

The Undergraduate Journal of Social Sciences Interview Series

Ambassador Robert L. Hutchings

During a recent visit to West Point, Ambassador Hutchings took time to address the journal.

Robert L. Hutchings is the Diplomat in Residence at Princeton University. Ambassador Hutchings' broad professional experience includes service as the Assistant Dean of the Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs, Fellow and Director of International Studies at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, Director for European Affairs with the National Security Council, Special Advisor to the Secretary of State, and Chairman of the U.S. National Intelligence Council in Washington, D.C.. Additional duties include directorship of the Atlantic Council of the United States and of the Foundation for a Civil Society, membership on the Council on Foreign Relations and British-North American Committee.

The Ambassador is the author of At the End of the American Century and American Diplomacy at the End of the Cold War.

Presently, Ambassador Hutchings is working to support the development of a global policy agenda through strategic dialogues with the leaders of rising and established world powers.

Ambassador Hutchings has been awarded the National Intelligence Medal, U.S. State Department Superior Honor Award, and the Order of Merit of the Republic of Poland.

Robert L. Hutchings is a graduate of the United States Naval Academy and received his Ph.D from the University of Virginia.

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UJSS: We'll begin with a little bit of an overview on intelligence and bureaucratic reform, and some questions within that specialty of yours. In the testimony titled The Morning After, you discussed that intelligence was simply ignored in some cases. Why is it possible for intelligence to be simply ignored, and how can the institutional structure be changed or modified to prevent that from happening?

Hutchings: Well, I spent a good deal of my career on the policy side, several years in the intelligence side too. When I was working on the policy side, if I got a policy memorandum from my counterparts at the State Department or the Pentagon, I was not free to ignore that; added to that, people had status. [The policy memorandum] had clout, it had authority. When I got something from my counterparts at the Intelligence Community, I could ignore it, I could pay attention to it, I could use it or disregard it as I saw fit. I think there's a structural problem there because intelligence documents ought to have more bite than that. If they did, it would give, I think, a stronger sense of responsibility to the policy side; to pay attention to intelligence, and also put the onus on the intelligence community to be more relevant to policy.

UJSS: Recently there have been a lot of problems, or suggested problems with the Central Intelligence Agency. So, is the CIA broken, and if so, what needs to be done to repair it?

Hutchings: I think the culture is broken. Let's just say the culture is still lodged in the Cold War and I'm afraid it's going in the wrong direction these days because of the so called "War on Terror," it's driving the Intelligence Community back into old habits rather than out into the brave new world where it needs to go. So I'm most interested in and further organizational changes. I think there's been enough already. But what's needed is to really start a slower process of changing the culture and making it a more open community that's better latched up to the policy side as well as to think of this outside government.

UJSS: Sir, you described the Inter-Agency's Strategic Planning Group. How could this Inter-Agency's Strategic Planning Group be insulated against the policy changes between administrations; the discontinuities and I guess policies between say, the Bush administration and the Obama administration?

Hutchings: Well, I don't think it should be insulated, I think in my conception this Inter-Agency's Strategic Planning Group would be imbedded in the NSC [National Security Council] system. It would just allow for a greater strategic perspective than happens now and make sure that its Strategic Planning happens on Inter-Agency basis rather than within individual departments. That's what happens now, the Pentagon does its planning, the State Department does its planning and the two don't really meet until the high policy level.

UJSS: You also discussed congressional oversight. Some concerns regarding Congressional oversight would be that this would add another layer of bureaucracy to deal with when processing this information, passing to the policy makers. Do you agree with this concern and does that put a burden on the ability of policy makers and the President to address new information?

Hutchings: I don't think so. We wouldn't want Congress to micro-manage intelligence, they're not equipped for that, but the pattern lately has been for Congress to get involved only after the fact; to appoint blame, to affix responsibility for failures. I'd rather get to see Congress be involved before the fact doing its due diligence to make sure the Intelligence Community is calling it right. Iran's nuclear problem is the obvious case, rather than wait for some catastrophe, some crisis, I'd like to see Congress and Congressional Oversight Committees all over that issue now.



UJSS: In respect to Iran, do you feel that there is another course to take rather than the one we are on right now? Is that the best way to attach this issue, multilaterally?

Hutchings: I think we're doing it now the best we can. The missing piece is to get the Russians more fully engaged. The problem is, the Russians are really free riders on this whole process now and if I were advising the Russian Government I'd probably be advising them to do the same thing; but we need to get them to lean on the Iranians more. But aside from that, I think we're doing about the best we can, and here's where a little strategic planning is necessary. We may be living with a nuclear Iran one day no matter how hard we work to prevent it. So just because we don't want it to happen doesn't mean we shouldn't think about that contingency and how we can prepare for that eventuality down the road.

UJSS: You stressed again the strategic importance of Intelligence here and in your testimony, as you said earlier. Why is it so important?

Hutchings: This is partly my own predilections based on the kind of career I've had, this is my focus so I tend to come back to this issue. It's also been my observation that this is one of the missing pieces in Government. Now everybody, up to the most senior levels, is totally (not totally), is 95% preoccupied with managing just several near things and it's an occupational hazard, we all go through it; there needs to be greater effort to carve out some time to think a little bit farther down the road. This has really been pronounced since 9/11 as the senior national security policymakers are dealing with the so called *War on Terror*: Iraq, Afghanistan, it doesn't leave much time or energy for anything else and it's that sort of strategic dimension that risks getting lost in the process.

UJSS: Have you seen improvements in this recently or at least a movement towards that type of strategic planning group?

Hutchings: Not in this administration. I think this administration should have lost that perspective earlier on. I've seen it happen intermittently in other administrations, the Bush Administration did a little bit better than most. It was set up through then the Deputy of National Security Advisor, Bob Gates, now of course, a group that did some longer-range planning and it really helped even though the same officials were preoccupied in most of their waking hours with these crises they also set aside time to think strategically.

UJSS: What can be done most immediately to combat the tendency of the United States to create little Americas when conducting Intelligence operations?

Hutchings: This is the reference I made to what I observe in too many embassies around the world is that we don't have the habit of staffing our embassies and our CIA stations with people who have the requisite language skills, the mandate to get out and around rather than simply go the diplomatic cocktail circuit to report on what the ministries are saying. All that's important and necessary, but I always found that when I went as chairman of the National Intelligence Council to embassies, I always had to rely on myself to go find people who really knew what was going on in the country. You don't go to the embassy to find out what's really going on in the country. I go to a stranger or some newspaper out there, that has been there for umpteenth years and really knows things. I think to her credit, Secretary Rice has tried to do this with what she calls 'transformational diplomacy.' I'm not sure how successful it's been but I really applaud the impulse.

UJSS: What can be done strategically, to approach this, on the order of the Intelligence University, or similar institutions to train State Department and Intelligence individuals?

Hutchings: Well the State Department probably does a little better than the intelligence community in this particular respect. I'm not a fan of the Intelligence University because I think it's a misnomer, but I'd like to see intelligence officials have a stronger mandate, a push to engage with leading thinkers outside of the Government circles. The stations have their own special missions abroad, but when it comes to intelligence gathering this sort of open source domain is underutilized; and we're in a world now where many of the questions we need answers to are not going to be found through clandestine sources. Of course some are, Iran's nuclear program, that's all clandestine stuff, Russia's nuclear program that too. But, a lot of other questions are not to be found through the old sources and methods, but rather through a different approach; and I think the CIA Director, Mike Hayden, knows this and I'm not implying that I'm the first one to figure this out, but the culture hasn't changed very much, and that's what worries me and that's what I think needs to change.

UJSS: Along those same lines, regarding intelligence: What are your sentiments regarding the operational clandestine service of the CIA? Should they retain that capability, or should the arrangement consist of the joint special operations command employing the CIA for intelligence and coordination support, rather than as an operational component?

Hutchings: I get a little bit outside my area of direct expertise here, I think that side is working pretty well, but exactly where the division of labor ought to be, I'm not sure I'm qualified to answer. I'll just answer a tangential question though, and that is the ethical side of this whole question. We got into some habits in the Cold War that the exigencies of the Cold War called on us to do some things as a

government that might be, under normal times, outside the bounds of what we as a democratic government would want to do. I think now that the Cold War is long over, we need to reassess just what we are prepared to do as a Government. 9/11 provided sufficient reason; I was going to say excuse, but rather, sufficient reason to go back to the habits of 'look anything goes,' the country is at war, anything goes out there. Vice President Cheney said we have to work the 'dark side.' I think we have to have a national conversation about how far we are prepared to go, even under conditions of international terrorism, to do things that may be in violation of our democratic principles.

UJSS: Much has been made recently, especially in our circles, about coordinating the State Department and the Department of Defense and civilian organizations in order to fight terrorism and the conditions that create it; bringing in the United Nations and all the different facets to attack this problem. What institutional changes must be made in order to facilitate this goal; and how can the Department of State better be employed to do this?

Hutchings: That's a very good question... I'm not sure institutional changes are needed. I would say one thing that would help would be to ratchet down the primacy of the National Counter Terrorism center a little bit in this whole thing, not to disband it, because the functional cooperation with the FBI and the CIA is really helpful and good, but to ratchet down its priority and keep a stronger focus on counter terrorism as something that involves all the agencies of government, that means the deputies and principals of the National Security Council need to be involved and need to think of this expansively, not only as a challenge for the military security, to be addressed through military means or intelligence means, but something that needs to be addressed through the whole range of things that are in our arsenal. So that means bringing development assistance that is closer under the mainstream and public diplomacy and traditional diplomacy into this mix in a more integrated way than it has been in the past. Because my view is that we're not going to meet this challenge through military means alone.

UJSS: One final institutional question: Regarding your contact with the National Security Council in this and other administrations, in what way do members of the council best influence the President? You are sitting on the council and you have a policy that you want to get through, what do you do?

Hutchings: You're really are referring to national security staff rather than national security principles. I worked for Brent Scowcroft as National Security Advisor, that was my stint in the NSC in the Bush 41 Administration. I think that administration got it as close to right as any has in any has since the creation of the National Security Council structure in '47. So that's the model, and I think the way that NSC staff members are able to exercise influence is by attaching priority to their world as coordinators of policy, not as policy applicants. So it's almost a paradox, that in order to influence policy you have to downplay your own advocacy role; and I think Brent Scowcroft had that pitch-perfect, he understood it and therefore all those who worked for him also understood it. When you've got National Security Council's staff members that become policy advocates, you lose the sort of inter-agency process that makes the whole thing work in the first place. I used to say to my wife at the time, that the good news was there was only one person between me and getting my ideas before the President of the United States; the bad news was that person was Brent Scowcroft. He was a tough one to get ideas through; let's just say half-baked ideas did not make it through his screen.

UJSS: Shifting to the Global Grand Bargain premise, how can rising international powers, like China and India, be incorporated into international political leadership and why has this been delayed?

Hutchings: I think the established powers, the United States and its principal Western allies, including Australia, Japan, South Korea, our allies around the world, have been very reluctant to give up our prerequisites and we basically adopted the position, understandably, that the international order that we were primarily responsible for creating sixty years ago still works and it's the responsibility of the

rising powers to simply join us. We establish the rules, they are now to join this system and play by the rules we've already set. It would be a nice thing if we could pull it off but I just don't think it is working. I don't think big, powerful, rising powers like China, India and slightly lesser ones like Indonesia and Brazil are going to play by those rules, and I think we're seeing it now. So, the established powers need to be a little more creative about relinquishing some of their grasp on international institutions in order to make participation of those institutions more viable by China and India. Not because we want to be international nice guys, but because their participation is necessary to resolve global problems like the international financial crisis. So that's where I'm casting about for how we can reform institutions or perhaps create new ones that make this kind of collaboration more viable. Bring China and India in, while preserving the fundamental values of a liberal international order. That's the challenge of the early 21st century.



UJSS: To address the kind of 'dark side' of that: if we failed bring China and India in, is it likely that China and India would set out to establish institutions on their own, like the Shanghai Co-op, and try to grow them into some kind of a international power structure, separate from the Western dominated United Nations, International Monetary Fund, World Bank or similar institutions?

Hutchings: I think it's already happening and not because China...we're referring more to China here because China is the big global actor. India exercises its influence little differently, it's not an export driven economy so it's a little more subtle the way India operates, but for China; I don't attribute Chinese moves to the most dire motives, I'm not sure about that, but they are simply beginning to act in a way that creates new patterns and new institutions. There's talk of an Asian Monetary Fund; and frankly, the International Monetary Fund has not been working very well. Maybe an Asian Monetary Fund is not a disastrous idea, but that's where the Chinese are moving. The Shanghai Corporation Organization is not, as far as I interpret it, not some Chinese plot or scheme, it's just a way of doing business at a time when

Chinese economic and political power is growing and their need to have a more active diplomacy is growing. Now, for our part, we need to be a little careful so we're not left out in this emerging Asian Security architecture and the way to prevent that is to think more creatively about how China fits in. For China, it means taking some steps to be more responsible in a lot of respects as a global actor. Pay higher dues in the World Bank and the IMF; act more responsibly as an international aid donor and so on.

UJSS: What is preventing China from participating more aggressively in the international political structure and why is there not recognition from the Western powers that China is a force in international politics? Is China reluctant to "pay their dues" in the IMF or are the western dominated organizations pushing China away?

Hutchings: That is a good question. It is probably a bit of both. It is hard to disentangle them because those institutions have been so unsatisfactory from a Chinese perspective. So we really have not found out whether if we in fact opened the institutions that China would actually become a responsible international actor in them. I think the first move should be on our side, ours meaning this side of the western powers. We could start by relinquishing our lock on the top IMF and World Bank jobs. I think in the early 21st century it makes no sense any longer for the World Bank always to be run by an American or the IMF always to be run by a European. So we could easily give that up and open those positions to other countries and see how this process evolves. Right!

UJSS: Would the United States accept nations like China or India taking on a greater role in global security?

Hutchings: It depends on how one defines global security. If you define it expansively the way I tend to do, to include financial security, economic security, energy security, then yes. If we are thinking more narrowly in terms of the military security then I think we will want to be rather cautious about how we proceed. It really depends on what kind of positive contributions China and India are prepared to make; when it comes to peacekeeping, India is already the most important single country in providing peacekeeping troops around the world. Thus, that question has already been answered. China of course has a veto on Security Council so it does play a role in international security. However, one could envision a global security system that brings China and India into hard security questions. I think that is probably premature to think in these terms.

UJSS: How can the United Nations be empowered to better address burning crises? For instance, the situation in the Congo or the piracy off the coast of Somalia—situations such as these?

Hutchings: I am not sure there is any easy way for that to happen. They need to have stronger peacekeeping capacities in Sub-Saharan Africa. I do not think the United States is likely to want to contribute significantly more to peacekeeping operations around the world. We have our hands full with hard security challenges, but we could play a stronger role in helping other countries develop their capacity to help so that we do not have to do it. So simply by having a more robust capacity for peacekeeping and peace-making at the disposal of the UN should the member countries, the Security Council, choose to empower them would be a good thing. I think at the end of the day, the U.S. and the Security Council are not going to give up our prerogatives to make those decisions on a national level, nor should we. I do not think we need to go down that road, and I certainly would not advocate a freestanding UN military capacity.

UJSS: Why should the UN not develop a military capacity? Or, should the United Nations have a military component for making peace, or why not?

Hutchings: No. No. No, I really do not think so. Even if I did think so, it is not feasible on our side. I really do not think it is necessary. The UN performs certain important functions. They perform certain important legitimizing functions and those should not be neglected. Every administration, even this one, which has been more unilateral than most, has considered it important to seek UN support for major international security operations. So that part really is critical and I would like to see that machinery work better. When it comes to the deployment of military force around the world countries will still want to reserve that right themselves in consultation with others. NATO has been a great exception for us because there is a degree of and authenticity built into NATO. That is not likely to be, nor should it be, replicated on a global level.

UJSS: At the present time, what are the three greatest risks/threats to the United States?

Hutchings: I will have to pause and think about that because I do not think I will begin with terrorism, Iraq or Afghanistan. Certain nuclear proliferations belong on the shortlist and I am thinking not just about bad actors like Iran and North Korea but the whole non-proliferation regime. I worry about a breakout of Iran leading to a number of other countries who at least are entertaining the prospects of going nuclear. Then exposing the weakness of the non-proliferation regime that presently exists, so I think that would be something we would want to address. But it is really issues involved with nuclear proliferation that I am thinking of. This may sound odd to add to say the least, but I think the international trade and financial system is in bigger trouble than people realize. I was saying this even before the current global financial crisis. It may not be the way one traditionally thinks about security, but I have seen the backlash against globalization developing almost everywhere. If we are not careful the assumptions we make about an ever-expanding more open global trading system and financial system will be reversed. So I would put that high on the list as well. Then there is the combination of energy and environment. I do not think the two can be entirely separated. Right now we have the energy future and climate future converging as potential security problems in of themselves, which now add a new security dimension. I guess that would be three that I would put high on the list.

UJSS: Would you agree with the statement that sovereignty is dead? Why, or why not?

Hutchings: No, I do not. There has certainly been some erosion to sovereignty as international interventions have been more frequent because of human rights catastrophes. The truth is that the world has shrunk so the classical notion of sovereignty has been unassailable and that is long since crumbled or at least for the smaller powers. The bigger ones like ourselves manage to keep our sovereignty intact, but I do not see us moving toward a world in which sovereignty is relinquished. Even in the European Union, which has gone a long way, sovereignty is jealously guarded.

UJSS: At what point does sovereignty become so strong that it cannot be threatened? Where is the point between a nation that can be invaded for humanitarian purposes and a nation that cannot be invaded?

Hutchings: I guess I am enough of a student of a *real politic* to think it simply becomes unfeasible then you just do not violate sovereignty. Some countries we cannot bully. Russia is certainly a prime case, and I think we have to be careful of embracing a global double standard in the way we enforce humanitarian norms. I have always been an advocate of forceful defense of the human rights norms enshrined in the Helsinki Final Act and the UN Charter. We should not try to enforce a much longer list of things that turn out to be more personal preferences on our part. Thus if the international community sticks to those things to which most of the world's countries have actually sided on, and push us hard on those, we are more likely to succeed.

UJSS: With regard to the United Nations Security Council, should the Security Council be reformed—to what extent?

Hutchings: I think it should. We have missed our best opportunity, but the opportunity has not passed entirely. When Kofi Annan called for the high-level panel to review, this is the time to make rather fundamental shifts. The member countries simply did not have the will or the desire to cease the opportunity, and I really think it needs to happen. This would be one way of helping bring into global governance the powers that are so far excluded. Now Russia and China of course are already in, but other countries ought to be brought in – India certainly should, probably Indonesia, Brazil, South Africa, a few other countries. It might make the Security Council a little more unwieldy, but part of this would then be to subtly downplay the significance of the veto. If we brought in more countries that had more Veto power it might make it even harder to get resolutions through, but I think that's a price that we could well pay because the UN has only authorized force twice, Korea and the first Gulf War, so it's not as though this is absolutely required to unanimity in order for the States to act, but reforming Security Council in this way and turning it increasingly into a vehicle for consideration of the broader range of security issues, the ones we spoke about earlier, energy security, economic security will then enable a reform Security Council to be a kind of steering group that could facilitate the resolutions of these problems than other specialized forums. This could be the beginning of a reform of the whole UN System to make it more pertinent, more relevant and still not raise any dangers that we're moving towards a world of global federalism or anything like that. That's the long way from what I have in mind.

UJSS: Addressing the second threat facing the United States, International Finance and a back-lash against globalization. What can be done immediately and then strategically to prevent this from happening?

Hutchings: A couple of things, one is to continue the process that has now begun to really strengthen international financial oversight. It really makes sense considering, first of all, how weak the mechanisms are; we found out the hard way ourselves, and how interconnected global finance is. Even small countries, the Gulf Emirates are powerful financial players, they are super powers in this financial domain even though they are pygmies in military terms. So, there's no getting around the fact that the resolution of our own financial crisis requires global steps to do this. The meeting of the G20, this is the first really sound meeting that had this broadened agenda; this was just two weeks ago, ended with... I call it a successful failure. It failed in the sense that it didn't put in place any of the mechanisms that needed to be put in place but it succeeded in at least that it identified how serious the problem was and kicked this down the road to another immediate finance ministers coming up and then another summit meeting before the end of April. So it gives the new Obama administration an opportunity to run with this idea and begin to refashion the international financial system. Along with it we've got a Doha international trade round that has been stalled now for years, and it has been stalled frankly because the U.S. and the Europeans don't have much incentive to do anything serious. We don't have much in the sense of narrow self-interest to gain by making further concessions on agricultural trade but we have a lot to gain in the sense of the overall health of the global trading systems. So I think these two go hand in hand, and I can well imagine a deal that the U.S. and the Europeans could broker with rising economies that would be beneficial to all of us down the road. This is sort of where I came in with the idea of the global grand bargain that there are some ongoing negotiations that are deadlocked because powerful countries including our own have little incentive to move, but if you think of this in a somewhat larger sense there are trade offs that can be beneficial to everybody that could be fashioned.

UJSS: My final question, Sir, for the Obama administration; what is the most important issue that must be addressed immediately, and how should they go about dealing with that?

Hutchings: I'm not sure you can reduce it to a single thing, of course there are domestic things that have to be done, but talking about the foreign policy agenda, there's no getting around some early decisions on Iraq, Afghanistan, and probably terrorism. None of these lend themselves to quick breakthroughs. There's not a happy quick ending to any of these conflicts. I would like to see the administration look at this larger strategic picture and all the issues you've been talking to me about; the crisis in global finance, the stalled global trading around unresolved questions of global energy security, climate change and making an initiative that ties all these together in a single conceptual package that begins, only begins, to point the way forward to a resolution of these, not in the first hundred days, not in the first year, but progress before the end of the first term of the Obama administration, and that would be an enormous contribution.

UJSS: Are there any questions that I should have asked you but I didn't, and are there any questions that you have for the Journal?

Hutchings: Well, there's one, and I really insist that you print this one, ~~go Navy, beat Army!~~
(Redacted, Tasteless Content)

For more on Ambassador Hutchings see:

http://www.princeton.edu/people/display_person.xml?netid=hutchngs