Rethinking National Security in a Globalizing World: A New Ecology

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The concept of national security has undergone substantial change over the past two decades, and the way nation states define national security could evolve even more dramatically in the coming years. This shift has major implications for how nation states treat intelligence information and the mechanisms and strategies they adopt to both protect and disseminate critical information. Nations now must deal with a growing array of threats which argues that new approaches are needed for sharing intelligence – and even publicly available information – across nation-state boundaries.

Redefining National Security

Traditionally national security has been defined in terms of the interests of nation states. The primary imperative of any nation is to protect its citizens. Nation states establish their armed forces for that purpose. Intelligence services were created to collect intelligence on the intent and capabilities of potential enemies and to support military operations should a conflict break out. In this environment, the prime objective for intelligence organizations is to penetrate foreign institutions at the highest level possible in order to assess both intent and capabilities.

Nation states, however, do not always operate unilaterally. Nations enter into formal alliances such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, to leverage the capabilities of like-minded states and provide better security for their citizens. They can also form *ad hoc* coalitions as was done to repel Iraqi President Saddam Hussein's incursion into Kuwait in 1990. When such alliances or coalitions are formed, agreements are often concluded to share intelligence on the adversary; this is particularly critical if joint operations are contemplated. Moreover, not all conflict, involves nation states. Computer hackers can cause major damage to a nation's infrastructure, and disease outbreaks such as HIV AIDS can devastate a population.

A Growing Array of Threats

In recent decades and particularly with the collapse of the Soviet Union, it has become increasingly apparent that not just nation states but a much broader array of actors can threaten the citizenry. In fact, a spectrum can be established categorizing sources of threat into at least five groups: Nation States, Sub-National Actors, Organizations, Informal Networks, and Systemic Challenges.

Sub-national Actors can range from ethnic groups (such as the Uighurs in China or the Kurds in Iraq, Iran and Turkey) to guerrilla movements (Tamil Tigers in Sri Lanka or the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia – FARC) to refugee populations (in the Congo or in the states adjoining the conflict in Iraq). While described as "sub-national groups" their membership and their activities often cross national boundaries.

Organizations come in many shapes and sizes including drug syndicates in Colombia and Mexico, alien smuggling groups in China, and terrorist groups with either a regional (ETA in Spain) or international (al-Qaeda) focus. Legal entities such as multinational firms and Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) can take actions that would have adverse implications for national security. For example, a large company could transfer technology or withhold investments; such decisions could unwittingly – or wittingly – undercut US or European national security interests through sales of "dual-use materials" or other strategic goods to all buyers. Similarly, a large humanitarian operation could choose not to partner with the United States or the EU in providing relief supplies in a given country because of unstable political conditions.

The impact of ***Informal Networks*** has grown almost exponentially in the past two decades, aided and abetted by the Internet. Anti-Globalization protesters made their first mark on the international psyche at the World Trade Organization meeting in Seattle, Washington in 1999 and in many subsequent G-8 and G-20 sessions. In China, and more recently in Iran, social networking sites such as Twitter and Facebook have been used successfully to articulate and mobilize protests.

Currency speculators have deepened or accelerated several international financial crises in the past decade, and computer hacking has become a serious problem for all countries and citizens of the world. On 4 July 2009 the websites of major institutions in several countries around the world were subjected to a sophisticated global attack by an unknown assailant, although many suspected the North Koreans. Individuals can also play major roles in advancing key national security interests, especially in the humanitarian arena. Witness the impact of American actors Angelina Jolie and George Clooney in calling public attention to the atrocities in the Darfur region of Sudan and the work of Irish musician Bono against the spread of AIDS and for debt relief in Africa.

In an increasingly globalized world, the impact of ***Systemic Challenges*** has become much more apparent. Systemic challenges are best defined as those threats to the global system that have "no face." The threat does not emanate from a particular nation or person but from natural causes. The emergence of SARS in China in 2003 and most recently the rapid spread of H1N1 (Swine Flu) demonstrate the vulnerability of nations to the spread of infectious diseases in an increasingly globalized world.

While most natural disasters are localized phenomena, the Indonesian Tsunami in 2004 demonstrated that even natural disasters can impact large portions of the globe. Global warming, rising sea levels, water shortages, and climate volatility will pose even greater problems in the years to come, suggesting that Systemic Challenges could emerge in the next decade as the subgroup of potential threats deserving the most attention and resources.

New Mechanisms of Engagement

When a nation state feels threatened, the classic response is to employ its military forces – or threaten to do so – in order to impose its will or defend its national interests. It has always been a simple calculus: the stronger a nation's military, the greater the likelihood that it can avoid being attacked and advance its interests globally. In recent years, however, nation states have begun to contemplate – and utilize – non-military and non-state mechanisms to advance their interests. Russia's cyber attack against Georgia is a recent example of nations using cyber as an instrument of warfare. Iran has

also looked to Hezbollah to support its agenda, just as the Pakistani intelligence officials have engaged the Taliban at times to support their interests.

In an increasingly globalized world, the mechanisms employed to defend a country's national interests are also becoming more nuanced to include a growing reliance on international policing and peacekeeping forces and the growth of a broad range of collaborative enterprises.

Policing/Monitoring. The United Nations has been at the forefront in establishing international peacekeeping and policing entities in places such as Haiti, Somalia, and Gaza but other organizations such as the European Union (EU) in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the African Union Mission in Sudan have also played such roles. A critical monitoring and policing role is also played by institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Trade Organization (WTO) and the World Health Organization (WHO). International treaties (such as the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) or the Kyoto Protocols to combat global warming) set standards and often contain provisions for monitoring compliance and sanctioning those who violate the rules. International legal entities, most notably the International Criminal Court (ICC), have been established to deal with behaviors of national leaders and nation states that violate international standards, for example, by committing acts of genocide.

Collaboration is another often overlooked mechanism of engagement. Collaboration can take many different forms ranging from the establishment of voluntary global standards to more *ad hoc*, informal arrangements. The allocation of domain names on the Internet is a prime example of voluntary standard setting: a global database has been established and domain names are allocated on a first-come basis. Increasingly, non-nation state entities are taking the lead in establishing international standards, for example, to guide genetic research or to establish common internet protocols. Hundreds of *ad hoc* groups pop up every day on the Internet to address new issues and develop collaborative solutions to new problems.

A New Ecology of National Security

As the array of potential sources of threat expands and the mechanisms for dealing with the threats increase, the concept of national

security becomes a much more complex phenomenon. One model for sorting out this complexity is to develop a new ecology of national security that can be illustrated by a simple 5 x 3 matrix (see Figure 1: The Expanding Concept of National Security: A New Ecology). The matrix arrays threats to national security along the vertical axis, beginning with the most traditional actor, the nation state. At the other end of the spectrum are systemic threats such as infectious diseases. The three mechanisms of engagement are listed along the top, creating a matrix with 15 distinct cells. The cells provide historic examples of how each mechanism of engagement has been employed to deal with the five categories of threat. For example, the top left cell presents the classic case of using military force to resolve nation state differences. In contrast, in the bottom right cell various actors have established collaborative work practices to deal with a systemic threat such as the outbreak of H1N1 (Swine flu).

A careful examination of the matrix will reveal how the concept of national security has been transformed over the past few decades.

- Classic definitions of national security focus on the potential for armed conflict involving nation states. This is represented by the top left cell.
- In recent decades, the threat to the nation state has expanded to include threats posed by sub-national actors, criminal enterprises, and terrorist groups. Similarly, the use of peacekeeping and international policing has become more commonplace. This enlarged definition of national security is represented by the six cells in the top left of the matrix.
- The remaining nine cells to the right and on the bottom of the matrix represent how the concept of national security is continuing to expand as the world we live in becomes increasingly globalized.

Implications for Information Sharing and Collaboration

Using a matrix to illustrate the concept of a new national security ecology highlights other key patterns, such as how the practice of collecting intelligence and sharing information varies dramatically from one cell to

another within the matrix. In the upper left quadrant of the chart, the standard practice of nation states is to seek intelligence on their adversaries, classify it, and protect it. If, for example, an intelligence service has obtained critical threat information from a recruited source in an adversary's government, it is imperative to classify and strictly control dissemination of this information in order to protect the source and ensure that he or she can continue to report.

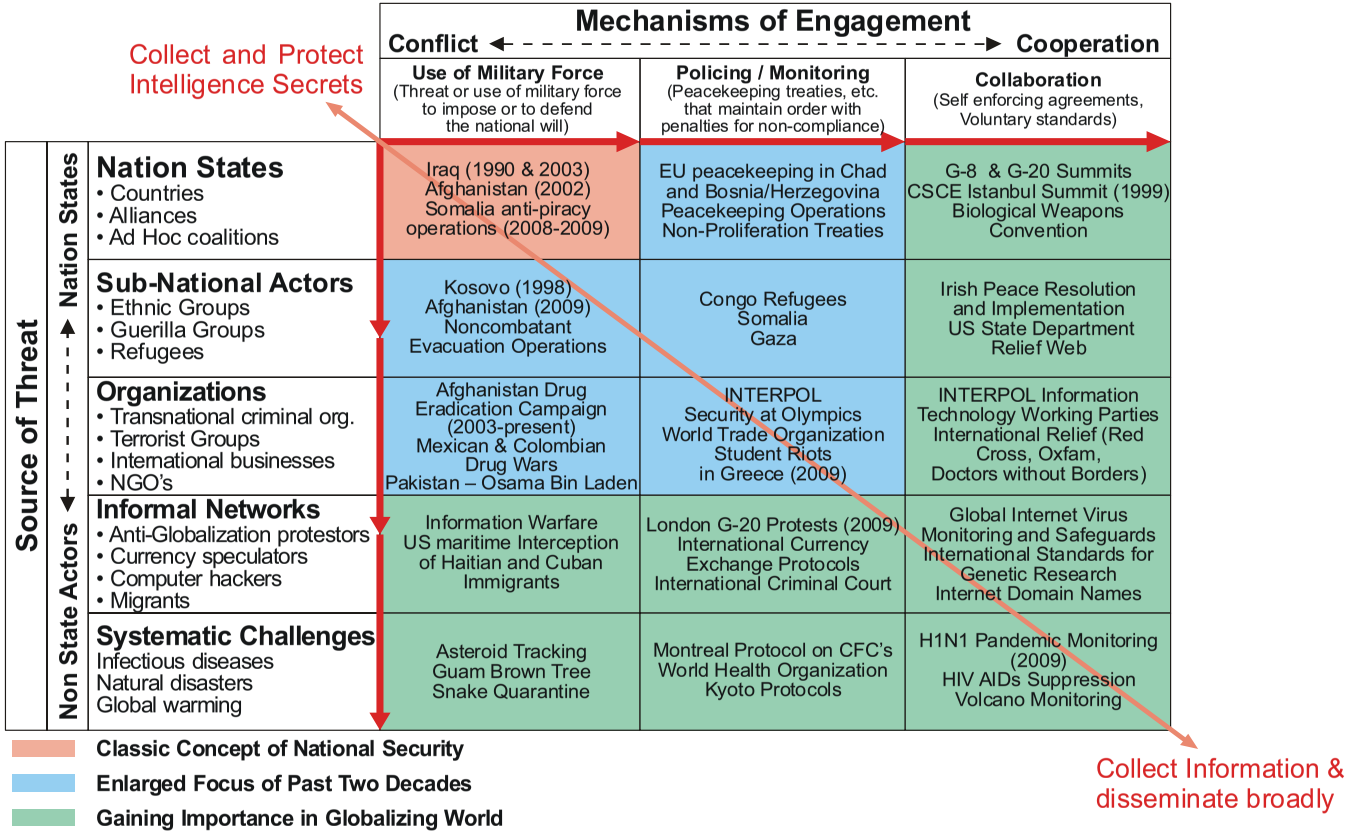
As one moves diagonally across the matrix from the upper left to the lower right, the tendency reverses. In the bottom right cell of the matrix, almost all of the critical information usually comes from unclassified sources and the imperative for the collector, the analyst, and the policymaker is to disseminate the information to everyone as soon as possible. For example, global concerns about the potential impact of an outbreak of avian influenza (H1N5) have led to the establishment of robust networks to detect and alert the global community when any sign of an outbreak is observed.

The greatest challenge comes when dealing with cells in the middle of the matrix where those working in the domestic security arena must find ways to share national security information with state, local, or provincial law enforcement officers. A good example would be efforts to detect and prevent the movement of illegal drugs across international borders. The host government intelligence service must work closely with liaison partners in countries where the drugs are produced or transshipped in order to learn about planned shipments and help limit production in producer countries. This dialogue often requires serious tradeoffs involving the protection of sources and the need to provide critical lead information to the liaison partner.

Similar tensions exist in the counterterrorism arena when national security agencies acquire classified information but must sanitize it to protect sources and methods before passing it to local law enforcement agencies to enable them to deal with the potential threat. Efforts to deal with these challenges have proven difficult, if not elusive. From the perspective of national security agencies, the best solution is to require that anyone receiving sensitive information has the appropriate security clearance. From the law enforcement perspective, this solution is often unworkable given the large numbers of law enforcement officers and the need for the police officer "on the street" to possess the information, not just senior managers or analysts.

Figure 1

The Expanding Concept of National Security



One of the most promising ways for dealing with this tension between the need to protect sensitive information and the value of disseminating it is to establish collaborative networks to bridge the gaps. To be effective, these collaborative networks should be small (usually no more than eight individuals) and based on the concepts of mutual trust, a shared mission, and mutual dependency. It is easier to maintain a high level of trust in such small cells. Individuals who belong to two or three cells are also much more efficient human sharers of information and insight. They know exactly how much information their colleagues can absorb, and what is most appropriate to share given each group's unique culture and work style.

It is also helpful not to confuse information sharing with collaboration. The movement of sensitive, often classified documents needs to be highly regulated to ensure no security breaches. The collaborative sharing of insights, strategies, and concerns, however, does not require the same degree of control; it should allow for a more free flowing dialogue within established "rules of the road." Once again, the matrix helps demonstrate that the development of trusting, collaborative groups is much easier when dealing with systemic challenges or issues that are best managed through collaboration. In contrast, collaborative systems are much harder to establish and much less likely to succeed with dealing with the affairs of nations and the projection of military force as the primary means for imposing national will. It is much easier to collaborate when faced with a systemic challenge than when dealing with interstate rivalries.

Biography

Randolph H. Pherson, President of Pherson Associates, teaches advanced analityc tecniques and critical thinking skills to analysts in the Intelligence Community and the private sector. He collaborated with Richards J. Heuer, Jr. in launching the Analysis of Competing Hypothese software tool; they have written a new book, "Structured Analytic Techniques for the Intelligence community". Mr. Pherson completed a 28-year carrer in the Intelligence Community in 2000, last serving as National Intelligence Officer (NIO) for Latin America. Previously, at the CIA, Mr. Pherson managed the production of intelligence analysis on topics ranging from global instability to Latin America, served on the Inspector General's staff, and developed and implemented a strategic planning process for the CIA as Chief, Strategic Planning and Management Staff under the Deputy Director for Planning and Coordination (ExDir). From 2000 to 2002, Mr. Pherson served as the Director, International Studies, for Evidence Based Research, Inc. Mr. Pherson is the recipient of both the Distinguished Intelligence Medal for his service as NIO for Latin America and the Distinguished Career Intelligence Medal. Mr. Pherson received his A.B. from Dartmouth College and an M.A. in International Relations from Yale University.