OxfordResearchGroup
building bridges for global security

Global Security after the War on Terror

Paul Rogers

Briefing paper **November 2009**

Published by Oxford Research Group, November 2009

Oxford Research Group
Development House
56-64 Leonard Street
London EC2A 4LT
United Kingdom

ISBN: 978-0-9552846-0-1

About the author

Paul Rogers is Professor of Peace Studies at the University of Bradford, and Global Security Consultant to Oxford Research Group. Paul has worked in the field of international security, arms control and political violence for over 30 years. He lectures at universities and defence colleges in several countries, and has written 26 books. Paul is also a regular commentator on global security issues in both the national and international media.

Acknowledgements

Oxford Research Group gratefully acknowledges the support of the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust, the Polden-Puckham Charitable Foundation and our many supporters and Sustainers for making the publication of this report possible.

Front cover photo: A U.S. Army Soldier from Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 173rd Special Troops Battalion coaches an Afghan National Police officer as he prepares to fire a rocket-propelled grenade launcher during a skills assessment mission on a range in Beshud, Afghanistan, February 13, 2008. (U.S. Army photo by Spc. Justin French) (www.army.mil)

www.oxfordresearchgroup.org.uk

Edited by Andy Roberts
Design by Shtig, based on a template designed by Helen Scott. info@helenscottdesign.co.uk
Printed by Aldgate Press on recycled paper.

Global Security after the War on Terror

Paul Rogers

November 2009

OxfordResearchGroup

Contents

Introduction

In the months and years after the 9/11 attacks, a series of analyses published by Oxford Research Group offered a critical perspective on the war on terror, arguing that the forceful military response was both wrong and dangerous.[1] It could even prove highly counterproductive to US security interests and would certainly do little to promote international peace and stability. While the response to 9/11 was readily understandable, given the appalling nature of the attacks but also the neoconservative overtones of the Bush administration, it was argued that it was deeply mistaken and would lead to a long period of war.[2]

there is a need for a fundamental re-thinking of those current approaches to security that focus primarily on military instruments

This perspective has stood the test of time. Moreover, the experience of the eight years since 9/11 supports a wider ORG analysis of global security that argues that there is a need for a fundamental re-thinking of those current approaches to security that focus primarily on military instruments. Instead, the major global trends of a wider socio-economic divide, mass marginalisation and environmental constraints all require an approach rooted in what is now being termed sustainable security.

This paper examines the context of the decision to go to war after 9/11 and the anticipated results. It goes on to analyse the actual consequences and seeks to explain why they have been so radically different to original expectations by the United States and its closest coalition partners such as the UK. The paper then updates the analysis of the major global challenges that Oxford Research Group has previously discussed and the need for a new paradigm focused on sustainable security. It concludes by assessing how the experience of the eight years that have followed the 9/11 atrocities might make a change of paradigm more likely.

From War on Terror to Axis of Evil

In January 2002, four months after the 9/11 attacks, President Bush delivered his State of the Union Address. By this time the Taliban regime in Afghanistan had been terminated and the al-Qaida movement dispersed, its abandoned training camps destroyed. The “war on terror” appeared to be progressing very much on American terms and although the leading figures such as Osama bin Laden and Mullah Omar had not been killed or captured, there was considerable confidence in Washington that this was only a matter of time.

As might be expected, the State of the Union Address was something of a victory celebration punctuated by frequent rounds of applause. What was less expected was the manner in which President Bush sought to extend the war well beyond the previous emphasis on al-Qaida. It would now embrace a number of rogue states that constituted an “axis of evil”. The most important of these were North Korea, Iran and Iraq:

> *"States like these, and their terrorist allies, constitute an axis of evil, arming to threaten the peace of the world. By seeking weapons of mass destruction, these regimes pose a grave and growing danger. They could provide these arms to terrorists, giving them the means to match their hatred. They could attack our allies or attempt to blackmail the United States. In any of these cases, the price of indifference would be catastrophic."* [3]

Later in the speech, President Bush stated that in the absence of clear cooperative international action to control the threat from these states, decisive action would be taken.

> *"We'll be deliberate, yet time is not on our side. I will not wait on events, while dangers gather. I will not stand by, as perils draw closer and closer. The United States of America will not permit the world's most dangerous regimes to threaten us with the world's most destructive weapons."* [4]

by June of 2002, the strong support and sympathy that the United States had received in the immediate wake of the 9/11 atrocities had weakened across much of Europe

Four months later, in his graduation address at the West Point Military Academy, President Bush made it clear that pre-emptive action in the face of potential threats was acceptable:

> *"...the war on terror will not be won on the defensive. We must take the battle to the enemy, disrupt his plans, and confront the worst threats before they emerge. In the world we have entered, the only path to safety is the path of action. And this nation will act."* [5]

Furthermore, such action could legitimately be taken against states harbouring terrorists:

> *"All nations that decide for aggression and terror will pay a price. We will not leave the safety of America and the peace of the planet at the mercy of a few mad terrorists and tyrants. We will lift this dark threat from our country and from the world."* [6]

By June of 2002, the strong support and sympathy that the United States had received in the immediate wake of the 9/11 atrocities had weakened across much of Europe. The governments in Britain, Spain and Italy were still supportive, but the German and French governments were more cautious. Among the populations of many European countries there was strong opposition developing to the prospect of the war being extended to regime termination in Iraq, but this change in mood had little impact in Washington. There, the belief was that the war on terror was an essential part of the progress towards a New American Century.

The key region would be the Middle East, and termination of the Sadam Hussein regime would be the most important step. If Iraq was liberated from despotic rule it would rapidly make the transition to a pro-western free market democracy, bolstered by a substantial US military presence. This would serve as a catalyst for a democratic transformation across the Middle East which was already being matched by the changes in Afghanistan where large military bases were being established. 9/11 had truly been an appalling experience but the vigorous response was well on its way to ensuring a far more peaceful and pro-western Middle East. There would now be, in particular, a thoroughly constrained Iran that faced US forces to the east in Afghanistan and to the west in Iraq, with the US Navy's Fifth Fleet controlling the Persian Gulf and the Arabian Sea.

Such an outcome would be of great value, given the immense oil and gas reserves of the Persian Gulf region and of China's rapidly increasing need for imported oil. Moreover, China and Russia would also be constrained by the new US presence in Afghanistan and several Central Asian republics. 9/11 may have been an utter disaster, but great good might now come from the response.

Context

In seeking to understand the reasons for the forceful US response to the 9/11 atrocities it is worth examining the context. Although President George W Bush was elected in 2000 without gaining the majority of the popular vote, expectations that his administration would therefore adopt consensus politics were quickly proved wrong, especially in the matter of foreign and security policy. Guided much by the thinking of the New American Century project, the administration followed a markedly independent and unilateralist line on issues such as the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, missile defence, climate change and the proposed International Criminal Court. The approach was rooted in the view that the Clinton Administration had lacked the ability to play an international leadership role, having missed the opportunity that the collapse of the Soviet bloc had provided for the United States.

In its Statement of Principles (3 June 1997), the Project had made its aims clear:

> *"We aim to change this. We aim to make the case and rally support for American global leadership.*
>
> *As the 20th century draws to a close, the United States stands as the world's pre-eminent power. Having led the West to victory in the Cold War, America faces an opportunity and a challenge: Does the United States have the vision to build upon the achievements of past decades? Does the United States have the resolve to shape a new century favourable to American principles and interests?"* [7]

For the Project, what had been lost was the leadership exercised nearly twenty years earlier by the Reagan Administration when a strong United States faced down the Soviet Union:

> *"We seem to have forgotten the essential elements of the Reagan Administration's success: a military that is strong and ready to meet both present and future challenges; a foreign policy that boldly and purposefully promotes American principles abroad; and national leadership that accepts the United States' global responsibilities."* [8]

This implication of American leadership, in the absence of a Soviet threat, did not imply an absence of dangers. Throughout the previous ten years there had been a recognition that multiple problems existed. It was encapsulated by Clinton's first Director of Central Intelligence, James Woolsey, who characterised the post-Cold War era as one in which the United States had slain the dragon but now lived in a jungle of poisonous snakes.[9] Much of the US military was transformed in that decade from forces designed to fight a single global war to much more diverse forces capable of fighting smaller wars in far-off places. This idea of new enemies was powerfully if idiosyncratically voiced by George W Bush himself during the 2000 Presidential campaign:

> *"...it was a dangerous world and we knew exactly who the "they" were. It was us versus them and we knew who them was. Now we're not so sure who the "they" are, but we know they're there."*

"...it was a dangerous world and we knew exactly who the "they" were. It was us versus them and we knew who them was. Now we're not so sure who the "they" are, but we know they're there."
- George W Bush

Even so, by the middle of 2001, the Bush administration was confident that its policies would ensure a new era of American leadership in which such threats could be controlled, enabling a free market liberal democratic model to deliver peace and security for the global community. In such an environment it could be dangerous for the United States to be tied down by too many multilateral arrangements, much as Gulliver had been tied down by the Liliputians. The attitude was put most effectively by Charles Krauthammer, writing shortly before the 9/11 attacks.

> *"Multipolarity, yes, when there is no alternative. But not when there is. Not when we have the unique imbalance of power that we enjoy today – and that has given the international system a stability and essential tranquillity that it had not known for at least a century."*
>
> *The international environment is far more likely to enjoy peace under a single hegemon. Moreover, we are not just any hegemon. We run a uniquely benign imperium."*[10]

It was in these circumstances that the 9/11 atrocities had such a profound effect. The destruction of the twin towers had a massive impact across the country and the attack on the Pentagon, the military headquarters of the world's only superpower, by people armed only with parcel knives was particularly traumatic for the US military leadership. From being in a state of near-absolute power and in the process of creating the New American Century, the Bush administration suddenly found itself knocked back with extraordinary force. The result, perhaps inevitably, was a resolute determination to kill or capture those who had planned the attack, to terminate the Taliban regime that harboured them, and then extend the response to face down other threats.

Expectations

The termination of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan commenced within a month and a combination of air power, Special Forces and the large scale financing and re-arming of the Northern Alliance was sufficient to disperse the Taliban and the al-Qaida paramilitaries. By the end of 2001 there was a confident expectation that Afghanistan would make a transition to a pro-western state which would accept a long term US military presence at Bagram and Kandahar. Furthermore, bases had been established in neighbouring countries to the North, ensuring increased US influence in oil-rich Central Asia. Western European powers were expected to aid in the reconstruction of Afghanistan, including the provision of a few thousand peacekeepers, but the dominant military force would be from the United States.

the extent of the free market orientation was in excess of anything seen elsewhere including the United States.... Iraq, though, was different and could be developed almost as an experiment

Within a very few months of the apparent success in Afghanistan, the Bush administration was focusing intensely on Iraq. The termination of the Saddam Hussein regime was commenced in March 2003 and completed within three weeks. Almost immediately there were reports that the Pentagon was planning to construct four large military bases, with these located close to the capital city of Baghdad, the northern and southern oil fields and in the western desert, a region believed to have exploitable oil deposits. It was assumed that foreign troops would be welcomed as liberators and there was a confidence that the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) would eventually hand over to an elected pro-American Iraqi government but would, in the meantime, establish an economy that would be organised on free market principles. It would include a flat rate tax system, a minimum of financial regulation and, above all, the opening up of the state industries, especially the oil sector, to overseas investors, even including Israelis.

The extent of the free market orientation was in excess of anything seen elsewhere including the United States, where labour unions and numerous public interest groups inhibit such deregulation. Iraq, though, was different and could be developed almost as an experiment. Moreover, this was a country with considerable potential since it combined a relatively well-educated population with oil reserves representing 10% of the world's total.

The high point of the Bush administration's war on terror came with President Bush's "mission accomplished" speech on the deck of the aircraft carrier *USS Abraham Lincoln*, on 1 May 2003. By that time, the bases were being built in Afghanistan, the Saddam Hussein regime was finished, and the al-Qaida movement was dispersed. Just as important, Iran was now greatly constrained by the regional US military presence and would cause little concern in Washington. North Korea was still a problem and the al-Qaida movement was dispersed rather than destroyed, but the Middle East and South Central Asia were being refashioned in a manner of great value to the United States. While the 9/11 attacks had been deeply traumatic, the New American Century was now back on track.

Outcomes

At the time of writing (November 2009), the war in Afghanistan has entered its ninth year with more troops being poured into the country as the Taliban and other paramilitary groups increase their areas of influence and outright control. The presidential elections in August involved substantial fraud and this was in the context of a turn-out that was lower than in 2004 due both to widespread apathy at the deteriorating state of governance of the country and to increasing insecurity.

There has been some easing of the violence and insecurity in Iraq, with US troops withdrawing from large-scale involvement in urban security. During the period 2006-08, US military leaders adapted to the bitter insurgency in which they found themselves and sought to avoid actions that killed civilians. By late 2008, a combination of a short-term surge in US troop numbers, the encouragement of a Sunni militia movement opposed to the brutal methods of al-Qaida-linked paramilitaries, a ceasefire by one of the main Shi'a militias and the separating of many of the urban areas into distinct confessional groups all served to decrease the overall levels of violence. Even so, bombings continue, including devastating attacks on government buildings, the world's largest embassy has been constructed by the United States in Baghdad, over 120,000 US troops remain in the country and the major bases show signs of permanence whatever the Obama administration says about complete withdrawal within two years. Moreover, if one of the original aims of the war was to contain Iran, the opposite has happened as Iran has substantially increased its influence in Iraq and has done so without exhibiting much evidence of direct involvement in the violence.

Perhaps the most remarkable outcome of the war in Iraq has been the manner in which Iraq has been a combat training zone for young paramilitaries both from Iraq itself and from across the region as far as Yemen and Algeria. In the 1980s the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan served a broadly similar purpose, with some experienced mujahidin later forming important components of the developing al-Qaida movement. These, though, were people gaining combat experience primarily against Soviet conscripts with low levels of morale, and the operations were conducted in a largely rural environment. Paramilitary experiences of the six years of the Iraq War have been against some of the world's best armed and trained volunteer forces of the US Army and Marine Corps, and they have been primarily in an urban environment. The long-term implications of the creation of this new cohort of experienced paramilitaries are difficult to predict, but there are clear indications that the experience has already been reflected in conflicts in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Somalia.

if one of the original aims of the war was to contain Iran, the opposite has happened

Moreover, states such as North Korea are embracing techniques and tactics developed by paramilitaries in Iraq and Afghanistan. For North Korea this includes some 80,000 troops trained in special operations including the use of improvised explosive devices.[11]

The human costs of the war in Iraq have been massive. At a minimum, around 100,000 people have been killed in Iraq[12] and perhaps twice that number seriously injured, many of them maimed for life. Many of the deaths have been due to inter-communal conflict rather than direct or indirect assaults by coalition forces, but almost all have been a consequence of the decision to go to war. The conflict resulted in at least 4 million people fleeing their homes as refugees, about half of them displaced within Iraq and the others seeking refuge in other countries, mainly Syria and Jordan. In Afghanistan, Iraq and elsewhere, at least 120,000 people have been detained without trial. For most of the past eight years there have been at least 20,000 in detention at any one time. Some have been locked up for more than six years and many have been subject to abuse. Torture and rendition have been repeatedly used, with only a few instances getting into the western media. The reputations of the United States and its close coalition partners have been damaged, especially across the Middle East and South Asia. This has been greatly exacerbated by the growth of 24-hour satellite TV news channels such as Al-Jazeera and Al-Arabiya and their extensive coverage of the civilian casualties and widespread destruction in Iraq and Afghanistan. Taking into account all the effects of the war, the monetary cost may be as high as three trillion US dollars. [13]

In the past two years, the focus of the conflict has moved from Iraq to Afghanistan and western Pakistan. While it is far from certain that Iraq will make a slow transition to a more peaceful environment, there is a better prospect than seemed likely two years ago, but the legacy of bitterness, anger and resentment will last for many years. In recent months the attitude of Barack Obama, especially his reaching out to Islam in his Cairo speech, has made some difference in terms of perceptions of the United States, but his administration remains committed to the war in Afghanistan and may well increase the numbers of troops. This is at a time when the insurgency is beginning to evolve into a more general insurrection in which the presence of increased numbers of foreign troops may stimulate rather than diminish violence.

Furthermore, the war in Afghanistan has progressively extended to Pakistan, with increasing controversy over the use of US weapons, such as armed drones, within Pakistani territory. The United States has provided substantial civil and military aid to Pakistan and has strongly encouraged the Pakistani Army to be more robust in countering Taliban and al-Qaida influence, especially in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), North West Frontier Province and Baluchistan.

This involvement has not been well received among many sectors of Pakistani public opinion, but a much more significant aspect is the Pakistani view of the importance of maintaining strong influence in Afghanistan. Pakistan's perception of its own security situation continues to be dominated by its fear of its much more powerful neighbour, India. In this context, strong influence in Afghanistan is singularly important as it gives Pakistan a degree of strength in depth and also extends Pakistan's own influence indirectly towards Central Asia. This was the primary reason for the support given to the Taliban in the 1990s by Pakistan's powerful Inter-Services Intelligence agency (ISI), and maintaining influence in Afghanistan remains a core aspect of Pakistani foreign and security policy.

In the past two years there has been particular concern in Islamabad at what is seen as India's increasing role in Afghanistan, not just in terms of support for civil development projects but, more importantly, the improving links between India and the Afghanistan security forces. Pakistan will readily receive substantial aid from the United States and will cooperate, to an extent, in operations to limit the power of Islamist militias in FATA and other western districts, especially as the numerous attacks across Pakistan demonstrate the power and influence of the paramilitary groups. Even so, its concern is primarily with limiting the influence of such groups on Pakistan's internal security. It does not extend to aiding the United States and its NATO partners in operations that are likely to limit the influence of the Afghan Taliban. A defeated Taliban coupled with an Afghanistan government that is likely to develop close links with India is close to being the Pakistani military elite's worst nightmare.

on the eighth anniversary of the start of the "war on terror" almost all analysts accept that the outcomes have been radically different to those anticipated by the Bush administration

Explanations

On the eighth anniversary of the start of the "war on terror" almost all analysts accept that the outcomes have been radically different to those anticipated by the Bush administration. The transition of Afghanistan to a peaceful pro-western state has instead been replaced by a bitter and increasingly violent insurgency involving rapidly increasing numbers of NATO troops, as well as rampant corruption and maladministration within the Karzai government. This is being paralleled by an evolving crisis of insecurity in Pakistan. The transition of Iraq to a model free-market pro-western economy has instead seen a six-year war with huge numbers of casualties, detentions without trial and refugee flows. A slow trend towards some degree of peace may be under way but could easily be reversed. It has already resulted in substantially increased Iranian influence, the direct opposite of what the Bush administration had planned.

Given these remarkably costly outcomes it is necessary to seek explanations. The first issue is the original decision to embark on a military war on terror, starting with the termination, by force, of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan. While the sheer horror of the 9/11 attacks and the forceful attitude of the Bush administration made such a response virtually certain, it was still a fundamental error. The very act of going to war elevated the al-Qaida movement to the status of a global threat worthy of a formidable military response by the world's sole superpower. The more intelligent response would have been to recognise al-Qaida as a rump movement arising from a peripheral if radical element of one of the world's main religions which had developed a trans-national and deeply criminal capability. If al-Qaida had been seen in this light then a sustained coalition could have been formed to use policing and legal means to bring those responsible to justice. Instead, the war could all too easily be represented by the al-Qaida movement as an assault on Islam. In this narrative, al-Qaida was at the forefront of the conflict and this could bring far more people into sympathy with its purported claim to be the defender of Islam.

This fundamental error of establishing a war on terror was exacerbated by two further mistakes. One was to extend the war to regime termination in Iraq and the other was to pay little attention to further developments in Afghanistan for four years until 2006. Indeed, there was a tacit assumption that the Taliban militias had been comprehensively defeated, whereas the majority had survived but melted away into towns and villages on both sides of the Afghanistan/Pakistan border. Even though the United States maintained combat units in south-eastern Afghanistan and NATO deployed a small International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) with both elements recognising the risk of a renewed insurgency, the Bush administration was so focussed on Iraq that the significance of this was almost entirely missed.

In Iraq there was also an assumption of easy victory, culminating in President Bush's "mission accomplished" speech on 1 May 2003. What is remarkable in retrospect is that there was abundant evidence of deep-seated opposition from the very earliest days of the war. Even as US forces were moving rapidly towards Baghdad in the first two weeks, the first of the suicide attacks were being experienced, and the extended supply lines were coming under repeated assault. Within six months of regime termination a full-scale insurgency was under way that evolved into a complex situation in which an anti-occupation insurgency intermixed with protracted inter-communal violence. Moreover, the war in Iraq was complicated by four further factors.

One was the early decay of the prospects for a stable and united coalition that was genuinely global and stretched well beyond the United States and its closer European allies. By August 2003 the United States was looking to India, as one of the few countries that had armed forces that were large enough and sufficiently professional to be able to provide a full division of troops. The intention was for Indian forces to ensure security in most of north-eastern Iraq including the substantial Kurdish regions, allowing US forces to concentrate much more fully on Baghdad and central Iraq. While the Indian government was sympathetic, it was facing a series of elections and Indian public opinion was very largely opposed to involvement in Iraq. The government could not take the risk and, as a result, the prospect of the United States maintaining a substantial coalition was much diminished.

The second factor was the manner in which the evolving insurgency was able to cause large numbers of casualties among the US troops, resulting in very forceful responses. Thus, with hundreds of US troops being killed and injured each month by the latter part of 2003, there was a pronounced tendency for US forces to rely increasingly on their considerable advantages in fire-power when responding to attacks. Such firepower, used repeatedly in urban and semi-urban environments, was responsible for large numbers of Iraqi civilian deaths[14] and injuries, with this leading to a widespread identification of US soldiers by Iraqis as occupiers not liberators. This was strengthened by the third factor, the practice of detaining tens of thousands of Iraqis and imprisoning them without trial for weeks, months or even years. Furthermore, such detention was commonly in very poor conditions with widespread prisoner abuse and torture.

Finally, and perhaps least recognised outside of the Middle East was the manner in which the United States utilised Israeli experience in the training and even equipping of its own forces for operating in a counter-insurgency role in an Arab country. Israeli links with the US Department of Defense go back more than four decades, and around one quarter of Israel's entire military budget is currently reliant on US military assistance programmes.[15] In return, almost from the start of the Iraq War, the Pentagon came to rely on Israeli knowledge and tactics as developed from operations in Lebanon and the occupied territories of the West Bank and Gaza.

What is remarkable about the war in Iraq is that it was so easy for al-Qaida and other jihadist groups to represent it as a Christian - indeed a Crusader - assault on one of the centres of Islam. This was in the context that much of the al-Qaida propaganda had already looked to the eventual creation of a new Islamist Caliphate. This resonated with many marginalised Moslems, but even more so because Baghdad had been the centre of the greatest of the Caliphates in the history of Islam – the Abbasids of a thousand years ago. Put bluntly, al-Qaida could point to a "Crusader/Zionist plot" to control one of the core states of Islam, an immensely powerful propaganda tool that was used repeatedly to great effect.

Although the war on terror no longer bears that name, and the Obama administration is actively seeking to withdraw most forces from Iraq, that country is far from peace, and the war in Afghanistan and western Pakistan is accelerating. This may be the appalling and toxic legacy that the Bush administration has bequeathed to Barack Obama and it is likely to be one that will eventually require a fundamental re-thinking of US and coalition policy. When that might come is impossible to predict but, as of November 2009, it is probable that there will instead be a further increase in US forces in Afghanistan, with the war evolving and intensifying over several years, quite possibly in Pakistan as well.

It is straightforward enough to identify the grievous errors which have led to the current predicament – regime termination by extreme military force in two states, rather than the rigorous pursuit of non-military responses through national and international law. What is much more difficult to advise is how best to respond to the effects of the past eight years. Given the current situation in Iraq, the progressive withdrawal of US troops must be maintained, but this has to be part of a wider initiative to improve relations across the region, not least with Syria. One of the challenges will be to improve relations with Iran, given the nature of the regime in Tehran.

In some ways Afghanistan and Pakistan are now much more difficult. In the former there is every risk that a corrupt and incompetent government will further exacerbate a sense in which foreign forces are seen as occupiers, with a risk that the insurgency turns steadily into a more general insurrection. There was already evidence of this by the middle of 2009, with indications that only a minority of the direct violent resistance to foreign forces was coming from Taliban-linked groups, with the majority being a wide range of local militias and paramilitaries motivated by many different factors but with an underlying antagonism to foreign forces. Such a situation means that further substantial increases in US and other forces will be directly counterproductive, a very difficult message for the United States and its coalition partners to accept.

...as the foreign forces have nearly doubled in numbers in the past three years, paramilitary violence has actually increased rather than decreased...

However unacceptable this is, it has to be recognised that as the foreign forces have nearly doubled in numbers in the past three years, paramilitary violence has actually increased rather than decreased, and Taliban and associated militias have actually increased their areas of control into northern and western Afghanistan. The argument is now being made that there will have eventually to be negotiated settlements with paramilitaries, probably involving a progressive patchwork of ceasefires, accompanied by some degree of incorporation into local and national governance. This argument, though, is accompanied by the view that such negotiations can only be successful from a position of strength, hence the need for a further major increase in foreign forces. It is an argument that does not meet the objection that more forces mean more opposition. If that is the case, then there has to be a far more fundamental re-thinking of strategy than is currently envisaged, including the reluctant acceptance of a measure of failure.

Global Challenges

The war on terror has so far had results that have been massively costly in human terms and deeply counter-productive for the United States. This leads on to the issue of whether such failure will result in fundamental changes in what might broadly be called the western security paradigm, a paradigm centred on maintaining control and successfully suppressing that jungle full of poisonous snakes. If the experience of the war on terror suggests that "the jungle" cannot be controlled by the largely traditional application of military force, then an opportunity may exist for a radical re-appraisal of the current western understanding of global security.

The main challenges facing the world community over the next thirty years have been explored in depth in other Oxford Research Group studies[16] and will be covered briefly here. They fall into three broad areas: the widening socio-economic divide, environmental limits on human activity and the militarisation of security.

The Wealth-Poverty Divide

Since the reorientation of the world economy towards a globalised free market and the evolution of the Washington consensus on economic development over the past thirty years, the world economy has continued to grow, although not at the rate of the previous thirty years. However, that growth has been deeply unbalanced in that the main benefits have accrued to a substantial minority of the world's people – about a fifth in total or close to 1.5 billion. This does not mean that the poor are getting poorer, although well over a billion people remain in deep poverty and the number of people who are malnourished has grown substantially. What it does mean is that the gap between the richest fifth and the remaining majority has widened spectacularly and is now at the level where the richest fifth is at least 70 times as wealthy in terms of per capita GNP as the poorest fifth. Measured in terms of household wealth, the difference is even more startling. According to a UN University study, the richest 10% of the world's people own some 85% of household wealth and the poorest 50% own barely 1%.[17] In broad terms, the globalised liberal market economy has delivered a measure of economic growth but has singularly and consistently failed to deliver economic justice. The wealth-poverty divide is not narrowly geographical – although the great majority of the world's wealth is concentrated in North America, Western Europe, and Japan, there are substantial elites in China, India and Brazil. What has actually evolved has been a trans-global elite.

Moreover, the trend does not allow for the impact of the economic downturn that started with the credit crunch in 2008 and is expected to make it well-nigh impossible to meet the modest Millennium Development Goals set for 2015. There are already indications that one of the main effects of the financial crisis will be very substantial increases in unemployment right across the world, but especially in the South:

> *"The 'third wave' of this crisis, which began in the financial markets and quickly moved to the broader economy, is now striking the labour market, according to Dominic Strauss-Kahn, the head of the IMF. In Cambodia 30,000 workers were laid off the clothing industry as the collapse in trade took hold, according to the World Bank. In South Africa the closure of mines and smelters has cost 40,000 people their jobs. In China an estimated 670,000 small firms went out of business in Guangshou, Dongguan and Shenzen."*[18]

...the richest 10% of the world's people own some 85% of household wealth and the poorest 50% own barely 1%

One of the worst impacts is on migrant workers – in early 2009 it was estimated that out of 130 million migrant labourers in China, 26 million were expected to lose their jobs.[19] Whereas the impact of unemployment is eased in richer states with welfare systems, the direct human impact in China and right across the South is very much higher.

In parallel with this widening divide, likely to be made worse by the economic downturn, is a much more positive development, although it is one with important consequences. One of the great success stories of the past forty years has been the improvement in education and literacy across the world. A far greater proportion of the world's children now get at least four years of primary education, with even the gender gap slowly narrowing. There have been great improvements in literacy and these have been accompanied by far better communications, including the spread of radio, television and mobile phone networks. Many parts of the world remain "data poor" in terms of the web, but even this is now changing. One of the many consequences of this success is that while the great majority of the world's people are on the economic margins, their self-knowledge of this marginalisation is steadily increasing. With it comes resentment, anger, high crime rates and the increased need for the protection of elite communities, often in gated settlements.

It also leads to the rise of radical and even extreme social movements such as the Naxalites in India and the Maoists in Nepal. One of the most powerful representations of a "revolt from the margins" came in 1994 when the Zapatista rebellion in Chiapas Province of Mexico was timed to start with the coming into force of the North American Free Trade Area (NAFTA) agreement. This was expected to further marginalise the majority of people in Chiapas and the motivation for the revolt was given in a powerful statement from a rebel source:

> *"We have nothing, absolutely nothing – not decent shelter, nor land, nor work, nor health, nor food, nor education. We do not have the right to choose freely and democratically our officials. We have neither peace nor justice for ourselves and our children. But today we say enough!"*[20]

Although considerations of international security have recently been dominated by the "war on terror" against al-Qaida, this movement may not be the best indicator of the forms of unrest and insurgency likely to be more common in the future. Developments in China and India may be more indicative. While China has experienced rapid economic growth it has also had to face increasing social unrest, with many thousands of strikes, riots and other disturbances across the country each year as the fruits of economic growth are so unevenly distributed. In 2006, the Chinese authorities supplemented existing systems of public order control by establishing a new elite force made of up of 600-strong squads in 36 cities across the country, each equipped with a wide range of weapons supported by helicopters.[21]

In India, the Naxalite revolt, which originated in the West Bengal village of Naxalbari in 1967, has recently evolved into an insurgency across much of India. It gets little coverage in the Indian or international media but now affects 185 districts in 17 out of India's 28 states. The primary motivation is the relative deprivation of marginalised peoples, frequently exacerbated by expropriation of land for new industrial or mining projects, and the Naxalite rebellion has become so intense in recent years that in April 2006, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh described the Naxalites as "the biggest security challenge ever faced by our country".[22]

Although some countries of the South are now experiencing a demographic transition involving decreases in birth rates, many others are not and these include much of Africa, the Middle East and South Asia. In such countries, there remains a demographic "bulge" especially among the under-25s with many millions of people facing lifetimes of unemployment, underemployment or low pay. Given their awareness of the far more comfortable lifestyles and prospects of the elites, a tendency towards radicalisation should hardly be a surprise.

it is the combination of the socio-economic divisions and the consequences of climate change that is at the core of the global predicament

Environmental Limits

The trend towards a widening socio-economic divide should, on its own, be of fundamental concern, not just because of its implications for stability, but much more for the pervasive injustice that it involves. But it is when this trend is put in the context of global environmental constraints that the major future security challenges arise.

There are two kinds of limits that are having an accelerating impact, resource constraints and ecosystem impacts. Of the former, the location of particular fuel and non-fuel minerals is central, consequent mainly on a "resource shift" over the past two hundred years away from the traditional industrial economies. With the exception of Japan, most of the early industrialising regions of the world depended initially on non-renewable resources mined from their own territories, whether these be coal or ferrous and non-ferrous metal ores. During the 20th century, they became increasingly dependent on imported resources, including food, and by the early 21st century the dependence is remarkable, just as newly industrialising countries such as China increase their demands.

More than 60% of the world's oil reserves are found in just five countries around the Persian Gulf – Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Iran, Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates, and over 55% of the world's natural gas reserves are in just three countries – Iran, Qatar and Russia. Iraq alone now has about four times the oil reserves of the entire United States, including the Alaskan deposits. From being almost self-sufficient in oil reserves forty years ago, the United States now imports close to 60% of its needs. The change for China is even more rapid – fifteen years ago it was self-sufficient, but now imports more than half the oil it needs. All of these resource locations and trends in use mean that the Persian Gulf is the world's most important resource location and is also one of the most heavily militarised. Along with the restricted location of key ferro-alloy and rare earth metal ores, the risk of conflict over control and use of strategic resources is increasing year by year. Beyond this, though, is the much greater issue of constraints on the global ecosystem and it is this aspect of environmental constraints that is set to interact with the socio-economic divisions.

It is only in the past half century that the entire global ecosystem has experienced human-induced impacts. The first major instance was the damage to the ozone layer caused by CFC pollutants and recognised in the early 1980s. Because these could be substituted with relative ease and because the dangers of ozone depletion were extreme, the international community moved rapidly to agree the Montreal Convention in 1987. However, the far greater problem is climate change, caused primarily by the burning of fossil fuels releasing carbon dioxide. Such use of fossil fuels is fundamental to the workings of modern economies and is far more difficult to curb, yet there are abundant indications that climate change is accelerating. This is partly because of a persistent failure to curb carbon dioxide emissions but also because of positive feedback mechanisms. These include the melting of Arctic sea ice leading to greater solar radiation absorption by open water which in turn accelerates further sea ice melting. They also include the thawing of Arctic permafrost leading to the decay of previously frozen vegetation potentially releasing large amounts of methane which is a far more potent climate change gas than carbon dioxide.

There is a consensus among climate scientists that the process of climate change is accelerating and requires radical action to curb emissions, if the consequences are not to be disastrous. Those consequences will have particularly damaging effects on the tropical and sub-tropical land masses that support the majority of the world's population and where relatively weak economies will be very hard-pressed to cope. The impacts will include rising sea levels and more intensive and destructive tropical storms. Even more important is the probability of major changes in rainfall distribution, tending towards more rain falling over the oceans and the Arctic and Antarctic and less over the main land masses. Given that almost all the food consumed in the countries of the South is grown in those countries themselves, the impact of a decrease in the ecological carrying capacity of the croplands will be one of catastrophe.

What is crucial here is the relatively recent recognition that the impact of rising temperatures will vary greatly across the globe. An average of a 4 degree Centigrade rise in temperature compared with 1890, which is probable if carbon emissions are not radically reduced in the next twenty years, will not translate into a uniform rise.[23] The smallest rise, by far, will be experienced by the oceans and by the southern latitudes and the biggest heating impact will be on most of the land masses and the Arctic region. Almost the whole of the Americas north of Chile and Argentina will see temperature increases that are twice to three times the average, leading to the destruction of the Amazonian rain forest, the desertification of most of the United States and Mexico and a heating of the Arctic regions of Canada sufficient to release huge quantities of methane from the thawed-out permafrost. Methane is a particularly potent climate change gas and permafrost destruction will also be evident right across Russia including Siberia. Arctic sea ice will disappear as will much of the Greenland ice cap and most of the world's glaciers, the latter leading to sea level rises sufficient to inundate many of the world's cities as well as some of the world's richest croplands which are found in major river deltas including the Nile, Mekong and Ganges / Brahmaputra. Most of Africa will warm up, leading to vast new desert areas in the south, as will southern Europe, Central and East Asia. As carbon sinks are lost, including Amazonia and the Arctic permafrost deposits, the process will accelerate. All populated regions of the world will suffer, but the poorest regions will be worst off.

It is thus the combination of the socio-economic divisions and the consequences of climate change that is at the core of the global predicament. If these global issues are not resolved, then the consequences will be many. They include human suffering on a massive scale, social and political instability, an increasing number of fragile, failing and failed states and a pervasive anger and resentment. There are certain to be much greater pressures on migration as people seek to move to regions of greater opportunity and these are likely to be resisted even more than at present. From within the marginalised majority we should expect to see the rise of radical and extreme social movements born out of desperation but all too easily seen as threats by the world's elites.

Militarisation

many of the western military think tanks recognise much of the analysis so far discussed here, ...but their perspective is one of the requirement to defend their own states or alliances from a potentially unstable and violent world, not to address the underlying causes of the global predicament

The fundamental issue is that the circumstances into which we are moving are unique in human history. Deep social and economic divisions have long existed, but they have not previously interacted with environmental limits to growth on a global scale. What is particularly dangerous is that the strong tendency among the world's elite communities, whether powerful states or elites within states, is to seek to maintain the status quo in the face of what are seen to be "threats" from weak and failing states, mass migration and radical anti-elite movements that are so easily termed terrorists. "Taming the jungle" is seen as the task in hand. Many of the western military think tanks recognise much of the analysis so far discussed here, especially on issues of climate change, the wealth-poverty divide and migration, but their perspective is one of the requirement to defend their own states or alliances from a potentially unstable and violent world, not to address the underlying causes of the global predicament.

The post-Cold War emphasis among the more powerful states has therefore moved towards the enhancement of Special Forces, amphibious capabilities, long-range strike and the other means of controlling disparate threats, especially where key resources are at risk or radical movements are seen to threaten the states or their interests. Maintaining control has involved sudden changes in military tactics and equipment including the emergency development of a huge array of counter-insurgency weaponry, everything from mine-resistant vehicles to armed drones, but these cannot disguise the extraordinary problems that have developed as irregular and asymmetric warfare has evolved.

In this key respect, the experience of the last eight years is hugely relevant to the future. In the original 9/11 attacks, a small number of determined people turned passenger jets into weapons. In Iraq, just a few thousand insurgents tied down over 200,000 of the world's best equipped and best trained armed forces for nearly six years. In Afghanistan the insurgents are probably no greater in number yet are gaining ground after more than eight years of conflict. The "war on terror" has been a classic example of what might be termed "liddism" – keeping the lid on security threats without recognising, still less understanding, the underlying reasons for insecurity. Such an approach - the determined effort to maintain control - fails to recognise the interconnected nature of today's globalised world. The castle gates simply cannot be closed.

Global Responses

Responding effectively to the global challenges is certainly within the capacity of existing society if the necessary changes are made, although there should be no misunderstanding about the extent of the changes required. They relate principally to the two interacting issues of the socio-economic divide and increasingly pressing environmental constraints, and each will require transformative change which goes far beyond what is normally envisaged. On the former, action is required in three main respects.

- One is far greater progress on third world debt relief, given that many countries remain crippled in their need to devote precious resources to servicing debt interest, let alone pay off capital debts.
- The second is the transformation of North-South trading relations towards a genuinely fair international trading system, especially in terms of commodity supply management as advocated by the UN Conference on Trade and Development for so much of the past four decades.
- Finally there is the urgent need for much greater direct assistance, especially gender-aware assistance for the poorest communities which promotes sustainable development. Such direct assistance could be greatly boosted by the development of a Tobin tax on currency transactions.

All three of these requirements far exceed what has been attempted so far, especially in the field of trade reform, where the powerful economies have been only too willing to maintain a system largely based on trade structures of the colonial era which have consistently benefited them.

Climate change is potentially an existential threat if not countered. It requires a response which goes far beyond anything currently proposed. Some industrialised states have recently begun to talk of the need to cut carbon emissions by 80%, which is certainly of the order of what is required, but target dates are set forty or more years into the future. Such reductions are required in less than half that time, and these will require a radical transformation of wealthier societies in a manner still largely unrecognised. Even these reductions will not prevent an acceleration of impacts in the short term. They are therefore needed alongside substantial assistance to the world's weakest and most vulnerable states and communities to counter those effects of climate change that are inevitable in the coming decades.[24]

Prospects

At the end of the first decade of the 21st century there have been some welcome changes in outlook compared with the attitudes of the 1990s. The anti-globalisation campaigns of that decade were multi-faceted and largely uncoordinated but still raised serious critiques of the failings of free-market globalisation. Even if they had little impact on the workings of the world economy and were largely submerged by the impact of 9/11, they left a legacy of unease. Now, the financial crisis of the past two years has raised again the deep inadequacy and dangers of the current system and its persistent failure to promote human well-being across society. Climate change has also risen rapidly up the political agenda, especially in the past five years, and is acquiring a political salience as a result of the hard evidence of the rapidity of change and of the dangerous and possibly even existential consequences if it is not brought under control.

Underlying all of this is the need for a substantial re-thinking of how modern economies can be transformed to ensure sustainability with emancipation.

There are many examples of changing attitudes. The Chinese political leadership shows signs of recognising the disastrous costs to China of unrestrained climate change, and is now investing heavily in renewable energy systems including heavy investment in photovoltaics and solar heating systems as well as the rapid and substantial installation of wind turbines.[25] A recent study of global energy requirements from Stanford University and the University of California at Davis suggest that the human community's entire energy needs could be met from renewables by 2030[26], and the extraordinarily rapid spread of mobile phone systems across the South is a powerful reminder of just how fast new technologies can spread. There is tremendous potential to improve energy conservation ranging from effective insulation to improved space heating efficiency and radical changes in transport through to far more energy-efficient agriculture and manufacturing industry. The potential for new technologies includes the development of third generation photovoltaics, undersea turbines, greatly improved electricity distribution systems and a hydrogen-based energy storage economy. Underlying all of this is the need for a substantial re-thinking of how modern economies can be transformed to ensure sustainability with emancipation.[27]

Even so, the responses required to counter the potentially disastrous consequences of the wealth-poverty divide interacting with an ecologically constrained global system are truly radical. As such, there is the basic risk that the world's trans-national elite communities will opt for actions that fall far short of what is required and will, instead, concentrate primarily on maintaining the status quo. Inevitably this means endeavouring to remain in control and countering reactions from the marginalised, even if this requires military responses as exemplified by the conduct of the war on terror. This is why the very failure of such "old thinking", clearly exemplified by the experience of the war on terror, is so important. In a divided and increasingly constrained world, an elite minority will not be able to prosper at the expense of the majority – a transition to a sustainable security paradigm rooted in emancipation and justice is essential.[28] The war on terror has been a disaster, but recognising its failure might at least help us develop our understanding of global security in a manner appropriate to the 21st Century.

Notes

1 The first of these was: *The United States, Europe and the Majority World after 11 September,* ORG Briefing Paper, October 2001.

2 Subsequent briefings were: *A Never-Ending War? Consequences of 11 September,* ORG Briefing Paper, March 2002; *The "War on Terrorism": 12-month audit and future strategy options,* ORG Briefing Paper, September 2002; *Iraq: Consequences of a War,* ORG Briefing Paper, October 2002; *The "War on Terror": Winning or Losing,* ORG Briefing Paper, September 2003; *Endless War, the global war on terror and the new Bush Administration,* ORG Briefing Paper, March 2005.

3 President George W Bush, State of the Union Address, January 2002, www.whitehouse.gov/stateoftheunion/2002/; accessed 18 May 2007

4 Ibid.

5 President George W Bush, Graduation Speech at US Military Academy, West Point, 1 June 2002, www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/06/2002601-3.html; accessed 18 May 2007.

6 Ibid

7 *Statement of Principles,* 'Project for a New American Century, 3 June 1997, Washington DC.

8 Ibid.

9 Statement by James Woolsey at Senate Confirmation Hearings, February 1993.

10 Charles Krauthammer, "The Bush Doctrine: ABM, Kyoto and the New American Unilateralism, *The Weekly Standard,* 4 June 2001, Washington DC.

11 David A Fulgum, "North Korea Copies Al Qaeda", *Aviation Week,* 5 October 2009.

12 For details of the Iraqi civilian casualties, see www.iraqbodycount.org/

13 Joseph Stiglitz and Linda Bilmes, *The Three Trillion Dollar War*. Allen Lane, 2008.

14 See note (12)

15 Barbara Opall-Rome, "Israel Drives Down Its Defense Burden", *Defense News,* 21 September 2009.

16 Chris Abbott, Paul Rogers and John Sloboda, *"Global Response to Global Threats: Sustainable Security for the 21st Century",* ORG Briefing Paper, June 2006; Chris Abbott, Paul Rogers and John Sloboda, *Beyond Terror,* Random House, 2007.

17 James Davies, Susanna Sandstrom, Anthony Shorrocks and Edward N Wolff, "The World Distribution of Household Wealth", *WIDER Angle,* No 2, 2006, World Institute for Development Economics Research, Helsinki.

18 "Separation Anxiety", *The Economist,* 3 October 2009.

19 Clifford Coonan, "China prepares to clamp down on workers' protests", *Independent,* London, 22 February 2009.

20 Quoted in: James Stephenson, "The 1994 Zapatista Rebellion in Southern Mexico – an Analysis and Assessment", *Occasional Paper No 12,* The Strategic and Combat Studies Institute, The Army Staff College, Camberley, 1995.

21 Jane Macartney, "China creates crack units to crush poverty protests", *The Times,* London, 20 June 2005.

22 P V Ramana, "Red Storm Rising", *Jane's Intelligence Review,* August 2008.

23 Shanta Barley, "A World Four Degrees Warmer", *New Scientist,* 3 October 2009.

24 Dan Smith and Janani Wivekananda, *A Climate of Conflict: the links between climate change, peace and war.* International Alert, London, November 2007.

25 Steven Murson, "China Steps Up On Emissions". *Washington Post,* 24 October 2009.

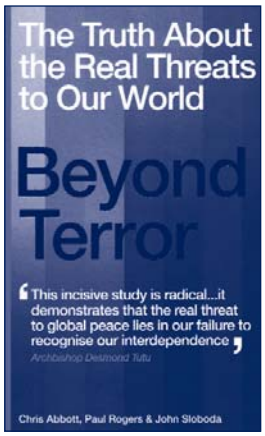
26 Mark Z Jacobson and Mark A Delucchi, "A Path to Sustainable Energy by 2030", *Scientific American,* November 2009.

27 Some of the most relevant work on this is being undertaken by the *New Economics Foundation,* especially its new "Great Transformation" project. See: www.neweconomics.org/ and especially www.neweconomics.org/gen/greattransition191009.aspx .

28 See www.sustainablesecurity.org

Also available from Oxford Research Group

Everyone's Guide to Achieving Change:
A step-by-step approach to dialogue with decision-makers
May 2007 (6th edition)
This handbook is designed to introduce the reader to a successful way of achieving change, based on over 20 years of experience of dialogue with decision-makers. It offers a step-by-step approach for groups of citizens or individuals to engage directly with government decision-makers and policy advisers on issues of national or international security, adopting an informed non-confrontational approach.



Beyond Terror. The truth about the real threats to our world
2007
Is international terrorism really the single greatest threat to world security? This important book shows why the focus on terrorism distracts attention from other, much greater threats:

- Climate change;
- Competition over resources;
- Marginalisation of the majority of the world;
- Global militarisation.

For a full list of publications please see
www.oxfordresearchgroup.org.uk

Many ORG publications can be purchased online at
www.orgshop.org.uk

OxfordResearchGroup

Oxford Research Group (ORG) is an independent think tank, which works to bring about positive change on issues of national and international security. Established in 1982, it is a registered charity. We employ a small core of staff and consultants, overseen by a Board of Trustees, and supported by a network of Patrons, Associates and Sustainers who come from all walks of life. In 2003, Oxford Research Group was awarded the Niwano Peace Prize, and in April 2005 The Independent newspaper named ORG as one of the top twenty think tanks in the UK.

Global Security after the War on Terror

Paul Rogers assesses the impact of the "war on terror" on international peace and stability. He argues that the experience of the 8 years since 2001 supports the Oxford Research Group's long-standing arguments that there is a need for a fundamental re-thinking of those current approaches to security that focus primarily on military instruments. Instead, the major global trends of a wider socio-economic divide, mass marginalisation and environmental constraints all require an approach rooted in what is now being termed sustainable security.

He examines the context of the decision to go to war after 9/11 and the anticipated results, and goes on to analyse the actual consequences and seeks to explain why they have been so radically different to original expectations by the United States and its closest coalition partners such as the UK. He then updates the analysis of the major global challenges that the Oxford Research Group has previously developed and the need for a new paradigm focused on sustainable security. He concludes by assessing how the experience of the eight years that have followed the 9/11 atrocities might make a change of paradigm more likely.

Oxford Research Group
Development House
56-64 Leonard Street
London EC2A 4LT
United Kingdom

T +44 (0)20 7549 0298
F +44 (0)20 7681 1668
E org@oxfordresearchgroup.org.uk

www.oxfordresearchgroup.org.uk

ISBN 978-0-9552846-0-1

Registered Charity No. 299436
Limited Company No. 02260840. Registered in England and Wales.