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Cultural Dialogue in International Security: New Thinking for Europe and America

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Introduction

The world is in a state of flux. The conventional ways of thinking about security and defence appear to be insufficient for policy-makers as they approach an increasingly complex strategic agenda, one in which the use of military force alone can rarely – if ever – effectively secure a desired political end, and the potential for success in the strategic and diplomatic fields becomes somewhat of an enigma. The world is shrinking via the process of globalization and the room for manoeuvre previously enjoyed by Western policy-makers is getting smaller and increasingly crowded with emerging powers and new stakeholders holding a different vision of the world from that which the West has built in the last two centuries. Moreover, as a result of the global financial crisis, the tools and mechanisms by which Euro-Atlantic countries exercise power have become increasingly limited. As a result, decision-makers and scholars continue to voice the need for new and creative thinking about the instruments employed to pursue foreign policy goals.

Crucially, policy-makers in the Euro-Atlantic area view the world in terms of complex risks rather than concrete threats. They seek to secure citizens from a myriad of risks rather than a singular overarching threat, such as Islamic fundamentalism. Thus we might say the West's defence umbrella has been widened to include non-traditional security challenges such as cyber warfare, piracy, climate change, state failure, radicalization and energy security. In order to meet these challenges successfully, an actor can seldom act independently or in isolation. Increasingly, Western governments must act in collaboration with other countries or via institutions to effectively manage security risks. However, risk perception is highly subjective and therefore culturally specific: what may be considered a risk by one country may not be by another. And even if two actors agree to collectively manage a risk, the instruments they choose to do so may differ, often owing to contrasting cultures or historical experiences.

While countries in the West increasingly view security through the lens of risk, some emerging powers see their security in terms of tangible and concrete threats. Countries such as India and China often express strongly statist views, extolling the rights of territorial integrity and non-intervention, in contrast to the post-modern European concern for 'human security' and the 'responsibility to protect'. Not only is security defined in contrasting terms in different parts of the world, it is also often pursued differently. Within the West, 'security' – with its implication of a blurring of the lines between inside/outside and foreign/domestic – is a relatively new concept when

compared with the seemingly outmoded concept of 'defence'. Furthermore, 'defence' in the West has traditionally been pursued via a dualistic track, in which one can neatly distinguish between the 'military' and the 'political', whereas Asian countries traditionally tend to approach security in holistic terms.[1] Western countries (exemplified by the United States) tend to view strategic challenges as best addressed with single tools, either military or political, whereas Eastern countries such as China see security as something to be pursued by a variety of instruments.[2]

A clear gap is therefore evident between Eastern and Western approaches to international security. As the world is getting smaller, the need to understand and bridge this gap grows. Transnational or global strategic challenges necessitate collaborative action – not only within the Euro-Atlantic area, through coalitions of the willing or organizations such as NATO and the EU – but also between these players and the wider world. If problems such as a nuclear Iran, state failure in South Asia, and energy security are to be effectively managed, all sides have to get along. In short, the conditions for a cross-cultural dialogue on international security must be formed. Although such a framework may not provide long-lasting solutions to these strategic challenges, it can allow for a meaningful discussion or debate to take place – one which recognizes the inevitability of culturally distinctive approaches to security.

The purpose of the two-year Chatham House project on 'Cultural Dialogue in International Security' is to create a neutral ground where policy-makers and opinion-leaders from different cultural backgrounds can come together and pragmatically discuss approaches to current strategic challenges. The inaugural workshop of the project – held on 21 March 2011 – addressed the foundational ideas that underpin the project (such as how the current strategic environment is defined, and how key concepts of culture, norms and values

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[1] Here, the distinction between Western and Eastern approaches to security is simplified for the sake of brevity, and it will be developed in a later Programme Paper. However, from the outset, it is important to note that Western strategic thinking has generally followed the Clausewitzian view of war as an instrument of policy (which involves an inherent distinction between the 'military' and the 'political'), whereas Eastern thinking on war (perhaps most famously posited by Sun Tzu) treats war as something that should be approached from a holistic understanding, with a variety of instruments – an act in which the concepts of the 'military', the 'political' and 'success' and 'defeat' are often indistinguishable.

[2] Further, in his recent book, *On China*, Henry Kissinger posits America as an 'adolescent' country, and China as an 'old' country. Elsewhere Kissinger also describes a 'cultural problem': 'American history dates back 200 years. That is shorter than the history of most individual Chinese dynasties. Americans are convinced that they have the best governmental system in the world. But the Chinese think that they have managed 4,000 years of history before America ever existed, and therefore react neuralgically to American lectures on how they should reform themselves. Americans are very pragmatic. They think every problem has a solution and that that solution can be achieved in a very brief period of time. By contrast, the Chinese think in a more historical, long-term manner.' Kissinger, Henry. Speech, 'Current International Trends and World

are understood), and sought to fundamentally highlight the need for a cross-cultural dialogue at a within the Euro-Atlantic area itself.[3] As NATO's operation in Libya unfolded, the need for dialogue within the West, and between the West and other global players was made patently clear. In fact, as the fierce debate within NATO over its mission in Libya has subsequently demonstrated, the need for cultural dialogue within the West is just as great as that between those countries and other potential global partners.

This Programme Paper highlights some of the key fundamentals and core ideas of the project, and in so doing points to policy options available decision-makers in international security and the scholars who inform them. It outlines the conditions by which a cultural dialogue in international security can be achieved and provides the framework within which a necessary debate can take place.

Setting the scene: a world of risk

Policy-makers in the Euro-Atlantic area increasingly view security through a prism of diverse risks rather than focusing on specific current threats. Essentially, they no longer see a world of existential challenges: on the contrary, they operate in a world of complexity in which the existence of their nations or societies is no longer threatened (as it was during the First and Second World War and the Cold War), but in which 'security' for their citizens cannot be fully achieved or fundamentally guaranteed.

In a world of risk, the categories of time and space are skewed: because the successful management of risk prevents a future scenario from occurring, one is making a bet about the future, rather than a judgment on a clear and present danger. Equally, in the context of globalization, risks are often transnational in origin and in reach, and thus do not apply to a particular territory. These aspects of risk – what German sociologist Ulrich Beck calls temporal and spatial 'de-bounding',[4] – make it exceptionally difficult for policy-makers to form wise decisions. In a world of risk, the relationship between cause and effect is turned on its head, as the method one chooses to manage a risk may not in fact generate the desired result and any action often brings unintended consequences. Increasingly, decision-makers are forced to

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Peace', expanded version of delivery at the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences. Vatican City. 28 April 2007.
[3] 'Cross-Cultural Dialogue in Euro-Atlantic Security and Defence'. Report of a Chatham House Workshop, 3 May 2011. http://www.chathamhouse.org/0511_cdsummary
[4] See Beck, Ulrich. 'The Terrorist Threat: World Risk Society Revisited'. *Theory, Culture & Society,* 2002, Vol. 19, No. 4, pp. 39–55.

contemplate the 'boomerang effect' of risk management[5] (what Chalmers Johnson also refers to as 'blowback'[6]), and must take into consideration that any one of their efforts to counter a risk inevitably has the potential to create more risks. As Europe and America are mired in debt, Western leaders are particularly sensitive to risk proliferation, and conscious of the dwindling supply of resources they have at their disposal to manage these risks. As any act of risk management effectively depletes a given resource in order to offset a certain risk – which might 'boomerang' into another – making decisions in a world of risk seems inhibiting at best, and crippling at worst.

Most problematically for Western security cohesion, the fact that America and Europe both appraise their strategic environment as a world of risk means that they will inevitably disagree. Risk perception is highly subjective and therefore culturally specific: what may be considered a risk to one society may not be to another. NATO's lack of coherence in the run-up to and execution of its operation in Libya is a case in point. Several key members – notably Germany – refused to participate, while contributing members (and even the decision-makers *within* those nations) continue to debate both the methods of execution and the desired end-state of the operation. Worryingly, in a marked contrast to its policy towards European allies in the war in Afghanistan, America decided to take a back seat in the Libya operation and emphasized the need for Europe to stand on its own and deal with its own 'back yard' in the Mediterranean.

As the war in Libya continues to unfold, NATO's fate – and the future of the Euro-Atlantic security community as a whole – has once again been called into question. With allies continuing to debate the means and ends of managing conflict – as well as reasons to intervene abroad in the first place – it seems that risk is inimical to a coherent strategic vision. And yet the complex character of risk necessitates collaborative action. As Euro-Atlantic decision-makers seek to collectively manage security risks, they must operate within a flexible framework: in short, the conditions for a cross-cultural dialogue – one which allows for culturally different approaches to risk, as well as divergences in strategic interests – must be formed. As the Chatham House project argues, the prospect for dialogue lies in the distinction between norms and values.

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[5] See Vedby Rasmussen, Mikkel. *The Risk Society at War: Terror, Technology and Strategy in the Twenty-first Century*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).
[6] Johnson, Chalmers. *Blowback: The Costs and Consequences of American Empire*. (New York: Henry Holt, 2001).

A cultural dialogue based on norms and values

The late Philip Windsor posited that the potential for cultural dialogue rested upon a distinction between norms and values.[7] Thus, from the outset, it is important to define what we mean by 'culture', 'norms' and 'values'. We might define culture as a society's traditions, its religious, moral and national beliefs, its historical experience and its narrative.[8] Crucially, as Windsor pointed out, rather than existing in a fixed state of 'being', cultures are dynamically 'becoming': that is, they are constantly shifting, adapting and evolving. He argued that the potential for dialogue between different cultures rested upon the distinction between norms and values:

> All cultures depend on translating certain underlying values into the norms of social behaviour. For the most part they promptly proceed to confuse the two; so that any criticism of a given social norm is regarded as an attack on the values which it is supposed to represent. Yet toleration implies respect for other people's beliefs and values, without necessarily implying that the social norms should be condoned.[9]

In his subsequent discussion of the relationship between norms and values, it is clear that Windsor presented a different meaning of the word 'norm' than is commonly found in English School and Constructivist literature in International Relations, which usually treats a norm as something prescriptive about action in the international community.[10]

In contrast, within the context of a cultural dialogue, this project assumes norms are culturally determined, and therefore vary largely from culture to culture. Because one culture cannot determine what the best course of behaviour is for another culture, norms are not regulatory; rather, a norm is an expression of an actor that reflects that actor's own cultural interpretation of a value, and hence *is* an action.

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[7] See Berdal, Mats ed. *Studies in International Relations: Essays by Philip Windsor.* (Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 2002), and Berdal, Mats and Spyros Economides, eds. *Strategic Thinking: An Introduction and Farewell.* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2002).

[8] As Nicholas Rengger pointed out, the term *Kultur* which originated in the German language, incorporated an understanding of 'self-realization'.

[9] See Windsor, Philip. 'Cultural Dialogue in Human Rights'. From Kokusai, Kōryū Kikin, ed. *The End of the Century: The Future in the Past.* (Tokyo: Kodansha International, 1995). Reprinted in Berdal, *Studies in International Relations,* p. 86.

[10] In his study of 'Norms and Ethics in International Relations', Andrew Hurrell cites Antonia Chayes and Abram Chayes to define norms as 'a broad class of prescriptive statements – rules, standards, principles, and so forth – both procedural and substantive' that are 'prescriptions for action in situations of choice, carrying a sense of obligation, a sense that they *ought* to be followed.' Hurrell, Andrew. 'Norms and Ethics in International Relations.' In Carlsnaes, Walter. ed. *Handbook of International Relations.* (London: Sage, 2007 [2002]), p. 143.

Specifically in terms of cultural dialogue, norms are *culturally* determined, and thus not especially affixed to particular states or governments. Norms do not always refer to specific nations: indeed, there are many divisions within states themselves.[11] For example, France under President Nicolas Sarkozy has been decidedly more 'Atlanticist' in its defence and security policy, even rejoining the Integrated Military Command Structure of NATO. Such a decision was almost unthinkable during President Jacques Chirac's tenure, and was unsurprisingly met with sharp resistance by senior military staff who sought to prioritize France's military concerns as affairs of the EU/European Security and Defence Policy rather than of NATO. Yet Sarkozy's move was a particular 'normatization' of a value at that time.[12]

Let us also take, for example, the transatlantic fallout over the Iraq War: while both the United States and Britain agreed to form a 'coalition of the willing' to collectively manage the perceived risk of a nuclear Iraq by the use of military force, they chose different ways of engaging in combat. At the time, Britain's General Sir Mike Jackson professed: 'We must fight *with* the Americans, but not *as* the Americans.' Even though they agreed to manage the same perceived risk, their different choices about ways of managing that risk are largely a product of culture or historical experience.

Thus determined by culture – as opposed to fixed to a particular state – norms are fluid and dynamic, and rest upon an understanding of *becoming*, rather than *being.* As such, Windsor's entire conception of cultural dialogue assumes that cultures are in a dynamic state of *becoming* rather than in a fixed state of being. The members of the Euro-Atlantic community recognize that though they share common values, they will fluctuate in their interpretations of those values. Indeed, these norms change over time, not only from government to government, but also within political parties

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[11] Thus one might say that nations themselves are in a constant state of becoming. As Nietzsche observed, 'What gets called a "nation" in Europe today (and really is more a *res facta* than *nata* – every once in a while a *res ficta et picta* will look exactly the same –) is, in any case, something young, easily changed, and in a state of becoming, not yet a race…'. Nietzsche, Friedrich. *Beyond Good and Evil.* Translated by Judith Norman. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005 [2002]). Sec. 251, p. 143. Similarly, Edmund Burke wrote, 'But common-wealths are not physical but moral essences. They are artificial combinations, and, in their proximate efficient cause, the arbitrary productions of the human mind […] I doubt whether the history of mankind is yet so complete enough, if ever it can be so, to furnish grounds for a sure theory on the internal causes which necessarily affect the fortune of a state.' Burke, Edmund. *Letters on a Regicide Peace.* In Brown, Chris, Terry Nardin and Nicholas Rengger. *International Relations in Political Thought: Texts from the Ancient Greeks to the First World War.* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 293.

[12] The potential for such sharp national divisions thus illustrates the fallacy of Robert Kagan's now (in)famous depiction of war-mongering Americans from 'Mars' and peace-loving Europeans from 'Venus'. Though there is some validity to Kagan's generalizations, there are in fact nuanced differences within America itself, for example, and certainly among Europeans and within European states themselves. See Kagan, Robert. *Paradise and Power: America and Europe in the New World Order.* (London: Atlantic, 2003).

themselves. Certainly within the West, debate about differing interpretations of shared values is inevitable. After all, as Windsor wrote, 'intermittent criticism' of norms is part of the debate.

We might say that much of the past discord within the West is a result of disagreement about norms; and yet, because these norms will change over time, such discord can eventually be overcome. In this sense, maintaining and recognizing the distinction between norms and values is of the utmost importance. To put it simply: while recognizing and revaluing their constitutive values, members of the Euro-Atlantic community can have a steadfast basis, despite the disagreement that inevitably occurs as they seek to manage risks to their defence and security.

Values

While expressions of values are constantly evolving and 'becoming', the values themselves stay the same. A recognition of shared values thus provides something that is fixed and common despite such constant change. Specifically with regard to the Euro-Atlantic community, its members are united by a set of common values.[13] Their source is a matter of debate; writers such as Voltaire and Edmund Burke described Western values as derived from a common historical experience of Christianity – for example, the 'value of human life', the 'sanctity of person', 'respect for property' and the rule of law.[14] Yet many of those values that have come to be seen as Western find their origins in the Enlightenment, and hence can be termed 'post-Christian' values. These include democracy, religious tolerance, freedom of the press and a market economy. It has also been argued that the values underpinning Western societies actually predate the Judaeo-Christian era.[15] However, looking beyond the debate about their origins, it is clear that the Euro-Atlantic community finds continuity in expressing – if not always living by – these values over time.

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[13] Voltaire once described Europe as a 'kind of great republic divided into several states, some monarchical, the others mixed [...] but all corresponding with one another. They all have the same religious foundation, even if divided into several confessions. They all have the same principle of public law and politics, unknown in other parts of the world.' Cited in Davies, Norman. *Europe: A History*. (London: Pimlico, 1997), p. 7.

[14] See Pelczynski, Zbigniew. 'Hegel and International History'. In Windsor, Philip, ed. *Reason and History? Or Only a History of Reason? (*Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1989), p. 38.

[15] Karl Jaspers coined the term 'Axial Period' to describe the 'spiritual process' in which these values were born – specifically in 800–200 BC – in which ideas about humanity and consciousness were articulated by philosophers in China, India and the West. See Jaspers, Karl. *The Origin and Goal of History*. (London: Routledge, 1953). See also Karen Armstrong. *The Great Transformation*. (New York: Atlantic, 2007).

In examining past historical experience, and indeed in regarding the Euro-Atlantic community in its present guise, we see that these values are neither allocated nor bound by the state. Rather, the values that unite the peoples of Western societies designate what Charles Taylor calls a space of 'common meaning' that transcends territorial boundaries.[16] For those populating the Euro-Atlantic community, it is these values that enhance life and unite their societies into a community. That norms and values are not specifically tied to the state is crucial for the prospects of cultural dialogue, as such a dialogue affords dynamism and flexibility in an increasingly fluid strategic environment.

As they seek to collectively manage risks, decision-makers in the Euro-Atlantic area must foster what Andrew Linklater calls a 'permanent openness to dialogue'.[17] Within this dialogue, these societies can 'agree to disagree' as long as they continue to revalue their common values. A cultural dialogue based on norms and values thus allows for both 'pluralism' and 'consensus': it provides consensus on the values that enhance the lives of its societies, and allows for differing cultural expressions of those values.[18] Though disagreement over norms hinders cooperation and has at times divided the West, the ability for its members to distinguish between norms and values does not mean that such a temporary divide spells what Ivo Daalder termed the 'end of Atlanticism'.[19]

In sum, an internal cultural dialogue – that is, a constant and conscious engagement in a discourse on norms and values – affords the West the ability to be dynamic and evolving as a community in an environment of strategic flux. Because cultures are constantly *becoming*, the inevitable clash over norms prevents alliances such as NATO or the EU from preserving the status quo. Therefore, the maintenance of a cultural dialogue provides for both diversity of expression and unity: though the norms are constantly changing, the values stay the same.

As such, cultural dialogue affords the West the ability to *dovetail* as a community. As Nietzsche observed, 'However forcefully a man develops and seems to leap from one contradiction to the next, close observation will reveal

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[16] Cited in Laïdi, Zaki. 'The Delocalisation of Meaning.' In Mandaville, Peter and Andrew Williams, eds. *Meaning and International Relations*. (London: Routledge, 2004), p. 2. As Laïdi writes (p. 2), 'Common meanings not only refer to the ideas and values of identifiable actors, but also relate to the actors' efforts to agree among themselves and to avoid steps of confrontation.'
[17] Linklater, Andrew. 'Dialogic Politics and the Civilising Process.' *Review of International Studies*. January 2005. Vol. 31, No. 1, p. 143.
[18] Hurrell, Andrew. 'Norms and Ethics in International Relations', p. 141.
[19] Daadler, Ivo. 'The End of Atlanticism.' *Survival,* Summer 2003. Vol. 45, No. 2. http://www.brookings.edu/articles/2003/summer_europe_daalder.aspx.

the *dovetailing*, where the new building grows out of the old.'[20] Thus the West, remaining united despite the lack of a cohesive strategic vision, continues to dovetail out of the old into the new, and this dynamism is facilitated by cultural dialogue. It therefore does not just become a 'clearing house of ideas' or, as one participant in the Chatham House workshop put it, 'sleeping in the same bed but dreaming different dreams'. We might say that NATO itself moves from being a collective defence organization, in keeping with its original mandate, to a collective security community in which some of its members may at times form ad hoc coalitions of the willing; but this does not detract from overall cohesion, as such coalitions are underpinned by a recognition and revaluation of their common constitutive values.

Allowing for values to play a role in the formulation of security policy is crucial. After all, any discussion of security and defence involves an inherent discussion about values: that is, the values that enhance the lives of a nation's citizens, which it seeks to uphold and defend. As leaders from the 'EU-3' of Britain, Germany and France have recently proclaimed an 'end to multiculturalism', commentators see this as heralding a 'loss of faith' in European civilization.[21] Viewed within the context of the ideologically based (and potential nuclear) wars of the twentieth century, such a vacuum is no bad thing. However, as the Chatham House project maintains, values – even at the most basic level – underpin and inform decision-making. In such a way, certainly within the West, they can form a common basis for a flexible dialogue that allows for culturally different interpretations of risk.

Notwithstanding this, when Euro-Atlantic leaders make pronouncements about values, leaders from countries such as Russia and China express a slight anxiety. 'Values-speak' has got the West into trouble, and not just as a result of the invasion of Iraq in 2003. More broadly, leaders from emerging powers and new stakeholders do not want to hear about how Western values form a linchpin for the architecture of the global community. However, as Windsor points out, there is a distinction between going to war in the name of values, and seeking to uphold and defend those values at home. Crucially for the West, in addition to highlighting the distinction between norms and values to facilitate an *internal* cultural dialogue, its leaders must also have a clear policy that, in approaching other powers in an *external* dialogue, their values are not 'universalizable'. For example, in a reversal of 250 years of foreign

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[20] Nietzsche, Friedrich. Sec. 198, 'The Wanderer and his Shadow.' in *Human, All Too Human: A Book for Free Spirits*. Translated by R.J. Hollingdale. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986 [1878]).
[21] Bolkestein, Fritz. 'How Europe Lost its Faith in its Own Civilization'. *Wall Street Journal*, 4 June 2011.

policy shaped by liberalism, the United States must act *internationally* without thinking *universally.*

The 'Universal' vs the 'International': an end to absolutism

As previously discussed, Euro-Atlantic countries face complex security risks that are often global in origin and in scope. In order to manage these risks successfully, they must therefore engage with non-Western countries on a pragmatic basis. Whether seeking to prevent state failure in South Asia or conducting a dialogue with Russia concerning energy security, or indeed managing a crisis with China in East Asia, Euro-Atlantic countries need to cooperate with others outside their community. They cannot do so on the assumption that their values can be 'universalized' or imparted to other societies.

Moreover, emerging powers such as China are developing alternative models of development, which promise modernization and prosperity without the Western rhetoric of democracy and 'the free world'. In the wake of the global fiscal crisis and the weakening of North American and European currencies, new global players are presenting a case that Western institutions and values are not the *sine qua non* in terms of ordering principles for the international community. As institutions such as the United Nations, NATO and the EU attempt to instil the rule of law and 'civil reconstruction' in war-torn countries such as Afghanistan, one may indeed question the efficacy of an export of values.

There exists a further question: whether there is a fundamental set of values – what several participants referred to as 'Tier 1' or 'vital' values, such as an understanding that life is preferable to death, or that everyone has the right to property and the pursuit of happiness – that are in fact universal. For example, Buddhists posit that there are things common to and desired by all human beings. This question was hotly debated during the Chatham House workshop, and will continue to be debated as the project proceeds.

However, it is absolutely vital for decision-makers within the West to maintain a clear policy on their values. The task at hand is to recognize the fundamental non-universalizability of values, and this requires a fundamental change in the liberal-democratic foreign policy mindset. Indeed, the push to export democratic values – the universalizing twitch – is inherent in the liberal political tradition that finds its origins in the Enlightenment. This brand of

crusading moralism – the tendency to attach a sense of 'historical inevitability'[22] to one's policy – has been preached and practised (albeit unsuccessfully) by liberal democracies for the better part of 250 years. Although this 'doctrinal democracy promotion'[23] may at times fall out of fashion, it continues to express itself as part of the liberal creed.

Universalizing values: bad for business?

Debating the universality of values also requires a rethinking of the relationship between economic prosperity and national security. Since the colonial era (and this is perhaps one of the reasons for the resurgence of 'imperial' literature surrounding Iraq and Afghanistan) there has been a presumed direct correlation between the spread of democracy and the spread of capital markets. The more an imperial power imparted its values or grafted its experience of 'becoming' onto another society, the more it benefited in terms of profit. Certainly, any amount of stability lends itself to continued economic prosperity. And yet in the twenty-first century a delicate balance must be struck, for the imposition of Western values by force does not always elicit the right response.

For example, in the run-up to the Iraq War in 2003, several prominent conservative American businessmen broke with President George W. Bush over his policy to invade the country. They argued that such an intervention would disrupt the balance of power in the region, which would be hugely detrimental to US commercial interests. Contrary to the popular conspiracy theories, they argued that hard-nosed Wilsonianism was actually bad for American business. Looking beyond 2003, although stability and infrastructure clearly benefit Western businesses as they engage in other countries, this stability and infrastructure must be *locally owned*, rather than imposed from the outside. This relationship between locally owned stability and commercial interests will be further examined as the Chatham House project progresses.

Against a policy of cultural relativism

Crucially, the rejection of the act of universalizing values is not to advocate a policy of relativism. Despite a recognition of the reality by Western policy-

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[22] Windsor, Philip. 'Some Reflections on Grenada.' In Berdal, Mats ed. *Studies in International Relations,* p. 171.
[23] Trenin, Dmitri. *Getting Russia Right.* (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment, 2007), p. 42.

makers that their values cannot form a common currency for dialogue with emerging powers on the strategic management of risk, there are – in the words of President George W. Bush – certain 'demands of human dignity' that are 'non-negotiable' for the West.[24] While Bush did not elaborate enough on what this meant, the sentiment is important for the Euro-Atlantic community. Its societies are united by values that they see as 'non-negotiable', despite their need to engage with others in order to maintain their national security interests.

In other words, though they must accept the non-universalizable quality of their values, there will be times when Western countries must stand up for their own values, even if such a stance is to have detrimental effects on their policies. Here, one might take the example of the murder of Alexander Litvinenko: in this case the United Kingdom stood up to Russia and essentially said, 'We will not have you killing spies on our streets', despite the deleterious knock-on effects this stance had on British commercial interests in Russia. Crucially, however, this merely represented a suspension of the dialogue, rather than its breakdown or dissolution.

Conclusion

In the twenty-first century more than ever before, the West will have to listen, rather than dictate, to non-Western actors. As one participant at the Chatham House workshop affirmed, 'there are real monsters out there', and in order to manage these with some degree of success, Western leaders must effectively cooperate with others outside the Euro-Atlantic area. Although the global financial crisis – originating in the West – has served to some extent as a corrective to the countries of the Euro-Atlantic community, forcing them to streamline their strategic policies, there is still an urgent need for new and creative thinking about the way in which the West engages with potential global partners. Certainly, for the last 350 years it has not been particularly adroit at listening to others. And while other countries (such as China) may be very skilled at understanding the West, the West, in turn, is not so skilled at understanding itself.

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[24] Bush, George W. State of the Union Address, 29 January 2002. http://stateoftheunionaddress.org/2002-george-w-bush. As Reinhold Niebuhr wrote of America, 'Our cherished values of individualism are real enough; and we are right in preferring death to their annulment.' *The Irony of American History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008 [1952]), p. 7.

It is important to note that the Chatham House project on 'Cultural Dialogue in International Security' is not a 'declinist' one. It posits several fundamentals that might be challenging for some Western policy-makers (and their electorates) to accept. First, in a world of risk, everything is discontinuous and in a state of flux. Second, the complex character of risk necessitates collaborative action, but is also inimical to it. Third, an indispensable dialogue on international security that allows for cultural difference rests on the distinction between norms and values. And finally, the 'value absolutism' practised by the West prevents any meaningful dialogue on security from taking place. Although Western values can take root outside the Euro-Atlantic area, this must come from a process *within* non-Western societies. Moreover, although there will be times when all (not just Western) countries must stand up for values that they consider to be non-negotiable (and hence against a stance of relativism), this does not signify the breakdown of the dialogue – merely its suspension.

In pushing forward with these fundamentals, the Chatham House project seeks to provide a pragmatic and meaningful problem-solving approach to security, rather than a gloomy outlook. Although new strategic realities such as temporal and spatial 'de-bounding' may be difficult to digest for Western policy-makers and their constituents (who historically enjoyed clear-cut successes and tangible strategic victories), cultural dialogue allows its participants the opportunity to take two steps forward, while seemingly taking one step back. In listening to others, and in not jumping to impose one's values on them, one acknowledges the dignity in another human being or in a society as a community of human beings.

A cultural dialogue based on norms and values is a way of fostering vitality through affording debate from within the West, and allowing a meaningful and pragmatic dialogue to take place outside the Euro-Atlantic area. It enables Western societies to revalue their common constitutive values, and to see a worthy and vital way out of the 'decline of the West', its 'crisis of confidence' and the 'loss of faith' in European civilization. In creating an opportunity for the expression of inevitable differences in cultural norms and diverging strategic interests, but also steadfast continuity through values, a cross-cultural dialogue on international security provides a flexible framework for interaction – without which, as one commentator cautioned, 'the twenty-first century won't be much fun'.

During the next event in Chatham House project on 'Cultural Dialogue in International Security', policy-makers, experts, 'cultural activists' and individuals from the private sector will discuss the relationship between values and stability in South Asia. In the last decade, the West has engaged with countries such as Afghanistan and Pakistan through a myriad of different approaches: development and aid, counter-insurgency, a civilian-military 'comprehensive approach', military training and assistance, and even technology and democracy assistance. To what extent do these policies involve an export of Western values? As Euro-Atlantic countries are crippled by internal fiscal crises and shrinking defence budgets, what kind of lessons might they learn from emerging powers and new stakeholders regarding holistic or 'smart' power? During a high-level roundtable workshop, and a subsequent report, the project aims to bring new and creative thinking on these issues as they are played out in the global community.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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