

Post 9/11 Scenarios: The Future of Global Security

Abstract

In a recent presentation to the SW Chapter of the INMM, Dr. Sig Hecker of Los Alamos National Laboratory characterized the tragedy of 9/11 as the third seminal event in the history of mankind - the first being the dropping of atomic bombs on Japan, and the second being the fall of the Soviet Union. Dr. Hecker believes that the world's response to 9/11 is our "third chance" to create a promising future for mankind - but also, if the right actions are not properly taken, the event that may plunge the world into a nightmarish future. Using the tools of scenario planning, future worlds can be created that will provide the environment for strategic discussions among global leaders so that even more significant events than 9/11 can be prevented or mitigated. This paper presents a "snapshot" of driving forces and critical uncertainties facing the U.S. and the world in this uncertain environment, and creates one set of "stories" that could be used to drive the important conversations that are needed: stories that bring hope, and stories that create nightmares.

Driving Forces

The tragic events of September 11, 2001 and the ensuing global war on terrorism, as well as domestic actions designed to strengthen homeland security have created external driving forces changing our world forever, steering a course down an unknown future path. Understanding the impact of these driving forces in the context of critical uncertainties and events is critical to being prepared and able to act with confidence. Some of the driving forces that exist in the post 9/11 world include:

- The spread of fundamentalist cells worldwide
- Vulnerability of U.S. infrastructure
- Availability of WMD components
- Use of conventional weapons in a WMD event
- U.S.-Russia cooperation in the war on terror
- Increased defense and homeland security budgets
- Global economic downturn - haves and have-nots
- Addressing global despair
- Stability of third world governments
- Global conflicts growing in scope
- New NATO-Russia Council

Critical Uncertainties

Many uncertainties exist in the future - which party will dominate the 2002 elections; will we find a cure for AIDS, cancer, Alzheimer's disease and other illnesses; will we find a way to solve world hunger, illiteracy, and overpopulation?

In the context of 9/11, however, the door has been opened to a new set of questions: can we stop the onslaught of an entire generation of extremists motivated to destroy Western civilization as we know it; can we reign in the tools and technologies of Weapons of Mass Destruction in a global community; can we resolve to live together as a common species and advance the destiny of mankind? Two of the most critical uncertainties facing the world today are whether future terrorist events, perhaps much more significant than 9/11, will occur, and how will the global community resolve its differences to not only fight the war on terror, but to also defuse the many conflicts that threaten to bring the world to the brink of war.

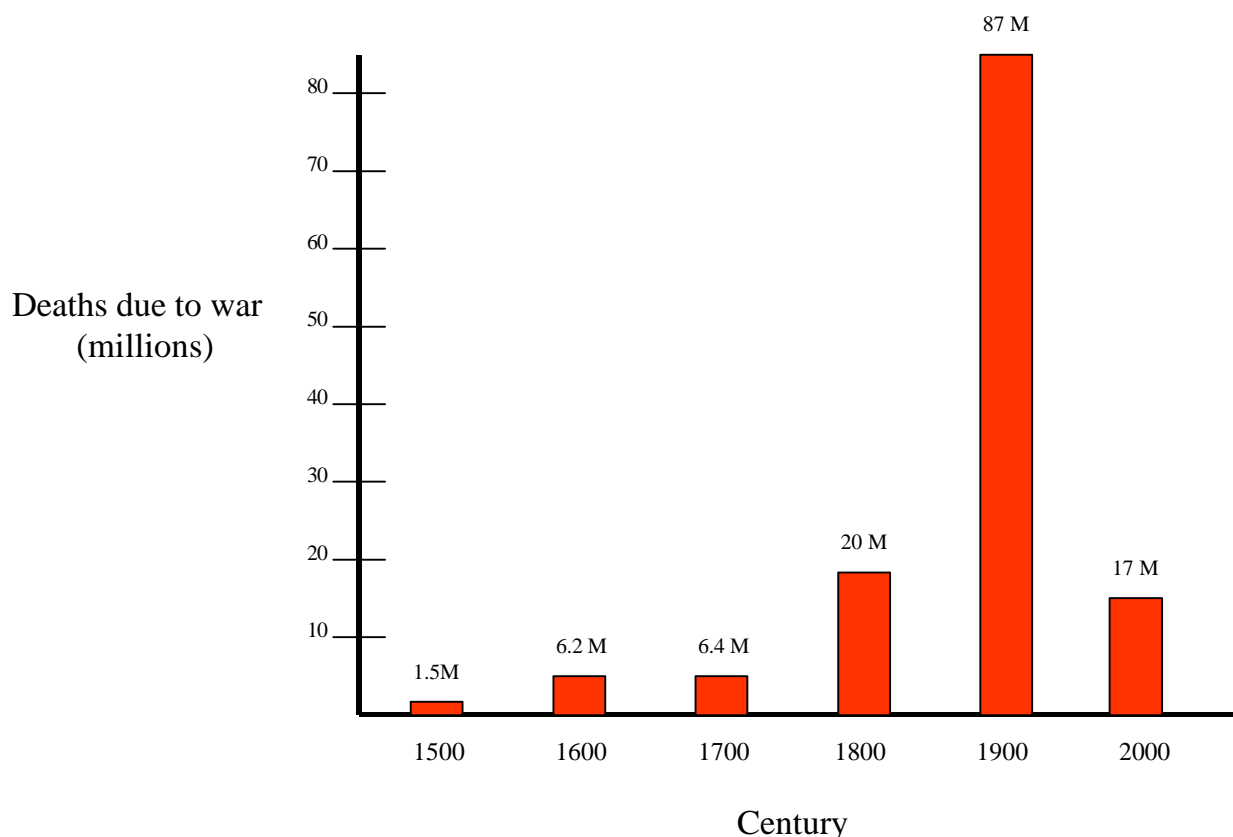
In casting the scenarios on the *Future of Global Security*, we form orthogonal axes representing these two critical uncertainties, and "live" in the worlds that are created by the extremes of each of these uncertainties (see attached scenario schematic):

- **Catastrophic Terrorist Events:** At the right hand extreme of this axis, events of even greater destruction and disruption than those of 9/11 occur, including a nuclear 9/11 on U.S. soil; attacks on nuclear power plants; biological attacks; attacks on the power grid; and cyber attacks, driving the world to actions that have previously been unacceptable or never contemplated. At the other extreme of this axis, U.S. and global efforts stem the tide of terrorism, and the use of technologies assist in providing a level of defense never dreamed possible. The U.S. attack on Iraq eliminates the largest source of terrorists, and the successful deployment of the National Missile Defense system provides a deterrent for future rogue states. These actions, however, can drive a response from the Muslim world in two dramatically different ways, which are explored at the extreme of the vertical axis.
- **Global Unity:** At the top of this axis, the International Rule of Law prevails, and a number of global alliances are formed to fight the war on terror and work on global problems of the "haves and have-nots." The Bush-Putin agreements, expansion of NATO and involvement of Russia, CTBT ratification, and the rise of democracy in China all contribute to this promising environment. However, at the other extreme, each of the global conflicts that threaten to bring the world to the brink of war, spill over, creating a world of global conflict and destruction, the rise of nationalism, and a dark time in the history of mankind.

Each quadrant of the scenario chart thus created by the extremes of each axis, describes a strategically rich future world around which leaders can gather to discuss the events they might see unfold, and how they could respond to mitigate those events and change the path of history. It is in this context, then that we enter the *Future of Global Security*:

Prelude

*In the history of mankind, political philosophy, religion, culture, ethnic differences, territory, natural resources, wealth, ego and many other reasons have justified conflicts to the death. Today, as we enter the third millennium, we look across the world and see all of these driving forces continuing to play a role in conflict, destruction and death. A new and horrific factor has been added to the "equation", however, that raises a fundamental question concerning the survivability of the human species: what future world might exist if weapons of mass destruction are unleashed? Can mankind address this issue and create a new global rule of law before an event, or series of events, occur? Or, is the history of 9/11 and related events a precursor to the inevitable - the occurrence of a **Global Discontinuity** on such a cataclysmic scale that the future of mankind is called into question? Can the lessons learned from 9/11 be kept before us so that the actions needed are taken, or are we doomed to wait for a **Global Discontinuity** before the resolve is there to take action? These questions cannot be answered with certainty, but we can raise the specter of the consequence of no action, or inappropriate actions, to events as the world travels down one of four paths. What constitutes a **Global Discontinuity**? If we look at deaths by century due to armed conflict in the recent history of mankind, we find a dramatic decline in the last half of the 20th century:*

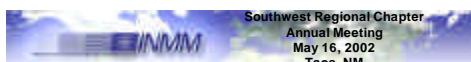


*Some argue this resulted from the deterrent effect of nuclear weapons and mutually assured destruction. Looking at this data, one can speculate the world has been "lulled" into a sense of security. Thus, one might assume that deaths related to a **Global Discontinuity** on the order of*

17 million or more would be necessary to "shock" the world into a set of actions that would address the fundamental threat to mankind's existence. A recent army study indicated that a terrorist action at any one of 123 chemical plants located in densely populated areas of the U.S. could result in casualties of close to 1 million. A nuclear exchange between India and Pakistan could easily approach the 17 million figure, but would the Western world react to such an event half a world away? What will it take to unify the global community?

The other concept of a **Global Discontinuity** is economic disruption. With a global domestic product of approximately \$25 Trillion, a minimum discontinuity to cause significant change would be 10% or approximately \$2.5 T. In his book, *Nuclear Anarchy*, Graham Allison of Harvard estimates that a small tactical nuclear weapon in lower Manhattan would cause an economic loss of about \$2 T. In fact, by some estimates, the Twin Tower attack of 9/11 has been estimated to be in the hundreds of \$B. What will it take to unify the global community?

It is in this context that we begin our stories...



Post 9/11 Scenarios: The Future of Global Security

"A Chance for Hope"

Indicators

- Creation of Palestinian State
- Creation of Homeland Security Department
- Extraordinary cooperation between U.S. and Russia
- Strengthening of Arab coalition with U.S.
- Breakthroughs in counter bio-terror technologies
- International capture of terrorist cells
- No new significant terrorist events

- No new significant Events
- Iraq attack supported by allies
- installation of new regime
- NMD successful
- New Bio Technologies
- New Vaccines
- Profiling

(+) Decreased Terrorism

Indicators

- Loss of influence by U.N.
- Leadership by U.S. in counterterrorism technologies
- Congressional actions
- Import/export restrictions
- Overthrow of Musharraf Government
- Complexity of international relations become overwhelming

"World War III"

(+) International Rule of Law

- Bush-Putin I
- Increasing UN role in international aid
- Expansion of EU-NATO security
- CTBT ratification
- Rise of China Democracy

"Struggling Through"

Indicators

- Growing actions by fundamentalist groups worldwide
- Loss of focus by U.S. post 9/11
- Security cooperation on a global scale
- Extraordinary cooperation between U.S. and Russia
- Large investments in national technologies and medicine
- Rise of influence of United Nations
- Series of "9/11" events - driving increased international cooperation

Global Unity

Catastrophic Terrorist Events

(-) The Discontinuity

Indicators

- Growing series of terrorist events - suicide bombings, truck bombs, facility attacks
- Loss of unity among allies
- Return to nuclear testing by Russia and China
- Growing hostilities among rival states
- Loss of influence by United Nations
- National I. D. System
- Martial law declared
- Increased Defense budgets
- Creation of Homeland Security Department
- Growing Anti-Americanism
- Crystal Geyser event

- Nuclear 9/11
- Nuclear Power Plant attack
- Biological release by terrorist cell
- Power Grid attacks
- Cyber attacks

- India-Pakistan nuclear exchange
- Israel - Arab WMD conflict
- Korean nuclear exchange
- Israel - Arab nuclear conflict
- China-Taiwan war
- Increased separation between haves and have-nots

"Return of the Dark Ages"

(-) Rising Nationalism and World War



Struggling Through

The terror had continued...slowly at first with an escalation of suicide bombers in Israel, then Europe and then the U.S. Each event drove a stronger bond to fight terror among the major Western powers, Russia and some third world countries that feared "being on the wrong side". But just as 9/11 shocked the country and the world, the nuclear incident of 3/29 shook the foundations of American resolve, and dealt a devastating moral and economic blow to the country. It removed all innocence the nation had ever clung to after 9/11, and set the stage for a generation at war against a largely faceless, nameless enemy. What other series of events could have ever resulted in such strong bipartisan support for an international U.N. nuclear force? - it was hard to imagine before 3/29, but so straightforward now...

The loss of over a million American lives and the indefinite evacuation of a hundred-plus mile stretch of the East Coast might have been the only way the world could come together to move toward its ultimate destiny...perhaps. Certainly the extraordinary cooperation between the U.S. and Russia and the rise in religious service attendance were indicators that something very dramatic had happened. What was so important before, no longer was, and new priorities were being set by the younger generation. And most remarkable of all - the free elections of 2010 in China, establishing a unified China once again with the island of Taiwan, gave a glimmer of hope to all the world that something special might rise from the ashes of devastation that had been sown by the thousands of trained terrorist cells around the world.

The key: education. As the world came together to "solve" the problem of terror once and for all, the path became clear: the world must commit to take an entire younger generation and provide enlightenment and education to bring the children away from the influences of the 20th century hatred. It was going to be a difficult road, and many believed that such a commitment could never transcend election boundaries, but the continuing terror being wreaked worldwide proved to be the motivation. It was hoped that the *Malta Global Strategy Toward Peace* would begin to see results before a cell obtained sufficient weapons to create the feared *Global Discontinuity*. And so it was, this resolve that the U.S. and its partners continued ***Struggling Through*** to their ultimate destiny.

A Chance for Hope

It had made a much more significant change than even the proponents had imagined - Palestine, the State. With official status in the U.N., and defensible boundaries, who would have guessed that such an event would itself create the dissolution of the very terrorist networks it had spawned? The wave of Anti-Americanism subsided, allowing the U.S. to regroup and invest in new technologies to further fight third world and domestic terrorist activities. Emboldened by its success, the Administration took a deep breath and launched Operation Freedom - the overthrow of the Iraqi government. Although the delicate balance was threatened many times, when the cache of chemical and biological weapons poised for launch were discovered, and then the two weaponized nuclear launch vehicles uncovered in the children's hospital north of Baghdad, the world realized a *Global Discontinuity* had been avoided, and the U.S. was viewed with renewed admiration.

The completion of Bush-Putin I, and the signing of the Huen-Wilson-Sakarov dismantlement treaty gave hope to the world that it had stepped back from the brink of destruction. The New United Nations quickly gathered all of the necessary resources to serve as the Overseer, and many believed that there indeed was a renewed *Chance for Hope*.

World War III

We won...the war on terrorism. Operation Freedom and its subsequent military actions in Libya, the Sudan and Lebanon broke the back of the terrorist groups that had spent over 20 years training their younger generation to destroy the Great Satan. But as many had feared, the resentment and overstaying of our invitation in the countries of our Middle Eastern allies proved to be too great, as the linkage, real or implied, to Israel began to take its toll. And so began the first exchange of the *Millennium War* (some continue to call it World War III even to this day because they refuse to believe it is a war that will last generations). If it was not so horrific to watch the nuclear exchanges "play out", it could almost be considered remarkable - *the tactical use* of nuclear weapons, a million deaths here, and a million deaths there - but never triggering a full exchange of stockpiles. Some magic threshold in the social conscience of warring nations could not be crossed, and each exchange was tempered, holding just prior to escalating to the *Global Discontinuity*. But now, in the second decade of the millennium, to the dismay of many, the overthrow of the Musharraf government and the loss of the Pakistani nuclear stockpile to the fundamentalist faction created a frightening specter of a dark, dark future. The extra \$200B that had been added yearly to the U.S. defense budget did not seem as outlandish as it once did - the world was hunkering down and digging its moats as it prepared for how **World War III** might ultimately take its course.

Return of the Dark Ages

He was surprised there were so many children...and so few adults. They had driven as close to ground zero as they could...3/29 would now be another number indelibly etched into America's history as was 9/11. The bus ran fine, but he felt compelled to stop one last time before he topped the hill and look back upon the eerie glow of the fires still burning, creating a surrealistic image punctuated by the truncated Washington Monument that would remain indelibly etched in his mind for the remainder of his life. One of the children asked him "why did somebody do this Mr. Powell?" "I don't know son, I don't know." But he really did know - he had been there to help broker the negotiations that was supposed to head off the Crystal Geyser event, but everyone knew it was still possible, so they planned for it anyway. If only...they had taken action after the fall of Iran this might have been avoided. But in those days, how could we have invaded a country and taken all the children away from their parents and isolated them so they would not grow up to be the terrorist cells of the 21st Century. It offended our sensibilities, and now this as a result...

At least it seemed like the plan was working - martial law had been declared within the first hour, the National Guard was mobilized across the country, and the shadow government was

broadcasting reassurances over the major radio stations. He looked skyward before re-boarding the bus and prayed that our missiles had landed on the right places. All the world would feel the pain.

Powell dropped off the last of the children in Denver as he proceeded to Cheyenne Mountain - this had seemed like such a silly scenario when first crafted, but he had made it safely and been able to stay in contact throughout most of his trip with the President. It had also given him some time to think about what might have been...if only we had spent more time understanding the rest of the world and the path it was headed down. The challenge ahead seemed so daunting.

In the ensuing years, a different lifestyle evolved. The disparity between the haves and have-nots grew as the old term "gated communities" transitioned to "armed encampments" - the standing government had to ensure that the industrial might and resources of the U.S. was guarded, this was our future.

Without the superpower global protector exercising its influence, global conflicts had festered, and now were on the brink of disaster - the Koreas, India-Pakistan, Israel-Arab, China-Taiwan, not to mention local civil wars too numerous to count where factions had secured weapons of mass destruction with impunity. Some estimated 100 million had died since 3/29, and the nuclear winter theory was being tested in a real life experiment. Life had seemed so complicated before, and now it was simply overwhelming.

The urge to survive and live was remarkably strong, however, and in some discussions there was even hope that amid the casualties, most, if not all of the fundamentalist enclaves had been annihilated. But Powell was tired - the cancer had taken its toll and he knew it would not be very long before he became as yet another victim of 3/29. "Mr. Powell, Mr. Powell" the young man said shaking him to wake him. "Do you remember me?" Powell looked up and the face seemed familiar. "I was on the bus you drove from Washington after 3/29 - I'm Johnny." Powell noticed the bird on his uniform, and smiled - "Johnny, what do you think?" "We're going to make it, Mr. Powell, we're going to make it. And we have all learned. The Internet is up and running again, and they are saying from all over the world that this will be a new beginning for all of us." These were comforting words for Powell, who like many others, had struggled these past years through the *Return of the Dark Ages*.