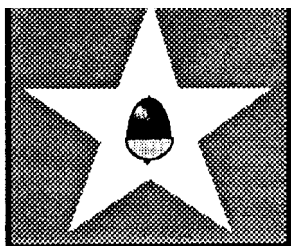


Conflict Studies Research Centre

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**Conflict in a Changing World:
Looking Two Decades Forward**

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A New World Order?

The end, in 1991, of what Eric Hobsbawm christened the "short" 20th century, was heralded by optimists as the start of a new and altogether better era. The Cold War was over and the USSR no more. Ideological struggle was over, with liberal democracy and market economics triumphant. There would be a "new world order" characterized by peaceful international relations and the rule of law, underwritten by a uniquely powerful and benign USA; the defeat of Saddam Hussein was an earnest of things to come.

Actually, the last decade witnessed, world-wide, over 50 ethnic/communal conflicts, 170 border conflicts and two major wars involving extra-regional forces. The end of the Cold War had made much of the world safe for hot wars. Many of these had previously been suppressed by the superpowers, either exercising their hegemony in their spheres of influence, or in co-operation to avoid a clash which could evolve into World War III (or world War IV if you think of the Cold War as World War III). Without Cold War dynamics overriding local relations and interests, political crises stemming from ethno-national or socio-economic causes came to the fore for ethnic, communal, state and regional leaders. Is this post Cold War trend towards civil, local and occasionally regional conflict establishing a pattern for the future?

The Strategic Environment 2000-2020

If history teaches any lesson, it is that predicting the course of two decades is a dodgy business, especially in a period of great upheaval. For example, no futurologist in 1795, 1850, 1900 or 1925, did, or could have, anticipated the events and outcomes of the following 20 years. Nevertheless, it is possible to suggest some general propositions and alternatives about the developing security environment over that same period. They are, of course, based on observable trends and exclude possible, but unforeseeable, political, environmental, cultural or technological developments that would create major discontinuities. Was 11th September 2001 such a development? Is the world being transformed, and if so into what? Such ideas are much hyped, but it is really too early to tell, though some changes are clearly underway.

The World will remain multipolar (*pace* Russian accusations that the US and its NATO allies are striving to create a unipolar dominance). This will be true despite the fact that US economic and military dominance will remain so great that the USA will not be dependent on allies to pursue interests perceived as fundamental. America is not cut out to be an autocratic hegemon. The world will probably also continue along two divergent paths: towards economic integration (despite the

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efforts of anti-globalisation activists) and in the direction of political fragmentation. There will thus be endemic uncertainty and instability. These will be exacerbated by certain trends.

World population is expected to grow from the current 6 billion to up to 9 billion over the next two decades. Perhaps 95% of this growth will take place in developing countries, where the average age of populations will fall dramatically. This will create massive pressures on resources, from such basics as food and water to those provided by wealth like employment, education and health care. There will be heightening competition for agricultural land. At the same time, there will be growing urbanization, with today's 270 megacities (ie, with populations upwards of 8 million) expanding to over 500; such city growth will outstrip that of work opportunities and the provision of services, resulting in deteriorating conditions. Consequently, driven by economic necessity and by illusions of the prospects of a better life, there will be increased migration both within countries and from poorer to richer states. These developments, perhaps exacerbated by environmental problems, will give rise to class and/or communal tensions and thence internal conflicts in countries where they are most acute and where the state cannot cope with the consequences. Remember that there will be a huge youth bulge within the overall over-population and that there is a correlation between youth, disappointment and violent behaviour. Its wealth will not render the western world immune to the consequences of these trends.

Regional boundaries will become progressively blurred as the information revolution spreads, technology annihilates distance and problems transect borders. Some argue (as was fashionable as long ago as pre-1914) that an increasingly interconnected world will be increasingly interdependent and therefore more peaceful. This will be true of most of the developed world, where there is now an increasingly common values system. But in most of the developing world, growing (and ever more visible) disparities between rich and poor, both within and between countries, together with increased competition for scarce resources driven by population growth will lead to growing tensions and these will more readily spill over from one area to another. To compound the problems of governments, organized crime and terrorism will continue an already observable trend towards internationalization.

Technology will spread rapidly, thanks to the competition of civilian industries in global markets. It will also become cheaper (*vide* the history of the personal computer and the mobile phone). These trends may have beneficent effects in the security sphere. For instance, major advances in the prevention and cure of disease, the provision of plentiful cheap food and the solution to some environmental problems could reduce the incidence of conflict, providing always that they are enjoyed by the whole populations of developing countries. They can also exert baleful effects. When coupled with the existence of an intensely competitive international arms market, they will make possible an increase in the military capabilities of even some poorer, but aggressive states, including so-called rogue states. Potentially even more serious, they will enhance the destructive capabilities of non-state actors such as Aum Shinrikyo and al-Qaeda. Demographic, economic, geopolitical, religious and ideological developments will drive some states and non-state groups to acquire greater power to pursue their goals by militant means.

WMD proliferation is likely to accelerate, the rate being driven by regional and global uncertainties (including the fear of great power intervention and hegemonic

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ambitions). The more states are driven to seek this route to security, the more others will feel impelled to do likewise. The more states acquire WMD, the more likely they are to fall into the hands of non-state actors, including terrorists. The danger is particularly acute in the areas of chemical, and perhaps biological, weapons, which are more easily developed clandestinely than nuclear (*vide* the Aum Shinrikyo sect's nerve agent attack on the Tokyo underground in 1995 and the 2001 anthrax attacks in the USA).

While states will continue to be the principal actors in the international arena, the sovereignty of many will come under pressure both from others trying to impose their values and from non-state actors. Trans-national corporations will exert increasing influence, not least in the security sphere. Organized crime, also increasingly trans-national, will exploit its business, financial and governmental connections to spread its influence; its wealth means that it will also be very knowledgeable and well armed. It will also be part of/co-operate with international terrorist movements. Political, religious, cultural and environmental groups will challenge existing power structures, not least through terrorism. Moreover, the "new terrorists" will be more terrifying than the politically motivated (often state-sponsored) varieties of old. The latter were driven by desire to gain strategic advantage in pursuit of long-term goals and thus avoided counter-productive excesses that risked endangering their "legitimacy" and alienating potential supporters. Their post-modern successors have more nebulous aims, often apparently nihilistic or apocalyptic. They present no political demands for negotiation. Lacking a plausible political agenda, they recognize no constraints on the use of violence, and indeed seem to revel in the prospect of mass, civilian casualties and destruction.

With the disappearance of the single, clear and monolithic threat posed by Soviet communism, it may become progressively more difficult to maintain existing alliances, like the Japanese-American or NATO, at least in their old forms. The USA, disillusioned by waging war through committee against Yugoslavia, has already demonstrated its preparedness to dispense with its largely, militarily, ineffective NATO partners in its so-called "war against terrorism". The Americans no longer need their allies, however politically useful it is to keep them on side. On the other hand, such western clubs have come to be more than mere marriages of convenience to maintain a balance of power. Shared values, common democratic societies, market economies and interests in maintaining stability, coupled with long-established habits of inter-governmental co-operation, should prevent a return to the international anarchy that characterized the old international system - at least as far as the west is concerned. But new challenges will necessitate the creation and sustainment of new "coalitions of the willing", a process complicated by differing perceptions of national interest and morality. As the world situation changes, friends and allies in one endeavour may become opponents or neutrals in the next. This trend is already evident in the "war against terrorism", *vide* the changing positions of Russia, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, to name but a few.

The USA will probably remain globally engaged. The size of its economy, an increasing web of commercial, cultural, political and security ties and its sheer pervasiveness, coupled with the certainty of chaos should it retreat into isolationism, make this fairly certain. America will also retain, perhaps even increase its military and economic dominance. (It is noteworthy that its 2000 defence budget was greater than the combined total of the nine next largest military spenders, yet amounted to only 3% of GDP - hardly a strain on an economy that

created almost one third of total world product.) However, the extent and nature of the role it is prepared to play will be conditioned by:

- an impulse towards unilateralism, evident in the George W Bush administration. How far this will go will depend both on a continuing community of interests with, and the level of co-operation and support received from, current allies and friends and on its willingness to allow its freedom of action to be trammelled in the interest of keeping friends;
- the level of US domestic harmony and the avoidance of a serious, long economic slump;
- the growing vulnerability of the homeland to unconventional attack, from terrorism, through cyberspace to the use of WMD;
- the nature and extent of any setbacks suffered (as in Lebanon 1983-84 or Somalia in 1993-94, for instance);
- the rise, unlikely but not impossible, of a global peer competitor (China or, less plausibly, Russia);
- the effectiveness and consistency of its leadership.

The Asia-Pacific region will become more economically powerful and politically important. Especially important will be Japan and, the more so as 2020 approaches (always assuming it is not inhibited by political chaos), China. The political ambitions and influence of both these powers are likely to grow. There could be a struggle for regional superiority or even hegemony, especially if China eschews democratic development in favour of nationalism and military power. The whole region will probably become increasingly militarized, turbulent and insecure. The nature of Korean unification will have a profound influence on the way power balances develop, as will the fate of the apparently failing state of Indonesia and the troubled Philippines. Also important will be the direction taken by India and Russia as important alternative sources of power in the region.

Europe's place in the global distribution of power will depend on the fate of the integration project. A federal, or even confederal, EU would be a major player (having a population 50% or more and a GDP 40% or more larger than those of the USA). If the EU continues merely to muddle along with no decisive leadership or clear sense of direction, Europe's relative decline will continue (today it contains seven of the world's largest economies, but by some predictions the number will be down to two by 2020). If integration efforts fail and there is a reaction towards the re-nationalization of economic, foreign and defence policies, European influence will decline drastically and a power vacuum could grow with consequential growing instability in Eastern Europe and the Balkans. How that vacuum would be filled would depend very much on developments in Germany and Russia.

Russia may well resume its downward spiral into economic, social, environmental and demographic disaster and cease to be a significant power. If it avoids that fate, however, its size and economic/military potential mean that its neighbours' destinies are inextricably intertwined with its own. Towards the end of the period under discussion, Russia could conceivably become the centre of a revitalized, predominantly Slavic, confederation the extent depending on the counter-pull that Turkey and/or Islam exert on the Transcaucasus and Central Asia. It is possible that a revitalized Russia would be a democratic and dynamic state that would be a *status quo* power content to rely on economic rather than military might to spread its influence. Such a Russia could co-operate with the EU and USA to bring stability to Eastern Europe and Central Asia. More likely, perhaps, it would be more or less authoritarian and confrontational. More likely still, it will remain weak as a

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result of failed, or only partially successful political, social and economic reforms. This would leave an arc of instability from the Balkans, through the Caucasus to Central Asia, all regions where there are potentially conflictual rivalries.

The Middle East could, just conceivably, see a comprehensive and durable settlement of the Arab-Israeli dispute, democratic political and economic progress and a move towards regional integration. Much more likely, it will continue to be a flashpoint and still important as the World's biggest source of cheap oil. The region is subject to systemic stresses from demographic trends, failing governments, dysfunctional economies, growing resource scarcities (especially water), ethnic problems and major ideological/religious cleavages within and between countries. The Middle East is likely to be plagued by intra- and some inter-state conflict, driven by a powerful combination of nationalism, Islam and economics. Chaos and anarchy are not impossible as the region is home to several potential failed states. There will be competition for dominance between regional rivals with the USA and perhaps the EU, Russia, Pakistan and even China being extra-regional actors in a general free-for-all.

Africa will probably continue, for the most part, to be a backward, impoverished continent characterized by endemic civil and inter-state wars in many regions. In fact, things could get worse as colonial-era states continue to fragment along tribal, religious and ethnic lines causing a proliferation of new political entities, some of them unviable, with yet more attendant internal and regional conflicts. Sub-Saharan Africa will also remain a geo-strategic backwater as far as the developed world is concerned, though north Africa's proximity to Europe will make it an area of concern to developed states.

The rebirth of ideology as a driving force cannot be discounted: for example, Huntington's "clash of civilizations", with an unstable, imploding Middle East being replaced by a loosely knit Islamic crescent from Morocco to Pakistan and beyond in confrontation with the richer, Christian west and north. This seems an unlikely development; neither religion nor an international ideology seem able to transcend ethnic, cultural, economic or political differences between peoples and states. However, there is real danger in the USA and its allies broadening excessively or misdirecting their "war against terrorism". By both reinforcing the observable trend towards Islamic fundamentalism and establishing a perception of the USA as an enemy of Islam, and by trying to impose western values on alien cultures, they could make Huntington's a self-fulfilling prophecy. Perhaps the increasingly murderous confrontations between Christians and Muslims from Algeria to Indonesia really are a harbinger of things to come. If that is so, increasingly multi-cultural societies in the west will not be immune.

Some Propositions on the Nature of Future Conflict

Changing Approaches to Conflict

The attitude of the great powers to war, at least in the west (including Japan), is changing. As Edward Luttwak has argued, they are no longer playing the great power game – at least in the traditional way. The struggle for territory is now *passé*. Now, competition is for influence, especially in the economic field, and national boundaries are of limited relevance to it. Furthermore, for all their awesome military technology, developed powers no longer have the fuel to drive great wars. The fuel of old-style war was people, to die as soldiers. Today, in the west, the shrinking size of families and changing values mean that people are no longer as expendable as they

once were. Heavy casualties will still be acceptable in wars of national survival, or even in defence of fundamental national interests, but not in conflicts of choice. The result of these changes in attitude may result in a reversion to the sort of use of military force common in 18th Century Europe: widespread, indeed prevalent, but not seeking decisive goals whatever the price. Western powers, with populations no longer easily aroused to make sacrifices, will be very cautious and will fight for limited objectives and using limited means which are low-cost in casualties – especially air power and special forces. There will, however, be two problems which will bedevil such an approach.

Air power seems to offer the prospect of a casualty risk-free involvement in military conflict – the sending of a politically decisive message without the potentially messy use of ground troops. Politicians, ignorant of military realities and swayed by the siren promises of air power protagonists touting dubious "lessons" of the Gulf, Kosovo and Afghanistan wars, will seek to rely on it exclusively in inappropriate circumstances.

Governments (and peoples) will, sooner or later, have to suffer an inevitable backlash as enemies seek asymmetrical responses to perceived western neo-colonial aggression (whether military or economic-cultural). Across much of the Third World, the international order is seen as an imperial order run by the USA in which the dispossessed have no stake and which consequently imposes no responsibilities on them. Being unable to fight successfully according to western rules, conventionally weaker enemies will tear up the rule-book.

Countries of the developing world, of course, have plenty of fuel. However, they will continue to lack the reach and technological sophistication to take on the west in traditional war.

Poorer, militarily less sophisticated states may hesitate to confront the west over issues short of national survival for fear of suffering pain which cannot be reciprocated. Thus inter-state wars, like that in the Gulf, which involve the USA and/or some of its major allies, may well be less likely in the near future. But their danger will not disappear. As time passes, they may well become more likely as potential aggressors come to feel confident in their improved capabilities and, more importantly, believe that the powerful lack the unity and political will to act. Miscalculation could again result in war as, indeed, it did with Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait. Collective security action to resist an old-fashioned land grab may occasionally be required, especially where western strategic interests are at stake. It may also be more difficult if the aggressor does not follow Saddam's policy of seize and then passively hold but instead pursues offensive action to deny in-theatre entry points to interventionist forces – or make their acquisition too expensive to contemplate.

They will find asymmetric responses to conventional military power which give them the confidence to challenge the mighty. Learning the lessons of the Gulf and Yugoslav wars, regional powers will become increasingly well armed (including with WMD) and doctrinally better prepared and organized to resist western interventionism. They may also be prepared to spend tens of thousands of lives to secure national goals seen as essential, calculating that the west will be unprepared to make major sacrifices in what is a limited war for it but a total war for them. (The Vietnamese struggle for unity and independence provides a paradigm.) And the 11th September 2001 attack on the USA is probably a foretaste, a demonstration that even the weak can have a capacity to deter or punish.

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One way or another, the days of short, successful, pain-free western military operations against relatively minor states will probably be short-lived.

Intra-state Conflict

Most recent conflicts, however, have not been, or at least did not begin as, interstate wars with clear violations of international rules or norms. Rather, they have been sub-state conflicts between rival ethnic or communal groups. This trend is likely to continue, even accelerate. It will do so in an environment that is currently becoming as uncertain legally and morally as it is politically. In attacking Yugoslavia in contradiction to its own statutes, without UN sanction and contrary to the Charter, the NATO action over Kosovo has set precedents that will bedevil international relations for many years to come. NATO insists that international law has evolved to recognize that pressing moral considerations override the once basic principle that, by and large, a country's internal affairs are its own concern. Unfortunately, the latter principle is unambiguous but the former lies in the eye of the beholder. NATO, in the view of several important states, usurped the role of the UN, taking upon itself the responsibility for deciding where, when and in what circumstances aggressive military action is justified. Where the alliance has led, others may follow. In the future, other governments will use the alliance's intervention to excuse their own interventions in other countries. Ironically, indeed, it is possible that western democracies, some of which are beginning to regret the outcome in Kosovo, and now in Macedonia, may, in future, be more inhibited in acting on the precedent they have established than less scrupulous powers.

For the foreseeable future, the principal form of conflict will probably be intra-state, at least initially. But its spread to unstable neighbours, whether by accident or design, will often be easy, sometimes inevitable, as is happening from Kosovo to Macedonia today. It may well attract the attention of outside interventionists with either mercenary or moral motivation. Such intra-state conflicts will have some of the following characteristics.

They may result from the inability of governments to govern some of their territory effectively. Conflict could be sparked off by extreme socio-economic or ethnic/communal divisions within a state and thereafter be exacerbated by a failing regime resorting to violence against its own citizens in an attempt to hang on to power. Former-Yugoslavia provides a model.

They may result from a total collapse of government, creating a failed state in which anarchy prevails, as happened in Lebanon in the '70s, Somalia in the '90s and contemporary Congo.

Ethnic and communal conflict will become an increasingly common form of intra-state warfare. By its very nature, it will tend to be absolute war in the Clausewitzian sense as compromise is very difficult (if not impossible) over end states. The drive to create ethnically/religiously pure regions can both destroy states and create new ones; former Yugoslavia and perhaps Indonesia are but two contemporary examples.

Various non-state actors may be involved on different sides. In addition to such traditional players as disaffected regional governors, warlords and ethnic or religious leaders, in future there will also be transnational corporations, organized crime and even eco-warriors. They will often have an interest in expanding the conflict. Osama bin Laden has demonstrated the power such actors can possess to effect fundamental changes in the world situation.

Such sub-state actors may be fighting for one or more of the following reasons: ethnic/communal security; seizure of land; control over resources or wealth; revenge for real or imagined past injustices; the triumph of an idea; even the greater glory of their leaders.

Conflicts may involve several belligerents representing different ethnic, communal or ideological/religious groups or interests. To complicate matters yet further, they may straddle borders *ab initio* or they may spill across them. Afghanistan provides a contemporary example.

They may lead to, or be worsened by, economic disaster (and possibly environmental also as already inadequate infrastructures are damaged or decay through neglect). Such developments may, in turn, feed the conflict by preventing those who want to do so from returning to normal life by depriving them of necessities like food, clean water, shelter and employment. Banditry may become as rife as more or less organized combat, an outcome to be seen in many African conflicts.

The conduct of such conflicts will not fit conveniently into traditional compartments of conventional or unconventional warfare. Time-honoured legal and moral restraints are giving way in face of ethnic, ideological/religious and nationalist pressures and future conflicts will often be characterized by a mixture of the two. Fought by a mix of regular, militia and irregular forces, they will mainly be fought with low-tech weaponry, but they may be very intense with high casualty rates, especially amongst civilians.

Intervention limited to the use of air power alone will be of limited effectiveness and may well be counter-productive. Will western powers be prepared to maintain adequate intelligence capabilities, ground forces and strategic lift to allow a flexible response?

Such conflicts could yet take place in the Balkans, or even eastern Europe, especially if NATO and EU solidarity weaken and a revived Russia becomes confrontational. But most will occur in those developing countries which are essentially ungovernable (failed states) or where central government has lost control of part of its territory to local warlords or ethnic or communal groups which themselves cannot establish effective control. Rarely will vital western strategic interests be at stake. Even if strategic resources are cut off by conflict, it will usually be possible to find substitutes, alternative production technologies or replacement sources elsewhere. Nor, with the end of the Cold War, will great powers feel impelled to get involved for geo-strategic reasons. Involvement in such conflicts will usually be a matter of choice and not necessity.

Western intervention, such as that in Afghanistan, may well be prompted in response to asymmetrical attacks like that of 11th September. However, the main impulse is likely to come from the "moral imperative". There will always be a "something must be done" brigade and media coverage will gain it much support. As communications technology (especially miniaturization) advances, so the electronic media becomes less dependent on official sources and virtually impossible to monitor and control. Simultaneously and consequently, it becomes more pervasive and influential. Thus there will often be pressure for humanitarian intervention to ease the sufferings of innocent civilians, or for peace enforcement action to punish the wicked, defend human rights and force belligerents to the negotiating table. Parties to the conflict will try to exploit this, following the example

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of the KLA in Kosovo: make enough trouble, fight a good information war and you may win an air force. Though there will usually be sound reasons for not becoming involved, intervention will become a fact of future life as long as the indignation of western publics is easily aroused (at least until one goes horribly wrong).

Deterring intra-state conflict, including by pre-emptive deployments, may become fashionable but will be fraught with problems. Bringing it to an end through the use of punishment and coercion will be more so. A variety of factors will doom most such efforts to failure.

Intra-state conflicts are usually very complex. There is usually a multitude of actors and crises. Identifying and then simultaneously cajoling and coercing them all into accepting a durable settlement is often all but impossible. The subjective rationality of many of the belligerents is difficult to understand and predict, save that, in ethnic and communal conflict, the different sides usually see the struggle as one for core values and therefore a zero-sum game where compromise is unthinkable.

Interventionists may be able to suppress the symptoms of such conflicts, but they will find it immensely difficult, if not impossible, to eliminate the causes. They must be prepared for a long haul, and perhaps (as in Bosnia and Kosovo) a sacrifice of some principles underlying the intervention. Will governments, or more importantly, their electorates, be prepared for this? The media is all-pervasive. It is also fickle. Even a small number of well-publicised western casualties can change public attitudes, as happened in Somalia after the deaths of 18 US Rangers; moral indignation is a fine spur to action as long as the action is all but cost-free. Or the public may tire of a seemingly unending commitment once the outrage that led to intervention has been forgotten and the feeling grows that all parties are as bad as each other.

Even if western publics do tire of an intervention, though, their governments may be forced to persevere for reasons of alliance/coalition solidarity and/or because they are trapped by the moral imperatives they have been trumpeting. As happened in Bosnia, a well-intentioned intervention can end up by subjecting both states and alliances to potentially fissiparous strains. Getting involved is always easier than getting out, and events (especially "mission-creep") have a way of invalidating even the best exit strategies.

Asymmetric Warfare

Asymmetric warfare is a much abused concept. Most wars are asymmetrical. Victory can stem from massive technological superiority (19th Century colonial wars), numerical superiority (Second Balkan War, 1913) or conceptual superiority (German conquests 1940-41). The term will be used here to describe conflict between two sides with a huge disparity in combat power where the weaker is fighting, unlike the stronger, over core issues and refuses to engage according to the latter's rules. Just as bacteria naturally mutate to resist anti-biotics, methods of waging war adapt to cope with superior strength. Asymmetric warfare can be used either in a war between states/coalitions or in a struggle between states and non-state actors.

Inter-State War & the West

Saddam Hussein fought a conventional war for Kuwait and lost. Slobodan Milosevic was brought to believe that holding Kosovo was not worth the political price of enduring prolonged bombardment and possible invasion. In both cases, superior western military capabilities brought victory with little or no cost in lives. Western publics have become accustomed to quick victories that are not only pain-free for them but also avoid excessive collateral casualties to their adversaries' civilian populations. It will not always be thus. Even weak potential enemies will seek ways partially to negate overwhelming firepower and exact sufficient price to make interventionists have second thoughts about pursuing a war of choice and not necessity. To do this, they will refuse to fight conventionally but try to shift the nature of the conflict to areas which play to their strengths and exploit western vulnerabilities.

Wars are won or lost at the political-strategic level, not the military operational or tactical. The outcome is thus not pre-determined by numerical or technological superiority, or even the two in combination. For example, Vietnam won its wars of unification against more numerous and militarily sophisticated foes despite the fact that it lost most of the battles. Arguably, Israel is being forced back behind its 1967 borders despite being the dominant regional power. These, and other, struggles illustrate the limitations of overwhelming military power in a politically asymmetric situation. The weaker side, when fighting for core issues on which there is national consensus, may possess superior political will to achieve victory; and a preparedness to go for the long haul, if necessary to fight for decades. By contrast, an enemy engaged in a war of choice is likely to find it difficult to sustain political unity and the will to engage in a protracted struggle if battlefield success does not quickly lead to peace on his terms.

When contemplating wars of choice, western powers today would like to fight short campaigns, relying on their technological advantages to inflict highly selective but crippling blows with little fear of effective retaliation. This is because democratic governments are (rightly) sensitive to world and, especially, domestic opinion. Accordingly, they are as averse to casualties as their electorates. They are almost as worried about heavy enemy casualties, collateral damage and civilian deaths, as was apparent in the attacks on both Iraq and Yugoslavia. They lack the stomach for a protracted campaign for which they have not psychologically prepared their peoples. What is true of individual countries becomes even more true of alliances or coalitions (and most interventions are likely to be multinational as few countries have the capability to act unilaterally and all wish burdens to be shared and international legitimacy to be enhanced through collective action). In any coalition, degrees of enthusiasm for military action must necessarily vary. Once the weakest link begins to fray, the whole multinational effort may unravel – an outcome feared in the wars with both Iraq and Yugoslavia. Internal and coalition/alliance cohesion was the centre of gravity which both Saddam and Milosevic tried to attack, though the dubious nature of their causes and their even more dubious methods undermined their ability to do so. A future enemy will try to improve on their performances and may well be able, as they were not, to portray itself to a substantial body of world opinion as the party with right on its side and therefore a victim of "western imperialist aggression".

The first problem that such an enemy faces is how to combat a political strategy designed to demonize and isolate him so that he can be defeated by a firepower, attrition oriented military strategy which involves minimal risk. He can find several answers at the strategic level. To be fully effective, however, they should be

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prepared beforehand, in peacetime. Moreover, the more thoroughgoing the advance preparations, some obvious, some with hints judiciously leaked and some covert, the stronger the deterrent effect against potential interventionists or neighbouring states that might be tempted to offer them host nation support. Like a poker player with a weak hand, he must try, by raising the cost of entry, to drive as many players as possible from entering the game.

The potential target of western intervention needs to mount vigorous information and diplomatic campaigns to sell his side of the story and avoid isolation. He must try to win over natural friends, including those facing similar problems and those who are already hostile towards, or even doubtful about, western attitudes and policies in general. He must also try to divide western powers and their publics on the likely *casus belli* to prevent or delay coalition -building. It will be particularly important to deprive would-be interventionists of bases for action in neighbouring states through a judicious mix of bribery, intimidation and, where feasible, an appeal to their publics over the heads of hostile but politically insecure governments. The longer the delay he can impose, the less likely it may become that interventionists will gather the necessary regional support. It will also be easy to portray western action as stalling to gain time for a force build-up, followed by an aggressive response to a lost political argument designed to close the road to a reasonable political settlement.

He must prepare his country and population for a protracted war. Such preparation should be both psychological and practical. In the latter category, passive measures can be taken to complicate the business of western targeteers and ensure that attacks are either ineffective or produce the collateral damage and civilian casualties that western leaders fear; the enemy must not think that he can win a cheap victory through aerial bombardment alone. The sort of things that he can do are:

- embed military installations and production facilities in civilian educational, medical and religious institutions and factories;
- make full military use of potentially dual-use facilities such as airfields and communications centres;
- harden and decentralize production and transmission of electricity and negotiate third party electricity supply agreements with other countries so that attacks on power generation and distribution affect neighbours;
- encourage foreign investment and foreign contractors into the country to limit target options;
- create underground fuel reserves in built-up areas.

By such means, the effectiveness of strategic air attack as a means of coercion may be reduced if national will is strong. This would face the interventionists with the choice of giving up or of upping the ante, possibly by committing ground forces. The Kosovo conflict shows clearly how reluctant would-be western interventionists are to take such a step.

In the military sphere, his second problem area, this hypothetical opponent of the west can capitalize on two advantages.

He does not necessarily have to win, in the sense of defeating the enemy in the field. It may suffice merely to avoid defeat while inflicting a steady, even if small, stream of casualties for long enough to induce a collapse of the enemy's political will. This

strategy served well in wars of national liberation from southeast Asia to Algeria in the three decades following World War II.

He is also in the fortunate position where a tactical victory can have strategic repercussions. A spectacular coup which kills a score or two of the interventionists at once can have a huge impact on enemy public opinion (as did the Beirut suicide truck bombings in 1983 which killed 241 US marines and 58 French soldiers). This is true even if the incident has no effect whatsoever on the military situation.

In other words, he can exploit the fact that countries like the USA are increasingly relying on applying weapons designed to fight a major war to cope with a different situation. These weapons cannot be used in the old way, however, as wars do not take place in a neutral environment but amongst people and in the full glare of the media. The conventionally weaker opponent has to exploit this fact to turn the west's greatest strength into a source of weakness. He should try to keep the fighting below the threshold of the utility of high-tech weaponry, at a level where the ability to deliver massive firepower is of limited value and his ability to send small but politically damaging numbers of interventionists home in body-bags can act as a deterrent to action.

It is, of course, pointless to try to fight asymmetrically against a technologically and possibly numerically superior foe with a symmetrical military organization. To do so may simply provide the enemy with targets, as the Iraqis did in 1991. Conventionally equipped and structured forces may be needed to cope with other regional foes, but they must be able to operate unconventionally against more capable interventionists. They must be capable of dispersion, concealment and deception, yet able to fight effectively in terrain where technological superiority does not give the enemy a decisive advantage. The interventionists can be taken on in forest, mountain and, above all, in urban areas where the media will be able to record the suffering of the civilian population; the Israeli experience in Beirut is an example of the sort of fighting which western powers are anxious to avoid. Operations on less favourable ground can be restricted to sniping, booby-trapping, car bombing, rocket attacks and other such politically significant harassing actions.

It should be noted here that inexpensive, easily obtainable modern technology can be used to good effect by the primarily low-tech force. For instance:

Access to cyberspace will enable the self-styled "victim of imperialist aggression" to conduct active information operations to undermine the political will of both the "aggressors" and those governments that support them and provide base facilities. The effects of this could be felt globally and not merely in-theatre.

Command and control need no longer rely on complex, easily located and vulnerable radio communications. Fibre-optic land-lines, the internet and the mobile phone will facilitate the control and co-ordination of dispersed groupings.

Inexpensive GPS jammers can degrade the high-tech force's ability to manoeuvre. They can also negate the accuracy of many precision weapons, complicating their use or even precluding it in population centres.

The use of sophisticated, but still relatively cheap dummy targets can exhaust the enemy's supply of expensive and relatively scarce precision weapons to little effect but at a cost in time, accurate battle-damage assessment and, ultimately, credibility.

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It may be possible to hack into enemy intelligence and targeting computers to spread disinformation and create disruption at critical times; such actions depend on brain-power and not on unaffordable systems.

And the humble portable SAM, ATGM and mortar with precision munitions can be used to good effect against both high value targets (such as AWACS and JSTARS aircraft on the ground) and personnel and for inflicting a steady run of casualties.

Of course, the putative western opponent need not eschew high-tech weaponry altogether. Instead of trying to compete across the board, he may choose to invest selectively in advanced weaponry in critical areas, for instance in air defence, semi-precision SSMs, intelligent naval mines and submarines. Access to satellite imagery, either commercial or supplied by a friendly power, could help in targeting. Of particular deterrent and perhaps war-fighting value would be mobile ballistic or cruise missiles with WMD warheads. Possession of such weaponry could not only threaten interventionist forces and delay a force build-up but also help to deter neighbouring states from acting as host nations.

While the military strategic initiative will eventually have to be surrendered to the superior western force, it will be important to convince the enemy that military intervention will not be a cost-free, spectator sport. The fight should be carried where possible to the enemy's homelands and to potential regional bases. Effective action during the period in which the enemy is attempting to put together his coalition and deploy could be decisive in preventing intervention. This is likely to be a lengthy period as it takes time to gain internal and then international consensus for intervention and then transport strong forces over great distances (for the Gulf War, it took over six months, though American concentration on improving strategic mobility will lessen future deployment times). Initially, non-lethal active measures could be used, using information warfare techniques. Interference with electricity and water supplies, air traffic control, internet commerce and financial transactions, however temporary, could deliver a psychological shock and create panic which could make people think twice about the necessity for a so-called moral intervention. A media offensive would point out that such economic disruption was more humane and proportionate than massive aerial bombardment as practised by the interventionists.

If it was thought necessary and not counter-productive (the reaction of democracies being notoriously hard to predict), selective escalation to terrorist action may be deemed possible. This could comprise attacks on purely military targets, (largely) non-lethal attacks on economic targets, selective assassination (eg, of key personnel) or even mass murder such as the 1993 failed attempt at, and the 2001 successful destruction of, New York's World Trade Centre. However, especially after 11th September, large-scale murderous assaults on civilian populations are relatively unlikely by rational states which seek long term goals or strategic advantage and fear retaliation by an enraged enemy. That is more likely to be a tactic employed by a non-state actor, though possibly used by such in support of a perceived victim of western aggression.

In fighting western powers, the target state must always seek a competitive edge by building on areas where it has a comparative advantage (eg, greater preparedness to suffer casualties), by focusing on innovation in areas neglected by the enemy and by changing the rules of the game. In its efforts to do so, it may well enjoy an advantage over the interventionists, especially if they are part of an alliance/coalition, and especially if it is happy to rely on technology to bring victory.

Consider Colonel Boyd's OODA Loop – the never-ending cycle of observation, orientation, decision and action. Provided its decisions are correct and well implemented, the side that goes through the cycle faster and thus wins the battle for time enjoys a decided advantage. The enemy is forced into a reactive posture, and his reactions are likely to become progressively more belated and ineffective. Technological superiority can confer an advantage in the observation and action phases of the cycle, but it does not help with the decisive, intellectual phases of orientation and decision. In these, the key issues are realism, understanding, conceptual (preferably non-linear, lateral) thinking and rapid, really decisive decision-making at both political and military leadership levels. Arguably, there is good reason to believe that western powers, particularly when acting in a coalition, will often prove to be wanting in these areas. Through a mixture of ignorance, cultural myopia and wishful thinking, they will often fail to grasp the complexities of the local and regional situation. The multinational nature of the intervention, where there will usually be problems of disagreement on objectives, ways and means, will retard decision-making and often produce less than optimal, compromise decisions. Complex chains of command will probably complicate and slow the implementation of decisions. A unitary enemy, knowing what he wants, determined to win at all costs and knowing that he has to be adaptive and flexible if he is to unbalance a militarily superior foe, may well enjoy a decisive advantage.

Conflict Between Democratic States & Non-State Actors

Since the era of de-colonization, western states have not had to fight guerrilla wars, though the USA and some others have had limited involvement in those of other countries. The non-state enemies that they have had to combat have mainly been terrorist movements, whether in areas in which they have intervened, home grown or imported. Guerrilla warfare is famously the method of the militarily weak: in Mao Zedong's famous analogy, they are the fish that rely on the benign environment of the sea of a friendly population for food, shelter, recruits and intelligence to survive, manoeuvre, strike and grow in strength. Terrorism is an even weaker form of struggle, for it implies that the movement practising it is unable to garner sufficient popular support to progress to the more advanced stage of guerrilla conflict. This can be the case where the terrorists represent a minority social, ethnic or religious group and the government is overwhelmingly strong and has the political will and popular support to fight it (as, for instance, in the Israeli dealings with the Palestinians). Or, as is normally the case where democracies are dealing with a politically fringe movement, the terrorists have such extreme views and aims that they lack a popular political base and thus have to operate in the shadows.

Generalizing, terrorists could be said to have fallen into two broad groups, though there has traditionally been some co-operation between them and it is sometimes difficult to distinguish between acts which were/are politically motivated and those with merely criminal, usually mercenary ends (such as those of narco-terrorists). Many have been encouraged and supported, sometimes directed by states such as Libya, Syria, Iran and North Korea.

Ideological terrorists plagued many western societies in the '70s and '80s, despite the fact that liberal capitalism was demonstrably delivering rising standards of living and social security. Even the open and successful USA had the albeit short-lived Weathermen. In Europe, some were right wing, like the Italian fascists who caused 285 casualties in bombing Bologna railway station in 1980. Most were what could loosely be described as "communist", attempting to destroy "bourgeois democracy", NATO and American interests in their country. By the end of the '80s, the most prominent of these (Germany's Red Army Fraction, France's *Action Directe*,

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Italy's Red Brigades and the Japanese Red Army) had been crushed. Currently, only Greece's 17th November movement is still active. By the '90s the failure of communism was clear for all to see, but it is premature to write the obituary of ideological terrorism of the left. It could well revive under the banners of anti-globalization, anti-capitalism and even defence of the environment. No country is short of the sort of egocentric, fuzzy-minded, middle class fantasists and malcontents who can convince themselves that they can create and lead a revolution to save their country or the whole world through bombing and assassination. Even America will doubtless suffer from some deranged successors to Timothy McVeigh and the Unabomber.

Nationalist and ethnic/religious discontent has been, and continues to be, a greater inspiration for terrorism. In the west, the FLQ's violent efforts to separate Quebec from Canada have ceased but in Europe, the IRA (in various manifestations) and ETA have proved remarkably durable. The new democracies of the southeast and east of the continent may well provide fertile ground for ethno-nationalist terrorism for years, even decades to come. In the developing world, such terrorist movements, sometimes alone and sometimes in tandem with an insurgency, disfigure politics in recent (mostly quasi-) democracies from Mexico to Indonesia. There is no sign that this is a phase of development that will soon be passed, and already shaky regimes like those in Pakistan or the Philippines might be unable to weather much economic and social disruption. Most menacing to international security, as opposed to that of individual states, is Islamic fundamentalist terrorism. Being pan-Islamic, it is a threat both to moderate Muslim governments everywhere and to the western supporters of such regimes and of Israel that it seeks to harm. It is increasingly moving from traditional to what can be called "new" terrorism in terms of aims and methods, especially when attacking the west.

Traditional terrorism could be succinctly defined as the systematic use of intimidation for political purposes. Because it has a political aim, it is not (*pace* popular perceptions) mindless. It is designed to:

- draw attention to neglected issues and injustices (and, as with some Palestinian groups, can be accompanied by social work to demonstrate a positive side to the movement);
- demonstrate the government's inability to protect its citizens and property, create economic problems (and provide funds through bank raids, etc);
- create a sense of fear to undermine societal cohesion and faith in the government and force it into a reactive, preferably excessively repressive, posture;
- force the government into a change of direction, either over domestic or foreign policy issues;
- win some international support for the cause.

When making targeting decisions, the terrorist is faced with a difficult balancing act between being effective (ie putting real pressure on the government) and being counter-productive (ie, hardening enemy resolve and endangering support from his domestic and international constituency). While attractive as "legitimate" targets, attacks on the security forces generally fail the first test, save where terrorism is carried out in support of an insurgency when tying down military forces is useful. Attacks on civilian, especially high-value economic, targets are often seen as more likely to undermine the will of governments and their electorates to resist terrorist demands. They are also more vulnerable and thus easier.

Because traditional terrorist groups have limited, local, political aims, there is usually a possibility of a compromise settlement – though where the issue is fundamental to both sides, as with the Palestinian-Israeli dispute, it may be very difficult to reach. There is, however, a new phenomenon on the terrorist scene – the group that seems to have a purely negative purpose, such as the apocalyptic Aum Shinrikyo sect in Japan, or whose motivation is vague and/or irrational, like al Qaeda.¹ Such "new" terrorist movements do not precede or follow their atrocities with political demands. They are more intent on punishment for perceived wrongs and destruction of the existing order. These groups wish to maximise civilian deaths for the sake of it. For such implacable enemies, there is no target that is seen to be counter-productive. It follows that nuclear, biological or chemical will become the obvious weapons of choice. With a claimed 30-40,000 members and over \$1.2 billion's worth of assets, Aum Shinrikyo was able to procure significant quantities of nerve agent; only bungled delivery in the Tokyo subway attacks of 1995 prevented the hoped-for mass casualties. Bin Laden's movement was apparently, perhaps still is, even more numerous, much richer, and seeking weapons of mass destruction.

The likely future trajectory of development may favour the terrorist more than his state opponents. Complex, sophisticated societies will become more and more dependent on technology. They will thus become increasingly vulnerable to its disruption, not least by having their own inventions turned against them. Progress may also put hitherto undreamed of means of destruction into terrorist hands (genetically modified biological weapons, for instance).

Aggression by a state, or by an ideology dependent on state power, can be fought by traditional means – the military and/or political defeat of the state and, if necessary, its occupation. This formula served in the war against fascism and communism but will not work with stateless or supra-state ideologies or religions. Armed forces are of limited effectiveness against an abstract noun like "terrorism". The trouble is that a clandestine, non-state enemy presents no geographical centre of gravity, the capture of which will mean its destruction. Nor will the elimination of the current leadership necessarily extinguish it. For instance, the fall of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan does not necessarily mean the end of al Qaeda. However useful a sheltering host government may be, it is not, in the last resort, essential. The movement appears to comprise loose networks deployed world-wide with cells which are comfortable living in hostile states, highly motivated and capable of independent initiative or coalescing according to requirements to execute specific operations. In an age of advanced communications (including encryption), such international terrorists could exist as a virtual movement. Moreover, even the actual destruction of al Qaeda will not end the threat posed by fundamentalist Islam. By their very nature, such movements are likely to be hydra-headed. A war against terrorism cannot thus be won, any more than can a war against disease. There can be tactical successes against this group/infection or that, but total victory is a chimera.

There is no purely military cure for terrorism, at least for democracies. It is true that the French Army won a military victory in Algeria in the late '50s, but Algeria won independence anyway and there was a later revulsion within the French electorate against the methods used. Both Britain and democratic Spain have

¹ Perhaps, though, this is an incorrect interpretation of the 11th September attack. It may simply represent a rational tactic in pursuit of al-Qaeda's goal of an Islamist seizure of political power in Saudi Arabia and other Muslim countries by taking the lead in espousing the religious cause and exposing the hypocrisy of regimes that profess to champion it but do little in practice.

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recognized the limits of military means in eliminating nationalist terrorism and rely on a judicious (and patient) mix of coercive and political means to undercut support for the terrorists. Israel, with its national survival allegedly at stake, has been more tolerant of violent repression, collective (indeed, often random) punishment, state terrorism and other pure force responses. It has been relying on force, both within the country and externally, in the latter case either clandestinely or, in Lebanon, through outright invasion and occupation. After 30 years, the threat is worse than ever. The Israeli example alone should be enough to demonstrate the bankruptcy both of reliance on pure coercion to defeat terrorism and of terrorism as a political tool.

President Bush's panacea for defeating international terrorism, of overthrowing governments supporting it and destroying terrorist bases may have worked in the case of Afghanistan – it is too early to tell – but that could be a misleading precedent. The Taliban regime was almost universally detested, both at home and internationally. Similar attacks on other states might be counter-productive. The international consensus forged for the war in Afghanistan would not outlast similar actions against, for instance, Iraq or Iran; there would be no UN mandate and thus clear legal sanction for it. Unilateral action is likely to make new enemies and lose old friends (and their crucial intelligence and logistics co-operation). And there is nothing like invasion by a perceived imperialist power to unite at a least a significant proportion of a population behind even an unpopular regime. Besides, what would the US do after it had seized Baghdad or Tehran anyway? Impose terms that could not be enforced once American troops left? Install what would be seen as a puppet government and, with little or no outside support, take on a guerrilla resistance and the task of rebuilding the country? Destroy terrorist bases and then leave the country to disintegration and/or anarchy? Such military solutions make the mistake of tackling the symptoms of the disease without addressing the causes. Combating terrorism is primarily a political, intelligence and law enforcement problem, not a military one.

The only sure way to defeat terrorism is to remove the contradictions that give rise to it: in other words, to make the sea of the population a hostile environment for the terrorist fish, in this way depriving him of active, or even tacit, support and ensuring that security forces have the backing of the people at large. Then the appeal of terrorism will be restricted to fanatics with closed minds and those naturally inclined to violence and criminality. The struggle should be primarily a police responsibility as part of ordinary law enforcement and the military involved only when absolutely necessary and then only in a supportive role. Patient intelligence work followed by effective, targeted, perhaps covert, action can then be employed to destroy the enemy without counter-productive collateral damage. But essential intelligence can only come from winning the hearts and minds of the terrorist's potential constituency. This is the political challenge.

Governments must not allow a legitimacy gap to grow, undermining the moral consensus that is essential to peaceful progress. They must ensure that no section of society suffers from blatant injustices that could create conditions in which violent opposition is seen as the only answer by the oppressed. Such problems need to be identified and dealt with before minorities have resorted to armed struggle, for belated action when polarization has already taken place can encourage the terrorist by appearing to be surrender to blackmail rather than the reasonable settlement of legitimate grievances. Moreover, while they can restrict civil liberties to an extent in the name of counter-terrorism without losing popular support, governments must ensure that their security forces operate with restraint and

within the law. To cross the line between the defence of civil society and repression is to lose the battle for men's minds, alienate significant groups and widen the pool of popular support for the terrorists.

The trends outlined at the beginning of this paper clearly suggest that both the breeding grounds of, and the ability to conduct, international terrorism are growing. Between 1965 and 1990, the share of world income of the richest 20% of countries rose from 69% to 83% and average incomes per head in the top 20% rose from 31 times to 60 times that of the bottom 20%. If rich democracies wish to sustain the status quo that is so congenial to them, they should think about paying a price for it. Disparities in wealth between advanced economies and the Third World are not only growing but are also becoming more visible and difficult to ignore as the world shrinks and becomes more transparent. Rich countries currently put a derisory proportion of their GDP into foreign aid (the UK, 0.3% of GDP and the USA, 0.1%, for instance), and much of that is tied or ill-spent. Moreover, the rich world currently insists on trade rules that hurt the poorest countries; for instance, their farming subsidies run at \$1 billion per day – more than six times their aggregated foreign aid budgets. Perhaps they should be prepared to sacrifice the goal of ever rising living standards to invest in security. Money sensibly spent in poorer countries could help to reduce coca and opium production and the flood of emigration that causes such concern and could help to reduce the constituency from which terrorists draw their support. That pool would also be narrowed if western support were withdrawn from unjust regimes that repress reasonable dissent and refuse to contemplate reforms that would benefit their populations as a whole.

The problem of finding appropriate carrots and sticks to combat international terrorism is too big for any single country, even the USA. Only a concerted effort and burden sharing by rich countries can make a difference to the economic situation in the Third World that gives rise to it. Only a supra-national approach to security in its widest sense (including drug trafficking, money laundering, mass migration, environmental problems) can cope with a threat that has grown in both scale and nature.

Conclusions

Francis Fukuyama's "end of history" is not going to mean the end of conflict. Rather, it will probably proliferate and become more dangerous.

There will be strong, sometimes irresistible pressures for western states to intervene in other countries' conflicts, and superior warfighting capabilities will not necessarily give them the ability to impose a low-cost and quick, never mind durable, settlement. Fortunately, most of their opponents are likely to be authoritarian leaders who may lack the far-sightedness, clarity of understanding and thought and the flexibility of mind effectively to prepare for and resist intervention. They may also, because of the nature of their regime, lack the united and determined national will behind them that is necessary for victory. But heaven help the interventionists who, possibly through ignorance, arrogance and overconfidence, come up against a cohesive enemy who knows what he is doing. Such a development has the potential to topple governments, as happened with the Vietnam war, or to fracture alliances, as almost happened to NATO over Bosnia.

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Sporadic domestic terrorism will continue to plague democracies. Weaker ones with systemic problems may suffer such socio-economic disruption that military governments take control, leading to a further downward spiral (as has happened in the past in Turkey and much of Latin America, for instance). However, while terrorism may cause destruction and loss of life, they will not endanger the existence of stable western democracies. As in the past, the terrorists will fail to gain popular support (which is why they must operate in the shadows and can never move from mere terrorism to guerrilla resistance). But the threat posed by "new", international terrorism will require international co-operation and real sacrifices by the better-off to reduce its appeal and thus its ability to operate. Will rich countries be able and willing to pay the price in economic terms and the pooling of sovereignty? Or will they, in pursuance of a simplistic policy of conducting a "war against terrorism", create more enemies than they destroy and contribute to a new polarization of the World?

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