

Will Terrorism Unite or Divide the Democracies?

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Every state has an inherent interest in international peace and security today, whether the state is democratic or not. At the same time, the democracies are the core of the world order as never before.

In the past few centuries, the threat to security was easy to define and was either internal (rebellions/insurgents) or external (state vs. state). In today's world one of the major security threats is terrorism. Even though terrorism per se is not a new phenomenon – several countries around the world have combated it for decades – the development of technology and globalization has made this threat extremely dangerous. States need a new level of mutual cooperation in order to fight terrorism.



President Bush and fellow G8 leaders stand behind England's Prime Minister Blair Thursday, July 7, 2005, as he addressed the media regarding the terrorist attacks that occurred in London earlier in the day. White House photo by Eric Draper

The question today is whether terrorism could unite the democracies by improving their cooperation; or will it do the opposite – undermine everything that was achieved so far due to diplomatic differences over how to deal with this complex enemy? Secretary of Homeland Security Tom Ridge at a conference on Transatlantic Homeland Security in 2004 stressed that “we must enlist stronger collaboration and cooperation, and improve information sharing both within nation and between nation.” He also emphasized that “one of the most valuable tools in our arsenal is strong partnerships ... national and global in scope that build barriers to terrorist and build bridges... that eliminate gaps our enemies could otherwise exploit.” Since then the notion has been repeated and discussed in numerous gatherings around the world.



The July 7 London bombings
BBC News website picture

Terrorism is a tough topic to tackle due to its nature. There are many disagreements among states, for example the definition of terrorism; one state's terrorist is still often the other state's freedom fighter. Nevertheless there has been increased teamwork among states in this sphere. The most intimate areas of homeland security have for the first time become subject of cooperation.

As with many things done for the first time, there is much learning to be assimilated, some mistakes to be corrected, and many further steps to be taken. But perhaps the main thing is that the first step has been taken. The door has been opened.

There are other areas where states need to bolster their cooperation. For example, one is intelligence gathering and sharing. Intelligence cooperation has always been a sensitive area of cooperation among states. Progress has been made in this area; more remains to be done.

Numerous leaders and academics, representing states facing terrorism, admit that states need to subordinate their particular national interest and pride, and work toward a more collective good. Other areas of mutual interest include border security cooperation among customs and immigration officers, cooperation between law enforcement agencies in related criminal matters and myriad other challenges. Throughout history, states mostly fought terrorism inside their country, but it is no longer possible to address it only in domestic terms or unilaterally. It is not one state's fight. Cooperation between states against this problem is vital. After September 11, 2001 we saw increased links among national militaries. However, many experts believe that the military is not the best organization to respond to terrorism.

The democracies should seize upon this cooperative momentum among democracies and other states as a good occasion to promote deeper transatlantic relations. Mr. Alan Charlton, UK Deputy Ambassador, emphasized this in a speech at the National Press Club on Sept. 21, 2005 . He also stressed the importance of fighting terrorism not only by confronting it, but by cooperating and working in other areas that affect the growth of terrorism such as economics, security, justice cooperation, elimination of poverty, education, money laundering, promoting freedom and equality among people. Cooperation among states is increasing on different levels, including, but not limited, to bilateral and multilateral agreements and inside organizations like EU and NATO. For example, the EU after the attacks in Madrid appointed a Special Counter-Terrorism coordinator, whose role is to define the EU's` responsibility in the field of counter terrorism and to promote practical cooperation between member states. Moreover EU has established a Joint Situation Center (SitGen), introduced biometrics passports and continuously works to strengthen other areas of cooperation. The UK Presidency intends to make the fight against terrorism/extremism a priority.



9/11/01, New York City after two hijacked planes crashed into the twin 110 story WTC towers. REUTERS/Peter Morgan

On a multilateral level, the EU and the US have developed additional agreements. For example the goal of the extradition agreement is to streamline the process for handling extradition requests and to broaden the range of extraditable offenses. The US and the EU also have worked in other areas to increase cooperation, for example in the areas of transport and border security. On the military and security levels, nation-states have entered into numerous bilateral agreements. Others have been reached within the organizational framework of NATO. It is also worth mentioning the upgrading of the NATO partnerships with Russia and Ukraine

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We see increased cooperation in areas where some years ago it was unimaginable. However, these cooperative attempts are just baby steps toward a larger objective and still do not have many visible results. To be sure, sometimes the result is unknown to the public, like in the case of successful intelligence operations.

In the fight against terrorism we should not forget what the target is – the core principles of our *democratic* society. When responding, we should not forget it and strike back only with

tools of force. We have also different tools – such as our legal framework, democratic principles and freedoms.

The transatlantic community has a lot of common interests, values and goals. We should measure what has been achieved and what still needs to be done against the standard of what a common government would do in these areas. A common government would guarantee considerably better our citizens' freedom and security. This notion provides a sobering reminder of how much more is to be done.

As has been noted above, international security and peace is a concern of every state. By having a strong and united nucleus of democracies fighting terrorism successfully, we will be more effective in transmitting democratic values and principles to other states. History has taught that a strong united nucleus attracts; this is the lesson of the end of the Cold War on the terms of the Atlantic Alliance and the efforts of its former enemies to join. An effective nucleus fighting terrorism will increase the willingness of other countries to join the fighting coalition and the democratic community. The democracies can yet again achieve much by setting an example -- more than most people realize, by a method different than most people have thought of.

Ultimately, it is only by transferring the framework of democratic principles upward to relations among the established democracies that we will be able to maintain our freedoms together with our security. It is the fear to go this further step, the fear that something will be lost by pooling together our sovereignties in certain areas, that feeds the dilemma we seem to face in all democratic society – having to choose between freedom and security. We can have them both, but we have to mature into the next stage of political evolution, the idea of a union of free peoples. We cannot separate any longer freedom from union.