



Threats, conflictuality and military operations



KEY MESSAGES

The world could witness an overall increase in the level of conflictuality¹ in the next thirty years, most notably favoured by the geopolitical transition underway and the multitude of factors that could potentially generate a crisis in the long term (access to resources, demographic and economic imbalances, effects of climate change, longevity of the terrorist phenomenon, etc.).

This transition should be marked by a change in the field of armed conflict, which will fit neither into the peace/war logic that characterised conflicts in the 19th and 20th centuries nor into the continuation of the 'societal' crises that arose in the

wake of the Cold War, but will incorporate different types of conflict struggle, or dispute of different intensities into a single set, particularly favouring asymmetric modes of action in the context of new conflictuality spaces.

The operational environment should become more limiting with regard to the use of force, in particular for Western countries, largely due to growing legalisation (increasing legal asymmetry, development of environmental standards, etc.).

Faced with the continual reduction of their technological and operational superiority, the armed forces of western countries could favour indirect strategies when running their military operations. Moreover, the inclusion of external operations in a multinational framework and integrated approaches should become more widespread;

Based on these likely developments, the concepts of 'dissuasion', 'coercion' and, above all, 'influence', will continue to be decisive. The concept of 'preventive influence', in particular, could become increasingly relevant.

¹- This newly-coined term covers concepts of different natures: war, crisis, and classic as well as hybrid military conflicts.

1 A conflictuality under development

1.1 - A period of geopolitical transition marked by growing instability and volatility

2010 - 2040 should be a period of geopolitical transition, marked by the emergence of new powers, a shift of the world's strategic centre of gravity towards Asia and a relative loss of the hegemony of the Western world, Europe in particular, whilst the USA should remain the predominant military power during the period.

This trend towards geopolitical restructuring, which generates instability and is potentially dangerous, could be marked by a growth of 'power rivalries' or even confrontation between groups.

These instances of geopolitical restructuring, in an increasingly globalised space, could be accompanied by a gradual ramping up of tensions, particularly with regard to a certain number of factors:

- The increasing problems of access to natural resources, particularly energy;
- The demographic imbalance between developed countries with low natural growth and countries with a high birth rate, particularly in Africa,

- the initial effects of climate change;
- Increasing inequality in the distribution of wealth;
- possible systemic crises, particularly economic ones;
- The significant increase in military spending;
- Proliferation crises..

These tensions could serve as catalysts to large-scale conflicts of a political, social and economic nature, likely to lead to open and polymorphous crises (ideological, security, military, humanitarian, economic, etc.), whose impact could be very strong in terms of destructuring the worldwide system.

Even though the level of scope for conflict currently appears to be at an all-time low in spite of several crises, this trend could be reversed over the next three decades, in an international environment that is undergoing restructuring and is more volatile and more complex.

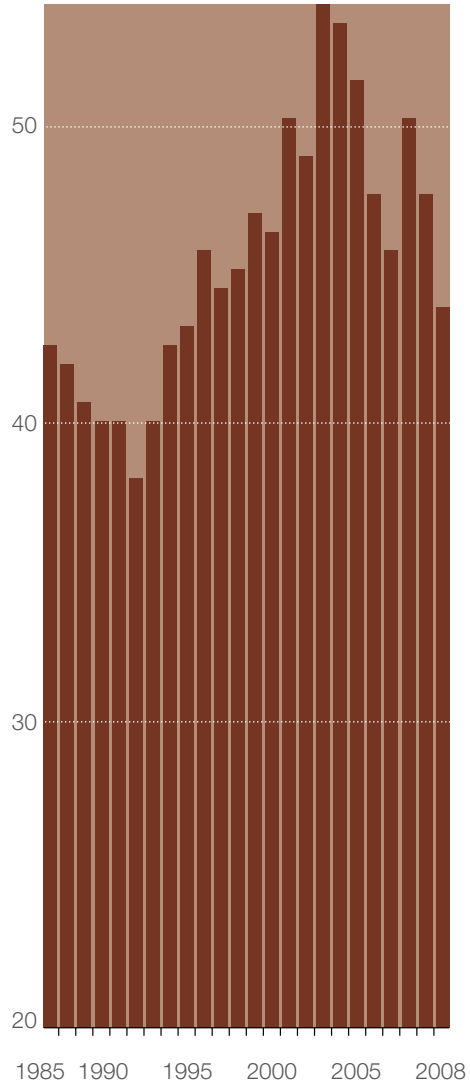
Multipolar restructuring should also generate a new form of potential conflict. Moving further and further away from the familiar war or crisis models, this could incorporate different forms of struggle, or disputes of varying intensity.

1.2 - New forms of potential conflict

The use of collective violence could thus become more unpredictable, gradually moving into new – including immaterial – fields, as technological innovations appear and societies change. In the decades to come, the scope for conflict will incorporate certain components that are currently non-military (media, cyber).

Friction and conflict will become increasingly difficult to define because of the increasing overlap between state and non-state players using ever-more varied modes of action which will sometimes be interchangeable and will be de facto more and more complex to identify.

Asymmetry[□] could become the preferred action strategy of many players, including states. With this in mind, the ability of an asymmetric opponent to exceed a certain threshold of sophistication in modes of action and armament should result, in particular, in a hardening of military engagements with respect to the present engagements. Moreover, 'flashpoints' will be more difficult to anticipate in the presence of this type of threat.



Conflicts involving at least one State, 1985-2008

Source: Uppsala Conflict Data Program, <http://www.pcr.uu.se>

Map Department of Sciences Po, 2011



Tribal militia, Pakistan – Afghanistan border.

ZAHID JAN / AFP

Military Dimension

Weak, fragile, or failed states will be the first affected by the development of a 'hybrid' conflictuality. Their vulnerability and the extension of grey areas, which are themselves interconnected directly or indirectly, will favour the risk of crises spreading contagiously.

This type of confrontation will require the in-depth redefining of the legal corpus that currently governs armed intervention. From an operational standpoint, the current matrices for the understanding and categorisation of events and players (conflict spectrum, concept of war or victory, distinctions between 'combatant' and 'non-combatant', 'military' and 'civilian', intensity of conflicts, etc.) should continue to evolve to adapt to this new environment.

1.3 - A growing risk of confrontation

Internal conflicts within nations, hinging on cultural, religious or ethnic dividing lines, often on a basis initially arising from problems concerning the distribution of resources (land, etc.) have increased and will continue, but international conflicts related to territorial issues have decreased since the end of the Cold War. Increased inequalities between rich and poor countries and difficulties involving access to resources could, however, favour the emergence of direct or indirect 'shortage wars' and 'need wars' between nations. Likewise, territorial and extra-territorial demands (e.g., control of material and immaterial flows) will accentuate the risk of escalation between states, whilst there could be increasing questioning of the borders inherited from the Second World War.

Although the risk of a major conventional conflict between the liberal democracies seems non-existent, the risks of a major conflict between powers will persist, essentially in Asia. Nuclear dissuasion, however, will continue to attenuate this risk. The competition between the powers could develop in new fields, and particularly, for those with the required level of technology, in space. In a multipolar context, the confrontation between powers could also take place by proxy via third-party countries belonging to their respective spheres of influence.

Other state players, of a lesser international status, are more likely to disturb the regional balances for reasons related to the ideology of their leaders or the desire to rectify the colonial or Cold War legacy, and impose international recognition of their power (this currently applies to the Iran of the Pasdarans, the Kims' North Korea, etc.). Cut off from the international community, these 'networked pariahs' are united by makeshift alliances, and co-operate with each other covertly (in particular, via shell companies). They continue to mobilise state and non-state players, uniting to mount a radical protest against Western globalisation and a Western-centric international order. Their potential to inflict harm could be increased by the possession of national sanctuaries and 'anti-access strategies'. Others are likely to appear, and the list of regional 'disturbers' constituting potential sources of conflict will very probably grow longer in the coming decades.



STEP CHANGE

A breaking of the taboo on the use of nuclear weapons cannot be ruled out. Without necessarily provoking a generalised confrontation, this situation would lead to a serious loss of credibility by the non-proliferation system, whose consequences must be anticipated and which could lead either to nuclear rearmament or, on the contrary, to general nuclear disarmament.

The line between international and intra-national conflicts, between regular and irregular wars, and between low- and high-intensity conflicts, will be increasingly blurred. This evolving nature of the threat will clearly call for equivalent adaptability of military capabilities.

The Balkans in 1989



The Balkans in 2011



The fragmentation
of Balkan states

A. Palle, Ministry of Defence – Delegation for Strategic Affairs

Military Dimension

1.4 - Appearance of new areas of conflict

The areas of fragility of the international system could primarily be established where the various spheres of influence meet, particularly when access to resources is at stake. In some cases, access to rare raw materials that are essential to the development of certain key technologies could spark off crises in areas that are currently preserved (Siberia, Arctic).

The seas, and particularly the areas where the main flows of exchange take place, will remain a favourite channel for criminal activity (piracy, banditry) and illicit traffic (trafficking of human beings, weapons, drugs, etc.). The asymmetric threat at sea (particularly piracy), which has been restricted to coastal areas until now, could extend. More generally, because the strategic areas are required to be increasingly regulated, the number of disputes related to energy resources or fishing resources should have a tendency to increase.

Urban areas, centres of power and symbolic places, should remain the favoured areas for conflict in view of increasing urbanisation. With the development of megacities and the increasing role of city-states, urban areas could constitute much more than simply an area for tactical or operational engagement, and could become a fully-fledged strategic area characterised by special asymmetric confrontation tactics and modes.

The aerospace sector will remain a power opportunity (technological, industrial, economic, military, etc.) and a major political tool to reach the essential components of a State or an organisation, providing worldwide strategic coverage. For countries with the required technological capabilities, the control of space will increasingly constitute a power opportunity and a potential area for conflict. Space activity will be more and more subject to risk: debris, vulnerability of space segments, freedom of information flows, growing economic interests, and development of activities for potentially hostile purposes.



Cyberspace will increasingly constitute a full-blown area of confrontation. The dependency of modern societies on NICT (new information and communication technologies) creates a new type of vulnerability, which will be taken advantage of more and more. Cyber attacks are easy to carry out; they provide a discreet, directly non-lethal, inexpensive and extremely disruptive method of mounting an attack. They already represent a real threat, and are sometimes used in combination with other modes of action. This trend is likely to increase, and will favour the dependence of 'small countries' on 'large' or even 'very large' countries, which might be the only ones able to develop a comprehensive capability in this area. In other words, cyberdefence could increasingly be a factor as major powers vie for influence and could de facto favour their hegemony.

Problems related to missile defence, and in particular striving for the growth of ballistic potential in Iran and North Korea, could favour these dependencies as cyberdefence does. At this stage, and in the absence of a complete European offer, only the USA has a coherent and exportable capacity in terms of missile defence for territories and populations, as shown by the gradual setting up of regional anti-missile defence architectures in Europe, Asia, and the Persian Gulf. Unless some solution to the Iranian and North Korean crises were reached, with those countries giving up their arsenals, the missile defence capabilities should not only constitute an additional constraint on national defence budgets in the future, but should also reveal the level of determination of the European nations that still have credible capabilities in the field of early warning, command and control systems, or interception, to offer additional options or alternatives to the American schemes. Meanwhile, the prospects of a technological response to the growing threat (prospect of an increasing role for guided cruise missiles) should not provide more than an additional protective capability, keeping the central role of nuclear deterrence intact for the future.

FOCUS

Towards the militarisation of cyberspace

The structural modifications expected in the next 30 years will only strengthen the in-depth trends already seen today concerning military exploitation of the digital world. They must be taken into consideration for the development of future military capabilities.

- The extension of conflict potential to all the functions handled by states will place increasing pressure on cyberspace, requiring computer warfare capabilities to be developed for the defence of national and allied information systems; but these must also be able to conduct offensive actions against attacking systems. Only certain nations will be able to run these systems with sufficient autonomy.
- The rise of the information society will favour the emergence of a new strategic function: 'influence'. In this context, armed forces and governments must equip themselves with every necessary means to fight against disinformation tools and protect their official information broadcasting systems. More than ever before, influence strategies must be preventive. The concept of 'preventive influence', however, could become more relevant.

- The 'cyber' aspect is now crucial in any engagement of Western military forces. The armies of certain emerging states will quickly catch up in technological terms, most notably developing offensive computer weapons able to inflict damage on command and control (C2) capabilities, which are currently one of the cornerstones of the power of the armed forces of the industrialised nations. With this in mind, note that it has been announced that next-generation jammers able to penetrate enemy air defence networks are due to be put in service in Western combat aircraft in 2020.

- From a legal standpoint, the development of computer combat capabilities gives rise to many difficulties that are far from being resolved. The many social, religious, cultural and, above all, political differences, which seem to be growing, will make it difficult to reach an international consensus on this matter. This will have to be taken into account for the drawing up of rules of engagement for future allied military interventions.

2 Transnational threats are growing

Even though globalisation can assert itself as a source of growth and interdependence on a worldwide scale, it is also a source of new points of vulnerability, particularly related to the explosion of flows and the speed of communications (e.g., viruses), hijacking of these systems (cybercrime, proliferation networks, arms or drug trafficking networks, etc.) and their vulnerability to external attack (piracy, cyber attacks, etc.).

The role of non-state disruptors, which is bigger than ever before and should grow as globalisation develops, attests to this. This trend makes it essential to strive for greater synergy between defence policies and security strategies, and to strengthen international cooperation.

2.1 - A potential for violence linked to the proliferation and dissemination of weapons

The proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (nuclear, bacteriological and chemical) and their means of delivery could constitute one of the most serious risks in the years to come, in a world in the throes of geopolitical and geostrategic restructuring.

Restricted by the principle of nuclear dissuasion during the Cold War, the threat of nuclear weapons being used could grow in view of the proliferation of new risk factors, most notably comprising:

- The increase in the number of states that have demonstrated their military nuclear capability, and others that have shown they can develop certain dual-purpose civil nuclear technologies,
- The growing spreading of scientific and technological knowledge likely to enable proliferation,
- The foreseeable technical capability of non-state players, particularly terrorist groups, to acquire and use nuclear equipment and materials.

In this context, the force of non-proliferation treaties and bans will remain a central question. The way in which nuclear proliferation crises (Iran, North Korea, etc.) are handled will have an influence on how other states are tempted to acquire this type of weapon.

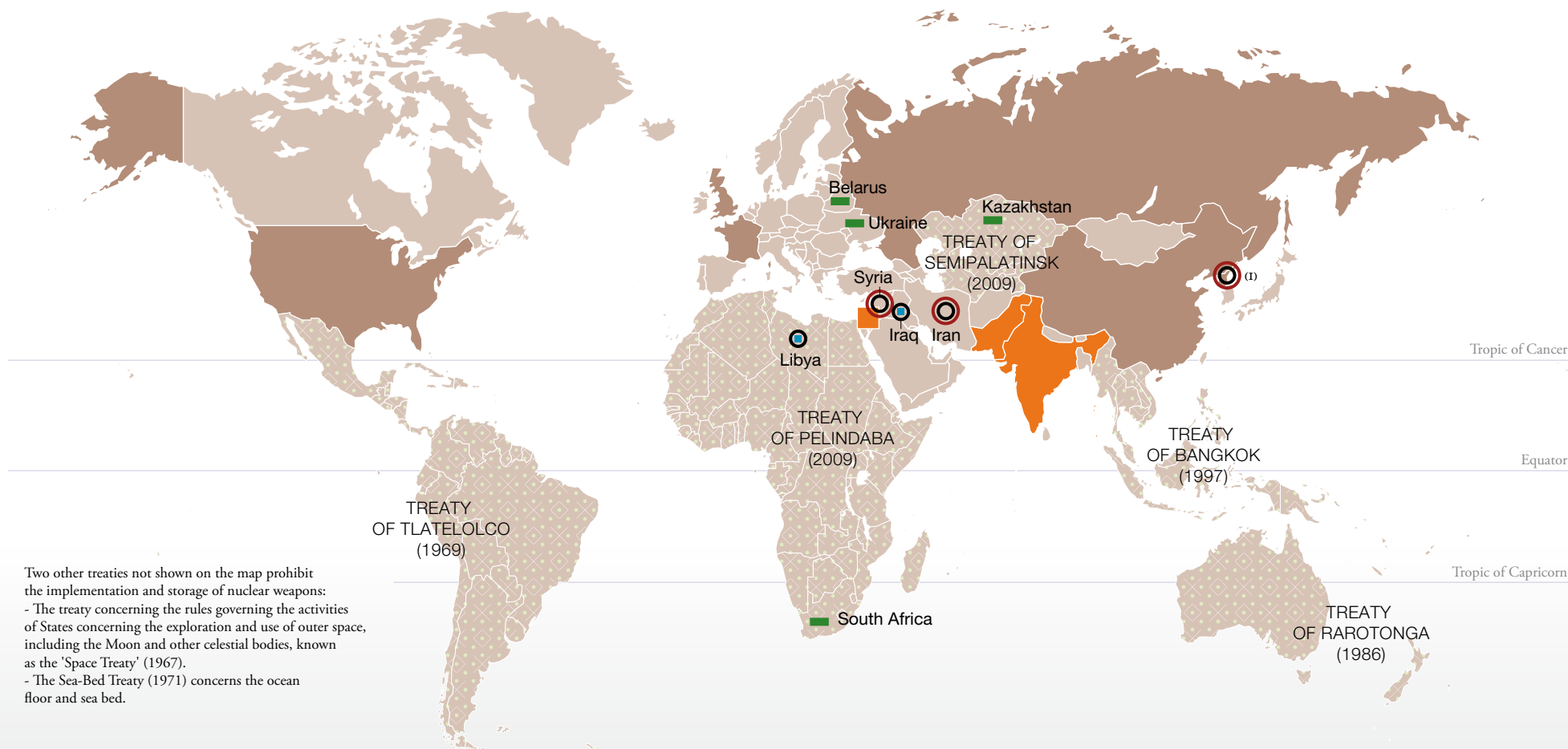


STEP CHANGE

Access to military nuclear capability by new states could encourage other states to choose the path of proliferation and could thereby endanger the non-proliferation regime. The withdrawal of a significant number of states from the nuclear non-proliferation treaty (NPT) due to 'contagion' or following the use of a nuclear weapon would have as one of its main effects the collapse of the NPT and the birth of a 'proliferated' world. Its rupture would create a major upheaval in the regulation procedures in force on an international scale.




* In a worst-case scenario, there could be as many as 20 nuclear states in 30 years' time, by the combined effect of nascent proliferation on the one hand, and less trust in the guarantees of security offered by certain major powers on the other hand.

Above and beyond weapons of mass destruction, certain current trends could continue in the next 30 years and contribute to an







Nuclear weapons in the world: situation in 2012

Military nuclear powers


-  States which are not signatories of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT, 1968)
-  States equipped with nuclear weapons (signatories of the NPT, 1968)
-  States not equipped with nuclear weapons as defined in the NPT

Proliferation

-  States whose file has been sent to UNSCOM by the IAEA
-  Currently unresolved proliferation crises
-  States that have abandoned their clandestine programmes in the past

-  States whose nuclear arsenal has been dismantled

Nuclear weapon-free zones

-  Treaty (date of entry into force)

(1) In January 2003, North Korea unilaterally declared its intention to withdraw from the NPT and carries out activities leading to proliferation

Military Dimension

overall increase in available means of conflict and therefore give rise to imbalances and favour an increase in the number of crises:

- The regular increase in the conventional weapons market,
- The gap between the countries that have or have not signed international treaties and agreements limiting the production and use of certain military tools,
- The regular increase in military spending by emerging powers wishing to consolidate their influence in their regional spheres at a time when European countries are reducing their defence efforts,
- The spreading of 'preventive' doctrines (anticipation of self-defence),
- Easier access to sophisticated technologies, most notably 'anti-access' and/or 'dual' weapons used to circumvent the military intervention capabilities of a major power:
- The dissemination of conventional weapons, including light and small-calibre weapons, especially in the 'grey areas'.

In the medium term, this combination of trends will increase the potential for tension, given state and non-state secondary players in particular the means to oppose the established international standards.

2.2 - The continuing terrorist phenomenon

Even though the end of unipolarity and western domination are likely to absorb some of the ideological objections, terrorism will remain an effective and profitable asymmetric strategy for the weaker and more relentless parties. It should continue to prosper in the fertile soil of poverty, economic and social inequalities, and the failure and poor governance in certain states. Terrorist groups are likely to make increasing use of information technologies and could benefit from easier access to better and more 'sophisticated' means of destruction, taking greater advantage of dual technologies. The use of information networks for terrorist purposes will be amplified. Terrorist organisations will seek to invent more and more innovative or unexpected means of action.

Whatever the future might hold in store (and this question is much discussed) for Al Qaeda after the elimination of its charismatic leader and the democratic movements in the Arab world, the Jihadist terrorist threat should lose the strategic central position it had brutally acquired after the attacks of 11th September 2001. The management of the conflict in Afghanistan and its consequence, terrorism in Pakistan, will be decisive in this regard.

Islamic Jihadism could lose its ideological basis, and in its global dimension it will increasingly be used as an 'umbrella' to lend a legitimate cover to activities related to organised crime. It could also accentuate its reorientation towards more local and national approaches in the context of persistent conflicts related to poorly controlled political transitions.



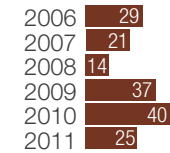
STEP CHANGE

The large-scale consolidation of an NRBC (Nuclear, Radiological, Biological, and Chemical) attack by a state or non-state player (terrorist group) would be a major strategic step change with humanitarian, political, economic, military, and psychological repercussions, which would be massive and immediate, and no doubt important, geopolitical and geostrategic repercussions (rearrangement of alliances and divisions, arms race). It would therefore have direct effects on all processes arising from globalisation.

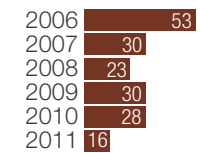
2.3 - Transnational criminality

Transnational organised crime (tax fraud, trafficking in weapons, drugs and human beings, intellectual property theft, piracy at sea, etc.) will continue to benefit from globalisation. Moreover, as certain natural resources becoming increasingly scarce, the illicit economy could find new avenues of expansion.

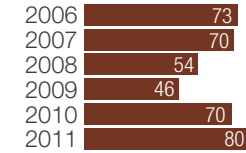
South America



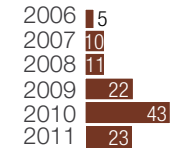
Indian Subcontinent



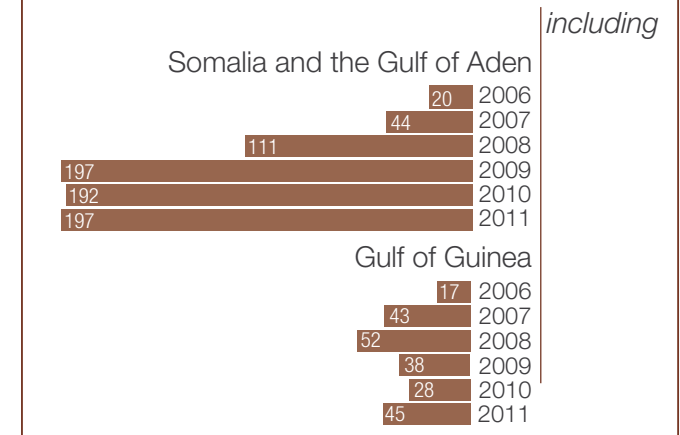
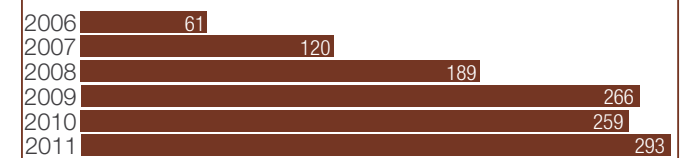
South-east Asia



Asia-Pacific

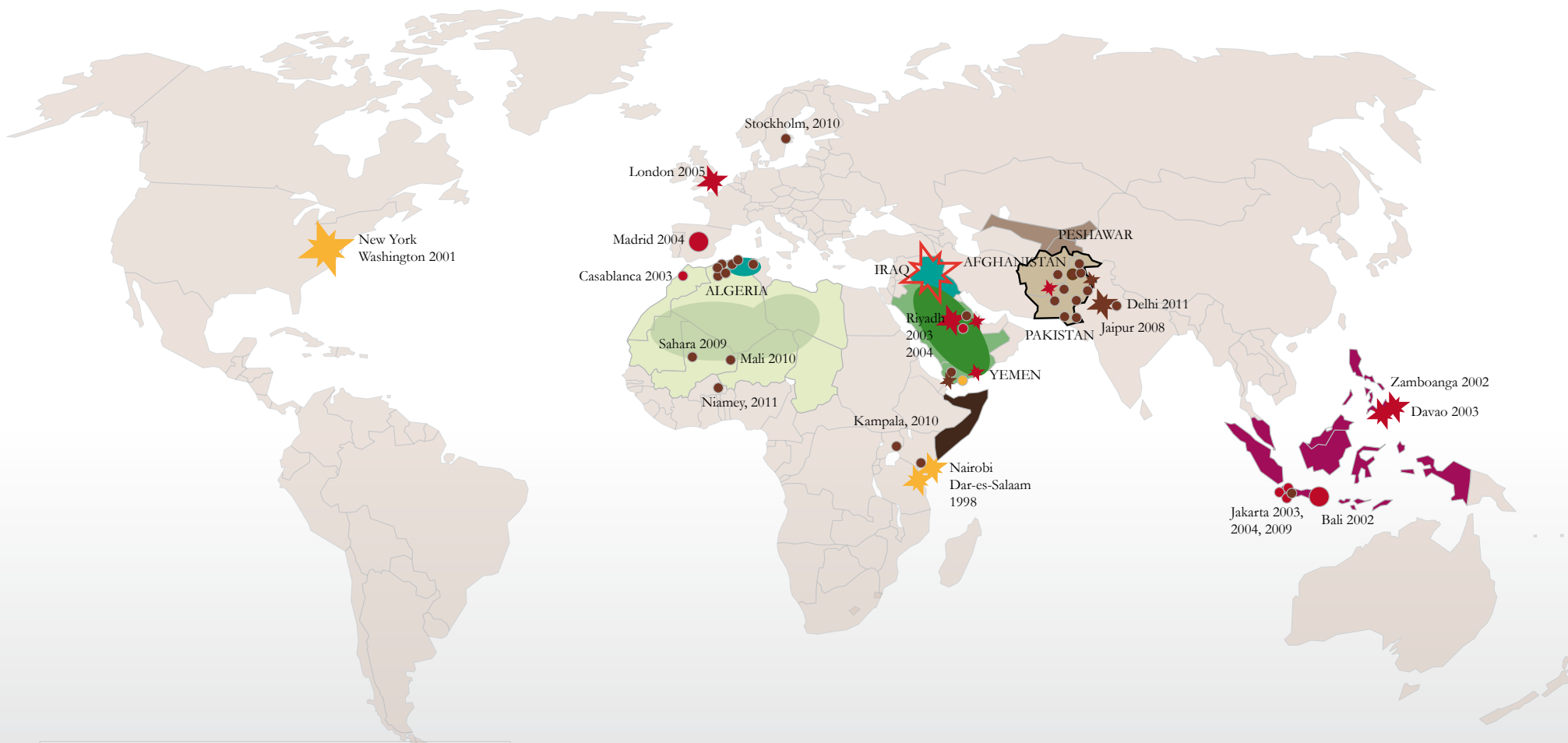


Africa



Number of attacks by pirates, 2006-2011

Source: ICC-IMB Piracy and Armed Robbery Against Ships Report Annual Report 2011



The Al Qaeda Movement, 1993-2011

Al Qaeda central command

■ Afghan and Pakistani Taliban

Movements allied with Al Qaeda

■ Islamic Jihad Union (Central Asia)

■ Harakat Al Shabaab Al Mujahideen (Somalia)

■ Jemaah Islamiyah (South-east Asia)

Movements affiliated with Al Qaeda

■ Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb region

■ The Islamic State in Iraq

■ Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula

PESHAWAR Birthplace of Al Qaeda in 1988

★ Terrorist act committed by Al Qaeda

○ Terrorist act committed by a movement allied or affiliated with Al Qaeda

○ } More than 100 dead or wounded

★ More than 2900 dead

★ ● 1993 - 2001

★ ● 2002-2006

★ ● 2007-2011

★ More than 1000 attacks carried out in Iraq from 2003-2011

Military Dimension

Operating at the dividing line between the security and military fields, this criminality could take advantage of the legal discontinuities and political ambiguities of the international system to enjoy relative impunity. It will also have sufficiently large resources to be able to challenge the forces that oppose it, in a dissymmetric or possibly even a symmetric conflict.

Although up to now they have been secondary players taking advantage of the chaotic world situation, certain criminal groups could upgrade their status to that of autonomous player, capable of developing their own strategies and ambitions. Transnational criminality could also, by contrast, be generated or supported by certain states or transnational organisations in the context of an indirect strategy.

Criminal groups should take advantage of globalisation to grow, broaden their scope of action, which is already very extensive (drug trafficking, trafficking of human beings, weapons, sensitive materials, money laundering, counterfeit, etc.) whilst using the advancing technologies in the fields of information and logistics and, more generally, the growth of flows. New fields will be sought after (health, cyberspace, etc.)

Criminality will continue to take advantage of technological or legal weaknesses to circumvent the growing regulations of the international community and states, and to take advantage of the weak governance in certain developing countries. It might sometimes participate in the failure of some of them. In any case, the fight against destabilising flows—for states and for international security—will constitute a predominant consideration. In order to allow for this, preventive and reaction measures might need to be developed, combining political, military, legal, and law enforcement resources.

Partnerships between terrorist groups and groups associated with organised crime that are currently formed on an ad hoc basis could become more 'regular', making these two threats even more difficult to combat.



THIERRY LABATAILLE

Armed
Rafale

3 Development of the operational environment

The environment of military operations will continue to undergo a transformation. Certain current trends should become more firmly established, and other trends will appear. These combined trends will converge to produce a probable reduction in freedom of military action, from both a national point of view and for all western forces.

3.1 - The risk of a gradual decline of Western technological superiority

The technological head start of the western countries should diminish in the coming years. Emerging powers devote a significant share of their wealth to the acquisition of facilities and the development of more autonomous defence industries, and should be capable of catching up with, or even overtaking, the western countries (theory of technological breakthrough) in the fields where their superiority had been unchallenged until now. This phenomenon is likely to reduce the interventional capability of the western powers and, in case of conflict, to equalise or even reverse the balance of power, therefore significantly increasing the level of casualties.

Moreover, the increasing power of irregular opponents could give them access to more sophisticated technology that would allow them occasionally to challenge a conventional force. Their ability to innovate using existing commercially-available technologies could also allow them quite easily to partially bridge the gap between them and the major weapons-producing countries.

Overall, our forces could find themselves fighting in less favourable technological and operational environments, likely to lead to greater material damage and human losses. In parallel, certain key capabilities that condition the operational superiority of our military system, such as information and command systems or air support resources, could become direct targets for attack.

Even though the difference will inevitably diminish gradually, it will be essential to maintain a relative advantage in our favour as long as possible, so that we can guarantee a definite margin of operational superiority and maintain the essential freedom of action, at least in some suitably targeted sectors. In this regard, sustained investment in R&D is necessary, along with a redirecting of our efforts in the segments that will guarantee our operational superiority in the future.

3.2 - Increasing legal asymmetry in conflicts

Whereas the legal supervision of military operations should continue to develop, conventional forces will increasingly face asymmetric strategies implemented by irregular opponents who flout all the rules and seek to take advantage of the fact that the other side is hampered by greater restrictions.

In this context, armies could be forced to imagine new methods of applying force and new tools (robotics, non-lethal weapons, components of forces immersed in the population, etc.).

STEP CHANGE

The worldwide rearrangement of alliances could lead to a certain readjustment of the western-inspired international legal standards. With the emergence of new powers to the East and South, special legal approaches emanating from different cultural spheres could gradually begin to challenge an international legal corpus that was strongly inspired by a western notion of the individual and of war.

Military Dimension

Moreover, the existence of rifts within the western world itself, between the Latin and English-speaking bases of the law, could lead to situations of mutual incomprehension or even deadlock when it comes to the use of force.

3.3 - Sensitivity of public opinion

Public opinion will remain an indirect participant in conflicts. It will be increasingly influenced via the new information and communication tools, transforming each individual who has access to a network into a 'receiver'. This new type of information, based on instantaneous eyewitness accounts and images, is already having a strong impact on public opinion. The mass media could thus be replaced by a legitimated form of *self-media*¹. In the coming years, public opinion should thus become more autonomous, more reactive, more volatile, and probably less and less predictable. This versatility must be anticipated, whilst media pressure will remain a decisive factor in choices and methods of intervention outside the national territory.

Communication strategies, and influence strategies more generally, will therefore remain fragile and random tools, which will not alone be able to protect populations from the effects of organised or spontaneous disinformation. It will however be necessary to intensify actions aiming to give the population a better understanding of the principles and reasons behind every military action, to increase its resistance to actions aiming to influence and demoralise it, thereby increasing its resilience.

3.4 - Growing confusion concerning protagonists

In opposition to the clearly identifiable soldier, the enemy will increasingly take on many different forms. The distinction between combatants and non-combatants could fade even further in most conflicts, especially asymmetric ones. In a particular operational environment, it should become more and more difficult to tell the difference between military personnel, armed civilians, militiamen, and security officers. In many cases, a single individual might play several different roles according to the tactical situation. The hybrid nature of the threat will only amplify this trend, which is already in effect. More generally, it will be difficult to distinguish between actions arising from the strictly military domain and other modes of action, confirming the changing nature of the very term 'military' and everything associated with it.

Civilian populations will remain a factor in conflicts and will continue to be the favourite target of all opponents using asymmetric methods of action. They run the risk of being subjected to more hostage-takings (being used as a shield, camouflage, or for logistical support).

Crisis resolution will be increasingly subject to an integrated management system in which the civilian and military parts will be tightly interlocked. The proportion of civilian participants in theatres of operation should continue to grow. Because of this, the civilian side must be better integrated into the planning of any crisis.

Military forces acting with limited contingents on extended theatres could more frequently resort to outsourcing certain tasks, to private companies in particular, to support their actions in secondary missions. The co-ordination of these various players and the control of the contractual relations that bind them will become operational issues, more than ever before.

3.5 - Changing behaviour within military coalitions

Whilst interventions should increasingly take place in a multinational framework, the interplay of alliances could evolve, with:

- The probable creation of new military alliances;
- The renewal of existing formal military alliances, with more latitude in the commitment of national players according to their specific interests.

Likewise, the conditions for participation in a coalition could change.

The interplay of the specific interests of each nation could lead to sudden reversals, likely to render the coalitions concerned fragile. In other cases, episodic contributions could develop for certain nations obliged to manage a large number of imperatives and unable to guarantee their participation other than in certain areas. Within an international organisation, certain nations could seek to specialise in one segment of the manoeuvre that matches their own capabilities, resources and legal constraints. This trend could lead to a form of 'work sharing' in a military context.

The weight of national interests could profoundly modify the approach that characterises an alliance or a classic military coalition.

3.6 The requirement for legitimacy

The new context of armed conflicts should raise the question, with renewed urgency, of the legitimacy of using force. Armed action will impose new requirements for legitimacy and the strengthening of the relationship between army and Nation in a context of open war, where the use of force is easier to envisage and is based on obvious humanitarian grounds.

3.7 - Open spaces and inaccessible spaces

Two convergent phenomena will probably limit military intervention possibilities. On the one hand, the multipolar logic could restrict access to a certain number of areas directly connected to a pole. On the other hand, the development of 'anti-access weapons' could greatly restrict the movement and deployment capabilities of an expeditionary force aiming to intervene directly in a theatre. A coalition's option to enter a theatre could be called into question in certain cases, redirecting military action towards new, more indirect or 'longer-range' modes of intervention (known as 'stand-off' operations, which reduce the tread contact).

Certain Asian and Middle-Eastern countries seem to be developing military strategies that aim to control access to certain areas, particularly maritime ones, through which there is an increasing flow of tangible or intangible goods related to globalisation. This provokes an opposite response from other States wishing to protect their freedom of access to those areas and the security of the flows passing through them, or certain key transit points such as straits. Continuing globalisation and the growing competition for access to resources should continue to power these access denial strategies and the strategies to oppose them - combining sea, air, space, and cyber forces - which should shape the international strategic field in the coming decades.



The United Nations Security Council.

STAN HONDA/ AFP IMAGEFORUM

4 Development of military operations



To win back greater freedom of action, forces must try to adapt to new environments, with less use of directly confrontational strategies, and by inventing new modes of action that do not allow the opponent to gain as much of a foothold.

4.1 – Development of more indirect strategies

The development of more indirect military strategies has a certain number of advantages, such as the following in particular:

- Reduced scope of action for the opponent,
- Limitation of losses related to a large tread contact, and which could be perceived as unjustified with respect to the stakes involved,
- Manoeuvres conducted in a manner that maximises the advantages associated with the possession of resources that the opponent cannot effectively counter;
- More limited media resonance, authorising greater freedom of political action,
- Greater reversibility of the engagement,
- Deployment of manoeuvres in a way that facilitates operating as a coalition based on specialist operational areas,
- Highlighting the value of local intermediaries, taking care not to allow them to be the victims of accusations of compromising their principles to a foreign force, and avoiding a situation where the coalition is accused of being an occupying force.

4.2 - Towards a new approach to the notion of 'campaign'

By resorting to a more indirect strategy, military operations should be able to offer more room for operational art. They should occupy this middle ground¹, developing a style of manoeuvre less dependent on co-ordinating resources in the context of complicated planning, relying more on a reactive method of combining different types of action according to the time and place.

Less dependent on the notion of volume of forces and cross-functional management, the operational level should become more involved in overall campaign management, finely controlling the interfaces with the civilian and political environment affecting a theatre. Its added value will consist of organising, with consistent timing, the carrying out of background actions, the development of targeted operations arising both from the concept of influence and the concepts of coercion and dissuasion, and seizing 'operational opportunities'.

4.3 – New typology of operational spaces

It must be less and less possible to reduce the field of operations simply to the notion of physical arenas. Operational manoeuvres could be conducted in two distinct types of space, which will give structure to differentiated rationales and modes of action:

- On the one hand, "transparent spaces", accessible to high technology—airspace, space, sea, open land—in which the opponent will have limited room for manoeuvre, even though its technical upgrading could lead to a hardening of confrontations in this field,
- On the other hand, "opaque spaces", difficult to control—urban, underground, societal, cyberspace—allowing the opponent to compensate for its weakness, particularly of a technological nature, and in which confrontation will be on the rise. Intervention in these fields will require special technologies and specific modes of action.

¹ - Between the strategic level and the tactical level.



Operational communication during an exercise at Fort Béar, Port -Vendres

Military Dimension

With regard to the opponent, a distinction must also be made between solid resistances (those that are identifiable and can be handled by application of targeting logic), and fluid resistances (those that are continually undergoing rearrangement and provide very few handles by which to grasp them).

4.4- New keys to operational superiority

The need to adapt military strategies to changes in the operational environment will require an evolution of the 'operational art' and a certain number of changes in military manoeuvres, from a tactical as well as operational and strategic standpoint.

- Reduction of exposed tread contact: Future operations must seek to reduce the overall tread contact of the forces directly engaged in a theatre of operations in favour of more discreet deployment that is more peripheral and has a greater stand-off action capability. This is far from implying a reduction of the engagement effort; it is more a case of re-thinking the deployment of available forces between the exposed areas, which are very vulnerable to asymmetric actions, and the secure areas, from which high added value actions can be prepared and managed.

- Pressure on "opaque spaces": Future operations can seek to exert more pressure on the opponent within the very spaces where it can manoeuvre freely in order to limit its freedom of action or force it to transit through open spaces where it will be more vulnerable. These operational manoeuvres should inspire the capability field, both in the doctrinal field and the field of equipment. They will require strong mobility between and within theatres, boosting of human intelligence and continuous surveillance capabilities, and powerful attack capabilities integrated to the tactical level.
- The necessary combining of 'combat systems': This action on the opponent could result in a combination in time and space of several 'combat systems', each operating under its own logic and pace, whilst relying on an ability to act in a co-ordinated manner in several environments (land, sea, air, cyber, and space):
 - One system whose purpose is to carry out, preventively if necessary, opportunity actions in a short-loop logic on high added value targets,
 - One system operating over a long period, aiming to restrict or neutralise the opponent on the scale of the theatre,
 - One system allowing direct attack and destruction of the opponent, if necessary via intense battles.

- Operational assistance: The reduction of tread contact in the most exposed areas must be compensated for by more sustained actions in support of local forces, better able to control the terrain. Provided that it is adapted on a case-by-case basis to the specific features of the action to be conducted, 'military assistance' could become a major component of engagements or, in certain cases, the core of the manoeuvre.
- Intelligence-led manoeuvres: In this type of environment, the military manoeuvre will be based increasingly on intelligence so that forces can be oriented towards targets that have been located, identified and chosen for their added value, or used to support an influence operation. The organisation of the command centres should take note of the profound change in a manoeuvre where time management, controlling actions in time, and obtaining the desired effects will be more than ever subordinate to a good understanding of the opponent and the relevance of the situation analyses.
- Profile of the manoeuvre: The implementation of a more indirect manoeuvre could involve a change in the nature of operations. In gaining greater freedom of action, forces could increasingly apply the principles of patience, discretion and risk-taking, which are more difficult to implement in direct action modes. The application of these principles could generate more violent occasional engagements where technological and operational superiority, ruggedness, and moral strength will be decisive.

5 Foreseeable changes in strategic priority

The major changes that could mark the conflict situation in the future (appearance of a wide field of armed conflicts, increasing use of asymmetric strategies, organisation of world space in a multipolar system) will call for the adaptation and redirecting of the strategies pursued by the western countries over the next thirty years.

5.1 – Global dissuasion and the fight against

The concept of dissuasion will remain linked to the existence of a credible nuclear capability able to guarantee the long-term safeguarding of our vital interests. The necessary maintaining of the required level of nuclear capabilities will go hand-in-hand with a growing commitment to the fight against nuclear proliferation, which will remain one of the main threats of the period concerned.

5.2 - The concept of influence

The analysis of risks and threats will mean that prevention must keep its key role, to provide the link between long-term actions (fight against proliferation, assistance and co-operation, pre-positioning) and military engagements, which are often late, and sometimes out of phase with the urgency of requirements.

This preventive management will take place via the implementation of several principles:

- Intimidation or reprisal actions, based on threats or the actual use of conventional means or appropriate new technologies could be envisaged.
- The containment of crises likely to cause fragility in the bases of a highly integrated and interdependent international system. When a nascent crisis is liable to threaten the direct or indirect interests of one or more poles, international interventions could initially seek to contain its level of contagion to prevent it from crossing a critical threshold beyond which crises reach a level where they are difficult to control. This logic should prevail especially in missions to support a weakened state, or in dealing with major humanitarian crises,

- Long-term involvement: In this type of intervention, the effort should be directed at the gradual settling of the crisis, placing priority on the use of local or regional skills and solutions. The military engagements should be more indirect (strong growth of operational military assistance, for example). In most cases, this will not so much involve intervening to physically restrain an opponent, as persuading vulnerable populations not to take a radical or protesting path, where they would stand to lose more than they would win. Military operations must therefore fit more tightly into integrated multidimensional approaches aiming to provide active support to the promotion of internal solutions to suit the local context.
- The development of influence approaches, which will play a growing role in preventive strategies. They will aim to gradually shape perceptions based on specific and targeted communication actions, aiming both at public opinion and local decision-makers, moral or religious authorities, diaspora communities, and all influential players. In parallel, they should favour the use of local forces, supported by the engaged powers, which are the only ones capable of carrying out in-depth intervention in the social fabric. For this purpose, the powers could seek to increase the role of the regional security and defence poles able to support their interventions and lead anticipatory actions, giving true meaning to the idea of preventive influence.

Military Dimension

5.3 - Renewed interest in the protection of the population and the national territory

Faced with transnational threats such as terrorism, traffics, or international criminality, armed forces could be increasingly involved in 'extended protection' actions. Carried out in collaboration and in partnership with the forces of other states, this type of military action could seek to neutralise or lessen the threats before they reach the national territory.

In parallel, given that safeguarding the immediate safety of populations under all circumstances constitutes the political priority, the field covered and the intensity of the military contributions to actions to protect the population and the national territory may grow significantly.

The armed forces will be in ever greater demand to respond to all types of event, most notably because of the increased and foreseeable presence of natural and technological disasters (climatic disturbances, increasing industrialisation of countries under development), of 'mega-shocks',[□] and the vulnerability of the very poor.

The extension of community-based policies could also lead to a sharing of certain protection missions by European countries wishing to better co-ordinate their actions and make savings. These developments could concern, as a priority, the management of sea and air approaches, but could also extend to cyberspace and to rescue and emergency actions.

Finally, by contagion, certain regional tensions could directly or indirectly affect the sovereignty spaces situated outside the metropolitan space. These tensions will be liable to require the deployment of armed forces capable of quickly restoring the state's authority over the sovereignty zone. This projection capability of security and national defence forces far from the mainland should be feasible autonomously and, in the event of need, in ad hoc multinational frameworks.

5.4 - Towards new forms of military intervention

The reasons that will justify the engagement of military resources in external operations will not fundamentally change: Protecting specific national interest, maintaining a certain rank on the international stage, international solidarity (alliance, partnership, defence agreements, etc.) and humanitarian reasons will remain the primary motives for these interventions.

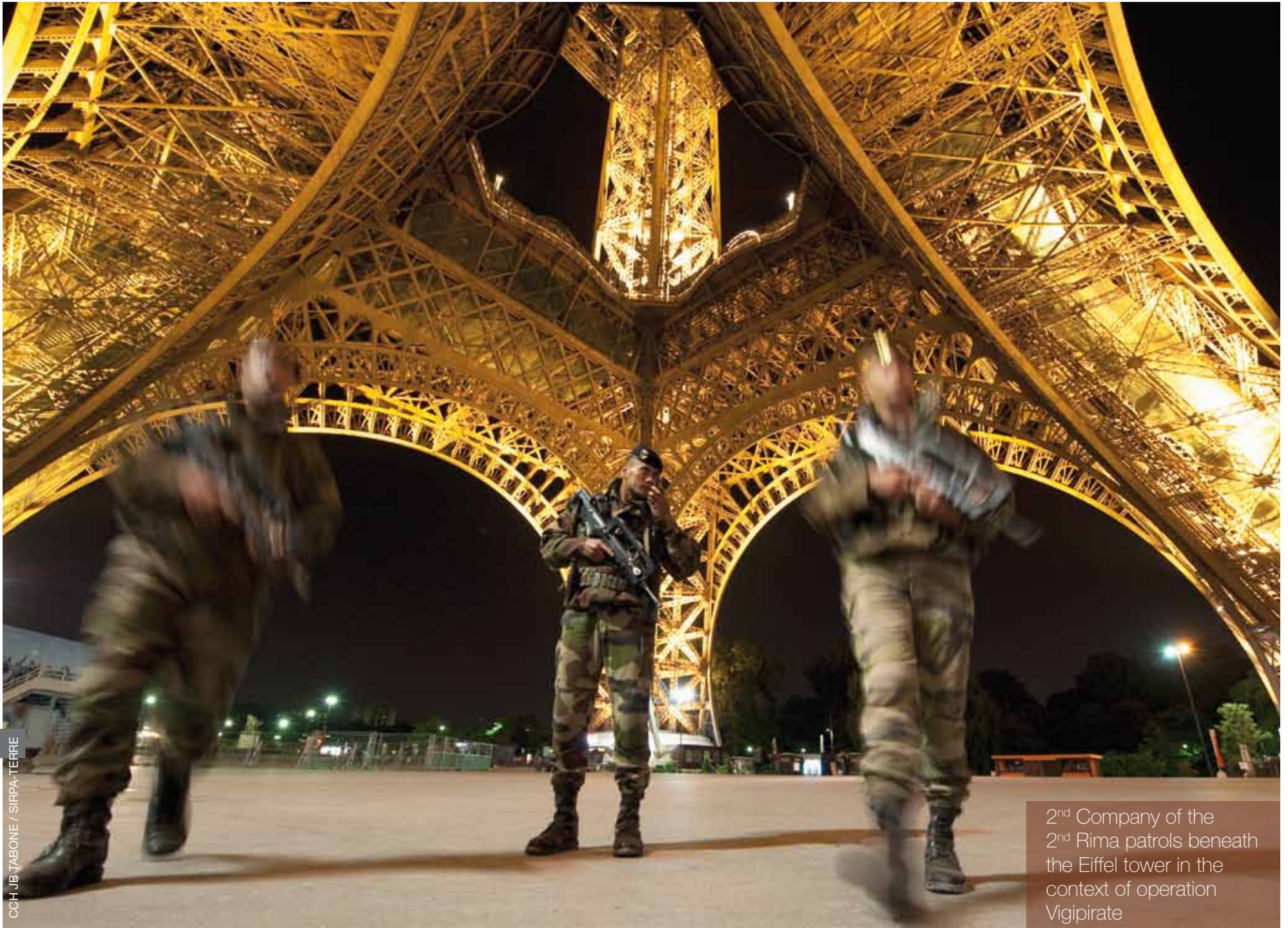
However, the low defence spending, particularly in European countries, and the shortage of troops will not fail to restrict the capabilities for standard use of a military force which has become rare and expensive. This general trend should limit external interventions and refocus them on more targeted actions where the operational profitability of the military tool should be optimised.

Because their numbers will be depleted and they will be obliged to cover rather broad zones of operation, armed forces will need to better co-ordinate their efforts with the actions of other participants. In particular, they must learn to combine the following considerations in a centralised manoeuvre: the participation of local defence or security forces, topping up the capabilities provided by other ministries or by private security companies, and finally, organising the joint action of conventional forces and special forces, often from different nations, not to mention the presence of other parties on the field (NGO, media, refugees, experts, etc.).



The Charles-De-Gaulle

VINCENT MAUPILE / MARINE NATIONALE



CCF J.B. TABONE / SIRPA-TERRA

2nd Company of the 2nd Rima patrols beneath the Eiffel tower in the context of operation Vigipirate

Military Dimension

5.5 - Converting knowledge into an understanding of conflicts

The cultural dimension, in the broad sense of the term, of conflicts will continue to be an essential key to understanding many operational situations. The social structure and collective psychology of populations involved in a crisis will have a decisive effect on the nature of a specific conflict situation, and this is difficult to simulate using technology alone¹. The ability to speak the language will remain essential for an understanding of the local culture and situations.

This cultural approach to conflicts, which will evolve towards a less *western-centric vision*, could increasingly directly guide the strategies implemented in the operational theatres and the style of the military actions conducted there.

In any case, it should oblige the armed forces to adopt a significant level of doctrinal flexibility, forcing them to consider each situation as a special case and to conduct special operational preparation for it. In view of the multifaceted nature of crises, the possible responses to them must also be adjusted according to each situation.

This need for an in-depth understanding of the opponent could also lead to the development of suitable 'sensors', able to continuously monitor and analyse broad zones, and the parallel development of investigative capabilities based on culturally prepared human sensors. In many cases, the use of reliable local forces could be sought.

The ability to speak the local languages or dialects will remain essential, not only to understand the local culture and situations, but also for integration into the populations and for training actions.

The procedures for the flow and processing of information must also advance a great deal so that all participants can enjoy reliable and relevant information at the same time. In this type of environment involving targeted actions and requiring ever more reactivity, intelligence should play an increasing role in military manoeuvres.

Over the next thirty years, the likely evolution of the threat field could force states to define new stances and review certain established scenarios. The field of action of armed force could be more directly integrated into a national strategy combining a strategy of influence, coercive capabilities, and dissuasive posture.



1- The sociological reality in many regions is based on a 'clan' system, which structures not only relationships between people, but also official political organisations. This intermediate level obeys its own logic, and is grossly underestimated by modern, democratic societies. In many cases, however, it is the key to understanding an operational situation.

⇒ CONSEQUENCES FOR DEFENCE

What challenges for our military systems?

Adapting military systems to the world that is developing requires being able to think of multipolarity in operational terms. This requirement means that two fields of action must be taken into account: that of understanding conflict in all its components, which determines the spectrum of probable threats, and that of controlling future operational engagements, which determines the success of our forces.

Confronting new forms of potential conflict

The primary necessity is to adapt to a new field of armed conflict, generating a broad spectrum of threats to which our country, our partners and our allies could be exposed. This requirement points the discussion to three key problems:

- The balance to be struck between the field of security and that of defence in the face of more asymmetric threats,
- The adaptability of forces to ever-changing situations,
- The contribution of armed forces to resiliency of the nation in the face of more diffuse threats.

The changing nature of conflict that has been outlined, whatever the circumstances, leads to the defining of a sufficient reactivity threshold and level of vigilance to cope with any strategic step changes. This question leads back to the notion of a military critical mass on which the operational credibility of forces can be based.

To ensure this credibility, it will be essential to define a threshold for the balance between maintaining a solid national base guaranteeing the expression of national sovereignty and the strategic role of France, and the development of new mechanisms for partnerships within the power poles (in the first instance, European and Transatlantic).

Preparing for future military engagements

In this area, the priority could be to improve the interoperability of armed forces with the resources of other participants intervening in the field of conflicts (allied, interministerial, private, local). This choice makes it necessary to update certain principles of command and organisation of the military tool, favouring a more interactive approach at every stage of discussion and action between the various players participating in a considered manoeuvre which is conducted, as far as possible, in a more global fashion.

The second requirement directs the discussion towards a material, doctrinal, sociological, and psychological adaptation of the military tool with regard to more open-ended threats, a tougher opponent, and the hardening of military engagements. With this in mind, the management of complexity, the intelligence of situations, the ability to grasp specific local features, imagination, discernment, adaptability, and a spirit of initiative will be more than ever a source of operational added value.

The third line of effort could concern the adaptation of forces to new legal realities that shape the operational field. This development calls for an adjustment of the legal framework of operations with regard to new types of threat, more in-depth cultural integration of the legal aspect into the exercising of the military profession, and better allowance for specific features of the military at every level of national and international legislation.