THE NEW SECURITY AGENDA
Read the communique from a recent summit meeting of government leaders, and chances are high that one or more of what are loosely labeled “new security” challenges will have been on the agenda for discussion. What this might refer to, however, could be any number of issues ranging from civil or ethnic conflict, environmental degradation, resource scarcity, and uncontrolled migration to organized crime, drug trafficking, and transnational terrorism. While none of them can be considered strictly novel problems, they are “new” in the sense of being increasingly perceived and treated as security threats—something that in the past had been reserved almost exclusively for military or defense-related concerns. This development reflects not just changing threat perceptions but also—and more fundamentally—changing attitudes to the nature of security.

The demise of the cold war has clearly played a large part in the emergence and growing prominence of “nontraditional” or “unconventional” security issues, as they are often also termed (Bedeski 1992; Allison and Treverton 1992; Fischer 1993; Utagawa 1995). As the specter of a global nuclear conflagration faded, many preexisting problems began to stand out in sharper relief. Some of them also began to take on more menacing...
proportions in the absence of the superpower military confrontation and, in particular, following the collapse of the Soviet Union. Within Eurasia, at least, the incidence of civil strife and the number of displaced persons grew, and organized crime and drug trafficking began to flourish. Many deadly environmental legacies of the cold war also became apparent, while the danger that terrorist groups might gain access to nuclear materials and weapons of mass destruction suddenly loomed much larger.

Of equal importance in changing threat perceptions has been the accelerating pace of what is loosely termed “globalization.” Driven largely by advances in communications and transportation technology, the world is inexorably becoming a smaller, more interconnected place—socially, politically, and, above all, economically. Although this phenomenon is presenting opportunities and benefits to many, it has also brought new risks and costs. Some problems, notably drug trafficking, illicit migration, and money laundering, are widely perceived to be expanding primarily because the effects of globalization in lowering trade barriers and making borders more porous help facilitate illicit commerce as much as they do the licit kind. More generally, globalization has engendered a growing sense of exposure or vulnerability to what had previously seemed distant or inconsequential. This is true whether it be far away conflicts, contagions, crop failures, or currency fluctuations. What many find particularly alarming is that the effects of events and new trends can resonate around the world at great speed, leaving few people untouched or unthreatened in some way.

As old threats have receded and new ones have emerged, traditional thinking about the meaning of security has come under intense scrutiny and reappraisal (Mathews 1989; Sorensen 1990; Buzan 1991; Booth 1991; Del Rosso 1995; Lipschutz 1995; Klare 1996; Rockefeller Brothers Fund 1997). This has in turn precipitated a contentious debate among security experts about the appropriate parameters and priorities of security policy—contentious because it reflects much deeper beliefs about the nature of contemporary international society and the norms and values that shape it.

THE CLASH OF SECURITY PARADIGMS

The traditional conception of security derives from what is generally referred to as the Realist view of international relations in which states seek
to maximize their power and advance their self-interest, often at the expense of others.¹ In the extreme, this is pursued by military force. With no sovereign body to maintain international order, self-help is an unavoidable fact of life. The search for security, therefore, is primarily a matter of deterring and, if necessary, defending against foreign coercion, attack, and invasion through the maintenance of adequate military defenses. Beyond independent initiatives, this can entail entering into coalitions and alliances with other states to offset a preponderant power bent on changing the status quo (“balancing behavior”) or, if deemed preferable, allying with it (“bandwagoning behavior”). Whichever course is chosen, responsibility for managing security lies unambiguously with the state. Ultimate security, therefore, is the “absence of a military threat or with the protection of the nation from external overthrow or attack” (Haftendorn 1991 in Levy 1995, 39). By and large, this conception of security dominated policy making throughout the cold war, certainly in North America and Europe (Romm 1993; Baldwin 1995).²

Criticism of the traditional Realist security paradigm, it is important to acknowledge, did not begin with the end of the cold war. At various times, commentators have assailed the prevailing orthodoxy as being one-dimensional and shortsighted (Brown 1977; Ullman 1983; Westing 1986; Romm 1993). Calls for a broader, more comprehensive approach to security policy making, however, received at best polite genuflection and were more often simply ignored. As the cold war wound down and the threat of foreign attack diminished, such arguments resurfaced and began to attract greater attention and support. Moreover, important differences distinguish the latest assault on traditional security thinking from earlier ones. The argument is no longer essentially about widening the focus of security policy to include nonmilitary threats. Rather, the new thinking on security questions not only the primacy of military threats in the calculus of security assessments but also—and more controversially—the central place of the nation-state as the focus of security policy (Booth 1991; Myers 1993; Rothschild 1995).

The alternative security paradigm that is emerging has its intellectual roots in the liberal-institutional school of international relations, which sees a world increasingly shaped by order and cooperation rather than anarchy and conflict.³ In particular, the incidence of interstate aggression is assessed to have declined to the point where it is now more the exception than the rule of international life. As a consequence, the traditional
preoccupation with defending the nation-state from the predatory attacks of others is viewed as anachronistic, to say nothing of being wasteful and potentially provocative.

Some ascribe this trend to the progressive extension of democracy around the world and the associated evolution of powerful restraining norms against territorial aggrandizement and warfare in general (Doyle 1983; Mueller 1989; Evans 1994; Lynn-Jones and Miller 1995). Others see it more as a function of the declining utility of war as a rational instrument of statecraft. The combination of the greater destructiveness of modern military technology, the growing public intolerance to even small military casualties that some attribute to underlying demographic changes (Luttwak 1995), and the increasing interdependence of the international economy that not only constrains the freedom to go to war but also makes its prosecution immensely counterproductive (Rosecrance 1986) is seen to have made the costs of war unacceptably high. Whatever the reason, political relations have already evolved in certain regions—essentially North America and Western Europe—to the point where the possibility of interstate war has become so remote as to be virtually unthinkable.

Those who subscribe to this assessment would be the first to acknowledge that the lessened probability of interstate warfare is not the same as believing that the incidence of conflict and violence in the world has also declined—quite the contrary. Internal or civil strife remains an endemic feature of many areas. It is a problem, moreover, that some believe may grow worse in the future as a result of the pernicious effects of resource scarcity and environmental degradation on the cohesion and stability of many communities, particularly in the developing world (Gleick 1991; Homer-Dixon 1991, 1994; Myers 1993; Kaplan 1994).

More generally, many fear that the earth’s natural resources (fresh water, arable land, fish stocks, and sources of energy) necessary, at a bare minimum, for sustaining life and, more generally, for fostering continued economic growth will progressively and irrevocably diminish as a result of a combination of declining supply (from overexploitation, particularly in nonrenewable resources and through inadvertent or accidental pollution) and rising demand (population growth and migration). At the same time, the quality of life of many if not everyone on the planet is being threatened by the modification of the earth’s ecosystem from a combination of global warming (caused primarily by the accumulated effect
of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases being released into the atmosphere from the burning of fossil fuels and the loss of rain forests from logging and human development), the depletion of the ozone layer in the earth’s upper atmosphere (due primarily to chlorofluorocarbon pollution), and deforestation and desertification (from acid rain pollution and overuse). These have physically threatening consequences in addition to the economic ones, such as increasing the risk of cancer and coastal flooding, to name just some.

On the basis of these fears, the concept of “human” or “global” security has been proposed that shifts the traditional imperatives of security policy away from defending the nation-state from military threats to protecting the planet’s ecosystem and the welfare of its citizens (United Nations Development Programme 1994; Commission on Global Governance 1995). In effect, “states become the means not the ends of security” (Booth and Vale 1994, 293). Indeed, to some, states are viewed as part of the problem rather than the solution in that they can perpetuate narrow thinking and selfish behavior while clinging to outdated notions of sovereignty that inhibit collective action in addressing humanitarian challenges that occur within their territorial boundaries. States, moreover, can be more of a direct threat to the physical safety and welfare of their citizens than any external enemy (Commission on Global Governance, 81).

The concept of global or human security represents, therefore, both a horizontal extension of the parameters of security policy to include an even larger set of problems, such as poverty, epidemics, political injustice, natural disasters, crime, social discrimination, and unemployment, as well as a vertical extension of the traditional referent object of security policy to above and below the level of the nation-state (Booth and Vale 1994; Rothschild 1995). This enlargement of the domain of security policy in turn calls for qualitatively different approaches. These include methods of “cooperative security” to regulate military expenditures and to reduce the residual threat of interstate conflict so as to free up resources for more pressing social problems; collective security mechanisms that strengthen the capacity for preventive diplomacy and, if this fails, U.N.-sanctioned peace enforcement and peace-building operations for dealing with large-scale civil strife; and various global public policy regimes that commit states and nongovernmental actors to commonly accepted behavioral norms and rules, particularly in the areas of environmental conservation and resource exploitation. More ambitious
schemes call for global disarmament and massive aid and development programs to address poverty, overpopulation, underdevelopment, and disease. Some would go still further in arguing for the establishment of world government.

Such views are not shared by those who still see security in essentially traditional terms. Some flatly refuse to consider nonmilitary issues as legitimate security concerns, fearing in part that doing so will render their subject area indistinct and even meaningless (Walt 1991). Others see the recasting of some issues—notably environmental and drug-related problems—as "security" threats to be a cynical ploy to attract more public attention and with it resources to their cause (Levy 1995). Meanwhile, whether by default or design, some security analysts continue as if little has changed and make no effort to accommodate nontraditional security problems in their assessments.

While adherents to the Realist security paradigm recognize that the end of the cold war has brought relief from the hitherto dominant source of insecurity—namely, superpower nuclear conflict—the nature of international society has not fundamentally changed in their view. In short, the protection of the state, its territory, citizens, and vital interests from the potentially hostile intentions of others remains just as relevant today as before. Thus, the present absence of major interstate confrontation or conflict is seen by some as just a temporary phase in a long-standing cyclical pattern of peace and conflict in world affairs (Mearsheimer 1992; Waltz 1993). In the same fashion, some characterize the post–cold war world as more correctly an "interwar" period (Gray 1994; Weinberger and Schweitzer 1996). Several variations exist on this general theme, however.

Apprehension over the emergence of Japan, a unified Germany, and, more recently, China as great powers is one. Others foresee inevitable rivalry and confrontation between regional power blocs or civilizational groupings (Huntington 1993a, 1993b). Some Realists would argue, moreover, that the quest for economic advantage if not supremacy is now the primary imperative of nations. Security is no longer measured by the correlation of military forces but by success in gaining access to and control over markets, sources of capital, key technologies, and even labor supplies. The consequences of failure are not military invasion and subjugation but unemployment, technological backwardness, and, ultimately, inexorable national decline (Moran 1990, 1993; Huntington 1993a).
Besides the emergence of new great powers seeking to change the status quo or rival power blocs leading to new patterns of confrontation, there is the more immediate concern over what are often described as “rogue states”—notably Iran, Iraq, Libya, and North Korea—as well as terrorist organizations. In particular, concern centers on their actual or potential capability to develop weapons of mass destruction (nuclear, chemical, and biological) and acquire the associated means to deliver them over long distances to coerce or attack others. This threat has arguably grown more acute since the end of the cold war for several reasons. First, the breakup of the Soviet Union has increased the risk that nuclear materials (and even nuclear armed weapons) will be covertly acquired and that the relevant know-how to build weapons will also spread (Lee 1996). The same is true for the former Soviet stockpile of chemical weapons and related technologies. Second, the capacity to develop weapons of mass destruction is becoming easier to attain as a consequence of a worldwide diffusion of expertise and related technologies. Much the same also applies to the acquisition of chemical and biological weapons through the spread of related civil production capabilities to the developing world. Third, the means of delivering weapons of mass destruction over long distances, particularly through the use of ballistic missiles, is also spreading as a consequence of weapons technology transfers and as a byproduct of national space programs (Nolan 1991).

The methods to be employed to address these challenges include the classic response of acquiring sufficient offsetting military power to deter and defend against foreign attack as well as the classic power balancing options of coalitions and alliances. As for proliferation and terrorist threats, strategies of passive denial, active military preemption, and the threat of punitive actions constitute the range of options.

THE NEED FOR A GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE

The purpose of this volume is to bring a broader perspective to the ongoing debate about the new security agenda after the cold war. It is fair to say that this debate has been conducted largely from the perspective of the United States and Western Europe. To a large extent, this is understandable. Both were most directly affected by the cold war confrontation and therefore have had more immediate reason to consider the impact of its passing. Traditional security threats, as noted above, now seem
remote if not entirely inconceivable. Both have also the world’s largest community of governmental and nongovernmental security experts with access to many publishing outlets to carry out an open debate. Unfortunately, however, the perspective of experts in other countries and regions is often overlooked or unappreciated, which is somewhat ironical given the trend to view security in a global context.

In an effort to remedy this shortcoming and stimulate further research, twelve papers were commissioned from scholars around the world to survey how specific countries and, more generally, entire regions view their security and in particular the threats posed by the so-called new security challenges. Although the bulk of the analysis is focused on Asia Pacific countries with contributions covering the ASEAN region, China, Japan, South Asia, South Korea, and the group of nations located in the southwestern portion of the Pacific Ocean, other surveys cover Africa, Latin America, the Middle East, North America, the former Soviet Union, and Western Europe.5

To allow cross-national/regional comparisons, the authors of the surveys were asked to address a broadly similar set of questions, including: To what extent has there been a debate among policymakers and security experts about the nature of security in the wake of the cold war? What part, if any, do nontraditional security issues play in such debates? Which ones have received the most attention and why? Have any been identified as potential sources of conflict in the short and longer term? What policy prescriptions, if any, have been proposed? In addition to providing a bibliographic resource from which others might benefit, a subsidiary goal of the exercise was to identify new areas of research that might advance our understanding of contemporary security issues. The concluding chapter of the volume endeavors to weave the results of this effort in the form of some final thoughts and recommendations. While clearly not the last word on the topic, this volume will hopefully serve to stimulate broader, comparative exercises of this nature.

NOTES

1. As others have noted, the Realist school includes several variants with important differences. For a very useful general guide, see Walt (1998) and Brooks (1997).
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2. As will become clear in this volume, the threat of internal overthrow of the ruling regime has been the primary concern of many states.

3. Again, the liberal-institutional school has its variants. For a discussion of changing views on evolving thinking on international security, see Rothschild (1995) and Dupont (1996).

4. Ironically, some have voiced concern that the redefinition of some issues as security concerns will distort their analysis and encourage the use of military responses that they feel to be inappropriate. See Deudney (1991) and Soroos (1994).

5. Unfortunately, the survey covering Africa could not be published.

BIBLIOGRAPHY


