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Paul J. Smith

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# Transnational Security Threats and State Survival: A Role for the Military?

PAUL J. SMITH

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On 20 August 1998, an undisclosed number of US Navy ships and submarines located in the Arabian and Red seas launched more than 79 cruise missiles in a simultaneous attack on alleged terrorist targets in Afghanistan and Sudan. Afghanistan-bound missiles targeted the Zhawar Kili Al-Badr Camp, an alleged terrorist training facility located about 160 kilometers southeast of the country's capital, Kabul. The Sudanese target was a manufacturing facility suspected to be producing precursor chemicals for the nerve agent VX. The attacks were carried out as part of a US response to terrorist attacks against US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania. According to press and government reports, the missiles hit their targets as planned and the US government subsequently deemed the attacks a success.

Because the two operations were essentially attacks by a state against non-state actors, American officials betrayed some uneasiness when confronted with questions about official terrorist involvement by the governments of Sudan and Afghanistan. Moreover, US military officials broke with previous practice by refusing to disclose damage assessments out of fear that it would give vital information to interested terrorist organizations. In defense of the government's policy of operational secrecy, General Hugh Shelton noted that such an antiterrorist operation required "different techniques" because "we are in a different ball game today."<sup>[1]</sup>

Although the US attacks in Afghanistan and Sudan were widely viewed as unequivocal responses to global terrorism, they were, in many respects, symbolic of a much larger trend: the emerging tendency of nation-states to turn to military forces to deal with post-Cold War era security threats that are transnational and not state-centered. Increasingly, governments are characterizing problems that were once considered law enforcement or public health problems as security challenges. Some examples of these emerging threats include international organized crime, terrorism, arms trafficking, pandemics, and international illegal migration flows. Unlike traditional state-centered security threats, these transnational threats often emerge slowly and their causes and effects are often not easily ascertained.

As transnational security challenges continue to grow in severity around the world, military leaders and planners are facing the almost inevitable reality that armed forces will be deployed against them in the decades ahead. This trend is not occurring without controversy, however. Some military leaders strongly oppose the use of military forces in non-warfare operations for a variety of reasons, including fears that such missions detract from military training and readiness. Nevertheless, governments around the world are increasingly discovering that civilian agencies which would normally manage these problems--such as police, health, environment, or immigration ministries--simply cannot cope with the magnitude of the problems they are confronting. This trend implies a major change in how countries will likely deploy their armed forces in the decades ahead. More important, however, it suggests a fundamental new role for military forces in the 21st century.

## Transnational Security Issues: Defining the Threat

Transnational security issues, as the name implies, are nonmilitary threats that cross borders and either threaten the political and social integrity of a nation or the health of that nation's inhabitants. Moreover, such issues might be deemed as threats that tend "to degrade the quality of life for the inhabitants of a state."<sup>[2]</sup> Typically transnational threats or challenges arrive in the host state because of their intrinsic nature (e.g., air pollution that crosses an international border due to prevailing winds) or because of porous borders resulting from government policies that reflect either an unwillingness or inability to restrict or regulate cross-border flows. Moreover, transnational security challenges are distinguished from more traditional security threats by their tendency not to manifest within a single

defining event or period of time. In contrast with traditional security threats--such as a nuclear standoff between India and Pakistan, or Serbia's military campaign in Kosovo--transnational security challenges often do not have a crisis "focal point" where policymakers and government leaders can direct their attention and energy.

Complicating the picture is the fact that many transnational issues are driven by non-state actors--such as international criminals, terrorists, or alien smugglers--who have little concern about international governance or legal norms. In fact, many of these non-state actors spend a great deal of energy simply trying to elude or evade government officials altogether, thus making traditional face-to-face negotiations or admonitions virtually impossible. Moreover, because transnational challenges often emerge subtly, over a long period of time, they are particularly challenging for governments which, for domestic political reasons, must focus on short-term problems. Environmental degradation and the spread of infectious diseases, for instance, are transnational problems with complex causes that have emerged over a period of several decades. A government that must focus on its next election (or other imminent domestic concerns) could easily overlook or ignore the subtle signs emanating from such issues and leave the problem to successor governments or generations.

The rise of transnational security challenges reflects numerous economic, social, and political changes that have occurred throughout the world since the ending of the Cold War. The new era of globalization has brought unprecedented economic growth, commerce, and international migration. Simultaneously, the communication revolution continues to expand throughout the world, bringing new ideas and opportunities to nearly every nation. But just as globalization has brought many economic and social benefits to the world, it has also opened the floodgates to more sinister elements. Computers and the internet disseminate and process highly useful information, but they also facilitate the activities of "cyber-criminals" and "cyber-terrorists." Similarly, porous borders, while ideal for tourism and trade, also allow easy passage for narcotics smugglers and terrorists. Political and social change in the former Soviet Union, for instance, has ushered in an era of greater political pluralism and openness, but it has also provided a fertile seedbed for the growth of organized crime and an influx of criminal activity from abroad. Similarly, China's encouragement of cross-border trade, especially in the nation's southwest region, has brought new economic prosperity, but it has also led to an influx of narcotics, disease, and illegal migrants.

Global demographic trends also underpin the growth of many transnational issues. Large-scale urbanization is a growing reality in many developing countries throughout the world. In 1975, only 38 percent of the world's population lived in cities; by 2025, however, that number will increase to 59 percent. Urbanization is considered a major culprit in the genesis of infectious disease epidemics, some of which transform into international pandemics. The growth of urban areas can also worsen environmental problems, as levels of air and water pollution in many of the world's largest cities show no sign of abating. If urban residents are unable to find satisfying employment, they may turn to criminal gangs and thus pose a threat to civil order. Another demographic trend is international migration. Most of the world's population growth during the next two decades will take place in the world's poorest countries, countries that will be least able to handle the social and economic costs of this growth. If individuals from these countries are unable to find adequate employment in their home countries, they may feel the urge to go abroad--legally or illegally. The persistent economic gap between the world's richer and poorer nations is setting the stage for mass migration on an unprecedented scale in the 21st century. In addition to economic factors, large-scale migration in the future may be stimulated by disruptive environmental change, civil conflict, or state collapse.

The primary challenge of analyzing transnational security threats is determining which ones are most critical to international security. Many transnational issues reach into a number of academic and professional fields, such as sociology, law enforcement, medicine, and demography. Drawing distinctions between what is and what is not a transnational challenge can be a daunting and perhaps insurmountable task. Generally, however, five broad categories of transnational challenges pose the greatest threats to human security, national governance, and, ultimately, international stability. These include transnational crime, transnational terrorism, international migration flows, disease and international pandemics, and global environmental degradation and climate change.

### *Transnational Crime*

The growth of transnational organized crime has emerged as a major security issue in the post-Cold War era. Ironically, an increasingly globalized economy that features international commerce, travel, and the movement of

goods and services is also allowing the easy passage of illicit money, narcotics, illegal aliens, and nuclear material.[3] Many organized crime groups are taking advantage of global communications and transportation advances to establish bases in multiple countries in pursuit of illegal profits. Russian crime groups, for example, are active in the Caribbean, Israel, Western Europe, and the United States, among other places. Chinese criminal organizations span the world, including East Asia, Central and South America, Western Europe, and North America. Colombian gangs have a presence throughout the Americas, including the Caribbean region, where they have reportedly forged alliances with their Russian counterparts.[4]

In general, organized crime syndicates operate for one primary purpose: the acquisition of money or other forms of material gain. To earn these illicit profits, they engage in a number of criminal enterprises including narcotics and arms trafficking, human smuggling, prostitution, credit card fraud, extortion, gambling, contract murders, etc. In some cases, particular gangs will specialize in a particular type of criminal enterprise. Nigerian gangs specialize in heroin trafficking, while Colombian syndicates focus on cocaine. Certain Taiwanese gangs, meanwhile, have perfected the art of smuggling people. Among the various transnational crimes, however, narcotics trafficking is arguably the most significant and pernicious, not only because of the huge profits that are gained, but because this illegal activity almost always results in significant collateral violence and destruction of human health. Globally, narcotics trafficking is considered to be the world's third largest economy.[5] In virtually every part of the world, drug trafficking is on the increase, despite numerous campaigns at various levels designed to eradicate it.

Like many forms of international crime, the narcotics trade has been an unintended beneficiary of the liberalization in global trade and looser border controls. In North America, for instance, the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) has helped to transform the US-Mexican border into one of the world's most active drug-trafficking corridors. Approximately 60 percent of the cocaine used in the United States--in addition to about 30 percent of the heroin--is smuggled across the US-Mexican border.[6] Similar trends can also be seen in other parts of the world. Increasing border trade and population flows between China and Myanmar (Burma), for example, have led to an influx in narcotics into Southwestern China. In one two-month period in 1997, police in Yunnan province uncovered 1,371 drug trafficking cases and seized more than 994 kilograms of opium and heroin.[7]

Transnational crime presents a real and protracted threat to the nation-state. It can undermine political institutions in countries with nascent democratic governments and foster mistrust of legitimate governments. Russian organized crime, for instance, has infiltrated that nation's society so deeply that many people no longer trust the government to provide a minimum level of protection for individuals, hence the rise of a private security industry.[8] Criminal activity can also cause widespread death and social destruction. In the United States, for example, more than 15,000 American citizens lose their lives annually because of the narcotics trade (including collateral violence and health impacts).[9] Money laundering can threaten a nation's banking system and undermine confidence in the entire financial system. Many South Pacific island states have seen their banking sectors tarnished by allegations of money laundering of organized crime money, especially from Russian criminal groups.[10]

### *Transnational Terrorism*

International terrorism was a major political challenge in the 20th century and is likely to be an even greater concern in the 21st century. Whether motivated by political ideology, nationalist-separatism, or religious fanaticism, terrorists of the 21st century are likely to be more determined than ever to cause massive destruction and human carnage to advance their particular causes. In the past, terrorists practiced a form of "constrained terrorism" that was focused less on destruction than on publicity. The mass media were the terrorists' best friends. Terrorist groups would attempt to cause enough havoc or destruction to get attention, but not so much as to lose popular support.

The new trend, however, seems to be for large-scale violence for its own sake. Wreaking violence and massive destruction has now become the goal itself, while the desire for publicity has evidently become a secondary consideration. When members of the Japanese religious cult Aum Shin Rikyo released sarin gas on the Tokyo subway system in 1995, their intent was to kill thousands of people, although in fact only 12 people died and roughly 5,000 were injured. Similarly, the 1993 bombing of the World Trade Center in New York City reflected a desire by the terrorists to kill thousands, although in fact the number of casualties was relatively small. As mass violence has increasingly become the goal of modern terrorism, the possibility of nuclear terrorism threatens to raise the magnitude

of physical and human destruction to an entirely new level.

Like international criminal groups, terrorists have benefited greatly from globalization and its attendant benefits, including mass communications, technology, and advanced financial services (which provide the critical covert financial support for terrorist operations). The vast global arms market--including the ubiquitous black market--provides key weapons for terrorist groups. Porous borders and international migration also play a role in facilitating modern terrorism. A terrorist's ability to enter and exit countries is contingent on his or her ability to circumvent a nation's immigration control system--hence terrorists' interest in the growing racket of false passports and fabricated entry-visas. A recent US Department of Justice study found that the US Visa Waiver Pilot Program, which allows individuals from 26 nations to enter the United States without obtaining a visa, provides a conduit for criminals and terrorists.[11] Global migration also provides an international network of financial support for terrorist groups. The LTTE (Tamil Tigers) of Sri Lanka rely on financial contributions from Canada, South Africa, and the United Kingdom.[12]

The threat that transnational terrorism poses to the nation-state is fairly direct. Terrorists may target key infrastructures within nations, and their attacks might prompt a breakdown in civil order (even in those areas far beyond the target of the attack). If terrorists attack a financial target, it could spark financial panic which could, depending on where the attack occurred, spread overseas and disrupt international markets. So-called "cyber-terrorism" could destroy a nation's power grid or destroy sensitive computer technology or networks through the use of computer viruses. If the trend toward "catastrophic terrorism" continues, then human carnage could increase substantially. The specter of biological or chemical weapons being used in terrorist attacks substantially raises the possibility of widespread human and social destruction.

### *Transnational Migration Flows*

International migration, a major political issue in the late 20th century, is likely to emerge as one of the thorniest political and social challenges of the 21st. Millions of individuals, spurred by joblessness, poverty, political persecution, and various other motivations, are crossing international borders to find opportunity or sanctuary. With the substantial portion of future global population growth predicted to occur in the developing world--combined with a looming unemployment crisis that is predicted for many developing countries--some predict that international migration will become a much greater phenomenon in the 21st century. Currently there are roughly 130 million international migrants, with about 25 million of those falling within the more legally-defined category of refugee. The number of international migrants grows by about three to four million per year.[13]

The basic challenge of international migration lies in the fundamental reality of inadequate avenues for legal or regular migration. Increasing numbers of people would like to leave their home countries and travel to more prosperous areas of the world. Yet fewer and fewer developed countries--such as the United States, France, or Australia--are willing to accept them legally. Migrants' only other option is to enter illegally via their own efforts or through the assistance of a smuggler. Rising numbers of illegal immigrants thus spark anti-immigrant sentiment in many countries, which often implement even stricter laws against both legal and illegal migration, reducing chances for legal migration even further.

Growing demand for international migration combined with limited opportunities for legal immigration has spawned an international trade in human cargo. Human smuggling now earns revenues in excess of \$8 billion per annum.[14] A number of high-profile cases, such as the 1993 arrival of the human smuggling vessel *Golden Venture* that carried nearly 300 migrants from China to New York City, have put governments on notice that human smuggling is a long-term challenge. Moreover, the gruesome discovery in June 2000 by British customs officials of 58 Chinese bodies trapped in a cargo truck in Dover, England, has highlighted the danger and reckless disregard for human life inherent in the human smuggling trade.[15] Like many transnational criminal enterprises, human smuggling relies extensively on collateral enterprises, such as passport and visa forgery, corruption of government officials (especially in transit countries), and money laundering.

As the scale of international migration--and particularly illegal or mass migration--has grown, nation-states are increasingly characterizing it as a security concern. Some states fear that immigration might alter the ethnic balance

and cause political instability, while others blame migrants for the importation of crime and disease. Still others fear that neighboring states may seek to use the threat of mass emigration as a tool for gaining political or economic concessions of some sort. In some countries, officials fear that political instability or chaos in a neighboring state might result in mass migration. The collapse of the Albanian economy in 1997 attributed to a series of Ponzi schemes, for instance, resulted in a mass migration to Italy; similarly, an economic crisis in Indonesia during 1998 spurred mass migration of thousands of Indonesian nationals to Malaysia. In both of these cases, receiving governments responded by deploying military forces.

### *Transnational Disease*

Infectious diseases have stalked mankind since time immemorial, although recent medical advances have contributed to the perception that these diseases no longer pose as serious a threat. In the era of globalization, however, infectious diseases are rapidly experiencing a resurgence. Urban crowding, migration, overuse of antibiotics, and changing sexual behavior are just a few factors that explain the trend. In 1995, infectious disease was responsible for over one third of the 52 million deaths that occurred in the world and the numbers were similar for 1996 and 1997. In 1997, moreover, the world witnessed more than 60 new outbreaks of both known infectious disease and new, unfamiliar varieties. One expert has noted that "infectious diseases are potentially the largest threat to human security lurking in the post-Cold War world." [16]

Today, disease outbreaks are occurring throughout the world with unsettling regularity. In September 1994, for example, the world was alarmed by news of an outbreak of pneumonic plague in Surat, India. The international response was swift as governments around the world attempted to seal their borders against travelers from India. A few months later in Zaire, an outbreak of the Ebola virus killed at least 59 people and sparked a similar international response. In 1998, dengue fever, a common and potentially deadly tropical disease, reached epidemic proportions in Indonesia and Thailand. In March 1999, Zimbabwe was overwhelmed by a major cholera epidemic which some experts blamed on urban overcrowding, among other factors. [17] Malaria, a disease spread by mosquitoes, is common in Africa, South America, and Southeast Asia, and is spreading to higher elevations and potentially infecting more people because of the effects of climate change. [18] Tuberculosis is another infectious disease that kills hundreds of thousands of people annually. In Africa, more than 1.6 million new cases of tuberculosis occur every year, with about 600,000 deaths. In China, about 250,000 people die of tuberculosis every year, making it the most deadly infectious disease in the country. [19]

Perhaps the most insidious and destructive infectious disease is the Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) epidemic. In April 2000, the Clinton Administration formally designated AIDS as a threat to the US national security, one that could "topple foreign governments, touch off ethnic wars, and undo decades of work in building free-market democracies abroad." As *The Washington Post* reported,

The National Security Council, which has never before been involved in combating an infectious disease, is directing a rapid reassessment of the government's efforts. The new push is reflected in the doubling of budget requests--to \$254 million--to combat AIDS overseas and in the creation [on 8 February 2000] of a White House interagency working group [which] has been instructed to "develop a series of expanded initiatives to drive the international efforts" to combat the disease. [20]

In December 1998, there were more than 33.4 million people around the world living with HIV (the virus that causes AIDS) or fully developed AIDS, and more than 2.5 million people died of the disease that year. By the year 2005, it is estimated that more than 100 million people worldwide will have become infected with HIV. [21] The region that has clearly borne the brunt of this epidemic is Africa, where new infections increase at a rate of about 10,000 per day. In sub-Saharan Africa, an estimated 34 million people have been infected with HIV since the beginning of the epidemic. [22] In countries such as Cote D'Ivoire and Zimbabwe, the AIDS epidemic has already reduced life expectancy by more than ten years. [23]

The AIDS epidemic is not limited to Africa, however. Many experts see Asia as the next epicenter for the epidemic. Although sub-Saharan Africa has the largest number of HIV carriers, India is now considered the country with the largest number of HIV-infected individuals. Bangladesh, moreover, has been described as an "AIDS Time Bomb." [24]

Farther east, in Cambodia, an estimated 18,000 people have contracted HIV since the beginning of the epidemic.[25] In Russia, a former health minister has predicted that roughly one million Russians will be HIV-positive by the year 2000.[26] An estimated 110,000 people are infected with HIV in the Ukraine.[27]

As the threat of infectious disease has grown around the world, many governments believe it constitutes a security concern, and not merely a public health matter. A US intelligence report recently warned that the American public was under increasing threat from infectious disease because the United States was a "major hub of global travel, immigration and commerce," among other reasons.[28] As noted above, the AIDS epidemic, once considered a major public health problem, is now described by officials as a security concern. A US State Department report warned that the AIDS epidemic is "gradually weakening the capacity of militaries to defend their nations and maintain civil order." [29] And the Director of the US Office of National AIDS Policy recently noted that AIDS should be described as an "economic issue, a fundamental development issue, and a security and stability issue." [30] AIDS and other diseases can devastate a country's economy, thereby potentially contributing to increased unemployment, reduced social stability, and, in the worse case, political collapse. In India, for instance, the cumulative cost of AIDS was projected by this year to exceed \$11 billion; [31] in Cambodia, the indirect impact of HIV on the economy may reach \$2 billion by the year 2006. [32] South Africa, meanwhile, fears that the AIDS epidemic could carve one percent from its economic growth. [33]

### *Transnational Environmental Phenomena*

Environmental degradation continues to persist as a major transnational challenge throughout the world. Despite increasing global awareness about environmental issues, the state of the environment continues to deteriorate, especially in developing countries, which are witnessing unprecedented levels of air, ground, and water pollution. Other environmental problems, such as land degradation and desertification, are also worsening. Today more than 900 million people around the world are affected by desertification and drought, and that number will double by the year 2025. [34] Millions of people around the world are denied access to safe drinking water because of pollution, which is commonly the result of domestic sewage, industrial effluents, and runoff from activities such as agriculture and mining. [35]

Environmental problems are inherently transnational, but the most direct evidence of this is transboundary pollution. Transboundary pollution in some regions of the world is so serious that it has generated tensions between neighboring states. In mid-1997, for instance, a major transboundary pollution crisis erupted in Southeast Asia. Forest fires in Indonesia--caused in part by excessive logging--created a persistent haze that blanketed much of the region. At first Malaysian officials attempted to downplay the phenomenon, but eventually they had to abandon their "good ASEAN neighborliness" (referring to the Association of South-East Asian Nations) and point the finger directly at Indonesia. [36]

Climate change is perhaps the most strategic environmental challenge facing the world community. A preponderance of evidence suggests that human activity--especially the release of carbon emissions--is a major culprit. When carbon is released during the combustion process, it forms carbon dioxide, which tends to trap heat in the atmosphere, resulting in increased surface temperatures. Carbon output continues in rich, developed countries, although the rate is much slower than in previous years. The opposite trend can be found in developing countries, however, where the rate of carbon emissions is growing significantly. Brazil, India, and Indonesia increased their carbon emissions by 20, 28, and 40 percent respectively from 1990 to 1995. [37]

Environmental degradation presents a number of security challenges to the nation-state. First, there are the effects on human health as environmental degradation tends to increase rates of cancer, heart disease, and other diseases. Transboundary pollution may also be considered a security threat by recipient nations that are forced to endure a neighboring country's pollution. Climate change is arguably the most serious long-term global environmental threat, however. Many South Pacific nations consider climate change and global warming their primary security threat. Sea-level rise, a result of climate change, will likely decimate some nations, resulting in large numbers of environmental refugees who will flee to neighboring countries. Rising seas will become a growing challenge for coastal regions, especially since these areas contain over three billion people around the world. [38] Climate change is also expected to increase the number of El Nino-type weather events and to stimulate other alterations to climate patterns that may

result in more violent storms. Such storms would be especially devastating for developing countries and would potentially have lasting economic implications. Hurricane Mitch, for instance, nearly destroyed the economies of Honduras and Nicaragua by causing roughly \$5.4 billion in damage to infrastructure and crops;[39] similarly, Mozambique's floods in March 2000 have almost undermined any hope of near-term economic progress. Economic instability resulting from climate change may also undermine political stability in affected states.

### **Military Deployments against Transnational Security Issues: An Appropriate Response?**

As the scale of transnational security threats has grown, many governments are increasingly inclined to deploy military force in either preventive roles or in the aftermath of a major event or disaster. In many cases, countries will turn to their military forces only after they realize that the particular threat is capable of overwhelming such frontline agencies as police or public health organizations which would normally address the issue. For example, the United States has deployed military troops in anti-narcotics missions along the US-Mexican border instead of relying solely on civilian law enforcement officers. Thailand relies extensively on military troops to counter illegal migration and drug smuggling in its northern regions, especially along the border with Myanmar. In 1995, Italy deployed nearly 1,000 soldiers when faced with a mass influx of Albanian illegal immigrants. In 1998, Brazil assigned 2,000 troops to fight an epidemic of dengue fever that had affected more than 6,000 residents. Military forces were also deployed in Indonesia in 1997 to counter widespread forest fires that contributed to a massive haze that blanketed almost the entirety of Southeast Asia. As these examples indicate, military deployments against transnational security issues are on the rise.

Nevertheless, as governments deploy military forces to counter transnational threats, they are sparking a debate about the appropriateness of that course of action. Essentially the debate pits those who support military involvement in such missions against those who are opposed. Some of the main arguments for each viewpoint can be summarized as follows.

#### *The Case for Military Deployment*

Proponents for military deployment argue that transnational security threats are the major security challenges to the nation-state in the 21st century and, given this reality, it is natural and appropriate to call upon military forces to address them. Some argue that in the post-Cold War era, the notion of security should be expanded to include issues that will have a direct impact on state stability and the welfare of individuals. In some countries, transnational security threats constitute a greater threat to political stability than even traditional state-based military threats. Pakistan, for instance, arguably faces more dire consequences from the influx of narcotics and small arms from neighboring Afghanistan and the attendant violence it spawns, than from any nuclear or military threat posed by India. Because military troops are the ultimate instrument of the state in maintaining its security, it is logical that military forces would be involved in combating such threats. Moreover, the likely scale of transnational problems in the future--mass migration, pandemics, environmental catastrophes--requires a massive state response. In general, only the military has the ability to react quickly enough with adequate resources.

Another argument for military involvement concerns the nature of transnational threats themselves. In general, transnational threats are driven by non-state actors, but occasionally there are situations in which governments act as the "hidden hands" behind transnational security events. Evidence has surfaced that North Korea engages in official acts of narcotics trafficking and money laundering. Similarly, Thai officials have claimed that criminal maritime piracy is sometimes sanctioned by Vietnamese officials. Mass migration events, moreover, are not always as accidental as press accounts might portray. There have been instances--such as the 1980 Mariel Boatlift from Cuba--in which a nation will encourage mass migration to destabilize or harass a neighboring country. Some health officials, meanwhile, fear that a massive infectious disease outbreak could be precipitated by a biological terrorist attack which might be orchestrated (perhaps indirectly) by a hostile government. More broadly, in 1999 a popular Chinese strategic book urged that China engage in "unrestricted war" against the United States by employing various transnational threats such as information and biological warfare, drug smuggling, environmental attack, and other types of asymmetrical warfare techniques.[40] These several examples suggest that it would be unwise for a government to simply downplay transnational threats as mere law enforcement or public health matters. Consequently, a prudent response would be for governments to prepare to use their military forces to deal with these types of threats.



## *The Case against Military Deployment*

On the other hand, there are those who argue that military forces should not become involved in these types of operations regardless of how serious they may be. Many nations have and maintain a tradition of keeping military forces out of non-combat tasks, except in the most dire emergencies. This attitude is sometimes apparent even when military forces successfully carry out humanitarian missions that gain them popularity with the general population. India's army, for instance, fears that humanitarian operations fuel "disaster fatigue" and are detracting from the military's fundamental role of defending the nation from external attack.[41] Indian military officials have reportedly urged the government to equip civilian agencies to handle such emergencies and hence free the military to focus on purely defense matters. Similar sentiments exist within the US military. Referring to the increased involvement of American military forces in humanitarian operations, one writer has observed, "The purpose of the US military is to fight and win the nation's wars. Military officers trained to have that mindset will inevitably find humanitarian operations to be a secondary activity." [42]

In general, the argument against deploying military forces hinges on practical concerns. First, there are fears that such operations will detract from operational readiness--in other words, military units accustomed to operating a refugee camp may have lost some of the battlefield skills needed to fight a war. A corollary to this is the financial drain to military budgets. Deploying military troops against organized crime or environmental threats, for instance, costs an enormous amount of money and can drain funds away from training or military equipment. Other objections include fears about the possible corruption of troops who might be deployed on anti-narcotics missions where millions of dollars are at stake. Moreover, there are legitimate concerns about miscalculation and overreaction, especially when military troops are placed in a law enforcement environment. One such case of miscalculation occurred in May 1997 when a young US Marine corporal patrolling for drug traffickers along the US-Mexican border mistakenly shot a US citizen who was herding goats. Although a grand jury subsequently determined that the shooting was an act of "reasonable defense," Pentagon officials abruptly halted the anti-narcotics missions.[43] One could easily imagine a similar scenario occurring with troops deployed to guard national borders against illegal immigrants. For these and other reasons, many traditional military planners believe a nation's armed forces are not appropriate for these types of missions.

### *A Possible "Middle Way"?*

One way governments might address the problem is to consider alternative plans that would address the concerns of both proponents and opponents of military intervention in transnational issues. For example, a possible solution might be for governments to designate a particular division of their military forces to deal specifically with transnational security issues, thus freeing up the remaining forces to focus exclusively on war-fighting missions. Alternatively, governments might consider creating units within civilian agencies--such as environment or immigration ministries--to deal with transnational problems. Members of these specialized "agencies within agencies" might even undergo military training to acquire certain specific and relevant skills.

Some countries are already considering such options in ways most appropriate to their domestic needs, culture, and financial situation. Australia, for example, has contemplated the creation of a coast guard that would be devoted exclusively to addressing transnational problems in addition to numerous other maritime issues. However, financial limitations may circumscribe such proposals. Transnational problems are often episodic and sporadic and are difficult to plan for. Countries facing budgetary constraints may determine that it is impractical to create additional agencies and fund military-style training to counter such threats.

## **Conclusion**

Transnational security issues are clearly growing problems. Issues that at one time might have been classified as law enforcement, health, or labor issues are now emerging as threats to the nation-state and to international stability. Ironically, it is their diffused nature and protracted emergence that makes these issues particularly dangerous. Infectious diseases spread slowly and inexorably, beyond the scrutinizing cameras of the international media. Cyber-crime, narcotics trafficking, alien smuggling, and climate change are phenomena that exist and thrive on a daily basis, and yet are rarely noticed by the general population. Only when a sudden newsworthy incident occurs--such as the

interception of an alien smuggling ship or a deadly terrorist attack--do governments seem to react decisively. When such events do happen, government leaders, fearful of appearing powerless, are tempted to turn to military forces to deal with the problem.

For military leaders, the dilemma is becoming clear. On one hand there is the imperative to maintain war readiness within the armed forces, particularly since more-traditional threats are not likely to dissipate anytime soon. On the other hand, military leaders must recognize that transnational threats will increasingly demand more attention and resources from the armed forces. Government leaders may attempt to create specialized agencies to alleviate the burden from the military. But that is likely only if nation-states perceive transnational issues as imminent threats to their security. Until that recognition occurs, military leaders should prepare to confront the growing transnational security challenges that lie ahead.

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Paul J. Smith is a research fellow with the Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies, Honolulu, Hawaii. His research focuses on transnational security issues, with particular reference to international migration and refugee issues. He is the editor of *Human Smuggling: Chinese Migrant Trafficking and the Challenge to America's Immigration Tradition* (Center for Strategic and International Studies, 1997). He also contributed a chapter on international migration for the book *Fires Across the Water* (Council on Foreign Relations, 1998) and has published numerous articles on international migration topics. Mr. Smith earned his B.A. from Washington and Lee University, his M.A. from the University of London, and his J.D. from the University of Hawaii.

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Reviewed 16 August 2000. Please send comments or corrections to [carl\\_Parameters@conus.army.mil](mailto:carl_Parameters@conus.army.mil)