

Security and Resilience: The Continually Adapting Threat

by

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Introduction

The title of my presentation is Security and Resilience: The Continually Adapting Threat. Earlier this month saw the 8th anniversary of 9.11. Whilst the word Security has been used for many years in discussing the kind of events that this Symposium will no doubt be concerned with, it was only after 9.11 that the word Resilience became associated with crises, disasters, emergencies and security – certainly in the United Kingdom and I suspect in most, if not all, other parts of the world.

In the NATO newsletter this month, Assistant Secretary General for Operations, Martin Howard, reminded us that “contrary to the past, to-days security challenges focus almost entirely on protecting people rather than territory. The new threats and challenges include energy security, cyber defence, piracy and pandemics, all of which transcend national boundaries and affect people rather than national borders.”

Some of these I shall come to later; others will be addressed later in the Symposium.

World bodies

Most World and Regional Bodies have set out what they refer to as a Security Strategy. So have most of the leading countries of the world. In 30 minutes I only have time to mention three, starting at what most people might think is the top, with the United Nations. Under the UN Charter, the Security Council has primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. Unfortunately, for a variety of reasons, the UN has shown itself to be remarkably ineffective in dealing with many of the crises that have arisen. For example, one has only to look at the continuing problems in Palestine, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Darfur. And there was total deadlock over last year’s crisis in Georgia because Russia was both a party to the conflict and a veto-wielding power in the Security Council. The result, one could argue, was and remains paralysis in the United Nations.

The European Union

The idea that the European Union should speak with one voice in world affairs is as old as the European integration process itself. However, whilst it is clear that the Union has made considerable progress in creating a single market and a single currency, far less progress has been made in forging a common foreign and security policy to deal with crises. A huge problem in

achieving consensus is in deciding how much authority for dealing with such events should be vested in the EU and its institutions, and how much should be retained by member states.

Nevertheless, the EU does have a security strategy which identifies some of the global challenges and key threats to the security of the Union and clarifies its strategic objectives in dealing with them. Interestingly, financial instability on the world markets was not one of them when they were first identified. According to the EU security strategy, the five key threats facing Europe are:

Terrorism. The threat of terrorism in Europe was apparent because of the bombings in Madrid and London. It still remains as the recent trial of three men in London, for plotting to smuggle liquid explosives aboard aircraft, indicates. In addition to any threat from Al Qaeda, Greece, Spain and the United Kingdom still have active, home-grown terrorist groups operating within their borders.

Proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. In 2003, this was identified as potentially the greatest threat to European security. An update report issued in December 2008 claims that “the risk has increased in the last five years, bringing the multilateral framework under pressure.” The greatest fear is that they should fall into the hands of terrorists.

Regional conflicts. I have already mentioned Palestine, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Darfur. But, as we saw last year in Georgia, regional conflicts can have a direct impact on European interests. But, regardless of their geographical location, they can also have an indirect impact on European interests. The threat that they pose to minorities, fundamental freedoms and human rights can lead to extremism and terrorism and provoke state failure.

State failure leads to regional instability. Invariably, they are caused by civil conflict and bad governance which includes corruption, abuse of power, weak institutions and lack of accountability. In order to try and reduce the number of failed or failing states most of the countries of the UN came together in September 2000 and agreed on what are known as the Millennium Development Goals. In September 2005, a UN Summit re-affirmed these goals but it is clear now that few, if any, will be achieved by 2015. The failure to achieve these goals means that the number of failed and failing states is unlikely to decline in total, thereby providing a feeding ground for regional instability, conflict and terrorism.

Organised crime poses an exceptionally high security risk, threatening the stability of some European states, both within the Union, and on its borders. It threatens the global economic system and, in some cases, the political system of certain states. The negative impacts – in particular money laundering, trafficking in human beings, the smuggling

of weapons, drug trafficking and corruption – are escalating as globalization progresses and increasing use is made of technology.

In Britain, organised crime gangs are trading “sucker lists” containing the personal details of several thousand Britains considered susceptible to fraud or scam rackets. I have no doubt it is going on in other EU countries.

A report issued by the European Commission earlier this year suggests that the UN strategy on drugs over the past decade has been a failure. In West Africa drug cartels have moved in from South America and elsewhere, taking advantage of the fertile terrain, porous borders, poverty and inadequate policing provide for their activities. The UN estimates that around 50 tonnes of drugs a year, worth almost \$2 billion (£1.5 billion) at Western European wholesale prices, passes through West Africa, virtually all of it heading for Europe.

NATO

The third body I want to mention is NATO.

The most critical issue facing NATO as it celebrated its 60th birthday earlier this year is what to do in Afghanistan. Afghanistan is a mess. Corruption is rife; there has recently been a seriously flawed election; drugs continue to flow from it; and too many NATO and EU countries have a minimum commitment with politicians putting self-interest before those of the organisation to which they belong.

Last week, the overall commander of the US Forces in the Middle East, General David Petraeus, said the Taleban had grown in strength and influence as the fortunes of the coalition forces have deteriorated in Afghanistan. He warned that there were no quick fixes and what was required was a sustained and substantial commitment.

At the same time, General Sir David Richards, the new Chief of the Defence Staff in Britain, warned that defeat for the international coalition would have an “intoxicating impact” on extremists around the world. Failure for an alliance as powerful as NATO would convince terrorists that “anything is possible.”

The second most critical issue is the fact that NATO has become much weaker in recent years. Its geography has moved from being a compact western European alliance to being a sprawling entity, ranging from an exposed and barely defended flank in the Baltics to – if they were included – totally undefended Ukraine and Georgia. Most of today’s new NATO members have minimal military forces. This is arguably in Russia’s favour. NATO was once able to defend Europe in the event of war. At this point, and for a very long time in the future, the best NATO could do now, particularly in defence of its new members is to make some kind of gesture.

Forthcoming threats

Another Cold War

There were suggestions in the media last year that there would be a re-introduction of the Cold War. Significant at the time was the actions Russia took against Georgia; the threat to energy supplies to Europe; and plans by the United States to put defence systems into Poland and the Czech Republic, albeit to protect Europe from Iranian missiles..

One could argue that two significant events gave Russia the green light for its action in Georgia. The first was the failure of NATO to make any decisions about Ukraine and Georgia in relation to their applications to join, other than that they would not be allowed to join. The second was the recognition decision about Kosovo. In the case of Kosovo, the West utterly ignored Russian concerns and imposed a legal regime that, it is claimed, fitted with Western interests. With Abkhazia and South Ossetia, Russia returned the favour in its own backyard.

One of the most critical issues currently facing NATO is how to respond to the applications by Georgia and Ukraine to join. Both countries are part of what has become known as post-Soviet space and Russia is much more sensitive here than it was about other areas which were previously under Soviet domination. The invasion of parts of Georgia just over a year ago underscored the sensitivity that Russia feels about the further expansion of NATO; indeed, one could argue that it was designed not only to punish the President of Georgia for his pro-Western stance but to send a broader message to the West – stay out of our space!

A good test of Russia's intentions in the region in the future could come in the Crimea which is part of Ukraine. It was handed over to Ukraine from the Russian Soviet Republic by Khrushchev in 1954. However, ethnic Russians still make up the majority of its nearly 2 million population. More importantly, it is also the home of the Russian Navy's Black Sea Fleet at Sevastopol, on which Russia has a lease only until 2017.

I will have something to say about energy supplies in a moment but turning to the third of the problems between Russia and the West, President Obama has, despite considerable opposition, now scrapped plans for a missile defence system in the former Eastern Europe. This is in Europe's interests. Russian co-operation is needed if any kind of settlement is to be achieved in the Middle-East and if there is to be a common strategy for dealing with the threat from Iran.

Meanwhile, stalemate remains with Tehran over Iran's nuclear ambitions; as, indeed, it does with North Korea. To-date, Russia has refused to support the imposition of sanctions against Iran. However, if sanctions are to be imposed then Russian support is needed. It is possible that President Medvedev may offer a change in the Russian attitude to sanctions when he visits the United

States to attend the G20 summit of economic powers and the UN General Assembly later this month.

There are also signs that Russia wants to adopt a greater profile world-wide. Within the last month, following a visit by President Chavez to Moscow, it is reported that Russia has agreed to lend Venezuela more than £1.2 billion to buy 92 tanks and an S-300 missile system that can shoot down fighter jets and cruise missiles. In addition, Russia has been assisting Venezuela develop nuclear energy.

The Financial Crisis

9/11 is well known! 9/15 was the first anniversary of the collapse of Lehman Brothers. Although not ingrained in our minds like 9/11, it triggered the biggest global financial crisis in history. From the vantage point of a year later, it appears that the apocalypse has been averted but there is a feeling that, whilst plenty of lessons were identified, none have been learned, and the banks are returning unfettered, to business as usual. Hardly anything seems to have been learned in terms of required regulation; any momentum that did exist for such reform has stalled although something may come out of the forthcoming G20 meeting. Financial institutions have been bailed out at enormous expense. Banks that were “too big to fail” have got bigger. Flawed incentive structures continue to promote short-term profit-seeking rather than social good; so private profiteering remains, at least for the time being. The opportunity for governments to improve the situation to ensure that it does not occur again may have been lost; this could prove very expensive and some experts are predicting that we should brace ourselves for an even worse replay of the financial crisis sometime in the not too distant future.

Climate Change

Tackling climate change is one of the biggest challenges the world faces. It requires rapid global action. Unless it is taken, the rising temperature of the earth’s surface will result in irreversible and catastrophic damage. The EU will be pushing for a collective 30% cut in green gas emissions by 2020 at the next United Nation’s climate change conference in Copenhagen in December 2009. However, whilst there is agreement in the EU and other economic powers that there is a need to help defray the cost of reaching this target in developing countries there is no consensus on what those costs are likely to be, nor how much should be borne by developed nations.

But, whereas, there is general agreement that the world must reduce its dependence on fossil fuels, the World Bank to which European countries contribute funds, is spending billions of pounds on subsidising new coal-fired power stations in developing countries.

In a recent interview, the British Foreign Secretary, said:

“The deal the world needs in Copenhagen is now in the balance. There’s a real danger the talks scheduled for December will not reach

a positive outcome and an equal danger in the run-up to Copenhagen that people don't wake up to the danger of failure until it's too late."

Energy crises

It is not weapons and missiles that makes Russia such a powerful opponent to NATO and the EU - it is energy. The European demand for gas is growing and, currently, can only be satisfied by substantial imports from Russia. There is, therefore, a huge potential for conflict over energy, particularly between Russia and the West. Russia controls a considerable amount of the energy flowing into Europe as these pipelines show.

In June of this year, the International Energy Agency (IEA) warned that the flow of Russian gas through Ukraine may be disrupted at any time as it has in the past. Consequently, there are plans to build a 2,000-mile pipeline to pump gas from Azerbaijan to Europe via Turkey.

Food shortages

In a major speech in 2007, the chief scientific adviser to the UK government, Professor John Beddington, warned that the prospect of food shortages over the next 20 years was so acute that it had to be tackled immediately. "Climate change is a real issue" he said "and is rightly being dealt with by major global investment. However, I am concerned there is another major issue along a similar time-scale – that of food and energy security."

A report, produced jointly by the UN's Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) and the World Bank funded International Water Management Institute (IWMI), published only last month (August 2009) reported that Asia faces an unprecedented food crisis and huge social unrest unless hundreds of billions of dollars are invested. By 2050, it is anticipated that an extra 1.5 billion people will live in Asia. This will double Asia's demand for food in an area where there are already considerable shortages.

Cyberwarfare

Cyber threats are a major challenge due to their evolving nature, increased complexity, and globalisation. It has the potential to bring a country to an economic standstill on par with that experienced by the United States in the days following the 9.11 attacks. It is a smart weapon of choice for inflicting blows without engaging in a shooting war. It can be executed from almost anywhere in the world without consideration for strategic geographic buffers and otherwise insurmountable distances.

Most countries, particularly in Europe and North America suffer daily attacks on their systems. Computer networks now control electricity supplies, telecommunications and banking amongst many other things. Just over a year ago, Lord West, the Security Minister in the UK reported that such networks were being attacked thousand of times a day by criminals and

terrorists. He claimed that some attacks are backed by foreign governments or by state-sponsored individuals.

A recent paper from the Information Society and Media Director-General suggests that there is a lack of skilled personnel, as well as a lack of expertise and research in relation to the security of this area and there needs to be a more coordinated approach to cyber threats across Europe.

Major pandemic

As we move into Autumn and Winter, the H1N1 influenza pandemic continues to be a threat if not an actuality at the moment. The World Health Organisation is advising countries in the northern hemisphere to prepare for a second wave of pandemic spread. There are, of course, marked differences between H1N1 and seasonal influenza. In the former case, the most severe cases and deaths have occurred in adults under the age of 50 years; deaths in the elderly are comparatively rare. This is stark contrast to seasonal influenza, where around 90% of severe and fatal cases occur in people 65 years of age and older. However, a recent article in the Medical Journal, Lancelot, suggests that heart attacks may be a product of the next outbreak of the pandemic H1N1.

Last Sunday, a leading British newspaper reported that a leaked UN Report suggests that the H1N1 influenza pandemic could kill millions and cause anarchy in the world's poorest nations unless £900 million can be raised from the richest countries to pay for vaccines and antiviral medicines.

This is, of course, by no means the only pandemic that exists at the moment – indeed we have had one for some time. It is estimated that some 33 million people were living with HIV AIDS in 2007. In that year alone, 2.5 million people became newly infected and 2.1 million people died of AIDS. Have the lessons in relation to this particularly pandemic been identified? More importantly have they been learned should H1N1 reach such proportions?

Security and Resilience

Given that countries throughout the world, either individually or together, face so many threats why is Europe not more resilient in handling crises?

In July, Javier Solana, the European Union High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy, suggested there was a need:

To enhance the EU's collective ability to handle crises;

To increase capabilities for crisis management, including the mechanism for rapid response and the ability to undertake more sophisticated analysis;

For all states to act with a common purpose rather than being concerned about national interests; and finally,

The EU needs to be bolder – the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) is about managing risks – the EU should be prepared to take on more rather than succumbing to a policy of risk aversion.

Making Europe more resilient

I believe we have four problems in terms of making Europe more resilient and I will deal with each one in turn.

Doctrine hand principles.
Scanning the horizon.
Learning from history.
Thinking outside the box

Doctrine/principles

Some of you may disagree with me, but in my view there is no generally recognised doctrine and neither are there any generally recognised principles associated with the kind of crises we are talking about here.

One of the advantages of doctrine is that it provides a common basis of knowledge and understanding that can provide guidance for future actions. The absence of any doctrine or principles in relation to crisis management means that decisions are made without any points of reference or guidance; thus those involved in crisis management issues face the prospect of 'reinventing the wheel' and repeating past mistakes.

Scanning the horizon

Scanning the horizon involves

“the systematic anticipation and identification of potential threats and opportunities, particularly new and emerging issues, together with a consideration of their likely implications and ultimate effect.”

Far too often we – I use the word in its widest sense – we seem to be surprised by what has happened, at least that is the public perception. Foreign Policy, a journal published in Washington, pointed out well over 2 years ago that a number of states had no-go zones. That is - they had within their borders, what could be loosely termed as virtual states; areas that are self-governing, but claimed by the central government. Two that were mentioned were Abkhazia and South Ossetia. It warned that both regions, heavily supported by Russian security forces and economic aid, continued to reject Tbilisi's authority. So the warning was there but how many countries within the European Union or NATO took heed of it; and, if they did take heed of it, what did they actual do, as organisations, to prepare for what occurred.

Failure to learn from history

That leads me on to the third point – what appears to be our almost continuous inability to learn from history. Indeed, the German philosopher, Georg Hegel (1770-1831) stated “What experience and history teaches is this – that people and governments have never learned anything from history, or

acted on principles deduced from it.” Time and time again I go to Conferences such as this and hear people talk about lessons learned. In the vast majority of cases, they are lessons identified. If we learned them, why do we continue to make such a mess of similar events the second time around? With the exception of the technology now available, little is actually new in dealing with crises, disasters, emergencies and security issues. We have had wars, small wars, insurgency, internal conflict, diplomatic incidents resulting from disputes, terrorism, earthquakes, hurricanes, tsunamis, volcanic eruptions, outbreaks of disease, and industrial and commercial crises for centuries. And lessons have come from them all. And yet, with relatively few exceptions, we keep repeating the same mistakes again, again and again. There is certainly no recognised repository of lessons learned in the UK either for real incidents or exercises – again, if any of you have such a repository in your countries I would be pleased to hear about it.

The lessons for us to do better in making our nations more secure from, and resilient to, today’s threats are already there. We just need to learn to apply them.

Thinking outside the box

The last point I want to make is this. Following 9.11, at every conference I went to the delegates were told that they had to start thinking outside the box if they wanted to manage tomorrow’s threats more effectively. But, if you look at 9.11 everything that happened on that dreadful and tragic day had happened before. Not with such a devastating effect I grant you but it had all happened before.

People don’t need to think outside the box in order to deal with next year’s security issues, or to make themselves or their country or organisation more resilient. They just need to know what is already inside the box and act upon it.

Conclusions

In the short time I have had available I have not been able to mention all the issues Europe faces. There are others such as extremism. However, the few I have mentioned shows just how fragile our – I use our in its broadest sense - just how fragile our ability to deal with crises is at the moment - and just how broad the threats are.

In conclusion then, the EU needs to get away from this attitude of risk aversion and start managing risk, doctrine needs to be developed for crisis management; the horizon needs to be carefully scanned for future disruptive challenges and opportunities; and we need to learn from the past if we are to avoid future crises or, at the very least, be in a better position to manage them more effectively.