

THE ASYMMETRIC SECURITY LANDSCAPE: THE ROAD AHEAD

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Before World War II, especially in the English-speaking countries, security was almost exclusively the province of soldiers. National security was a term primarily associated with possible or probable military threats from other nation-states concerning strategic access or denial of raw materials, markets, lines of communication, choke points, or the national territory. As a corollary, strategy was generally limited in its application to the use of military means to achieve the objectives (ends) of national security policy.¹

The current international security dialogue goes beyond traditional national policy objectives and focuses on relative well-being. The United Nations (UN), for example, has made human security an explicit condition warranting intervention with or without the concurrence of the so-called "sovereign" state whose population is at risk.² Now, more frequently, national security implies protection—through a variety of military and nonmilitary means—of more ambiguous political, economic, social, cultural, ideological, and environmental interests.³ Additionally, the contemporary security dialogue stresses that challenges to the national well-being are generated by a lack of development and resultant chronic poverty, violence, and instability.⁴ As a consequence, security can no longer be considered only in terms of protecting national territory and interests against outside military aggressors. Rather, security is being redefined more broadly, to encompass stability—and stability is dependent on the legitimate political, economic, and social development (well-being) of the global community. Thus, the redefinition of security calls for a wider concept of what constitutes threat. First, a deeper look at the new global security arena is required.

The views expressed in this report are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of the Department of the Army, the Department of Defense, or the U.S. Government.

A LOOK THROUGH A MAGICAL MICROSCOPE INTO THE CONTEMPORARY GLOBAL SECURITY ARENA

A map of the present and future political-strategic reality can only be examined in terms of layers of activity and as an "ever-mutating representation of chaos."⁵ *The Coming Anarchy* (New York: Random House, 2000), pp. 3-57. In this context, one could see the overlapping actions of internal groups and transnational non-state actors. Instead of borders, one could see moving centers of power and a shifting pattern of buffer entities. Additionally, one could see degradation of scarce water systems, migrations of peoples, and vectors of violence.

If the appropriate magic could be conjured and one could look down through the familiar artificial political lines and colors of a current world map into the twenty-first century's strategic reality, one could see a complex new security arena. A deeper look into that picture would provide snapshots that show several types of ambiguous and asymmetric conflicts as well as state failure - and their causes and consequences. The following examples should suffice:

1. A vision of 79 low-intensity conflicts, 32 complex emergencies, and 18 ethnic (genocidal) wars overlapping with 175 small-scale internal wars throughout the world today. This picture would also show unspeakable human destruction and misery involving refugee flows, modern plagues, food and water scarcity, and resource conflicts. In this connection, a magical snapshot would show that during the period since the first Persian Gulf War, anywhere from 80 to 210 million people have lost their hopes, their property, and their lives. The resultant political alienation—sufficiently reinforced by significant governmental corruption, criminal activity, and social violence—tends to direct the survivors and their advocates toward more and more violence, terrorism, and the asymmetrical tactics of despair.⁶
2. A view of a vicious downward spiral that manifests itself in diminished levels of popular and institutional acceptance and support for weak and ineffectual governments and generates further disorder, violent internal conflicts, and mushrooming demands by various groups for political autonomy. These governance issues translate themselves into constant subtle and not so subtle struggles for power that dominate life in much of the contemporary world. Results of these dynamics can be seen not so much in the proliferation of new countries, but in an ironic explosion of weak, incompetent, misguided, insensitive, and/or corrupt governments throughout the globe.⁷

3. In that connection, one can see a broken pattern of emerging city-states, shanty-states, amorphous warlord-controlled regions, criminal anarchist controlled regions,⁸ and a "steady run of uncivil wars sundering fragile but functioning nation-states and gnawing at the well-being of stable nations."⁹ Ultimately, this instability—along with the human destabilizers who exploit instability for their own self-determined objectives—leads to crises of governance and another downward spiral into failing and failed state status.¹⁰ Indeed, it has become evident that humanitarian assistance, if not managed in the context of restoring the legitimacy of the failed state, actually nurtures warlords by providing additional bases for illicit power and wealth, and corruption.¹¹

This takes us back to where we began—to the fact that armed nonstate groups are challenging the nation-state's physical and moral right to govern. This almost chronic political chaos can be seen propagating its respective forms of instability and violence in large parts of Africa, Eastern Europe, the Middle East, Asia, and Latin America. In many of these cases, governments are waging war on their citizens, fighting to survive assaults from their citizens, or have become mere factions among other competing political factions claiming the right to govern all or part of a given destabilized national territory. It is in this context that international organizations, such as the UN, and individual national powers, such as the United States, confront a succession of failing and failed states.¹²

Then, with some additional adjustments of focus on our microscope, we can discern a number of issues that cannot be shown in two-dimensional space. First and most important, we can get a better idea of the complex threat situation and the ultimate threat—state failure. Second, an even deeper examination of the vision of contemporary wars reveals the shadows of things that have been and of those that will be on the road ahead. Third, a closer look at the familiar and troubling world map exposes some signposts on the road ahead that identify the most significant changes in the landscape. Finally, our magical microscope reveals a short list of the challenges and tasks that will help discerning civilian and military leaders negotiate the road through the new global security landscape.

THE DEEPER, MORE COMPLEX, MULTIDIMENSIONAL THREAT SITUATION, AND THE ULTIMATE THREAT—STATE FAILURE

The traditional international problem of conventional external aggression retains a certain credibility, but not the urgency it once had. For sovereignty to be meaningful today, the state and its associated governmental institutions, working under the rule of law, must be the only source of authority

empowered to make and enforce laws and conduct the business of the people within the national territory. The violent, intimidating, and corrupting activities of illegal internal and transnational nonstate actors can abridge or negate these powers. In this connection, probably the most insidious security problem facing the world and the nations in it today centers on the threats to a given nation-state's ability and willingness to do the following: (1) control the national territory and the people in it fairly and justly and (2) control internal factions or nonstate actors seeking illegal violent change within the borders of the nation-state. Ultimately, this kind of instability—along with the human destabilizers who exploit it—lead to a final downward spiral into failing and failed state status.¹³ In that context, instability and the people who create and/or exploit it are tactical-operational level threats in their own right. However, the ultimate political-strategic threat is that of state failure. This takes us directly to the following questions:

1. What is a failed state; and why do states fail?
2. Why does state failure matter?
3. At what point in a state's disintegration should state failure be dealt with; how should state failure be handled; and what entities should deal with state failure?

What Is a Failed State, and Why Do States Fail? First, state failure is a process, not an outcome. It is a process by which the state loses the capacity and/or the will to perform its essential governance and security functions. At the same time, it may be a process by which the state never sufficiently developed those capabilities in the first place. The logic behind this distinction is simply that it is impossible to lose that which never existed. At the same time, however, if we focus only on the capacity to govern, we may lose sight of the fact that a state and its institutions may lack effective legitimacy. Haiti, North Korea, Afghanistan under the Taliban, and former President Saddam Hussein's Iraq are cases in point. History demonstrates that individuals and groups (including security forces) can prop up the capacity of the state to govern through the use of sheer force and "state terrorism." Nevertheless, over time, the weaknesses inherent in the lack of legitimacy can lead to the eventual erosion of governmental authority and to a process of state failure.¹⁴

In *The Constant Gardener*, John le Carré outlines the answer to the associated questions of "What is a failed state?" and "Why do states fail?" from the point of view of a common-sense practitioner:

I would suggest to you that, these days, very roughly, the qualifications for being a civilized state amount to—electoral suffrage, ah—protection of life and property—um, justice, health and education for all, at least to a certain

level—then the maintenance of a sound administrative infrastructure—and roads, transport, drains, et cetera—and—what else is there?—ah yes, the equitable collection of taxes. If a state fails to deliver on at least a quorum of the above—then one has to say the contract between state and citizen begins to look pretty shaky—and if it fails on all of the above, then it’s a failed state, as we say these days.¹⁵

And, as Tables 1 and 2 indicate, this state of affairs is normally the result of an evolutionary process brought on by poor and irresponsible governance and leads to two other very fundamental reasons why states fail. First, state failure can be a process that is exacerbated by nonstate groups that, for whatever reason, want to take down or exercise illicit control over a given government. Colombia is a good example of this. The narco-terrorist nexus in that country represents an unconventional, asymmetric threat to the authority of the central government. Through murder, kidnapping, corruption, intimidation, and other means of coercion and persuasion, these violent internal nonstate actors compromise the exercise of the state’s authority. The government and its institutions become progressively less and less capable of performing the tasks of governance and exercising the effective sovereignty of the state. As a result, the narco-terrorists become increasingly wealthy and powerful, and the country deteriorates further and further toward failed state status.¹⁶

Table 1
Causal Links Between environmental degradation, security problems, violence and eventual state failure

Stage One: The Beginnings of the Threat

<p>Resource Shortages Over exploitation of land, forest, and water resources. Production of industrial Contaminants of land, Forest and water resources. Results in land, forest, water, and industrial slowing, etc. Generating rising wealth differentials.</p> <p>Population Stresses Reduction of standard of living and increased social violence. Results in internal and external migration, and social segmentation. In turn generates capital shortfalls and susceptibility to sharp changes in the economy, the political system, and the security environment.</p>	<p>Resource and Environmental Stress, and governmental stresses. results in rising wealth differentials, societal and governmental officials taking advantage of shortages for own advantages, and boosting capital demand faced by the state and the economy. In turn increases susceptibility of government, economy, and society to sudden shocks like floods, draughts, and sharp downward changes in the economy, political system, and security environment.</p>	<p>Dealing effectively with these problems demands strong, competent, resilient, uncorrupted governmental action at all levels of economy and society, e.g., legitimate governance. Also requires strong uncorrupted inter-National coordination and cooperation. Otherwise, the environmental situation can move into Stage Two.</p>
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Stage Two: Moving Closer to the Threat

<p>Phase I – Precursors Threat Resource and environmental governmental stresses incompetently or insensitively managed. Resulting in structural degradation and economic scarcity.</p>	<p>Phase II – Third Level Threat Constrained economic production, disease, migration, expulsion, elite rent-seeking (greed), and power-grabbing. Results in personal violence, strikes, kidnappings, bank robberies, bombings, criminal anarchy and death squads, and refugee flows. Requires short-term political, social, and economic reforms; and minimum force to help ensure personal security.</p>	<p>Phase III – Second Level Inadequate reforms and adherence stresses, and to Rule of law results in further social, economic, and political degradation, and more widespread and better organized social violence. Requires medium to long-term deep reforms to deal with poverty and other root causes of instability; and the prudent application of force to enforce reforms and law and order.</p>
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Stage Three: Violent Conflict

<p>Phase IV – First Level Threat Regime unwillingness or inability to promulgate and enforce necessary reforms, and provide personal and national security results in further weakening of institutions, group identity crises and ethnic conflicts, more internal and external migration, terrorism, coups d'etat, insurgency, and possible external intervention. Requires continuation of reforms and development of deep regime legitimacy; as well as development of superior organization, unity of effort, and ability to exert deadly force against violent internal foe(s).</p>	<p>Phase V – Falling or Failed State Syndrome Failure to achieve legitimacy and deal effectively with progressively worsening internal social, economic, and security problems results in virtually complete turmoil and generally ineffective institutions. Thus, intervention to preclude state failure, or state failure.</p>
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Table 2 Threat Dimensions

LEVEL OF THREAT	TYPE OF THREAT	CIVIL-MILITARY ACTIONS TO CONFRONT THESE THREATS
3 rd (Third)	Instability; e.g., personal violence, increased strikes, kidnappings, bank robberies, violent take-overs, death squads, bombings, murders/assassinations, criminal anarchy; and the beginnings of insurgency, ethnic cleansing, and refugee flows.	Short-term political, economic, and social reform; and minimum force to guarantee personal security.
2 nd (Second)	Widespread social violence; e.g., increases in third-level instability.	Medium to long-term deep reforms to deal with poverty and other root causes of instability; and the careful application of force to enforce reforms and law and order.
1 st (First)	Regime unwillingness or inability to promulgate and enforce 2nd and 3rd level reforms and provide personal and national security.	Long-term deeper reforms to create changes in mind-set; and development of political, military/police competence under an umbrella of legitimacy.
4 th (Fourth)	Completely entrenched violent 'revolutionaries.'	Continuation of reforms and development of deep regime legitimacy; plus development of superior organization, unity of effort, and ability to exert deadly force against a violent internal foe.

At the same time, Tables 1 and 2 also trace the patterns through which the many specific links between security and sovereignty may be targeted and broken by the use of nonmilitary and nonlethal information warfare and sophisticated technology. In this context, the state collapses under a process of knowledge-based technology, manipulated by those self-proclaimed leaders who wish to destroy "bond-relationships" that unite a government, its security forces, and a people, and to erode governmental authority. Their intent is to weaken or control government or to replace it with their own regime.¹⁷ Clearly, there are different paths or processes that lead to state failure.

Why Does State Failure Matter? The argument is, generally, that failing or failed states comprise the most dangerous long-term security challenge facing the global community today. More specifically, failed states become breeding grounds for instability and terrorism. They breed massive humanitarian disasters and major refugee flows. They can host "evil" networks of all kinds, whether they involve criminal business enterprises, narco-trafficking, and/or some form of ideological or religious crusade. They spawn a variety of pernicious and lethal activities and outcomes, such as human rights violations, including torture and murder; poverty, starvation, and disease; the recruitment and use of child soldiers; illegal drug trafficking; trafficking in women and body parts; trafficking and proliferation of conventional weapons systems and weapons of mass destruction; genocide, ethnic cleansing, and warlordism; and criminal anarchy and insurgency. At the same time, they usually are unconfined and "spill over" into regional syndromes of destabilization and conflict.¹⁸

Additionally, failing and failed states simply do not fade away. Ample evidence demonstrates that failing and failed states become dysfunctional states, "rogue states," criminal states, narco-states, or new "people's democracies." Moreover, failing and failed states (1) tend not to buy U.S. and other Western-made products; (2) tend not to be interested in developing democratic and free market institutions and human rights; and (3) tend not to cooperate to solve shared problems, such as illegal drugs, illicit arms flows, debilitating refugee flows, and potentially dangerous environmental problems. In short, failing and failed states tend to linger and go from bad to worse. The longer they persist, the more they and their problems endanger global peace and security.¹⁹

Where, When, and How Should State Failure Be Dealt with? Perhaps the most relevant questions in this section are "Where, when, and how should failing or failed states be dealt with?" The realist answer to the first question is that attempts must be undertaken where they matter the most. Not all individual cases of potential or actual state failure matter equally. Some

states matter more than others. Thus, the primary implication is that the United States and its Western partners should consider a grand strategy that adopts state failure as a core focus and combines it with a "pivotal states" approach to global security.²⁰

Likewise, as implied in Table 2, the realist answer to the second question is that heading off the problems of a failing state must be attempted as early as possible in the state failure process. If the global community waits to deal with a failed state, it will be dealing with the hardest and the most expensive cases. The rule of thumb would be, then, that when it is mutually agreed that a case is clearly of vital interest to a community—the sooner the better. The presumption is that governments choose to do nothing or something as a result of having weighed the various costs and benefits of a specific course of action.

Finally, the realist answer to the third question is that the United States and its Western partners should look to other key actors within regions who can play larger roles in monitoring, preventing, and addressing the challenges of state failure. Again, as Table 2 indicates, an international and multilateral coordinated, regionally based multidimensional framework for action—rather than a unilateral military approach—is essential for political-strategic success now and for the future.

Conclusions. Admittedly, putting the already large humanitarian "root causes" issue of the state failure process into an even larger global stability-security context generates such a complex problem that many leaders and scholars are tempted to disregard this approach as "too big," "too hard," or "impossible." However, looking at the grand strategic picture of cause and effect allows one to understand better that: (1) ". . . humanitarian/environmental problems can no longer be thought of as ancillary,"²¹ (2) "substantially more sophisticated policy structures will be required to define and manage the interests of nations-states,"²² and (3) the United States and the West need "an overarching campaign plan to operationalize strategic [shaping and engagement] guidance."²³

Attacking the foreign internal development or reconstruction causes and consequences of instability and violence is no longer a matter of grace, charity, or patronizing kindness. Because of the very real threat to peace and prosperity, it is a matter of intense national and global self-interest. The conscious choices that the international community and individual intervening powers make about how to conduct national stability and reconstruction efforts now and in the future will define the processes of national reform, regeneration, and well-being—and, thus, relative internal and global security, stability, peace, and prosperity.

A VISION OF CONFLICT ON THE ROAD AHEAD: SHADOWS OF THINGS THAT HAVE BEEN AND THOSE THAT WILL BE²⁴

The United States and the parts of the global community most integrated into the interdependent world economy are embroiled in a security arena in which time-honored concepts of national security and the classical military means to attain it, while still necessary, are no longer sufficient. Now, in addition to traditional regional security issues, an array of nontraditional threats challenge the West at home and abroad:

Military Threats

- the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction,
- regional ethnic and religious conflicts,
- myriad varieties of terrorism, and
- criminal anarchy.

Nonmilitary Threats

- trade wars,
- financial wars, and
- cyber wars, and
- new terror wars, involving improved and more sophisticated use of chemical and biological agents.

At the same time, these "new" traditional and nontraditional threats blur the old

dividing lines among military, political, and economic security affairs. Clearly, effective involvement in the contemporary global security environment requires some serious conceptual adjustments. They center on understanding the transformation of conflict.

The Transformation of Conflict. Carl von Clausewitz reminds us:

It is possible to increase the likelihood of success without defeating the enemy's forces. I refer to operations that have direct political [and psychological] repercussions, that are designed in the first place to disrupt the opposing alliance, or to paralyze it, that gain us new allies, favorably affect the political scene, etc. If such operations are possible, it is obvious that they can greatly improve our prospects and that they can form a much shorter route to the goal than the destruction of the opposing armies.²⁵

In these terms, there is only one governing rule for contemporary conflict. That is, there are no rules. Nothing is forbidden.²⁶ This is warfare in the age of globalization and, while possibly less bloody, is no less brutal. We can see these characteristics in a brief outline of what is more frequently being called first through sixth generation warfare methods.²⁷ It is important to note, also,

that each generation or method of warfare is not completely different and separate from the other. Each successive methodology builds on the previous one, and all overlap with each other. Finally, there is the "mix and match" of the past that can produce what we call a "Chinese Cocktail."

First Generation War. Low-technology *attrition war* has been a means of conducting conflict from the beginning of time. The basic idea is that the more opponents that are killed or incapacitated—relative to one's own side—the better. And, the last man or military unit left standing is the winner. Historically, attrition warfare appears to serve only those protagonists with "the largest battalions." When facing a numerically superior opponent, thus, it has been important to find other means to compensate for military inferiority.²⁸

Second Generation Warfare Methods. Relatively higher technology-led *maneuver warfare* was intended to provide the proverbial "equalizer" to compete against sheer numbers. The basic concept is to utilize better and/or faster weaponry against an opponent. That is to say, the military force that can move, shoot, and communicate more effectively, relative to the opponent, has the advantage and is more likely to prevail. Over 2,500 years ago, Sun Tzu warned, "In war, numbers alone confer no advantage. Do not advance relying on sheer military power."²⁹ The German "Blitzkrieg" of World War II and the U.S. "Shock and Awe" of the recent Iraqi War are examples of effective maneuver war and take us to the next generation or method of warfare.

Third Generation Conflict Methods. At this point, the concept is to move from the blatant use of force toward the employment of "brainpower." That is, *movement from "hard" toward "soft" power*. In addition to using transport (movement), weaponry (shoot), and speed involving command and control (communication), third generation methodology tends to take advantage of intelligence, psychological operations, and more knowledge-based technology as "force multipliers." The addition of "soft" power to the military equation provides an efficient and effective means by which to paralyze enemy action—rather than simply to crush enemy forces.³⁰ It should also be noted that while intelligence, psychology, and other forms of "soft" power are less bloody than the "hard power" of infantry, tanks, and artillery, the ultimate objective of war remains the same: to compel the enemy to serve one's own interests.³¹

Fourth Generation Methods. The primary characteristic of this methodology is that of *asymmetry*. This is the methodology of the weak against the strong. It is the use of disparity between contending parties to gain advantage. Strategic asymmetry is defined as "acting, organizing, and thinking differently than opponents in order to maximize one's own advantages, exploit

an opponent's weaknesses, attain the initiative, or gain greater freedom of action. . . It can have both psychological and physical dimensions."³² This is a concept as old as war itself, but some military officers and political leaders do not like it. They argue that asymmetry is not the way "real soldiers" fight because they are not fighting fair. This view is unfortunate. What many military and political leaders seem not to have learned about contemporary conflict is that terrorists, insurgents, drug traffickers, paramilitaries, and so on (the "weak") can be what Ralph Peters calls "wise competitors." He argues, "Wise competitors will not even attempt to defeat us on our terms; rather, they will seek to shift the playing field away from conventional military confrontations or turn to terrorism and other nontraditional forms of assault on our national integrity. Only the foolish will fight fair."³³ Thus, what is required more than weaponry and technology is lucid and incisive thinking, resourcefulness, determination, and a certain disregard for convention.

Fifth Generation Conflict. This methodology tends to emphasize the use of *information (that is., propaganda) and high technology* and is aimed at both civilian and military organizations. On one level, it involves the propaganda-oriented strategy derived from Maoist insurgency doctrine against a vulnerable government or set of targeted institutions. As an example, Peru's Sendero Luminoso calls activities that facilitate the process of state failure and generate greater insurgent freedom of movement "armed propaganda." Additionally, Colombia's narco-terrorists call the same type of activities "business incentives."³⁴ Those organizations operate with psychological, political, and military objectives—in that order. On a more sophisticated information and technology level, fifth generation conflict includes but is not restricted to financial war, trade war, economic warfare, media war, cyber war, net war, and bond-relationship targeting.³⁵ As one example, Chancellor Helmut Kohl used the powerful German deutsche mark to breach the Berlin Wall—not tanks, artillery, or aircraft. The point in fifth generation conflict, according to Qiao Liang and Wang Xiangsui, is to "fight the fight that fits one's weapons, and make [asymmetric] weapons to fit the fight." In these terms, one uses "all means, including armed force or non-armed force, military and nonmilitary, and lethal and nonlethal means to compel the enemy to accept one's interests."³⁶

Sixth Generation Warfare. This type of conflict is sometimes called New Terror War. It elaborates on all the previous generations, but *emphasizes biological and informational methods* to achieve desired ends.³⁷ We can see this in many ways—a single computer virus invasion, a single man-made stock market crash, and/or a single rumor or the exposing of a single scandal that leads to the fall of a government. Additionally, we can see the introduc-

tion of biological weapons, as in the poisoning of a water system of a major metropolitan area, poisoning the air in a given subway system, and/or the imposition of a single biological virus (such as "mad cow disease")--into a specific country. The mix of possibilities is only limited by the imagination and willingness to use "unethical" bio-informational technology to disrupt, control, or destroy an enemy. Thus, the lines between civilian and military and lethal and non-lethal are eliminated, and the "battlefield" is extended to everyone, everything, and everywhere.³⁸

An Example of a "Chinese Cocktail." Liang and Xiangsui explain that any number of completely different scenarios and actions can occur using a mix of the various generations or methods of conflict. As an example:

If the attacking side secretly musters large amounts of capital without the enemy nation being aware of this at all and launches a sneak attack against its financial markets, then after causing a financial crisis, buries a computer virus and hacker detachment in the opponent's computer system in advance, while at the same time carrying out a network attack against the enemy so that the civilian electricity network, traffic dispatching network, financial transaction network, telephone communications network, and mass media network are completely paralyzed, this will cause the enemy nation to fall into social panic, street riots, and a political crisis. There is finally the forceful bearing down by the army, and military means are utilized in gradual stages until the enemy is forced to sign a dishonorable peace treaty.³⁹

Conclusions. War has changed. Today, war is no longer limited to using military violence to force desired change. Today, *all means* that can be brought to bear on a given situation must be used to compel the enemy to do one's will. Technology is no panacea. Technology may not dominate knowledge or information; however, it is the principle of the "scissors, rock, and paper game" applied to the "Great [Geopolitical] Game." This represents a sea change in warfare and requires nothing less than a paradigm change. The direction of change may be seen in some signposts on the road ahead.

SOME SIGNPOSTS ON THE ROAD THROUGH THE SECURITY LANDSCAPE

In protecting one's interests and confronting and influencing an adversary today, the proverbial road ahead is not easy. There are curves and bumps, and, perhaps, detours. We can see these supplementary deviations in the conflict situation in several different ways.

Ambiguity. First, the definitions of "enemy" and "victor" are elusive, and there is a lack of consensus on the use of "power" to secure, maintain, and enhance vital interests. Underlying these ambiguities is the fact that contemporary conflict is more often than not an intrastate affair that international law and convention are only beginning to address. Generally, a part of one society is pitted against another. In these so-called "teacup" wars, clear-cut conditions do not apply or are not present; therefore, there are (1) normally no formal declarations or terminations of conflict, (2) no easily identified human foe to attack and defeat, (3) no specific territory to take and hold, (4) no single credible government or political actor with which to deal, (5) no legal niceties such as mutually recognized national borders and Geneva Conventions to help control the situation, (6) no guarantee that any agreement between or among contending authorities will be honored, and (7) no specific rules to guide leadership in a given "engagement" process. These aspects of the global security environment in general and any given specific context in particular are not only complex—they are political-psychological, and they are very ambiguous.⁴⁰

The Need to Redefine "Enemy," "Power," and "Victory." As a consequence, there is a need to redefine some standard conflict terminology. The enemy is no longer a recognizable military entity or an industrial capability to make traditional war. The enemy now becomes "violence" and the causes of violence. Thus, the purposes of power have changed. Power is not simply "hard" combat firepower directed at a traditional enemy military formation or industrial complex. Power is multi-layered, combining "hard" and "soft" political, psychological, moral, informational, economic, societal, military, police, and civil bureaucratic activities that can be brought to bear appropriately on the causes as well as the perpetrators of violence. And, victory is no longer the acknowledged destruction of an enemy's military capability. Victory (or success) is now—more frequently, and perhaps with a bit of "spin control"—defined as the achievement of stability and the possibility of a "sustainable peace."⁴¹

"New" Centers of Gravity. These ambiguities intrude on the comfortable vision of war in which the assumed center of gravity has been enemy military formations and the physical capability to conduct conventional war. Clausewitz reminds us, however, that "in countries subject to domestic strife . . . and popular uprisings, the [center of gravity] is the personalities of the leaders and public opinion. It is against these that our energies should be directed."⁴² Thus, the primary center of gravity changes from a familiar military concept to an ambiguous and uncomfortable multidimensional political-psychological paradigm. A major implication that is often ignored is

the fact that centers of gravity must not only be attacked but also defended. It is as important for an attacker to take the necessary measures to defend his own centers of gravity as it is for him to deal with those of his opponent. For example, during the Vietnam War, U.S. leadership failed to defend American public opinion against the full-scale "propaganda war" that was conducted by North Vietnam and its allies throughout the world. At that time and since then, U.S. leadership seems to have failed to understand that the "streets of Peoria" and the "halls of Congress" are probably more decisive in determining the outcome of a given war than a battlefield thousands of miles away.⁴³

Conflict. Has Become Multidimensional, Multilateral, and Multiorganizational. As examples, the conflicts in Colombia and Iraq are not simple military-to-military confrontations. These conflicts involve the entire population of the countries, as well as a large number of national civilian, military, and police agencies, other national civilian organizations, international organizations, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and subnational indigenous actors who must work together to deal with complex internal and transnational threats to security, peace, and well-being. As a result, a viable unity of effort is required to coordinate the multilateral, multidimensional, and multiorganizational effort necessary to play effectively in a given security arena.⁴⁴

Deterrence. Deterrence is not necessarily nuclear or military—although both are important. It is not necessarily negative or directly coercive—although these aspects, too, are important. Deterrence is broader than these descriptions. Deterrence is the creation of a state of mind among opponents that either encourages one thing or discourages something else. Under these terms, motives and culture, as well as weapons and tactics, become crucial. As a consequence, the deterrence task is straightforward. Culturally effective ways and means must be found to convince traditional as well as nontraditional external and internal players that it is not in their best interests to continue perceived negative and destructive behavior.⁴⁵

Linkages. Clausewitz's "Holy Trinity" of government, security forces, and population depicts the crucial activities of the major players in any given conflict situation. It portrays the allegiance of a population as the primary center of gravity. Persuasive and coercive measures will determine success or failure in the achievement of "victory" and peace. In these terms, both the government and its external allies and the internal illegal opposition and its external allies can coerce and persuade the populace into actions on behalf of either side.⁴⁶ This takes us to the implications for the modern knowledge-based use of information and communication technology to manipulate

political leadership and public opinion.⁴⁷ The intent, again, is to break the bonds that unite a government, its security forces, and a people—or those of an adversary and its supporters. Whichever side that wins the “bond-relationship” targeting battle will require a superior organization, a unified civil-military strategy, and the careful application of soft and hard power.

Contemporary Conflict Is Not Limited: It Is Total. Last, contemporary nontraditional war is not a kind of appendage (a lesser or limited thing) to the more comfortable conventional military attrition and maneuver warfare paradigm. It is a great deal more. As long as opposition exists that is willing to risk illegal violence to control or take down a government, there is war. Again, it may be military or nonmilitary, lethal or nonlethal, or a Chinese mix of everything in an unrestricted arsenal. This is a zero-sum game in which there is only one winner or in a worst-case scenario, no winners. It is, thus, total. This is the case with other governments, rogue states, Maoist insurgents, Osama bin Laden’s terrorists, the Japanese Aum Shinrikyo cult, Mafia families, Southeast Asian warlords, or any group’s ethnic cleansers, among others. It is also the case with the deliberate financial attack or hacker attack, among others, that that can impair the security of a nation as effectively as a nuclear bomb.⁴⁸

Conclusions. Over the years, national security has been viewed largely in terms of military defenses against external military threats. Given the opportunities and threats inherent in the predominantly interdependent global security environment, that is clearly too narrow a conception. The historical record demonstrates that the better a power or government is at conducting the military aspects of conventional war near the top of the conflict ladder, the more a potential external enemy or internal enemy is inclined to move asymmetrically toward the predominantly political-psychological conflict at the lower part of the conflict spectrum. As a consequence, this conclusion espouses a forward-looking, proactive, unified civil-military approach to “. . . protect against our asymmetric vulnerabilities to sustain our strategic position. . .”⁴⁹ It would combine the potent virtues of the proverbial military-police “iron fist” within the political-diplomatic “velvet glove.” According to General Sir Frank Kitson, “Thus, instead of thinking of the various manifestations of war as being singularly military, it is imperative to regard them as steps in the ladder of warfare as a whole.”⁵⁰

In sum, these are the basic political-psychological realities of conflict for now and the future. These realities must inform the development of a conceptual framework—or filter mechanism—that can support issue identification, deal with changes in center of gravity, and establish priorities for efforts and actions to deal with the constellation of human and more traditional security

issues that threaten the well-being of myriad peoples, societies, and countries. The consequences of failing to do this are clear. Unless thinking and actions are reoriented to deal with these asymmetric, knowledge-based information and technology realities, the problems of global, regional, and subregional stability and security will resolve themselves—none will remain.

THE CHALLENGES AND TASKS FOR THE ROAD AHEAD

Even though prudent armies must prepare for high-risk, low-probability conventional war, there is a high probability that the U.S. president and Congress and the UN's Security Council will continue to require military participation in horrible new dilemmas that arise from the chaos engendered by the contemporary global security environment. They center on the traditional threat that stems from current and potential nuclear powers and the many smaller—but equally deadly—nontraditional threats that are generated out of the unevenness of global economic integration.⁵¹ Moreover, these threats to national and international stability will be gravely complicated by the processes of state failure that they will trigger.⁵² In this security environment, governments, military and police forces, and other related agencies have little choice but to rethink security as it applies to nontraditional threats that many political and military leaders have tended to ignore or wish away.

The Challenge. The primary challenge, then, is to come to terms with the fact that contemporary security, at whatever level, is at its base a holistic political-diplomatic, socioeconomic, psychological-moral, and military-police effort. The corollary is to change from a singular military approach to a multidimensional, multiorganizational, multicultural, and multinational paradigm. That, in turn, requires a conceptual framework and an organizational structure to promulgate unified civil-military planning and implementation of the multidimensional concept.

Associated Tasks. The study of the fundamental nature of conflict has always been the philosophical cornerstone for understanding conventional war. It is no less relevant to nontraditional war.⁵³ In the past, some wars, such as the Vietnam War, tended to be unrealistically viewed as providing military solutions to military problems.⁵⁴ In the twenty-first century, the complex realities of contemporary wars must be understood as holistic processes that rely on various civilian and military agencies and contingents working together in an integrated fashion to achieve common, workable, and reasonable political-strategic ends.⁵⁵

Given today's realities, failure to prepare adequately for present and future contingencies is unconscionable. At a minimum, there are five fundamental educational and organizational imperatives needed to implement the tasks noted above and deal effectively with contemporary conflict situations. They are the following:

- Civilian and military leaders at all levels must learn the fundamental nature of subversion and insurgency with particular reference to the way in which military and nonmilitary and lethal and nonlethal force can be employed to achieve political ends, and the way in which political considerations affect the use of force. Additionally, leaders need to understand the strategic and political-psychological implications of operational and tactical actions.
- Civilian and military personnel are expected to be able to operate effectively and collegially in coalitions or multinational contingents. They must also acquire the ability to deal collegially with civilian populations and local and global media. As a consequence, efforts that enhance interagency as well as international cultural awareness, such as civilian and military exchange programs, language training programs, and combined (multinational) exercises must be revitalized and expanded.
- Leaders must learn that an intelligence capability several steps beyond the usual is required for small internal wars. This capability involves active utilization of intelligence operations as a dominant element of both strategy and tactics. Thus, commanders at all levels must be responsible for collecting and exploiting timely intelligence. The lowest echelon where adequate intelligence assets have been generally concentrated is the division or brigade. Yet, such operations in most contemporary wars are normally conducted independently by battalion and smaller units.
- Nonstate political actors in any kind of intrastate conflict are likely to have at their disposal an awesome array of conventional and unconventional weaponry. The "savage wars of peace" have and will continue to place military forces and civilian support contingents into harm's way. Thus, leadership development must prepare peacekeepers (that is, peace enforcers) to be effective war fighters.
- Governments must restructure themselves to the extent necessary to establish the appropriate political mechanisms to achieve effective

unity of effort. The intent is to ensure that the application of the various civilian and military instruments of power *directly* contribute to a mutually agreed political end-state. Generating a more complete unity of effort will require contributions at the international and multilateral levels, as well.

Final Conclusions. These challenges and tasks are not radical. They are only the logical extensions of basic security strategy and national and international asset management. By accepting these challenges and tasks, the United States and the West can help to replace conflict with cooperation and to harvest the hope and fulfill the promise that a new multidimensional paradigm for a more peaceful and prosperous tomorrow offers. These cooperative efforts may not be easy to establish; however, they should prove in the medium to long term to be far less demanding and costly in political, economic, military, and ethical terms than to continue a "business as usual," crisis-management approach to contemporary global security.

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Abstract**THE ASYMMETRIC SECURITY LANDSCAPE: THE ROAD AHEAD**

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If the appropriate magic could be conjured and one could look down through the familiar artificial political lines and colors of a current world map into the twenty-first century strategic reality, one could see a complex new security arena. A deeper look into that picture would provide magical snapshots that show several types of ambiguous and asymmetric conflicts, and state failure—and their causes and consequences. It is in this general context that international organizations such as the United Nations, regional organizations such as NATO, and individual national powers such as the United States confront a succession of failing and failed states.

Then, with some additional adjustments of focus, one can discern a number of issues that cannot be shown in two-dimensional space. They are briefly discussed as follows. First and importantly, one can get a better idea of the Complex Threat Situation and the Ultimate Threat—State Failure. Second, an even deeper examination of the Vision of Contemporary Wars reveals the shadows of things that have been and of those that will be on the road ahead. Third, a closer look at the familiar and troubling world map exposes some Signposts on the Road Ahead that indicate the most significant changes in the landscape. Finally, our magical microscope reveals a short list of the basic Challenges and Tasks that can help discerning civilian and military leaders negotiate the road through the asymmetric global security environment.