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Steve Coll

Staff writer at the New Yorker and President of the New American Foundation
"Osama Bin Laden and the Age of Globalized Terror"

March 5, 2010



Pulitzer-winning Author, Steve Coll, Places Osama Bin Laden in a Modern and Globalized World

Osama Bin Laden is very much a product of contemporary culture, stated Steve Coll at his lecture on March 8th, "we must take him 'out of the cave' and place him in the modern, globalized setting he belongs." Coll centered his talk on the cultural and political circumstances that Bin Laden grew out of, tracing the roots of his illustrious father and older brother. Fredrik Logevall, Director of the Einaudi Center, introduced Coll, describing the subject matter as having "immense importance in terms of where national affairs are today and where they are going." The talk was part of the Einaudi Center's Foreign Policy Distinguished Speaker Series.

Steve Coll, President of the New America Foundation and staff writer for The New Yorker, gave the lecture "Osama Bin Laden and the Age of Globalized Terror" on Monday, March 8th. Coll, who has been writing about Osama Bin Laden since the 1993 World Trade Center bombings, described Bin Laden as a contemporary figure who came of age in a transnational, wealthy family.

Osama Bin Laden grew up in Saudi Arabia, one of 54 brothers and sisters. His father, Mohammed Bin Laden, built an empire with a post-war construction business. The Bin Laden children grew up in an affluent, transcontinental, technologically-advanced world; a world that Coll believes provided each child the "ability to discover who they were in the world." In 1967, Mohammed was killed in a plane crash, leaving the oldest brother, Salem, in charge of the family business. Coll described Salem as a blue-jeans-wearing, "charismatic" young man, who loved everything having to do with rock music and modern technology. Then, in 1988, Salem was killed in a plane crash. Osama, who had been a strong admirer of Salem, formed Al Qaeda nearly two months after his brother's death.

Coll described the Bin Laden's siblings as representing a full political spectrum. Osama belonged to the most conservative wing of the family, as he had been radicalized by many of his school teachers who were exiled members of the Muslim Brotherhood. Coll attributes the success of Al Qaeda, in part, to Osama's childhood of global exposure and familiarity with modern technology. Bin Laden understood "the technologies of global integration" from his youth; his family invested in satellite communication technology even before cell phones were in existence. While serving as a junior executive at his father's company Bin Laden learned the importance of "building brands and marketing an identity," techniques he used to turn Al Qaeda into a brand name. Following Coll's talk there was a lively question and answer session, where questions were asked ranging from Osama Bin Laden's education to questions about the strength of Al Qaeda.

Coll is the author of six books including, *Ghost Wars: The Secret History of the CIA, Afghanistan and Bin Laden, from the Soviet Invasion to September 10, 2001* and *The Bin Ladens: An Arabian Family in the American Century*. He won the first Pulitzer Prize in 1990 for a series of articles written with David A. Vise about the Securities and Exchange Commission. His second Pulitzer was awarded in 2005, for his book, *Ghost Wars*, which also won the Council on Foreign Relations' Arthur Ross award; the Overseas Press Club award and the Lionel Gelber Prize for the best book published on international affairs during 2004. His book *The Bin Ladens* was a finalist for the 2008 National Book Critics Circle Award. In 2007, Steve Coll became the president of the New American Foundation, a nonprofit, nonpartisan public policy institute headquartered in Washington, D.C.

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Thomas J. Christensen

Professor of Politics and International Affairs and Director of the China and the World Program, Princeton University

"Challenges and Opportunities in U.S.-China Relations"

April 8, 2010



Thomas J. Christensen to Address U.S.-China Relations

Thomas J. Christensen, professor of politics and international affairs and director of the China and the World Program at Princeton University, will present "Challenges and Opportunities in U.S.-China Relations" April 8th at 4:30 PM in G10 Biotechnology Building. The talk is part of the Einaudi Center's Foreign Policy Distinguished Speaker Series.

Thomas J. Christensen is Professor of Politics and International Affairs and Director of the Princeton-Harvard China and the World Program at Princeton University. From 2006-2008 Professor Christensen served as Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs with responsibility for relations with China, Taiwan, and Mongolia.

Prior to teaching at Princeton, Christensen taught at both Cornell University and MIT. Christensen's research and teaching focus is on China's foreign relations, the international relations of East Asia, and international security. Christensen has published numerous book chapters, articles, and the book, *Useful Adversaries: Grand Strategy, Domestic Mobilization, and Sino-American Conflict, 1947-1958*. He received his Ph.D. in Political Science from Columbia University.

Professor Christensen has served on the Board of Directors and Executive Committee of the National Committee on U.S.-China Relations and as co-editor of the *International History and Politics* series at Princeton University Press. He is a life member of the Council on Foreign Relations. In 2002, he was presented with a Distinguished Public Service Award by the United States Department of State.

Mahmood Mamdani

Professor of Government at Columbia University and Director of Columbia's Institute of African Studies

"Lessons of Darfur: Human Rights Activism and Africa"

April 29, 2010



Mahmood Mamdani to Address the Lessons of Darfur

Mahmood Mamdani, Herbert Lehman Professor of Government in the Departments of Anthropology, Political Science and International Affairs at Columbia University, will present "Lessons of Darfur: Human Rights Activism and Africa" April 29th at 4:30 PM in Lewis Auditorium, Goldwin Smith Hall. The talk is part of the Einaudi Center's Foreign Policy Distinguished Speaker Series.

Mahmood Mamdani is the Herbert Lehman Professor of Government. He received his Ph.D. from Harvard University in 1974 and specializes in the study of African history and politics. His works explore the intersection between politics and culture, a comparative study of colonialism since 1452, the history of civil war and genocide in Africa, the Cold War and the War on Terror, and the history and theory of human rights. Prior to joining the Columbia faculty, Mamdani was a professor at the University of Dar-es-Salaam in Tanzania (1973-79), Makerere University in Uganda (1980-1993), and the University of Cape Town (1996-1999). He has received numerous awards and recognitions, including being listed as one of the "Top 20 Public Intellectuals" by Foreign Policy (US) and Prospect (UK) magazine in 2008. From 1998 to 2002 he served as President of CODESRIA (Council for the Development of Social Research in Africa). His essays have appeared in the New Left Review and the London Review of Books, among other journals.

He teaches courses on: major debates in the study of Africa; the modern state and the colonial subject; the Cold War and the Third World; the theory, history, and practice of human rights; and civil wars and the state in Africa. Mamdani's books include *Saviors and Survivors: Darfur, Politics, and the War on Terror* (2009); *Good Muslim, Bad Muslim: America, the Cold War and the Roots of Terror* (2004); *When Victims Become Killers: Colonialism, Nativism and Genocide in Rwanda* (2001); *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism* (1996), which was awarded the Herskovitz Prize

of the African Studies Association; Politics and Class Formation in Uganda (1976); From Citizen to Refugee (1973); and The Myth of Population Control: Family, Class and Caste in an Indian Village (1972).

Mahubani Speaks on Global Challenges and a New World Order

Students, faculty and members of the Cornell community gathered in Kennedy Hall's Call Auditorium on February 13 to hear Kishore Mahubani, Dean and Professor at the National University of Singapore, former Singapore Ambassador to the United Nations and President of the United Nations Security Council, give the 2013 Bartels World Affairs Lecture. The title of his talk was, "The Great Convergence: Asia, the West, and the Logic of One World."

After an introduction from Cornell Provost Kent Fuchs, Mahubani began his lecture on convergence by alluding to cultural differences. "In America you begin with a joke, in Asia you begin with an apology, so perhaps the best would be to begin by apologizing for a joke." He continued that there have been 2 general narratives about our world, a stronger Western narrative and an emerging non-Western narrative. For a long time, Western societies have had the most optimistic view. Now, the 12% who live in the West are more pessimistic about the future than the other 88%. In his talk, Mahubani set out to answer three thematic questions: Why is there more optimism in Asia? What are the challenges to be faced? What are some remarkably easy prescriptions for success?

Mahubani started with what he described as the "good news," several reasons why the world is better off than ever before. His first example was that the likelihood of a new major war was at its lowest point in history, and the number of people being killed in wars is at its lowest since statistics have been kept. "From the dawn of history, society has been concerned with war and peace. Today wars are a sunset industry," he said. "Southeast Asia was once described as the Balkans of Asia, and now it's at peace." Another reason for optimism is that global poverty is declining. The Millennium Development Goals (MDG) sought to halve global poverty by 2015; this goal will be met and exceeded by the end of 2013. The success of China and India alone has lifted 600 million people out of poverty. Today in Asia, 600 million people enjoy middle class standards of living, and by 2020 this figure will be 1.75 billion. This constitutes a 350% increase over 7 years. "This is the most remarkable transformation in human history, and part of the great convergence," he said. "The reason for this convergence is that in all parts of the world people are coming to a common understanding of what it takes to build a good society."

Next, Mahubani discussed the challenges this "great convergence" faces. He defined one challenge as the potential tension between the U.S., the world's greatest power, and China, the world's greatest emerging power. Although we should be seeing more signs of rising tension between the two, he said, "It is quite puzzling that we are seeing the opposite," because China is stabilizing the bilateral relationship by creating economic interdependence.

Another challenge Mahubani identified was the tension between Islam and the West. The majority of Muslims are enjoying the benefits of global convergence. Indonesia, the world's most populous predominantly Muslim country, is enjoying annual growth rates of 6 to 7%, and Bangladesh, once described by Henry Kissinger as a "basket case," has grown at 6% per annum for the past 10 years. Mahubani believes that the key ingredient to diffusing tension between Islam and the West is a two state solution in Israel and Palestine. Since the relative power of the U.S. will decline in the coming years, he advised that Israel should make peace with the Palestinians now.

A third challenge Mahubani identified is in preserving the quality of the global environment. Where is widespread concern that the growing global middle class will consume more nonrenewable resources

and produce more greenhouse gasses, Mahbubani believes that we need to re-allocate “sacrifice” equitably across the world. “You can’t ask Indians not to electrify while people in the United States are still able to drive big S.U.V.s,” he said.

The third and final part of Mahbubani’s talk focused on what he described as the “Low hanging fruit,” some prescriptions for success in the near term. “We live increasingly in one way or another in a global village,” he said, “and we should be increasing the strength of our ‘Global village council.’ It has been the consistent policy of Western countries, led by the U.S., to keep global village councils like the U.N. weak.” Paraphrasing a speech given by Bill Clinton in 2003, Mahbubani said that it is in the interests of the dominant U.S. to build stronger multilateral institutions so that whoever is dominant next will be constrained by these institutions. “It is in the self-interest of the U.S. to change its policy towards these multilateral institutions such as the WHO and IAEA,” Mahbubani said.

After concluding his prepared remarks, Mahbubani answered questions from the floor. Provost Kent Fuchs asked the first question, whether it was harder to be an academic or a U.N. diplomat. Mahbubani joked that while President of the United Nations Security Council he had much less power to make changes than he did as a dean. An audience member then asked, given the thesis in Acemoglu and Robinson’s *Why Nations Fail* that inclusive political institutions lead to inclusive economic institutions, how Mahbubani could explain the success of Singapore and China. Mahbubani responded that it was a Western project to spread education, science and technology around the world, and China has succeeded because of its ability to use state power to incorporate these key elements. Meanwhile, the West is walking away from one of the foundations of its success by refusing to sign free trade agreements even while China is signing them with all of its Asian trade partners. Mahbubani believes that China will have to expand personal freedoms to continue its success story. “China will have to become a democracy, the destination is not in doubt, only the route and timing,” he said.

A student asked, “If Western powers have had a role in keeping the budgets of multilateral institutions low, what role is to be played by the rising Asian powers?” Mahbubani responded that although an ascendant China has adopted a policy of not aspiring to leadership, now is the time for it to take a lead role in the international community. He cautioned, however, that the U.N. has a free-rider problem, and nobody wants to pay more than they are compelled to.

A student asked Mahbubani if, when suggesting that the West needed to take a more long-term view of redistributing “sacrifice” across the global economy, he was suggesting a move away from transactional interests and advocating a change in how capitalism is organized? Mahbubani responded with David Brooks’ observation that in the old days Americans used to invest in the future, and that now we are borrowing from it. “This isn’t because of capitalism, but politics. Something has gone horribly wrong in the U.S. political system,” Mahbubani concluded.

The Henry E. and Nancy Horton Bartels World Affairs Fellowship was established in 1984, to bring prominent international leaders to Cornell. The mission of the fellowship program is explicitly educational-to foster a broadened world view among Cornell students by bringing to campus persons who have distinguished themselves as international public figures.

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