

By Leila Ouardani

No, most of our political elite have not realized that the world is flat - Thomas Friedman

As Thomas Friedman's "flatness" metaphor observes, the compression of time and space and the easy movement of people, weapons, toxins, drugs, knowledge and ideas have transformed the way in which threats emerge and challenged the traditional modes of obtaining security used by policymakers. The complexities underlying these transnational movements contest established International Relations theories of agency and scope and have made it increasingly difficult to

conceptualize and measure security in this context. During the 1990s when the issue of transnational security first entered security studies dialogue, progress was further hindered by intellectual squabbles between realist, liberalist and constructivist agendas. It was, however, the events of September 11, 2001 that catapulted transnational security to the centre stage: academics and security studies professionals alike now found an attentive audience within international policymaking fora.

The 'transnational security' paradigm

The term 'transnational security', also referred to by some scholars as 'transstate security', has not attracted a clear and unambiguous definition as to its nature. Some scholars have gone as far as to suggest that the term 'transnational' should become redundant and replaced with what is considered a more accurate description: 'transsovereign'. For these scholars, in view of the fact that the term 'nation' is not synonymous with the term 'sovereign state', the word 'transnational' is argued to simply add needless confusion to what is an already complicated idea. However a workable definition has been provided in a 1997 outline of the emerging field, *Security Studies for the 21st Century*, written by Richard Shultz, Roy Godson, and George Quester. In the text, the term 'Transnational security' was referred to as a 'paradigm for understanding the ways in which governments and non-state actors—functioning within and across state borders—interact and affect the defence of states and their citizens.'

Underpinning the transnational security paradigm is the premise that as a result of globalisation, more specifically the growth in open markets, open societies and open economies—security has, in the words of Maryann K. Cusimano, moved to a situation 'beyond sovereignty'. Up until the end of the Cold War, in 1990, the globalizing phenomenon was to quite a considerable extent held in check. However there are some scholars that have voiced skepticism by suggesting that the elevation of transnational security concerns came as a response to find new external threats after Soviet collapse. Matthew and Shambaugh argue that transnational security issues of the level to which the world faces today while clearly being affected by the collapse of a bi-polar world are mainly a result of twentieth century advances in human mobility, communication and technology. It is, however, worthy of note that the emergence of what have

been called 'weak states' and 'failed states', following the end of the bipolar geostrategic system, have considerably worsened the effects of transnational security issues.

Sovereignty as a political organization had dominated the international system from the time of the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648. From then on, the state had both exclusive and final jurisdiction over a territory and those resources and populations that were found within its territorial borders. This system acknowledges a single political authority which possesses both a monopoly over the use of force but also the role of sole defender and final arbiter of any problems that arise within the territorial borders. Attempts to restrict border and territorial access have long been a core state activity. Historically the vast majority of interstate wars concerned territorial defence and conquest and therefore it is unsurprising that borders were considered primarily in military terms. Nowadays, the marked reduction in interstate military conflicts has resulted in state borders being contested only on rare occasions.

On the other hand, globalisation processes that many commentators consider to contain 'good, progressive, and liberalizing international trends' have led to borders increasingly being penetrated by non-state actors. Indeed central to the transnational security paradigm is the involvement of transnational non-state actors which can affect the defence of states and its citizens. A number of commentators however have been keen to point out that transstate non-state actors have long been a historical reality. Indeed states have been subject to transnational pirates, mercenaries, contraband smugglers, and religious extremists for many centuries. However historically the transnational dimension of their activities were considerably limited without the financial, transportation and communication networks that are unique to our age.

The transnational security paradigm does not only challenge the traditional state-centric paradigm with its incorporation of non-state actors into its framework but also includes somewhat of a widening of the security agenda. Transnational threats often referred to as 'non-traditional threats' often do not pose an existential threat. As Buzan has argued the 'state is less important in the new security agenda than in the old one. It still remains central, but no longer dominates either as the exclusive referent object or as the principle embodiment of the threat'. This shift should be understood in the context of the emergence of concepts such as 'human security' that sought to encompass and recognize security at multiple levels from the global right down to the individual.

The main transnational security issues

Statistics demonstrate that in the twentieth century a greater number of casualties have come about due to sub-national and transnational threats than traditional interstate wars. Globally in 1999, for instance, while 33,000 individuals lost their lives in major power conflicts, a staggering 2.8 million people met their death from AIDS, 40,000 through civil conflicts and approximately 1000 as a result of terrorist attacks. The range of non-traditional threats that we face in the twentieth century are considerable. Identifying the main transnational security issues however is not a straightforward task since some transnational security issues have a greater capacity to challenge the security of certain states than others. For instance, the closing of the United Kingdom's only human trafficking police unit in November, 2008 demonstrates that states often

need to prioritise those transnational security threats that pose the greatest threat to them.

In recent years, more than any other transnational security issue, the existence of failing and destabilised states has attracted considerable attention from the international security community. The worlds 'failed', and failing, states are widely publicised, they include: the Democratic Republic of Congo, Burundi, Sudan, Zimbabwe, Somalia, and Haiti, to name a few. Following these are those states that are considered to be on the brink of collapse such as Pakistan. It is now widely believed that in our highly globalized world the stability of any one state can critically affect the stability of the international system as a whole. Failed sources can act as sources, incubators, and facilitators of a whole host of transnational security threats such as terrorism, weapons proliferation, organized crime, infectious diseases, and environmental destruction. The severity of threats posed by failed and destabilised states led the Bush administration to move up 'failed states' to the same level of threat posed by hostile states. Indeed the international community is extremely concerned about Pakistan's stability due to its radicalized anti-Western elements, its use of territory as a base for al-Qaeda, and a weak central government' s possession of launch codes for a whole arsenal of nuclear weapons.

Transnational Organised Crime (TOC) involves the planning and execution of illicit business ventures by networks or groups of individuals working in more than one country. Transnational organised criminal groups often use violence and corruption in order to meet their goals. Crimes can include money laundering, cyber-crime, human trafficking and smuggling, drugs, weapons, endangered species, body parts and nuclear material." TOC has over the last decade become a central security issue in western political economies, finding its way onto the agenda of key international for a including the United Nations, G7-8 elite industrial countries and the Council of Europe. This is mainly due to its capacity to weaken the financial and economic systems of countries and undermine democracy. In situations where weak governments are involved, they can find themselves up against these crime networks with out the institutional strength to counter them. While prospering in illegal activities these groups work against the peace and stability of nations internationally and often use bribery, terror, and violence to meet their goals."

Transnational terrorism has, since September 11, 2001, been considered one of the main (if not, the main by a number of Western countries) of the transnational security threats. Transnational terrorism is characterized by a non-state actor operating from one state and crossing borders to carry out terrorist attacks on another given state. Over the last decade there has been a marked increase in extremist Islamist terrorism operating from zones all across the world. Some commentators have questioned the high 'prioritization' of transnational terrorism due to the relatively little (when compared to other transnational security threats such as AIDS) of deaths associated with the phenomena. Indeed much of the international attention can be argued to have stemmed from the world's dominant power, the United States', interest and focus upon transnational terrorism as a major security threat. However this argument does not take into account a number of other issues. Perception has a fundamental role in security, and individual's beliefs that they are at risk from transnational terrorism has been arguably heightened in recent years. Moreover, whilst the deaths are relatively less than other transnational security issues, recent developments such as news that terrorists may have been experimenting with biological weapons demonstrates that the situation can change rapidly and lead to a greatly exacerbated threat.

Countering transnational threats

It is important to note that transnational security threats cannot, in the same way that traditional security threats are unable to, ever be entirely eradicated. It is for that reason, as Waever suggests, that desecuritization—the shifting of these issues out of emergency mode and into the normal bargaining process of the political sphere, that should be the aim of nation states and collective organisations. The removing of the existential threat (if there is one that is) is therefore the primary aim. It is thus central for the government to acknowledge the fact that the larger areas of the globe are ungovernable and efforts to identify those sectors that "matter" and those that do not. Godson labels these areas as 'zones of influence' and suggests that they will resemble nineteenth century informal empires or spheres of influence.

In the late 1990s, Lawrence Freedman proposed that those trying to counter transstate security threats would inevitably face the 'free-rider problem' whereby some governments would essentially pursue a 'free ride' on the back of the countering activities of other sovereign states. Although some transnational security issues have, in recent times, been taken up more willingly. In the case of transnational terrorism, the United Nations Security Council's resolution 1373 requires all member states to actively counter terrorism on its own territory. In this instance, the events of September 11th, 2001 affected the political will and pressure on states to address the issue. Indeed, to effectively address transnational security issues there has to be firstly a securitization of the transnational issue, and political support for engagement. The difficulty arises with those countries that, for instance, gain from the continued existence of transnational threats in some way. This is arguably the case with states like Columbia whose economy is reliant on transnational exportation of drugs.

Scholars have called for the need to work towards 'international norm' development whereby common standards are created committing states to collective and consistent responses to transnational threats. With this in mind, the United Nations through its convening power has frequently been cited as a possible forum. However attempts to construct globalised conceptions of security diffusing reciprocity and international responsibility face difficulties. Globalised conceptions of security have been, and are likely to continue to be, very difficult to operationalize. Some states, for instance, have accused the US and to a lesser extent the EU of 'policy laundering'. This involves the use of foreign and international fora as an indirect means of pushing policies that are unlikely to have won approval through the domestic political process.

After effective securitisation of the relevant transnational security issues, the policy approaches for addressing transnational security issues can be divided into either state-centric or non-state-centric responses. Many traditional security tools can be effective, if properly adjusted to engage non-traditional threats. Most scholars group the instruments of statecraft into three basic categories: Military force; diplomacy; and cryptodiplomacy.

State military force can be harnessed to counter transnational security threats through shifting from an understanding and operational readiness for Clausewitzian trinitarian warfare with its decisive battles to one of low intensity conflicts involving small groups and non-decisive battles. For instance, Special Forces can be incredibly valuable in capturing well-defended

drug-traffickers, impeding drug transits and dealing with transnational militants and terrorists. In these circumstances, non-traditional forms of combat are required: engaging militarily with a high degree of lethality against targeted combatants while simultaneously committing low levels of collateral damage. In many ways however such activities constitute reactions to the transnational symptoms that require strong and direct force. The military can however also be used to address the issue of ungovernability in some states, through contributing to peace-keeping missions, in countries which have the potential for breeding transnational threats. Indeed the strengthening of the social and political institutions is believed to provide the foundations for sustained civil peace.

Diplomacy can also be an effective tool in the countering of transnational security threats through foreign ministries interacting with transnational actors and sub-state actors. It has been found that in the process of international securitising transnational issues, diplomats can be extremely significant. The role of diplomacy is in many ways wide-ranging and can be both bi-lateral and multi-lateral. Destabilised states which are vulnerable to transnational security threats can be provided life-lines by diplomat's sensitive and knowledgeable generation of inexpensive loans and international political capital for external assistance. Diplomats can also be effective in providing technical and knowledge-based assistance in areas such as the political process, labour relations, agronomy and education.

Cryptodiplomacy is also widely considered to have a number of key uses within the transnational security paradigm. Indeed each of its main elements is potentially valuable. For instance, human intelligence is central for determining both intentions and capabilities of non-state actors; it is especially useful when dealing with drug cartels and terrorist networks. Intelligence can also be used in an international coalition-building capacity through using its apparatus for liaison. Stronger and stable states can be of security assistance to those states that do not possess the intelligence infrastructure. The use of outside intelligence can be effective destabilised states in preventing, for example, presidential candidates from assassinations and judges from bombings. The use of covert action within a larger comprehensive program can also be useful.

While traditional modes security tools can to some extent be effective, it is generally argued that a concerted effort to involve the support of non-state actors is crucial to the success of countering transnational threats. Scholars often criticise those policymakers which interpret non-traditional security threats through the traditional lens of inter-state cooperation and coercion. Cusimano, Hensman, and Rodrigues are eminent proponents of the increased importance of the private sector in the effective combating transnational problems. Generally the non-state-centric policy approach is considered desirable due to its ability to influence activities that largely fall in the social and economic sectors, where the arms of liberal, capitalist states find it difficult to penetrate. Advocates of this approach argue that new responses and infrastructure should be encouraged to make good use of NGOs and MNCs. In recent years however the effects of "contracting out" to non-state actors have become evident. Alexander Cooley has challenged the widespread opinion that market-based institutions in the transnational arena increase efficiency and effectiveness, especially in the cases of INGOs. Indeed the environments in which these transnational actors have to operate contain constraints—for instance, the issue of renewable contracts by Western governments. In such

cases, Cooley found that there is a tendency to underplay government subversion of economic reforms, restrict information on ineffective projects. Reliance on PMCs and private mercenaries has been similarly found to cause transnational security issues. In this instance, the lack of cross-border legal restrictions on these private companies must be sufficiently addressed and acted upon in the near future.

Whilst traditional state-craft has been proven to provide some assistance in countering non-traditional security threats, it is ultimately only through a multi-lateral approach that any substantial difference will be made. Katzenstein noted that the traditional divisions between internal and external security have become blurred through recognition of transnational threats. Security decisions now have to be taken outside the traditional purview of state sovereignty, through the undertaking of an 'intermestic' approach. A considerable amount of progress has been made in this area through the development of transnational organisations and institutions. For instance, Europe has founded institutions such as Interpol, TREVI and the Schengen Accord and continues to invest in transnational committees and policy consulting groups. However ongoing research has shown that traditional perspectives on national security remain deeply entrenched, intellectually and institutionally within government agencies which affect involvement and cooperation with these transnational agencies.

Conclusion

The term 'transnational security' has gained greater use in recent years. It is generally used to refer to the way in which governments and non-state actors interact across and within state boundaries and affect the security of the state and its citizens. Failed states represent the greatest transnational security issue today with their ability to affect the stability and security of the international system through acting a breeding ground for other transnational security threats. Transnational organised crime and transnational terrorism can also be considered significant threats. A multi-lateral approach that involves the whole international community is required to counter these non-traditional threats. Traditional state-centric responses however have not become redundant, rather their modification to take into account the nature of these new threats and the involvement of non-state actors can see them, when coordinated with international responses, retain use.

Editor's note : We suggest this should also be read in conjunction with the posting "Updating Westphalia" published last week.