



## **A Surprising Present** by John Hamre

The world received a remarkable Christmas present last week when Libyan leader Muammar Qaddafi announced that Libya would renounce all nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons and invite world inspectors in to verify it. Libya has been an outlaw nation for over two decades. This seems to be changing.

One needs to pause to consider the magnitude and rarity of this development. For over two decades, Libya was actively trying to build nuclear weapons – hiding its program in civilian enterprises. Even more remarkable, Libya admits to systematically deceiving international inspectors suspicious of its illicit program. Now, the same leader who quietly promoted these activities has turned away from them, renounced them, and invited the world in to verify it.

The transformation in Qaddafi's thinking has been underway for some time. I recall when I was at DoD five years ago we were approached through a third channel with the message that Col. Qaddafi wanted to find a new path for communications. Clearly his transformation has been underway for a while. It picked up considerable steam at the start of this year. He approached the Brits in London and asked to open a quiet channel with the UK and the U.S. The past nine months of secret negotiations produced this monumental announcement.

President Bush can rightly take considerable credit for this development. He confronted the international community about an "axis of evil." That rhetoric scared allies, but it also scared the bad guys. The jury is still out about the effectiveness of pre-emption as a doctrine, but President Bush can certainly point to this considerable success in Libya in no small measure because of his strong stand against irresponsible nations.

The irony for President Bush, though, is that following through on this victory depends on the very international institutions and collaborators that lower-level folk in the administration have scorned so openly. President Bush said that Libya is on the road back to regaining a respected place among the community of nations, yet the primary meeting place for that community is the United Nations. The instruments of verifying "normal" behavior and international respectability are the treaties and treaty-based institutions that flow from the UN community.

The "internationalists" should not be gloating, however. A decade of sanctions didn't transform Saddam, and two decades of sanctions against Libya didn't really push Col. Qaddafi to this point, I would argue.

While it is a bit too arbitrary a distinction, for America there are two types of power: power of intimidation and power of inspiration. For the last 50 years we blended the two. During the Cold War we relied more heavily on powers of inspiration. We galvanized a world community with the inspiring vision of international cooperation to contain

international communism. By itself, however, an inspiring vision doesn't cut it. You do need military muscle. We were always inferior quantitatively to the superior might of the Soviet Union, but we had sufficiently credible military capabilities that permitted the victory of our inspiring vision for all people.

In recent years we have placed more emphasis on the intimidating power of our unrivaled military muscle. And, unfortunately, we have set aside the inspirational quality of America's vision. Much of the world, frankly, is worried about us. When the UN Security Council voted sanctions on Iraq last fall, most of the members were more anxious to stop America than to force compliance by Iraq.

President Bush is striving to recover a transcending vision for American foreign policy, but he often uses religious imagery, which Americans understand but which non-Americans find alien or even threatening. President Bush recently told the assembled ambassadors of the Washington diplomatic corps that all peoples of the world have a right to freedom and democracy and that it is God's will that he (President Bush) would bring that freedom and democracy to the rest of the world. Americans may understand that kind of politico-religious rhetoric, but Europeans are shocked by it. President Truman used similarly sweeping rhetoric when he called on American to confront an expanding communist threat in 1948, but the rhetoric of crusades sounded different back then.

American power is a mixture of our inspiring vision and our intimidating muscle. Both are essential. Inspiring rhetoric with no muscle is self-indulgent. This is where most of Europe dwells these days. Muscle alone is self-defeating. Over-reliance on military might create resistance to our vision, even among people who share the principles we espouse.

The surprising steps of Col. Qaddafi actually create a new opportunity for America. This change wasn't brought about by American's muscle alone. It was years of international cooperation by many nations and skillful diplomacy, especially by our reliable British friends. This welcome news should also represent a new year's "resolution" for a national strategy that balances inspiration and intimidation.

Earlier this month CSIS held a timely conference on Libya's Relations with the world under the direction of Jon Alterman, director of our Middle East program, and Steve Morrison, director of our Africa program. For more information on that conference and the challenges that lie ahead with Libya, contact Jon at [Jalterma@csis.org](mailto:Jalterma@csis.org) or Steve at [Smorriso@csis.org](mailto:Smorriso@csis.org) or visit our web site at [www.csis.org](http://www.csis.org).

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