from Iran and the political as well as the financial support of the US and the EU of any peace agreement.

A peace accord with Syria will have enormous advantages for Israel: the country will not be threatened from all directions any more. Israel can concentrate solely on the question how to come to terms with the Palestinians including the Hamas.

The recent trials to come to a new approach for peace talks between Israel and the Palestinians have been paralyzed by the fact that President Obama`s words and his Cairo speech to the Arabic world have not been followed sufficiently by deeds. Washington has decreased the pressure on Israel to stop the building of new settlements immediately – although everybody knows, that this is the very precondition for success. Future negotiations under the patronage of the USA have to concentrate on three core elements: On the one hand Washington has to take into account vital interests of Israel but on the other hand Washington has to lead Israel to essential concessions. Those concessions must include a complete building-stop in the settlements, the concession that Jerusalem will be the capital of both states and the concession that the Palestinians will get a bigger part of the territory. An exchange of territorial entities has to take place on the basis of the rationale land for peace. The ratio of 22 to 78 percent has to be changed.

Turkey has proven to be an exporter of stability to this conflict laden region. Ankara has worked on stabilizing the political situation in Lebanon and has served as an honest broker in so called proximity talks between Syria and Israel. Turkey is pursuing a stringent policy of bilateral cooperation and understanding in the immediate neighborhood. During the last months Turkish relations with Iraq and Syria have been improved by numerous bilateral agreements.

III.

60 % of global energy reserves are concentrated within a circle of 3000 km around Teheran; but this circle does also contain the most dangerous potential for conflict. The unpredictable political leaders of Iran, their support of Hisbollah and Hamas

against Israel and above all their ambitious nuclear program give reason for grave concern. Arming Iranian missiles with nuclear war heads would mean an existential threat for Israel but soon also for Europe. The overall strategic situation in the wider Middle East would change dramatically.

The international community is therefore decided to deny Iran the access to nuclear weapons. A diplomatic solution for this problem is being preferred – but patience is running out. In order to come to a political solution one has to understand the Iranian motive for the nuclear ambitions. This kind of approach is key to the understanding of Iranian security concerns. Iran feels encircled by unpredictable nuclear powers, by US presence in Iraq, Turkey and Afghanistan and by increasing instability in the region. The government of Iran - supported by the Iranian people - is firmly decided to stick to the legitimate right of peaceful use of nuclear technology.

Iran wants security in a more and more destabilized region and in the long run Iran wants to be the dominating regional power. Under the condition, that Iran will finally exercise a constructive role and policy this approach may be agreeable.

So far all talks with the Iranian government have been solely focused on transparency and denial and on the related question whether Iran is trying to get nuclear weapons and to prove this suspicion. It may be that Iran wants to be able to build the bomb without actually doing it. Iran would become sort of a “nuclear power in being”. Other countries like Brazil do have this kind of status; and Iran is trying to cooperate closely with these threshold states.

Further talks with Iran should be based on a wider approach. The security situation of the entire region has to be taken into account – including the US presence in Iraq, the role of Syria in Lebanon and of course the future cooperation with Iran on Afghanistan. Everybody knows: there will be no regional stability without Iran.

President Obama has initially decided to talk with Iran without any preconditions after a period of silence that lasted longer than 30 years. Any call for regime change will harm this approach – even if such a change would be applauded everywhere in the light of the oppression of the growing opposition.

The US is also well advised not to count too much on a military option. This option will not lead to a solution. One must not be a strategic genius in order to foresee Iran's reactions on airstrikes: attacks on US forces in Iraq and Afghanistan, a blockade of the Strait of Hormuz and the complete cut of oil flow from the Arabian Gulf – not to speak about terrorist attacks and an immediate solidarity of neighboring Arabic countries.

Today Teheran is in principle more dependent on the West than ever before. This dependence could well be exploited in future talks. The incentives have to be

enriched by investments as well as by the transfer of knowhow and technology. The Iranian regime has no other choice than to create jobs for more than a million young people every year. But these jobs are not available given the present conditions. 65 % of the Iranian people are younger than 30 years. Iran is the key country in the region and should be treated accordingly.

A solution of the crisis has to give something to everybody: no Iranian nuclear options, but also security for Iran in a potentially threatening neighborhood. With other words: Security against Iran demands security for Iran.

It is of utmost importance to find out whether Tehran is seriously interested to negotiate a durable agreement. So far the negotiations had reached two agreements ready to be signed; but in both cases they did not find the final political blessings in Teheran. Even the top people of the governments in Washington, Paris or elsewhere are not sure who is actually in charge in Teheran.

IV.

During the last weeks and months we have heard alarming news from Afghanistan. NATO's ISAF troops can guarantee security and public order only on a very limited scale. The radical Islamic Taliban have expanded their influence and are present on more than 70 % of the territory. They avoid open battles, but they try to cut NATO support lines and they prefer guerilla tactics. They do operate with suicide bombers and ambushes. Threats such as improvised explosive devices (IEDs), explosively formed projectiles (EFPs), mortars, rocket-propelled grenades (RPGs), and shoulder-fired anti air missiles are relatively minor factors in conventional force-on-force warfare on the open battlefield, but they are a major factor in irregular warfare.

NATO has suffered from many victims – and that had and has an impact on the public acceptance of the war in Afghanistan – not only in Germany, but also elsewhere. Canada has decided to leave Afghanistan until 2011. The Netherlands have announced as early as 2007 that Dutch troops will leave in July 2010. The attempt to expand this date has brought the ruling coalition down on 20th February 2010. Uneasiness about seemingly endless presence in Afghanistan has created controversial political debates in Denmark as well as in the United Kingdom.

President Obama is obviously trying to avoid burdening the re-election campaign in 2012 by the war in Afghanistan. Beyond this tactical argument the President has to take into account that US presence or withdrawal has to be seen in the light of the US budget situation. America, however, is now sending 30.000 additional soldiers. A substantial collective effort is aiming to achieve in the next two years as much stability and security as possible for the Afghan people. It took a while for the Obama administration to come to these decisions. But Washington came to the conclusion: unless the US strategy will not be revised the campaign will end in disaster.

Some developments complement each other in a very negative way - like the relationship between the Taliban, the international drug cartels and Al Qaida in the region. The situation in Pakistan does complicate the whole situation enormously. It is difficult to stabilize a country that is divided by ethnic conflicts and rivalries between war lords. The drug problem is adding a particular dangerous dimension. The international organized crime has enforced instability in Afghanistan since many years. Today about 92 % of the global demand for heroine is coming from Afghanistan. Taliban, war lords and even parts of the government are protecting the heroine production that creates enormous economic values. Drug cartels and Taliban are mutually supporting each other in an un-holy alliance.

The new strategy for Afghanistan has therefore to focus on the development of the country and on the fight against poppy cultivation. On 11 August 2009 the Foreign Relations Committee of the US Senate has underlined that the Taliban cannot be defeated and the Afghan government cannot function unless the flow of money that stems from the drug industry will be stopped.

The radical Taliban which amount to about 8000 fighters pursue a national objective in contrast to Al Qaida that is internationally oriented. They want to create a caliphate run by fundamentalists. Such a development would certainly have a catastrophic impact on the role of Muslims in Pakistan and India.

The US National Security Advisor told me in Washington when I saw him there in December: President Karzai will get clear cut guidance for more efficient government; the appointment of ministers and governors will only take place with US agreement and if the new appointees commit themselves to stop drug production and corruption; priority will be given to the training of the Afghan army and police and also as to the protection of the Afghan – Pakistan border.

This general US-guidance has been confirmed by the international Afghanistan conference in London on 28 January 2010. The conference has declared that Afghan government and the international community are entering into a new phase on the way to full Afghan ownership. The conference defined a force level of 171.600 soldiers and 134.000 police men.

One can recognize a growing international consensus that reconciliation with and integration of Taliban who are not connected with Al Qaida must become an important part of the strategy. Afghanistan obviously needs a new balance of all relevant political forces.

Any new strategy should not be limited to Afghanistan proper but should be widened to a regional approach. Regional neighbouring countries have to be included – of course Pakistan, but also Russia, China, India and Iran. Iran is very interested to get refugee migration and drug trafficking under control.

V.

The political and strategic situation in the wider Middle East in general and on the Indian subcontinent in particular is determined by the danger of destabilization. The whole region could be destabilized by cross border terrorism, ethnic and religious rivalries and weak governments which are not able to cope with new challenges. The attacks on Mumbai in November 2008 had a wide ranging effect on Indian policy. This terrorist attack had a new quality because it was perceived as an armed aggression in an asymmetric war. As a consequence the overall security situation in South Asia has decreased severely and is now similar to the situation in the Near East. Islamic terror does now stretch from the Mediterranean region to Myanmar.

The Indian government does not hesitate to say that Pakistan seems to be a failed state. But Indian crisis management does pursue several options simultaneously – being prepared for the worst but also being ready for a constructive dialogue with Pakistan – well knowing that the Pakistan army as well as the intelligence service are hardly under political control. The most dangerous scenario, however, is access to nuclear weapons by terrorists. And that has to be avoided by all means.

VI.

The present factors of instability are of immediate and grave concern for the government in New Dehli. In the long run, however, India is concerned about Chinese policies and strategies which from an Indian point of view are not easy to indicate – not the least due to Chinese maritime activities and the Chinese strategy of the “string of pearls” around the Indian subcontinent. This strategy is aiming at a support of permanent Chinese naval presence by naval stations and harbour rights in Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Myanmar. These activities have to be seen in the context of a gigantic program for fleet modernisation in China that will even include two carrier battle groups for power projection.

This development makes India nervous. Chinese naval activities around India and the delivery of Chinese weapons to India`s neighbouring countries create an Indian perception of being encircled. Indian-Chinese relations become more and more determined by maritime rivalry.

The US Pacific fleet is and will be the key strategic factor for maritime balance in this part of the world.

In ancient times the Mediterranean Sea was the connecting and separating element between Europe and Africa. Romans and Greeks knew that their security was depending on maritime superiority. In our days the Indian Ocean is the maritime key region of the world. The major part of global trade is using the sea lines of communication in the Indian Ocean. More than 25.000 ships per year are crossing

the Indian Ocean and are now threatened by piracy. It goes without saying: Our maritime interests require the protection of sea trade and preparedness for maritime interventions.

The international community that does participate in global trade should be held responsible to protect the ships. Ship owners must count on the protection of their ships by states or alliances. NATO will need a maritime oriented strategy in the future. What we see is a renaissance of global maritime policy.

VII.

With view to our security we have to answer the question – what can we do in order to master the challenges in the Southern Arc of Crisis. There Europe, the United States and Russia have common interests – since we all are challenged by the same problems like terrorism, the growing threat by missiles with nuclear war heads, by proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and the instability of the region as a whole.

And how does NATO react? Does the Alliance contribute to the Near East peace process? So far no indication. Does NATO pursue a comprehensive regional strategy in order to stabilize Afghanistan *and* Pakistan? There is certainly room for improvement. What does the precarious security situation in India mean for Europe? No answer. Why is NATO so reluctant to engage in a constructive dialogue with Russia on the future security architecture in Europe? No convincing explanation.

It is obvious: the Alliance needs more visionary leadership and must make a serious effort to regain a credible public profile. NATO urgently needs strategic orientation; and therefore the Alliance is working on a new strategic concept. This concept certainly has to deliver some key messages.

- In the context of a multi polar world with growing importance of China and India NATO should understand itself as a strategic clamp of the three power groups which are confronted with common challenges – America, Europe and Russia. Common challenges in the Wider Middle East require common responses. Russia should be invited to participate in this effort in order to contribute constructively to a joint approach. We need Russia and the US in Africa, in Iran and Afghanistan and above all in the fight against proliferation, but also for energy security. Russia should be encouraged to live up to this role as a strategic partner sharing common interests, common strategic principles and a joint responsibility. At stake is how to enhance stability in a region that is determined by the most dangerous potential for crisis and

conflict and harbors at the same time the biggest energy reserves on earth. Central Asia harbors all ingredients for crisis and conflict: almost unlimited energy reserves, a vast potential for ethnic and religious disputes, Islamic fundamentalists and also conflicting interests of the engaging world powers. Whoever is playing with that powder cag has lost from the very beginning. To make Georgia member of NATO would be such a temptation. We have no vital interest in Georgia that has to be defended militarily. In this context it becomes obvious that NATO should not open her doors for countries which are not mature for membership and do not contribute to common security and regional stability but would rather become a burden.

- NATO has to be revitalized as a political Alliance. NATO must not only be able to defend vital interests with adequate military capabilities but also to enhance peace and stability with political means. The end of the East-West confrontation was the result of such an approach. The Alliance has to act as the guarantor to keep the indispensable relationship between Europe and America intact. NATO is and will be the very anchor for collective security. NATO urgently needs to establish a new consensus. Otherwise we will neither come to terms with common challenges and issues such as energy security and the foreseeable dispute about new energy reserves in the North but also, how to cope with the Iranian nuclear issue or with the urging question how to deal with Russia. Right now Europe is divided on this issue. Most East European states define their security mostly in terms of protection against Russia and many of them even want NATO to draw up specific plans for defense against Russia. This attitude is in direct conflict with the West European preferred strategy of entangling Russia in partnership rather than confronting it NATO needs a new political strategy in order to master the challenges of tomorrow.
- Globalization is not only an economic phenomenon but is also relevant for the global challenges to our security. This development can only be mastered by a concept of international burden sharing, in which specific capabilities for crisis management are tied to regional responsibilities. Afghanistan is the best example. Henry Kissinger has rightly pointed out, that the country has powerful neighbors or near neighbors – Pakistan, India, China, Russia, Iran. Each one has substantial capabilities to defend interests against threats emerging in Afghanistan. But they all have chosen to stand more or less aloof. This leads to the conclusion that international organizations such as the UN, the EU, NATO and possibly the G20 have to coordinate their strategies. Russia, China and the countries in Central Asia do coordinate their policies on energy and counter-terrorism in the Shanghai Organization for Cooperation. They see the drug industry as the most important problem not only for Afghanistan but also for the region as a whole.

The deficits in Western security policies are obvious. Neither NATO nor the EU succeeded in overcoming those deficits and to close the gap between economic strength and strategic weakness. The international structures for crisis management seem to be over demanded. But the challenges in the Southern Arc of crisis do require to bundle our efforts in order to make cooperative multilateralism workable. Russia's acceptance of the trilateral approach is of historical importance. Only the combination and cooperation of America, Russia and Europe is able to balance the dynamism of the emerging world powers in Asia, of China and India.