

On 25 October 2002 Professor François Heisbourg, Director of the International Institute of Strategic Studies, London, UK, delivered a lecture under the auspices of IIPS entitled “A New Security Landscape: the End of the Post-Cold War Era.” This event took place at the Capitol Tokyu Hotel in Tokyo.

In this lecture, Professor Heisbourg covered three major topics: the various constant as well as changing aspects of the security issues facing the United States and its European and Asian allies; the rise of hyper-terrorism (specifically, the grim possibility of the acquisition of weapons of mass destruction by non-state actors); and the implications for existing international alliances of these new security challenges. The talk concluded with a brief examination of the wider implications of the nature of the new security landscape.

The New Security Landscape: the End of the Post-Cold War Era

Summarized By Phil Robertson
Editor

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The basic change in the security landscape marks a close to the legacy of the Cold War and the transitional period of the 1990s. The scope and depth of this transformation are due to a simultaneous shift in two basic features of the security landscape: the newly acquired ability of non-state actors to wreak mass destruction, and the on-going deep revision in the relationships between the United States and its European and Asian allies. These factors interact with one another and are also influenced by additional factors, both external (such as Russia, China and the Middle East) and internal (such as ageing populations in the countries concerned).



Inter-State Security Risks - Continuities and Changes

In the sphere of inter-state relations, three sources of insecurity represent an ever more clear and present danger:

- 1) an exacerbation of conflicts in the Maghreb-to-Pakistan “Arc of Crisis.”
- 2) the spread of nuclear weapons, the risk of breakdown of the international nuclear non-proliferation regime, and the spread of biological weapons,
- 3) the possibility that nuclear weapons may be used in Asia (particularly South Asia), and the consequences for Europe.

Arc of Crisis under strain

The term “Arc of Crisis” was coined in the 1970s to connote the dangers inherent in the region stretching from the Maghreb to Pakistan, which was characterised by a combination of political Islam, poor governance, the declining quality of the social contract, the Israeli-Arab crisis and control of much of the world’s oil supply.

The level of crisis in the region seems set to rise as broad-based political Islam is supplanted by ultra-violent fanatics such as Al-Qaeda and the GIA in Algeria, and economically poorer countries—such as Iran—may be tempted to opt for ballistic missiles and nuclear weapons as an alternative to conventional weaponry: one that is cheaper and that confers greater military power on the possessor.

Many of the key players in the region (such as Syria, Iraq, Saudi Arabia and Libya) are dictatorships lacking any deep-rooted national identity, and are thus inherently unstable. Outside intervention, such as a US invasion of Iraq, could trigger violent popular reaction in these states. With no historical traditions of democracy or liberalism (as existed in Eastern Europe at the time of the collapse of the USSR), change in the Middle East promises to be considerably more violent than was the case with the Soviet Empire.

To all this must be added the Middle East's role as the world's major oil supplier (currently the region exports more than half the world's oil). This is not about to change, given the continuing rise in China's and India's oil imports.

WMD proliferation

Although, to date, efforts to combat the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) have been relatively successful, such that weapons of mass destruction have not proliferated in line with the most pessimistic forecasts of 25 years ago, the situation in Asia does not bode well for the future. The prospect of a breakdown in the current non-proliferation regime, as underpinned by the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), looms large.

A nuclear arc of crisis, stretching from Israel to Northeast Asia, is emerging, encompassing two of the five official nuclear powers, Russia and China; the three de facto nuclear states (who, as NPT non-signatories, may be regarded as not violating the non-nuclear norm), Israel, India and Pakistan; the two nuclear "wannabes", Iraq and North Korea (both violators of NPT); and a suspected nuclear candidate, Iran.

If possession of nuclear weapons were to come to be perceived in Asia as the norm rather than as the exception, countries such as Japan, South Korea and Taiwan, who have for different reasons sworn off nuclear development programmes, may feel compelled to change their minds.

Thus, the non-proliferation regime in Asia—and by extension the world—is fragile in the extreme. In this regard the case of Iran, and Europe's relationship with her, are pivotal. If the international community cannot dissuade Iran (an NPT member) from developing nuclear weapons, NPT will likely be rendered henceforth ineffective.

Biological weapons are particularly troublesome, despite the fact that 144 countries renounced them in the 1972 Biological Weapons Treaty. This treaty was subsequently violated by the USSR and Iraq. Furthermore, biological weapons research and production are not subject to any international verification regime.

Other than the deterrence afforded by Britain's and France's nuclear weapons, Europe's armed forces and defense strategies offer no effective answers to enhanced WMD proliferation and heightened tension in the Middle East.

The growing number of nuclear actors causes the risks of the use of nuclear weapons (whether accidental or deliberate) to increase in geometrical progression. Moreover, certain



circumstances, such as the India-Pakistan situation, would appear more conducive to their use than others (such as the Cold War stand-off).

We must all reflect on what the consequences for international security of the breaking of the nuclear taboo would be, particularly in terms of our own strategic posture.

Hyper-terrorism: the acquisition of weapons of mass destruction by non-state actors

New threat level from non-deterrable actors

9/11 represented the realisation of a threat that had existed throughout the 1990s—the ability of non-state actors to wreak mass destruction (although, in the case of 9/11, purely conventional devices were employed).

The rise to prominence of non-state actors adds new levels of complexity to the analysis of inter-state relations. The former Taliban government in Afghanistan served to empower Al Qaeda. Analysis of the confrontation between India and Pakistan must take into account the strategies of Al Qaeda and its regional affiliates.



Unlike warlike states, non-state actors are not susceptible to deterrence, containment or diplomacy; hence, they must be countered using a totally different set of policy tools: detection of actual and potential perpetration, prevention, pre-emption, interception, damage limitation and damage confinement.

Hence, the defense policies and strategic cultures of the United States and its European and Asian allies must undergo drastic revision.

Convergence of internal and external security

The traditional “Westphalian” notion of separation between a nation’s internal and external security cannot succeed against an adversary who both operates across borders and strives to undermine a targeted society from within. The implications of this are threefold.

- 1) Domestic security and external defense will have to be tightly coordinated in all facets (economic, financial, diplomatic, political, judicial, and those of police intelligence and defense),
- 2) Cross-border terrorism must be countered using cross-border remedies,
- 3) Successful countering of cross-border non-state violence requires the assistance of other non-state entities, such as the international banking community and transportation industry.

In short, a transformation of approaches to security and defense must take place.

Alliances and Partnerships

Mission-driven vs. permanent coalitions

The post-9/11 Rumsfeld/Wolfowitz formulation “It’s the mission that makes the coalition.” represented a basic departure from the pre-9/11 sentiments of the Bush Administration.

The move is away from permanent alliances as defense pacts, and towards mission-driven *ad hoc* coalitions as demanded by immediate requirements (such as the ouster of the Taliban and the capture of Al Qaeda bases in Afghanistan). This evolution is true of both NATO and East Asia.

This trend does not necessarily imply strategic decoupling between the US and its European and Asian allies. There are, however, two key ways in which strategic solidarity might be undermined: by deliberate disregard of one’s partners’ interests, and by lack of interest in using the machinery that allows allied forces to work together.

Prevention and pre-emption

In his January 2002 State of the Union address and his June 2002 speech at West Point Military Academy, President Bush propounded a new US strategy of pre-emption and prevention, designed to counter mass destruction by terrorists groups and the states which support them. Although the sweeping implications of this strategy were initially obscured by the controversy over the President’s “Axis of Evil” formulation in the State of the Union address, it has become apparent that this new strategy poses several questions, the answers to which may have far-reaching implications for the relationship between the US and Europe.

Can self-defense (as enshrined in Article 51 of UN Charter) be legitimately extended to a policy of first strikes? Should the same rules apply to both state and non-state actors?

If (as seems probable) there is no viable alternative to pre-emption as a means to counter non-state actors (non-deterrable by nature), how does this affect the answer to the question on the legitimacy of first-strikes as self-defense? Article 51 in its present form does not cover actions such as Israel’s preventive strike on Iraq’s Osirak reactor in 1981. However, given the emergence of non-state threats of mass destruction, a new jurisprudence could be developed, if need be, via discussion in the UN Security Council.

While pre-emption clearly involves the use of force (by the military or police), prevention could entail a much broader range of (largely non-forceful) actions. What kinds of action does prevention include? The European nations will emphasise the use of economic and political means rather than military action, and will be extremely reticent about endorsing any use of force where the goal of prevention is merely used as a pretext, and where no clear and present danger is perceived.

Where would pre-emption be applied? Judging from the State of the Union address, the answer would seem to be Iraq, North Korea and Iran. The vigorous European and Asian condemnation provoked by the “Axis of Evil” statement does not constitute an alternative strategy for dealing with a post-9/11 non-state actor.

9/11 notwithstanding, the evolution of China remains the greatest long-term US strategic concern. The war on Al Qaeda has exacerbated tensions in the Sino-US relationship, as the US has established a military presence in Central Asia, drawn closer to Russia and flexed its diplomatic muscle in South Asia. US relations with her European partners and Japan will be

shaped largely by the extent to which those countries act in accordance with Washington's China policy.

Economic weakness notwithstanding, Russia too remains a key player, by virtue of her location, size, population, energy resources and nuclear status. Russia no longer constitutes a military threat to the US or Europe, and under President Putin has displayed no overt hostility in her reaction to the accession of the Baltic States to the EU or to the demise of the ABM Treaty. There is the grave danger, however, of criminal or inadvertent dissemination of Russia's nuclear, chemical and biological weapons, fissile material and technologies. Given the EU's and Japan's basic interests, it would be wise for them to invest as heavily as the US has done in programmes to reduce this risk. This was agreed upon by the G8 at the Kananaskis Summit in Canada.

With the prospects of Middle East instability, the EU and Japan would also be well advised to focus efforts on oil prospecting and acquisition of investment rights in Russia, as well as on importing Russian gas.

China will also figure in the West's relationship with Russia. Reversing the dynamic of the 1990s, Russia may seek to use her closer ties to the West as a means of countering the economic and demographic challenges posed in the Russian Far East by an emergent China.

Conclusions

Five major conclusions may be drawn from the foregoing discussion.

- 1) The substantial increase in the intensity of risks and threats necessitates new institutional and budgetary initiatives within each of our countries.
- 2) The external and internal aspects of security and defence policy can no longer be regarded as separate. Thus, much greater institutional and organisational cohesion between domestic and external security and defense policy is required.
- 3) Military alliances in their current form cannot cope with these challenges. However, they should continue to play an important role in providing inter-operability between US forces and those of their European and Asian partners.
- 4) US military effort will continue to focus heavily on the greater Asian region, given US energy interests in the Middle East and Central Asia, nuclear instability in South Asia, and US economic and strategic interests in the Asia-Pacific area.
- 5) In this new environment multilateral security efforts offer promise.