Security in the Great Transition

Charles Knight

GTI Paper Series

Frontiers of a Great Transition

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Security in the Great Transition

Preface

This paper offers a plausible narrative on how the world moved very close to the elimination of large-scale organized violence in the seventy-eight years between 2006 and 2084. The narrative is written with the voice of an historian in 2084.

The word "plausible" is used advisedly to describe this narrative. The intent is to provide texture to the opportunity we have in our time to prepare for a *Great Transition*. Plausible narratives are the minimum criteria for enabling the "pull" that will energize the collective effort required for the *Great Transition*. We must have credible possibility, a plausibility worth pursuing. Then, without any guarantees of success, we have the basis from which to turn our collective will to constructing the future we envision.

There are many other security narratives that can be written about the next seventy-eight years. In some, if not all of these alternatives, wars of various kinds would feature prominently. A quite plausible narrative could include a new world war with disastrous consequences for many nations and societies as well as hundreds of millions of proximate deaths.

Certainly, from the perspective of 2006 the prospects counsel pessimism. The world's greatest military power, the United States, has embarked on a "Global War" or "long war" policy of unilateral (or very limited multilateral) military interventions, meant in part to demonstrate its dominating military strength. Human history strongly suggests that another center of power will eventually rise, organizing armed force to initially counter-balance the dominant power and later to probe and challenge until it finds the opportunity to overcome and assert its own dominance. This, in abbreviated form, is the conservative Realist story, one that current U.S. strategy explicitly invokes and then seeks to forestall through extended dominance.

There are many other stories that can be told. One is emergent at this moment. The first big demonstration of U.S. dominance and its militarized counter-proliferation policies appears to be failing in Iraq. This imminent failure provides an opening for construction of another more optimistic narrative recounted below. It takes off from the opening that accompanies failure, moves through a global crisis in 2015 to the years of a reform period immediately following, and continues through the *Great Transition* beginning in 2025.

There are many different aspects and layers to what has been termed "human security". Security is a meaningful and consequential concept all the way up from the personal to the familial, community, national, and international levels. It involves aspects that are economic, environmental, cultural, criminal, and military, to name just a few.

At the level of states and nations there is a likelihood of greater commonality of interest in some types of security issues than in others. The difference is attributable to the degree to which some actors calculate and prioritize advantage from competition and/or conflict. Global warming and pandemic are two types of security threats where the benefits of

cooperation are easily perceived by all. With these it is obvious that "we are all in this together" and solutions are best arrived by coordinated and cooperative action.

Even here, we find the case of a privileged country (the USA) refusing to cooperate on global warming because to do so might hurt its economic advantage in the short run. With the threat of pandemic, states might freeload on other's preventive investments and opt for defensive measures such as shutting down border crossings in the event of an outbreak. Such choices could precipitate economic conflict and even war.

Economic dislocations and war are intermediate cases. While we can predict that most nations will find economic dislocations in the international system undesirable, a few nations may calculate that certain types of dislocations are advantageous, especially if they are poised to take advantage of such for market penetration.

Similarly with war, most nations may view warfare as undesirable and dangerous. However, a few may calculate advantage in pursuing goals by means of war. Miscalculation of advantage in war is a frequent occurrence, which means that nations can too easily undervalue the benefits of cooperation and of avoiding armed conflict.

This paper focuses on international security, the problem of war in particular. Moving beyond the war system is almost certainly a requisite of the *Great Transition*. Few of the other aspects of the *Great Transition* will come to pass if nation states still prepare for and engage in warfare on anything like the scale they do today. Warfare and its preparation not only undermine the global consensus-building needed for the *Great Transition*, but it robs the world of resources vital to that transition.

By choosing to focus on warfare, this author does not imply the diminishment of any of the other types of security issues. In fact, our historian in 2084 specifies critical changes in the culture of personal and social relationships that were prerequisites to deep changes in the war system. Nonetheless, it is beyond the scope of this paper to report on all the changes in security during the *Great Transition*. Other historians will have to fill out the narrative as we go forward.

Charles Knight, 2006

The Terminus of War and Militarism in the 21st Century

Dateline: 2084

In the twentieth century, an important international consensus emerged. It became the norm of the "international community" that concerted collective effort should be made to avoid war. In prior centuries, the norm had been that war was an accepted part of statecraft. By the late nineteenth century, the norms were changing and in the early years of the twentieth century European powers convened peace treaty conferences. After the Second World War, the victors established the United Nations in furtherance of war avoidance. This consensus at the level of the "international community" was accompanied by a shift in many cultures away from the glorification of war making.

Despite this progress at the ideological and, to the lesser extent, the institutional levels, the twentieth century certainly ranked high on the list of most bloody eras in human history. Rapidly growing human populations and the maturation of industrial war contributed to this carnage. In particular, the proliferation of rapid-fire small weapon technology and the large-scale employment of strategic bombing meant that when warring happened, it was likely to kill a great many. Fierce ideological contention between communism, liberal capitalism, and fascism were additional factors that resulted in the deaths of many millions of human beings in the ensuing wars, "hot" and "cold".

After the defeat of fascism at mid-century, the devastating potentials of the new military option of nuclear strategic bombing served to force some constraint on contentious great powers and to reorient their conflicts toward the periphery of their imperial reach, as typified by the wars in Vietnam, Afghanistan, Angola, and Central America. Then in the late 1980s, the leadership of the Soviet Union began to withdraw its military power from Eastern Europe and to negotiate significant arms reductions with the United States and NATO. Only five years later, the Soviet system spun apart.

The Soviet collapse greatly reduced the likelihood of a large scale nuclear conflagration and thereby provided the world with an enormous security windfall. It also produced numerous new weak states and "security vacuums" in regions where the Soviet Union had once been dominant and had enforced a fragile peace. This resulted in an upsurge in violent conflicts, particularly in the Balkans with the break up of the Yugoslav union and in parts of Africa where parties to the Cold War had generously armed indigenous factions. The Cold War's Afghan war also spilled over into the twenty-first century when a relatively small radical Islamist group that had organized and employed Afghan civil war veterans attacked the United States.

This was followed by aggressive counter action by the United States against Afghanistan and Iraq. U.S. military activism under the mantel of the "sole superpower" or the "indispensable nation" accelerated in the second half of the 1990s during the Balkan wars and by 2004 reached levels not seen since the Indochina war forty years

earlier. With the 2006 Defense Review, the U.S. military began framing its activity as "the long war".

In 2008 when 70,000 U.S. troops were still taking casualties in and around the territory now known as the former-Iraq, American public doubts and frustrations with the new wars reached such a level that this sort of military intervention was no longer politically sustainable. When a new administration took over in Washington in 2009, it quietly began moving away from the security policy frameworks of a "long war" and a "Global War on Terrorism". The new administration began modest shifts toward investing more in non-military aspects of security. Although the previous administration had killed or captured many people it designated "terrorists", most observers believed the "long war" was not going well. In particular, the frequency of suicide bombing had grown with the onset of the Iraq war and had remained high during the decade. The new administration, in keeping with a declared "renewal of multilateralism", launched a major diplomatic initiative to build a cooperative approach to the problem of terrorism. The initiative was to be coordinated globally and rooted locally with a priority focus on intelligence gathering and law enforcement activities.

But this did not happen without first building a stronger foundation of consensus and trust. This included intentional restraint of any actions that might be interpreted as the West attacking Islam; coordinated counter-terrorist actions were designed to minimize the chance of increasing the resonance of the terrorist's reactionary message. Recognizing that the campaign against terrorism would not elicit the cooperation essential for its success if it was perceived as the privileged instrument of a few states, the campaign was grounded in a framework of equal justice before the law.

In early steps, the United States endorsed the International Criminal Court and worked to extend the Court's purview to cover terrorism. Interpol and the UN Terrorism Prevention Branch were reinforced substantially to help lead international cooperation in law enforcement. The U.S. pledged that military action against terrorism—apart from acts of immediate self-defense—would henceforth proceed under UN auspices. The Security Council convened an international summit to map international strategy on terrorism.*

By the middle of the second decade of the twenty-first century there were clear signs that this revised strategy was paying off. The number of incidents of high casualty terrorism was now at half of the peak in the previous decade and the trend was clearly downward.

Meanwhile, broadly shared perceptions of what constituted the highest priority security threats shifted. Symptoms of global warming were now manifest, and political pressure to respond in substantial and meaningful ways was becoming irresistible. Several elected governments fell after the flu pandemic of 2015 (although many experts called it an episode "of moderate severity"), and leaders across the world called for effective

* Terrorism section adapted from Conetta (2002).

investments in public health measures, which in turn necessitated addressing the structures of poverty.

Most everyone acknowledged that the "global warming crisis" and the threat of global pandemic were going to demand huge resource investments. Following the global financial crisis of 2015, it was obvious that these investments could not be made unless military spending decreased significantly. In this situation, it became commonplace to speak of the limits of U.S. power, especially the failure of unilateralism and the over-reliance on military instruments during the Global War on Terrorism years. Nudged along by other great powers, the U.S. returned, however reluctantly, to supporting the task of building international security institutions and norms as the best option for preventing international chaos.

Even during the decade of extreme U.S. military unilateralism, the United Nations Peacekeeping Department had quietly become more substantial, more professional, and more full-time. Contributing troops, supplies, and financial support to UN peacekeeping operations became a routine security function for many nations. This set the stage so that when in 2017 Canada, Pakistan, and Japan together moved a plan to establish a small permanent UN volunteer "legion", the U.S., after some months of heated political debate, acceded to its establishment. Working from a former NATO base offered by Turkey, this legion established a professional, well-trained, and well-equipped force (see The Founding UN Legion, p. 6).

In its first years, the activities of this small UN force received little attention, having deployed along with several national forces only three times in support of peacekeeping missions. Then in 2020, there was an outbreak of inter-communal violence in the Congo, and the U.N. legion was able to deploy leading elements within four days. A few weeks later, this force was credited by numerous journalists and commentators as "preventing another Rwanda", resulting in an upsurge of global political support for the force.

With the UN legion proving mission-capable, nations that had previously contributed elements of their armed forces to peacekeeping missions began to realize that it was politically easier and more cost-effective to contribute financial support for the UN force. This dynamic reinforced rapid growth of the volunteer UN force. Now supported by a broad consortium of richer nations, the UN legion doubled in size every three years of the next eighteen, adding capabilities such as air transport and advanced communications. By 2040 it had more deployable infantry than the U.S. Marine Corps and was considered at least as capable in its respective role.

The UN Security Council had gone through a series of reforms in the second and third decades of the century that made it more inclusive and more democratic. This was the body with the ultimate responsibility and authority for political decisions regarding large-scale interventions, including those that combined the UN's own legion with national forces. Even among the state powers that constituted the Security Council authority, it was understood that the considered opinion of independent jurists was essential in order to achieve the best approximation of justice in international disputes or in cases of crimes

against humanity. Panels of jurists would ensure that more than a few people with some meaningful degree of independence and disinterest could work toward a common assessment of the evidence and its relevance before reaching a judgment. In the early part of the century, the Security Council had authorized a number of ad hoc international commissions of inquiry (e.g. The International Commission of Inquiry on Darfur), and by 2020 a permanent apparatus was in place in Geneva that served to empanel international jurists, sometimes on extremely short notice. This structure served to increase the confidence in the decisions made by the Security Council when undertaking forceful measures.

In the early decades of the twenty-first century, the experiential and institutional basis for global cooperation was not yet mature enough to effectively tackle the full range and magnitude of problems. The impetus for security cooperation was restrained by concerns about the profound disparities in power among nations as well as suspicions remaining from earlier conflicts. For these reasons, most security policy planning and implementation still proceeded on a unilateral national basis. Nevertheless, one of the most encouraging aspects of the global security environment beginning in the third decade of the century was the express desire of almost all large state and non-state actors to address problems by working from a common perspective and through cooperation.

The Founding UN Legion*

The initial UN legion of 15,000 troops was comprised of these components:
Two brigade HQs (340 staff and support personnel each), two motorized infantry battalions, two light mechanized infantry battalions, one cavalry squadron, one light armored cavalry squadron (thirty-seven light tanks), two armed scout helicopter companies (eighteen aircraft each), four field artillery batteries (eight guns each), two air defense companies (twelve mounted air defense systems each), two combat engineer companies, two signal companies, two field intelligence companies, two MP companies, two civil affairs companies, and two field logistics bases.

From these elements, various "deployment packages" were tailored for differing missions.

A force tailored to perform a mission of ceasefire monitoring involved two motorized infantry companies, two cavalry troops, a scout helicopter company, and one company each of signal and field intelligence personnel.

A more demanding mission, such as the provision of humanitarian relief and support for national reconstruction under conditions of low but tangible threat, required a larger and somewhat more robust force package: one motorized infantry battalion, including a fire support company; two troops of cavalry, each supported by a mobile mortar platoon; and one each of armed scout helicopter, combat engineer, military police, civil affairs, signal, and field intelligence companies.

Most demanding would have been a mission involving the protection of safe areas and the disarmament of factions. For such a mission planners would add to the package just described: a light mechanized infantry battalion, two light armored cavalry troops, two artillery batteries, and one air defense company. With these additions and service support elements, the package would constitute a 5,000-person reinforced brigade. Among its assets would be eighteen light tanks, sixteen 155-mm field pieces, thirty-three medium-heavy mortars, twelve mobile air defense systems, eighteen armed scout helicopters, and approximately 200 other combat vehicles mounting a variety of weapons.

The capacity of the legion to meet the requirements of any specific operation depended heavily on the operation's scope, the level of hostility in the theater, and the size and capability of potential belligerent forces. Nonetheless, the legion was large and varied enough to deploy any one of the packages described above while retaining a duplicate package at home as a strategic reserve (in reconstitution and/or training mode). Furthermore, even the least combat capable of these packages had a significantly greater operational mobility and capacity for self-protection than comparably-sized light infantry forces of the type often used in peacekeeping operations during the twentieth century.

* From Conetta and Knight (1995).

Yet with cooperative security institutions and regimes still underdeveloped, there was a danger that nations would take unilateral initiatives that would undermine the basis for global cooperation. It was understood that ill will on the part of any player was not a necessary precondition for heightened security tensions. Nations could fall inadvertently into the "security dilemma", whereby each pursues security in ways that beggar their neighbor's. Care was taken, therefore, to ensure that each nation's posture (in its particulars) was consistent with and conducive to progress toward greater interstate trust, as a necessary condition for any far-reaching cooperation. Direct cooperative initiatives—such as joint peacekeeping—were understood as necessary, but not sufficient. All aspects of military security policy needed to meet "confidence-building" criteria.

In the second decade of the century the U.S. was mired in a multi-national "land war in Asia" and the Middle East. Its people and leaders were now acknowledging the limits of its "super" powers, and for the first time in more than a half-century, the U.S. was undergoing a profound reconsideration of its role in the world. As the world's greatest proponent of offensive military doctrines, it was, of course, skeptical of the entire notion of "defensive restructuring" —an idea promulgated by a number of smaller powers and numerous NGOs. But, its leadership now wanted to reduce and withdraw forward forces in some regions and was facing serious problems of how to maintain stability in areas where it had previously exerted a dominating military influence. Thus, the U.S. joined in sponsoring the establishment of the UN Office of Defensive Restructuring in 2021 as part of the solution to the necessary reordering of global military power (see Doctrinal Principles of the Office of Defensive Restructuring, p. 8).

The Office of Defensive Restructuring was composed of both military planning specialists and diplomats who shared a mission to seek customized solutions for creating and maintaining security confidence between neighboring countries and across regions. They did this by advising military planners and parliaments on how to reorganize and modernize their military establishments into robust defenders while presenting the lowest feasible threat to other countries. The diplomats worked to persuade leaders of the value of non-provocative security options while also helping develop broader solutions to security problems that might persist despite restructuring.

Doctrinal Principles of the Office of Defensive Restructuring (ODR)*
Excerpts from ODR document dated 2029

The work of the Office of Defensive Restructuring is based on the recognition that a primary requisite of effective security cooperation is international trust and confidence founded on stable regional and trans-regional military relations. This requires stability measures at the level of national military policy, a minimization of imbalances between nations, and a viable institutional framework for multinational cooperation and conflict management.

Military stabilization at the national level can be best achieved by an appropriate and affordable defense establishment and a sufficient, steadfast, and non-provocative defense posture. In addition, military structures must avoid contributing to the aggravation of existing or potential civil conflict.

An *appropriate* defense establishment is one that is suitable to the particular society it serves. In general nations should not simply imitate foreign structures, but rather build them in accord with the character of the nation and the skills of its people. Furthermore, if a nation's goals include economic renewal, democracy, social harmony, and international co-operation, the norms and culture of the military establishment must reflect and reinforce these goals.

An *affordable* defense will achieve security within existing resource and demographic constraints. Nations that are confident in their defensive intent can exploit the structural and operational efficiencies of a defensive orientation. These "home court" advantages include the high morale of troops defending home territory, intimate knowledge of the terrain, shorter lines of supply and communication, and the opportunity to intensively prepare the likely zones of combat. The inherent efficiencies of a defensive orientation also make easier the reconciliation of the various confidence-building defense criteria: non-provocation, sufficiency, steadfastness, and affordability.

Sufficiency refers to how well a defense posture matches a threat matrix. The degree of "match" involves both qualitative and quantitative aspects of the threat(s). To provide a context for the measure of sufficiency, it is important to undertake a broad review of national objectives. This process will help specify what is to be protected and set the level of defense or deterrence certainty that a nation can or wishes to attain. Once objectives are clear, it is possible (although by no means easy) to determine military "sufficiency".

A *steadfast* posture combines qualities of robustness and reliability. Robustness refers to the capacity of a defense array to absorb shock and suffer losses without undergoing catastrophic collapse; instead maintaining a cohesive combat capability. Even when facing an overwhelming level of threat, a robust defense force will degrade gracefully, buying time to regroup, for diplomatic intervention, or for outside assistance.

Reliability, the second aspect of steadfastness, refers to the capacity of the military to perform as planned with high confidence across a wide variety of "environmental" circumstances. A reliable defense will avoid the security gamble implicit in "high risk" operational plans and in dependence on immature or poorly integrated technologies. Reliability is also a function of social relations in the armed forces and the society and of the motivation and training of personnel.

A defense posture is regarded as non-provocative if it (i) embodies little or no capacity for large-scale or surprise cross-border attack and (ii) provides few, if any, high-value and vulnerable targets for an aggressor's attack. Such a posture contributes to stability in times of rising political tension by reducing fear of and opportunity for preemption.

The non-provocation standard also addresses the larger issues of the security dilemma by seeking to reduce reliance on offensively oriented military structures and, in so doing, minimizes the threat of aggression inherent in any organized armed force. Such threats often stimulate arms races and

* Adapted from Conetta, Knight, and Unterseher (1996).

countervailing offensive doctrines. By bringing military structures into line with defensive political ends, the non-provocation standard aims to facilitate the emergence of positive political relations and trust among nations.

In contrast, any doctrine and force posture that is oriented to project power into other countries is provocative unless reliably restrained by political and organizational structures.

For countries that have experienced serious ethnic and political strife, it is of great importance that their national security apparatus itself not contribute to centrifugal forces. Military functions must be de-politicized and police functions should not be militarized. The composition of forces should reflect the ethnic balance of the nation as closely as possible.

Defensive restructuring on a national basis cannot by itself relinquish all offensive potential, particularly at the tactical level. Regional confidence building must take into account the large asymmetries in real and potential military power among states in a region, and in this context planning must be sensitive to the provocative nature of many military options. Many regions have regional giants with many times the GDP and defense expenditure of neighboring countries. The hegemonic potential of such regional giants cannot be ignored. In this context, smaller states should emphasize the affordability and robustness of their defense structures and fully exploit their "home advantages"—which include the opportunity to prepare their territory and infrastructure to support defensive operations. In the case of the regional giant, the emphasis should be on reducing its military dominance vis-à-vis other countries in the region while displaying enlightened leadership in cooperative endeavors to improve collective security. This would entail reducing active forces to the minimum level consistent with meeting immediate threats while preserving the basis for expansion or reconstitution should future threats arise.

Commensurate with the above, the end point of retrenchment and modernization should be a general reduction in the proportion of strike assets in the force. The structure of long-ranging, mobile forces should reflect missions of patrol and control of areas and lines of communication rather than strike. This means placing lower priority in the force structure composition on highly mobile protected fire assets, such as armored combat helicopters and tanks.

By 2030 the World Union (the successor to the United Nations) had acquired technical means (chief among them satellites) to monitor military forces and their movements. Together with the information gathered by the now universally accepted and routine international arms inspections, the observations by technical means allowed for near real-time assessments of the capabilities of mobilized armed forces. This information was published with hourly updates and was available to all. Military transparency of this sort was an enormous boost to security confidence.

Within a decade the practical value of defensive restructuring was recognized both through perceptions of lower threats and in substantial resource savings. This set in motion an important dynamic. As soon as security dividends were recognized, many nations, pressed as they were by resource demands for other needs, began cutting back their military establishments, sometimes faster than the former hegemon thought wise. This made the U.S. (and the broader "international community") rely more on the advice and leadership of the UN's Office of Defensive Restructuring to guide regional defense balancing and to manage the process of demilitarization. The Office was becoming the world's center for expertise on international security.

In the third decade of the twenty-first century, following the broad failure of the U.S. policy of militarized counter-proliferation after the Cold War, the nuclear powers returned to focused planning and negotiation around reductions and control of nuclear weapons stocks and materials. In 2035 an international regime was in place for regulating and storing spent nuclear fuel, controlling uranium enrichment and plutonium separation facilities, and providing universal on-site inspection of nuclear power facilities.* By mid-century, one former member of the "nuclear club" had unilaterally eschewed nuclear weaponry, and all the remaining members had reduced their arsenals to "minimum deterrent" levels. Although debates about the possibility of assured permanent control of nuclear weaponry continued, the general level of confidence in the carefully developed nuclear arms control regime was high and growing.

After 2025 the notion that nations needed to maintain large global-intervention forces began to lose support, and parliaments, with increasing frequency, chose to realize budget savings by downsizing national forces in favor of more "cost-effective" investments in the international force. Growing capabilities for non-violent conflict resolution realized both through institutions and through the changing global culture further reduced the need for large-scale investment in national defense.

That said, the reductions in national armed forces were slow and measured, reflecting an abundance of state caution, ideological resistance, and institutional inertia. The United States started the century with a standing active force of 1.2 million soldiers. In keeping with its less militarized approach to security in the second decade, the U.S. began reducing the size of these forces so that by the time of the "2015 crisis", its standing forces had been reduced to 1.1 million soldiers. In the next ten years, there was a further reduction of 350,000, bringing the remaining active force to 750,000. During the *Great Transition* that followed, U.S. forces were increasingly viewed as back-up or reserve forces to the (now) World Union's legions which were growing in size and capabilities as the U.S. forces continued to get smaller. Now, in 2084, the World Union forces are considerably larger than the forces under the flag of the U.S. or any other nation. The century also witnessed a decline in military spending as a percentage of GDP, with a plurality of nations spending well below 1% and even the United States standing at about 0.9% (down from a century high of 3.5% in 2003.)

The twenty-first century saw the expansion and maturing of non-violent responses to conflict and the deepening legitimization and institutionalization of collective action. Some NGOs specializing in non-violent conflict resolution and in humanitarian missions spun off new quasi-public versions allowing for a steady increase in resources available, a vast expansion of activity, and a consequent rise in effectiveness in prevention of deadly conflict. An example is the development of the Non-violent Peaceforce in 2003. Its mission has been to build a trained, global civilian peaceforce committed to third-party non-violent intervention. The peaceforce works in partnership with local groups to

* From the disarmament steps advocated by Krieger, D. and Ong, C (2005).

apply proven strategies to protect human rights, deter violence, and help create space for local peacemakers to carry out their work.

Non-violent Peaceforce field teams use a variety of techniques to reduce and prevent violence, applied as appropriate to particular circumstances:

- Accompanying civil society activists
- Providing protective presence in villages and at public events
- Monitoring demonstrations and other volatile situations
- Connecting people to resources
- Linking local leaders, local authorities, community based organizations (CBOs), and other individuals
- Introducing other NGOs and INGOs to the area
- Consulting with local activists and people in general on crisis options
- Providing safe places to meet

The Non-violent Peaceforce deployments began modestly in 2004 with a couple of dozen international field staff working in four communities in Sri Lanka. By 2008 it had world-wide deployments of 300 and a trained volunteer Peaceforce of 1,500. On the eve of the *Great Transition* in 2025, with support from a consortium of a dozen countries and thousands of individuals, the trained and ready Peaceforce stood at 60,000 and was active in 80% of the major conflict zones of the world. It was frequently credited with preventing the spread of local armed conflicts and, on more than a few occasions, with being a key player in the resolution of the conflict.

The trend toward global demilitarization was reinforced and, in some senses, dependent on other aspects of the *Great Transition*. The *Great Transition* resulted in reduction of tension and conflict in the areas of economic, environmental, and social life, which in turn serve as preconditions to demilitarization.

Few of the advancements in international security arrangements and in the demilitarization of nation states we enjoy today would have been possible if there had not been a deep change in culture from below. The previous century had already witnessed less glorification of warring and the rise to prominence of several outstanding leaders and movements committed to non-violent political struggle.

In the twenty-first century, a deeper cultural change happened. Non-violent practice became central to many more people's lives and identities at all levels of relationships, from the personal to the global. Historians trace this “culture revolution” back to the feminist and gay liberation struggles of the twentieth century. By the second decade of the twenty-first century, these movements had evolved into broad and multi-variant gender revolution that found strong resonance in the Global Citizens Movement that was

then gaining strength (Kriegman, 2006). More and more people came to understand that gender identity and roles were much more of a choice (and had many more possibilities) than had been understood in previous generations. Gender identity and roles were increasingly understood as non-dichotomous, occupying a complex space of sexual and gender behavior possibilities. Gender expression was an active, creative, and inventive part of life and very much a choice in the way of being with and among others.

Although there was significant cultural resistance to this gender revolution, many observers expressed surprise at how quickly millions, especially among the young, broke with conventional identities to join in the freedom of open gender expression.

For matters of security, this "revolution" had several effects: a significant minority of males began to identify with a masculinity that did not include an affinity for violent or dominating relations with others, and a majority of females were no longer willing to cede management of security (in their immediate lives and internationally) to males. This had political effect in that it became much harder to form political coalitions in support of wars—in particular, fewer people were willing to throw their political support behind organized violence. Also, many more females aspired to be elected or promoted into positions of power and found success, often supported by significant numbers of males who preferred less violent and less dominating approaches to security issues frequently favored by female leaders.

This female-male alliance caused a profound shift in the culture of violence at the personal, familial, and community level. As the century progressed, the steady decrease in the size of national armies and the numbers of wars was matched by a similarly paced decrease in violence "domestically", the result of intensive social and political organizing by this growing female-male gender alliance. Of course, this change in gender identities and relations was not evenly paced across cultures and societies, but an unmistakable global trend was apparent that supported lower levels of international, inter-communal, and inter-personal violence.

In the final analysis, it was the actuality of less warfare between states and within states that provided the necessary underpinning of the global demilitarization. In the first decade following the end of the Cold War, the average number of armed conflicts in the world each year had been forty-nine (UCDP, 2006). In the first decade of the twenty-first century, this average fell to thirty-three. With the onset of the *Great Transition* in 2025, the number of armed conflicts was at twenty-five and in 2084 it stands at nine, an 80% decrease during the century.

Of special significance for nations with a history of maintaining large armed forces, the incidence of interstate warfare is approaching just one a decade, with the most recent incidents best described as brief skirmishes rather than wars. As evidenced by the grumbling of military leaders about constrained strategic and tactical options, the decline in numbers of armed conflicts has also been accompanied by growing global consensus that non-combatant casualties are no longer an acceptable "collateral" cost of fighting.

The Enduring Problem of Armed Rebellion

The right to take up arms against oppression is cherished by many, often valued as strongly as the desire for peace. In the twenty-first century, this tension would prove to be the most persistent to involve organized violence. In the closing decades of the century, this is the type of large-scale organized violence that most challenges the collective efforts to move toward a comprehensive global regime of non-violent conflict resolution and thereby end systemic war.

The problem of armed rebellion is complicated by the fact that criminal organizations often take advantage of legitimate popular grievances against established governments by arming and supporting rebel groups that can then chase away police and hold territory from which the criminal activity can proceed without government interdiction. Political outlaws often need the financial resources of criminal outlaws and the criminals make use of the armed power of the political rebels.

States, of course, perceive a clear right and need for self-defense, while rebels understand a clear case for fighting against illegitimate power and oppression. Third parties observe the destructive consequences of oppression and rebellion. These consequences include significant loss of life, destruction of a society's wealth, and regional spillovers that tend to spread instability and represent a broader threat to international peace.

In the twenty-first century, third parties including NGOs and international mediating, arbitrating, and juridical institutions have become much more proficient in productive interventions in these sorts of intrastate conflicts. They can count dozens of cases of averting precipitous armed conflicts and having negotiated cease-fires and peace agreements. Nonetheless, few observers foresee conditions in which armed rebellions will no longer occur. And, moreover, some people continue to believe that averting all armed rebellions is not a desirable goal in itself.

Although some of today's civil and inter-communal conflicts continue to have horrific human costs, the trend in the number of conflicts strongly supports the view that warfare is a declining human activity. In this environment, government officials, experts and the public at large share a perception that a world without war is fast approaching.

Postscript

"...without imagination we can do no more than spin the future out of the logic of the present".

Lewis Hyde

A great transition in security is a necessary component of the broader *Great Transition*. If peoples and nations continue to organize national military forces on today's scale, the potential for organized violence that exists outside a universal cooperative security system will make international and transnational cooperation in other vital areas much less likely.

This essay has one goal: To make plausible that which seems difficult to imagine at this moment in history. It is written from the perspective of a grateful historian in 2084.

Whatever reality emerges seventy-eight years from now will not be constructed out of human agency alone. Much is beyond our control. But as humans we have some freedom to apply our labor and skills with spirit and purpose toward goals. The first step on this path of purpose is in the imagination.

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