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**UNCONVENTIONAL THOUGHTS TOWARDS A FUTURE POLICY TO
COUNTER ASYMMETRIC THREATS**

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UNCONVENTIONAL THOUGHTS TOWARDS A FUTURE POLICY TO COUNTER ASYMMETRIC THREATS

“This is another type of war, new in its intensity, ancient in its origins — war by guerrillas, subversives, insurgents, assassins; war by ambush instead of by combat; by infiltration, instead of aggression, seeking victory by eroding and exhausting the enemy instead of engaging him . . . It requires in those situations where we must counter it . . . a whole new kind of strategy, a wholly different kind of force, and therefore a new and wholly different kind of military training.”

John F. Kennedy

Introduction

The classical type of warfare, often described as a conventional war between equal powers, has dominated European history for almost three centuries. It allowed states to use military force in pursuit of political goals and even permitted a certain regulation of warfare and violence.¹ According to this politico-military model nations are the only authorities legally allowed to engage in war, which can declare war and consequently can decide on its termination in the form of an all-nations binding peace treaty. Under this construct the military has a monopoly over warfare; guerrillas or partisans, militia and warlords are outside the parameters of legality surrounding the conflict.²

¹ Second-generation (or Industrial Age) warfare: “This style of war-fighting tends to be linear and slow moving, relying on masses of men and material to physically crush (albeit not necessarily through frontal assaults) or threaten to crush an opponent”. Third-generation: This type of war-fighting “breaks battlefield linearity by seeking and exploiting a combination of “spaces and timing” vis-à-vis an enemy (...), anticipating the actions of the opponent and pre-empting his intentions via unexpected thrusts and parries by highly agile, dispersed friendly forces brought together quickly for the mission and just as quickly dispersed when the action is finished. This type of warfare also may free forces from the ponderous support structure characteristic of Industrial Age warfare”. Fourth generation: “This primarily involves land forces (although targets can be naval vessels and air assets) – irregular or guerrilla warfare carried out by groups motivated by ideology, revenge, lust for power, ethnicity, religion or some other unifying bond”. (Col. Daniel Smith (ret.), Marcus Corbin, Christopher Hellman. Reforging the Sword. Forces for A 21st Century Security Strategy (Condensed Report). Centre for Defence Information, September 2001. pp. 20–21

See: Bjørn Møller, „Privatization of War and the Regulation of Violence”, page 1, <http://dana.ucc.nau.edu>,

² Herfried Münkler, *Symmetrische und Asymmetrische Kriege*, Merkur. August 2004: 664, page 1

Recently this model seems to be superseded by a “new type” of conflict or warfare, described as ‘asymmetry’, ‘asymmetric warfare’ but also as ‘small wars’, ‘new wars’, ‘unorthodox warfare’, ‘post-modern wars’ or ‘uncivil wars’.³ This subject becomes interesting, however, in combination with terrorism. The most recent large-scale terrorist attacks on Western democracies, which started with the attack on the World Trade Centre and Pentagon on 11th of September 2001, found their latest culmination in the Madrid attacks on 11th of March 2004. A feeling of security has given way to a realization of being vulnerable not only in Europe but also in North America. Many experts suggest that the conflict triggered by the attacks of 9/11 and Madrid is only the beginning of an era of international conflicts, escalation of terror and other asymmetric threats. It shows that this war pattern neither corresponds to the perceptions of a Carl von Clausewitz nor the conditions of The Hague and Geneva Convention.⁴ Asymmetric warfare is both a modern construct of the past decades and yet as old as warfare itself. The idea of mismatched groups or forces seeking to achieve comparative advantage has been around for a very long time. For centuries, even millennia, weaker opponents have sought to neutralize their enemy’s technological or numerical superiority by fighting in ways or on battlefields that nullify it.⁵ Looking back in history, it seems that this type of warfare is a step back to the era of the

³ The term ‘small wars’ goes back to Carl von Clausewitz. He used this term to distinguish this kind of warfare from the “Great (interstate) Wars”. Synonyms for ‘small wars’ are ‘low-intensity conflicts’ (LIC), ‘asymmetric warfare’, ‘partisan warfare’, ‘neo-Hobbes’ warfare’, ‘guerilla warfare’, ‘new wars’, ‘post-modern wars’ and ‘degenerated wars’.

See: Christoph Daase, *Kleine Kriege – Große Wirkung. Wie unkonventionelle Kriegführung die internationale Politik verändert*, Baden-Baden /Germany: Nomos-Verlagsgesellschaft, 2001, pp.10-12

See: Bjørn Møller, „Privatization of War and the Regulation of Violence”, page 3,

⁴ Krystian Piatkowski, “A New Type of Warfare“, The “Polska w Europie” Foundation”, Studies and Analyses, Vol. I, no. 3 “Globalization after 9/11.” 2002: p. 31

See: Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, ed. and trans. Michael Howard and Peter Parent (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976): C. acknowledges unconventional war but views it as something not to be encouraged.

⁵ J. G Eaton, “The Beauty of Asymmetry: An Examination of the Context and Practice of Asymmetric Warfare from a Western/Centrist Perspective”, *Defence Studies*, Spring 2002: Vol. 2, No 1, p. 1. Published by Frank Cass, London, p. 51

Thirty Years' War which was a war of religion and ideologies and later also became a war perpetuated by the need of people to physically survive in times of non-functioning economies, chaos and anarchy.⁶ In this war the civil population was deeply involved and suffered tremendously. It was a conflict in which the intensity of fighting actions flared up and down and where an end was not predictable. Instead of standing armies on the battlefield with clearly defined structures and a code of conduct, today's conflicts feature private corporations,⁷ warlords, marauding mercenaries,⁸ child soldiers⁹ and internationally acting terrorist groups as well as non-state militias that conduct war worldwide and fight against states, international organizations and even against themselves.¹⁰ This "demilitarization" of war, where nations no longer struggle with

⁶ H. J. Chr. Grimmelshausen who lived in the 17th century in Gelnhausen/Germany participated himself in the Thirty Year's War and wrote this story of *Simplicissimus'* life under the impressions he gained during this period. In this most famous European poetry about this period, in which he portrays a realistic picture about the Thirty Year's War, G. describes in book 4, chapter 13 a group of mercenaries, the so called "Merodebrüder". The only reason for their existence was not to fight for religious or ideological aims but only for physical survival of themselves and their peer group ('clientele'). H. J. Chr. von Grimmelshausen: "Der abenteuerliche Simplicissimus", Insel-Verlag, Frankfurt/Main, 1983, Viertes Buch, Kapitel 13, pp. 425-429. Many of those groups existed during this period in Europe and today one can find groups with identical aims in almost all continents, especially in Africa, Middle and South America and Asia.

⁷ "Private corporations have penetrated western warfare so deeply, that they are now the second biggest contributor of coalition forces in Iraq after the Pentagon, a Guardian investigation has established. While the official coalition figures list the British as the second largest contingent with around 9,900 troops, they are narrowly outnumbered by the 10,000 private military contractors now on the ground. (...) It is a trend that has been growing worldwide since the end of the "Cold War", a booming business which entails replacing soldiers [and other fighters – author] wherever possible with highly paid civilians and hired guns not subject to standard military disciplinary procedures [and the Law of Armed Conflict – author] (...) Since the end of the "Cold War" it is reckoned that six million servicemen have been thrown onto the employment market with little to peddle but their fighting and military skills. The US military is 60 % the size of a decade ago, the Soviet collapse wrecked the colossal Red Army, the East German military melted away, the end of apartheid destroyed the white officer class in South Africa. The British armed forces are at their smallest since the Napoleonic wars." I. Traynor. "The Privatisation of War", *The Guardian International*, 10 Dec 2003, page 1

⁸ "In 1994, the United Nations became sufficiently alarmed about the role of mercenaries to appoint an official to investigate the issue. Enrique Bernales Ballesteros, the UN special rapporteur on mercenaries, reported a growing number of hired fighters appearing in Angola, Rwanda, Tajikistan, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Afghanistan, the former Zaire and the former Yugoslavia. His report expressed particular concern about the involvement of large, well-organized and well-equipped private military corporations." Steven Brayton. "Outsourcing of War: mercenaries and the privatization of peacekeeping", page 1, www.questia.com/PM.qst?a=o&showHideToc=0&docId=5000767951&keywords,

⁹ "According to recent reports of a group of human rights organizations in more than 20 countries (e.g. Afghanistan, Ivory Coast, Columbia, India, Iraq, Palestine, Liberia, Russian Federation and Sudan) child soldiers are fighting on each side of the belligerent parties." www.spiegel.de, 17 Nov 2004

¹⁰ C. Philipp, "Die neuen Kriege", FSU Jena / Institut für Politik. 2002: Archivnummer V 11992, p. 1

each other, was the dominating type of war during the last decades of the 20th century and it seems that war in the 21st century will no longer be what it had been during the past centuries.¹¹

Although terrorist groups have been acting and conducting terrorist attacks in Europe and in other parts of the world for decades,¹² first reactions of Western nations after 9/11 showed that most nations were taken totally by surprise. In the aftermath of these events most Western democracies reacted with reluctance and indecisiveness despite the fact that they had earlier announced their sympathy and solidarity. Conversely the US reactions can be characterized by hasty actions, doing things for the sake of doing things and a tendency to overreact. This tendency found its strongest expressions in the operations in Afghanistan and Iraq as well as in the set up of the Guantanamo “Prison Camp” which caused many concerns and fierce reactions in Western Europe and many other countries in the world. This inconstancy between most Western democracies and the US as well as the different interpretations concerning the danger of terrorism and how to cope with it adequately lead to a political split and deep political disagreement between many European countries and the US, which found its strongest expression in the massive anti-war demonstrations in spring and summer of 2003 and the refusal of most Western nations to participate in the Iraq War. Also today, more than two years after the terrorist attacks took place on US soil, the West is still divided and lacks convincing synchronized and harmonized political and military strategies, concepts, and actions. This clearly recognizable disharmony between close allies and friends weakens Western nations’ solidarity and

¹¹ Mary Kaldor, *Neue und alte Kriege. Organisierte Gewalt im Zeitalter der Globalisierung*, Frankfurt am Main Germany: Suhrkamp Verlag, 2000, pp. 8-9.

¹² Many terrorist groups have been active during the last decades of the 20th century all over the world:, e.g. “Red Army Fraction”, the so called “Baader-Meinhof Gruppe” in Germany, “ETA” in Spain, “IRA” in Northern Ireland and Great Britain, “Tamil Tigers” in Sri Lanka, “Sendero Luminoso” in Peru or “Jemaah Islamiya” in Indonesia.

effectiveness in their fight against terrorism and unfortunately plays also into the hands of terrorists.¹³

9/11 proved that most Western nations were neither prepared to counter terrorism and asymmetric threats adequately nor had convincing strategies to deal with them. Actions taken were mostly spontaneous, inappropriate and unsynchronized and were lacking an overall approach and common, harmonized policy. This paper argues that a successful fight against terrorism demands that the developed nations of the world formulate a global strategy that can deal with the political, social and economic conditions that cause social and political disorder as well as poverty in the less developed countries, both of which offer a fertile breeding ground for terrorists and terrorism. Furthermore Western democracies must be able to cope with the physical risks and dangers of terrorism and asymmetric threat adequately. In this context it is essential to understand those risks and dangers and therefore to develop a comprehensive understanding of the cultural and social background of those actors and groups involved in terrorism. Finally it is necessary to recognize the still existing weaknesses of Western societies, organizations and national institutions which find their expression in national and institutional egoisms, the lack of international cooperation, suppression or even ignorance of those reasons which lead to terrorism and asymmetric warfare as well as the unwillingness to conduct necessary yet drastic and costly reforms in order to cope with the challenges of the 21st century.

This essay demonstrates that to combat these new threats, a holistic, preventive and multinational approach that considers all relevant economical, political and social factors is

¹³ Examples, which characterize the division between the US and her European allies, are manifold: e.g. the problems of the US to convince NATO to take action in Iraq ended in the creation of a “coalition of the willing” in which most of the European NATO members did not participate. Another example is the creation of the “prisoner camp” in Guantanamo, which provoked heavy critiques and led to a further dissociation of many Western European Nations from the US.

necessary. Only a unified effort and international, especially Western solidarity as well as an overall international political and security political framework that sets the conditions for appropriate development based on the UN Charter as well as national and international institutional reforms will lead to a common and just world order. This just world order, based on the aforementioned necessary developments and reforms is the most promising way to provide any chance of coping adequately with the root causes of these new forms of conflict and organized violence and must therefore be the priority of all anti terrorist policies.

Asymmetric Warfare – Definitions

The term asymmetric warfare appeared in specialist publications in the nineties during the debate that was taking place in the USA on the proper direction for the development of the country's military potential following the end of the "Cold War". There is no shortage of definition within this area of study and this essay accepts the terms irregular, unconventional, non-traditional and unorthodox as precursors of the current preference for the term asymmetry. P.F. Herman defines "Asymmetric warfare ... as a set of operational practices, aimed at negating advantages and exploiting vulnerabilities rather than engaging in traditional force-on-force engagements."¹⁴ Another, broader definition goes back to Metz and Johnson: "In the realm of military affairs and national security, asymmetry is acting, organizing and thinking differently than opponents in order to maximize one's own advantages, exploit an opponent's weakness, attain the initiative, or gain greater freedom of action."¹⁵

¹⁴ P.F. Herman, "Asymmetric Warfare: Sizing the Threat", *Low Intensity Conflict & Law Enforcement* 6/1, spring 1997, p. 176

See: J. G Eaton, "The Beauty of Asymmetry: An Examination of the Context and Practice of Asymmetric Warfare from a Western/Centrist Perspective"

¹⁵ S. Metz and D.V. Johnson, *Asymmetry and US Military Strategy: Definition, Background, and Strategic Concepts*, (Carlisle PA: US Strategic Studies Institute, 2001), p. 2

This essay also accepts the definition of “asymmetric warfare” as an armed conflict in which the state and its armed forces confront an enemy whose aims, organization, means and methods of combat do not fit the conventional notion of war. A party involved in asymmetric warfare does not engage in direct confrontation with enemy troops on the battlefield. Instead, it aims to strike a painful blow to the foe using such “unconventional methods” as: terrorism (including weapons of mass destruction); psychological warfare (attack on the morale of the opponent’s leaders and society); information warfare (IT attack); or economic attack (destabilization of the financial system and stock exchange). The victim of asymmetric warfare need not be a state; it may also be any organized (political, ethnical, religious, criminal, ideological, or ecological) group of people united by specific features or objectives. The notions of battlefield or front are foreign to asymmetric warfare, since it is characterized by dispersion and the absence of any geographical or chronological continuity. A party engaging in such a war will employ all available instruments to achieve its objectives.¹⁶

This definition underlines that the benefit of an asymmetric approach is not purely avoidance of attrition but also the exploitation of initiative. Similarly the term “threat” is used in various ways within defence literature and yet is poorly defined;¹⁷ in this essay it will be taken to be a combination of capability, intent and opportunity.

The Current Situation

Before analysing the “new forms of war” it is helpful to look at the main economic, political, and social trends that essentially determine the current development of civilizations.

¹⁶ Krystian Piatkowski, “A New Type of Warfare“, pp. 8-12

¹⁷ J. G Eaton, “The Beauty of Asymmetry: An Examination of the Context and Practice of Asymmetric Warfare from a Western/Centrist Perspective”, pp. 52-53

Economic Development – Globalization. The transnational interconnection of systems, markets and societies continues to progress. This is most evident in the field of the international economy. National economies are increasingly disintegrating and giving way to a global economy.¹⁸ The economic power of multinational enterprises continues to grow and so do their opportunities for exerting political influence.¹⁹ On the other hand, globalization obstructs those values of Western societies, which demonstrate their strengths and superiority in the view of the rest of the world. With the export of low paid jobs in low-wage countries the West accepts child employment and bad working conditions. This is the main drawback of economic globalization, the aggravation of the contrasts between “rich and poor” within and between nations as well as the loss of social cohesion. At the same time, “losers in the globalization process” are marginalized at national and regional and global levels.

Political Development – Multipolarity. A steadily increasing number of non-state actors and organizations in addition to the existing and probable future actors at state level are gaining influence in the geopolitical order.²⁰ Many “interest groups” do not strive for participation in or a takeover of the government in the traditional sense because in their eyes the question of “right or wrong” is decided by the results of fighting rather than being defined by any international law i.e.

¹⁸ According to Hans Küng, a German political scientist, „Today 20 % of the economy is global, in 30 years it will be 80 %.” Hans Küng, *Islam – eine umstrittene Religion*, (Novalis-Verlag Schaffhausen/Germany 2001), See: Jutta Bakonyi, „Terrorismus, Krieg und andere Gewaltphänomene der Moderne“, Arbeitspapier, Universität Hamburg – IPW, Forschungsstelle Kriege (Research Unit of Wars), Hamburg 2001, Nr. 4/2001, pp. 15-18

¹⁹ One of the most prominent, but not the only example for the influence and power of multinational enterprises on nations is the case of the Shell Petroleum Development Company in Nigeria: The Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC) and its joint-venture partners - particularly the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation - have earned billions of dollars from the oil extracted from the land of the Ogoni in the Niger Delta. The Ogoni however complained that they have not seen adequate benefits; rather the oil has cost them dearly in terms of a deteriorating environment and underdevelopment and mobilized a successful national and international campaign against the Nigerian government and Shell. Despite the avowed non-violent nature of the campaign, military repression [which was totally ignored by the management of the Shell Company – author] resulted in thousands of Ogoni killed, raped, beaten, detained and exiled and the main leaders executed. Richard Boele, Heike Fabig, David Wheeler. Shell, Nigeria and the Ogoni. A study in unsustainable development: I. The story of Shell, Nigeria and the Ogoni people - environment, economy, relationships: conflict and prospects for resolution.”

www.interscience.wiley.com/cgi

²⁰ Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, “Fokus Globalisierung”, Internationale Politik und Gesellschaft, Bonn/Germany 2002, <http://www.fes.de/focus/indexglobalisierung.htm>

the ends justify the means. Thus, the application of such laws and regulations on legal types of non-international wars is rendered more difficult, if not impossible. These actors are mainly non-governmental organizations, multinational enterprises and a large number of groups and persons that, at the other end of the scale, include organizations of international terrorism and organized crime as well as ethnic and religious groups. This increase in non-governmental actors impacts significantly on the power of the state and also influences severely the government's exclusive right to the use of force. The consequences are an increasing number of states without a functioning public order and which become an ideal playground for terrorists as bases of training and operation. According to I. Hauchler, D. Messner and F. Nuscheler, fragmentation and singlepolarity as counter developments challenge the trend towards multipolarity, but at present they are not strong enough to stop it.²¹

Social Development – Democratization. Further globalization and the diversification of information and thus the increased dissemination of a common concept of values leads to the assumption that the world is, despite all drawbacks, developing in a much more open and economically more successful way. The basis and main reason for this development is the process of democratization. Since the end of the “Cold War” at the latest, democracy in general is the universally most promising and successful form of social organization. A worldwide comparison of the economic productivity of societies shows that the developed economies in the world are mainly found in states with democracy as the social form of organization. These observations show if states are striving for economic progress and want to participate in global

²¹ Foundation Development and Peace, *Globale Trends 2000 – Fakten, Analysen, Prognosen*, Ed. by Ingomar Hauchler, Dirk Messner and Franz Nuscheler. Frankfurt-Main/Germany: Fischer Taschenbuch-Verlag, 1999, p. 371
See: Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, “Fokus Globalisierung”, Internationale Politik und Gesellschaft,

growth, it is necessary for them to structure their economic and social form of organization in a liberal and free manner.

Thus, coping with the risks and challenges of the 21st century requires social, economic and, at least, political actors, who consider these developments and are willing to tackle the national, regional and global tasks jointly and in a mutual and common approach in order to contribute to an overall agreed world order which needs to be based on the principles of a free and just society as laid out in the UN Charter. However, complementary to these developments nations and politics must also be sufficiently realistic and be prepared to cope with the physical risks and dangers of terrorism and asymmetric threats, which are inherent in or derive from such evolutionary and revolutionary processes. This will definitively impact the further development of Western strategies and doctrines including military, police and para-military forces to prepare them for future challenges.

War in the 21st Century

The modes and means of war are dramatically changing and this has significant implications for future politics and the further development of armed forces, institutions and organizations. Until the end of the “Cold War”, states were still considered to possess the monopoly over war. Since then there has been an increased tendency towards its “privatization”, which is expected to continue during the next decades.²²

Simultaneously the aforementioned political, economic and social developments will continue to involve significant changes in many parts across the world. Thus, the future might

²² According to Peter W. Singer, “In the first time in the history of the modern nation state, governments are surrendering one of the essential and defining attributes of statehood, the state’s monopoly on the legitimate use of force“, Peter W. Singer, *Corporate Warriors: The Rise of the Privatized Military Industry* (Cornell University Press 2004)

See: Herfried Münkler, *Symmetrische und Asymmetrische Kriege*, page 2

see an increasing number of non-state actors who want to ensure for themselves and their “clienteles” or peer groups a fair share in the satisfaction of material and immaterial needs, if necessary, by force of arms. These parties are not really interested in terminating wars or conflicts because this specific way of satisfying needs may take or already has taken the place of normal economic life. A large number of future conflicts will no longer see a clear separation between the use of force and the “satisfaction of own needs” or better “special interests”.²³

According to Herfried Münkler, a German political scientist, the developments since World War II indicate that wars in the classical sense might disappear from the scene or at least will play a very minor role. “Classical wars” between states, (e.g. Indo-Pakistan (1971), Yom Kippur (1973) or Malvinas (1982)) seem to be a “discontinued line of warfare” and an analysis of respective historical data show that future armed conflicts mostly will be asymmetric conflicts.²⁴ Developments in the recent years and the attitude of the “powerful poles”, namely the US but also Europe and other capable regional powers have shown that these actors might no longer accept wars between states to be waged.²⁵ Consequently, state and non-state actors will increasingly resort to this new type of violence that threatens international security.²⁶

Asymmetric warfare will become more and more attractive as it can be waged more

²³ Those special interests can include economic interests, criminal activities (e.g. wealth and power of drug cartels, hostage taking), ethnic goals, religious goals, ideological goals etc. In many regions of the world this “business of war” for satisfying material and immaterial needs, although other reasons are used for justification (e.g. religious, political, ethnical), is day to day business. One example for this type of “business” are those groups which are active in hostage taking for ransom demand in Middle and South America, Africa and East Asia. Mark See: Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God. The Global Rise of Religious Violence*, (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London 2000, University of California Press):
See: footnote 6

²⁴ Herfried Münkler, a German political scientist, argues

economically and successfully by the weaker adversary and is characterized by an all in all reduced vulnerability on the part of the aggressor. Primarily scientific-technical advances and their potential for this type of war enhance this process. Recent trends show that future wars might almost exclusively be conflicts with asymmetric features because the only chance for aforementioned groups and actors to provide a reasonable threat to the so-called “powerful poles” or to succeed in a conflict is their resort to asymmetric warfare.

Besides its political consideration these developments need to be reflected in future strategies as well as in the further development of army doctrine, organization and structure as well as in the education and training programmes for military leaders and soldiers to prepare them for the challenges in the 21st century. These programmes need to be adapted in such a way that future military leaders at the strategic, operational and tactical levels get the right mindset and that they are prepared to understand political processes especially at the strategic and operational levels. Furthermore education and training have to be adapted in a way that these future military leaders are able to inject military thought into the political process in order that the state may develop coherent internal and external policies and strategies to assure the security of the state and its people.

Actors in Asymmetric Warfare

To get a complete picture and to understand the behaviour and reactions of such actors involved in terrorist attacks and asymmetric warfare, it is necessary to have a closer look at the social origin and cultural background of such people. Most of the *leaders* of such armed groups come from urban middle and upper classes and are very well educated in Western schools and

universities, with all its advantages and which allows them a “world political communication”.²⁷

They normally have a relatively high social status in their respective countries or regions, which finds its expression through several sources such as money, education and origin.

The *staffs* of such groups are mainly composed of “violence specialists” from an environment with a corresponding professional code of ethics like army, para-military groups, police, sports associations or other comparable organizations.

The *followers* come from all, mostly underprivileged parts of the society, especially from urban outlaws, war victims or from refugee and work migration milieus. These groups mainly arise in times when changes due to modernization processes occur too fast and when new institutions of political and social integration cannot grow at the same speed that the old institutions lose their influence and importance.²⁸

While our knowledge about such groups is relatively limited, most of the main actors and decision makers of such groups are very well aware of the culture, values and behavioural patterns of Western societies and the influence of public opinion on politicians and the political decision making process. This background knowledge and awareness makes Western democracies easy to manipulate and vulnerable to asymmetric threats and terrorism and gives such groups an indisputable advantage for their “fight for justice and freedom”.²⁹

To be prepared for and to cope with these threats appropriately it is obvious that Western politicians, military leaders and other influential groups as well as members of society need to

²⁷ Many of the revolutionists and revolutionary thinkers came from urban middle of upper classes families e.g. K. Marx, F. Engels, F.I. Lenin, Mao Tse Tung, A. Baader, Osama Bin Laden. Eckhard Johanssen, “Internationaler Terrorismus”, Fachbereich Politik – Int. Politik, Christina-Albrechts-Universität, Kiel, 2003, p. 8

See: Klaus Schlichte, “Kleine Kriege und die Mikropolitik bewaffneter Gruppen”, Lecture at workshop “ ‘Small Wars’ – A Challenge for Security Policy”, Waldbröl/Germany, January, 14/15th, 2002

²⁸ Peter Lock, “Terrorismus und Krieg. Keine neue Zeitrechnung“, Arbeitspapier, Universität Hamburg – IPW, Forschungsstelle Kriege (Research Unit of Wars), Hamburg 2001, Nr. 4/2001, p. 30

²⁹ Thomas J. Williams, “Strategic Leader Readiness and Competencies for Asymmetric Warfare”, Summer 2003, p. 27

gain a better understanding of their own vulnerabilities and must also become familiar with the opponent's culture, values, behavioural patterns and thinking in order not to fall victim to existing beliefs and wishful thinking and to prevent, cope with and – if necessary – counter asymmetric threats and terrorism adequately and thus to defeat the enemy with his own means and methods.³⁰

The Asymmetric Threat and Western Societies

The specific nature of asymmetric warfare's threats to industrially developed states depends on a number of factors:

The first threat is of an economic nature. Weak, disintegrating, and criminal regimes and furthermore the globalization process have contributed to the fact that more and more non-state actors resorting to organized force are emerging in international relationships. During the past ten years, some 75 % of the non-state war actors who have waged conflicts have done so for economic reasons.³¹ Analyses carried out by the World Bank³² have shown that a large percentage of non-governmental protagonists are using organized force to achieve their interests, which are mainly their own enrichment but also profit for their clients. These activities reach far into the economies of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) world;³³ they are encouraging corruption and organized crime and are thus weakening not least the internal security of the states in question.³⁴ The inability of the "official economy" in these countries to offer adequate opportunities to the "great underprivileged masses" will aggravate the

³⁰ Colin S. Gray, "Thinking Asymmetrically in Times of Terror", *Parameters*, Spring 2002, pp. 11-12

See: J.G. Eaton, "The Beauty of Asymmetry: An Examination of the Context and Practice of Asymmetric and Unconventional Warfare from a Western/Centrist Perspective", pp. 60-62

³¹ Johannes Varwick, „Kriegsbild im Wandel. Kriegsführung unter terroristischer Bedrohung“, p. 3-4

³² Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, "Fokus Globalisierung", *Internationale Politik und Gesellschaft*,

³³ *ibid.*

³⁴ Peter Imbusch, *Krieg: Eine besondere Konfliktform*, pp. 35-37

situation and might lead to an increase of this type of conflict. Opponents will make use of the possibilities offered by globalization and new technologies, but for criminal and anti-social purposes. In the course of this process and as reaction to globalization, informal, purely survival-oriented economies might emerge, which have broken away from the state and seek to control the use of force at regional and even global level.³⁵ However, it must be emphasized that economic problems are not automatically the reason for war, but it is the exclusion of certain parts of the society from a progressive and prospering economy that can lead to armed conflicts which might not only influence the stability of these nations and neighbouring regions but might also influence the flow of resources and thus economic growth and prosperity of the developed countries.

The second threat derives from the incompatibility of potentials, leading to the asymmetry of operations. Most armed forces of the West, whose main task is to defend territories and societies against an external attack, are completely unprepared for operating on an asymmetric battlefield, despite their state-of-the-art weapons they possess. Although these weapons are capable of combating all kinds of the potential opponent's traditional weapons (i.e. tanks, planes, and ships) they are utterly useless in the face of passenger plane hijackers or squads poisoning water supply systems simultaneously. The infrastructure of the party conducting asymmetric warfare is concealed, dispersed, or imbedded in the infrastructure of the host state or enemy, which makes it barely susceptible to strikes with precision guided weapons. The value of such targets is usually incomparably low in relation to the costs of the arms used for their destruction. As a result, the armed forces of an industrial state can attack enemy targets, but with relatively low effectiveness and at enormous costs. And the opponent, although unlikely to ruin the industrialized state's military potential, can deal it severe and often even humiliating blows.³⁶

³⁵ Jutta Bakonyi, "Terrorismus, Krieg und andere Gewaltphänomene der Moderne", pp. 15-16

³⁶ Krystian Piatkowski, "A New Type of Warfare", p. 11

The third threat to the developed nations is the ease of conducting asymmetric warfare. Anonymous financial circulation, extensive freedom of movement and highly global mobility, weak control mechanisms, free access to advanced technologies, and rapid technological advances as well as the increasing dependence of developed countries on a functioning high-tech telecommunications infrastructure make it possible that potential aggressors will make increasing use of this situation. The allies of asymmetric warfare soldiers are the Internet and cell phones; technologies which offer instant communication and anonymity.³⁷

The fourth threat is of a social nature. A relatively new phenomenon is that post-industrial Western societies are not resistant to violence. Their consumer lifestyles, individualism (as exemplified by an emphasis on individual rights and freedoms), affirmation of comfort, wealth, and pleasure and the relative indifference to patriotic sentiments lead to strong fluctuations in the climate of public opinion.³⁸ The establishment of such attitudes and the lack of willingness to accept and bear obviously necessary, but inconvenient and costly security measures and decisions in the widest sense, could permanently threaten the ability of the West to adopt effective political, social and economical measures and also to accept counter-terrorism actions and military operations as part of the political process.³⁹

Finally, special attention must be given to the possibility that asymmetric threats can cause their greatest damage through ill-judged political and military measures of response. Western democracies and their polities have to be particularly alert to the danger that relatively minor physical damage inflicted by terrorists may be translated into truly major societal and

³⁷ J.G. Eaton, "The Beauty of Asymmetry: An Examination of the Context and Practice of Asymmetric and Unconventional Warfare from a Western/Centrist Perspective", pp. 71-72,

³⁸ J.G. Eaton, "The Beauty of Asymmetry: An Examination of the Context and Practice of Asymmetric and Unconventional Warfare from a Western/Centrist Perspective", pp. 66,

³⁹ The classic example of this was the "television" death of 18 US Special Forces soldiers in Mogadishu in 1993, which resulted in the withdrawal of Americans from Somalia. See: Krystian Piatkowski, "A New Type of Warfare", p. 12

economic costs; over-reaction dignifies the asymmetric belligerent. The challenge lies not so much in those cases where there is a military option, but rather when there is none. The temptation to do something for the sake of being seen to be doing something can be politically irresistible. The terrorist can succeed only with our assistance. He or she lacks the resources himself to inflict significant direct damage to us.⁴⁰

This all needs to be considered when the West wants to cope with those threats adequately and successfully. A reactive approach from only one side, e.g. the political or military as seen in the recent history, cannot cope with the problem of asymmetric threats and terrorism. Fighting only the symptoms instead of the causes and excluding the people from any solution will only lead to short-term solutions and is doomed to failure. It becomes more than obvious that only such an approach will be successful, which considers all those threats to Western societies as well as facts and reasons for asymmetric threats and terrorism that can lead to a long-term solution for overcoming or, at least, for reducing them considerably.

Armed Forces and Asymmetric Warfare

As already outlined, most of the armed forces of the West, are still “Cold-War-optimized”. Their main task still is to defend territories and societies against an external (symmetric) attack. With their organizations, structures, doctrines and equipment as well as their partially outstripped education and training systems they are to a great extent unprepared for operating on an asymmetric battlefield and to cope with the challenges of the 21st century.

Armed forces of the Western nations will have to contribute, as part of a comprehensive political strategy and in addition to their essential task – guarantee of the security of the

⁴⁰ Colin S. Gray, “Thinking Asymmetrically in Times of Terror”, *Parameters*, Spring 2002, pp. 12-13

homeland – to the maintenance and stabilization of a politically, economically and socially dynamic world order. The military contribution must include the ability to maintain a world order, which allows the development of civilization and the ability to intervene against violent conflict. Thus, armed forces must be prepared and able to cope adequately and successfully with asymmetric threats through the development of strategies and doctrines as well as through their changes to command and force structures, their equipment as well as education and training of military personnel.⁴¹

*New technologies*⁴² will continue to influence the nature of armed conflict in the future. The development of new types of weapons will depend on two factors: the demands of the battlefield and technological progress. The accumulation of threats arising from the asymmetric form of military action must affect the structure of spending on research and development.⁴³ In most general terms, a relative stagnation in the development of classic armaments and consequent money savings can be expected over the coming decades. Still, the development of the systems constituting the so-called digital battlefield will not be decelerated. A particularly turbulent development must take place in the reconnaissance and identification systems that guarantee the permanent control of all elements of one's own troops and enable the military leader to detect and identify 'enemy forces'.⁴⁴

⁴¹ We will not necessarily sustain a wide technological advantage over our adversaries in all areas. Increased availability of commercial satellites, digital communications and the public Internet all give adversaries new capabilities at a relatively low cost. We should not expect opponents in 2020 to fight with strictly "industrial age" tools [indeed Al Qaeda in 2000-01 had already proven quite adept at using the new technologies listed above - author]. Our advantage must, therefore, come from leaders, people, doctrine, organizations, and training that enable us to take advantage of technology to achieve superior warfighting effectiveness. Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Vision 2020* (henceforth JV 2020), Washington, DC, 2000, p. 4.

⁴² J.G. Eaton, "The Beauty of Asymmetry: An Examination of the Context and Practice of Asymmetric and Unconventional Warfare from a Western/Centrist Perspective", pp 58-60,

⁴³ Johannes Varwick, „Kriegsbild im Wandel. Kriegsführung unter terroristischer Bedrohung“, p. 5

⁴⁴ *ibid.* p. 25

Western *command structures* provide operating advantages for large-scale military operations but also produce vulnerabilities in ‘unorthodox warfare’.⁴⁵ Non-conventional warfare methods call for non-conventional countermeasures. Therefore, the coming decades must be characterized by further quantitative and qualitative development, adapted command and control structures as well as ‘non-conventional’ armed forces. The nature of threats points to the necessity to develop *special operations forces* that are capable of operating at a distance from their home bases. Presumably, the coming decades will witness their further development involving, for instance, an increase in the number of *special units* in most armies of the Western world and their further specialization. It will consist not only of creating new special units in all services, but also of forming *units with new specializations*. A separate trend in the development of non-conventional forces will be the formation within the armed forces of *specialized services* for the protection against the effects of putting weapons of mass destruction to unconventional use and against information warfare. *New units* may also appear, the tasks of which will be close to the missions of the police and military to be used for paramilitary actions within peacekeeping operations or for actions against non-state subjects, such as organized crime groups.⁴⁶

Education and training. According to N. Luttwak, “Equipment does not innovate, men do, which is why the successive military revolutions that have changed the course of warfare over the centuries have always resulted from major institutional reforms imposed by determined leaders, rather than from the spontaneous effect of new weapons or new circumstances.”⁴⁷ The most important challenge facing the military leaders will be the need to transform their mentality and to create a mental readiness to develop and promote their strategic, operational and tactical

⁴⁵ J.G. Eaton, “The Beauty of Asymmetry: An Examination of the Context and Practice of Asymmetric and Unconventional Warfare from a Western/Centrist Perspective”, p. 57,

⁴⁶ *ibid.* pp. 23-24

⁴⁷ Edward N. Luttwak, *Book Review*, ‘*Lifting the Fog of War by Bill Owens with Ed Offley*’, New York Times Book Review. January 21, 2001: p. 21.

agility in their thoughts and actions as they prepare to meet the multifaceted challenges posed by asymmetry, terrorism and new developments in our society.⁴⁸ The more complicated definition of the objectives of military operations, their political dimension and the necessity to constantly co-operate with politicians and non-military institutions will inevitably widen a military leader's scope of interest and knowledge. To remain relevant, the professional military education and training systems as well as military leaders need to begin in earnest not only to identify and adapt attributes and methods required to prevent, deter, counter or defeat operational and strategic asymmetric threats and conflicts but also to cope with the challenges that the 21st century will provide. This need calls for overhauling the present educational system for professional military personnel.⁴⁹ What military consequences for the further development of military forces will this have?

Military and Non-Military Consequences

Today we realize an emerging "privatization" of the use of force because of the eroding governmental exclusive right to use force and the destruction of the peace economy. The dividing line between war and peace becomes increasingly blurred and the growing congruence of social space and battlefield make a clear distinction between combatants and non-combatants almost impossible.⁵⁰ It is predictable that more non-state actors will participate in the use of force, which might penetrate deeper and deeper into the entire societies. In view of the denationalisation, ideologization and economisation of war the traditional dividing line between external and internal security becomes increasingly blurred. It is therefore difficult to tell

⁴⁸ Thomas J. Williams, "Strategic Leader Readiness and Competencies for Asymmetric Warfare", Summer 2003, p.24

⁴⁹ Krystian Piatkowski, "A New Type of Warfare", p. 22

⁵⁰ Johannes Varwick, „Kriegsbild im Wandel. Kriegsführung unter terroristischer Bedrohung“, p. 5

whether a breakdown of the information system is caused by a planned attack or only by failure. Given 11th September 2001, potential terrorist acts within a country as well as participation in international counter terrorism the question arises whether a country is at peace or at war. Societies and states may become the target of unconventional, asymmetrical attacks at any time.

Security risks are interdependent. While multinationality is nothing new in the field of external security, it certainly is in the field of internal security. National differences in legislation relevant to internal security as well as different standards regarding data privacy, preliminary police investigations, surveillance of suspects and criminal prosecution, impede the fight against criminal organizations and terrorists operating at international level. For this reason, the balanced international cooperation of police, intelligence and secret services as well as military and para-military forces is of utmost importance for future preventive security measures. In future, security cannot be looked at in isolation from the point of view of one ministry only, because political, economical and social developments can result in a threat to security. Therefore, security problems should rather be resolved through an overall, holistic approach. Today, the responsibility for the resolution of these problems lies with national and international bodies and institutions, which for the most part act independently of each other.⁵¹ They compete for resources but depend on each other during operations. Against the background of limited resources it becomes clear that maximization of the effect of preventive security systems not only requires unified control during their employment, but ultimately also common planning with regard to the design and procurement of systems as well as the preparation of the employment. In future greater emphasis needs to be placed on unified coordination and control of the activities of different bodies dependent on each other in order to complicate or even make impossible the

⁵¹ Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, "Fokus Globalisierung", Internationale Politik und Gesellschaft,

task of terrorists who wish to use their different countries and its (liberal) legislation as a sanctuary and in order to allow synchronized and concerted action against them.

Preventive security measures require an inter-ministerial approach and can no longer be accomplished at national level. Prevention is generally difficult to calculate since local leaders in conflict areas will not keep quiet, if only because of the fact that otherwise western funds in favour of needy parts of the population and the stabilization of the region would cease to flow. A comprehensive prevention policy at national level is impossible as well, as it would always require the consensus of the international community. To what extent preventive measures of all kinds will be taken depends on the ones particular interest in becoming active at all, and on whether politicians are able to legitimize their actions towards their own public. In doing so, it is certainly more promising and easier to “sell” a structure-oriented approach with different political measures than to intervene in a purely event-oriented manner mainly with military means. For prevention much time is necessary; time that Western politicians often do not have because of their limited term of office and thus, political decisions and measures must show results during their legislation period to support the efforts for re-election. Deterrence can be useful in preventing the creation of sanctuaries for terrorists. Military intervention for the purpose of preventing or ending severe violations of human rights is also legitimate; however the approach based on the motto ‘getting into the minds and winning the hearts of the people’ appears to be the most promising approach in the long term because it causes a real change in the mindset of people which seems to be the only way to guarantee further development and fruitful future cooperation. This approach must include the ability to take rapid decisions and actions, including military actions, supported by the international community. The essential trends of demographics, environmental changes, globalization of the economy, cohesion of politics, access

to information and knowledge as well as scientific-technical development must lead to a paradigm of the cooperative world order in which the most developed states of this world assume their main responsibility in the process of civilization and cooperatively tackle security policy as a global shaping task.⁵² For this purpose instruments have to be developed which in an inter-ministerial sense make lasting political, economic and social development policies and violence prevention methods as well as civil and military conflict and crisis management possible. Of crucial importance are the media, whose intensity of coverage is of great consequence with regard to how certain measures will be evaluated by the public.

Vulnerability of post-modern industrialized states, especially with regard to asymmetric forms of violence, is steadily increasing. Asymmetric conflicts can only be “won” in very few cases; however they can be contained to a gradual extent in favour of the permanent change of the initial situation. To achieve this objective in the long term, it is necessary to undertake more multidimensional activities that are scheduled over a longer horizon. The destruction of any terrorist organization will not make the phenomenon of terrorism disappear. Therefore, with eradication of the phenomenon of terrorism globally being impossible, it is nonetheless possible to act towards limiting its free development. Any effective action against terrorism should be based on building a stable international coalition which is willing to agree on a code of conduct regarding terrorist organizations, look for internal consensus on reinforcing the measures against terrorism in the widest sense and foster an evolution of the attitudes in developed societies towards accepting the burden of anti-terrorist strategies.⁵³

⁵² Boris Wilke, “Terrorismus, Krieg und andere Gewaltphänomene der Moderne – Anmerkungen zur Genese eines regionalen Akteurs und zu den möglichen Folgen eines globalen Krieges“, Arbeitspapier, Universität Hamburg IPW, Forschungsstelle Kriege (Research Unit of Wars), Hamburg 2001, Nr. 4/2001, pp. 38-40

⁵³ Krystian Piatkowski, “A New Type of Warfare“, pp. 17-18

CONCLUSION

New actors, new forms of conflict, an increased speed of technological innovation and new tasks will emerge. In order to achieve the objectives of the present “war against terrorism” in the long-term, it is necessary to undertake more multidimensional activities that are scheduled over a longer time horizon. Any effective action against international terrorism should be based on building a stable international coalition, consisting of as many states as possible, which is willing to act in a common and harmonized approach, not only to overcome the injustice and negative impacts deriving from the economic, political and social developments in the less developed countries, but also to act in a concerted and synchronized approach against the threats deriving from terrorism and asymmetric warfare. Furthermore all actions must be based on internal consensus in the Western countries on reinforcing the measures and actions against terrorism, even if this affects the range of civil liberties to some extent. And thirdly an evolution of the attitudes in developed societies must be promoted towards accepting the burden of the anti-terrorist struggle. This overall approach to successfully deal with terrorism and asymmetric warfare has to recognize the necessity of change and closer cooperation. The roots of this challenge are best dealt with in an overall, preventive and international approach. Therefore it should encompass actions in the following areas:

Economical, political and social development. Western nations must offer opportunities to the less developed countries, and especially those who are the breeding grounds for terrorism, to get a fair share in the prosperity of the developed nations which will offer chances for a sound development of their own economies and as a consequence their social standards which are a prerequisite for political and democratic development. However, on the other hand it is necessary to develop control mechanisms of cash flow and stock exchange transactions that would hinder

the funding of terrorist operations and prevent terrorists from benefiting from exchange speculations.

Military development. In order to take the changes in the security environment into account, the West needs armed forces that are characterized by a high level of flexibility, a learning ability and professionalism. This requires, besides adequate equipment, a leadership willing to play its part in the political environment and to question the existing structures and concepts in order to support the further development of the armed forces and contribute to the shaping of national and international security policy. These personnel must be willing to face the necessity to develop the armed forces into learning organizations with implemented knowledge management.

Intelligence development. Closely related to the military development is the close coordination of the intelligence-related activities and close cooperation of Western states and organizations which is key to success. These activities should be aimed at optimizing the processes of collecting, processing and exchange of information on international terrorism world wide.

Institutional development. Organizations like NATO and the EU and nations need to take action to improve and synchronize their crisis management systems and to internationally harmonize the competencies and procedures of their armed forces, police, and para-military forces, national rescue as well as intelligence services.

Police and paramilitary forces development. The police forces in Western countries need to accommodate their potentials to the new kind of threat. It is they, not the military forces who are responsible for resisting asymmetric strikes on the territory of their own states.

Security policy has to recognize the necessity for change. The West is still lacking overall solidarity as well as a coherent and comprehensive answer to the challenges of the 21st century. Current efforts are mostly focusing on reactive political and military solutions. The upcoming global transformations must be regarded as an opportunity to create a future that is more peaceful and more worth living in. The roots of challenge are best dealt with in a holistic, preventive and multinational approach that strongly includes the economical, social and political as well as the territorial and personal aspects of terrorism. The ability to maintain a world order allowing civil development and the ability to intervene against violent conflict developments if they pose a threat to international security should be the aims. This, however, requires that the whole society become intellectually involved in the issue of security in order to fight not only the symptoms of threat but also its causes. For this we need the international community and overall solidarity.

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