



**Australian Security in the 21st Century
Seminar Series**

WHERE IS THE US GOING IN THE WORLD?

An edited text based on an address by

**Hon Richard L Armitage
Former US Deputy Secretary of State**

Parliament House, Canberra
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Former United States Deputy Secretary of State
to the Menzies Research Centre
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Senators and Members of the House of Representatives and members of the Royal Australian Armed Forces, ladies and gentlemen, it is not you who are lucky. It is I who am lucky to have been able to come back to Australia. I have been coming to Australia regularly since 1967, when I first arrived on a US Navy ship during the Vietnam War, and I am delighted to be back with you. I’ve got a lot of stuff on my mind today and since you’re a captive audience I want to share it with you.

I want to first of all, most importantly of all, thank the people of Australia, the Government of Australia, and most especially the wonderful serving members of the Royal Australian armed forces: what they’re doing in my view is admirable, and in many cases heroic. I want to thank them for their participation in Iraq and Afghanistan and even more importantly, to me as a former policy official, for the participation in the discussions and the arguments we had before Afghanistan and before Iraq. I know these are neuralgic issues. They are neuralgic in my country too. But these men and women are doing the Lord’s work. These men and women are standing up for freedom and they are trying to do the right thing. I’m very proud of our troops and I’m very proud of yours as well.

Over the last several days I’ve had the opportunity to discuss the alliance, and in my point of view the alliance is in splendid shape. We’ve come to the conclusion that this is indeed a global alliance and I couldn’t be happier. I want to share a story with you that I told the other night to illustrate where we are. I hope you’ll enjoy it and you’ll see the point.

I want you to imagine for me, the Pope, the Holy Father, standing in St Peter’s Square and he’s in the middle of a tremendous rainstorm and the rain is falling and water’s rising and it’s coming up over his knees. All of a sudden a row boat comes up and says;

“Your holiness, hop in the boat, we’ll save you.”

The Holy Father says, “No, no, go on, heaven will provide.”

And the water continues to rise, the next time we see him and the water is up to his waist, and a motor boat comes up. And the fellow in the boat says:

“Hop in I’ll save you”

And the Holy Father says: “No, no my child. Go on ahead. Heaven will provide”.

The next time we see His Holiness with the water rising up around his neck and chin. And he has his head lifted up, and there’s a helicopter over head and they put a line down to him and said

“Go on grab the line, and we’ll pull you clear”.

And he says “No, no, my son. Heaven will provide.”

Well the rains continued and the Holy Father died. And we next see him he's at the Pearly Gates with St Peter and His Holiness is quite put out. He's perturbed. He says; "Peter, Peter I had *faith* and you let me drown."

Peter just shook his head and said: "Poor Man, we sent two boats and a helicopter."

The point is, no matter how much *faith* we have in our alliance and how good we feel about it today we have to take every single opportunity to improve our alliance to improve this relationship to make this relationship work.

Now I said I've got a lot of things to talk about, I'm going to lay out some parameters for the future, and I'm going to talk a little but about the Middle East, a little but about Asia, and a little bit about my country. It's duly noted we're on the cusp of an election in the United States and we might talk about that and share my views on the election.

The Future

First of all, let me look to the future. Those in intelligence circles, particularly the National Intelligence Council, did a study about 15 years into the future and they say there are only about seven things that you can be absolutely definite about. And those seven things are called certainties and there are uncertainties associated with them.

The first certainly is that globalisation is irreversible. And although we've seen some speed bumps in the US – Dubai Ports is one for us – and there is economic nationalism that creeps up from time to time, but by large globalisation is irreversible. The uncertainty associated with globalisation is whether or not those nations which are not in the globalised society can be brought in, in a timely enough fashion, because if they can't you'll have a greater proliferation of what you are dealing already with in your own region – the phenomenon of failed states. And I think Australians and Americans and many other nationalities found out what can emanate from failed states on 9/11. I think this is something to think about.

The second certainly is associated with the first. In the next 15 years or so the world economy will continue to grow. The uncertainty has to do with the delta between the haves and the have-nots and whether the delta can be lessened. If it becomes greater then we run the risk of displaced peoples' migration which can disrupt states, regions and in the extreme continents.

The third certainty is one that has been talked about over the last couple of days in Australia and is a constant source of chatter in the US. That is that the West and Japan are all getting older. Japan is the oldest country in the world with a median age of 42.66 years of age. The United States is 36, almost 37, Italy is 40, Germany is 41. We're all getting older now. That's the certainty. Well contrast that with other countries like Indonesia whose median age is 23 years, Pakistan 19, Brazil 24, South Africa 23.5. Now why I am concerned with this aging phenomenon? Because I am a citizen of a nation who wants to take part, if we must, in security operations with coalitions and alliances. And the question of the uncertainty associated with the aging phenomenon is whether nations will be able to honour their social obligations, their social compacts – we call it social security? And if they can not then more and more money will be bled off from defence, bled off from education, bled off from R&D to honour that social contract. Sooner or later those nations will not be able to participate

in alliance activities with the United States and that's why the aging phenomenon is a real concern to me and should be a concern in Australia.

The fourth certainty is that the rise of China will be every bit as important in the first half of this century as the rise of the united Germany was in the 19th century or the rise of the United States in the 20th century. The uncertainty associated with it is whether it will be a gentle straight line rise and allow all surrounding countries to accommodate it? Or will it be herky-jerky and will it dislocate the tectonic plates? History would suggest that when existing powers try to accommodate an emerging power there is some dislocation of the tectonic plates which underpin the security, the economic and the social geography of the region. Right now we're having an unprecedented situation in North East Asia. There are two equal powers, for the first time in history occupying the same space, Japan and China. That's why you see the elbowing, pushing and shoving and it's never happened before. Before 1894 at the start of the Japanese empire, China was dominant. Since 1894 Japan has always been dominant except for the four years that they were at war with us. So you are witnessing something that has never happened before in history.

The next certainty is that there is enough oil in the ground to satisfy expected needs out to about the next 15 years or so. The uncertainty has to do with the security and stability of the producer nations whether it is Sudan or Nigeria or Venezuela or Saudi Arabia.

The sixth certainty is the trend towards urbanisation will continue. There are more people who live in cities now across the world than in the country. That has never happened before. The uncertainty associated with it is whether local and regional leaders can make infrastructure decisions in a timely enough fashion to serve those burgeoning populations. Because if they can't then you have ticking time bombs particularly in mega-cities, those with more than 8 million people. Now if you go to Shanghai, it reminds me of an accordion. People from outside the city come in, in the morning and like an accordion it spreads open, and at night, the workers go back to the country the accordion is pressed back. But they don't all go home. Some of them stay so the accordion is slightly larger than it was at the beginning of the day and the more that continues and you have more and more people who don't have access to facilities, fresh water, medical, dental care, all of those things. And parts of these cities become hotbeds for action against governments.

The last certainty, I was corrected the other night, I was not chastised - but I was advised to use different term, is that after the year 2020, the United States will still be the leading power in the world. I define that as a nation which has interest in every part of the globe and without whose active participation, nothing meaningful could take place in any part of the globe. That is not something that is destined to last forever. It's not something that we asked for. We would be delighted if other people came on the stage and helped with all the heavy lifting. The uncertainty associated with this is two-fold. On the one hand, will a country or a group of countries supplant us, not join us, but supplant us. If they attempt to supplant us then that leads to one set of circumstances. The other uncertainty is whether the United States will maintain the will to maintain this position of supremacy over the world scene. If we can continue to see ourselves as a force for good, if we can dedicate our nation to do whatever humanly possible to preserve that pre-eminence as long as is humanly

possible. I think it's an open question. Because Americans at heart are reluctant internationalists: at best they realise that have to be internationalists but they are reluctant at best. We wish we could just hide behind our two great oceans. It should be an open question because in a democracy it is right to debate it. So that's what the future's going to look like.

Asia

I'm going to talk a little bit about Asia and then a little bit about the Middle East First I want to play a numbers game with you. In 2020 there's going to be 7.8 billion people in the world, if you telescope those 7.8 billion people down to 100 people here's what the world looks like. 56 are Asian. 19 are Chinese and 17 are Indian. 16 are African, 13 are from my hemisphere but four are Americans. Seven are from the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. 5 are from what we regard as Western Europe and three from the middle east - 3 % of the population and probably 85% of the trouble. Just think about it .But it does make the point that the centre of gravity, at least in population terms for starters is shifting

When Douglas MacArthur graduated from West Point in 1903 he had a much better deal than I had because he was able to go off with his father and travel for eight or nine months throughout Asia. While he travelled he kept a diary or a journal and at the end of it he wrote that what he'd seen convinced him that the 20th century was the Asian century. Perhaps he was right to some degree that if you think about the number of lives lost in wars in Asia over the last century I guess he was right. But if he had written that in his diary regarding this century he would really be right. Six of the 10 most populous nations in the world including ours are in the Pacific. Six of the largest appetites for oil and six of the 10 largest appetites for raw materials including our own are in the Asia-Pacific. So it indicates to me an extraordinarily dynamic change of region. Over the last 20 years it's had a remarkable amount of stability, economic stability and intra-dependence. But there are some troublesome signs out there.

Australia is very heavily involved with the United States trying to bring about a resolution to the question of the Korean peninsula. It's going to be very difficult work. No nation, to my knowledge, who has exploded nuclear devices ever wants to give up that power. This gives you an idea of how tough the problem might be. It's going to be very difficult work. We are all delighted the six party talks will continue. I'm delighted with China's activities. I think Australia's diplomatic representation, alongside our own, has been very helpful in bringing China to a higher degree of activity regarding North Korea but I am careful. We are going to be addressing the problem sometime into the future

That's not the only problem – perhaps the largest problem we have in Asia is what I call the vice of nationalism, particularly in North-East Asia, where weak domestic leaders rely on hostile rhetoric to sure up weak domestic support. It has got somewhat better with Abe Shinzo's emergence on the scene but it is still a dangerous phenomenon.

The next issues is the situation in the Taiwan straits which is less incendiary than it once was but its still out there and is till a problem to be resolved.

Another issue is that you've got island and territorial disputes particularly throughout North and South-East Asia which when combined with divisive nationalism can explode at any moment. You've got insurgency in Thailand, Nepal, the Philippines, India and a small one in China. Eight hundred billion dollars of the world's shipping, including oil, passes through the Malacca Straits but this is a vulnerable area of the world because of these disputes and insurgencies. There's a lot going on and you have the spectre of failed states in your own arc of instability, many of which are in a very difficult position.

Now let me say a word, just a word, about US-China relations because this is going to develop quite a bit over the course of the Bush Administration. We started with a very difficult airplane crash, or collision, of one of our reconnaissance aircraft, a combat aircraft. I think through the diplomatic activity that it took to resolve that issue, we took a measure of each other and both of us decided we could live with each other. And we're going to make the best of it. And from that time on, Chinese-US relationships have gone up. One the one hand in North Korea and in fighting infectious diseases they were being very helpful. But on the other hand they do things which raise questions. We believe you can judge people by the friends you have. China has been developing a relationship with comrade Robert Mugabe. We know they do it because they're absolutely hungry for energy and their absolute desire to make sure they always have it. Well that's understandable, the United States may not like it, but at least there's a rationale for it. Their role in the Shanghai Co-operation Organization has been a cause for greater concern.

In general we are very forgetful of South-East Asia. God knows why we should be. Here to your North is a nation of 600 million souls in the largest Muslim country in the world, \$800 billion of combined GDP per annum – the single most strategically important position I could ever imagine. Thank God our Australian friends constantly bring American Secretary of State and American Secretary of Defence's attention to the fact that South-East Asia is a region of growing strategic and economic importance. I'll freely admit that Americans don't understand the South Pacific. We'll be glad to help you in any way that you see fit, but we just don't understand it. Perhaps it's a good thing, that we can be hands off, and leave it to you.

The Middle East

Move over to the Middle East a bit because I do have some things to say. Overnight we have had a guilty verdict in the trial of Saddam Hussein. Now we will watch the appeal process, I have no idea how it's going to play out in Iraq, or how it's going to play out in our own congressional elections. It seems to me that we're witnessing, and continue to witness, an evolving Iraq and this trial is a necessary pre-condition to Iraq's evolution. Perhaps being able to say what effect it will have overall in Iraq is impossible. And all I think I could say is that for the families of the 148 who died at Dujail in 1982 then at least for them there's some closure.

I think the situation right now is that we can win or lose. We cannot want to win more than the Iraqis want it. It's impossible, it won't work. We can continue to provide them security and space, oxygen if you will, but they've got to make use of it and if they don't want it badly enough we will not be successful. Let me be straight with you. I didn't oppose the war in Iraq. I had some questions about the timing. But the notion of removing Saddam Hussein seemed to be eminently sensible. But many told

the President that you don't have to worry very much about phase four – the post-invasion – because after all, democracy is so intoxicating, it will be so fragrant, that the Iraqi people will just sort of effortlessly go in any direction you indicate. That's all there is to it. After all, they'd go on to say, Germany and Japan were treated much more harshly and badly and were more greatly destroyed with losses of many more lives and in three years time they were democracies. Well this was very, very misleading to the President, I think. It was very duplicitous.

Japan and Germany had homogenous populations, bureaucratic institutions and a significant industrial base, as well, at the end of the war. Germany and Japan had world class bureaucracies and memories of democracy. The Weimar republic was a democracy – a flawed democracy – but a democracy nonetheless. We neglected one of the central lessons of Germany and Japan and that is that people who suffered from the war, people like Konrad Adenauer in Germany and the improbable figure of the Japanese Emperor Hirohito, they took the mantle of democracy and moved it forward. Iraq, on the other hand, is not a homogenous community, it had no democratic institutions or industrial base. We put into the leadership diaspora Iraqis who had no standing in society, rather than leaders on the ground who could have paved the way for the installation of a democracy. We didn't learn any lessons from history. So we are where we are. It's the Iraqi people's now to win or lose, not ours.

We have seen the conflict in Israel and Lebanon. And the continued strength of Hezbollah. Our support for Israeli invasion of Lebanon was a mistake that emboldened and strengthened Hezbollah, Syria and Iran. Of course we understand Israel's desire to retrieve its soldiers. But it's inexplicable that we would hold Israel's coat for them and let them conduct an air campaign against Hezbollah guerillas in southern Lebanon for six weeks. And what's even more inexplicable is that Israel, just like the US, forgot the basic lesson of warfare that every single officer knows, and that is that only a soldier with a bayonet can bend an enemy to our will. No Arab government could have done as well as Hezbollah did. And not only did they fight well, they simultaneously handed out goods and services to the people, something the Government of Lebanon, the democratic Government of Lebanon, was unwilling or unable to do.

So what we have is a non-government organisation taking the place of the Government, electrifying the streets of the Middle East with its boldness and temporarily the myth of Israeli invincibility is shattered. It is inexplicable why the US did this. Lebanon is much the worse off. Syria's in a better position and Iran is in a fabulous position because of their backing for Hezbollah. Recently we've been sending envoys to Turkey to try to keep them from invading Kurdistan, to try to prosecute the PKK, the Kurdish terrorists. And we're pleading with them and asking them not to do it. But now their answer to us is: 'Why did you hold Israel's coat?' So everything that happens has an effect on everything else.

The final group of people in the Middle East that I want to mention are the Iranians. The Iranians are an interesting group. They are an ethnocentric group who still look back to the days of Cyrus the Great and Darius and other leaders of the Persian Empire which, in the 6th Century BC, was the greatest empire the World had seen. This is how Iranians see their rightful place in the world. Nuclear power and nuclear weapons gives them status and brings them back on the world stage where they feel

they should belong. It will be difficult to bring them back to a non-nuclear status. However the good news is that, in Iran, the people by and large despise their regime. By and large they want a correct relationship with the West: they don't want a very close one but they are so frightened by the possibility of another revolution like 1979 going through it is too much for them to contemplate.

War on terror

I just want to say a couple of things about the war on terror. This is principally a war within Islam itself – between the differing sects about who will dominate. You've got the unresolved issue that is underlying, to some degree, the spread of Islamic fundamentalism and that is that the Prophet Mohammed may have been a great religious leader but he never solved the issue of succession. Following Abraham and Jesus and then the final prophet Mohammed never resolved the issue. That lack of resolution in the 600s has led us to a situation today where to a large extent we are bystanders while Shia and Sunni try to wrestle for the political leadership of that religion simultaneously while those within Islam try to wrestle with modernity versus the caliphate. To some extent we are observers in it. We have a strong equity in it but we are, to some extent, just observers

Now the US is doing well to defend itself against terrorism but we have been doing some disturbing things. After 9/11 we were exporting things that were very foreign to us. We were exporting our anger and our fear and our hatred for what had happened. America needs to stop doing what we have been doing for the last five years. We have to stop exporting our anger and our fear. We need to try to start getting back to our more traditional exports of hope, opportunity, inspiration and enthusiasm. If we can do that it will effect the way we are viewed in the world and we can start getting a handle on some of these problems.

Finally, looking to our elections tomorrow, they are not going to be good for Republicans. I think the House will definitely go to the Democrats, I'd say 20 or 25 seats. I'm not sure about the Senate but it's probably an even bet that it could go Democratic as well but I certainly hope not. But the messages in this, the message from the electorate is fear doesn't work. We've got to go back to what is traditionally ours. We've got to go back to those things that made us important in the eyes of the world. The shorthand in the US is that these elections are a referendum on the Iraq war. It's a referendum on how we handled the war after we went in. It's also a referendum on the fact that Americans don't like the nation to be viewed in such low esteem internationally.