CONCLUDING REMARKS

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The preceding national and regional surveys by and large confirm that nontraditional security concerns are attracting growing attention around the world. There is also evidently an increasing inclination in many parts of the world to view their security in broader, more comprehensive terms than has typically been the case. For the most part, moreover, there is acceptance that some of the most challenging nontraditional security concerns require greater international cooperation if they are to be tackled successfully. These general observations need to be tempered, however, by other important conclusions of the surveys.

First, it is apparent that in most parts of the world there has been no “revolution in security affairs,” to use Kamal Shehadi’s term, nor does one appear imminent. In general, traditional security concerns continue to exert a powerful—even dominant—influence in the setting of priorities and the allocation of resources. What “traditional” connotes in this context, however, does not necessarily mean a preoccupation with external military threats, as will be discussed below. At the same time, those responsible for setting the security agendas of the countries and regions surveyed continue to be guided—implicitly at least—by Realist conceptions of the international system and in particular the central place of the nation-state as the primary object and instrument of security.

The countries of North America and Western Europe (as well as Australasia) have probably done more than any since the end of the cold war to incorporate new security threats into their official pronouncements as well as adapt their security establishments to ensure that these issues
become part of the policy-planning process. Yet, as Ann M. Florini, P.J. Simmons, and Alessandro Politi make clear in their respective surveys, the shift has been more rhetorical than substantial. “New” security threats remain marginal or secondary to what are essentially traditional military security concerns. Thus the dominant security questions in recent years have included the enlargement of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), reinvigorating the U.S.-Japan alliance, reducing the threat of war on the Korean peninsula, the constructive engagement of China, the containment of Iraq and Iran, and halting the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

It also appears that the initial interest in and enthusiasm for more expansive conceptions of security has lessened, a trend that reflects the generally more pragmatic mood that now prevails following the initial period of optimism after the end of the cold war. Certainly, public attitudes and elite opinion in the United States, Western Europe, and, to a lesser extent, Canada are now less enthusiastic toward peacekeeping and humanitarian operations in faraway places. Unless demonstrable national interests are at stake, there is likely to be little public support for such endeavors. The continuing commitment to enforce the Dayton peace agreement in Bosnia-Herzegovina might appear to contradict this trend, but looked at more closely, the commitment seems to be driven more by the need to maintain the cohesion and viability of NATO than by higher humanitarian impulses. Overall, “enlightened Realism” may be the best way to describe the security paradigm that governs the policymakers of North American and Western European countries.

Second, in many areas of the world, military security concerns show little sign of diminishing, whereas in others they may actually be intensifying. In the Middle East, the long-standing conflict between Arabs and Israelis continues to dominate the region despite the hopes engendered by the Oslo accords, while the threat of renewed hostilities in the Persian Gulf has not appreciably receded. In South Asia, the heavily armed standoff between India and Pakistan has also not abated, as Iftikharuzzaman comments, and may now be entering a more dangerous phase with the potential deployment of nuclear weapons and long-range missile delivery systems.

Further east, the countries of Asia Pacific are generally enjoying a prolonged period of peace and stability notwithstanding the economic and political ramifications of the recent financial crisis. Yet for certain
countries, military security concerns are if anything exerting a more prominent influence on policymakers. This is true for Japan and South Korea, as Akaneya Tatsuo and Moon Chung-in make clear in their respective surveys. It is also evident among many member countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, as indicated by the surge in arms purchases in recent years.

Third, where security concerns of an external or military nature do not predominate, the most important items on the security agenda nevertheless can still be described as “traditional,” though not in the sense that this term is typically used in Western countries. For example, in Latin America, as Mónica Serrano describes in her survey, interstate conflict has been comparatively rare and for the most part countries in the region have been concerned with safeguarding the political regime from internal challenges. The same is true for many states in the developing world. For the nations of the Southwest Pacific, as Jim Rolfe notes, the long-standing security concern has been the threats of resource scarcity and environmental degradation, which would be categorized as new security threats in most places. Similarly, in the Middle East, the problems of water scarcity, terrorism, and migration may not be the most important security issues, but neither are they new concerns.

Fourth, it is clear that in many areas where various new security issues are attracting growing public concern, it is not necessarily because they are perceived as security threats. For example, in China, as Yu Xiaojin observes, problems such as environmental degradation, resource scarcity, and population growth are all considered to pose serious challenges to economic growth and political stability, but rarely as security threats as Western scholars would employ this term. To a large extent, this is true for many parts of the former Soviet Union and within some ASEAN countries, as Sergei Medvedev and Julaporn Euarukskul discuss, respectively. More often, they are designated “new social challenges” or “global problems.” Much the same applies, moreover, to the academic and policy analysis communities. Beyond North America and Europe, the reconceptualization of certain issues as security concerns is relatively scarce. One explanation is that security analysis in many countries and regions is largely carried out by government-controlled and government-funded institutions. This point was made with respect to Russia, the Middle East, South Asia, and China.

Notwithstanding how the new security issues are discussed and
“packaged,” considerable variation exists in the relative importance they are attracting from region to region. In Europe, organized crime, terrorism, drug trafficking, and illicit migration are high-priority issues. ASEAN emphasizes the environment, resource scarcity, migrant labor, and drug trafficking; the Middle East, water scarcity and terrorism; the Southwest Pacific, environmental change/natural disasters; China, population growth and resource scarcity; the former Soviet Union, pollution, organized crime, and civil strife; and Latin America, civil strife, drugs, and organized crime. Issues of top concern for the United States are terrorism, drug trafficking, and organized crime. Canada stresses population growth, poverty, and pollution; Japan, environmental degradation, migration, and terrorism; South Korea, migration, pollution, and resource scarcity; and South Asia, poverty, environmental degradation, and ethnic strife.

Finally, with the nation-state still viewed overwhelmingly as the primary referent for security policy, the need for new supranational structures and practices that entail loss of sovereignty do not appear to be attracting a great deal of support. Only in Europe where the process of political integration is most advanced, are such ideas actively considered; but even here there is still considerable resistance.

In a very crude way, the observed variations between the security agendas of the different countries and regions conform to what some perceive as a three-way division of the international system into “premodern,” “modern,” and “postmodern” states. Each category corresponds to different levels of political and economic development.

Premodern states tend to be relatively underdeveloped and are still in the early stages of nation-building. Security concerns are dominated by the need to establish the authority and control of the state throughout its territorial space from potential domestic challenges. Modern states, by contrast, are industrialized countries that for the most part have established the internal sovereignty of the state. They are typically nationalist in orientation and, therefore, remain highly protective of the state’s sovereign prerogatives. Moreover, their security concerns are more outwardly focused to take account of regional power balances and in particular the military potential of neighboring states. Postmodern states, in contrast, are the most advanced economically while being less sensitive about conceding sovereignty, recognizing that interdependence is largely unavoidable. At the same time, mutual transparency is
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considered a valuable stabilizing influence in avoiding unwarranted threat perceptions. Although traditional military security concerns remain important, the threat from states of comparable levels of development and outlook is considered so negligible as to be virtually non-existent.

With this admittedly crude framework, one can make more sense of the conclusions revealed by the national and regional surveys. Thus, what might be termed premodern security agendas can be found in parts of Latin America and the former Soviet Union. Some countries in Southeast Asia also retain similar characteristics but now may be adopting attributes of a modern security agenda. This is more clearly apparent, however, in the countries of the Middle East and South Asia as well as in China and South Korea. Meanwhile, those states with postmodern security agendas are most clearly the members of the European Union, Canada, Australasia, and the nations of the Southwest Pacific. They may be joined soon by the countries of central and eastern Europe along with the southern cone states of South America. Russia and the United States, however, exhibit elements of both a modern and postmodern security agenda. The same is true of Japan, though for different reasons and in different ways.

The findings of this edited volume point to the need for further multinational and multidisciplinary research on the relationship between different nonmilitary security concerns, the relationship between non-military security concerns and conflict, and the efficacy of different policy approaches. The tendency to treat many of the new security threats as distinct phenomena, albeit within a larger set of nonmilitary or non-traditional security concerns, frequently ignores the complex cause-and-effect relationships that can exist among them: for example, between terrorism, organized crime, and migration or environmental degradation, resource scarcity, and civil strife. These are not just theoretical questions but issues that have a direct bearing on the crafting and implementation of policy responses.

Similarly, how nonmilitary security concerns can affect the likelihood of intrastate and interstate conflict remains a contentious question that requires more empirical and conceptual investigation. In-depth case studies that endeavor to isolate and weight the effect of different factors in the incidence of violence should be encouraged and pursued.

The effectiveness of chosen and alternative policy responses to
specific concerns also needs to be regularly evaluated. This includes assessing the relative emphasis given to preventive versus remedial measures as well as those that address underlying causes rather than the superficial manifestations of the problem. More specific research efforts can be directed at how international institutions and mechanisms need to adapt to new challenges as well as to the growing involvement of nongovernmental organizations.

Regardless of how these various nonmilitary security challenges are labeled, it will only be through a clearer understanding of their complex nature and interrelationships that we can hope to address them in an effective manner.