

**“Multilateralism Matters”**

**Perry Award Acceptance Remarks**

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Mr. Director, Mr. Secretary, Mr. Cope, Mr. Secretary General, Ambassadors and flag officers, students, guests. My wife Carol, members of my family and personal friends. *Amigos todos.*

I thank those who found me deserving of this award. Public Service, like the priesthood, is a calling. Jay Cope and Tom Shannon each exemplify the highest standards of that calling, Jay in the Army and as a civilian, Tom in the career Foreign Service. I am indebted personally to you both more than I can say. Our countries and all of us here are better off for your service.

I met Bill Perry when he was Secretary of Defense, and have just finished what he calls his “selective memoir”: *My Journey at the Nuclear Brink*. With a forward by my old boss George Shultz, Perry writes how honored he was to have this Center named for him, and makes a passionate plea to eliminate nuclear weapons before they eliminate us. It is a good read, and I recommend it.

I am proud and touched that so many of you are here. Even though many of us have worked closely together, you come from different times and from circles that often do not intersect. Your combined presence today makes this an unusual ceremony and a much-prized reunion for me. Thank you for being here.

My values have been shaped by a belief in Western civilization. That bold phrase *Civis romanus sum* (I am a Roman citizen) is its cornerstone. I was born in the United States and am a citizen of the United States alone. But I believe the rights and obligations of citizenship that began in Rome are at the heart of mankind’s progress.

My professional career has focused United States relations with countries in the Western Hemisphere. As in my service on the Policy Planning Staff for Secretaries of State from two different parties, I have always tried to see our neighbors in the Americas in the context of U.S. foreign policy as a whole.

In accepting this award, I would like to share some thoughts about where we are now and what may lie ahead.

The last twenty years or so have been hard on the international order. So much so that disorder increasingly seems a better description. The current *Foreign Affairs* calls the situation simply “Out of Order.” Governing has become harder and more complicated. Citizen demands for a better life have grown, but disparities in power and cultural differences have not been erased; in some cases, they have sharpened. World War II ended with winners and losers; the Cold War had blocs and anti-blocs; and now, what has been called the “end of ideology” has left us with fewer shared viewpoints than ever.

These conditions hamper international understanding and disrupt long-held concepts. Take for example the Organization of American States, the world’s oldest regional organization.

The OAS is a multilateral organization of the sovereign states of the Western Hemisphere. This simple definition combines *three concepts*.

*Multilateralism* is based on “generalized principles of conduct” – the creation of predictable universal rules rather than a temporary coalition of a few countries on a specific problem.

*Sovereignty*, the sovereign equality of states, is the organizing principle of the international system since the 1648 Peace of Westphalia.

*Geography*, as in the proposition that “the peoples of this Hemisphere stand in a special relationship to one another which sets them apart from the rest of the world.”

Today, these three concepts are all operationally challenged.

*Multilateralism* is associated with inefficiency more than order. International law has been weakened by repeated failures to ratify treaties or abide by their obligations. A cynic might argue that *multilateralism is now just an idealistic illusion in an increasingly Hobbesian world.*

*Sovereignty* has long meant that individual states are inviolate from outside intervention and free to decide whether or not to participate in any particular activity. The problem is that our times *require* cooperation. Cyberspace, illegal drugs, weapons from small arms to drones and nukes, migration, terrorism, disease, climate and most economic activity cannot be dealt with by any one state acting alone. Does this mean *sovereignty is obsolete?*

Finally, in the age of the jet and the internet, *does geography still matter?* Twenty years ago, a senior administration official told me geography was no longer relevant to foreign policy.

Here at the Perry Center and the National Defense University we know better. War is intimately related to sovereignty, geography and even multilateralism. The League of Nations was created to end war but had no military authority. The United Nations Charter authorized the use of force in Chapter VII. The OAS Charter purposely conveyed no coercive authority. These formulas are all incomplete. Neither force nor diplomacy can work alone.

What is needed, of course, is to *integrate* the various elements of power. You can't say “We'll deal with this militarily, or just economically, or just diplomatically.” You can't say “We'll deal with this multilaterally, that bilaterally, and this unilaterally.” Major problems require the application in some form of all elements of power, civil and military, hard and soft, multilateral, bilateral and unilateral.

Trying to integrate power by making the inter-agency system work is how I survived in Washington. My mentors at the State Department all served on the National Security Council. One of them conditioned becoming Assistant Secretary on also chairing the NSC Inter-Departmental Group, then promptly appointed me its Executive Secretary. Years later, when I was asked to represent the United States in the effort to end fighting between Ecuador and Peru, I did the same thing and teamed with U.S. Southern Command.

In a dispute that went back to colonial times, five thousand Special Forces soldiers from the two countries had become entangled in mountainous jungle terrain. To prevent escalation, Brazil, Argentina, Chile and the United States – all guarantors of an earlier treaty -- contributed soldiers to a military observation mission, known as MOMEPE, to separate forces and give diplomacy a chance. My guarantor counterparts and I would share intelligence, listen to each other's views and meet until we hammered out a course our governments could all support. We approached things differently. But the give and take was mutual. Often our guarantor meetings led to a course different from anything any one of us had started with. Whenever that happened, interagency coordination was key to keeping Washington in sync as well. Sometimes I felt as though I was dealing with two wars, one abroad, and the other here at home. The peace agreements ultimately settled the land boundaries at the origins of the conflict, but

extended also to river navigation, trade, parks, burial of casualties, human rights, and economic development. It took almost four years, but we succeeded where few believed we could.

The peace between Ecuador and Peru resolved the last active territorial conflict on the South American mainland and removed the arms race contagion in the region. Conventional war among states in the Americas today is almost unthinkable.

In this lower threat environment, collective security obligations have given way to a concept championed initially by the countries of the Commonwealth Caribbean -- that security should be understood as "multidimensional." This approach expanded security concerns from traditional defense matters like weapons acquisitions and confidence building measures to trafficking in persons, drug abuse and the special security concerns of small island states.

Yet even with this more consensual approach, security and defense matters remain problematic. Uncertainty about military and police roles creates confusion. Asymmetries in power breed illusions and distrust. Tensions among neighbors still flare up. The end of the Cold War reduced but did not eliminate concerns about the activities of countries outside the hemisphere. The variety and complexity of contemporary security issues makes clear that no one policy fits all. Every country has tended to set its own course. Nothing is automatic.

So what should we do in the midst of this uncertainty?

*First, multilateral consultations should be part of any strategy.*

Multilateralism was the core of the international order the United States led in creating after World War II. The United States today is more focused inward and faces competition from many quarters. The multilateral order has eroded, and U.S. participation has reduced. Yet even when agreement is elusive, broad consultation can reduce confusion and set the stage for future cooperation.

The excellent lead article in the *Foreign Affairs* issue I cited earlier calls for a system of "Sovereign obligation" to deal with the world's growing common problems. I was amused, however, that the author suggests the United States consult only half a dozen "other major powers" [FA p9]. I was delighted to read that the powerful have obligations as well as rights. But in my experience, *democracy is as important among countries as within them*. If smaller countries do not receive respect, they are unlikely to be part of the solution.

Our Founding Fathers set a good example in our Declaration of Independence: "a decent respect to the opinions of mankind" requires that all be heard. Idealism quite aside, success is harder if you don't consult.

*Second, respect the law and support local institutions.*

In the Peru-Ecuador conflict, the Rio Protocol authorized the guarantors only to "assist" the parties, not to decide. Peru and Ecuador had to agree; and a Terms of Reference had to be negotiated for the military observers. Once the rules were agreed, however, everything could be dealt with -- from the painting of MOMEF helicopters by hostile radar to secret force build-ups. Using the law enabled the parties of peace within Peru and Ecuador to seize the initiative. A key dispute was resolved by a panel headed by the Chief Justice of Brazil's Supreme Court. That Chief Justice, Nelson Jobim, later became Brazil's Minister of Defense. Jobim received this Perry Award in 2011.

But just as the peace between Ecuador and Peru was proving the value of the law, the United States Senate stopped ratifying international treaties. We have not ratified the global Law of the Sea, even after it was re-written to meet U.S. objections. We have also not ratified conventions that advance US regional interests in human rights or in fighting drugs by controlling illegal firearms. Sandra Day O'Connor summarized the consequences well: *"The decision not to sign on to legal frameworks the rest of the world supports is central to the decline in American influence in the world."*

In 1991, OAS Resolution 1080 established common grounds for action against interruptions of the democratic process. But it also called for proposals and incentives to support democracy, a call that was never followed up with resources or specifics. The current tragedy in Venezuela is due to failures in implementation by the member states, starting with Venezuela, rather than to a failure of multilateralism.

Much the same could be said about other hot-button issues like migration and trade. Sovereign nations have the right to decide who and what enters and leaves their territory. A wall that channels people and goods to an entry/exit point at which clear rules are enforced is fine, but if the wall is breached or circumvented, or if there are no rules, it becomes a Maginot line, impressive but ineffectual.

The world needs laws and relationship-building, not walls or nation-building. Lectures and barriers are less effective than relations built on respect and shared rules. Nothing will last unless all concerned feel at least some of their interests are being advanced.

Which brings me to my third and last point:

*prepare professionals to cooperate across cultures.*

Even if interagency differences were all miraculously resolved here in the United States, we would still need to work efficiently with other countries.

To reconcile different national interests requires knowledge. Institutional ties maintained by a network of professionals who know how to work together can help contain issues that might otherwise escalate into conflict—in effect, a valuable insurance policy for progress and peace.

Bill Perry understood this. As Secretary of Defense in the years after the fall of the Berlin wall, he supported the establishment of the Marshall Center in Germany to help military and civilian officials from both NATO and the Warsaw Pact learn to work together. And because he understood that geography matters, he then supported the creation of similar centers for other parts of the world.

This Center for Hemispheric Defense Studies or CHDS, now known simply as the Perry Center, has an international faculty and students, ties to countries and institutions large and small, and an annual fall program that examines U.S. security and defense structures and policy. For years, the graduates of the Inter-American Course in International Law in Rio de Janeiro and of the Inter-American Defense College here at Fort McNair had enviable records. Between them, the OAS and the Perry Center are forging relationships and cadres of public servants who can help turn a difficult world to mutual advantage. They provide a unique foundation for a safe neighborhood.

And this brings me to a personnel recommendation. In this increasingly disorderly world, we in the United States might do well to link cultural sensitivity and knowledge of how to make things work to eligibility for promotion. In 1986, the Goldwater-Nichols Act established that to be eligible for promotion to General or Flag Officer, a military officer had to have both senior education and a completed a Joint Duty Tour. Stealing a page from Goldwater-Nichols, might a tour in the UN, the OAS,

the IMF, or some other international organization become a requirement for promotion to the Senior Executive Service and the Senior Foreign Service?

So I return to my opening.

Times have changed, but some old truths still apply. Geography and neighborhood still matter. Sovereignty still matters. Yet in today's world, we can no longer retreat like Voltaire to cultivate our own garden. To take care of ourselves, we must also deal with the outside world, our neighbors perhaps most of all.

In international politics and security, there is no MapQuest to click for directions. There is just a lot of time consuming and necessarily inclusive hard work. Our circles must learn to intersect and work together.

It will not be easy. The logo at the bottom of the Perry Center's crest -- *Mens et Fides Mutua* (Mutual understanding and trust) has guided the Center during twenty years of progress. It must continue. It is an honor to receive the William J. Perry Award for Excellence in Security and Defense Education, and a particular honor to receive it in this setting and in this anniversary year. Thank you.