

STRATEGY ISSUES FOR AN INTERCONNECTED WORLD

At a Navy League New York Council symposium, a faculty panel from the Naval War College presented issues that confront the U.S. with regard to China, Africa, and failed cities, during a period of increasing global connectivity.

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On 14 November, the Council, in conjunction with the Naval War College Foundation, held its second annual symposium featuring the faculty of the Naval War College. This year's panel consisted of Dr. Joan Johnson-Freeze, Chair of the National Security Decision Making (NSDM) Department, and Drs. Stephen Emerson and Richard Norton of that department. The following is excerpted from their presentations.

***D**r. Johnson-Freeze began the discussion. Her particular area of expertise is China and the Chinese Space Program and accordingly, her discussion focused on U.S./China relations. At the NWC, we form our curriculum according to many mandates, the Joint Staff mandates, the OPNAV mandates but also mandates such as CIST which stands for Countering Ideological Support for Terrorism. It is the recognition, and I think it is an important recognition, that hard power is not enough. We are very good, the United States is absolutely unbeatable in hard power. But in that soft power stuff, - - having people work with us because they want to - - not so*

much. One of the things I'd like to mention about China is that they've got pretty good at it. The terrorists have gotten very good at it and we have to get much better at it.

One of the areas that we also are putting considerable attention on that we really have not before is strategic communication. It is the way the United States conveys its message. It is not just important that we have a good message, it is important that we convey it in a way that what we say is what is heard. I don't think that is always the case. We are getting better at it but we have assumed that the world heard a benign benevolent speaker.

We don't communicate very well with the Chinese, what we say and what they hear is often two different issues and it is vice versa as well. We need to get much better at that. China is a country of such size - -and I'm not talking not just geographic but population and diversity - - that if you are studying China, pretty much any thesis you come up with, you can go there and find support for that thesis. You really have to understand the evidence that you are looking at in order

to interpret it correctly. We don't even have enough people to speak the language. The estimate is that 20 times more Chinese speak English than Americans speak Chinese.

We don't understand China very well. We don't understand the culture and part of our misunderstanding is that it is very Asian to keep information close to the vest. If I go into NASA, I come out with more pamphlets than I can carry. When I am in China, I beg for information. As long as there is ambiguity, everybody feels very comfortable - - putting things in writing and handing it out takes away the comfort level immensely.

Part of that is legal. Space is a high security area. There are laws that cover what can be shared and what can't. If you're an individual and you are not sure of what the law is, better to take the prudent course and not share any more than you absolutely have to. All these obstacles, keep us from really understanding China well at all.

The Chinese don't get the difference between the National Enquirer and the New York Times. They don't get differences between what is government policy and what is news editorial, and what is simply yellow journalism. We don't either. There is a communications boom in China. Where it used to be that everything that came out was officially vetted, that is not the case anymore. There are commercial publications, there are internet sites. We need to get much better at what I will call nuance interpretations.

If you are basing your threat assessment on speculation and poor interpretation, you have a problem. The way you solve that problem is to sit down and have a dialogue. We have not had those kinds of dialogues with China.

We have not had them for a variety of reasons, most of all because China is a communist dictatorship that we have chosen, especially prior to 9/11, not to work with. We have not had the kind of dialogue because there is a school of thought that China is the next near-peer competitor, if not already a viable threat. Therefore, we should be working with them on a competitive basis rather than a cooperative basis.

I would argue that China is a country at a strategic crossroads and that the U.S. will influence whatever direction it takes. Not interacting with them will minimize that influence and probably set it in a direction, in my opinion, that is not in our best national interest.

It is also important to note that over the last five years, China has executed a major charm campaign, not just in Asia, but worldwide. In 2005, Pew released a study that showed that in 11 out of 16 countries, [including] France, England, [and other] developed countries, the majority of public opinion held China in higher favor than the United States - - an authoritarian communist government being held in higher esteem than the United States. Why? I would argue two reasons: One, because we have not been doing a good job of strategic communications; and two, China has launched this charm campaign.

What does this mean? [First], trade initiatives, huge trade initiatives. Second, aid. Aid programs with no strings. While with all good intentions, the United States offers aid on the Millennium Challenge basis - - "if you democratize, if you show good governance, you will be eligible for aid." China just says "do you want the money?" and what of the two are [the

recipients] going to pick and what influence does it have?[The Chinese are making considerable headway with economic and security implications]. It gets down to: do we do what is admirable, do we what is right or do we get into real politics? Do we take a realistic approach and say we need to look at what is effective in this globalized world?

The way [we influence China to be a responsible member of the international community] is to raise their risk of doing anything foolish. Make it too costly for them. On a strategic level, the latter is often voiced. Secretary of State Rice said: "The U.S. welcomes the rise of a confident, peaceful and prosperous China and wants China as a global partner." At the functional level, however, it becomes much more difficult to implement that approach.

The Chinese have one fall on their sword issue - - Taiwan. Their entire military structure is built around Taiwan cannot be allowed to go free. I think if the Chinese ever had to do anything about that kind of threat it would be by the use of naval forces. I'm sure you are all aware that there have been reports this week of a Chinese sub stalking the U.S. Navy. My view is that the Chinese plan if the Taiwanese would ever go too far off the reservation and declare independence, would not involve a rain of missiles and would not involve a million man swim but would involve a blockade using submarines. They want to show us how good they are at their submarine warfare. Of course, what is an area that we need a lot more attention to in the United States, in the U.S. Navy, - - antisubmarine warfare. The Chinese are showing us their prowess.

What should we do about Taiwan from the United States? It is not in the United States national interest for Taiwan and China to come to blows. Therefore, what we should do is take the Taiwanese aside and say: "you don't want to see what is going to happen if you decide to declare independence. You might not like it, don't go there, don't do it." Then, we should take the Chinese aside and say: "You don't want to see what is going to happen if you decide to go into Taiwan, you won't like it, don't do this." Keep them apart. Don't let either side get cocky. I think that is the only course that is in the U.S. national interest.

There are other interests that the U.S. and China will compete over, energy supplies and strategic interests. I think increasingly [however] U.S. and Chinese interests are converging, at least in areas such as fighting terrorism and dealing with North Korea, as much as diverging. My view is future U.S. policy will have to learn to accommodate both.

Dr. Emerson, an expert on Africa, *continued the discussion.* I'm going to talk about globalization in Africa and its relevance to US security policy and issues. I want to touch on three themes: one is terrorism; the second is energy; and the third is China. General Jones, the commander of U.S. European Command, says that he spends 60 to 70% of his time focusing on African issues. This is an area of responsibility that includes Russia, New Europe, Old Europe, and most of Africa. [Thus,] the fact that this person is spending almost two thirds of his time dealing with African issues just shows you how it is growing in importance.

With respect to terrorism, it is not really new to Africa. It was certainly used prolifically during the colonial struggle. Go back to the Mau Mau rebellion in the 1950s in Kenya, the Algerian conflict in the 1960s, Rhodesia in the 1970s and South Africa. It has always been there but it has been a domestic type issue, a tactic used in asymmetrical warfare.

What is different about it [now], particularly with the bombings in Kenya and Tanzania in 1998, is that there is [a trend towards] weaving together of international terrorism network and domestic terrorism in Africa. The fear [is] that they may come together and coalesce as part of this global phenomenon and threaten not only African interests, but U.S. interests.

We see this particularly in Algeria today. Algeria is probably one of the most radicalized countries in Africa these days. [The Algerians who went to Afghanistan to fight the Soviets returned as radical Islamic fundamentalists and have formed groups to fight the Algerian government.] The main group that is there now, GSPC, which is a French acronym for preaching and combat, is a very radical deadly group that has claimed publicly that it affiliated with Al Qaeda. The Algerians have done fairly well in their counter-terrorism campaign. But [although there are only about 300 members of the group], they are very nasty and they operate all along southern Algeria but also in the other states, everywhere from Mauritania, across to Mali, Niger and Chad.

The other concern in Africa that we have is in the Horn of Africa in Somalia - - the classic failed state, the collapse of government. Recently there, you have the rise of a group which has

as its core foundation this militant form of Islam. [It] could be in alliance with international terrorism and certainly could be exploited.

This brings me to the second aspect of terrorism in Africa - - [the] concept of failed states. The collapse, not even necessarily the collapse, but state weakness, where the government is not able to exercise authority and control - - things like policing its borders, who is coming in and out, control of institutions, financial [and] legal. The [concern is] that some of these areas in Africa can become the breeding grounds for terrorists. The government does not have a presence in there, you have an alienated population for whatever reason, conflict is endemic to Africa, and these problems can be exploited by terrorist groups looking to take advantage of that and that they can come and operate fairly easily in these types of states.

The United States has developed a number of programs to deal with this and I'll just lay them out. In the Horn of Africa, there is a very successful, about 2,000-person, Joint Task Force Horn of Africa which is based in Djibouti - - the only permanent U.S. presence in Africa. It is complimented by a naval presence, which is a coalition effort, Combined Joint Task Force 150, [which] operates in the Red Sea, doing a lot of interdiction efforts, maritime security. In the region that sweeps all the way from Senegal into Sudan, we have established a State Department program with heavy DOD presence, the Trans-Saharan Counterterrorism Initiative.

The questions that we need to ask ourselves are: "Are we actually addressing more the symptoms of terrorism or do we have to go beyond that and look at some of the causes? Are

the tools that we are implementing as the counterterrorism strategy, really addressing the underlying cause?"

The second issue [is] energy in Africa. U.S. dependence on African oil is growing. There was a National Intelligence Council study done in about 2001 that predicted by 2015, so not that far off, up to 25% of U.S. imports would come from Africa - - that would surpass the Persian Gulf, which now is about 18 to 20%. Production [will expand not only] in traditional sources such as Nigeria and Angola but [there will] also [be] a lot of new production coming on line, particularly in the Gulf of Guinea. Cameroon [is] coming on, [as are] Sao Tome and Principe - - little tiny islands where they have discovered oil. Now, we have this whole string of new producers investing in infrastructure and U.S. companies are heavily involved. But a lot of international companies are involved. China is making a big push to get involved in those early explorations.

It is a good news, bad news story. The good news is that it is, obviously, a little closer to the United States, a little less vulnerable than the Persian Gulf, a little easier to get the oil out. The bad news is that oil in Africa has been both a blessing and a curse. If you want to look at any country that sort of epitomizes that, it is Nigeria. One of the most corrupt countries in the world, a country that has by some studies wasted up over \$300 billion since independence just through corruption and bad government.

[Will] these countries coming on with large wealth create more problems, more social division, more conflict? A lot of the problem that you hear about in Nigeria now, particularly in the [Niger] delta which is the area that has the oil, [concerns] local movements, some are

called terrorist movements, [that] seek part of the spoils. Most of that money is going to the central government, [and the locals] don't see a lot of return. There is a group in the south called MEND - - Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta - - using some terrorist tactics, seizing oil platforms and doing kidnappings, but they want a share. Are they a political movement? Are they a terrorist movement? Are they a little of both? It is hard to say. The question is how is the government going to deal with that? How is the U.S. government going to support the Nigerian government dealing with that?

With respect to China, China's involvement in Africa is really an old story. I remember the Chinese ambassador to South Africa saying: "It is nothing new. We sent a fleet in the 15th century to Africa. We have been sailing here forever. It is just new to you." But there has certainly been a transformation in the post Cold War period. China's involvement in the 60s, 70s and during the liberation struggle was more an ideological commitment to African movements in newly emerging states. It was part of the Cold War dynamic. They saw an opportunity to support the struggle against the West and so they did. It was based on an ideological litmus.

New China's involvement is different. It is more of a search for raw materials, it is a search for markets. We think a lot about China tapping the raw resources of Africa, oil being one, but also metals, and that certainly is the case, but also they are looking to develop markets for their goods. Chinese trade to Africa in the last five years has more than doubled. They see this as a market. They are certainly

making inroads in becoming an economic competitor to the United States in Africa. Some would say they are trying to beat us at our own game. "You want free market economics, bring it on. We are the original capitalists."

What are the implications for this? Part of it is the "no strings aid" that is very appealing to African states. The [Chinese] don't question internal politics. They have written down loans or written them off completely. They do infrastructure development, which is a thing that the United States got away from in the 60s and the 70s. We didn't consider it efficient but these showplace projects give [the Chinese] a lot of prestige.

On the downside, according to the U.S. State Department, is where [the Chinese] support governments that are less than democratic, where they stifle democratic development, [where they ignore] concerns with human rights - - Sudan being the classic case in point. Darfur for example, most of the weapons the Sudanese government is using are from Chinese aid - - Chinese equipment, Chinese helicopters, missiles, ammunition, small arms. [The Chinese] would say it is economics and [the Chinese] don't question the [recipient's] internal politics. But how do you balance that concern for human rights and also democracy and reform? Also, economic reforms, [the Chinese] don't push, they don't tell them, "you have to go to the IMF, you have to restructure your economy," that is not fair. So, those types of litmus tests that the West puts on, China does not put on.

There has been a little backlash and you are starting to see it. During a recent presidential election in Zambia, one of the opposition candidates [argued for re-establishing] ties with Taiwan

because these Chinese coming in here have real ruthless business practices, they pay low wages and they undercut local businesses. So, there is some tension there, it is not all good for China and maybe their ruthless pursuit of the almighty dollar is starting to do them some bad.

The point we need to think about is how does the United States view its engagement with China in Africa? Are we going to be cooperative? Do we view China as an ally? Maybe, we can bring them along and say maybe you could put pressure on Sudan. Or, do we see them as a competitor, not only in economics but also in security issues. Are we getting into another Cold War situation?

The final speaker, Dr. Norton, began by describing how he developed the concept of feral cities. In 2003 and 2004, we witnessed the convergence of certain currents in the international political system that led me to wonder where things were going. Those currents were: globalization - - increased connectivity; urban hypertrophy - - the explosive growth of cities, particularly, in what we would consider the developing world; the rise of armed groups - - the new buzzword for terrorists or armed resistance groups - - but clearly a resurgence of this activity; but at the same time, a reaffirmation of the power and concept of state sovereignty. Where do these trends lead? It occurred to me that the nexus of this convergence was in the feral cities of all places.

It is important to distinguish a feral city from a tough town. New York has been a tough town for a long time. It has a reputation as a city that rewards the strong and perhaps consumes the weak.

But, no one really doubted that during the riots of 1863 that the federal government could control New York if it had the political will to do so. What makes a feral city distinct is that the state that owns that city can't control the city no matter how much the state would like to.

So, I imagined what a feral city would look like. I thought it would be sprawling, I put a minimum number of a million people; it would be dangerous, there would be no law and order; it would be a breeding ground for pandemics and an ecological disaster zone; it would be a haven for crooks, for terror, for contraband trade and human trafficking. It is a pretty dire picture, kind of like a TS Eliot's "Rats Alley" on steroids.

The next part of the investigation is how do you tell if a city could become feral, become wild, uncontrolled? There were trends that I saw emerging on the international landscape that led me to believe that yes, we could see cities of this type emerging. Mogadisho perhaps being the first one to get there.

I published a piece on this and it got some attention, and that was two years ago. Since then, I have been studying and thinking about feral cities and the results have been surprising and depressing.

The first one is that we are going to see this phenomenon. We are going to see it far quicker than I imagined. The first case in point: San Palo, Brazil. San Palo is a feral city in all but name. In May of this year, a criminal cartel, a gang called the PCC, following orders from its leaders who are in Brazilian prisons, came out of the [slums] of San Palo and went to war with state and city authorities. For four days, the gangs outfought the cops. They left 2.9 million

San Palans stranded in their city because they wrecked the transportation grid. They shut down the city, they attacked 70 police stations, in the process 200 people died. How did the war end? Stalemate. The gangs outnumbered and out-weaponed the cops. In the end, state officials from San Palo sat down with the PCC leadership in prison and brokered a cease-fire.

What caused the eruption? The leaders of the PCC got hold of state secret documents that said that Brazil was about to separate them and distribute them to other Brazilian prisons so they would not be in contact with each other. If you think about it, the degree of penetration and opposition this gang can offer a state central authority is phenomenal.

One thing I was wrong about in 2004 was to discount conflict and ferality. If you are involved in Iraq in Phase IV stability operations, sovereignty of cities becomes important. My next case: Fallujah.

Insurgents gained control of Fallujah. It became a hot bed of anti-U.S., anti-coalition activity, a safe haven for the enemy. The Iraqi government, such as it was, lacked the resources to deal with Fallujah. So, how do you [deal with] Fallujah? Well, you whistle up two Army infantry brigades, several striker battalions, and Marine infantry units and with some Iraqi help, take the city back. You do this by cordoning it off, seizing key peripheral areas, conducting lightning thrusts into the city to grab key strategic points, and then roll the city down neighborhood by neighborhood. That's great, we got the city back.

We broke a lot of crockery in taking the city back. Almost 100% of city structures, houses and infrastructure

were at least significantly damaged in the re-conquest of Fallujah. This is damage that most states cannot afford to their cities. In the case of Fallujah, which, by the way is only seven square miles, we re-built it. We re-built it with U.S. dollars and British pounds and Iraqi help. It was a success story. We handed over the keys to the city to the Iraqis but who today is willing to say that the Iraqi government enjoys sovereignty over Fallujah? It would be silly to say that they do. At best, they have a patch-work sovereignty or a diurnal sovereignty, they control the day, they don't control the night. This is a real issue that the U.S. is facing today.

Critics could simply say that it is a special case. But is it? There are feral border towns that are security issues, not just theoretically, but in reality, to the United States today. I give you the case, my third city, of Nuevo Laredo, Mexico.

[I]t is both Mexico and the United States' most deep water inland port. There are Coast Guard people in Nuevo Laredo. It is the major point of commerce between the two countries. Almost \$90 billion in commercial trade goes back and forth over the five bridges that span the Rio Grande. \$33 billion in illegal trade accompanies it.

Because of the lucrative, strategic position of Nuevo Laredo, for the last three years there has been what has been called the I-35 War being waged - - no one knows about this. Two rival gangs, the Sinaloa cartel versus the Gulf cartel have been fighting for control of Nuevo Laredo. It is almost like something out of *The Untouchables*.

[The police] were either corrupted by the gangs or they were killed. Mexico employed a hard-hitting, tough-talking, new broom police chief, seven hours into his first day, he was

assassinated. The next chief lasted seven months because his policy was "I don't do gangs." He was relieved for cause by the Mexican government.

How did Mexico, which is obviously sensitive to the issue of Nuevo Laredo, handle this essentially feral city? They called out the Mexican Army, armored battalions cordoned off the city. Federal police, not state or city police, conducted a lightning thrust into the heart of the city to seize key buildings and thoroughfares. Then, rather than roll them up neighborhood by neighborhood, they allowed the gangs to subside back into their normal areas. By the way, the fighting in Nuevo Laredo is not in barrios or shantytowns, it is in the nicest part of town because that is where drug kingpins tend to live, with the result that some of these formerly exclusive neighborhoods have been depopulated by 35% or more.

Nuevo Laredo is a city which is changing its complexion and despite all the good works of the Mexican government I would argue is in the process of going feral. It is going feral because it is too lucrative for these groups that we have talked about not to take a piece of it. By the way, the Gulf cartel gets its muscle from retired and AWOL Mexican Green Berets who bring a new dimension of fire power and combat technique to the war.

If you disregard the hype, take away the exaggeration and take away the failures of command that were involved at all levels with Hurricane Katrina, the stark fact remains that for three to five days, the most powerful nation on this planet lost the ability to exercise sovereignty within the domain of New Orleans. It wasn't terrorists and it wasn't crime cartels, it was nature. It was the loss of every UHF and cell phone

communications tower in the city. It was the flooding of National Guard headquarters and police stations. It was the loss of transportation and everything else. All that aside, we couldn't - - even though we were desperately trying to - - exercise our writ of sovereignty over New Orleans for about 72 hours.

Several conclusions can be drawn. Feral cities are going to be part of the strategic mix. They are going to be real problem areas especially when the states that surround those cities are not willing to let other people in to address the problems of their city. National pride etc. tends to get in the way. If those cities are ports, they pose even more problems because of the environmental issues, because of their increased connectivity to world trade, because they act as havens for piracy and transition points for illegal commerce, terror etc. It is an issue we had better start thinking about and even more so better start readying ourselves to deal with because it is not going to go away.