

16. Combating Terrorism: From Skyjacking 1978 to September 11th, 2001

John Kirton

Hello, I'm John Kirton, Director of the G8 Research Group at the University of Toronto and your lead instructor for G8 Online 2002.

In this session, "Combating Terrorism: From Skyjacking 1978 to September 11th, 2001," we explore the G8's longstanding leadership in the war against global terrorism. This topic takes us back 25 years, to the G7's action against aircraft hijacking in the 1970s and right up to the G7 and G8 response to the terrorist attacks in September of the past year.

Since its start, the G7/G8 Summit has been called upon to cope with the transnational security threats bred by **globalization**, beginning with terrorism of global reach. In 1978, the G7 moved decisively against the epidemic of aircraft hijacking in the 1970s. In 1986, Libya's state-sponsored terrorism was the centre of G7 attention, and from 1996 onward, the terrorism of the al-Qaeda network has been a core concern.

Yet judgements of the G7/G8's performance in one governing this dark side of globalization vary widely. Those who see the G8 as essentially an economic body, or immobilized by the **false new consensus** brought by globalization, suggest that the G8 will do little in the realm of security, an area so full of secrecy and sensitivities to national **sovereignty**. Alternatively, adherents of the **American leadership** model argue that the G7/G8 has been sometimes attentive and effective, in regard to terrorism as it was in 1986 and 1996 when the United States itself was attacked and thus chose to lead. Supporters of the **democratic institutionalist** model would claim that the G7/G8 has become steadily more effective in combating terrorism, as a consequence of the expanding web of G7 institutions involved in the anti-terrorism campaign. And those who see the G8 as a **concert of equals**

engaged in collective management through mutual adjustment, assert that the G8 has always been an effective institution against this new globalized threat that brings equally vulnerability to all (Bayne 2000).

In this lecture, I argue that since its beginning the G7/G8 has been continuously concerned with combating global terrorism, in the ever changing forms this dark dimension of globalization has assumed. The G7/G8 has also been highly effective in its work. It has remained engaged because all members are now in equal need of co-operation against this common enemy that threaten all. As the September 11th terrorist attack on the World Trade Center in New York and the Pentagon in Washington showed, the G8's most powerful member — the United States — is now most directly vulnerable to a global terrorist threat that it cannot defend itself against all alone. The most powerful member has now become the most vulnerable in our globalizing age.

A. The G8 as an Anti-Terrorism Institution, 1975–2001

Over the past quarter century, the G7 has almost always proven to be perform well in combating terrorism. At the 1978 Bonn Summit, it felt compelled to act against the rash of aircraft hijackings, or "skyjackings," in Europe and the Middle East that year. The G7 leaders easily abandoned any faith in a United Nations system that operates the responsible functional agency, the International Civil Aviation Organization, as it had proven ineffective in the face of the new threat. Led by Germany and Canada, the G7 created a new regime of automatic, severe, comprehensive sanctions against anyone who helped any skyjackers at

any point, regardless of which side of the cold war or of any regional conflict they might be on. This new regime worked. The incidence of skyjacking rapidly decreased in subsequent years. Indeed, the regime's success in virtually eliminating skyjacking from North American skies for the following two decades made the new form of aircraft hijacking on September 11th, all the more severely shocking.

The G7 leaders focused again on terrorism at the 1986 Tokyo Summit. Libya's state-sponsored terrorism was the new target now. This time, as predicted accurately by the **American leadership** model, Ronald Reagan's United States, supported by Margaret Thatcher's United Kingdom, led their G7 partners to mount a hard-line response.

The next major episode of decisive G7 anti-terrorist action came at the 1996 Lyon Summit. The spur was an attack on American military forces in the Gulf region immediately before the Summit, an act of terrorism that suggested the al Qaeda network was at work. At Lyon, the leaders easily adjusted their pre-set agenda to accommodate President Bill Clinton, who took the lead in having the G7 react. Thus the America leadership model again appears to explain Summit co-operation accurately. But here the model must be modified, for, as **democratic institutionalism** suggests, the G7 had held already the first G7 ministerial meeting on terrorism hosted by Canada in Ottawa six months earlier, in December 1995. There they had created the so-called **Lyon Group** to make recommendations available for the leaders to adopt as the core of their response at the subsequent Summit.

A broader look at the Summits' treatment of terrorism suggests that the concert equality and **liberal-institutionalist** models, rather than the American leadership model, actually explain the pattern best. Specific commitments on combating terrorism have been made at almost all Summits, often in abundance. This indicates that all hosts have shown at least procedural leadership on this common, continu-

ing core G7/G8 concern. The members that have shown their concern as hosts are France in 1989 as well as 1996, Italy in 1980 and 1987, and Canada in 1981, 1988 and 1995. Similarly, when they have served as host, many members have contributed to the creation of the multi-layered machinery of G8, ministerial and official-level bodies that have sprung up to deal with terrorism since 1996.

B. The G8's Response to September 11, 2001

This counter-terrorism machinery, led by the G7's finance ministers forum, was quick off the mark after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. On September 12, Canadian prime minister and incoming G8 host Jean Chrétien, along with Italian G8 chair Silvio Berlusconi and Russia's Vladimir Putin, called for the G8 to be used as the dominant vehicle for politically defining a response. Chrétien brushed aside suggestions that Canada's G8 be cancelled or moved for fear it would attract another terrorist attack.

On September 12, the G7 finance ministers issued the first of several statements condemning the attack, offering condolences to the victims' families, pledging to prevent disruption to the global economy and promising to provide liquidity as required. They then moved quickly to strengthen the G7/G8's efforts against terrorist financing that had begun in 1989. In Ottawa on November 17–19, 2001, Canada also hosted the G20, the International Monetary and Financial Committee (IMFC) of the **International Monetary Fund** (IMF) and the IMF-**World Bank's** Development Committee. Here it deepened and broadened the action-oriented anti-terrorist consensus created by G7 finance ministers at their meeting in Washington, held shortly after the September 11th attacks.

The G8 foreign ministers meeting, held on the eve of the United Nations General Assembly's delayed opening in New York in November 2001, was devoted entirely to the war against terrorism and developments in the Middle East. At the end of December, G8 for-

eign ministers again sprang into action: under Russian leadership, they issued a collective statement calling on India and Pakistan to move back from the brink of a terrorist-inspired war. At the official level, by late November, the G8's group on terrorism had met. The group was now merged with the Lyon Group. It and the G8 Nonproliferation Experts Group were charged with determining how they could contribute to the anti-terrorism campaign.

C. The Kananaskis G8's Anti-terrorism Agenda

At Kananaskis in June, the G8 leaders will seek to ensure that all the existing anti-terrorism commitments are fully implemented, plug the few remaining holes in the global system to strangle the al Qaeda network and chart the longer term steps ahead. Dealing with terrorists in Palestine, escalating violence in the Middle East, and potential terrorist links to totalitarian Iraq, communist North Korea and closed Iran will also be a concern.

Closer to the North American homeland, the Kananaskis Summit will be the occasion for the United States and Canada to announce a program to enhance physical security and economic security in their two countries, in part as a model of what others might usefully do. This event will show yet again how Summit membership and the hosting prerogative helps smaller countries such as Canada get what they sometimes find difficult to obtain when they deal alone with the much larger United States. But it will also enable the United States to signal that it now understands that it cannot guarantee its own national security against terrorism unless neighbouring Canada and all the other tightly integrated G8 countries play their full part.

Because Summits allow leaders to take charge and to link issues that are naturally interconnected, smaller countries can use them to produce large package deals that make all members and values better off. It should become clear at Kananaskis how combating terrorism can require new government spend-

ing, new technologies and technology sharing, and how it can be done so as to enhance productivity throughout the civilian economy and increase prosperity for all. It should also be clear that successfully combating terrorism over the long haul will mean reducing poverty in Africa and other areas, so that new breeding grounds for terrorists are less likely to arise.

The important attention and actions against terrorism at Kananaskis will therefore not mean, as the American leadership model would have it, that the United States has hijacked the G8's pre-set agenda, on Africa, and diverted it to deal with all-American passions unique to those living in New York and Washington. It will mean, as predicted by the concert equality model, all G8 members recognize that they are vulnerable to global terrorism that comes from anywhere and can strike anyone, and must also deal with other difficult problems, such as African development, in an integrated way (Kirton 1993).

References

- Bayne, Nicholas (2000), *Hanging in There: The G7 and G8 Summit in Maturity and Renewal* (Ashgate: Aldershot).
- Kirton, John (1993), "The Seven-Power Summit as a New Security Institution," pp. 335–357 in David Dewitt, David Haglund, and John Kirton, eds., *Building a New Global Order: Emerging Trends in International Security* (Oxford University Press: Toronto) <www.g7.utoronto.ca/g7/scholar/kirton199301/index.html> (May 2002).

Further Readings

- Bayne, Nicholas (2001), "The G8's Role in the Fight Against Terrorism." Remarks to the G8 Research Group, Toronto, November 8 <www.g7.utoronto.ca/g7/speakers/baynenov2001.html> (May 2002).
- Sussmann, Michael (1999), "The Critical Challenges From International High-Tech and Computer-Related Crime at the Millennium," *Duke Journal of Comparative & International Law*, 9(2, Spring): 451–489 <www.g7.utoronto.ca/g7/scholar/sussmann/duke_article_pdf.pdf> (May 2002).

Discussion Questions

1. If the G7/G8 has been so successful in combating terrorism over the years, why did it fail to prevent the terrorist attack on North America on September 11, 2001?
2. Some argue that sticking to the 2002 Kananaskis Summit's agenda of poverty reduction and development in Africa would provide adequate solutions to combat terrorism rooted in Africa and the Middle East. Explore the balance between explicit and indirect approaches. What balance would prove most successful, and why?
3. How successfully can a concert equality of democratic institutionalist model make strides in the war on terrorism? Must there be one evident leader, with a legitimate motive (for example, the United States with the events of September 11, 2001) to achieve results?
4. There are suggestions that a significant amount of terrorism stems from the fact that the northwestern hemisphere controls global policy. Such an example would be speculation that the September 11 terrorist attacks were retaliation for U.S. interference in Middle Eastern affairs. Can a European- and U.S.-dominated G8 achieve change outside of their geographical boundaries? How?
5. Is the G8 the appropriate forum to develop anti-terrorism strategies? Does its small size make it more efficient and effective, or would a more globally exhaustive group, such as the United Nations, achieve greater long-term success?

Quiz

1. The G7 Summit moved decisively against aircraft hijacking at
 - a. Rambouillet in 1975
 - b. Bonn in 1978
 - c. Lyon in 1996
 - d. Genoa in 2001
2. The G7's first ministerial forum on anti-terrorism was created at
 - a. Bonn in 1978
 - b. Ottawa in 1985
 - c. Lyon in 1996
 - d. Genoa in 2001
3. What United Nations group was responsible for anti-terrorist direction before the skyjackings in 1978?
 - a. United Nations International Security Coalition
 - b. International Intergovernmental Security Initiative
 - c. International Civil Aviation Organization
 - d. Transnational Global Security Taskforce
4. On September 12, 2001, the leaders of which countries publicly called for the G8 to be used as the dominant political vehicle in response to the September 11 terrorist attacks?
 - a. United States, Great Britain, Canada
 - b. Russia, Germany, Japan
 - c. Italy, France, United States
 - d. Canada, Russia, Italy
5. Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher led their G7 partners to mount a hard-line response to which country's sponsorship of terrorism?
 - a. Libya
 - b. Sudan
 - c. Pakistan
 - d. Afghanistan