



SAM NUNN
THE RACE BETWEEN COOPERATION AND CATASTROPHE
INTER-PARLIAMENTARY CONFERENCE
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Thank you for that introduction. I would like to thank the European Commission for hosting this important conference, particularly Mr. Briet and Marc Defrennes for their valuable efforts. I would also like to thank the Chairman of the European Parliament's Committee on Foreign Affairs, Mr. Brok, for chairing the conference and organizing a delegation of members of the Parliament. Thank you as well to Bob Einhorn and the Center for Strategic and International Studies for your work in bringing together a consortium of 21 security organizations to work on Strengthening the G8's Global Partnership.

It is a distinct honor to join you in this historic city to speak to this distinguished audience of parliamentarians.

My main point this evening is that, as we confront our challenges, we must focus on the obvious. I am reminded of the story about Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson on a camping trip. After a good meal and a bottle of wine, they lay down for the night and went to sleep.

Some hours later, Holmes awoke and nudged his faithful friend. "Watson, look up at the sky and tell me what you see."

Watson replied, "I see millions and millions of stars."

"What does that tell you, Watson?"

Watson pondered for a minute. "Astronomically, it tells me that there are millions of galaxies and potentially billions of planets. Astrologically, I observe that Saturn is in Leo. Horologically, I deduce that the time is approximately a quarter past three. Theologically, I can see that God is all powerful and that we are small and insignificant. Meteorologically, I suspect that we will have a beautiful day tomorrow. What does it tell you, Holmes?"

Holmes was silent for a minute, then spoke. "Watson, you idiot, someone has stolen our tent!"

Like Sherlock Holmes, I hope we can dismiss obscure theories and deal with stark realities here tonight.

As we enter the 21st century, four aspects of the international security matrix combine to create a daunting and urgent set of challenges to international peace, prosperity and stability:

First, the persistent gap between the “haves” and the “have-nots” – not just in resources, but in knowledge -- continues to inflict humiliation, breed resentment, and spark conflict in many parts of the world.

Second, a number of seemingly intractable conflicts continue to fester around the globe, inciting public outrage, a shared sense of grievance, and even sympathy and support for terrorists in too many quarters.

Third, the sudden collapse of the Soviet Union created a vulnerable supply of nuclear, biological and chemical weapons and materials, as well as know-how. The rise of global terrorists created a new demand for these weapons and a new willingness to use them.

Fourth, the acceleration of scientific discovery and the increased access to new technology – combined with this rising supply and demand – have converged to create a perilous new arms race: Terrorists are racing to acquire nuclear, biological and chemical weapons -- we ought to be racing to stop them.

Although I have left public office, I continue to be involved in public policy, because I believe that:

1. The gravest danger in the world today is the threat from nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons.
2. The likeliest use of these weapons is in terrorist hands.
3. Preventing the spread and use of nuclear, biological and chemical weapons should be the central organizing security principle for the 21st century.

This will require an unprecedented global partnership against catastrophic terrorism.

The media tells us that in October of 2001, top U.S. government officials received a highly classified intelligence report, warning that terrorists had acquired a crude 10-kiloton nuclear bomb and planned to smuggle it into New York City, where it could, according to reliable estimates, kill at least one million people.

This intelligence report was later judged to be false. But it was never judged to be impossible or implausible – either in New York or anywhere else in the world.

This should focus our attention on two fundamental questions:

First, if the report had been accurate, and the bomb had gone off, what would we wish we had done to prevent it?

Second, why aren't we doing that now?

The first question -- what should we have done to prevent it – has many answers.

The second question – why aren't we doing it now – has none. There is no defensible answer to why we are not united in doing all we can to defend against the greatest threat to our security.

How difficult is it for terrorists to attack us with a nuclear weapon? That depends on how difficult we make it. No terrorist can launch a nuclear attack without weapon-grade material -- plutonium or highly enriched uranium. Most terrorists lack the sophisticated infrastructure necessary to produce these materials; they would have to steal or buy them.

So the most effective, least expensive way to prevent nuclear terrorism is to lock down and secure weapons and fissile materials in every country and in every facility that has them. We must insist on transparency and assurances that those weapons and materials will not be vulnerable to diversion to any other state or non-state actor.

Many Europeans may feel that the threat of catastrophic terrorism is a very remote possibility or one confined to the United States or Russia or the Middle East. I disagree, and so does the EU's High Representative Solana. Mr. Solana stated in his excellent draft security strategy that – “The new terrorist movements seem willing to use unlimited violence and cause massive casualties.” He adds: “Europe is both a target and a base for such terrorists.”

In the 50 years that the trans-Atlantic alliance protected our democracies, a massive web of commercial relationships has taken hold within and between our two continents. We together represent more than half the world's wealth. We conduct a great share of the world's trade. We are the greatest investors in one another's economies.

Today, we must remind ourselves that there is more to the ties that bind than shared history, common ancestry or common principles. Europe and the U.S. are “joined at the hip” economically.

Terrorists cannot hit us without staggering you, and they cannot hit you without staggering us. A nuclear attack in any major world city would make September 11 look like a warning shot.

It would be impossible to calculate the economic impact, because there is no way to calculate how long it would take to recover the confidence of our citizens to spend and invest. The public would assume that if the perpetrators had one nuclear bomb, they could get another. If it could happen in New York, it could happen in London, Paris, Tokyo or Berlin.

Biological terrorism holds equal danger – catastrophe without an explosion. More people died from smallpox in the 20th century than in all of its wars combined. Nature has warned us. Today, genetic engineering and the explosion of information know-how allow individuals or groups to unleash biological nightmares.

My fundamental conclusion is that the world is in a race between cooperation and catastrophe.

To win this race, we have to achieve cooperation on a scale we've never seen or attempted before – not because cooperation will give us a warm, fuzzy feeling of community, but because every other method will fail.

The key challenges facing us cannot be addressed by governments alone. Most of our critical infrastructure and our information technology is privately owned and controlled. The private sector has an indispensable role in protecting its assets and business continuity against terrorist strikes.

We must not conclude that because the threat is unthinkable, the mission is impossible. The good news on the nuclear front -- we know where the dangerous and vulnerable materials are; we know what has to be done; we know how to do it and we have made considerable progress.

A decade of cooperative threat reduction activities proves that progress can be made to reduce nuclear, biological and chemical dangers:

- All nuclear weapons have been removed from Ukraine, Kazakhstan, and Belarus – more than the total inventories of China, Great Britain and France.
- Thousands of Soviet nuclear missiles, launchers and bombers have been destroyed, and more than 6,000 nuclear warheads have been deactivated.
- Tens of thousands of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons scientists have been employed in peaceful research projects.
- Security upgrades have been provided for more than 200 tons of highly enriched uranium and plutonium in Russia.
- Dozens of bombs worth of vulnerable nuclear materials have been removed from Kazakhstan, Georgia, Yugoslavia, and Romania.

The biological and chemical weapons challenges are fundamentally different from the nuclear challenge, and we have just started. But some important steps have been taken. As we heard today, we are together slowly making progress in chemical destruction.

There remains, however, a dangerous gap between the pace of our progress and the scope and urgency of the threat. For example, hundreds of metric tons of inadequately secured bomb-making materials are dispersed through Russia's network of nuclear facilities, which employ nearly one million people.

And the threat extends well beyond Russia and the former Soviet Union. There are 100 nuclear research reactors and other facilities in 40 countries using highly enriched uranium -- the raw material of nuclear terrorism. Some of it is secured by nothing more than an underpaid guard sitting inside a chain-link fence. We know of at least two-dozen circumstances requiring immediate attention. Some of the inadequately secured research reactors that use Soviet-furnished weapons-grade uranium are located in and around Europe.

For ten years, the U.S. has led a cooperative effort with Russia, but other nations are now providing leadership and support. The most positive new development in Cooperative Threat Reduction occurred in Canada in 2002 when the leaders of the G8 nations pledged \$20 billion over ten years to launch the Global Partnership to secure and prevent the spread of weapons and materials of mass destruction.

Since this announcement, the European Union, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, Finland, the Netherlands and Poland have joined the partnership. Other nations should be encouraged and welcomed, particularly those nations like Kazakhstan and Ukraine that set a powerful example for the world by giving up their nuclear arsenals.

One important caveat -- the \$20 billion has only been pledged, not allocated -- and it falls far short of what's needed to meet the threat.

The root of the problem is this: We are moving too slowly. Our leaders and parliamentarians still have not acknowledged by their actions, by their resource priorities, and by their cooperation that the threat of catastrophic terrorism is the most likely, most potentially devastating threat we face; that it threatens all of us equally; that it demands urgent action; that it requires a new level of cooperation.

At this point, you are probably thinking that Sam Nunn is Don Quixote -- dreaming the impossible dream. How can we expect that Europe and the United States will cooperate at a level we've never achieved before, when we are trading insults at a pace we've rarely seen before?

What about Iraq? The preemption doctrine? Steel tariffs? Agriculture policies and the recent barrage of accusations between the U.S., France and Germany? Some say: "America is arrogant, unilateralist and interventionist." Some say: "Europe is preoccupied internally, an unreliable ally and in denial about urgent international threats." Some say: "Russia is hopelessly bureaucratic and still viewing the world through the Cold War prism." Some say: "Japan is insulated, uninterested and uninvolved."

In the midst of all of this, how can we expect our leaders to focus, prioritize and take cooperative actions?

Two answers: First, in spite of our many disagreements and differences over strategy and tactics, the security interests of the major powers -- the U.S., Europe, Russia, China and Japan -- are, in fact, more closely aligned today than at any point in modern history.

Second, sensible people will usually put aside a smaller dispute to defend against a bigger threat. The unprecedented cooperation required will not happen because we are all suddenly overcome with affection for one another. It will come from the realization that if we don't address this threat, nothing else will matter.

What needs to be done?

Let me give you a brief menu outlined by the "Strengthening the Global Partnership" project -- a Nuclear Threat Initiative-funded consortium of 21 research institutions across Europe, Russia, the U.S. and Asia -- many of whose members are here with us tonight. I summarize from their report:

1. Nuclear weapons and materials -- wherever they are in the world -- all represent a grave danger. We must secure all of it, everywhere, quickly to reduce the terrorist threat.
2. Tactical nuclear weapons should be accounted for and secured.
3. All excess weapons-grade nuclear materials should be secured and then destroyed.
4. Chemical weapons -- every one of them -- should be secured and then destroyed.
5. Biological weapons facilities of the former Soviet Union must be open and transparent. Former Soviet weapons scientists should be given an opportunity to use their talents in constructive ways -- improving our defense against bioterror and strengthening our defense against contagious disease. The first glimpse of this biological partnership has started with the U.S. and Russia on the civilian side, but very little progress has been made on the military side, and the clock is ticking.

I view the threat of biological terrorism as equal to the nuclear threat and more likely in the years ahead.

To prepare for and help prevent a biological catastrophe a world partnership will be essential:

- We must strengthen our infectious disease surveillance and early warning systems across the globe.
- We must develop the health care infrastructure necessary to deliver timely and vital public health measures and medical care essential to controlling disease and saving lives in a crisis.
- We must make research a priority, especially to develop new vaccines, new drugs and new rapid diagnostic tests.
- We must work together as a global community to develop guidelines for implementation of epidemic control measures, including for such thorny issues as travel restrictions and quarantine of goods and people.
- Finally, we must encourage members of the international scientific community, including the private sector, to confront the sinister side of modern biological research and development, and design a system of self-policing, best security practices, and safety peer reviews that assures that our technological advancements designed to improve life are not turned into mechanisms for mass murder.

Infectious diseases routinely kill thousands each day in the under-developed world. Approximately, 16,000 people die each day from TB, malaria, and HIV-AIDS. The growing threat of biological terrorism adds a new dimension to the burden of infectious disease. We have a rare chance to defend our security and launch a global war against infectious disease with the same dollars. The fight against infectious disease has always been a moral imperative -- it is now also a security imperative.

These global threats will require a global response.

A great opportunity to accelerate the work of the Global Partnership comes between now and next summer in Sea Island, Georgia, where the leaders of the G8 will meet again. It has been 18 months since the G8 leaders made their pledges and any sense of urgency has been difficult for me to detect. Either the G8 will dramatically expand and refocus its threat reduction efforts, or

the Global Partnership will go the way of many G8 initiatives – never reaching its full potential and leaving grave dangers as a result.

The EU can play an immense role in the success of the Sea Island Summit. As we discussed today, the EU has pledged to provide one billion euros to the Global Partnership over 10 years or roughly \$100 million a year. That is an impressive amount, but it consists primarily of support for nuclear reactor safety in the former Soviet Union. Reactor safety is certainly an important mission, but it does not prevent weapons of mass destruction and weapons-grade materials from getting into the hands of terrorists and hostile states.

In his security strategy draft, High Representative Solana states, “As a union of 25 states with over 450 million people producing a quarter of the world’s Gross National Product (GNP), the European Union is, like it or not, a global actor; It should be ready to share in the responsibility for global security.”

I recognize that the EU focus has been on economic matters more than security matters, but the economic consequences of catastrophic terrorism are profound.

There could be no stronger demonstration of the EU’s role in the global economy and in global security than taking a lead in addressing our gravest threats.

The EU has declared its readiness to assume greater responsibility in this area. A line item on weapons of mass destruction proliferation would vividly demonstrate that commitment. It would show Europe’s commitment to addressing the threats from weapons of mass destruction. It would increase the incentive for G8 leaders and others to fulfill the promise of the Global Partnership. Parliamentary voices in support of WMD nonproliferation programs will send a strong message – that it is time to confront the proliferation threat head on and fund the response.

Let me conclude by saying -- if we want to leave our children and grandchildren a world worth living in, trust and mutual respect is desperately needed – starting with Europe and the United States, and spreading out around the world. A willingness to listen to each other sounds simplistic but today it is an essential starting point – especially for U.S. leadership. Our leaders, on both sides of the Atlantic, will be judged harshly by history if they do not begin to make it clearer to our citizens that our greatest perils are the threats that all nations face together, and that no nation can solve on its own.

We are in a race between cooperation and catastrophe. We have taken some steps in the right direction, but we’re long past the time when we can take satisfaction with steps in the right direction. A gazelle running from a cheetah is taking steps in the right direction. It’s not just a question of direction; it’s a matter of speed.

I close with my fundamental questions -- If a terrorist nuclear device exploded in Paris tonight, or New York, Moscow, London, Tokyo, what would we wish we had done to stop it? Why aren’t we doing that now?

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