

CHALLENGES FOR DEMOCRACIES IN RESPONDING TO TERRORISM: A VIEW FROM CANADA AND ISRAEL

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Disclaimer

This SPP summary of proceedings is based on and informed by the discussions at The School of Public Policy and the Canadian Forces College Foundation event “A Global Security Conversation,” held at the Canadian Forces College in Toronto on May 26, 2016. The discussion featured Israel’s former national security adviser and School of Public Policy executive fellow Dr. Uzi Arad, and Stephen Rigby, former national security adviser to the prime minister of Canada. Rudyard Griffiths moderated the discussion. (For full biographies, please see the appendix). The event was held under modified Chatham House Rules and as such, the comments and analysis presented in the summary of proceedings are not attributed to any one speaker but represent the general conversation among speakers, the moderator and guests, as well as the authors’ added analysis and references.

INTRODUCTION

The November 2015 terrorist attacks at the Bataclan concert hall and sidewalk cafés in Paris, the March 2016 bombing at the Brussels airport, and the mass shooting at the Pulse nightclub in Orlando, Fla. in June 2016 are just a few examples of the horror and loss of life inflicted on innocent civilians by individuals affiliated with, or supporting the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS). Canada is not immune: in October 2014 two ISIS-inspired attacks, one in Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu, Que. and one in Ottawa, resulted in the deaths of Warrant Officer Patrice Vincent and Cpl. Nathan Cirillo. More recently, ISIS vowed to make the month of Ramadan a bloodbath in Europe and America.² Heightened awareness, attention, and concern among western democracies surround the issue of terrorism on home soil. And there are serious challenges in addressing such threats.

¹ Jean-Sébastien Rioux, Ph.D. is an associate professor and director of the International Policy Program, and Maureen Shields, MA, MSS, is director of market diversification, both at The School of Public Policy, University of Calgary.

² *The Economist*, June 14, 2016.

The May 26, 2016 event in Toronto, entitled “A Global Security Conversation,” co-sponsored by The School of Public Policy and the Canadian Forces College Foundation, addressed the precarious state of affairs in the Middle East, the growth of ISIS and related groups, and analyzed some of the options for Western powers in responding to increased national security concerns among allies and other democracies. While the conversation did not focus on any one terrorist organization, clearly the current global jihadist threat is ISIS, which has supplanted al-Qaida.³

The gathering considered the current state of global instability as well as some key considerations for governments in formulating a sophisticated response to national security threats, such as those presented by ISIS. Although the threat of domestic terrorist attacks calls into play a country’s national security apparatus, the analysis and recommendations presented during the discussions at Canadian Forces College focused on an allied international response to jihadist-inspired terrorism rather than a discussion of domestic security responses.

THE UNPRECEDENTED COMPLEXITY OF CURRENT GLOBAL GEOPOLITICS

A recurring theme throughout the conversation was that current global geopolitics are extremely complicated, dangerous and unpredictable. Good policy choices are much less evident to decision-makers and the practices of diplomacy and warfare have changed drastically over the past two decades. A certain “nostalgia” for the relative strategic simplicity of the Cold War was referred to on several occasions.

The complexity of today’s global geopolitics was captured in four broad themes:

- The global balance of power is shifting to the East, and countries such as Israel and Canada need to recalibrate and decide how to work within this new dynamic, especially in terms of a strategic response to the rise of China;
- An Atlantic Alliance remains crucial in the fight against terrorism, but must be re-energized and find new ways to solve complex emerging issues;
- An Arab-Israeli conflict that needs be resolved if there is to be peace in the Middle East; and,
- The necessity for Western allies to capture the moral high ground — and the imperative that Western allies work together and apply the same norms, especially in light of the horrendous savagery of ISIS.

The Middle East received the most attention during the presentations and discussion, with the region described as being “torn by a series of unprecedented events.” The number of issues plaguing the region includes partial or total state failure in Syria, Iraq and Libya; the proliferation of weapons and the rise of a potentially nuclear Iran; the global slump in energy prices threatening stability in some countries; and the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In fact, it was suggested that the current state of affairs in the Middle East is not chaos but something worse: a seemingly intractable set of issues and flashpoints.

³ For analysis of ISIS and the challenge of confronting ISIS for the west, see: Audrey Kurth Cronin, “ISIS is not a Terrorist Group: Why Counterterrorism Won’t Stop the Latest Jihadist Threat,” *Foreign Affairs*, March/April 2015.

The audience was reminded that Israel sits in the middle of this instability. A “coping mechanism” used by Israel is to avoid entanglements in the region as much as possible. For example, one of the reasons Israel is avoiding involvement in Syria is the impossible choice it has in supporting any of the current factions in the ongoing civil war. A further example is that Israel is not part of the coalition to defeat ISIS. For Israel, it was argued, there are few good or easy choices in the Middle East.

SOME CONSIDERATIONS FOR GOVERNMENTS WHEN FORMULATING A RESPONSE TO GLOBAL TERRORISM

Given that the guest speakers were from Israel and Canada, the role and position of smaller countries, such as those with niche capabilities and modest capacity, dominated the analysis. Three key themes emerged: the necessity for strong and decisive leadership; the importance of recognizing one’s strengths *and limitations*; and the importance of the United States to most geopolitical calculations.

It was recognized that smaller countries are important players in some global arenas but not others. However, although Canada touts its credentials as a member of the G7 and the G20, it is not as sophisticated as many of its allies when it comes to hard-nosed positions on global security. Participants argued that while playing on an “exalted” former status as an “honest broker,” Canadian foreign-policy initiatives and leadership have been overtaken in several areas by other countries, such as the Nordic states. It was submitted that Canada should strive for a more sophisticated approach to national security and its foreign policy posture.

Moreover, Canada has not yet been bloodied with a major domestic terrorist attack and as such has not been truly tested. Canada's experiences with terrorism have been in the realm of “pre-events”: we saw the ‘Toronto 18’ arrested before any damage was done, and on August 10, 2016 ISIS supporter Aaron Driver was shot by RCMP officers before he allegedly planned to detonate an IED somewhere in Ontario. Thankfully, we have not had a 9/11, 7/7, or a Bataclan-sized crisis yet. Canada is still maturing in how it views national security and the hard decisions that have to be made behind closed doors. A certain naiveté may lead to a softer approach to national security than is actually required. Elsewhere, in fact, a similar observation was recently made by Canada’s Vice-Chief of Defence Staff, Vice-Admiral Mark Norman of the Royal Canadian Navy, who pointed out in an interview that Canada has been “lucky” with regard to national security threats: “We’ve been able to avoid any real situations that either have embarrassed the country ... or have actually threatened the security of Canadians.” Norman further cautioned that Canada should not base strategy or policy on luck.⁴

The need for “focus” and a “clear-eyed” approach were two key points made with regard to Canada’s maturation in its global interactions. Recognizing one’s genuine strengths and knowing when to engage and where to engage (in both diplomacy and defence) is key. It was recommended that Canada should, for example, focus on two or three areas of comparative advantage, bring these capacities to international tables, and stick with them. A more focused, engaged and refined approach to international security concerns will increase Canada’s international credibility, and such an approach hinges on strong leadership.

⁴ Aly Thomson, “Canada is ‘vulnerable’ to threats, outgoing commander of navy warns,” Canadian Press, June 13, 2016.

Foremost for both Israel and Canada with respect to their response to global terrorism is the role of, and their respective relationship with, the United States. Quite simply, the Israeli prime minister must cement a relationship with the U.S. president “no matter what.” So too must Canada's leader. The importance of being “latched” to key friendships was stressed throughout the discussion.

That said, there is strong concern in most of the world about a possible retrenchment on the part of the U.S. from global security concerns, and how this might influence events in the coming years. It was stressed that although the American ‘Main Street’ is tired after 15 years of continuous war since 2001, a more isolationist U.S. would have significant negative impacts on global security. Most comments reflected recognition of the importance of U.S. engagement and the likelihood that Washington will continue to be active in the world. Participants noted that most, if not all, successful multilateral engagement has an American spine. Working with the U.S. and other like-minded countries is clearly pivotal in the battle against ISIS.⁵

WHITHER GRAND STRATEGIES? POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Issues surrounding national “grand strategies,” in the face of global threats such as ISIS, tied the wide-ranging discussion together. Questions were addressed, such as: Do Israel and Canada have grand strategies? Do they require grand strategies? If not a grand strategy, what should guide the response to threats such as ISIS?

Israel does not have a formal grand strategy but will always make decisions based on precedent and history. The strategic choices Israel makes will be somewhat derivative of the strategies of other key nations, namely the U.S. Decisions made by the U.S., especially regarding the Middle East, will clearly impact Israel’s strategic decisions.

It can certainly be debated whether or not Canada has a grand strategy.⁶ The general opinion during the conversation was that Canada does not have a grand strategy and developing a formal strategy faces numerous and perhaps insurmountable hurdles. As with Israel, Canadian strategic decisions will always be influenced by the U.S. and its actions and priorities.

Quite simply, formulating grand strategies is a difficult task and may not be realistic for most countries. Four reasons for this were presented:

- The incapacity of most countries to accurately forecast geopolitical events;
- The velocity of events: incidents are happening faster and with less lead time for preparation, analysis and sober thought;
- The density of events: an overwhelming number of things are happening globally, making it very difficult to strategize while facing so many possibilities; and,

⁵ Of course, the notion of recognizing key friendships and working with important allies has been advanced numerous times recently, with other experts arguing that allied powers must work together and with the U.S. to develop common diplomatic, military and economic approaches to contain groups such as ISIS. See for example Cronin, “ISIS.”

⁶ See for example the excellent analysis of Canadian defence strategy, historical and current, in Christian Leuprecht and Joel J. Sokolsky, “Defence Policy ‘Walmart Style’: Canadian Lessons in “not-so-grand” Grand Strategy,” *Armed Forces and Society* 41, 3 (2015): 541-562.

- The propensity for events to become structural, not transitory: for example, many problems in the Middle East will take decades to unfold, such as ISIS and the unique political challenges within Iraq, Syria and Iran.

If not a grand strategy, what approach may better address the challenges in today's complex geopolitical environment? The answer advanced was straightforward: a set of well-formulated actions to tackle specific problems.

THE FINAL WORD

Clearly, the development of security policy in countries such as Canada and Israel is deeply dependent on the role of the national security adviser. Whether they are smoothing bilateral and multilateral state relations, pre-brokering deals, or simply keeping a nation's leaders apprised of the most serious threats, national security advisers form a unique clan. Given the chaotic and complex security issues facing countries such as Canada and Israel, the position of the national security adviser has grown in importance. And globally, a strong network or "guild" of national security advisers has developed and it is effective. The discussions held at Canadian Forces College on May 26, 2016 gave participants an important window into the world and thinking of national security advisers in a world that is seemingly becoming more chaotic.

APPENDIX

SPEAKER BIOGRAPHIES

Uzi Arad

Dr. Uzi Arad is currently chair of Israel's Grand Strategy Forum and of the Center for Defense Studies.

Dr. Arad served as the national security adviser to Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and was head of the Israeli NSC between 2009 and 2011. From 1997 to 1999 Dr. Arad was Netanyahu's foreign policy adviser. Between 1975 and 1997, Dr. Arad served in the Mossad, Israel's foreign intelligence service, holding a number of posts both at home and abroad, the last of which was director of the intelligence division.

In 1999, at IDC, Dr. Arad founded the Institute for Policy and Strategy (IPS), which he directed until 2009. He also served as the adviser to the Israeli Knesset's foreign and defence affairs committee. At IDC he launched and presided over its Annual Herzliya Conference Series. In 2005 he established and then headed the Atlantic Forum of Israel.

Prior to his career in government, Dr. Arad was a professional staff member at the Hudson Institute in New York and a fellow at Tel Aviv University's Center for Strategic Studies. He received his BA from Tel Aviv University (1971) and his MA (1973) and PhD (1975) from Princeton University.

Dr. Arad has received the Fulbright Fellowship in the U.S. and the rank of officer of the Legion of Honour in France.

Dr. Arad is the co-author of *Decisions at the Top: Forming and Transforming the National Security Council* (forthcoming 2015, in Hebrew), *Sharing Global Resources* (for the Council of Foreign Relations, 1979) and was editor of *The Balance of Israel's National Security and Resilience* (2001, in Hebrew).

Stephen Rigby

Stephen Rigby was appointed as the president and CEO of the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp. (OLG) on Jan. 5, 2015. He's leading the corporation through a large-scale transformation program, modernizing its current business and integrating horse racing into the provincial gaming strategy.

Mr. Rigby came to OLG after four years as national security adviser to the prime minister of Canada. He was responsible for the provision of strategic policy and operational advice to the prime minister and cabinet on all significant national-security, foreign and defence policy issues facing the country.

He also held deputy minister positions within both the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade and the Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA). In his time leading CBSA, Mr. Rigby was responsible for the delivery of services at more than 1,200 domestic and 40 internationally based delivery points for all people and goods crossing the Canadian border.

Prior to that, Mr. Rigby served in a range of assistant deputy minister roles at the Canada Customs and Revenue Agency and the Privy Council Office.

Mr. Rigby is a graduate of Carleton University in his home city of Ottawa.

Rudyard Griffiths

The anchor of Bloomberg North on Bloomberg TV Canada, and the organizer and moderator of the semi-annual Munk Debates, the world's pre-eminent public debating forum, Rudyard Griffiths is a highly sought-after commentator on global economics, geopolitics, and corporate decision-making. He is also an expert at moderating Q&A format presentations, one-on-one interviews, and panels with business leaders and executives.

In 2015, Mr. Griffiths moderated the first-ever Canadian federal election debate dedicated to foreign policy issues. Before joining Bloomberg TV Canada, he was a regular business commentator and co-host on CBC's *The Exchange*, and prior to that, he co-hosted BNN's top-rated show *Squeeze Play* and CTV's *National Affairs*. He is the author of the 2009 *Globe and Mail* Book of the Year, *Who We Are: A Citizen's Manifesto* and has edited over a dozen books on international affairs, politics and history.

In 2006, Mr. Griffiths was recognized by *The Globe and Mail* as one of "Canada's Top 40 Under 40." He studied history and political science at Trinity College, University of Toronto, and completed a master's degree in political theory at Cambridge University.

About the Authors

Jean-Sébastien Rioux (PhD, Florida State University) is a full-time Associate Professor at The School and Co-Director of the International Policy Program. He teaches a core course in Institutions and Public Policy in the Master of Public Policy program, as well as electives in Foreign Policy Analysis and the International Summer School on the Geopolitics of Energy & Natural Resources. He is the author or co-author of 16 books, book chapters and scholarly articles as well as several dozen op-eds on current affairs in newspapers across Canada. He has taught at McGill and Concordia universities in Montreal, as well as at Vesalius College in Brussels, Belgium. In 2001 he was awarded a Canada Research Chair and joined the political science department at Université Laval. From February 2006 to August 2008, he served as a senior executive in the federal government as Chief of Staff to the Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada, and the Minister of Industry Canada. He later moved to Calgary and from 2009 to 2012, worked for one of Canada's largest oil and gas companies as the lead Government Relations Practitioner. He joined The School in the fall of 2012.

Maureen Shields leads the research, programming and strategic guidance functions of the Market Diversification Program at The School of Public Policy. She holds a MA in Canadian History from Carleton University and a MSS (Masters of Strategic Studies) from the Centre for Military and Strategic Studies at the University of Calgary. Ms. Shields spent several years as an information and research professional in both academic libraries and the energy industry. From 2007 to 2012, she was based in Ottawa where she held positions as an International Policy Analyst with the Library of Parliament and a Strategic Analyst at the Department of National Defence. More recently, as a research associate in the International Policy Program at The School of Public Policy, she developed and directed conferences, symposia and related publications and provided advice and recommendations on the program's strategic direction. With a broad background conducting research and strategic analysis in business, government and academia, Ms. Shields is an independent research consultant and partner with the 42nd Street Group Inc., based in Calgary.

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