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The historic search for an international order has always been a historic disappointment, and alas seems destined to remain so. The varied nations of the world clearly need to deal with each other and with common problems according to accepted norms of behaviour, the alternative of course being a kind of international anarchy. That, indeed, is what has been threatening to overtake us ever since the breakdown of the approximation of an international order that emerged after World War II. True, the fundamental organizing principle of a real international order, the means of enforcement, never came into being. The passing whiff of idealism we experienced after the war's horrors was too brief and evanescent to give life to hope. We did all subscribe to the great multilateral institutions that were created to try and evolve and maintain a new international order, but for all the good work they have done -and still do, they could not compete with, much less replace, the driving force of the great powers. The central fact of international life became that contention for advantage over each other between the groups allied to the two super-powers known as the Cold War. That imposed its own sort of order by drawing some sort of lines regarding what various nations could or could not do. Since the end of the Cold War we are all of drifting, trying to find a new sextant to guide us through the turbulent waters of global affairs.

Meanwhile a new challenge to international order has developed, terrible, growing and largely unmanageable. Terrorism has been directed mainly against a few specially chosen victims, but is universal and unpredictable. What is called the international community is united in condemning it, but so far has not found either the means or indeed the will to combat it. It is evident, for example, that the greatest epicenter of terrorism is the Al-Quaeda-Taliban complex on both sides of the Afghan-Pakistan border. Many countries have no doubt contributed forces to counter the threat but it is well known that public opinion in most of the participating countries has no inclination for the painful part of what needs to be done if it is to have any effect.

In such a global situation perhaps the greatest contribution each state can make to the common, continuous search for stability in the international system is to ensure effective governance within itself. Terrorism can strike anywhere, anytime, especially if its agents are fanatical enough to be suicidal. May be there is no complete answer, but surely effective, acceptable internal order, what we call good governance, goes a long way towards limiting both the causes and the incidence of terrorist outrages. Even if they cannot fulfill the expectations of their peoples, if governments are seen to be working to these ends, there is more likelihood of discouraging extremist challenges. And if it is efficient, it can deal with outrages far more competently. Furthermore, such good government at home is a major asset in constructive international cooperation.

In discussions such as ours, I always bear in mind the wise comment Moliere puts in the mouth of one of his characters (in *Le Misanthrope*):

“C'est une folie a nulle autre seconde

De vouloir se mêler a corriger le monde »

Unfortunately, it is no longer just a question of “vouloir” but of “nécessité”. It is imperative for all of us to work towards “correcting the world”, not only if there is to be any world order at all but if these new challenges are to be addressed. Terrorism is the most awful, but others, from climate change and WMD to HIV Aids energy issues need collective action. No doubt the obstacles that have obstructed us in the past remain. May be we are condemned always to yearn and not attain. But the effort has to be made, and even the processes of attempting can bring about salutary improvements by at least leaving salutary scratches on one's minds. It is conferences such as this, for which IFRI should be both congratulated and thanked, that can stimulate these essential processes.