

“America: Vulnerable? Hegemonic? Or Both?”

Walter H. Judd Lecture

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I want to thank Dean Bloomfield of the Graduate School and Director Allen of the International Programs Office for inviting me to offer the Walter H. Judd Lecture.

We are focusing during this International Week on the vital importance of the academic and personal linkages we create through our exchange programs. One of the most prominent of the University's international exchange programs is the Judd Fellows Program. Thanks to a generous gift from the Walter H. Judd Fund of the Minneapolis Foundation, the University has been able this year to offer fellowships to 23 master's and professional degree students.

Dr. Judd served the people of Minnesota in Congress in the 1940's and 50's. He was a Republican who described himself as a conservative. He was also an internationalist who gained his appreciation of the world at large during his work as a medical missionary in China in the 1930's.

I know that Walter Judd would be very pleased to see the large number of foreign students on this campus. Each year the University attracts some 3,200 students and 1,300 scholars from more than 130 nations. Many of these students are from China. We also send some 1,200 American students abroad. I think Dr. Judd would agree that this type of academic exchange has never been more important.

He also might share my concern that our nation's current preoccupation with security is putting these programs at some risk. Since September 11, 2001, it has grown more difficult for foreign students to obtain visas to attend school. Some have been made to feel unwelcome, though that problem has been very rare here in Minnesota. The newly passed "Patriot Act" is still being analyzed by University administrators but it places a worrisome number of restrictions on what our guests can study.

No one would argue that security concerns are not legitimate in a world where terrorists masquerade in many guises. Yet, international exchange programs foster understanding; they are an essential part of our defense against those who demonize the United States or mischaracterize American motives in order to recruit those who would attack us. The current climate will make us work much harder to maintain international education programs, but we must. In these perilous times, we need more exchanges among nations, not less.

I have posed a question for my talk today for which there is no simple answer: "America: Vulnerable, Hegemonic, or Both?" There is little debate, especially after the recent election, that Americans feel vulnerable. One headline describing the victories of

President Bush's party read, "Its Security, Stupid," a takeoff on that phrase that President Clinton rode to victory, "It's the Economy, Stupid." With the apparent reappearance of Bin Laden in a threatening taped message and new daily security alerts, Americans are demanding protection from political leaders at all levels of government. It would be an exaggeration to suggest that they care about little else, but security is today at the forefront of any list of concerns.

Are we a hegemonic power? Do we deploy our military and diplomatic resources around the world solely to extend our sphere of influence? Are we the "Good Neighbor," to borrow a phrase from Franklin Roosevelt, or have we become the "Big Neighbor" whose influence is pervasive and whose motives are suspect?

The answer to these questions depends on where you reside. If you are an American, you probably would be offended by the notion that the purpose of U.S. foreign policy is to dominate others. If you are a European, you may see a nation that increasingly is choosing to go it alone. If you are Japanese, you are suspicious that our recommendations for reforming Japan's economy are a subterfuge for a takeover by American investors. If you are from the Middle East, you worry that an American military attack on Iraq will mean the imposition of American, and perhaps, Israeli, power for years to come. If you are from the developing world, you see yourself being left further and further behind as new world trading rules, written mostly by Americans, seem intended to assure that the rich get richer.

Wherever you sit outside the United States, you feel the pervasiveness of American culture: the internet, the movie stars, MacDonalds. You see in America a nation that is projecting its influence to every corner of the globe and is capable of backing it up with overwhelming military force.

These fears of American hegemony may not be universal, but they are a significant new factor that complicates our efforts to gain international cooperation to fight terrorism and to address a myriad of other global problems. We should not ignore the implications of the growing perception that America is prepared to act alone in the world even if to do so would be to undermine the international legal structures we ourselves erected to protect our interests.

Fears of American hegemony were exacerbated when our government said we would be willing to act alone against Iraq if the U.N. failed to get tough. They were exacerbated further when the administration recently announced a new national security doctrine saying that our government would "not hesitate" to act "pre-emptively" to thwart dangers from potentially hostile states.

This statement goes beyond any declaration of its type we have made. No American leader would rule out pre-emptive action if American citizens or territory were at risk. Yet, this new doctrine seems to suggest that we would act whenever and wherever we wished even if the requirements of the self-defense provisions of the U.N. Charter were not met. The combination of this new national security stance and our threats to act alone against Iraq has convinced many that we would use force without regard for international law.

Is this perception reality? Is this, in fact, the position of the United States Government? If it is, I would suggest that the American people may wish to hear a debate on the implications of this apparent change in our traditional position.

The U.N. Charter, drafted in San Francisco and ratified in 1945 by a strong bipartisan vote of the U.S. Senate, represented a new model for international cooperation. The international legal scholar Antonio Cassese described the change represented by the Charter this way:

“...states still zealously sovereign, [were] linked together now in a ‘myriad of relations;’ subject...to tight restrictions on the resort to force; under pressure to resolve disagreements by peaceful means and according to legal criteria; and constrained to observe ‘certain standards’ with regard to the treatment of all persons on their territory, including their own citizens.”

Walter Judd was a strong advocate of this new approach to international relations. In the summer of 1943, Dr. Judd joined a bipartisan group of Senate and House members on a tour of the Midwest to promote the concept of a United Nations organization. He shared a room on that trip with a relatively obscure Senator by the name of Harry S. Truman. He wasn't so obscure a few years later when, as President of the United States, he signed the legislation and deposited the treaty that brought the United States into the United Nations.

Several years later, Judd was asked why he was such a strong proponent of the U.N. His answer was as uniquely American -- indeed Midwestern -- as it was profound.

Judd pointed to the Western territories of what had become the United States. He said that there were three stages of security for the people who moved into that land. The first was what he called “individual armaments.” “Every man,” he said, “carried a gun on his hip, but it didn't give him adequate security because two or three others could gang up on him.”

The second stage was “the formation of alliances.” This was the effort, Judd said, of “law-abiding citizens...to form alliances to counter the cattle thieves and highwaymen.”

The third stage was what Judd called “organized security.” “We joined together in communities,” he said, “that not only provided collective security, but also helped us to provide clean water for all, good schools, highways, public health and a good police force.”

Then Judd referred back to the period of isolationism after World War I. He said, “America tried for twenty years to get along [in the world] without any of the three types of security. America wouldn't go into alliances with the nations whose interests were nearest to ours; she wouldn't join with other countries to get organized security; and then she even gave up her gun,” referring to the decision to dismantle much of our defense force in the 1920's.

Judd believed in collective security and the U.N. because he saw the American economy expanding beyond its internal markets. He saw the growing inter-dependence of

nations and the need for rules to govern the conduct of governments. I believe that if Walter Judd were alive today he would be deeply concerned about the go-it-alone tendencies that risk compromising the very foundations of the United Nations system. And he would be the first to say that this is an American issue, not a partisan issue.

The prescription Dr. Judd would offer would be to respect the law and to cooperate with others to advance our interests. Terrorism is only one of many global problems whose resolution requires this kind of respect and cooperation.

It would be sad indeed if we permitted fear of a band of criminals to cause us to act in conflict with the international structure the U.S. helped erect to preserve its interests. As powerful as America is, we need friends and partners if we are to effectively address the forces that are threatening the international system.

We know more about those forces today than ever before. We know more about the impact of globalization on marginal, underdeveloped economies. We know that if we do not intervene to help these societies they will fall further into poverty.

We know more about the tensions within societies that can lead to conflict. We know, for example, that a combination of unsustainable population growth, severe environmental damage, food insecurity and weak governance will produce desperation and can exacerbate ethnic tensions. We know that demagogues and terrorists can exploit the conditions of poverty.

There are more people living in extreme poverty today than ever before, some 1.6 billion. That is more than 25 percent of the world's population, an unacceptable number, from a moral point of view, and from a practical point of view as well. These individuals, most of them ordinary peace-loving people in search of a better life for their children, constitute a significant potential threat.

Why? Whatever their personal motivations, these people are a threat to stable governments when they move from their home area to fragile rural lands or crowded cities. They are a threat when they become desperate. They are a threat when they come under the influence of religious fanatics or irresponsible political leaders. They are an explicit threat when they actually engage in conflict or resort to terrorism. At that point, they move from the category of humanitarian problem to destabilizing force.

How do normal peace-loving people become desperate? They become desperate when they see their children dying of diseases that are easily cured by modern medicines accessible to people with resources.

They become desperate when they can no longer plant traditional crops on depleted soils and cannot, therefore, feed their families.

They become desperate when they cannot overcome the squalor of overcrowded cities and when governments cannot provide for their human needs.

They become desperate when they are not part of the formal economy, when they hold no title to the property they occupy and when they have no access to collateral or the other forms of capital that make productivity and economic growth possible.

The countries in which these desperate people reside are at risk of becoming either rogue states or failed states. They are convenient hiding places for terrorists. They constitute a dangerous risk to the continued viability of international law and global cooperation.

What can we do? How can America prevent a further deterioration of the global governance and economic system we helped to create? The answer, of course, lies in cooperation and engagement.

This should be a time for creative interaction with other nations, a time for innovative changes in the way we do our international business. It is a time when we should be practicing preventive diplomacy and investing in development assistance to mitigate the alienation that poverty creates. It is a time for quiet diplomacy and the sharing of intelligence information. It is a time for competent police work.

As was true after World War I, it is also a time to maintain a strong military force to deter war. However, we should recognize that our military is a very blunt instrument in the war against terrorism.

We call it a “war” to dramatize our commitment to resist, but there will be no peace treaties signed by terrorists. Even if we destroy the many cells of Al-Qaida, there always will be sick individuals and groups willing to attack the citizens and institutions of the civilized world. These groups are extremely dangerous, but they are not unlike hardened criminals. They are best dealt with by good police work.

As we look down the road, we can expect to see the addition of another 1 billion people by the year 2015. Four out of five of these individuals will be living in the developing world. They will be mired in poverty if we do nothing to help.

How will these people view the United States? Will we be seen as we wish to be: as a nation that stands for freedom, democracy and opportunity? Or, will we be seen as an isolated society, closed to the hopes and dreams of millions who wish to share our wealth and good fortune, a nation consuming most of the world’s food and energy while others starve and do without?

The West won the Cold War because we formed alliances and committed ourselves to a system of collective security. We also won the hearts and minds of millions because we reached out with our values and our generosity.

Now, more than ever, we need to invest in programs that, over the long term, will bring individuals and nations into compliance with the global political and economic system as envisioned by the U.N. Charter and other legal arrangements. These programs provide the opportunity for human and social development. They promote democratic governance systems that enable people to participate in decisions that effect their society. They develop

human capacity through education. They help create wealth by building micro-economic systems and providing start-up capital. And they offer medical services and permanent health infrastructure of the type Dr. Judd provided to the people of China in the 1930's.

Foreign assistance programs have not always produced clear and sustainable results, but, overall, they have changed the world we live in dramatically for the better. Had we failed to make the resource commitment first called for in President Truman's Point Four Program, the world today would be a much sadder, more chaotic and more dangerous place.

The principles for which Walter Judd stood are as valid today as they were in 1943. The United States still needs alliances. Despite our overwhelming supremacy, we still need the United Nations system of collective security.

Unlike the period after World War I, we have kept our guns, indeed we have built an impressive arsenal. But that arsenal affords little protection against the spread of infectious disease, the impact of global warming, or the instability created by pervasive poverty. That arsenal, as impressive as it is, cannot alone defeat terrorism. For that, we need international understanding and cooperation. That is what international education is all about. Thank you.