

## New World Disorder, New Terrorisms: New Threats for Europe and the Western World

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### Introduction

#### *Radically Different Hybrid Terrorist Movements*

As we approach the twenty-first century, terrorism is no longer a marginal and localized problem for our governments, but has become a major security priority. Terrorism today is all-invasive - every day, throughout the world, bombs are set off for a thousand different reasons; it has also, however, dramatically changed from its past forms.

Let's start with the good news. The Cold War's state terrorism, essentially ideological, has virtually disappeared as such. All those tough, tightly structured, high-tech miniature armies, like the Red Army Faction and the Red Brigades (in Europe), or Abu Nidal's Fatah Revolutionary Council or Ahmad Jibril's PFLP-General Command (in the Arab world) have now disappeared. The end of the Cold War proved to be their undoing. Now the bad news. Taking their place is a brandnew kind of terrorism, unstructured and "low-tech". Furthermore, many non-ideological entities are making widespread use of terrorist methods - millenarians, criminals - even environment or animal "liberation" fanatics.

Let us look briefly at some general distinguishing features of these neo-terrorist groupings. Diverse they may be, but they have nonetheless some common characteristics:

- De-territorialization, or location in inaccessible areas;
- Absence of state sponsorship, which makes them more unpredictable and uncontrollable;
- A hybrid character, partly "political", partly criminal;
- The ability to change configuration rapidly as a function of the now "almighty dollar";
- Enormous killing power, compared with a cold-war terrorism which was usually symbolic. The Aum sect wanted to kill 40,000 in the Tokyo Metro in April 1995, but only failed to do so because an aerosol blocked.

#### *Trans-National Criminal Organizations and Narco-Terrorists*

As a threat, terrorism is not alone. Dangerous players in the new global disorder are legion. But among all these, the transnational criminal organizations (TCOs), or mafias, currently pose a great threat. Today, Italian, Turkish, and Russian mafias, Colombian and Mexican cartels, Japanese Yakuza and Chinese triads control financial and "military" assets of a clearly strategic nature. Some of them have already engaged in the most murderous forms of terrorism. Capable of lightning-quick changes - today trafficking in narcotics, tomorrow in computer chips, human beings or toxic wastes - these mafias are now entrenched in chaotic areas of the sprawling cities in the third world and in the dangerous suburbs of the major metropolises of Europe.

As Interpol Secretary General Raymond Kendall stated in April 1994: "Drug trafficking is in the hands of organized crime... INTERPOL has a file of 250,000 major criminals, 200,000 of whom are tied to drug trafficking." In fact, the groups that control the bulk of drug production and trafficking are well known and relatively few in number: the Colombian cartels for cocaine, the Triads (Hong Kong, Taiwan and the People's Republic of China) for the Golden Triangle heroin, and the Italian and Turkish/Kurdish mafias for the Golden Crescent heroin. These TCOs are vital to world-wide drug trafficking because they connect the agricultural sector, controlled by the guerrillas and the tribal

warlords, and the final distribution operations, handled by the urban gangs of the developed world's metropolises. With no compunction about killing or corrupting, the TCOs control a large part of the yearly US\$500 billion in criminal profits, recycling perhaps as much as half in the world economy. These TCOs are currently working to merge illicit trafficking in narcotics, weapons, and illegal immigrants. By joining and bolstering their profit bases, the TCOs will be even more powerful in the future.

### *New Wars: Where are the Battlefields? “*

The first and obvious battlefield relates to the electronic flow of information and of money; the cybernetic networks specializing in financial transfers, or the “information superhighway”. According to the ; latest official American information, between 300 and 500 billion “criminal dollars” went through the US banking system in 1997. This in the country with the world's most severe anti-laundering laws, which gives an idea of what must be happening elsewhere. But other major battlefields in the decades to come will also be the gaps in space and time.

### *Battling in Uncontrolled Spaces*

The primary focus here is on the “grey areas” from which the nation-state has disappeared for good and where real power is exercised by coalitions between guerrillas or militia and the drug-traffickers, with their millions of dollars from heroin and cocaine. These are the lawless suburbs of the major third world megalopolises - or even those of certain cities in the developed world - which have completely escaped from any police or local armed forces control (Karachi, Rio, Lagos, Lima, Mexico, etc.). There, you find the joint presence of gangsters, terrorists and drug-traffickers, trading in human beings, arms and illegal substances. By the year 2000, 414 cities in the world will have populations of over one million, 264 of them in the Third World. In 1950, Africa had 6 cities with population over one million, 19 in 1980, and by the year 2000, will have more than 50. Even quicker is the growth of unplanned neighbourhoods - squatter villages and shantytowns - in the megalopolises of the Third World. These settlements are mushrooming at twice the rate of the more conventional urban sprawl.

These urban jungles are extremely volatile. As Mao Tse-Tung used to say, it takes only a second for “a spark to set the whole plain on fire”.

This explains why it is so hard to step in and put down an insurrection there, or even to wipe out local drug trafficking, all a mere stone's throw from international airports, and, therefore, CNN's cameras. Witness that giant shanty town, the Gaza Strip, from which the Israeli Army, despite its brutality, was forced to withdraw. Interspersed amidst the populace of unplanned outlying neighbourhoods that either abet or tolerate them, the guerrillas and drug traffickers are practising tribal warfare, politico-military activism, or trafficking of one kind or another, with full *impunity*. These suburban sanctuaries offer the ideal backdrop for such illicit activities: squalor; overcrowding; hordes of unskilled young people providing a steady supply of hoodlums; and above all providing proximity to the establishment's economic hub and to the airports (for the drug traffickers), and to the political and media hub (for the guerrillas and terrorists).

Other grey areas are those that fall between the cracks of competing agency jurisdictions, or competing sectors in which these agencies operate, each from its own special perspective (narcotics, trafficking in human beings, terrorism, smuggling, etc.). For instance, it took Abdullah Ocalan's arrest to see truly the big picture regarding the threat from the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK).

Above all however, time is a central factor. Dangerous, aggressive, lightning-quick groups wielding high-tech equipment have a tremendous time advantage over slow, hulking states, paralysed by administrative inertia and legalistic nit-picking.

### *Funding the New Wars*

To begin with, criminals and terrorists frequently working hand in hand have more money than ever in history. By 2004, the Financial Action Task Force experts believe that the value of drug money, by way of its compound growth, will reach 1500 billion US dollars (today's value of the world's stock of gold), and by 2014, will top the 1998 Gross Domestic Product of the United States. Each year, the profit of narcobusiness and other criminal activities amounts roughly to 500 billion dollars, two per cent of the world's GNP. Both politically and economically, this criminal money carries a lot of weight - but is also physically extremely heavy: in 1996, the street value of cocaine sold in the United States reached 30 billion dollars. Add another 18 billion for heroin: in 5, 10 and 20 dollars bills, these 48 billion dollars weigh 6,200 metric tons.

*After the Cold War, a Disrupted Geo-Strategic Landscape*

Some of the major challenges for nation-states include fanatical religious, ethnic, or tribal confrontations; civil war or famine; piracy at sea or in the air. These are now some of the worst threats to international peace and security. Behind this chaos, they are threatening entities that are non-governmental, transnational, even global. Fierce and inaccessible, these cartels, mafias, and militia are implacable enemies.

The days of exchanges between gentlemen-spies in the mist of a Berlin dawn are over. A bullet in the head has taken the place of diplomatic niceties. And in the chaotic areas of the world, there are few embassies and no friendly cocktail bars; instead there are huge, anarchic cities, slums, the jungle - a setting for terrorism and warfare.

How does this new world disorder affect international security? An example: March 1993, Bombay, India: car-bombs, motorcycle and suitcase-bombs explode at noon in the business district. An unprecedented massacre: 320 dead, 1,200 injured within an hour. The perpetrators of the carnage were not "classical" terrorists, but local gangsters recruited by Pakistani agents to avenge the massacres of Muslims in Kashmir. In a world where the line between terrorism and "gangsterism" is increasingly blurred, this is a striking proof of the existence of new hybrid entities, midway between crime and terror. Beyond terrorism, what are the new dangerous developments in the domain of international security, affecting nation-states in the Arab world as well as in Europe?

*The explosion in trafficking:* in nuclear materials, but also in illegal immigrants and, above all, in narcotics. In January 1993, just off Cyprus, several frogmen and three frigates from the Turkish navy intercepted a Panamanian freighter chartered by two Istanbul mafia dons. In its hold were 14 metric tons of Afghan heroin, valued at \$25 billion wholesale. Monitored from Karachi by US satellites, the freighter "Lucky S" was due to deliver its heroin in Turkey, Cyprus, Italy, Spain and the Netherlands. Twenty years ago, at the time of the first "French connection", anyone predicting that counter-narcotics would one day require a spy satellite, frogmen and warships would have been called a crank.

*The appearance of violent, "irrational" entities:* like the Japanese Aum Shinrikyo (Aum Supreme Truth) sect that committed the Tokyo Subway attack in March 1995, leaving 12 people dead and more than 5,000 wounded. Or like the militiamen of the American heartland who, for obscure reasons, reduced a Federal office building in Oklahoma City to rubble, killing 167 innocent people in cold blood in April 1995.

*The appearance of environmental issues on the strategic agenda:* late January 1995 and again in April 1996, on the Hamburg-Hanover railway line, a German train transporting nuclear fuel was derailed by explosion. This attack by the "Kollektiv Gorleben" confirms the existence of cells of ecological extremists who have resorted to direct action to "save the planet". In the United States, such fanatics have already tried to poison water reservoirs and building ventilation systems. Others have been caught spying on nuclear power plants, offshore oil rigs, and fuel storage areas.

## New Threats - The Strategic Outlook

### *The Heart of the Matter: Are the "New Threats" Really New?*

When confronted with something new, people always tend to waver between two reactions. The French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu summed it up brilliantly: "the illusion of "never seen it before" and the illusion of "the same old thing"". Note, however, that bureaucrats have a subtle preference for "the same old thing". When it comes to new threats, a common response is thus to say "there's nothing new under the sun" or "we have known it for a long time". This is the classic reaction. Any bureaucracy, when confronted with a disturbing new development, offers this three-pronged response:

- (1) "It is a media hoax " (or, alternatively, " a plot to distract us from a more vital mission ");
- (2) We have known all about it for quite sometime", and
- (3)"The problem is, of course real, but it is a minor one, and has been resolved".

But there really is something new in the modern world. This is easy to argue using Karl Marx's analogy of revolution as water on the stove. Until it reaches the boiling point, the water changes only in terms of degree. Once it hits 212° and becomes steam, it changes its nature.

Compared to a revolt, or a riot, a revolution represents a change in the nature, not the degree, of a country's socio-political reality. The same is true of the new threats. In scientific parlance, the end of the bipolar order has caused the mutation of a host of organisms that used to be purely terrorist groups or purely criminal groups. In other words, they have abruptly and unexpectedly shifted from machines to lifeforms.

They were "machines" because it used to be that most non-state strategic-level violence, i.e. transnational terrorism, was waged by groups organized or recruited by intelligence agencies working for states. Secretly, obeying orders, they operated like machines, following start/stop signals.

They are now "lifeforms" because now we are witnessing an almost biological, uncontrollable, and, thus far, uncontrolled, proliferation of dangerous, complex entities that are very hard to identify, understand and define within inadequately explored territories or movements. In concrete terms, denying that these new threats exist gives rise to the notion that the organizations that monitor danger spots and dangerous groups can remain unchanged, even though they are ill-suited (stable and slow) to these mutant entities (unstable and quick). The result is that now our ability to diagnose the actual danger of these entities is limited.

## A Media Hoax? The Media's Silence in these Matters

In today's world, where information and communication play such important roles, it is striking to see how immense and sometimes dangerous groups can move about completely undetected, and remain, sometimes for quite a long time, outside the media glare. This has been the case for example with some of the major transnational Islamic fundamentalist movements, such as the Ikhwan (the Muslim Brotherhood), the Salafiyah, or the Tablighi, whose role behind the scenes has nevertheless been crucial in some events that have attracted major media attention. Take for example, the major daily newspapers, which devote whole pages to specific events, such as Iranian statesponsored terrorist attacks or strikes by the Palestinian group Hamas. They have never said a word about the important Islamic fundamentalist movements mentioned above. One begins to wonder if these great media outlets even know that these movements exist.

This "head-in-the-sand" mentality extends to the new threats as a whole. While their effects are dealt with in the media (heavy coverage of the Golden Triangle, for example), the causes (in this instance,

the concept of “grey areas”) seem to have a hard time attracting media attention, even when the media venture into this domain at all, given their intense resistance to any original idea from outside.

But the new threats are anything but a media hoax. On the contrary, as an original development, they are grossly under-reported. Naturally, complex phenomena are not always easy to convey in pictures and news articles. But beyond that, one senses a clear reluctance to leave the game of mirrors and the clearly marked turf behind to delve into basically dangerous individuals or to poke into the *terra incognita* (in the true sense of the term) of today’s disorderly world.

#### *Reminder: Which are the Truly Dangerous Groups in Today’s World?*

The operative words here are “truly” and “today”. The new threats are a lot more than fuzzy silhouettes in hazy far-away lands. They are a reality, in the here and now, as can be seen in the following examples:

#### *Transnational Criminal Organizations (Mafias)*

May 1997, Colombia: In a hangar west of Bogota, the police uncovered a telecommunications station containing at least \$10 million worth of hi-tech material. Established by the drug lord Efraín “Don Efra” Hernández, murdered in 1996, the station enabled all the cartels, on a time-share basis, to maintain constant satellite contact with their fleets of aircraft or boats (on the high seas and high in the skies), and with their representatives throughout the world.

#### *“Degenerate Guerrillas”*

These are the most dangerous terrorist groups in today’s world. According to a report published in April 1997 by the US Department of State, 200 of the 311 deaths caused by “international terrorism” in 1996 were attributable to the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, and 76 of the 296 attacks counted by the US government last year were the work of the PKK.

#### *Gangster-Terrorist Hybrid*

April 1997, Bridgeport, Texas: The police arrested four individuals (an unemployed man, a tattoo artist and his wife, and a plumber’s apprentice), unknown to intelligence services, although with loose ties to the Ku Klux Klan. The four of them, turned in by a frightened accomplice, were preparing to blow up the local gasworks, and take advantage of the panic unleashed by the release of deadly gases to attack a bank. Had it come off, the attack could easily have left hundreds dead.

In January 1997, the Public Prosecutor of Bastia, Corsica, announced that there had been 574 bomb attacks on the island in 1996, including 148 that were “politically” motivated bombings. According to the magistrate, whether the attacks have a “political” motivation or not, the bombs are being planted by the same individuals, whose attacks involve terrorism 25 per cent of the time, and simple gangsterism the rest of the time.

#### *Violent Irrational Groups*

In Japan, the 1997 Shoko Asahara trial exposed how sophisticated and complex an organization Aum Shinrikyo really was, when it was able to:

- Extort hundreds of millions of dollars, particularly from its followers;
- Recruit hundreds of brilliant students, most in fields of advanced science;
- Set up a world-wide supply network for hazardous substances, weapons, explosives, etc., managed by capable businessmen;
- Establish, particularly in Russia, important “branch offices”;
- Murder, over the course of several years, “traitors” to the sect, with complete impunity.

#### *“Grey Areas”: The Golden Triangle Extends its Borders*

In the past two years, drug traffickers and other warlords in the Golden Triangle have become increasingly active in Indochina - so much so that much of northern Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam are now "under their sway". From 1985 to 1995, opium production doubled in the region, and drug addiction has become a problem even for the local populace. In May 1997, analyses conducted near the Chinese border in northern Vietnam revealed traces of heroin in the urine of 10 per cent of the high school students.

This is when one hears, after "it's nothing new", the protest "it's far away". Turkey, Colombia, Sri Lanka, Japan, and the borderlands of Burma and China really are quite far from Europe or North America. But a word of caution is in order. Millions of natives of the planet's most chaotic regions now inhabit the major cities of the developed world, having fled as either migrants or refugees, and are, for the most part, just trying to lead a decent life. But how many partisans of the degenerate guerrillas are there among them? How many accomplices of drug traffickers are there, willing or coerced? Clearly, these are not false threats, nor are they remote. Dangerous territories and groups are not confined to the far-off jungles of the Third World; they are also found in the hearts of our major cities, or, even more often, in their outskirts.

## **Dangerous, But Not Evident: The United States and the New Threats**

There are currently two basic schools of thought in the United States regarding these new threats, but one goes too far, while the other falls short.

Blending mysticism and science fiction, the first school<sup>1</sup> has developed the notion that it is now practically impossible to imagine what society will be like tomorrow, when the "infosphere" will be the driving force. They thus conclude that it is thoroughly impossible to guess what dangers lie in store.

Unlike the mystics, the sceptics' approach is quite ordinary. Because of its powerful position, the United States is experiencing a strategic lull. An era of calm has begun.<sup>2</sup> Naturally, "the subject of new threats is complicated" and "ethnic, religious, or sectarian violence offer us a never-ending succession of Somalias, Haitis, and Yugoslavias", but that's all right. No cause for alarm. Just a few lice in the lion's mane. As for a solution, "the United States will need a solid intelligence establishment, able to analyse the world and to sound an early warning when the dangers posed by these highly complex threats appear". Furthermore, "American strategists will have to think about restructuring the defense and security communities, which are ill-suited to today's world". But let's stay calm and "be careful not to spoil this strategic opportunity (i.e. the lull) by panicking over threats that in reality do not even exist".

In the area of arms procurement, one senses the same gap between the long-term and short-term approaches, between mirages of the future and sometimes mundane requirements of the moment. Strictly speaking, it could be said that the United States has its head in the hi-tech clouds and its feet on ground that is as low-tech as it could be. The Pentagon orders Stealth bombers costing \$3 billion apiece, without really knowing what they will be used for,<sup>3</sup> while the US First Armored Division needed three weeks of 1995 just to cross a flood-swollen river in Bosnia, without encountering a single shot of enemy fire. Nowadays, the prevailing trend in real warfare is chaos, and in chaotic encounters, the more sophisticated the hardware, the less effective it is. During the Lebanese civil war,

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<sup>1</sup> See Michael Vlahos, "The War After Byte City", *The Washington Quarterly*, Spring 1997.

<sup>2</sup> The quotations that follow are taken from "A New Millennium and a Strategic Breathing Place", *The Washington Quarterly*, Spring 1997. The author, Russell E. Travers, is an analyst at the Defense Intelligence Agency.

<sup>3</sup> See William Pfaff, "The Pentagon is Hooked on Fancy Weapons It Doesn't Need", *Herald Tribune*, 22 May 1997.

US fighter planes made just one sortie. But the result was two aircraft lost (\$60 million) and the humiliation of having to ransom a pilot from Hafiz al-Assad and some Palestinian gangleaders.

## Today, a Chaotic World

There is no doubt about it, the world is in disorder; but before we assume the sky is falling in, we would do well to remember that not every disappearance is necessarily tragic, and not every disruption is terrible, in and of itself.

*World Chaos, New Threats: Where are the Traps, the Extremes?*

1. Is the state really disappearing throughout the entire Third World? Or is this just another “mediatic illusion” (just as one would say an “optical illusion”), a mirage? Clearly, there are some regions that are out of control. But this does not mean that the Third World is becoming a hemisphere-size no-man’s land. Ahmed Ould Abdallah, who served for two years as the UN Secretary General’s special envoy to Burundi, offers one compelling approach. In his book, *La diplomatie pyromane* (Diplomatic Arson),<sup>4</sup> he notes: “When I got back to New York from Bujumbura, I was surprised to hear my New-York friends always talking about failed states. In Burundi and Rwanda, the state has not failed at all. In Rwanda, you can find lists of people who are to be killed off, with certified file copies for the Police. Furthermore, in Bujumbura, I never saw an official document that was not duly initialed and signed, or an official paper sent to the President or Prime Minister that was not in a folder bearing the national crest. Protocol is scrupulously upheld. The state has been weakened by unrest, but it is still there, at least in bureaucratic form.”

2. “The old order changeth...”. In the Third World, private companies are starting to replace corrupt local officials (see below). One example, again taken from Africa: “Mozambique has just become the first in the world to hire a private British firm to run its customs service. Is this necessarily a bad thing? Naturally, one might lament the fact that a state has relinquished one of its prerogatives. But considering how, in many African countries, the customhouse is just a gravy train for a “well placed” minority, a sinecure, is it not better to be realistic and to accept a necessary solution that is in everyone’s interest, particularly the weak ones?”<sup>5</sup>

3. Is sectarianism (a polite term for tribal warfare) irreversible, or simply a matter of ups and downs, like a blood pressure reading”? During periods of crisis, humans always spontaneously form networks. In Europe, during World War II, there were resistance networks, to be sure, but also black market networks. Thus, is all this globalization, and the sectarianism it breeds, a permanent return to a tribal mentality, or is it just a temporary turning inward by communities coming in from a new cold wind? “In Burundi, as in Rwanda, everyone is a potential extremist, and becomes one when the pressure gets extreme, when one fears for one’s life, or is forced to join one’s “own” camp, to avoid being killed.”<sup>6</sup> Likewise, for the major transnational crime organizations, are these really permanent mutations, or is it pure and simple opportunism at work, dictated by incredibly favourable circumstances (European borders that are wide open for criminals, even though the police still have to respect them scrupulously)?

4. Will this world-wide chaos last, or is it just adjustment anxiety, a relatively long episode between two world orders? Think of the Lebanese civil war, so chaotic that it spawned the term “lebanonization”. Then, one day, when nothing had really changed (hostile tribes and clans, billions being earned in drug trafficking, huge stocks of weapons, overlapping mini-territories, ancient bloodfeuds, religious fanaticism, etc.), the civil war suddenly ended, as if someone had blown a whistle, just as quickly as it started. But just before that, the “experts” had naturally predicted that it

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<sup>4</sup> Ahmed Ould Abdallah, *La diplomatie pyromane*, Calmanu-Lévy, November 1996.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid. Ould Abdallah knows wherein of he speaks: he has held several cabinet posts in his native Mauritania.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

would last for another decade, if not forever. So the question is whether the new world-wide disorder is an episode born of crisis, of imbalance, limited in duration, following the collapse of the Soviet Empire and the end of the bipolar world order ("world history moves from catastrophe to catastrophe" said Oswald Spengler), or if chaos is now an inevitable feature of a human society fragmented by globalization.

## **What are the Real Conflicts in Today's World?**

Even back during the Cold War, most conflicts were not "conventional" wars between two armies in uniforms, fighting according to the rules of war. From 1945 to 1990, there were approximately 75 important conflicts: 28 following the classic rules mentioned above, and 46 insurrections, serious civil wars, etc. The latter cost a total of nearly 20 million lives, and were thus infinitely more deadly than the 28 "conventional" wars.

Today, the count is easily made, since one side of the scales is quite simply empty. The last of the "conventional" wars are now, fading into the past: the Yom Kippur War (1973), the Falklands (1982), Iran-Iraq (1980-88), and the Gulf War (1991). Depending on the level of deadliness chosen, the Stockholm International Peace Research

Institute (SIPRI) counted 31 conflicts in 1994, while the National Defense Council Foundation (NDCF, a Washington think tank) counted 71 a year later (the NDCF list for 1989 included only 35 conflicts). Naturally both tallies included Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Burma, Kashmir (India), Peru, the Philippines, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Sudan, Sri Lanka (the Tamils), Tajikistan, Chechnya (Russia), Turkey (the PKK), the former Yugoslavia, etc.

Upon closer scrutiny, both lists reveal nothing but internal conflicts, civil wars or wars motivated by religious fanaticism, guerrilla warfare, terrorist campaigns, protracted insurrections, and tribal wars. Three-quarters of the time there are known ties between armed operations and drug trafficking. None of these conflicts involves two "conventional" armies, two identified and recognized nation-states. Sometimes an organized army is pitted against militias, troops loyal to warlords, or guerrilla groups. Often, they are actual Liberia-type *bandenkriege* (warfare by armed gangs), if not criminal anarchy, as in Albania.

The conclusion to be drawn is that conflicts between authorities (conventional armies, for example) are becoming rarer, and those between substances (amorphous, either by their very nature, or because of abrupt change) are becoming more frequent. The conventional observer is hard-pressed to pinpoint the exact nature of these substances or the space they occupy. New concepts have had to be developed (grey areas, degenerate guerrillas, hybrid criminal groups, etc., noted above).

It is even harder for the strategists, who see absolutely nothing in common between these elements. How can one conceive of these substances as belligerents? In southern Albania, how does one tell the difference between a mighty mafioso and an innocent fisherman in the port of Vlorë ?

## **Military "Privatization" in the Third World: Myth or Reality ?**

What we are actually witnessing is the end of a process that began in Europe more than three centuries ago. Since the end of the Thirty Years' War (see Annex 1), the nation-states that were taking shape have endeavoured to exercise increasingly stricter control, the ultimate goal being total monopoly over the application of armed violence. As indicated above, these same nation-states are now virtually incapable of confronting one another, while armed groups at either the supranational or infranational level are at the root of all armed violence currently being waged on the planet.



In March 1997, the United Nations published a documented report on mercenary activities, revealing that this business was rapidly expanding in a number of crisis-ridden countries (Afghanistan, Angola, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Rwanda, Tajikistan, the former Yugoslavia, Zaire, etc.). Outside of Europe, security (policework, etc.) is increasingly being privatized. In the South African Republic, for example, private police forces (320,000 security agents) outnumber government police forces and their gross earnings are up 30 per cent per year: US\$763 millions in 1996. In Nairobi, Kenya, 180 security companies have been established employing more than 20,000 agents. In Angola, there are more than 100 of these companies. And the list does not stop there. From a more strictly military perspective (antiguerrilla operations, etc.), Latin America has witnessed the growth of private armies, employed by the major oil companies, or by large landowners. In Colombia's Arauca Province, Occidental Petroleum maintains the Colombian Army's Eighteenth Brigade, 4,000 men strong, under what amounts to a form of privatization. In the Province of Uraba, the major planters have formed self-defence forces, who hunt down Communist guerrillas without mercy.

Veritable paramilitary and security multinationals have even been created, such as "Executive Outcomes".<sup>7</sup> Headed by former members of the South African and British special forces (i.e. poachers turned game wardens), the company operates in 20 African, Middle Eastern and Asian countries, through some 50 (very discreet) subsidiaries.

Depending on their customers' needs, "Executive Outcomes" and similar outfits train presidential bodyguards or local security forces; supervise them on the battlefield; monitor sensitive installations, oilfields, gold mines and diamond mines; or protect the local elite, expatriates, or charitable organizations. They must be effective, swift and discreet, which, in turn, underscores the shortcomings of the local security forces. Often these companies are paid in kind, with part of whatever valuable item is extracted from the sites they are protecting, for example, further bolstering their economic power.

The reverse trend has also been observed, i.e. private interests, sometimes on the shady side, "sponsoring" armed gangs. In May 1997, seasoned Africa watchers revealed the financial dealings of Lebanese, Colombian or Israeli "businessmen" close to the Ugandan government. These representatives of gold and precious stone cartels, or worse, used millions of dollars to bribe certain armed gangs loyal to Laurent-Désiré Kabila, who, in turn, were recruited from Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi and Eritrea.

## **Armed Forces versus Bandits - Bandit Armies**

### *Armed Forces versus Bandits*

In April 1997, Albania was plunged into anarchy. Bashkim Fino, the country's new Prime Minister,<sup>8</sup> branded organized crime, the mafias, as the main culprit. Hence, various military forces (French, Italian, etc.) found themselves assigned to perform humanitarian duties to somehow quell the disorder - all the while confronting an invisible "enemy", hidden amidst the general populace. Yet these soldiers do not know how their minds work, nor can they understand what goal they are pursuing, other than lining their pockets, of course.

In April 1997 in Mexico, where crime has skyrocketed since the December 1994 financial crash, the chairman of the Confederation of Industrial Associations stated that "organized crime has outpaced any ability the official or private police forces might have to react". He demanded that henceforth the armed forces be engaged to fight the formidable Mexican cartels, which is exactly what was done a month later.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>7</sup> See *Le Figaro*, 15 January 1997, and *U.S. News & World Report*, 20 January 1997.

<sup>8</sup> 29,000 km<sup>2</sup> and a population of three million, 10 per cent of whom are heavily armed.

<sup>9</sup> Mexico militariza lucha contra la droga en la frontera norte" (Mexico Militarizes Counternarcotics Campaign along the Northern Border), *La Opinion*, 16 May 1997.

Is crime fighting, either domestically, or occasionally overseas, the exclusive domain of the army"? Not any more. Navies will play an increasingly important policing role in the future. From 1995 to 1996, acts of piracy reported to the International Maritime Bureau rose from 187 to 224 (most such acts go unreported). The danger zone is located between Indonesia and South China. With the help of corruption, sometimes sizeable cargoships (150m and longer) have been boarded on the high seas, emptied of their wares, and resold, or scuttled.

Merchant fleets are playing a growing role in drug trafficking too. In April 1997, Japanese police seized 70 kilos Of pure amphetamines, retailing for hundreds of millions of dollars, aboard the Northern Korean cargo ship Ji Song 2.<sup>10</sup>

### *The Flip Side : Il''hen Bandits Infiltrate the Armed Forces<sup>11</sup>*

On 10 May 1997, *The Frontier Post*, an English-language daily from Peshawar, Pakistan, interviewed Air Marshal Ashgar Khan. A respected figure<sup>12</sup>, 12 he stated that deceased dictator General Zia-ul-Ilaq used to transport shipments of heroin in his private aircraft. "It was Zia who started the contraband operation", Khan stressed. A month earlier, the pilot of a Pakistani military transport aircraft was arrested in New York when he sold two kilos of pure heroin, for the wholesale price of \$160,000, to an FBI undercover agent. At the same time, Pakistani police arrested a known drug trafficker near Rawalpindi airport. A former officer and ex-member of Pakistani secret. services, Munawar Shah, was transporting two kilos of pure heroin, and samples of uranium (military grade, according to the local press). The drugs and uranium were on their way to another drug trafficker, Raja Altai, based in London.

## **A New Situation in this Century, but One without Precedent?**

War was not always what it had been in Europe for the past three centuries, i.e. army vs. army, state vs. state. Prompted by lofty political concerns, war in earlier days was noble, even sacred. After all, was it not God's means of deciding among nations"? Since the treaties of Westphalia (1648, on land)<sup>13</sup> 3 and Utrecht (1713, focusing more on maritime matters), war has tended to be the exclusive preserve of nation-states, which conferred the monopoly over armed violence on armies or fleets that were carefully controlled, wore uniforms and carried weapons that were clear for all to see.

In that kind of war, troops obeyed officers who were responsible for their actions. Where possible, the populace was kept away from the combat. It was forbidden to break truces, or to attack the wounded or prisoners. In short, armed forces saw themselves, and indeed most often were, polar opposites of a large gang, a band of ruffians. International rules of warfare, formulated over the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, were so firmly embedded in the Western mind that they were respected, and scrupulously so, by both sides during the nineteenth century's most famous and most significant civil war, the US Civil War.<sup>14</sup>

### *Are the Consequences Purely Tactical?*

<sup>10</sup> In early June 1999, the British Royal Navy frigate HMS Marlborough seized from two ships in the Caribbean 8 tonnes of cocaine, with a street value exceeding UK£1 billion.

<sup>11</sup> The fact that all recent important incidents of this sort took place in Pakistan is purely coincidental. A month earlier, or later, similar cases could have happened in 30 other countries anywhere in the world.

<sup>12</sup> Ashgar Khan was the first Commander-in-Chief of the Pakistani Air Force, the President of Pakistan Air Lines (PIA). Zia-ul-Itaq died on 17 August 1988, when his private aircraft blew up, a crime that has not yet been solved.

<sup>13</sup> See Annexes on Westphalia and piracy.

<sup>14</sup> See Martin Van Creveld, *The Transbrniation q/ War* (New York: The Free Press 1991).

Quite the opposite. The current upheavals have incalculable consequences, first and foremost for the military. Are nation-states losing their monopoly over armed violence? They actually have now lost it, as noted above. Indeed what has been lost was one of the key achievements of Renaissance Europe and the modern era, and the main tool designed by international law to abolish, insofar as possible, barbarity when man confronts his fellow man, is disappearing. This major invention of the modern age was to draw a sharp distinction between the enemy and the criminal. Now, violence is everywhere, and, moreover, the enemy is a criminal.

### *What Role Should Defence Play?*

Clearly, defence should play a major role, but on one condition: a clear understanding of the reality of today's world. At that price, the military will be able to deal with contemporary dangers. There is, in fact, a long tradition of studying and practising indirect strategy within the armed forces. Remember, the Greek word *stratos* (army) gave us not only the word strategy but also the word stratagem.

### *What Should be Kept in Mind?*

*Idea 1:* Thousands of precedents exist to help us understand our current situation: the most advanced civilizations always prosper against a backdrop of chaos. Even in stable phases of history, mankind is sometimes drawn under the spell of destruction, attracted by the abyss of annihilation. The calm prosperity of today's Europe should not be taken for granted.

*Idea 2:* The basic political requirement for any community has remained unchanged since the dawn of history: its protection. An authority that is unable to protect the life and property of its subjects, both within and beyond its territory, does not retain their loyalty for long, and does not long survive. Furthermore, while nation-states in their part were able to count on the patriotism of their citizens when these states confronted one another, this national loyalty is- far from assured in a confusing brawl between nearly unidentifiable entities. Here, too, a word of caution. To quote Philip of Macedonia, the father of Alexander the Great: where armies have trouble passing through, a donkey laden with gold slips in easily.

*Realism:* The international law of warfare developed by the European powers two to three hundred years ago is not an immutable law of nature. The insidious notion by which armed violence that does not involve states is not regarded as war must be resolutely discounted. Nowadays, many of the most savage enemies of the law-governed state do not show us the courtesy of conforming to our rules. More and more, the new, threatening entities will be playing by their own rules, not ours.

Does this mean a return to barbarity? Not necessarily, provided that the means are procured either to force these entities to respect a minimum set of rules, or to neutralize them for good. Annex 2 describes how the piracy that had beleaguered international trade for more than half a century was resolved in 10 years.

## **New Wars: What are the New Cards on the Table?**

*Strategic Dimension.* Since the warlords are basically entrepreneurs at heart, the *bandenkriege* do not follow the logic of a European-style war. Troop movements (or the lack thereof) are based not on tactical considerations, but, rather, on financial ones: seasonal trafficking, potential looting, controlling the harvest of narcotic plants, etc.

*Disease Control Dimension.* A 1997 report<sup>15</sup> on the health of soldiers in seven Central African armies revealed that 50 per cent of them have AIDS or are HIV-positive.

### *Characteristics of Chaotic Wars*

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<sup>15</sup> Jim Hoagland, "Strategic Old Thinking Doesn't Block a Virus", *Herald Tribune*, 3 April 1997.

- More often than not, the conflicts are protracted, bloody, and painful; There is non-recognition of the state or border by at least one of the two sides, owing to the waning on three continents of the concept of the nation-state with stable and controlled borders;
- There is an end to the distinction between military and civilian, between the front and the rear; militias with something even vaguely resembling a uniform will become increasingly rare in the future;
- There is a complex human environment: the need to confront a scattered enemy, hidden among the populace, often mixed in with the armed forces;
- There is an absence of conventional battles in the open countryside, but continued massacres, bloody vendettas (Algeria, Chechnya, the former Yugoslavia), and a series of terrorist episodes.

## **What Should Be Done? First, Some Research...**

“The enemy frequently forces one to adopt a passive stance. The important thing in such cases is to retake the initiative quickly. If this cannot be done, defeat is inevitable.<sup>16</sup> In chaotic warfare, technology does not play a decisive role, at least not on the ground. Faced with a real threat from hostile, unconventional groups, it thus seems reasonable not to commit all the assets at one’s disposal to upgrading existing weapons and systems, which are already highly sophisticated for the most part. We should also be thinking about the real dangers of today’s world, and thus of basic research into tools, either totally new ones, or those adapted to today’s threatening groups.

## **How Do We Counter an Enemy Whose Way of Thinking We Cannot Understand?**

The first thing to be done is a political task, in the noble sense of the word. We need to seriously think about how to instil order into a world of ever-increasing civil war, ethnic conflict, and confrontation motivated by religious or sectarian fanaticism. As in any strategy, this means understanding what rationale or logic the dangerous groups in today’s world are using. If we know nothing of the “mindset” or the motives of our adversaries, how can we fight them?

More simply stated, imagine a ship today without radar, without an instrument panel, reduced to sailing along blindly, with only a foghorn. This is how Europe is operating in 1999 as it confronts the dangerous groups in today’s world. We have a hard time discerning them, know little about them, know next to nothing about what makes them tick, or about what frightens them. In Europe, the European Union bureaucrats know how many seals there are in the Eastern Mediterranean, but they have no idea whether there are 500,000 heroin addicts in the EU, or double, or half that number.

Without basic math, computer science cannot advance. Without basic chemistry, pharmacology cannot advance. Similarly, particularly in our complex and chaotic world, without basic research into the real dangers of today’s world, it is impossible to detect dangerous phenomena when they appear, or to analyse them, understand them and, thus, to combat them.

## **How Does Counter-insurgency Work Today?: The Indian Model**

The concrete reality where dangerous groups now operate must therefore be studied. A short paper such as this can only offer some approaches - here is one.

Take, for example, the Indian Union, widely touted as the “world’s biggest democracy.” Like creaking Chinese junks, made of scraps of wood, but withstanding the toughest storms, India, always shaken by

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<sup>16</sup> Strategic Problems of evolutionar), Warfare, December 1936.

explosions, has, in the end, withstood every assault. Yet is there a country in the world with more guerrilla groups, or a more varied mix of them? Tribal insurrections (Nagas and Bodos) in Manipur and Assam; Marxist-Leninist terrorism from the Naxalites in the northeast; pro-independence Sikhs in Punjab; Islamic fundamentalists in Kashmir - most of them financed with crime money, of course.

Imagine this drama played out within the European Union: the Armed Islamic Group, Hamas, Sendero Luminoso (Shining Path), the PKK, all unleashed at roughly the same time. It is not a miracle that India has managed to hold off such a tidal wave - quite the opposite. Over the past 20 years, the country's intelligence services have developed techniques that enable them to detect threats very early, and to tag and then manipulate the actors in guerrilla or terrorist circles. Because they know their enemies well, the Indian intelligence services know how to mount sophisticated clandestine operations in which they control, sometimes from the start, the groups that seem the most extreme, pitting their enemies against one another, weakening them, and sometimes destroying them from within.

Should not great nations such as ours study these techniques for dealing with new threats, like the ones developed by India, and then adapt them to their rules and their own needs”?

## **ANNEX I : “The Thirty Years” War and the Treaties of Westphalia**

From 1618 to 1648, the great European powers (France, the Holy Roman Empire, the Spanish Empire, England, Sweden, Bavaria, the Netherlands, Denmark, etc.) tried to settle the great Catholic-Protestant quarrel once and for all. Germany, then a patchwork of mini-states, served as the main battlefield. Thirty years later, the country was absolutely devastated. Between one-third and one-half of the population perished (famine, massacres, disease), yet the outcome was indecisive, with neither religion in a position to dominate Europe completely.

After two years of endless discussion in Westphalia (in the cities of Minister and Osnabrück), European diplomats produced a shaky peace that pleased no one, least of all the Protestant and Catholic clergy, who, in unison for once, denounced it. Only France got something out of it and regained Alsace, and the cities of Metz, Toul and Verdun. The war was the last Europe-wide religious war; the era of national conflicts had begun.

Getting out of a war was not an easy task in those days. Sweden, for example, had to lay off 200,000 mercenaries (with families in tow – at that time, they went along with the troops), who all turned to looting and marauding. The frightening aftermath of that war more than anything else prompted the European powers to form national armies.

## **ANNEX 2 : Piracy**

There is a striking resemblance between our era and the period between the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries; 1650 to 1725, to be exact. An era of bipolar confrontation had come to an end, indirect strategies were widely employed, and politically-inspired groups were degenerating into criminal gangs.

Piracy was actually born at the end of confrontation between two maritime blocs, a Catholic one (Spain and Portugal) and a Protestant one (England and the Netherlands). Before 1713 and the Treaty of Utrecht, privateering was clearly “political”. Even in France, the most famous corsairs from La

Rochelle - Levasseur, Legrand, and l'Ollonois<sup>17</sup> - were all die-hard Calvinists, and attacked the fleets of Catholic Spain and France as irregulars on the Protestant world front.

Even the raids of Henry Morgan against Spanish colonies (Panama in 1671, for example) were authorized by the Governor of Jamaica. Morgan was knighted by Charles II and received a 21-gun salute at his (official) funeral. Once the treaty of Utrecht was signed, the bipolar conflict essentially came to an end and privateering degenerated into piracy. In the Caribbean, the "grey area" of the time, buccaneers and "Frères de la côte" lost their political tags and began to pillage ships from any country, indiscriminately. In 1720, reports from the British admiralty mention 2,000 active pirates. From 1720 to 1730, 400 pirates were hanged outright. The harsh punishment was a powerful deterrent: by 1730, there were only 200 pirates left.

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<sup>17</sup> Jean-David Nau, aka "l'Ollonois", after his native Sables d'Ollones, aka "the Scourge of the Spaniards". He met an end worthy of a pirate when he was devoured by cannibals in the gulf of Darien (Panama). See David Cordingly's *Under the Black Flag: The Romance and Reality of Life Among the Pirates* (New York: Random House 1995).

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