

THE NEW TWILIGHT STRUGGLE

Former Secretary of Defense William S. Cohen shares some thoughts on terrorism, the role of the military, and foreign relations.

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William S. Cohen, a Republican, served as Secretary of Defense from January 1997 to January 2001 during the Clinton Administration. Prior to holding that position, Cohen was a three-term Senator and a three-term Congressman from Maine. Since leaving office, Secretary Cohen has done private consulting work and has written several books, the most recent of which, Dragon Fire, is a novel that opens with the assassination of a Secretary of Defense. On 6 September, Secretary Cohen spoke at an event sponsored by the Oxonian Society in conjunction with the Cornell Club of New York. His theme was "The Long Twilight Struggle against Terrorism" - - a modification of a phrase John F. Kennedy used to describe the Cold War. During his talk, Cohen said that he sees this struggle as extending over our lifetimes and our children's lifetimes. Further terrorist attacks in the United States will occur, he predicted, and government must act to prevent them. However, he called for a national debate to determine how much individual privacy the nation is willing to sacrifice in order to enhance security. Secretary Cohen graciously agreed to allow The Log to quote from his address. The following portions focus on the causes of the war, the role of the military, and his view as to what should be a key element of our foreign policy.



"9/11, it is easy to say, was transformational for all of us. It transformed our lives forever and we know they are never going to be the same. I have had the occasion to address many audiences since 9/11 and we get the same questions. Number one: how did it happen? Number two: why did it happen? Number three; is it going to happen again? Number four: Is there anything we can do about it?"

"How did it happen is very easy. We had gotten very lax in terms of we had made certain assumptions. Here we are the biggest, most powerful, superpower in the universe. No one is going to attack us on our home soil. We have the insulation of the two oceans. We've got the finest military in the world and they are deployed overseas.

Therefore, it is unlikely that anyone is ever going to attack us on our home soil. Well, along comes 9/11 and shattered that particular illusion."

"The question that we keep coming back to, which is taunting some of you, is the question of why. It is one I think that we pass off of quickly saying 'It is because people hate us. They hate us for who we are. They hate us for our values, for our embracing of different religions, different ethnicities, and different races. We stress equality even though we don't always achieve it. But they hate that particular set of values that we have."

"That's one answer to it but there is another viewpoint. They hate not who we are but where we are. That we are over in Saudi Arabia, or we were, or that we are occupying lands and bringing customs to them that they find offensive. So, you have Bin Ladin issuing all of these declarations condemning our presence over there."

"Some of it also has to do with the fact that many Arab and Muslim people look through the prism of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and they make a judgment about us from that as well. So, there are a mixture of rationales about why do people want to harm us. That is something we have to contend with."

"The issue is how do we stop it? Deterrence does not work. You cannot deter terrorists because they are determined to kill you, killing themselves in the process. Deterrence works against states. We deterred the Soviet Union all of those years. They were not going to launch an attack on the United States because of the retaliatory capacity that we have. We would have responded in kind and wiped out their country. Even during the Cold War, you

had rational people that you were dealing with even though they were your enemies. Not necessarily so today when you are dealing with terror groups. Appealing to reason will not help."

"The [terrorists] are looking for weaknesses and we have to defend the best we can. That means having in addition to a number of active defense measures, consequence management - - making sure we know how to help people in these times of stress. That's something that we have been doing for the last several years but we are not there yet."

"Katrina was a good example. It is ironic that nothing really happened until the military got involved. The people kind of sat there, waiting, hoping that somebody would be coming to the rescue but because of the break in the command structure, who was in charge? It took several days. I think that as soon as the military started to get involved, things started to happen. The same thing [happened] with the tsunami."

In fact, the military's response to the tsunami had another positive result beyond providing the needed humanitarian relief. "Prior to the tsunami, a poll was taken and over 70 per cent of the Indonesians, which is the largest Muslim country in the world in terms of population, had a largely negative attitude toward the United States. After the tsunami hit and they saw our warships coming in, delivering not military equipment but humanitarian relief, those polls turned exactly inside out. Seventy percent had a favorable attitude toward the United States."

The lesson is that the United States' military is a force for stabilizing the world. "There is no question that our presence in Europe helps to stabilize Europe. Over in the Asia-Pacific region,

China is growing today by virtue of our presence in the Asia-Pacific region stabilizing it. When you have stability, what happens? Money flows in, capital flows in. When there is instability, capital flows out. So, China, ironically, has been the beneficiary of our presence in the Asia-Pacific region even though for some years it has said it is time for the Asians to take care of Asia, time for the U.S. to get out."

"I've been over there to lecture their young [military] officers, and I say [to them] that is the worst thing that could happen to you. If we leave tomorrow, there is a vacuum. Nature abhors a vacuum. Who fills it? Will it be you? Do you think Japan is going to sit on the sidelines watching you fill the vacuum? Do you think India is going to be watching the two of you compete without any interest in being a player? So, what happens if that takes place? Instability. Markets start to react. Capital starts to flow out. All of the progress you've made is suddenly in jeopardy."

"We are a stabilizing force throughout the world and that is one of the burdens we carry. When they ask are we still willing to carry that burden the answer is yes. Not necessarily because we are great humanitarians, although I think we are, but because it is in our self-interest. It is in our interest to be forward deployed. It is in our interest to try and shape people's attitudes in a positive way towards us. It is in our interest to help out with our humanitarian relief and our economic aid packages because we are shaping opinions about us. That becomes important as we talk about this long struggle before us."

"We have to understand the implications of our power. We need to

think about hard power but also about soft power occasionally. We don't like to think about that word 'soft' because it sounds weak. Soft power, what does it mean? It means using our ideals, using our humanity, helping people who are in need, going to countries that are in desperate need of food, water and AIDS vaccines and help lift them up from desperation. Otherwise, we are going to see more and more terror spread throughout the world because . . . a situation where there is no help, there is no social safety net, [is] a prime breeding ground for all of those who want to destroy our way of life."

"[In Henry Kissinger's book *Does America Need a Foreign Policy* he argues that] the American people must come to accept the fact that we are a preeminent power and we have global responsibilities. But, we must always try to conduct our foreign policy as if there were multiple centers of power. I say that is *Human Relations 101*. Make people feel that they are important, listen to them, go out and understand what their culture is about, their history, and the prism that they see life through. You listen to them and you will learn about them. You may not agree with them. Ultimately, you may come back and say 'I'm sorry I've listened to you carefully but we think we have to take the following actions notwithstanding your history and your particular position.' But if you are at least willing to listen, and perhaps learn from them, you might modify your policy somewhat, you might build a much larger coalition; you might reach out and embrace more people into this struggle."

"In this long twilight struggle, we are not going to wage it effectively principally by our military might. That's going to be important but it is not going

to be the decisive thing. It is going to be having much better police work in terms of the MI5 type of operation in Britain - - the gathering of more and more good intelligence and then sharing it, sharing it vertically within your country as the Brits do within their intelligence system but [also] sharing information [with other countries] and they sharing it with us in order to identify, and then defeat, apprehend, kill, or marginalize those elements within their societies that are dedicated either to their destruction or ours. So, that means police work, intelligence, and some covert activity, Special Forces and finally the military. Because you cannot defeat a movement through military means alone, you must do it through trying to build relationships with other countries so that they see that their interest really is at stake.”

“This is something we have to convey to the world. This is not the U.S.'s battle. You cannot go to Bali and feel safe on the beaches of Bali, you can't ride a train in Madrid, you can't be on a bus in Britain, you can't be in Riyadh Saudi Arabia, and you can't ride the subway in Tokyo. There is no place that is safe. No country is safe. We are all in this together. That is the reason why when it comes to our foreign policy that we have to reach out and start sharing commonalities, ideals, interests, and work together with other countries. Otherwise, if it is just us and a few others, it is not something that we can be successful in.”

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