Has the leadership acted responsibly in preparing both itself and the country for such a role? I do not think so. We see and hear all around us the signs and languages of traditional American nationalism, unmindful even of the fact that the patterns of immigration into this country in the last few decades have been so vastly different from those of previous decades.

There is another huge question of responsibility concerning America's role in the rest of the world. Given its overwhelming military and economic dominance, every action by the US in any part of the world cannot but have enormous repercussions on those states and societies. Has America acted responsibly in weighing the long-term, and often unintended, consequences of its actions? I will not speak here of West Asia, for instance, where American policy has had enormous historical impact; there are others who are more qualified than me to speak on that subject.

Let me speak of Afghanistan where, in the early Eighties, the US fought a long proxy war against the Soviet Union. It is said to have been the biggest Central Intelligence Agency operation in history. The US—in collaboration with the military regime in Pakistan and the retrograde conservative monarchy of Saudi Arabia—organized, trained, funded and armed the Afghan militants, encouraged their Islamic ideology and applauded when they successfully drove out the Soviet troops. I heard Zbigniew Brzezinski, a familiar figure in the corridors of Columbia University, say on television last night that when the last Soviet soldiers crossed the Amu Daria back into the Soviet Union, he felt very very good. He also said that he would have felt even better had he known at the time that that would be the beginning of the collapse of the Soviet Union.

I don't suppose he even thought for a moment the disastrous consequences the American involvement would have on the region. The Taliban was born in the Eighties in the *mujahedin* camps in Pakistan. Osama bin Laden became a hero of Islamic militancy at that time. The Pakistani army itself became deeply afflicted by the ideology of Islamic fanaticism. The results are now there for all to see. Has the US ever accepted that it has some responsibility for what was done to the region and what the region is now doing to the rest of the world?

The question should be asked today when battleships, bombers and commando units are taking up positions for military operations. Is anyone thinking what might be the consequences for Afghanistan of another deadly war? We heard the other day that the council of *ulema* has recommended that Osama bin Laden be asked to voluntarily leave Afghanistan. There is only one conclusion to be drawn from this. The religious leaders are terrified of that might become of their country and people if the US chooses to attack. And what about the consequences for Pakistan where a reluctant army, the only organized institution of the state, is being forced to lay the ground for an American invasion? What about the consequences for all of South Asia where there are two countries with nuclear weapons and a political atmosphere seething with religious and sectarian conflict?

Like it or not, comprehend it or not, the US is today the world's only imperial power. As such, everything it does has consequences for the world as a whole. It is not only the collateral damage of military action that American defence analysts must think of. American leaders must also necessarily think of the collateral damage they do to the history of societies and peoples all over the world. If the US is the world's only superpower, it must be responsible for its actions to the people of the whole world, not to some mythical international coalition hurriedly and cynically put together, but to countries and people—yes, ordinary and innocent people—who suffer the consequences of its actions.

I am not persuaded that either the American leadership or the American people are aware of the enormous moral responsibility contemporary history has put on them. In the aftermath of the attacks on the World Trade Center, President Bush could only think of the "Wanted" poster he had seen in Western movies. While the whole world is looking for an American policy that is flexible, sensitive, attuned to the enormous changes that have taken place in the world in the last decade or so, what we will probably get is more of the familiar American arrogance, bludgeoning and insensitivity. Perhaps, sadly, the first war of the twenty first century will end up no differently from the many wars of the twentieth. ∎

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ON SECURITY AND TERROR

Giorgio Agamben

Security as leading principle of state politics dates back to the birth of the modern state. Hobbes already mentions it as the opposite of fear, which compels human beings to come together within a society. But not until the 18th century does a thought of security come into its own. In a 1978 lecture at the College de France (which has yet to be published) Michel Foucault has shown how the political and economic practice of the Physiocrats opposes security to discipline and the law as instruments of governance.

Turgot and Quesnay as well as Physiocratic officials were not primarily concerned with the prevention of hunger or the regulation of production, but wanted to allow for their development to then regulate and "secure" their consequences. While disciplinary power isolates and closes off territories, measures of security lead to an opening and to globalization; while the law wants to prevent and regulate, security intervenes in ongoing processes to direct them.In short, discipline wants to produce order, security wants to regulate disorder. Since measures of security can only function within a context of freedom of traffic, trade, and individual initiative, Foucault can show that the development of security accompanies the ideas of liberalism.

Today we face extreme and most dangerous developments in the thought of security. In the course of a gradual neutralization of politics and the progressive surrender of traditional tasks of the state, security becomes the basic principle of state activity. What used to be one among several definitive measures of public administration until the first half of the twentieth century, now becomes the sole criterium of political legitimation. The thought of security bears within it an essential risk. A state which has security as its sole task and source of legitimacy is a fragile organism; it can always be provoked by terrorism to become itself terroristic.

We should not forget that the first major organization of terror after the war, the Organisation de 1 Armee Secrete (OAS), was established by a French general, who thought of himself as a patriot, convinced that terrorism was the only answer to the guerrilla phenomenon in Algeria and Indochina. When politics, the way it was understood by theorists of the "science of police" in the eighteenth century, reduces itself to police, the difference between state and terrorism threatens to disappears. In the end security and terrorism may form a single deadly system, in which they justify and legitimate each others actions.

The risk is not merely the development of a clandestine complicity of opponents, but that the search for security leads to a world civil war which makes all civil coexistence impossible. In the new situation created by the end of the classical form of war between sovereign states it becomes clear that security finds its end in globalization: it implies the idea of a new planetary order which is in truth the worst of all disorders.

But there is another danger. Because they require constant reference to a state of exception, measure of security work towards a growing depoliticization of society. In the long run they are irreconcilable with democracy.

Nothing is more important than a revision of the concept of security as basic principle of state politics. European and American politicians finally have to consider the catastrophic consequences of uncritical general use of this figure of thought. It is not that democracies should cease to defend themselves: but maybe the time has come to work towards the prevention of disorder and catastrophe, not merely towards their control. On the contrary, we can say that politics secretly works towards the production of emergencies. It is the task of democratic politics to prevent the development of conditions which lead to hatred, terror, and destruction—and not to limit itself to attempts to control them once they have already occurred. ∎

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