FROM THE NEW MIDDLE AGES TO A NEW DARK AGE: THE DECLINE OF THE STATE AND U.S. STRATEGY

Phil Williams

June 2008

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The author would like to express his deep appreciation to Professor Douglas Lovelace and Dr. Steven Metz for their helpful and incisive comments on an earlier draft of this monograph. He would also like to thank Dr. Paul Kan, Dr. Max Manwaring, Lieutenant Colonel Nathan Freier, and Dr. Alex Crowther for many helpful discussions and ideas which are reflected in the analysis. Other colleagues at the Strategic Studies Institute provided a wonderfully welcoming, congenial, and stimulating environment within which to research and write this monograph, and the author has benefited from their individual and collective wisdom and insight. Special thanks also to Ms. Marianne Cowling and Ms. Rita Rummel for their invaluable editorial assistance. Errors of any kind are solely the responsibility of the author.

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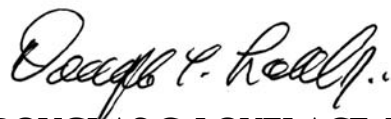
ISBN 1-58487-358-2

FOREWORD

National security policymakers are continuously challenged to ensure that the judgments and assumptions underlying policy, force posture, and provision are congruent with the international environment and the role the United States is playing within it. This has become problematic in the 21st century security environment characterized by complexity, connectivity, and rapid change. This analysis offers key insights into what is a shifting security environment and considers how the United States can best respond to it. Dr. Phil Williams argues that we have passed the zenith of the Westphalian state, which is now in long-term decline, and are already in what several observers have termed the New Middle Ages, characterized by disorder but not chaos. Dr. Williams suggests that both the relative and absolute decline in state power will not only continue but will accelerate, taking us into a New Dark Age where the forces of chaos could prove overwhelming. He argues that failed states are not an aberration but an indication of intensifying disorder, and suggests that the intersection of problems such as transnational organized crime, terrorism, and pandemics could intersect and easily create a tipping point from disorder into chaos.

Dr. Williams suggests that analysts and policymakers are reluctant to acknowledge the pace and scope of state decline. He argues that continued assumptions about the central role and vitality of states—a phenomenon he terms "stateocentrism"—blinds us to emerging challenges. The exception is the Joint Operational Environment, which offers critically important insights into emerging challenges. Yet even this, Dr. Williams argues, focuses on defeating enemies rather than managing conditions of chaos

and restoring order, and remains overly optimistic. He suggests that many of the problems which are proving particularly intractable in Iraq exemplify—albeit on a small scale—the kind of challenges associated with a New Dark Age. Against this background, Dr. Williams outlines the strengths and weaknesses of three major choices: preventive interventionism, disengagement and mitigation, and triage or selective interventionism. He suggests that for both a continuation of the current approach and for selective intervention, U.S. policymakers have to design a far more holistic approach to the exercise of power. In the future, for any substantial U.S. military intervention (by the United States acting alone or with allies) to have any chance of success will require what is termed in this monograph a transagency organizational structure. A whole of government approach cannot simply replicate in the field the institutional rivalries and divergences prevalent in Washington. Military forces, diplomats, reconstruction specialists, and legal experts must be integrated into one organization designed to assist a target state in reestablishing its authority, legitimacy, and effectiveness. Whether or not one agrees with the gloomy prognosis of this analysis, the author identifies trends and potential challenges that will have an impact on U.S. strategy and military posture in the next few decades and offers some suggestions about possible responses.



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PHIL WILLIAMS is currently Visiting Research Professor, Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, and Professor of International Security in the Graduate School of Public and International Affairs at the University of Pittsburgh. From 1992 to 2001, Dr. Williams was the Director of the University's Matthew B. Ridgeway Center for International Security Studies. His research has focused primarily on transnational organized crime, and he was founding editor of the journal, *Transnational Organized Crime* (now *Global Crime*). He has published on alliances among criminal organizations, global and national efforts to combat money laundering, and trends in cyber crime. Dr. Williams has been a consultant to both the United Nations and various U.S. Government agencies. He has edited or co-authored books on the Carter, Reagan, and Bush Presidencies, *Russian Organized Crime*, *Illegal Immigration and Commercial Sex: The New Slave Trade*, and *Combating Transnational Crime*. He recently published book chapters on the financing of terrorism, the relationship between organized crime and terrorism, trafficking in women, complexity theory and intelligence analysis, and intelligence and nuclear proliferation. He has also conducted research on how to attack terrorist networks. At the Strategic Studies Institute, Dr. Williams is working on monographs on organized crime in Iraq and the Madrid bombings. Dr Williams is a National Intelligence Council Associate and works closely with the Office for Warning.

SUMMARY

Security and stability in the 21st century have little to do with traditional power politics, military conflict between states, and issues of grand strategy. Instead, they revolve around governance, public safety, inequality, urbanization, violent nonstate actors, and the disruptive consequences of globalization. This monograph seeks to explore the implications of these issues for the future U.S. role in the world, as well as for its military posture and strategy.

Underlying the change from traditional geopolitics to security as a governance issue is the long-term decline of the state. Despite state resilience, this trend could prove unstoppable. If so, it will be essential to replace dominant state-centric perceptions and assessments (what the author terms "stateocentrism") with alternative judgments acknowledging the reduced role and diminished effectiveness of states. This alternative assessment has been articulated most effectively in the notion of the New Middle Ages in which the state is only one of many actors, and the forces of disorder loom large. The concept of the New Middle Ages is discussed in Section II, which suggests that global politics are now characterized by fragmented political authority, overlapping jurisdictions, no-go zones, identity politics, and contested property rights.

Failure to manage the forces of global disorder, however, could lead to something even more forbidding—a New Dark Age. Accordingly, Section III identifies and elucidates key developments that are not only feeding into the long-term decline of the state but seem likely to create a major crisis of governance that could tip into the chaos of a New Dark Age. Particular attention is given to the inability of states to meet the

needs of their citizens, the persistence of alternative loyalties, the rise of transnational actors, urbanization and the emergence of alternatively governed spaces, and porous borders. These factors are likely to interact in ways that could lead to an abrupt, nonlinear shift from the New Middle Ages to the New Dark Age. This will be characterized by the spread of disorder from the zone of weak states and feral cities in the developing world to the countries of the developed world. When one adds the strains coming from global warming and environmental degradation, the diminution of cheaply available natural resources, and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, the challenges will be formidable and perhaps overwhelming.

These challenges will also have profound implications for U.S. security policy and military strategy. Reflecting this, Section IV considers the extent to which these trends and challenges have been incorporated into official thinking about U.S. national security policy, military posture, and strategy. Although there is considerable sensitivity to the need to adapt to a more complex, dynamic, and unpredictable environment, the continued focus on defeating enemies rather than managing conditions of complexity and even chaos is overly narrow. At best, the official assessments remain linear in terms of projections about states—and even when the focus is on state weakness, the emphasis remains on adversaries rather than the environment itself.

Consequently, Section V considers how—in the event the prognosis of state decline and emerging chaos is correct—the United States might seek to adapt its policies and strategies. Several different options are explored. These range from the adoption of vigorous preventive measures at one extreme to global

disengagement at the other. The first option seeks to quarantine and contain disorder and chaos as far from the United States as possible. The second option seeks to quarantine the United States itself, thereby protecting it from the most serious consequences of an inexorable trend. A third option, lying somewhere between these extremes, offers a more selective and differentiated strategy. For both the first and the third options, the United States would need a far more holistic approach to the exercise of power and a far more coherent organizational structure than currently exist. In responding to security challenges, the United States develops several strands of distinct and often independent activities rather than a sustained strategic approach that integrates multiple activities and directs them towards a common purpose.

In a world where the United States seeks to combat extensive disorder and restore stability, military, economic, and diplomatic power have to be targeted in ways that create synergies rather than seams, that reinforce rather than undercut, and that provide maximum efficiency and effectiveness. U.S. interventions would have to be smarter, not harder. The problem is that effective strategies of intervention and reconstruction require more than the coordination of disparate elements. Strategy cannot be patched together. At the very least, it requires going beyond interagency collaboration to develop what might be termed transagency organizational structures. Based on but extending the task force concept, a transagency structure would be a central core of U.S. interventionist capabilities. It would include military forces, diplomats, reconstruction specialists, and legal experts integrated into one organization designed to assist a target state in reestablishing its authority, legitimacy,

and effectiveness. Notions of joint operations would be extended beyond the military to civilian institutions, replace departmental loyalties with a sense of loyalty to the mission, and focus on synergistic effects. Without both organizational innovation and a shift of organizational cultures and loyalties, tactical success is unlikely—even if there is selective and limited intervention.

The caution is that tactical success might not translate into strategic success. After all, the state does not necessarily represent the optimum set of political arrangements for meeting people's needs or for ensuring peace and stability. More organic, bottom-up forms of governance, for all their shortcomings, might be the best available in a world of increasingly hollow and failing states. The fixation with the centralized state needs to confront realities that point towards serious consideration of alternatives. The problem is that the stateocentric mode of thinking is so highly normative that consideration of alternative forms of governance, which does more than treat them as threats, is typically regarded as heretical, irrelevant, or misguided. Yet if we fail to see the decline of the state and to recognize the underlying realities, the prospect of a cascade of strategic surprises and a series of strategic disasters is inescapable.

FROM THE NEW MIDDLE AGES TO A NEW DARK AGE: THE DECLINE OF THE STATE AND U.S. STRATEGY

I. FRAMING THE ISSUE

In the 21st century in most parts of the world, issues of security and stability have little to do with traditional power politics, military conflict between states, and issues of grand strategy. Instead they revolve around the disruptive consequences of globalization, governance, public safety, inequality, urbanization, violent nonstate actors and the like. This monograph seeks to explore the implications of these disruptions for the future of the U.S. role in the world, as well as for its military posture and strategy.

Underlying the change from traditional geopolitics to security as a governance issue is the long-term decline of the state. Despite state resilience, this trend could prove unstoppable. If so, it will be essential to replace dominant state-centric perceptions and assessments with alternative judgments acknowledging the reduced role and diminished effectiveness of states. This alternative assessment has been most effectively articulated in the notion of the New Middle Ages in which the state is only one of many actors, and the forces of disorder loom large. Consequently, the New Middle Ages is discussed in Section II. Failure to manage the forces of global disorder, however, could lead to something even more forbidding—a New Dark Age. Accordingly, Section III identifies and elucidates key developments that are not only feeding into the long-term decline of the state, but seem likely to create a major crisis of governance that could tip into the

chaos of a New Dark Age. At the very least, such a crisis will have profound implications for U.S. security policy and military strategy.

Reflecting this, Section IV considers the extent to which these trends and challenges have been incorporated into official thinking about U.S. national security policy, military posture, and strategy. Although there is considerable sensitivity to the need to adapt to a more complex, dynamic, and unpredictable environment, the continued focus on defeating enemies rather than managing conditions of complexity and even chaos is overly narrow. At best, the official assessments remain linear in terms of projections about states—and even when the focus is on state weakness, the emphasis remains on adversaries rather than the environment itself.

Consequently, Section V considers how—in the event the prognosis of state decline and emerging chaos is correct—the United States might seek to adapt its policies and strategies. Several different options are explored. These range from the adoption of vigorous preventive measures at one extreme to global disengagement at the other. The first option seeks to quarantine and contain disorder and chaos as far from the United States as possible. The second option seeks to quarantine the United States itself, thereby protecting it from the most serious consequences of an inexorable trend. A third option, lying somewhere between these extremes, offers a more selective and differentiated strategy. Whatever strategic choices are made, however, the consequences for the U.S. military and its roles and missions will be far-reaching. Before examining the menu of choices, it is necessary to explore more fully why the state is in long-term decline.

Observers who see the dominance of states in world politics as immutable reject the decline thesis. They dismiss the weakness of many states with the argument that most of these were never more than "quasi-states" in the first place.[1] Moreover, the contrast between states in Africa, for example, and the advanced post-industrial states of the developed world is so stark that assessments of the former seem to have little or no applicability to the latter. Consequently, arguments about the decline of the state tend to be dismissed—like reports of Mark Twain's death—as somewhat premature. Certainly, it is "too early to schedule a wake for the sovereign-state system."[2] The state remains the main construct for political allegiance and affiliation, the ostensible provider of security to its citizens, and the key organizing device for world politics.

None of this is inconsistent with the notion that the Westphalian state system is in a long recession. States, having reached the zenith of their power in the totalitarian systems of the 20th century, are in a period of absolute decline. The challenges from contemporary globalization and other pressures are neither novel nor unique, but are more formidable than in the past—while the ability of states to respond effectively to these challenges is not what it was. In a sense, states are being overwhelmed by complexity, fragmentation, and demands that they are simply unable to meet. They are experiencing an unsettling diminution in their capacity to manage political, social, and economic problems that are increasingly interconnected, intractable, and volatile. States are also undergoing a relative decline, challenged in both overt and subtle ways by the emergence of alternative centers of power and authority.[3] Sometimes decline is dramatic and overt, but much of it is subtle and gradual. At some point,

however, changes in degree can become a change in kind. A multitude of incremental shifts, especially if combined with powerful trigger events, can create a major tipping point, where the Westphalian state moves from stability to instability, from high to low levels of performance and legitimacy, and from untrammeled dominance to a loss of centrality.

Scholars and policymakers who remain staunchly state-centric dismiss this notion of a fundamental long-term transformation. In effect, they suffer from "stateocentrism"—a term having the same kind of pejorative connotations as ethnocentrism. To argue this is not to ignore the power of the ingrained assumptions and attitudes underlying the "stateocentric" mindset. After all, for the most part, states follow certain norms and rules, are predictable in their behavior, and exhibit high levels of rationality. Stateocentrism is very comfortable—it is parsimonious, reflects powerful if partial realities, and has the great virtue of familiarity. In the immediate aftermath of September 11, 2001 (9/11), for example, there were arguments from many quarters—including former Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) Director James Woolsey—suggesting that a transnational network was incapable of carrying out such an operation without state sponsorship or at the very least state support.[4] Such an assessment underestimated the capacity of violent nonstate actors to develop plans that were simultaneously simple and sophisticated, exploited U.S. infrastructure as a delivery system, and had effects grossly disproportionate to their capabilities.

Similarly, failed states are seen as aberrations or anomalies rather than as indications of a long-term structural decline of the Westphalian state. More specifically, in Iraq the idea of a viable central

government has dominated U.S. planning and policy even though the political and sectarian divisions seem to preclude the central government from developing the level of legitimacy and effectiveness that is necessary for the restoration of an effective Iraqi state.[5] Moreover, Iraq is a powerful example of how violent nonstate actors such as militias can become proxies for the state in the provision of security to portions of the population. Stateocentrism tends to blind its adherents to the democratization and diffusion of coercive power to these nonstate actors. This has more recently been evident, for example, in a growing tendency to dismiss 9/11 as simply a blip rather than an indicator of a major change in world politics.[6] Skepticism of this kind about the terrorist threat is unlikely to be dispelled by anything less than another major attack on the U.S. homeland. Yet, even without such an attack, these stateocentric perspectives are increasingly tenuous. Transnational networks and forces of disorder are seriously redrawing the maps of the world—and the lines that demarcate nation-states are becoming increasingly notional, if not wholly fictional. At the same time power and authority are moving away from states to other actors. These trends must now be examined.

II. THE NEW MIDDLE AGES

Many of the characteristics of the state system that have long been taken for granted are now in question—and will become increasingly so in the future. Robert Kaplan forcefully articulated this view in the 1990s. Unfortunately, the hyperbole inherent in his vision of the coming anarchy enabled critics to dismiss the alarming trends and developments he identified.[7]

Ironically, most of these trends and developments have subsequently intensified rather than abated. Had Kaplan argued not that the future of the world was Sierra Leone, but simply that the future of large swaths of the world was Sierra Leone, then his thesis would have been compelling. The kind of future he discussed has been captured systematically in the notion variously characterized as the New Middle Ages, new medievalism, or neo-medievalism.

Initially developed and dismissed by both Arnold Wolfers and Hedley Bull, the concept of the New Middle Ages has been best articulated in a doctoral thesis at the University of Pittsburgh by Gregory O'Hayon and in articles by Philip Cerny and Jorg Friedrichs.[8] Mark Duffield, in a succinct summary of Cerny's analysis, suggests that global politics is characterized by several mutually interlocking and reinforcing conditions which give it a neo-medieval quality. These include:

- "Competing institutions with overlapping jurisdictions" between states and other actors.[9] As societies and economies have become more complex, states no longer have a monopoly on functions or responsibilities. Even strong and rich states choose to privatize certain functions or co-opt nongovernmental organizations. For weak states, however, the sharing of responsibilities and indeed authority is not so much a choice as a result of their own shortcomings. The irony, as discussed more fully below, is that when the state is already weak, the sharing of governance tends to undermine rather than strengthen state authority and legitimacy.
- "More fluid territorial boundaries (both within and across states)."[10] Borders have never been fully impermeable. Nevertheless, in what has

become regarded as a global "space of flows," control over borders is increasingly problematic.[11] This, too, is discussed more fully below. Suffice it to suggest here, however, that borders are not lines on maps but organic spaces which develop their own character and dynamism—often in ways that are inconsistent with the objectives and values of central governments.

- "Inequality and marginalization of various groups."[12] These groups exist to one degree or another within all societies, although the proportion of a country's population they represent varies enormously from developed to developing countries. In many African and Latin American countries, marginalized individuals and groups make up the large majority of the population. Their deprivation is starkly underlined by its juxtaposition with the wealth of the political and business elites, wealth that is often displayed in very ostentatious ways.
- "Multiple or fragmented loyalties and identities."[13] Largely obscured by the Cold War, issues of identity, ethnicity, and loyalty have come back to the forefront. In the Balkans during the 1990s, they resulted in ethnic cleansing and large-scale atrocities; in some African countries, the result was genocide. In other parts of the world, identity politics has resulted in the rise of militant Islamic groups with a propensity for violence.
- "Contested property rights, legal statutes, and conventions."[14] In some parts of the world, especially urban slums in many developing countries—which are discussed more fully below—the contest is between formal property

rights and the de facto property rights of slum dwellers who often live off the informal economy and are typically outside the orbit of state largesse, if not state control.

- "The spread of geographical and social 'no go areas' where the rule of law no longer extends."[15] Notions of ungoverned spaces or lawless areas increasingly have been seen as a dangerous phenomenon, especially because they provide safe havens for terrorists. In fact, many of them are not so much ungoverned as alternatively governed by groups which act as surrogates for the state. The "dons" in the slums of Kingston, Jamaica, for example, are not merely the heads of drug trafficking organizations; they are also the social and economic patrons of marginalized people who have little or no assistance from the state. As John Rapley has noted, the dons provide "a rudimentary welfare safety net by helping locals with school fees, lunch money, and employment—a function that the Jamaican government used to perform. But over the last couple of decades, keen to reduce spending, it has scaled back many of its operations, leaving a vacuum. As one kind of authority has withdrawn, another has advanced."[16] While particularly stark in Jamaica, this phenomenon is also present in many other countries.
- "A growing disarticulation between the dynamic and technologically innovative north and the south."[17] At one level, this observation is very compelling—and is hard to disagree with. Yet, within the south, there are varying degrees of growth and deprivation. Paul Collier, for example, has noted that there is "a group of

> countries at the bottom that are falling behind, and often falling apart."[18] Encompassing what Collier terms the "bottom billion" people, these countries "coexist with the 20th century, but their reality is the 14th century: civil war, plague, ignorance."[19] Emphasizing this, however, makes Cerny's argument even more compelling.

Cerny himself, having fully elucidated each of these characteristics of neo-medievalism, concludes with the suggestion that these elements constitute a long-term "durable disorder" in which the system as a whole stumbles along with problems managed and contained rather than solved.[20]

Friedrichs, while identifying many of the same characteristics, adds that the "Middle Ages in Western Christendom between the 11th and the 14th centuries" was nevertheless held together by the dual yet competitive universalistic claims of the Empire and the Church.[21] In his view, the notion of the Middle Ages as a disorderly system ignores the forces which gave it coherence. He then argues that a similar dualism exists today with regard to the state on the one side and the globalized market economy on the other.[22] There are several difficulties with this, however. First, Friedrichs' discussion of the Middle Ages is highly selective, both geographically and temporally. Second, even if we accept that the universalistic claims he identifies provided a critical degree of order, it is not clear that either the state or the transnational market economy can do the same in the 21st century. On the contrary—as suggested below—globalization, far from helping to impose a degree of order, actually compounds the disorder.

Clearly, Cerny's encapsulation of the new medievalism is far more compelling than Friedrichs', especially in terms of its emphasis on disorder. Unlike Friedrichs, Cerny sees contemporary forces such as globalization and connectivity as having profoundly negative as well as positive effects. When combined with technology that has become more diffused and easily acquired, the result is not only an empowerment of what James Rosenau almost 20 years ago termed "sovereignty-free actors," but also a turbo-charging of global politics.[23] The speed of travel and communications, the ease and low cost of business transactions, the volume and velocity of financial flows, the pervasiveness of television, and the growing reach of the Internet have created a world that would be unintelligible not only to citizens in the Middle Ages, but also to many of those who lived in the first half of the 20th century. We live in a somewhat paradoxical era when political conditions and the dispersion of authority increasingly resemble the Middle Ages, but the forces of modernity, technology, and globalization add a whole new set of challenges to the viability and integrity of the state system and make the provision of security—at the national, public, and individual levels—increasingly problematic. Cerny, of course, recognizes all this and sums it up in his notion of the "security deficit."[24] This is based on the contention that traditional state approaches to the provision of security such as the maintenance of a global or regional balance of power are increasingly irrelevant to contemporary and future challenges.

At the same time, Cerny contends that "such turbulence does not necessarily mean chaos."[25]

> The medieval order was a highly flexible one that created a wide range of spaces that could accommodate quite extensive social, economic, and political innovations—eventually laying the groundwork for the emergence of the post-feudal, nation-state-based international order. The 21st-century globalizing world order similarly provides manifold opportunities as well as constraints.[26]

In effect, he suggests that what is essentially a dark prognosis has a silver lining. Yet, this might not be the case. The problem with even this limited degree of optimism is that disorder itself could prove highly unpredictable rather than "durable." It does not require much imagination to see disorder spread, intensify, or tip into chaos. The danger is that the New Middle Ages, rather than being a stopping point, will be simply an interim stage on the road to a New Dark Age. The world is already facing not only a "security deficit" but also, as Cerny acknowledges, a governance deficit.[27] Both will accelerate rather than diminish in the next few decades. Moreover, the security deficit and the governance deficit will reinforce one another in pernicious, unpredictable, and potentially unmanageable ways.

III. STATE DECLINE, GLOBAL CRISIS OF GOVERNANCE AND THE NEW DARK AGE

There are many reasons why the state is in decline, and why this decline is likely both to accelerate and to intensify. The difficulty is not so much with identifying the underlying structural conditions contributing to what appears to be a long-term secular trend, but with understanding the cumulative impact of drivers which are not only interdependent but also mutually reinforcing. Interdependence, combined with

persistent and reinforcing feedback loops, ensures that the impact of these factors is much more than the sum of their parts. Indeed, decline can easily become self-perpetuating: as states go into decline, other forms of governance become more important, simultaneously acting as proxies for states while further reducing state legitimacy. Keeping this in mind, several considerations clearly feed into the continued erosion of state dominance.

The Inability of Most States to Meet the Needs of Their Citizens.

Many states are increasingly unable to meet the needs of their citizens. In part this reflects the rise of complex or "wicked" problems that resist short-term or readily salable solutions as well as what might be termed the long-term demography of unemployment.[28] Job creation in most countries of the developing world is already inadequate and will fail to meet the needs of growing populations, while even in developed countries large segments of immigrant populations—especially youths—remain unemployed, underemployed, or employed only for the most menial of tasks. For countries such as Nigeria, even if they succeed in overcoming the mix of corruption and incompetence that pervades governance structures, it is unlikely that they will create sufficient job opportunities for a rapidly growing population. The result is that the disenfranchised and alienated segments of society will grow as will disputes over resources—such as the oil in the Niger Delta. This is also likely in other African societies where the state, rather than being above politics, is simply the prize of politics.[29] In these circumstances, politics becomes a zero-sum game, and the distribution of spoils is heavily

skewed in the direction of the ethnic group, tribe, clan, or sectarian faction that is in power. Inevitably this leads to instability of the kind that erupted in Kenya in late December 2007 and early 2008, even though the country was long regarded as one of Africa's success stories. Dynamics of this kind have also been evident in Iraq since the U.S. invasion and have complicated both reconstruction and the reestablishment of a legitimate and effective government. The conflict in Basra among competing Shiite factions and militias, for example, has little to do with sectarianism and revolves primarily around the control of oil and oil smuggling.[30]

Even where this zero-sum dynamic is absent, weaknesses of the state are debilitating. These weaknesses can be understood in terms of capacity gaps and functional holes.[31] Gaps in state capacity lead to an inability to carry out the "normal" and "expected" functions of the modern Westphalian state and to make adequate levels of public goods or collective provision for large parts of the citizenry. In Latin America, this has resulted in what Gabriel Marcella described as "inadequate public security forces, dysfunctional judicial systems, inadequate jails which become training schools for criminals, and deficiencies in other dimensions of state structure such as maintenance of infrastructure."[32] Indeed, Marcella goes on to argue that "at the turn of the 21st century, Latin American countries have essentially two states within their boundaries: the formal and the informal. They are separate entities often walled off from each other, though they interact with the informal state supporting the other."[33] Similar observations have been made by John Rapley who has argued not only that the state "lacks the largesse needed to buy the loyalty of an ever-increasing number of players," but also that other

informal forms and structures of governance move in to replace the state.[34]

> Where the State can no longer provide employment, build houses, pave roads or police the streets, or where the police are so woefully underpaid that they supplement their incomes from corruption, sometimes turning on the very citizens they are meant to protect, in such cases, private armies and mini-states might fill the vacuum left behind by a retreating state.[35]

One reason for the resurgence of Sendero Luminoso in Peru, for example, has been that in most respects, the state does not exist outside Lima. Over the next several decades, the state is likely to retreat from more and more sectors and more and more geographical areas. Although Marcella and Rapley focus primarily on Latin America and the Caribbean, their comments apply equally in many other parts of the world, most particularly Africa and Central Asia.

The Persistence of Alternative Loyalties.

A second problem for states is what might be described as alternative loyalties of significant portions of the population. This can have several reasons, the most obvious of which is the lack of congruence between state and nation. For the Kurds in Iraq and Turkey, for example, national citizenship is less important than ethnic identity. It could be argued, of course, that this is simply because the Kurds want their own state—so it is the particular state arrangement in question rather than the state itself. Even if this is accepted in the Kurdish case, a broader trend is apparent in which lack of primary affiliation with the state and the resurgence of primordial loyalties—to family, clan, tribe, ethnic

group, religion, or sect—has created a crisis of loyalty among significant and often growing segments of "national" populations. Indeed, David Ronfeldt has described tribes as "the first and forever form" of social organization.[36] As he has noted: "even for modern societies that have advanced far beyond a tribal stage, the tribe remains not only the founding form but also the forever form and the ultimate fallback form."[37] It is perhaps not surprising, therefore, that "many of the world's current trouble spots—in the Middle East, South Asia, the Balkans, the Caucasus, and Africa—are in societies so riven by embedded tribal and clan dynamics that the outlook remains terribly uncertain for them to build professional states and competitive businesses that are unencumbered by tribal and clan dynamics."[38] In Somalia, Iraq, and Afghanistan in particular, clans and tribes have complicated efforts to engage in state making. Nowhere have the fractured and diffused loyalties been more obvious than in the Facilities Protection Service, a force set up to guard ministries and other government installations and infrastructure in Iraq. Although it is nominally under the control of the Ministry of Interior, the "allegiance of many Facilities Protection service personnel has been to individual ministries, parties, tribes, and clans rather than to the central government, and such division of loyalties undermines their ability to provide security."[39] Even the much-vaunted U.S. alliance with Sunni tribes against al-Qaeda in Iraq has been based on an important if belated recognition of the significance of tribes and has led to some short-term success. The danger is that the long-term construction of a centralized and viable Iraqi state becomes even more difficult.

Tribes, clans, and the warlords who sometimes lead them typically define their interests and identities

in ways that implicitly or explicitly challenge notions of public interest and collective identity as symbolized in state structures and institutions.[40] This is both possible and persuasive because, in some respects, the nonstate actors have more legitimacy then the state. As Zonabend noted: "The lineage or clan is more than a group of relatives united by privileged ties; it is also a corporate group, whose members support each other, act together in all circumstances, whether ritual or everyday, jointly own and exploit assets and carry out, from generation to generation, the same political, religious, or military functions."[41] Few states have this kind of unity—except under conditions of total warfare.

Significantly, criminal organizations also exhibit some of the same features as tribes and clans. Many criminal organizations—although certainly not all—have an ethnic, family, tribal, or even geographical basis. Even when this is not the case, bonding mechanisms—which can include time spent together in prison or simply working together in risky conditions—play an important role.[42] Although an increasing number of criminal organizations appear to be cosmopolitan in membership, the more important ones are still based on family ties or common ethnicity. Strong internal affiliation is often accompanied by hostility towards outsiders. It is not surprising, therefore, that warfare between competing criminal organizations is often based on family or clan rivalries in which revenge and vendettas are the contemporary forms of blood feuds. The clash between the Mexican drug trafficking organizations led by the Arellano Felix family and the Gulf drug trafficking organization on the one side and by Chapo Guzman of the Sinaloa and Juarez organizations on the other have been partly about the

control of drug trafficking routes and markets, but they have also been fuelled and intensified by the killing of family members and the desire for revenge. Inherent in both the sense of identity and the willingness to use force is a challenge to state dominance. This has even been true in the United States where the Mafia which

> arose from medieval conditions in Sicily . . . succeeded precisely as a medieval anachronism in counterpoint to modern culture, each provoking and irritating the other. Modernity broke society down into atoms of mobile, free-floating unaffiliated individuals with ultimate loyalties only to the state and its laws. The Mafia insisted on the enduring primacy of family, geography, ethnicity, and ultimate loyalties to persons and the Mafia itself—the group over the individual. Instead of contractual, legalistic, or economic ties, the Mafia bound its men with personalized relations of reciprocal obligation.[43]

For the members, the organization was more important than the state or its laws. A similar dynamic is evident in Islamic terrorist organizations.

Perhaps nowhere have identities, loyalties, and obligations surpassing and transcending the relationship with the state been more evident than in the rise of al-Qaeda and affiliated groups. The real genius of bin Laden and Zawahiri, as well as of jihadi theorists such as Setmariam Nasr, has been in the use of "grievance narratives" to create a sense of Moslem identity.[44] This sense of identity, loyalty, and obligation, encouraged through radical mosques, personal affiliations, and the Internet, not only transcends and trumps citizenship but also encourages citizens' hostility towards the states in which they live. The vision of the new Islamic Caliphate—even though merely a long-term aspiration—is at one level a frontal challenge to the nation-state, especially as the loyalties

it creates are most evident in radicalization and have as their ultimate expression the suicide bomber. It also suggests that although Huntington's clash of civilizations is not necessarily the defining framework for understanding global politics in the 21st century, it does feed into the new medievalism.[45] Religious wars were an important feature of the Middle Ages and have resurfaced today.

In sum, the sense of affiliation with other groups, while often coexisting easily with loyalty to the state, can also work against the state. Moreover, as the state increasingly fails to provide adequately for its citizens, it is likely that these alternative loyalties and the organizational forms that accompany them will become increasingly important. From a state perspective, this can be understood as negative synergy.

The Rise of "Sovereignty Free" Transnational Actors.

The relative decline of the state is also linked very closely to the rise of empowered nonstate actors in the form of "dark networks."[46] In part, this reflects the fact that many states have inadequate social control mechanisms, and weak law enforcement and criminal justice systems. Yet other considerations have also fed into the rise of transnational criminal organizations. When states are failing or inadequate in terms of economic management and the provision of social welfare, the resulting functional hole creates pressures and incentives for citizens to engage in criminal activities. Amid conditions of economic hardship, extra-legal means of obtaining basic needs often become critical to survival. For countries in which there is no social safety net, resort to the informal economy and

to illicit activities is a natural response to the economic and social gaps created by the weakness or failure of the state. From this perspective, the growth of organized crime and drug trafficking, along with the expansion of prostitution, can be understood as rational responses to dire economic conditions and circumstances. Such activities are, in part, coping mechanisms in countries characterized by poverty, poor governance, and ineffective markets. Furthermore, organized crime is a highly effective form of entrepreneurship, providing economic opportunities and multiplier benefits that would otherwise be absent in feeble or dysfunctional economies. Illicit means of advancement offer opportunities that are simply not available in the licit economy. The difficulty, of course, is that the filling of functional spaces by organized crime perpetuates the weakness of the state.

In contrast, the power of criminal organizations (along with that of clans, warlords, and ethnic factions) is increased by connections outside the state. According to Shultz and Dew, "one of the more disturbing trends of nonstate armed groups is the extent to which such groups, including these clan-based groups, are cooperating and collaborating with each other in networks that span national borders and include fellow tribal groups, criminal groups, and corrupt political elements."[47] Similarly, many transnational criminal organizations have recognized the benefits of cooperation with their counterparts elsewhere. Russian criminals and Colombian drug trafficking organizations, Italian mafias, and Albanian clans, and even Japanese and Chinese criminals have worked together when it has been mutually advantageous. Criminals also seek to co-opt representatives of the state, in some cases creating what Roy Godson termed

the "political–criminal nexus."[48] In the past, the political elites such as the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) in Mexico and the Communist Party in the Soviet Union were often the dominant partner in this relationship; increasingly though, criminal organizations appear to be in the stronger position. This, in turn, further erodes state authority. In yet other cases, there is also cooperation between criminals and terrorists. Although this should not be exaggerated—and it typically occurs when terrorist organizations are engaged in criminal activities to fund themselves—it cannot be ignored. Even where such collaboration does not occur, many criminal networks operate in a transnational manner, engaging in jurisdictional arbitrage to both maximize profits (selling illicit and trafficked commodities where the price is high) and minimize risk. In effect, therefore, state authority is subject to challenge both from within by nonstate armed groups and from without by transnational movements, organizations, and forces.

In this connection, it bears emphasis that it was a network based organization, al-Qaeda, which, at least symbolically, challenged U.S. hegemony when there was no peer state competitor. The more modest, but highly disconcerting, ability of nonstate actors to become spoilers has been evident in Iraq. The United States, in turn, has rediscovered the challenge of transforming its overwhelming military and economic power into an effective strategy for rebuilding a viable Iraqi state. The old notion that power is relative to the contingencies for which it is used has been underlined by the contrast between the rapid U.S. victory on the battlefield and the protracted difficulties it has faced in developing adequate responses to the challenges of security, stability, and reconstruction. Indeed, in looking at Iraq what emerges most clearly is the

ability of the various nonstate actors such as the Shiite militias—especially the Badr Organization and Jaish al Mahdi—as well as the Sunni tribes to hinder, complicate, and undermine the efforts to establish an effective and legitimate Iraqi state.

The Rise of Cities and the Emergence of Alternatively Governed Spaces.

One area in which the New Middle Ages resembles the Middle Ages of the past is in the importance of cities. In the medieval world, towns and cities, although much smaller than those of today, became centers of social activity and hubs of commerce as well as incubators of disease. In the last 50 years or so, the rise of cities has become an enduring and significant trend and has reached a point at which more than half the world's population lives in cities. A possible implication of this is that cities will increasingly become an alternative focus to the state as an organizing device for economic, political, and social activities. Many cities are also becoming increasingly ungovernable—a trend that can only feed into what appears to be an impending crisis of governance at national, regional, and global levels.

The latter half of the 20th century was characterized by the large-scale migration of population from rural to urban areas. This movement—and the resulting transformation of urban spaces—was particularly pronounced in the developing world. In 1950, New York was the only city in the world with more than 10 million inhabitants. By 1995, there were 14 such cities—mostly in the developing world.[49] By 2015, there will be 23—with 19 in the developing world.[50] In addition, by 2015, "the number of urban areas with populations between five and ten million will shoot from 7 to 37."[51]

According to UN-Habitat, almost one billion people (one out of every six people in the world) live in slums which typically lack adequate shelter and basic services.[52] The problems in these spaces include widespread poverty, overcrowding, disease, environmental degradation, and pervasive crime and violence. Many have areas which are so violent that even law enforcement agencies regard them as no-go zones. Furthermore, conditions are unlikely to improve in the near future as slums continue to expand. The *UN-Habitat Report on the State of the World's Cities, 2006/7* described slums as the "emerging human settlements of the 21st century."[53] It also noted that "urbanization has become virtually synonymous with slum growth, especially in sub-Saharan Africa, Western Asia, and Southern Asia."[54] According to one analysis, "there are probably more than 200,000 slums on earth. The five great metropolises of South Asia (Karachi, Mumbai, Delhi, Kolkota and Dhaka) alone contain about 15,000 distinct slum communities whose total population exceeds 20 million."[55] Characterized by inadequate housing, over-crowding, limited access to water and sanitation, and lack of property rights, slums are areas where "the idea of an interventionist state strongly committed to social housing and job development seems either a hallucination or a bad joke, because governments long ago abdicated any serious effort to combat slums and redress urban marginality."[56] What makes this all the more serious is that by 2030 the number of people living in slums worldwide is expected to reach two billion people.[57] To put this in perspective, the population of China today is somewhere around 1.3 billion people.

Against this background, Richard Norton developed the concept of "feral cities" to describe concentra-

ted urban spaces that are no longer under the rule of law.[58] In effect, these cities are failed or failing. Using a term typically applied to domestic animals which have gone wild, Norton argues that the problems besetting mega-cities could also become evident in many smaller cities. These problems, of course, are not the result of urban growth per se, but its interaction with other factors such as economic crises, high levels of unemployment, and weak and inadequate governance—at both the state and city levels.[59] The result is that mega-cities and even many smaller cities are being transformed into disorderly spaces where aspirations are rarely fulfilled and most new urban dwellers find that they have merely traded a life of rural destitution for one of urban destitution. For unemployed young men suffering from what Castells describes as a process of social exclusion, crime, random or organized, is one of the few available career options.[60]

The growth of violent and organized crime is particularly evident where slum conditions and poverty are juxtaposed with the secure gated communities of the wealthy. The contrast is particularly stark in Brazil. In São Paulo, for example, "the rich are often unfathomably rich, and the poor are disastrously poor. Crime and violence flourish any place where jobs are few, youth are many, and the chasm between rich and poor becomes too deep and too obvious."[61] For the poor in the favelas, the drug economy is a crucial safety net. Furthermore, in both Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, drug traffickers who operate in, through, and out of the favelas have developed alternative forms of governance based on rudimentary but effective forms of paternalism, the provision of welfare services, a degree of protection against violence, and career opportunities for young men who would otherwise

be unemployed. Governance of this kind is not altruistic; it is designed primarily to maintain a safe haven for the trafficking networks. Those helped by the traffickers become sources of information and support, thereby enhancing the intelligence capabilities of the criminal network. In this sense, a degree of reciprocity is expected. Nevertheless, the paternalism of the trafficking networks can also be understood as an organic form of governance which is at least partially attuned to the needs of the people deprived of economic opportunity. After all, these people have been neglected or ignored by the state and left to fend for themselves. In these circumstances, to suggest that the governance provided by the trafficking networks is an inferior form of governance is beside the point; it is the only form of governance—albeit one that inherently challenges the legitimacy of the state.

Not surprisingly, therefore, favelas in both São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro suffer from regular outbreaks of violence as both rival trafficking organizations and police and traffickers vie for control. In effect, the organic or bottom-up governance is contested—at least intermittently—by the state.[62] Although the favelas have governance, therefore, they also have considerable violence, which sometimes spills over to other parts of the cities. In May 2006, for example, in response to a plan to move major drug traffickers to a different prison, the leaders of the First Capital Command in São Paulo orchestrated a wave of violence in which "more than 160 people, including at least 75 police and prison guards" were killed, police posts, bars, and banks were attacked, riots occurred in 80 prisons, and at least 59 buses were burned.[63] In effect, the city was brought to a standstill.

Although it might appear contrived to compare the problems in some of Iraq's major cities with those in Rio and São Paulo, the parallels are, in many respects, very striking. In Sadr City, which is simultaneously a Shiite ghetto, one of Baghdad's most deprived areas, and one of its most obvious concentrations of urban dwellers, governance, so far as it exists, is provided by Jaish al Mahdi (JAM). The Mahdi Army has been both protector and predator.[64] It controls black market activities, demands protection payments, and some of its factions are very violent even in their treatment of Shiites. At the same time, black market prices of some commodities are sometimes lower in Sadr City than elsewhere in Iraq, which suggests that there is an important paternalistic component to JAM's activities.[65] Indeed, in early 2008 there were signs that JAM was taking steps to curb excessive predation and violence and was killing some of its own members who overstepped the boundaries of permissible behavior too often or too overtly.[66] When Iraqi government forces (which had incorporated many members of the Badr organization, a rival militia which has often clashed with Mahdi members) and U.S. forces did the same, however, Mahdi forces reacted violently, resulting in major fighting in both Basra and Baghdad in late March 2008.

So long as there is a continued juxtaposition between concentrations of people and the absence of services and opportunities, the trends towards urban disorder and the rise of alternative forms of governance are likely to continue and even intensify. Disorder in cities takes many forms: riots in Paris, contract killings in Yekaterinburg, kidnappings in Metro Manila, and child prostitution in Mumbai. All of these problems reflect the failure or abdication of the

state and the rise of alternative forms of governance that are paternalistic, but are also both predatory and parasitic. Since it is in cities that the inability of states to meet the needs of their citizens is most pronounced, these agents and structures of alternative governance are essential. As suggested above, they are often the only form of governance that exists. Yet, even though they are organic, bottom up, and attuned to the needs of the population, they are far from ideal. They are exploitative and often violent in nature. Moreover, as alternative forms of governance, they are a major challenge to the dominance of the state.

Another and more surprising challenge to the state has arisen in prisons. Paradoxically, prisons are both a monument to the coercive power of the state and an expression of the limits of that power. Although the ability to incarcerate (and in many cases execute) people starkly reflects the coercive power of the state, prisons are increasingly uncontrollable. At times, it appears that the prisoners run the prison. Although the formal structure of incarceration imposes outer controls, within limits prisoners have a great deal of freedom—especially where they have the resources to bribe some of the prison authorities. And prison no longer isolates inmates from the society in the way it once did. The widespread availability of "cell" phones has enabled some prisoners to continue running their criminal enterprises from prison. Osiel Cardenas, for example, continued to run his drug trafficking organization, the "Gulf Cartel" from La Palma prison in Mexico until, in January 2007, he was extradited to the United States. Moreover, major criminals can mobilize resources in the outside world in the event that the state adopts policies or initiates regulatory measures they oppose. This has certainly been the case in Brazil

where the riots discussed above were orchestrated, at least in part, from prison.

It has long been recognized that prison also acts as a training ground and finishing school for criminals. Not only do criminals develop their professional expertise in prison, but they also build up social capital that can be very important when they are released. In this sense, prisons inadvertently help to facilitate the emergence and expansion of criminal networks. They also provide an ideal environment in which terrorists can recruit members of criminal organizations who bring with them a skill set that can act as a multiplier for the terrorist organization. Indeed, prisons, especially in Western Europe and to a degree in the United States, have become a petri dish for radicalization of Moslems.[67] In other words, many prisons have become places where criminals conduct business, where they swell the ranks of terrorist organizations, and where the authority of the state is systematically undermined by the corruption of prison officers.

Porous Borders.

One of the most important aspects of sovereignty is the notion of territorial control—a notion which extends to determining who and what is allowed to enter the territory and under what conditions. Not surprisingly, therefore, the authority of the state is deeply and obviously embedded in formal points of entry and departure. In effect, this is where "the strategy of state territoriality is dramatized and state sovereignty is paraded. It is also here that many countervailing strategies contesting state territoriality are clustered. The struggle between these strategies continually reproduces, reconstructs, or undermines

borders."[68] It is also a struggle between customs officials, immigration service personnel, and border guards on the one side and smugglers, illegal migrants, criminals, and terrorists on the other. For these latter groups, borders are both obstacles and opportunities. Once the border has been crossed, all sorts of benefits accrue—job opportunities for illegal migrants or profits from illegal goods that have increased significantly in value from one side of the border to the other. Smugglers also exploit differential tax rates among countries—which explains why cigarette smuggling has become a major issue in Europe and why Turkey (with gasoline prices among the highest in the world) remained a favorite destination for smugglers of Iraqi oil and gasoline even after sanctions against Iraq were removed. Smugglers also seek to meet the demands for products that are illegal, regulated, prohibited, or stolen.

The inability of states to control their borders and the global flows—of people, money, weapons, drugs, etc.—that cross these borders into their national territories is both a manifestation of the decline of the state and a major contributor to the strengthening and acceleration of this tendency. Although Stephen Krasner is correct in his observation that states "have never been able to perfectly regulate transborder flows,"[69] it is also arguable that they have never before had to contend with the sheer volume, speed, and diversity of the people and commodities that cross their borders both legally and illegally. As Carolyn Nordstrom has observed, in the contemporary globalized world, "taxes and tariffs are obstacles, not obligations."[70] Similarly, borders might be boundaries, but they are far from being barriers.

One reason for this is the intermodal container, a development which both transformed the scale of global trade by reducing transaction costs, and—in

spite of such measures as the Container Security Initiative rolled out by U.S. Customs—helped to deny states the ability to control what comes across their borders, unless they are willing to place global trade on hold. The container ship, with its large numbers of containers and the ability to move them from ship to shore quickly and efficiently, has compounded the inspection challenge.[71] The result is that states enjoy what Nordstrom termed "the illusion of inspection" but are unable to turn the illusion into reality.[72] The sheer volume of trade, the diversity of commodities, and the increased reliance of businesses on just-in-time deliveries all militate against the imposition of truly effective border controls.

Those who want to bring commodities or people across borders undetected have a range of options to exploit. For example, they can simply circumvent customs posts and come in through remote areas where checks are nonexistent. Alternatively, they can facilitate their actions through corruption, which in the last few years has become a major problem on the U.S. side of the border with Mexico in spite of (or perhaps because of) U.S. efforts to impose more stringent border controls. More often than not, however, concealment and/or deception are sufficient given the volume of goods crossing borders and the limited capacity for search and discovery. The problem for states is that the smugglers' toolkit is diverse and flexible in scope and innovative in method. Mexican drug traffickers, for example, have dug a significant number of tunnels from Mexico to the United States, through which they can move their drugs unhindered. Although 19 of these tunnels were discovered and closed in 2007, clearly illegal movements across borders of prohibited, regulated, and stolen goods, as well as of people and dirty money, are flourishing.[73]

So, too, are cross-border digital signals. Ironically, the Internet, which was a product of the Cold War between the superpowers, has become a means of empowerment of individuals, small groups, and small businesses—often at the expense of the state. In some instances, states such as Burma are able to clamp down on Internet access and use, at least temporarily. Nevertheless, nonstate actors are generally able to use the Internet as a force multiplier in their competition with states. Although the Internet is not wholly unregulated, it is a haven for the sexual predator, the insurgent looking for international support, the criminal seeking to move his money covertly, and the terrorist who uses it to finance and plan and to recruit and train people for his next attack on state targets. Indeed, if borders are far more than simply lines on maps; in cyber-space, they are far less.

Implications: From New Medievalism to the New Dark Age.

Each of the drivers outlined above poses a formidable set of challenges to the state. The drivers also feed off one another in ways that are not only mutually reinforcing but multiply the difficulties in developing an adequate response. In complexity terms, they interact in an emergent system which makes the ultimate outcomes both synergistic and highly unpredictable. The extent to which states are able (or unable) to adapt and learn also adds to the uncertainties. Nevertheless, it is not hard to envisage the transformation of global politics and an abrupt, nonlinear shift from the New Middle Ages to the New Dark Age.

The 21st century will see a continuing dialectic between the forces of order and the forces of disorder. Within this co-evolution, the limits of state power will

become increasingly apparent, while the empowerment of nonstate actors will increase significantly. Although some strong legitimate states will continue to exist, the number of what might be termed qualified, restricted, notional, or hollow and collapsed states is likely to increase. Moreover, many of these weaker states will be neutralized, penetrated, or in some cases even captured by organized crime, terrorists, militias, warlords, and other violent nonstate actors. In effect, we will continue to see a world of formal state structures, but at least some of these will be little more than fronts for these other actors. In other instances, the emphasis on formal sovereignty will do little to obscure the dispersal of real authority and power among what Rapley described as "autonomous political agents, equipped with their own resource bases, which make them resistant to a reimposition of centralized control."[74]

One of the corollaries of this is the spread of disorder from the zone of weak states and feral cities in the developing world to the countries of the developed world. This is recognized, for example, by Collier in his argument that the problem of the bottom billion

> matters, and not just to the . . . people who are living and dying in 14th century conditions. It matters to us. The 21st century world of material comfort, global travel, and economic interdependence will become increasingly vulnerable to these large islands of chaos. And it matters now. As the bottom billion diverges from an increasingly sophisticated world economy, integration will become harder not easier.[75]

This notion of spreading disorder is a very important antidote to an overly-optimistic Wilsonianism that sees democracy, liberty, or global economic integration as cure-alls. Thomas Barnett, for example, in

a sophisticated variant of economic Wilsonianism, has argued that global security is simply a matter of inclusion, of bringing states on the periphery into the world of globalization and making them more like the core.[76] In some ways this is a variant of the argument developed in the 1990s by Singer and Wildavsky suggesting that the real world order was made up of both zones of peace and zones of turmoil.[77] For Singer and Wildavsky, the key was to export democracy and thereby contain and reduce the turmoil and enlarge the space in which there was a real sense of order and stability. Barnett's twist on this is simply the emphasis on economic integration into the developed world—and in particular the need to integrate states which are economically isolated. He argues, for example, that one of the most positive consequences of the U.S. intervention in Afghanistan is the prospect that this will help to integrate the country into the core of the global economy. The problem with this argument is that Afghanistan is already fully integrated into the global economy—albeit the illicit global economy. Connectivity and integration have multiple layers and facets. Moreover, opium and heroin radiate out from Afghanistan, bringing with their market diffusion a cornucopia of violence and addiction. The Afghan experience directly challenges Barnett's Wilsonianism as it suggests that the export of order from the core to the periphery can be far outweighed by the export of disorder from the periphery to the core. Another example of this is the spillover of conflicts between transnational criminal organizations from their home states to host states. Indeed, "gang warfare or apparently random murders in Toronto or London that seem senseless and anarchic within the context of those societies take on a new, brutally rational meaning when

analyzed within the context of the activities of gangs back in Jamaica or Nigeria (or Russia, or Albania, or a host of other countries)."[78]

Some of the disorder, however, will be more widespread and even more intractable than criminal or drug-related violence. This is particularly likely in Western Europe where the clashes of religions and civilization will be fuelled by a continuation of demographic trends and the failure of policies designed to integrate immigrant communities. In retrospect, the Madrid and London bombings, as well as the Paris riots in 2005, will be seen as the first salvos in what is the functional equivalent of a low-grade civil war that is likely to wrack Europe in the coming decades. Some elements within immigrant Moslem populations in Western Europe are reluctant to accept the authority of the states within which they reside, and the backlash against this is almost certain to fuel indigenous nationalism.[79]

Another danger stemming from many of the conditions enunciated above is that of a pandemic of an emerging or reemerging disease. Urbanization, underdevelopment, the gap between health care services and needs in many cities, as well as urban populations whose immunity is compromised by both extreme environmental degradation and close proximity to animals and fowl in confined spaces, could all contribute to virulent outbreaks of emerging or reemerging diseases. Trade and travel could rapidly transform the outbreak from local to global in a few days. Even with no ill will, the prospect for a rapidly spreading epidemic is enormous. Add to this the possibility of malevolence and the ability of terrorists to deploy human biological weapons—infected people on planes at airports and other dispersal nodes—

and the scenario rapidly becomes worst case.[80] If the carriers are asymptomatic, unless there is a cessation of international air travel, national borders will have all the stopping power of tissue paper. And even if there is a formal travel embargo, illegal migration is unlikely to cease. Trafficking and smuggling of peoples could undermine efforts at disease containment.[81] And even if they do not, the damaging consequences of a pandemic will not be confined to the health sector. The cascading effects into the economic domain could be enormously damaging—a kind of globalization interrupted that would hit the bottom one billion even harder than anyone else. At the same time, the inability of states to control and limit the pandemic would further undermine public faith and confidence in them. In extreme situations, people might even look for comfort and support not to the state but to the alternative forms of governance that are likely to be equally overwhelmed but at least have the virtue of proximity. To the extent that alternative governance can provide some help, alternative loyalties to these nonstate groups will be cemented, while faith in and loyalty to the state will diminish even further.

Clearly, the prospects for global chaos are not as remote as might be thought. Problems such as transnational organized crime, terrorism, and pandemics could intersect and interact to create a tipping point from "durable disorder" into chaos. When one adds to the trends already discussed the strains coming from global warming and environmental degradation, the diminution of cheaply available natural resources, and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, the agenda becomes even more formidable. As states go further into decline, some will inevitably collapse. It is certainly not inconceivable that among these could be

a nuclear weapons state. Conditions of chaos, looting, and violence are not conducive to secure command and control. A race for the acquisition of "loose nukes" between states and nonstate actors, therefore, is not out of the question. And if states lose this race, the radical and sudden empowerment of nonstate actors will demand an immediate reevaluation of many of the orthodoxies about weapons of mass destruction (WMD) terrorism.

The point about such contingencies is not that they will necessarily happen, but that they represent a set of threats and challenges that have multiple implications for U.S. policy and strategy during the next few decades. A key issue, therefore, is the extent to which this has been recognized in the U.S. national security community. The next section addresses this.

IV. U.S. THINKING ABOUT SECURITY AND STRATEGY

There is no single or easy answer to the question about threat recognition. The *National Security Strategy* of 2006, for example, is unabashedly Wilsonian in tone and optimistic in outlook. Although the Bush administration is very different from its predecessor in its willingness to use military force, the underlying thrust of U.S. policy remains that articulated by the Clinton administration—"engagement and enlargement."[82] The emphasis is on spreading democracy and promoting development. Democracy is treated as synonymous with good governance, while the focus on development, although well-placed, does little to help the bottom billion or the urban poor. The idea of stability is given little attention. In terms of threats, four categories are identified: traditional threats from other states, irregular challenges from

both state and nonstate actors, catastrophic challenges involving acquisition and use of WMD, and disruptive challenges from state and nonstate actors who employ technologies and capabilities in novel ways to offset U.S. military superiority. Not surprisingly, the list of adversaries has broadened to include nonstate actors such as terrorist and criminal organizations. The strategy also recognizes that globalization presents challenges such as pandemics, as well as illicit trade and environmental destruction. The strategy notes that although these are not traditional national security concerns, "if left unaddressed they can threaten national security."[83] The overall tone, however, is that the United States is powerful enough to deal with both threats and challenges.

Other documents are somewhat more cautious in their optimism. The 2020 study conducted by the National Intelligence Council, entitled *Mapping the Global Future*, for example, focuses upon both opportunities and dangers. While noting that the likelihood of great power conflict is very low, it argues that many governments and publics do not feel secure. The study highlights both the positive and negative consequences of globalization while also acknowledging that the process itself could be derailed by "a pervasive sense of economic and physical insecurity."[84] Mass casualty terrorist attacks, widespread cyber attacks on infrastructures, or even a pandemic could trigger efforts by "governments to put controls on the flow of capital, goods, people," and technologies, thereby increasing transaction costs and dampening economic growth.[85] Even if this is avoided, "lagging economies, ethnic affiliations, intense religious convictions, and youth bulges" could combine to create what the study describes as a "perfect storm."[86] States with insufficient capacity to meet expectations or reconcile conflicting

demands are likely to "encounter the most severe and most frequent outbreaks of violence."[87] These states, for the most part, are in "a great arc of instability from Sub-Saharan Africa, through North Africa, into the Middle East, the Balkans, the Caucasus and South and Central Asia and through parts of Southeast Asia."[88] Clearly, the 2020 report recognizes "that troubled and institutionally weak states" will be a major security challenge.[89] For all its sophistication and subtlety, however, the report focuses on particular states and regions rather than systemic strains. It discusses the possibility of state failure in specific circumstances and locations but offers little more than a genuflection to the notion of systemic state decline. Whereas the 2020 report suggests that some states will fail to meet the Westphalian ideal, the argument here is that the Westphalian system itself is increasingly eroding.

Another government document that provides a highly sophisticated and very compelling, but only partial, assessment of the emerging security environment is *The Joint Operational Environment* (JOE). Produced by the Joint Forces Command and presented as a "living draft," the JOE acknowledges that "the United States will not operate in a single, static, operational environment" but in "layers of operational environments, all constantly in flux."[90] Inherent in this assessment is the recognition that complexity and connectedness will significantly influence the operational environment for future conflicts. Moreover, this environment will be characterized by nonlinearity and cascading effects: "some of the smallest activities and interactions cause the largest effects. No activity is subject to successful prediction. Instead, outcomes will be possibilities (potentialities unbound by constraint) that undergo confirmation or denial processes."[91]

Although the JOE assessment of the future geostrategic landscape acknowledges the "diffusion of power away from central governments"[92] and the increasing influence of nonstate and transnational actors, it still assumes that "nation-states will remain principal actors."[93] In other respects, however, it acknowledges the kind of dynamics that could tip the system from the New Middle Ages to a New Dark Age. Many of the developments envisaged in the report coincide with those discussed above. They include state weakness and collapse, demographic time bombs, the emergence of urban environments as centers of gravity (and, therefore, areas of operation) with potential for chaos and civil unrest, the likelihood that many traditional challenges will morph into irregular ones, the pervasiveness of criminal elements in operational environments, and the importance of tribes, extended families, and "super-empowered" individuals and groups.[94] Failed or failing states will be sanctuaries for enemies who are flexible and adaptive. In spite of this overlap, however, there are three critical differences between the JOE assessment and the central thesis of this monograph about the descent into the New Dark Age.

The first is that the JOE very naturally focuses on enemies to be defeated, whereas the argument here is that the key issues revolve around conditions of chaos, contagion effects, and the capacity of the United States and other members of the international community to mitigate consequences, restore order, foster reconciliation and reconstruction, and ultimately provide good governance where none exists. The distinction is between purposeful threats from hostile actors and threats posed by unmanageable and chaotic conditions that have a significant prospect of

spreading. To some extent, these conditions develop from what Liotta terms "creeping vulnerabilities."[95] In the context discussed here, however, they have become dramatic, highly visible, and fast moving. To focus on these conditions is not to deny the existence of enemies who will flourish within chaos. Nor is it to ignore the likely existence of spoilers who will seek to prevent the restoration of order. Neutralizing enemies and dealing with spoilers will be essential if the United States is to have any chance of success in any intervention to restore order. Moreover, providing a congenial security environment will clearly be a prerequisite for success in reestablishing governance. If military successes are a necessary condition for successful management of the kinds of contingencies that are likely to arise in the New Dark Age, however, they are not a sufficient condition.

Second, the analysis here is ultimately far more pessimistic than that continued in the JOE. The JOE assessment, at least implicitly, incorporates many of the characteristics of the New Middle Ages. The argument here is that we are already moving from the New Middle Ages to the New Dark Age, and that the challenges of security in an increasingly chaotic environment will be even more formidable than they already are. In terms of wicked problems, the frightening thing is that we have not seen anything yet.

The third difference flows from this. Understandably there is a "can do" quality about the military operations envisaged as likely within the emerging joint operational environment. Military planning after all is designed for success not failure. Yet the difficulties the United States has confronted in Iraq—although they stemmed in part from no planning rather than poor planning—suggest that the challenges are formidable,

victory is difficult to define, and that military success cannot easily be translated into political stability. Iraq has revealed that state building is complex, protracted, and expensive, and comes with no guarantee that desired or anticipated outcomes can be achieved. Yet Iraq also illustrates the kinds of conditions that are likely to characterize the New Dark Age—albeit in multiple locations rather than a single country. Unfortunately, Iraq at its most intractable might be little more than a poor approximation of the difficulties that will have to be confronted in a world where chaos is both extensive and intensive.

To summarize, the *National Security Strategy* has little sense of the tectonic shocks that might be ahead, whereas both the 2020 report and the JOE suggest that we will typically have to confront quakes that are magnitude 8 or above on the Richter scale. The problem is that future shocks could prove beyond the realm of current experience—creating what Nassim Taleb has called a "black swan" event.[96] Put differently, the paradigm shift involved in the transition from the New Middle Ages to the New Dark Age is so profound that it might require new kinds of responses to security challenges. If the world moves in this direction and confronts the United States with conditions of chaos rather than simply a "durable disorder," U.S. policymakers will have to design a far more holistic approach to the exercise of power. Against this background, the final section explores the range of strategic options available to the United States as it prepares for the possibility that the New Middle Ages will be followed not by the revitalization of the Westphalian state system but by a decline into a New Dark Age.

V. GLOBAL INSTABILITY AND U.S. STRATEGY

Even if the notion of a New Dark Age is dismissed as a truly worst case scenario, a looming crisis of governance and widening security deficits are harder to ignore. They are inextricably linked to increasing global instability. The decline of the state will both reflect this rising tide and intensify it. Consequently, instability could all too easily degenerate into a tsunami of chaos—posing far-reaching challenges for U.S. military forces as well as U.S. diplomatic and global leadership. The signs are already evident. One of the lessons of Iraq, for example, is that the resource demands of state-building and economic reconstruction are far greater than expected. Although the United States, in effect, catalyzed the failure of the old Iraqi state, the resulting chaos, factionalism, and violence proved much harder to control than expected, even by those who had serious reservations about the invasion. If the outlook described above is even partially correct, the implications for U.S. security and strategy are far-reaching.

Yet the United States is not without some discretion in how it responds to this world of global chaos. Broadly speaking, there are three major choices: interventionism, disengagement and mitigation, and triage or selective interventionism. There are also, of course, significant variations within the first and third, depending on whether the United States acts alone or in concert with other powers which are also willing to try to shape the environment. For purposes of this analysis, however, the focus is simply on the three major options as this offers a clearer, not to say starker, picture of the advantages and shortcomings of each approach.

The first of these is a highly interventionist strategy which is designed explicitly to uphold the state system, to contain disorder and chaos, and to reimpose order and stability. In many respects, this offers a continuation of the assertive and activist strategy pursued by the Bush administration. The logic was encapsulated in the *National Security Strategy* initially enunciated in 2002 and refined in 2006. In the words of the administration, this strategy reflects "the path of confidence," the choice of "leadership over isolationism and the pursuit of free and fair trade and open markets over protectionism."[97] It seeks to "deal with challenges now rather than leaving them for future generations . . . fight our enemies abroad instead of waiting for them to arrive in our country . . . shape the world, not merely be shaped by it; to influence events for the better instead of being at their mercy."[98] Although this is in some respects very appealing, there are major problems with a long-term extension of this highly activist strategy in a chaotic world.

First, it suffers from stateocentrism. This has already been evident in Iraq where the United States, at the political level at least, has put all its faith into the recreation of a unified central state. The difficulty with this has been highlighted by the military's alliance with Sunni tribes which led to the "awakening" and the defeat of al-Qaeda in Anbar province. This might actually make it harder rather than easier for the central government to consolidate its power. Empowering the Sunni tribes tacitly disempowers the central government.

Second, an interventionist strategy can all too easily become indiscriminate. In some respects, this reflects the fact that since terrorist threats can emanate from anywhere to hurt the United States, security is globally

indivisible. From this perspective, there are no longer primary and secondary interests—there is only an overriding interest in preventing disorderly spaces that can provide terrorists safe havens. If the United States envisages its role in terms of maintaining stability, shaping the environment, minimizing disorder, and preventing or eliminating chaos, the demands on national resources will be enormous—and perhaps unsustainable. For the United States to carry out a strategy of this kind, at the very least, it would have to expand the Army and Marine Corps—which are the keys to successful interventions—beyond the increase already projected. This would likely be at the expense of the Navy and Air Force—which are typically more concerned (again in a stateocentric way) about the emergence of peer competitors than about military interventions in chaotic contingencies. Even this, however, might not be enough for what is potentially an open-ended strategy.

More important than the size of the intervention capability, however, would be its composition. In confronting a deteriorating security environment of the kind envisaged here, the United States would need a far more holistic approach to the exercise of power and a far more coherent organizational structure than currently exist. In responding to security challenges, the United States still tends to develop several strands of distinct and often independent activities rather than a sustained strategic approach that integrates multiple activities and directs them towards a common purpose. In a world where the United States seeks to combat extensive disorder and restore stability, military, economic, and diplomatic power have to be targeted in ways that create synergies rather than seams, that reinforce rather than undercut, and that provide

maximum efficiency and effectiveness. Iraq has shown that throwing money at problems is no longer enough. In effect, U.S. interventions in the future would have to be smarter, not harder.

Achieving this goal requires major institutional change. As suggested above, the United States is organized according to domains of activity—military, diplomatic, economic, and so on. The problem is that effective strategies of intervention and reconstruction require more than the coordination of disparate elements. Strategy cannot be patched together. At the very least it requires going beyond interagency collaboration to develop what might be termed transagency organizational structures. Based on but extending the task force concept, a transagency structure would be a central core of U.S. interventionist capabilities. It would include military forces, diplomats, reconstruction specialists, and legal experts integrated into one organization designed to assist a target state in reestablishing its authority, legitimacy, and effectiveness. For the United States, which historically has extolled the virtues of fragmented government structures in order to maintain checks and balances, this would be a radical departure—perhaps too radical. It would also run up against bureaucratic self-interest and standard operational procedures. The danger is that departments would ostensibly cooperate in what has been termed a "whole of government" approach, but that the deployment would simply reproduce in the field the fissures, tensions, and divergent operating philosophies that are so prevalent in Washington.[99] The requirement, therefore, is to extend notions of joint operations beyond the military to civilian institutions and to develop transagency structures that are cohesive, replace departmental loyalties with a sense

of loyalty to the mission, and focus on synergistic effects. Without both organizational innovation and a shift of organizational cultures and loyalties, success is unlikely.

In the final analysis, however, the real problem with this activist strategy is cost. Even if the Iraq involvement is not followed by an Iraq syndrome resembling the Vietnam syndrome, the interventionist strategy will almost certainly be difficult to sustain because of resource constraints. Given the growing signs of U.S. economic weakness, domestic programs and demands, and the likelihood that other states will not fully share U.S. concerns or assessments, the prospects for long-term implementation of this strategy are minimal. Overstretch would be inevitable and would significantly erode mission effectiveness. There would also be a need to recognize that not all change can be successfully resisted—even when it is for the worse—and not all problems can be solved. Indeed, even if the United States did everything the strategy requires and even if its power was augmented on occasion by allies, the United States could end up with its finger in the dike as the walls are crumbling all around.

It is perhaps not surprising, therefore, that an alternative and in some respects very attractive strategy is one of distance and disengagement. Whereas the interventionist strategy involves a mix of preventive action and hands-on consequence management, this alternative strategy is a mix of insulation and mitigation. If the United States recognizes that disorder and chaos are inescapable and that even with the coherent deployment of all its military, diplomatic, and economic power it cannot change this, then it might opt for a strategy which focuses not on intervention but

primarily on homeland security. In this case, it would seek to insulate itself from the worst effects of global chaos, try to ensure that it is not a primary target, and seek to mitigate adverse consequences of breakdown elsewhere. In effect, John Quincy Adams rather than Woodrow Wilson would provide the leitmotif for this strategy: America "goes not abroad, in search of monsters to destroy. She is the well-wisher to the freedom and independence of all. She is the champion and vindicator only of her own."[100] This would be low cost in terms of "blood and treasure" spent on foreign interventions, and would allow the United States to focus on domestic problems and economic challenges.

Attractive as this might appear, it has significant shortcomings. First, neglect is not always benign. Without a continued U.S. military role in upholding at least some of the vestiges of international order, the descent into chaos could be deeper, sharper, and more long-lasting in its effects. In effect, the Dark Age would be even darker without U.S. efforts to maintain or restore order. Second, there is no guarantee that the United States can effectively insulate itself and mitigate adverse consequences of chaos in a world with even the vestiges of globalization and connectivity. Even if the United States succeeds in taking itself out of the line of fire of terrorists, so long as it fosters trade and travel, it will remain vulnerable to microbes, to economic disruption, and to other spillover effects from the growing chaos outside its borders. A disengagement strategy, therefore, could prove to be both elusive and illusory.

The third option offers a middle ground between these two and could be described variously as selective intervention, a triage strategy, or even as "prudential realism."[101] In effect, this strategy would be based on the

assumption that although these trends towards chaos are global, their impact varies according to location, circumstance, and even U.S. strategic interests. To put it crudely, chaos in Mauritania is not as important for the United States as chaos in Mexico. Even in a world of global terrorism, some interests are more important than others. Accordingly, the United States could opt for selective interventions to deal with chaos or disorder when it is a direct rather than indirect threat, when it is proximate rather than distant, or when it takes on such proportions that it could have highly disruptive and far-reaching spillover effects.

This is a more differentiated approach than either of the other two alternatives. In many respects, it reflects a recent U.S. Army assessment of the strategic environment which noted that "the stability and legitimacy of the conventional political order in regions vital to the United States is increasingly under pressure from a variety of sources. There is now a nexus of dangerous new actors, methods, and capabilities that imperil the United States, its interests, and its alliances in strategically significant ways."[102] These threats require a response which is carefully formulated, with an appropriate balance between ends, ways, and means, and a realistic prospect of reaching an end state that is less dangerous and unfavorable than it would be in the event of inaction. In effect, the Weinberger-Powell Doctrine could provide the framework for assessment, albeit with one addendum—the United States should not intervene if its intervention would lead to an increase rather than a decline in chaos and instability. Even a strategy of limited and selective intervention, however, has to be done right. Significantly, the Army has not only enunciated at least some of the preconditions for intervention, but also has emphasized the need

for "integrated operations . . . in Joint, interagency, and multinational environments."[103] In addition, it has acknowledged the need to integrate the elements of national power—diplomatic, military, economic, and information.[104] Taking this a step further and developing the transagency organizational structures discussed above might enhance the prospects that these selective interventions would create the desired results. Even selective interventions require the holistic exercise of power and a more coherent organizational approach than has been evident in Iraq.

The difficulty is that adaptation by the United States is constrained by intense partisanship and by an anachronistic set of institutional arrangements and procedures for managing national security policy. Gone are the days when politics stopped at the water's edge. Partisanship not only encourages the adoption of extremes rather than more prudent and moderate alternatives but also results in dramatic course shifts when presidential incumbents are replaced by members of the opposing party. Similarly, many institutional arrangements in the United States are unsuited to the demands of the 21st century. Reform of American government in general and the national security apparatus in particular might be a necessary—albeit not a sufficient—condition for the United States to function effectively in dealing with the challenges of emerging global chaos.

The other constraints on the United States are the increasingly obvious fiscal and economic trends. In the short and medium terms, the possibility of a U.S. economic meltdown and a global realignment of economic power cannot be excluded. The ripple effects of such an event would greatly intensify the trends and tendencies towards the dissolution of the Westphalian

order discussed above. Yet this might not be all bad. In the final analysis, it is important to recognize that state predominance is not immutable. The state does not necessarily represent the optimum set of political arrangements for meeting people's needs or for ensuring peace and stability. More organic, bottom-up forms of governance, for all their shortcomings, might be the best available in a world of increasingly hollow states. The fixation with the centralized state needs to confront realities that point at least towards the serious consideration of alternatives. The problem is that the stateocentric mode of thinking is so highly normative that serious consideration of alternative forms of governance, which does more than treat them as threats, is typically regarded as heretical, irrelevant, or misguided. Yet if we fail to see the decline of the state and to recognize the underlying realities, the prospect of a cascade of strategic surprises and a series of strategic disasters is inescapable.

ENDNOTES

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5. On this particular issue, the author benefitted from several lengthy discussions with Lieutenant Colonel Nathan Freier.

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14. *Ibid*.

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26. *Ibid*.

27. Cerny actually uses the term "governance gap." See *Ibid*., p. 36.

28. For a good overview of wicked problems, see Cognexus Institute at *www.cogenxus.org/id42.htm*.

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