

II. New Risks Facing the International Society

A. The U.S. Redefines Security Issues

U.S. perception of national security underwent a fundamental change with the September 11 attacks. The attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon using passenger airplanes were an act of terror beyond all imagination. Since the attacks, the U.S. has become deeply concerned about the relationship between the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and terrorism, specifically the possibility that terrorists could use weapons of mass destruction to commit acts of aggression. This concern was reflected in President Bush's State of the Union Address in January 2002.

In the speech, the president named North Korea, Iran and Iraq as states that were actively attempting to obtain weapons of mass destruction and supporting terrorism, denouncing the three countries and the terrorists linked with them, and describing them as an "axis of evil." Both the *National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, reported by the administration to Congress in September 2002, and the *National Strategy to Combat Weapons of Mass Destruction*, announced in December, link weapons of mass destruction with terrorism and indicate that the U.S. considers the issue to have the highest national security implications.

Traditional national security issues were rooted in bilateral rivalry and disputes. The threats originated principally in a specific country, with issues of national security centering on the diplomatic policy to be followed, the types of alliances to be formed, and the military strategies to be taken in order to counter the threats. Terrorists, however, are not confined by geographic boundaries; in fact they gain their strength from the lack of such boundaries. For these reasons, the threat from terrorists cannot be countered with traditional methods. National security policy needs to be reformulated.

Although it is impossible to declare that interstate rivalry and disputes are no longer with us, a new type of security issue represented by weapons of mass destruction and terrorism is clearly taking center stage. Most statements regarding security-related matters in the U.S. now focus on these new security issues. In reality, however, these issues did not just appear from nowhere with the September 11 attacks. Since the 1990s, security discussions have focused on "globalization" as

a buzzword. The U.S. government has been working to address the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction since the beginning of the 1990s, and has focused on the issue of international terrorism since the 1980s.

What changed dramatically with the September 11 attacks was not the security problem itself, as much as the U.S. perception of it. The shift in security perception was not limited to U.S. government officials or security experts; perception in the U.S. as a whole, including the general public, underwent a dramatic change.

The change in U.S. perception was profound, and against a backdrop in which the U.S. wields overwhelming power, the change has reshaped global realities. Although other major powers (particularly Russia and China) had positioned themselves up to that point as constraining and countering U.S. unilateral control, there has been a tendency to establish closer ties with the U.S. since the September 11 attacks. One reason for this seems to be the conclusion that no one has the capacity to stop a U.S. so fiercely determined to act, and the calculation that accepting the U.S. position would enable them to pursue their own national interests. Whatever lies behind the shift, the U.S. has redefined the issue of security, and other states have generally accepted this.

B. Risk-Based Approach

Redefining the link between the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and terrorism as the highest-level security issue confronting today's world means basing the approach to these issues on the concept of risk. The 2002 Annual Report to the President and the Congress from the Secretary of Defense, Donald H. Rumsfeld, issued on August 15, 2002, is extremely interesting in this regard.

A significant change to the table of contents distinguishes the August 2002 report from those of other years, and the word "risk" is used frequently in many section headings. The report is considered to be the first security policy based on the concept of risk adopted by the U.S. Risk is a highly probabilistic concept and is defined as a danger that can only be expressed in terms of the probability that an incident will take place at a certain time, in a certain place and manner, and at a certain scale, until it actually occurs.

In the case of terrorism, who would commit a terrorist act is unclear. Even if a person who would commit such an act could be identified with some degree of certainty, other factors such as the time, place and possible method remain unclear.

President George W. Bush was right in pinpointing these difficulties in the following remarks he made when he was a presidential candidate, “When I was growing up, it was a dangerous world, and you knew exactly who the enemies were. It was us versus them, and it was clear who they were. Today we are not so sure who they are, but we know they’re there.”

These remarks illustrate the world today as one of omnipresent risk. Considering the gravity of the possible consequences, the link between the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and terrorism in particular are too great a risk for today’s international community to accept. Traditional methods designed to counter threats (potential enemies) specified in advance cannot counter threats from the unidentified “them” mentioned above. The effectiveness of deterrence developed during the Cold War against an enemy unrestricted by territorial borders is also doubtful.

It is in this context that the concept of preemption (preemptive strikes) was put forward, triggering the major debate in the run-up to the Iraq war. The debate on the issue of preemption in the Iraq war shed light on problems that are fundamental to today’s world order.

It should be noted that the rationale included in the concept of preemption is already evident in other spheres of policy. The environment and food safety are classic examples. As the result of continuous heated debate, environmental policy has adopted the precautionary principle, which stipulates that regulatory measures be adopted, even when definitive scientific evidence is lacking, in cases where inaction or neglect could lead to grave consequences. The concept behind the precautionary principle has also been adopted in Japan, having been incorporated into Japan’s Basic Environment Law (Law No. 91 of 1993), and the corresponding Basic Environment Plan (by Decision of the Cabinet on December 12, 1994).¹

¹ The “Basic Direction” of the Basic Environment Plan enacted by the Cabinet in December 1994 states, “The policy will be enforced based on the concept that when the risk of immense and/or irreparable damages can be foreseen, the lack of scientific certainty should not be the reason for delaying in taking up high cost-effective measures for the prevention of environmental disruption.” The Second Basic Plan adopted by the Cabinet on December 22, 2000 also positions “preventive measures” as one of its four concepts that form the guiding principles of basic environmental policy. With regard to specific environmental issues, the plan stipulates that “a lack of complete scientific certainty not be used as a reason for delaying policy measures and that preventive measures be adopted as necessary, while efforts are made to expand scientific knowledge,” in response to “environmental issues for which concern about extremely serious impact and/or irreparable impact

This principle gained widespread recognition across the international community with the adoption of the Rio Declaration at the UN Conference on Environment and Development, also known as the Earth Summit, in Rio de Janeiro in June 1992. The Rio Declaration sets forth a total of 27 principles, with the 15th principle calling expressly for a precautionary approach. In cases where serious environmental issues could lead to irrevocable damage if neglected, the principle states that a lack of complete scientific certainty should not be used as a reason for delaying measures designed to check environmental deterioration.

The precautionary and preemption principles are both based on a rationale that calls for measures to be implemented before definitive evidence is available in order to deal with problems that invite grave consequences if left unchecked. The similarities indicate that the move toward precaution in environmental and food safety issues has extended to the area of security policy. This is not to justify preemption simply on the grounds that the precautionary principle has been adopted in other policy sectors. The need for preemption should be clear in light of the unimaginably vast scale of destruction that would result from the use of weapons of mass destruction by international terrorists, and the omnipresent risks in today's world. It is no exaggeration to say that preemption provides a societal function demanded by the realities of the present international society.

Preemption cannot, however, be unconditionally justified, even if one admits the need for such a function. Preemption involves military action, and security issues cannot be lumped together with issues in other policy sectors.

Reflecting on the tragic horrors of World War I, mankind has worked continuously to make war illegal and curb military action. The effort to draft the League of Nations Covenant, the Kellogg-Briand Pact of 1928 (a treaty providing for the renunciation of war as an instrument of national policy), and the United Nations Charter, have been to allow only two forms of military action as legitimate: collective security by the United Nations, and military based on the right of self-defense. The concept of preemption appeared in this context. While the need for preemption is easily understood, one must be extremely prudent in practicing it, keeping with the spirit of the historic efforts that have been made to eliminate military action.

over the long term is indicated.”

If abused by certain states, preemption will prove to be nothing more than the preventive attacks launched in the 18th century. The United Nations plays an important role in this respect. Preemption unanimously recognized as a result of deliberation in the Security Council, the central United Nations body, can be regarded as preemption as a collective measure by the United Nations and, on this basis, in the common interest of the international society. This was not the case, however, in the Iraq war.

C. United Nations' Intrinsic Role

The Iraq war clearly illustrated an obvious fact – the United Nations is “they,” not “it.” As a general rule, unanimous consensus among members of the UN Security Council, particularly among the permanent members of the Council, is rare when grave issues concerning military action are involved. The 1991 Gulf War was an extremely unusual exception to the rule, considering the United Nations having authorized almost no cases of military action since World War II.

The U.S. did not, for example, have United Nations approval for the Vietnam War. Although a great many “ethnic wars” had broken out across the world after World War II, the United Nations had not sanctioned any of these. The states involved made their cases for war in a variety of ways. The Vietnam War was explained as an issue concerning the Geneva agreement, rather than a matter for the United Nations, while the justifications for “wars of national liberation” were explained as being based on the right of self-determination, a basic principle set forth under the United Nations Charter.

The authority of the United Nations was impaired in the run-up to the Iraq war, although this setback was temporary and should not be viewed in overly pessimistic terms. States around the world must recognize the need for the United Nations' continued existence, since no existing worldwide organization could replace the United Nations. This being the case, a reason will undoubtedly be found to justify the United Nations, as has always happened in the past.

If member states are persuaded by the argument that “as Iraq did not comply in good faith with a series of Security Council resolutions, the U.S., the U.K. and other “willing” states took military action to force Iraqi compliance,” the authority of the United Nations will remain intact. If the explanation does not prove persuasive, countries around the world will have no choice but to abandon the United Nations.

Given these options, there is no doubt that some basis will be found to justify the Iraq war and retain the United Nations, though this may perhaps take some time.

Even if the United Nations is preserved, however, the experience of the Iraq war will likely change the way the United Nations is viewed. The Japanese consistently put a great deal of stock in the United Nations, and their view of the organization will subsequently undergo a dramatic change. A new perspective on the United Nations means that the world will have to become comfortable with the idea outlined above that the organization is by nature “they.” We must shift our global mindset this way in order to restore the authority of the United Nations.