

COMMENTS FOR THE GLOBAL HEALTH DIPLOMACY MEETING
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Though there may be many reasons for a State to engage in diplomatic efforts, national security concerns represent the primary motivator, particularly for large nations with global-scale economic and political concerns. Serious diplomacy is rarely motivated by the sorts of issues that form the basis of public health: altruism, health justice and equality, non- or low-profit technology transfer and skills sharing. Since its inception in March 2004, the Global Health Program at the Council on Foreign Relations has endeavored to create sophisticated frameworks for positioning global health concerns within a United States, and global security perspective. We have found this a mixed blessing, as elevating health issues to the national security agenda has both increased attention and concern, but also focused U.S. larger political agendas.

In the course of gaining a national security perspective on health, the Global Health Program of the Council on Foreign Relations has been engaged in the following:

- Chairing the Working Group on State Security and Transnational Threats for the Princeton Project.ⁱ This particular paper draws heavily from a draft analysis prepared by the group, and penned by David Fidler of the University of Indiana Law School. **If this paper proves useful, please direct your praise to Fidler.**
- Chaired numerous closed-door sessions on security and HIV/AIDS, culminating in release of the Council on Foreign Relations special report, *HIV and National Security: Where Are the Links?*ⁱⁱ
- Conducted numerous meetings and briefings inside the U.S. national security apparatus, across agencies and on the Hill, regarding pandemic influenza. Among the outcomes was a *Foreign Affairs* special issue on the subject.ⁱⁱⁱ
- Engaged in numerous consultations with other governments, focused on the security/health links.

Defining the “Threat”

All aspects of global health best fall under the umbrella of so-called “transnational threats”, which are characterized by as events or phenomena of cross-border scope the dynamics of which are significantly (but not necessarily exclusively) driven by non-state actors (e.g., terrorists), activities (e.g., global economic behavior), or forces (e.g., microbial mutations, earthquakes).

Since the 1980s, academic, think tank, governmental, and intergovernmental analyses have contributed to discourse on the potential national security significance of, among other things, terrorism^{iv}, environmental degradation^v, and the spread of infectious diseases^{vi}. Interest in the relationship between security and transnational phenomena has also contributed to the development of such concepts as “human security” and

“ecological security” as potential rivals to the traditional focus on “national security.” More recently, work designed to guide reform of the United Nations stressed the importance of “comprehensive collective security,” a concept that included not only preventing traditional threats of interstate military violence but also addressing threats from terrorism, poverty, infectious disease, and environmental degradation. It should be noted that, for reasons that will be detailed further below, non-infectious disease threats have not fit neatly into the burgeoning transnational threat paradigm, which has, in turn, made it difficult to persuade lawmakers and government foreign policy leaders that diplomatic investments in health systems, per se, and chronic diseases, malnutrition, maternal health.

Much of the “new thinking” on national security has argued that governments have to respond increasingly to serious threats to the physical safety, material well-being, governance capabilities and principles, and social values of their populations that do not emanate from the military forces of foreign countries^{vii}. National security strategies determined predominantly or exclusively by military power offer little defense or deterrence against a range of problems that can significantly degrade the welfare of citizens and the ability of the government to respond to such degradation.

The national security strategies submitted by the Executive Branch to Congress since 1987 frequently included a diverse range of transnational issues in their respective analyses of the national security challenges facing the United States.^{viii} Since the late 1980s, U.S. policymakers have identified, among other things, terrorism, drug trafficking, U.S. trade and fiscal imbalances, energy supply vulnerabilities, environmental degradations, demographic trends, and infectious diseases^{ix} as transnational concerns of national security importance.

Yet despite all the rhetoric on transnational threats and national security, stepping beyond mainstream notions of U.S. national security to consider such threats still proves controversial and often meets with skepticism (if not hostility) from those comfortable with, or committed to, conventional wisdom about national security. Hostility softened considerably, however, following the tsunami devastation in Asia, Hurricane Katrina’s impact on the Gulf Coast and subsequent failures in government response, and on-going deterioration in military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. All of these events have contributed to a growing bipartisan sentiment in favor of increased emphasis on the “hearts and minds” side of U.S. international affairs, as well as essential domestic infrastructure development for American security, both against violent and natural threats.

Some issue-specific endeavors, including those related to public health, have the feel of clothing transnational issues in the garb of national security primarily to increase policy attention on the issues, and thereby garner more funding. Public health advocates have often been flip about their references to “security,” suggesting that merely because a disease can kill many people, its inclusion in the list of U.S. security threats ought to be ensured. Other efforts are so general in nature (e.g., human security) that distinguishing between a foreign policy problem and a national security threat is nearly impossible. The

effort to collapse foreign policy and national security policy is often intentional in order to prioritize the political over the military in international politics. This tendency has already resulted in sufficient folly in U.S. international affairs that public health advocates ought to be mindful of applying rigor to their arguments.

This undisciplined, fragmented, uneven quality of arguments in favor of thinking about transnational phenomena as national security threats encourages traditionalists to heighten their scrutiny and skepticism of such arguments. At the end of the day, thinking on transnational threats (outside of terrorism) had made little headway in the U.S. national security institutions. A key exception is the threat of pandemic influenza, which will be discussed further below.

Terrorism and the violence paradigm

The Department of Homeland Security—the largest reorganization of the federal government for security purposes since the National Security Act of 1947—addresses the transnational threat of terrorism, a powerful indication that the United States has redefined what “to provide for a common defense” means under the U.S. Constitution. Properly advancing this revolutionary shift in U.S. national security policy will continue to devour political, economic, and bureaucratic capital for years to come, further squeezing the possibilities of including other transnational threats on the national security agenda. To date, the performance of DHS is, at best, a mixed picture.^x

Defending against state or terrorist attacks connects policies to the state’s primary responsibility for protecting itself and its population from physical violence. Terrorism expanded this “violence paradigm” to include transnational threats, but it has also strengthened rather than weakened the violence paradigm’s hegemony in U.S. national security policy. Tolerance in U.S. national security circles for adding more transnational threats to the national security agenda, other than for rhetorical effect, will be minimal as long as the violent threat from the insurgency in Iraq and from terrorists energized by the U.S. intervention in Iraq remains high. Just as the United States filtered every foreign policy problem during the Cold War through the strategy of containment of Soviet power, the tendency in the near to medium-term future will be the filtering of most foreign policy and national security challenges through the lens of the war on terrorism.

Some advocates for national security treatment of transnational problems that do not involve direct, physical violence against the United States present such threats as forces that can lead, directly or indirectly, to the perpetration of state or non-state violence in international relations. These attempts to fit transnational challenges into the violence paradigm typically go as follows: The transnational phenomena in question help weaken the capacities of states to function effectively, increasing the likelihood of civil, interstate, or terrorist violence and related conflict. To avoid such violent threats to their security, states need to address the transnational threats preventively, rather than simply responding to the violence when it emerges.^{xi}

Empirical work in transnational threat areas, such as environmental degradation and infectious diseases, reveals, however, a complicated picture of linkages between the erosion or failure of state capacity and violence. Transnational threats compose part of a complex mosaic of factors that weaken the ability of states to function effectively with respect to their populations and in their relations with other states. Even when evidence suggests transnational threats are materially contributing to state failure, the policy response may not target those threats because of more pressing problems, such as corrupt, authoritarian governments that stand in the way of governance reforms. Consider the example of South Africa, which is in the throes of two major epidemics, HIV and multi-drug resistant TB. As dire as these epidemics are for the people of South Africa, the government has not to date seriously targeted either one. Instead, the Mbeki government (And others in the region) has focused on some of the impacts, direct or indirect, of the epidemics in clear security areas: Immigration, military affairs and police.^{xii} Because the epidemics have yet to dampen overall economic growth in South Africa, it has proven easy for leaders of the African National Congress to virtually ignore them.^{xiii}

In an alternative argument, U.S. national security is perhaps indirectly affected by transnational threats that might (or might not) play a role in state failure, typically in weaker or near-failed states. In most such cases, however, even if the failure contributed to the emergence of civil or interstate violence, it would not necessarily amount to a national security threat to the United States or any other wealthy state.

Linkages between transnational threats (such as environmental degradation, infectious diseases, or poverty) and terrorist violence are even harder to sustain empirically than connections between such threats and domestic and interstate violence. Analyses of terrorism before and after September 11th provide little to no basis for claiming that terrorists of concern to U.S. national security are motivated by environmental problems, disease epidemics, natural disasters, or poverty. The continuing grim progression of the HIV/AIDS pandemic does not, for example, apparently play any role in the strategic thinking of global terrorist groups, such as Al Qaeda, that organize violence against the United States and other countries.^{xiv}

As the violence paradigm suggests, the role of U.S. national security policy historically has concentrated on protecting these primary public goods from violence or threats thereof from other states. Such protection requires the state to produce and maintain sufficient military power to deter or respond to organized interstate violence. The primary public good of military power has, thus, long been the exclusive province of national security policy. Attempts to play on the turf staked out by the violence paradigm simply strengthen its policy hegemony to the detriment of understanding the increasingly more complex reality of U.S. national security in the 21st century.

Avoid the Violence Paradigm

There is a critical lack of rigorous analytical frameworks that provide coherent guidance on transnational problems that threaten damage through mechanisms other than physical violence. Though the national security literature of the past twenty years contains much analysis and advocacy for broadening the definition of national security, it is more diverse than cohesive, offering no single template for national security scrutiny of transnational threats.

Ironically, the very definitions of “national security” offered by even the most traditional of analysts are sufficiently broad to include health issues, and define the role of the state as that of protecting military, political, economic, and ideological objectives.

- George Kennan’s^{xv} definition of national security as “the continued ability of this country to pursue its internal life without serious interference” resonates.
- But transnational threats and globalization force us to think differently about what “serious interference” in our “internal life” means.

U.S. national security policy operates to help secure six fundamental interests (in alphabetical order): economic prosperity; governance continuity; ideological sustainability; military capability; population well-being; and territorial integrity. Each of these interests represents a primary public good the state is responsible for producing, sustaining, and protecting from material harm. These primary public goods are at the heart of the social contract that exists between the people and its government.

Production of the other primary public goods involves, however, complex combinations of domestic and foreign policies, responsibility for which falls mainly outside the government agencies typically tasked with national security (e.g., Department of Defense). Producing and sustaining these other primary public goods in aggregate has historically been important for national security; but the actual achievement of these results did not, absent crises, typically require attention from national security bureaucracies.

Efforts to re-think the meaning of national security in the past thirty years often emphasize how transnational events, phenomena, and forces are altering the context for achieving national security. The end of the Cold War, and the search for new frameworks to conceptualize U.S. national security, reinforced the importance of understanding the environment in which the primary public goods described above have to be produced and protected.

National security and networked anarchy

Forces of globalization increasingly affect all of the primary public goods of the United States, creating the potential for transnational phenomena beyond terrorism to pose direct challenges to the production and protection those elements that give national security

substantive meaning. Globalization facilitates the rapid movement of capital, people, goods, services, pathogens, culture, news, knowledge, and ideas over, under, and through borders. Countries, including the United States, are thus exposed to accelerating factors and forces with the potential to affect adversely economic prosperity, population well-being, ideological sustainability, governance continuity, military power, and territorial integrity. These accelerating transnational flows can stress and perhaps overwhelm the state's capabilities to produce and protect these primary public goods. Further, the quantity and quality of a state's military power appears increasingly irrelevant to addressing the challenges these transnational phenomena generate. For example, much of the success in pressing the case for placing pandemic flu threats high on the national security agendas of many nations has derived from recognition that an event as massive as a 1918-type influenza would disrupt the entire just-in-time-delivery global economy, leaving the retailers and food shelves of the world empty. As policymakers came to better appreciate the significance of a catastrophic influenza, they realized that no threat typically listed under the violence paradigm, short of thermonuclear exchange, would have as profound an impact in a globalized world.

The structure and dynamics of international relations during the Cold War privileged conceiving of national security predominantly as a gladiatorial contest waged by states subject to militarized anarchy. This environment made military power the coin of the national security realm, with the objective being parity with, or dominance of, the military capabilities of rival states. The context for producing and protecting primary public goods is, however, radically different in the 21st century. Most experts agree that the 21st century will not experience the kind of interstate, great power conflicts that made the 20th century a nightmare for peoples all over the world. The militarized (and militarizing) anarchy of the Cold War has given way to "networked anarchy," a term coined by Fidler.^{xvi}

Like a computer network, the environment of networked anarchy in which states relate today simultaneously gets stronger and more vulnerable as network membership expands. Strength comes from the incentives network users—both state and non-state actors—have to keep the network functioning stably and efficiently. Core tenets of liberal thinking on international relations foster transnational links and connections between states and peoples, especially through trade and commerce. U.S. national security and foreign policy since the end of World War II has consistently supported the expansion of international trade and commerce in an effort to render states and peoples interdependent. The United States has been a leading architect of the world of networked anarchy.

Vulnerability appears because networked anarchy exposes every aspect of the internal and external functioning of a state to transnational processes and effects, requiring robust governance capacity and adaptability. Relative military power vis-à-vis a rival state declines in national security importance, while the national security need for governance and societal resilience among states increases. The broadening, deepening, and acceleration of networked anarchy also require that the production and protection of governance and societal resilience must itself be a transnationalized process.

Extraordinary damage to the nation

The United States does not currently face, and is unlikely to confront, any state that poses an existential threat to its survival. The absence of existential threats to the state re-orientes national security thinking toward problems that may cause extraordinary damage to the nation. The embrace of homeland security in the wake of the September 11th terrorist crimes signals a shift in national security thinking toward preventing, protecting against, and responding to *threats with the potential to cause extraordinary damage to the American way of life*.

Networked anarchy exposes every aspect of the internal and external functioning of the United States to transnational processes and effects. This exposure creates serious transnational challenges for the American way of life, some of which have the potential to inflict extraordinary damage. Inherent in the social contract is the state's responsibility to secure, as much as possible, the people from extraordinary harm.

The Princeton Project Working Group identified global conventional terrorism, terrorism involving weapons of mass destruction (nuclear, radiological, chemical, or biological agents), highly infectious pandemic disease, and U.S. dependence on foreign oil as transnational threat categories requiring national security attention from the United States in the 21st century. The Working Group reviewed the growing concerns of the last ten to fifteen years triggered by the emergence and re-emergence of naturally occurring infectious diseases. The Working Group concluded that the potential damage a pandemic of a highly infectious disease could inflict on the United States and its overseas interests warranted treating the possibility of such outbreaks as a national security concern. Critical to the Working Group's deliberations were the lessons learned, and the fears raised, by the SARS outbreak of 2003 and the mounting anxieties present all over the world about the transformation of the avian flu crisis in Asia into a virulent human influenza pandemic. The emergence of a virulent, highly transmissible pathogen in today's globalized, demographically imbalanced, and HIV/AIDS-ravaged world could trigger an epochal event surpassing the Black Plague's transformation of Europe in the 14th century.

Finding lasting structures for surveillance, prevention, response and mitigation of transnational threats will be an enormous challenge to both states worldwide, and the international institutions, such as the World Bank and WHO. Because all existing security structures are war/peace oriented, with special attention to nation/state conflicts, the very players most likely to forestall transnational catastrophes are specifically excluded from security mechanisms. The United States, for example, had its first medically-trained member in the National Security Council during the Clinton Administration - - a form of expertise not duplicated in the subsequent Bush Administration. Traditional security structures such as NATO, UN Peacekeeping operations and the U.S. Department of Defense and its counterparts worldwide are not well equipped to assess or handle transnational threats.

Following the anthrax mailings of 2001 the Bush Administration assessed the weaknesses of its traditional security apparatus, recognizing the need to bring the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and elements of the Department of Health and Human Services under the security umbrella. The result has included:

- An extraordinary increase in public health funding, both domestic and foreign, with special emphasis on bioterrorism preparedness and smallpox vaccination.
- A radical restructuring of the CDC that has proven costly and controversial.
- Construction of a global pandemic command post at WHO headquarters in Geneva.
- Elevated sensitivity to issues surrounding pandemic potential and HIV/AIDS.
- Tension between the federal and state governments over requirements, funding and preparedness.
- Elementary discussion of larger health concerns, within the frameworks of PEPFAR, MCC/MDGs, and general foreign aid.

U.S. vulnerabilities, based on its aging and frail national infrastructure, were brought home by Hurricanes Rita and Katrina. The American public health infrastructural weaknesses have been highlighted within that larger context.

Conclusion

The 21st century will witness U.S. national security and foreign policy increasingly tested by transnational events, phenomena, activities, and threats. U.S. national security and foreign policy thinking will need to adapt to this new world. During the Cold War, in response to the existential threat posed by the Soviet Union, the United States encouraged, crafted, and defended processes and institutions that laid the groundwork for the globalized world we see unfolding in the 21st century. Although the United States was a key architect of today's networked anarchy, the federal government faces daunting responsibilities to increase the resiliency of the nation and the international system to multiplying transnational challenges. How the United States fulfills these responsibilities may well determine whether the 21st century comes to be known in history as the Second American Century.

Global health advocates must develop arguments in support of "health diplomacy" that recognize these trends, and rigorously immerse themselves in the appropriate language and vision of U.S. security. The use of "health" as a diplomatic tool, traditionally a partisan activity finding strongest support from liberal Democrats, must be promoted within a far larger transnational threat agenda.

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