

The Dimensions of Power

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I. Introduction

Members of Parliament, Ministers, Your Excellencies, Distinguished Guests, friends, and the Host Committee of the Estonian National Prayer Breakfast – first of all I wish to thank you for the opportunity and privilege to share a few thoughts with you today.

My remarks this morning are in part prompted by the current state of international affairs – and in particular the relationship between Estonia and its neighbors. Thus it is the context of the exercise of power that I would like to focus my remarks this morning.

As you are aware, I served in the White House, as Henry Kissinger's Assistant when he was National Security Advisor (1969 - 1973). It was a time in United States history that was almost unparalleled for significant international developments and domestic turmoil. The country was in the middle of the Vietnam War. There was great domestic division. There was Watergate. We were negotiating the

SALT Treaty with the Soviet Union, pursuing Middle East shuttle diplomacy, and the secret opening of China.

It is from this perspective that I want to address “political power” – in its broadest sense – whether legitimately or illegitimately attained, whether exercised by individuals or organizations or by state or non-state actors – and finally whether the states are liberal democracies or non-democratic authoritarian regimes. In other words, all forms of political power.

But first - I must stress that this speech is the result of the fact that one of the most lasting and over-riding memories of my years in the White House was and is of a sense of “battle” – not a military battle between armed forces, or hard negotiations over strategic arms or even of conflict between economic blocs – but the sense of a battle – unseen and supernatural.

Hence my title: “The Dimensions of Power.”

II. SO, WHAT ARE THE DIMENSIONS OF POWER?

History is a chronology of the exercise of power and I would propose that throughout history there have been and are three dimensions of power:

1. The Hard Power Dimension

This is the tangible dimension. How many men are in your armed forces? How many men, guns, weapons, bombs, drones, tanks, ships, missiles, aircraft etc. do you have?

2. The Soft Power Dimension

“Soft” power has been in vogue for many years now and much has been written about it. It is the sum total of strategy, intelligence, counter-intelligence, logistical systems, diplomacy, propaganda, economic power, cultural influence, etc. And today it would include the use of social media and cyber warfare. In sum, it guides how and what you do with “hard” power.

3. And the Third Dimension which is neither Hard nor Soft –

It is not tangible and not intellectual. It is not plans or strategy or intelligence. You can call it the “non-hard/non-soft” dimension of power. I call it the “spiritual dimension.” It leads to “wars of the spirit” – battles between good and evil – unseen and supernatural. It determines how “Hard” and “Soft” power are used.

Let me illustrate this idea by looking at one of the most interesting analyses of “political power” IMPLIED in the documentary “The Fog of War: Eleven Lessons from the Life of Robert McNamara.” Or one might say Eleven Observations by Robert McNamara on his life. If you haven’t seen this film, I highly recommend that you do. It won the Oscar at the Academy Awards for best documentary in 2003. And today it’s used in the U.S. Intelligence Community training programs.

- Three of McNamara’s lessons relate to the hard dimension of power
 - Maximize efficiency

- Proportionality should be a guideline in war
- Get the data
- Three to the soft dimension and
 - Empathize with your enemy
 - Rationality will not save us
 - Never say never
- Five relate to the neither hard nor soft dimension;

But to the “Unseen and Supernatural” -

The “spiritual dimension.” Namely,

- There’s something beyond oneself
- Belief and seeing are often both wrong
- Be prepared to re-examine your reasoning
- In order to do good, you may have to engage in evil
- You can’t change human nature

History, as I said, is a chronology of the exercise of power. These are recorded as events. But events don’t happen on their own, they happen

because of human action, or inaction, and because of decisions – good and bad – driven by human nature.

People exercise power. People make events happen. What kind of people? People whose nature is just like yours and mine. So it is important that we understand human nature and have a realistic view of what motivates and drives people to do what they do.

Some quotes will suffice to set the stage for the “Spiritual Dimension of Power” – and the spiritual dimension of human nature.

First, from Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn’s classic work, *The Gulag Archipelago*:

“Gradually it was disclosed to me that the line separating good and evil passes not through states, not between classes, nor between political parties either—but right through every human heart and through all human hearts. This line shifts.

Inside us it oscillates with the years. And even within hearts overwhelmed by evil, one small bridgehead of good is retained. And even in the best of hearts there remains an uprooted small corner of evil.... It is *impossible* to expel evil from the world in its entirety, but it is possible to constrict it within each person.”

To this I would only add that – because the line passes through every human heart, it also passes through the history of human behavior on a grand scale. So the battles of the spirit are between “good” and “evil” – whether within the heart of the individual or otherwise.

The notion of a “spiritual dimension” to the exercise of power is not new. In 1888, in his famous book *Ecce Homo*, Friedrich Nietzsche wrote:

“For when Truth engages in a struggle with the falsehood of ages, we must expect shocks and a series of earthquakes, with

a rearrangement of hills and valleys, such as has never yet been dreamed of. *The concept of 'politics' is thus raised bodily into the realm of spiritual warfare.*”

Nietzsche's conclusion, that politics is a struggle between truth and falsehood (good and evil) and is a matter of “spiritual warfare,” is at the heart of my thesis. It is very interesting to note that while Nietzsche was an atheist, he nevertheless recognized that there could be a dimension of spiritual power – unseen and supernatural.

In more recent times Vaclav Havel said in an address in Tokyo in April 1992:

“When I look around the world today, I feel strongly that contemporary politics needs a new impulse, one that would add a badly needed spiritual dimension.”

There is, of course the alternative view that seeks to reduce the nature of power to its more elemental two dimensional aspects. Such a view is epitomized in Mao Tse Tung's famous dictum that,

“Political power grows out of the barrel of a gun,” or

Stalin's mocking quip in 1935 when urged to take a conciliatory view of Catholicism in Russia:

“The Pope? And how many divisions does *he* have?”

This is not to say that Mao and Stalin did not wield great power, but that power is not simply a matter of the capacity to enforce one's will. To believe such, rules out the third dimension. Nevertheless, many of our Western elites and governments do so, which led the eminent sociologist Max Weber to conclude years ago that they did not understand the role of religion in political power and were “tone deaf” to the reality of the spiritual dimension of power.

The reality is that it is the spiritual dimension, as reflected in human nature, that drives the actions that “Soft and Hard Power” take. It is the motivations of the hearts of those wielding “Soft and Hard Power” that determines how that power is used – and for what end – for good or evil. This does not mean that the spiritual dimension of power is only present within ourselves. Yes, it exists within us as we struggle in the battle of good versus evil within ourselves, but it also exists outside ourselves – unseen and supernatural.

Milton’s *Paradise Lost*, Dante’s *Inferno*, and noted artists such as William Blake, have all tried to describe and picture, with extraordinary imagination, the spiritual battles between the forces of good and the forces of evil. And today we have a contemporary film trilogy of J. R. R. Tolkien’s “Lord of the Rings” that powerfully illustrates what Tolkien wrote about.

But perhaps the most accurate and concrete description of what I am talking about goes back almost 2,000 years to the Apostle Paul, who wrote in the book of Ephesians:

“For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this present world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.”

The fact that Nietzsche, the atheist, and Paul, the Apostle, agree that the exercise of political power has a spiritual dimension (of “spiritual warfare”) must, at a minimum, give you pause to think and cause you to reflect on the nature of the battles you are in, why you are here, what is your purpose in being here and most importantly, what do you believe in? What is the north of your moral and spiritual compass?

III. NOW, WHAT DOES ALL THIS HAVE TO DO WITH A NATIONAL PRAYER BREAKFAST IN ESTONIA?

Why do you have a National Prayer Breakfast organized by the Christian community each year?

Why? To begin with, it is an open and public acknowledgment that we live in a world with a spiritual dimension. Christians recognize that we live in a broken world where this spiritual dimension involves good versus evil—for individuals as well as states, non-states, organizations etc. They believe in and worship the God of creation—He is a god who is “good” and hates “evil.” He loves his creation and mankind whom He created in his own image. He knows our selfish nature and yet he loves us and because He loves us, and is a God of mercy, He has provided a “rescue plan” of “hope” through His Son, Jesus Christ. He can and will rescue the men and women in this broken world who believe in Him and who have a relationship with him.

A short story on this point happened in 1992 when two Americans – one a doctor and one a businessman – came to Tallinn from DC and met with Mark Laar, the newly elected Prime Minister. They said they were part of a Christian fellowship involved with the U.S. Congress that had come to ask if they could be of help to him in any way. Mr. Laar replied, “our people have suffered so much over the last 50 - 60 years and are so downcast and discouraged. We have to discover a way to give them hope and encouragement.” And when the Americans asked Mr. Laar what he meant, he responded, “our people need a new courage, a new heart. This they can achieve by Jesus Christ”.

In short, all three men recognized the answer was in a relationship with Jesus Christ, but at the same time they realized they lived in “a broken world” – and that the challenge ahead would be very difficult.

This is why you gather each year to ask God’s blessing on “the work of your hands” as you seek to govern wisely and fulfill your Calling.

And so I address you, as individuals. And also collectively as members of your government.

History is not only a series of battles between “good” and “evil,” it is the story of human suffering on a grand scale. Your own history attests to this, especially the last century. And now you – Estonia – are once again on the front line of a three dimensional battle at the center of the world stage of history.

- First there is the headline grabbing “hard power dimension” of military might, which I will leave to your Ministry of Defense, the EU, and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and its members. But you are still the ones in the front lines.
- Second there is the “soft power dimension” where you are again in the front line, particularly with regard to cyber security and cyber warfare, which I will again leave to your Ministry of Defense, the EU, and NATO and its members.

(The significance of both these “hard” and “soft” dimensions of power have been very well dealt with by Ambassador Juri Luik a few moments ago.)

- Third there is the “non hard non soft dimension” – “the spiritual dimension” – which is timeless and involves everyone.

In sum, you are in the crosshairs of history today - in all three dimensions.

And as uncertain and discouraging as the circumstances relating to hard and soft power may seem, my underlying assumption is that our God is nevertheless the God of Hope and the God of History. Good will prevail over Evil – if not now, then in the end—in the “Last Battle”. And our God will reign forever.

History, however, is not yet over and the challenge for each of us is: How do we find the spiritual courage and hope by which to live today?

IV. SO YOU MIGHT SAY: WHAT DO I HAVE TO DO WITH COURAGE AND HOPE?

Here I would like focus on the significance of “Hope” at the center of Christian faith. Whatever kind of world you live in, you must take account of the significance of the reality of “peace and war” and of “Courage” and “Hope” - or lack of it.

“Hope” is at the heart of Christianity and providing hope of peace and security is at the heart of governing. It requires courage and this is your responsibility.

You are the keepers of the promise of peace and security for your people—for Estonia. They have put their “hope” and “trust” in you. And you are thus in the middle of a most intense and formidable spiritual battle, whether you realize it or not.

I said earlier that two things were needed: “Courage” and “Hope”—at both the human and spiritual levels.

So let me conclude with a lesson from Scripture.

A wonderful example of how encouragement begets courage is in the Old Testament (1 Samuel 23:16) when King Saul (who had been David’s great admirer) becomes jealous of David and is hunting him down to kill him – and Saul’s son Jonathan (David’s best friend) goes secretly into the woods and finds David and

“encourages him in the name of the Lord his God.”

(Jonathan thus “strengthens David’s hand in his God.”) And David escapes and lives on. But a little while later he is then devastated in another Battle at Ziklag. This time there is no one to encourage David – so what does he do?

“David encouraged himself in the name of the Lord his God.”

["David strengthened himself in the Lord his God." (1 Samuel 30:6)]

And as we all know, Saul dies, soon thereafter and David becomes king.

Lesson:

1. You must first encourage each other – in your “Hope” in your God.

And this should be across the political spectrum. You must be united in the face of threats. You must put your faith in the God of History – and recognize the Spiritual Dimension of the battle you are in.

2. And then when you don't have each other, you must encourage yourself in the Lord your God—just like King David did at Ziklag.

For the God you worship is the God of history. As King Solomon writes:

“The heart of the King is in the hand of the Lord. Like a river of water – He turns it wherever He wishes.” (Proverbs 21:1)

V. CONCLUSION

So, in conclusion, let me draw my remarks together around 4 takeaways:

1. **We live in a world of three dimensional power – hard, soft and spiritual – and the spiritual dimension cannot be ignored. It is essential to how hard and soft power is exercised.**

“Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit says the Lord God Almighty” (Zechariah 4:6).

2. **History is a chronology of the exercise of such power and the result is the story of human suffering from the battles between “good” and “evil”.**

- 3. As Christians, we worship a god who created Man in his own image and all things to enjoy within a framework of peace and freedom. But we are nevertheless in a broken world and the most important thing is to look to our God who has provided a “rescue plan” – of hope and redemption - through His son Jesus Christ.**

- 4. You, as those charged with governance – you are responsible for the security and well being of your people. You must realize you are in a spiritual battle that involves:**

 - **Fighting for the triumph of good over evil**
 - **Fighting to lessen human suffering;**
 - **Offering “hope” and encouragement on both human and spiritual levels.**

But you must never forget that just as your “Hope” is based on your “Trust” in God for your salvation – the “hope” you aspire to for your

people is based on a relationship with God through Jesus Christ. “Christ in you the Hope of Glory.”

Thank you!