

REPORT OF THE HOUSE OF LORDS MEETING 25TH OF NOVEMBER 2014

TITLE: Who Rules the World ?

Nearly 150 participants, including many students, packed the House of Lords Committee Room 4a for the Uniting for Peace 2014 Annual Conference on Tuesday 25 November on the theme 'Who Rules the World?'. Under this heading, eminent speakers and specialist experts addressed key current global issues and trends.

Vijay Mehta [UfP Chair] opened the event by welcoming all present, and stressing the urgency of the contemporary conflict-ridden and tense global situation. He said all present could play a vital role as 'today's change-makers'.

Lord [Frank Judd], a former Minister for International Development, stressed the world today faced increasing uncertainty, instability and "immense security challenges" as political and economic power centres were shifting. "Ordinary people are becoming very insecure and yearn for a sense of identity." Effective international institutions were more important than ever: humanity needed to move "from local and national identities to true internationalism". Russia, currently in a period of insecurity, needed to be firmly in the international system: "We need to find ways to build Russia into effective global partnership."

Rita Payne [Commonwealth Journalists' Association], chairing the speakers' session, said this uncertainty was definitely widespread in Africa, as many governments there favoured multi-national corporations with special deals enabling them to exploit Africa's natural resources.

Humphrey Hawksley [BBC Foreign Affairs Correspondent] criticised USA/West for backing the overthrow of democratically elected governments - of President Morsi in Egypt and President Yanukovich in Ukraine - rather than awaiting their possible removal at the ballot box. These actions set a very negative precedent, undermining the advance of democracy. The West's failure in Libya [and current post-Gaddafi chaos] faced the global community with the urgent question of what

happens to such states after the overthrow of a dictator but before a viable democracy can be established. Addressing the Asian situation, he said this area would now "balance the West". China posed a key challenge to the West and its democratic ideals, because it was a new power which had lifted millions out of poverty and had done so without democratic institutions. Asia - stretching from Turkey to Japan - was "now driven by making money, building development and infrastructure, and advancing education and science", according to Asian nations' own ways rather than copying the West. However, dangers existed: rivalry between China and Japan, especially in the South China Sea, was causing rising tensions. However, the existence of many institutions of Asia-Pacific co-operation was a very positive factor: "they dilute sovereignty and reduce the danger of conflict". He was broadly optimistic about the future of Asia, and generally saw the world as "much safer than in 1940s - 1950s".

Mary Dejevsky [*Independent* columnist]:

WHO RULES THE WORLD?

Remarks for Uniting for Peace annual conference

Mary Dejevsky

In the light of what Lord Judd and Humphrey Hawksley have just said, I am going to alter my prepared remarks to respond to what they have said about Russia and then skip direct to the last two of my original points.

Lord Judd spoke about the dangers of demonising Putin and equating Putin with Russia. I agree – and this is a rare gathering when, to judge by the reception to what Lord Judd said about Russia – I am not in a minority of one.

My view on Russia and the Ukraine crisis is that both have been catastrophically read by most Western politicians and commentators, especially in the UK, and as a consequence we risk making Russia more dangerous and not less.

Equating Putin with Russia is to personalise a country and our foreign policy in a way that is – and has always been – counterproductive. Putin has survived in power and ridden successive waves of domestic popularity because, in my view, he has an uncanny ability to sense where the centre of gravity of Russian public and

political opinion is at any particular point. His views and responses have changed, but that generally reflects a change in broader Russian opinion, too.

What I fear, with Ukraine, is that in annexing Crimea, he has – correctly – gauged where opinion is, but at the same time raised expectations that fuel long- frustrated nationalism. Those who applauded the ‘recovery’, as they saw it, of Crimea, cannot now understand why Russia would not proceed to ‘recover’ eastern Ukraine and perhaps the rest of Ukraine as well. Putin, I think, realises that danger, which is a reason for the confused signals about Russia’s intentions in eastern Ukraine. But the nationalist forces he has unleashed could contain the seeds of his eventual downfall.

I would add, by way of a perverse answer to the question – who rules the world? – is that, if anyone does, it is NOT Putin. You could go into a British street, and probably many people, if you asked them that question, would say Putin ruled the world – not least because he is widely portrayed in the western media as an all-powerful tsar. Nothing could be further from the truth. The power he actually enjoys abroad is hugely curtailed from that wielded by Soviet-era leaders. And the power that he has actually to do anything at home is wildly exaggerated. There is a view abroad that he has only to snap his fingers and everyone does his bidding across all Russia’s time zones. Almost the opposite is true. Power in Russia is hugely dispersed and corrupt, with many regional fiefdoms. Putin has tried many times to establish what is often called a “vertical”, or pyramid, of power to make sure that his writ runs. But his efforts have largely failed. His image is of a strong leader; the reality is of a weak leader in charge of a weak country.

So long as we persist in our misinterpretation, we will deal with Russia – as we are doing with sanctions and rhetoric now – as though the chief danger was of Russian aggression. The greater danger in my view is of a weak and paranoid Russia, which lashes out from a sense of insecurity. Reassurance is the way to respond to this, not sabre-rattling, whether of an economic or military kind.

OTHER TWO POINTS:

Obama and the United States:

Many people in the United States and around the Western world have been highly critical of Obama for what they see as weakness and reluctance to use American power where it could and should be used. We have to be careful here. His predecessor, George W Bush, did use American power, and what good did it do anyone? Obama’s election platform (twice over) was in part a reaction to that, and in part a reflection of his own instincts. He also had to contend with a buffeting

from totally unforeseen forces that few American presidents have had to deal with: the aftermath of the banking crisis; the Arab spring so-called; Syria, Ukraine/Russia, and now ISIS, plus the NSA revelations that emerged courtesy of Ed Snowden.

My view is that, with the hindsight of history, Obama will be judged to have been a better president than he seems at present, and that his more cautious approach will be vindicated. I remember that Bill Clinton used to say, when President, that the US had to prepare structures that the US would be able to support when it ceased to be the world's 'top dog'. I think Obama is continuing that line, and getting Americans used to the multi-centric, multi-polar world they will in time have to live in. No, Obama and the US do not rule the world – but can the world as it is now be ruled by anyone?

Europe

Considering the idea of a multipolar world, you could also look at Europe – and the European Union - as admired from afar as it is, maligned from within. This is a cooperative group of states that have voluntarily ceded a small part of their sovereignty for the greater good. Even successive French governments speak openly about this sacrifice of sovereignty, although no British Prime Minister seeking re-election ever could. (If the French can, why can't we?) But perhaps this sort of collaborative power suggests where power is moving, and who – sometime in the future – might rule the world.

Guy Arnold [author on African and North-South issues], commenting on East-West relations, said that at the end of the Cold War, the West should have wound up NATO and focused on building good relations with Russia. Russia today felt deeply insecure following the break-up of the Soviet Union: UK had taken 40 years to come to terms with its loss of Empire, but Russia had had much less time. On the 'Who Rules the World?' question, he identified three distinct key forces: transnational corporations, radical Islamist jihadism, and "the major states which still make the key decisions", particularly USA as the world's only super-power. Yet even the latter, under Obama, was having to recognise its limitations. US-Chinese rivalry was an increasingly significant factor in world affairs: in 2012 Obama had announced the transfer of 40% of US military power from Europe to the South China Sea region, as a counter-weight to China's rise. US/West was becoming obsessed with the rise of China, especially its military power: "US wants a military ring-fence around China", but such would be a major error. Militarily, China remained weak compared with USA, but was forecast to catch up in

economic terms by 2020. US policy in recently sending some 3000 military advisers worryingly echoed the beginnings of its Vietnam involvement.

Vijay Mehta [Chair, Uniting for Peace]

1. Introduction

"Many of the world's problems are so intractable that it's hard to think of ways even to take steps towards mitigating them."

That was how Noam Chomsky opened a recent speech to the United Nations. Looking at the turmoil in the world today, it's hard to see our actions meaning anything, particularly as we watch the world descend in to chaos with the rise of ISIS, the spread of Ebola, confrontation in Ukraine, tensions in the far east between China and Japan and the US led interminable border wars on Syria, Iraq and many other places.

The weapons circulating around the world have enriched American, French and German dealers. Arab countries have been destabilized for a century by a power struggle that is fuelled by the interests of the West. In the words of Martin Luther King Jr. "US is the greatest purveyor of violence in the world." In 2013 the military spending worldwide was \$1.75 trillion, which is 2.5% of global GDP and US alone spent \$700 billion which is the 40% of the world total.

Imbalance of power in the world today is the highest and our perception of each other (us and them) do not match up. At the same time we are more connected than ever economically and electronically on the World Wide Web

2. Turmoil in the World Today

The question – Who rules the world? – is easier to answer in the negative than in any explicitly positive way. The world is no longer ruled, as it was during the Cold War, by the duopoly of the United States and the Soviet Union, each backed by massive

alliances – NATO and the Warsaw Pact – and underpinned by the appalling military doctrine of Mutually Assured Destruction. It is not ruled either by the one super-power left standing at the end of the Cold War, the United States – whose unipolar moment has now ended after only the briefest of periods, terminated by the shift in the global power and economic balance towards the rising powers of Asia, and by the unilateralism, hubris and disregard for the opinions of others demonstrated by the US administrations, which brought its own downfall in Iraq and now engaged in futile wars in Syria, Iraq and elsewhere. But nor is the world now governed, as many of us would wish that it were, by rules-based systems applied effectively and equitably by multilateral international organisations, with the UN at the fore amongst them. We are a good deal closer to new world disorder now than ever with the continuing bombing in Libya, the Sahel, Lebanon, Syria and Iraq.

The US and West are creating Islamic wastelands which hardly can be a foundation for peace. The war profiteers make us believe war is the only option and the other is doing nothing. War does not bring stability. However, the reality is war leads to violence, militarism, a resurgence in global terrorism and a disregard to life we live on this earth.

Both sides in the conflict ISIS (Islamic State) and Western military intervention has resulted in barbaric killings. Can the western leaders really think they can tackle the militants by bombing fundamentalists? If you need to create a just and civilised world we must try to understand the root causes of conflict – talk with, listen and to empathise with the people in region and explore non-violent alternatives.

So, if the world is not ruled by a superpower or by a rules based system then who gives the orders. Who are the most powerful people of the world who decide the future of humanity? Is it billionaires with dark money who are in charge and operate the law of the strong, the corrupt and the criminal in which lawlessness unrest and violence reign supreme? Why perpetual wars are fought and for what purpose when never a solution has yet been found by continuing wars as said by the philosopher George Santayana “Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it”

However, the rules of the game might change as we enter a post American world. The new players – Brazil, Russia, India and China will have a seat at the international high table and will bring new stakes and rules of the game.

3. US Military Aggression and its Consequences

This leads to what is undoubtedly one of the world's largest problems: the insatiable appetite of US military expansion, the militarisation of Europe with NATO leading towards a new cold war and military aggression. US Neocons in alliance with NATO backed by media reporting about the Ukraine conflict are constantly pushing for war with Russia. It is a disaster waiting to happen if tensions between Russia and the West are not resolved soon.

U.S. defence industry's profits soared along with global tensions. Companies like Lockheed Martin the biggest U.S. defence contractor along with Raytheon, Northrop and General Dynamics other defence contractors are trading at record prices as shareholders reap rewards from escalating military conflicts around the world. Investors see rising sales for makers of missiles, drones and other weapons as the U.S. hits Islamic State fighters in Syria and Iraq, said Jack Ablin, chief investment officer at Chicago-based BMO Private Bank.

The Pentagon currently functions as the largest reverse money laundering scheme in the world. The tax dollars are filtered through the US military into the pockets of arms manufacturers and private contractors, while politicians and lobbyists make sure the money keeps flowing. Military strategists adapt to grow their market. War is waged not against nations but against ever-shifting, often ill-defined groups.

Noam Chomsky wrote that 'The U.S. covert operations routinely resemble acts of terrorism. "The United States did not plan the formation of ISIS," he adds, "but its destructive interventions in the Middle East and the War in Iraq were the basic causes of the birth of ISIS."

It is appalling how newspapers, TV, radio, movies, artists, authors, intellectuals and men of science all are recruited to tend their support for the next war or the next conflict. A small group made up of military/industrial/media/corporate/academic elite, whose agenda is profit, from arms trade, war and valuable resources, now holds power worldwide and has a stronghold on elected governments. We see this in gun lobbies, among others, which wield great power over US politics. All are implicated in the obscene sums spent on war and its preparation.

The key finding by Pax Christi international on the global financing of the nuclear weapons industry in 2014 states that 411 banks, insurance companies and pension funds invested \$402 billion in 28 companies in the production, maintenance or stockpiling of nuclear weapons.

Former US Attorney General Ramsey Clark had this to say about what is happening in the world today? 'The international community is not by chance, and what happened in Libya is not by chance, what is happening in Syria and Iran is not by chance.

Who is behind the acts of terrorism? What is behind the assassinations and murder of intellectuals and high-ranking officials in both countries? We are building up to what, exactly? And where is the truth in the international press?

As usual, the obedient press, has managed to come up with the same goods time and time again and so long as a gullible public, obediently swayed to where it is supposed to be by swallowing the tidy controlled media package daily, it is going to work: public opinion will conform to the schemes of the arms and energy and banking lobbies which control Washington, and by proxy, NATO and the USA's allies'.

4. Solutions and Actions

There are more academics in existence than ever before, but most prefer not to confront authority even if it debars the path of free thinking. I will recommend you to read a book written by a German journalist Udo Ulfkotte who reveals in his bestseller "Bought Journalists", how he was 'taught to lie, to betray and not to tell the truth to the public'. The former editor of *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, which is one of Germany's largest newspapers, was secretly on the payroll of the CIA and German secret service, spinning the news in a way that was positive for the United States and bad for its opponents.

The tradition of questioning a dominant authority, be it religion or the state, continued with Locke, Hume, Voltaire, Montesquieu, Diderot, Rousseau and others. When asked

by an American journalist about the motto of his life, Karl Marx said "Doubt everything". The trouble is when there should be voices, there is silence. Are we all co-opted easily by the comforts of conforming.

We need to ask relevant questions. As political and peace activists we have a bounden duty to pursue that tradition and protect our hard won political, economic, social and civil liberties. As Abraham Lincoln said "You cannot escape the responsibility of tomorrow by evading it today"

In my last book, *The Economics of Killing* I argued that war and continue war is not a solution to terrorism, jihadism, sectarianism, we cannot afford to repeat the mistakes of the past. We cannot bomb an ideology, or heal sectarian conflicts with the barrel of a gun. Invisible to the public, the bombing inevitably causes widespread suffering among innocent people, multiplying enemies and provoking further 'terrorism.'

I have advocated a solution by campaigning and developing an effective strategy for nonviolent future by following 4d for World Peace campaign. The 4D's stand for Disarmament, Demilitarisation Development and Democracy and advocate for promoting soft power approach for the well being of humanity. It is a campaign for civil society groups to work not only to change government policies, but also economic incentives and cultural understandings to resolve all conflicts by dialogue and diplomacy for lasting peace. It works on the principle that what we have in common is more important than our differences.

For a start, stop expansion of NATO and take steps to wind down its military pact with the European Union. Disband its operation like the Warsaw Pact. Why in the 21st Century, world is producing more guns, weapons and bullets? Arms along with drugs and human slavery are the three largest illicit trades in the world.

The cold war paradigm of confrontation and militarisation should be abandoned for close cooperation between Europe and Russia, USA and the Middle East for seeking peaceful solutions.

We do not require a cold war thinking in Europe we should continue to build structures through which we can cooperate and which reflect our relations of interconnectedness and interdependence. The vision of the founders of the European Union to link countries together politically, economically and culturally, in order to lessen the likelihood of war among nations is one of the most worthy endeavours in the history of mankind. We should try utmost to keep it intact.

5. Conclusion

And yet belief and the example of progress in civilisation is a testament that even when the barbarians are too close for comfort our work bears great fruit. We have the witness of those who did not despair in the face of fear knowing well that the power of the pen, the power of the word and the power of individual and civil society is much stronger even if world may seem to be drifting in to a very dangerous time.

The UNESCO preamble is as relevant today as it was in 1945: "Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed".

We call ourselves civilised. But a true civilisation does not need to possess weapons and to train millions of men and women in armed forces and send them to war. To counteract the evil of warmongering we need a global movement for a positive change to show we can live with our fellow human beings in peace, by taking steps to build a peaceful and secure world based on non-militarist approaches. A radical rethinking of political forces is needed to initiate an act of reconciliation.

More constructive alternatives to military intervention include:

- Need of political will and more effective leadership, efforts at a global scale for a world without war
- Accelerating humanitarian assistance for displaced people
- Immediate halt to air strikes and stopping the flow of arms to the regions of conflict,

- Prioritising diplomatic intervention under United Nations auspices,
- Insisting on a renewed peace process for Syria, Iraq, Middle East and Ukraine that includes all parties
- Moving away from secrecy, war propaganda, and the outmoded macho approach so often manifested in the defence, foreign affairs and national security sectors
- Helping create peaceful and just societies – changing the mindset from culture of guns to culture of peace
- Changing the current political-economic system which is a form of plutocracy or elite rule to diverging form of democracy significantly influenced by the public will
- Stop the pursuit of profit without any ethical and moral compass

Peace starts in recognising and valuing the inherent humanity in each of us as the Archbishop Desmond Tutu famously said 'My humanity is bound up with yours, for we can only be human together'. So, let us take the first step in recognising the world we live is interdependent and interlinked. We all have to work together to solve the intractable problems we face not by rivalries but through co-operation.

Things do change. Europeans have made Europe peaceful for the first time in history. Apartheid era is gone. There was cold war, but then the Soviet Union dissolved. Recently we had reunification of Germany. What we need today is urgent change by extraordinary change makers, courageous peace leaders who do not give up against all odds to inspire global movement for a just and peaceful world. Our greatest strength as individuals is citizen power. Individuals, organisations and countries - let us cooperate on a global scale to take bold but doable, practical steps to change things around and sow the seeds for a more peaceful and prosperous world. Then we need not worry who rules the world.

Luckshan Abeysuriya [Author & International Relations Expert]: Weakness of the UN Security Council had made it unable to solve the Ukraine crisis; abolition of the veto would enable it to be more decisive. Within Russia, Putin was a 'Holywood idol'-style political leader, whose very difficult early life had made him determined to succeed. After dealing with the problem of the St.Petersburg oligarchs, he had come to the attention of President Yeltsin who made him his successor. Regarding the break-up of the Soviet Union as a catastrophe, Putin "wants to re-create a d new version of the USSR" through the Eurasian Economic Union project [so far comprisn ing Russia, Belarus, Kyrgistan, Armenia], which he hopes could become a counter-weight to the European Union. He had strongly

wanted Ukraine to join EEU, but USA, Germany, Poland and France had acted to pull Ukraine towards the West. Russia had annexed Crimea to prevent its Sebastopol major naval base, of great strategic importance, falling under pro-US control, perhaps even being lost to NATO.

Rev. Brian Cooper [Churches & Inter-faith Secretary, Uniting for Peace]: It was vital to realise President Putin rejected the concept that the world order should only be defined on US terms: that US notion was simply 'arrogant' in Putin's view. A recent poll showing Putin as the world's 'most admired person' after Bill Gates and Pope Francis I surely meant many people shared his view. Only a diplomatic solution taking into account the legitimate security interests of all relevant parties including Russia could resolve the Ukraine crisis. B. Cooper pointed out that Putin, early on in his power, had been the first world leader to alert the global community to the dangers of Islamist jihadism, which in Chechnya he had suppressed ruthlessly. Emergence of 'Islamic State' - 'ISIS' - in Iraq and Syria had raised this danger to a new level, especially when when Boko Haram in Nigeria and Al-Shebab in Somalia/East Africa were taken into account. ISIS aimed to restore the Caliphate, which ended with the collapse of the Ottoman Empire at the end of World War One. Osama bin Laden, who had denounced Britain's role in this - falsely claiming it aimed to replace Islam by Christianity [Britain's motivation was imperial realpolitik] - had urged restoration of the Caliphate. Contemporary Islamist jihadism and terrorism were also rooted in the influence of the Egyptian radical anti-Western Islamist theorist Sayyid Qutb [1906-66], the 1979 Islamist Revolution of Ayatollah Khomeini in Iran and his world-view as dominated by the 'Two Satans' [consumer materialist USA and Marxist materialist USSR], victory over the latter by the Mujaheddin Islamist fighters armed by US, and widespread Muslim anti-Western alienation in Middle East in reaction to recent US/West invasions and decades of interference. ISIS marked the culmination of these influences and forces, and being a state with major resources and weaponry, motivated by a heretical version of Islam, posed a major threat to Muslim regimes it deemed 'heretical' and to the West. It certainly could not be defeated by military action alone. A Muslim heresy, it challenged mainstream Muslim leaders to denounce its barbarism, re-assert Islam's true nature as a religion of peace and

offer its adherents positive non-violent visions for the future. ISIS also challenged the West to confront its own failings and false policies which had understandably alienated so many Muslims, and to achieve comprehensive Middle East peace settlement including of the Palestine/Israel dispute. Development programmes to end the mass poverty and deprivation across Middle East which helped nurture violent extremism, were also integral to the answer to Isis. "The answer to Islamic State is to bring peace and hope to those areas of Middle East where none exist now."

Daniel Jakopovich [global issues researcher and journalist]: UK, a continuing military power which had been at war in most years since 1945, also acted as a 'bridge power' between US and EU. Britain's political system included close links between the ruling elite, the military and the arms industries, which latter received state subsidies - 'military capitalism'. Military-related industries, financial institutions and the energy sector were involved in upholding Middle East despots. 'Strong economic motives' were at work in the US/UK invasion of Iraq, with post-invasion privatisations and Western companies profiting from the occupation. UK was closely linked to USA's project of global hegemony, an imperial project for power and profit. However, such fundamental issues were generally not publicly debated in the media, and certainly were never raised in the UK Parliament: the Peace Movement needed to expose these realities and dangers of the military-industrial complex.

Questions & Open Forum: Issues raised included: Increasing availability of weaponry around the world was itself a cause of war; was there still a place for ideology in determining state policies; local activism had a vital role in spreading awareness and prompting action on global issues; current political structures needed a 'total re-casting' to meet contemporary realities, and to promote peace and justice; the potentially dangerous consequences of USA's current pursuit of 'containment' policies against Russia [through NATO] and China [by US military re-orientation towards the Pacific region]. It was asserted that global power primarily was in the hands of major transnational corporations, with 147 'super-entities' controlling global trade and levers of political power.