Strategic Shortfall: The Somali Syndrome

Robert G. Patman

Asian Security Seminar Series

Thursday 6 May 2010
12.30pm
Lecture Theatre 2
Hedley Bull Centre (Building #130), ANU

Contrary to conventional wisdom, this presentation argues that it was not the 9/11 attacks that transformed the international security environment. Instead, it was “Somali Syndrome,” an aversion to intervening in failed states that began in the wake of the 1993 U.S./UN action in Somalia. The botched raid precipitated America's strategic retreat from its post-Cold War experiment at partnership with the UN in nation-building and peace enforcement and engendered U.S. paralysis in the face of genocide in Rwanda, Bosnia, and Darfur. The ensuing international security vacuum emboldened al-Qaeda to emerge and attack America and inaugurated our present era of intrastate conflict, mass killings, forced relocations, and international terrorism.

As this even-handed treatment shows, the Somali crisis can be connected to seven key features of the emerging post-Cold War world security order. These include the fact that failed states are now the main source of world instability and that new wars are driven by racial, ethnic, and religious identity issues.

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Since completing his PhD in International Relations in 1987, Professor Patman has authored or edited seven scholarly books, written numerous book chapters, contributed regularly to academic journals and appeared often in the media in New Zealand and beyond as a commentator on international issues. Professor Patman’s recently published books include The Ethics of Foreign Policy (2007) and Globalization and Conflict (2006).

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The seminar is free and open to all but please RSVP to Ms Sheila Flores:
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