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The Pentagon's new map

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Abstract (Summary)

Barnett discusses the reason why military engagement in Baghdad is not only necessary and inevitable, but also good. In his analysis, shrinking the problems requiring American attention are only possible by stopping the ability of terrorist networks to access the regions of the world with stable governments, high standards of living, and high suicide rates, via the "seam states" like the Philippines, Mexico, Thailand, Malaysia, Greece, and Pakistan.

Full Text (3094 words)

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[Headnote]

IT EXPLAINS WHY WE'RE GOING TO WAR. AND WHY WE'LL KEEP GOING TO WAR.

[Headnote]

Since the end of the cold war, the United States has been trying to come up with an operating theory of the world-and a military strategy to accompany it. Now there's a leading contender. It involves identifying the problem parts of the world and aggressively shrinking them. Since September 11, 2001, the author, a professor of warfare analysis, has been advising the Office of the Secretary of Defense and giving this briefing continually at the Pentagon and in the intelligence community. Now he gives it to you.

LET ME TELL YOU why military engagement with Saddam Hussein's regime in Baghdad is not only necessary and inevitable, but good.

When the United States finally goes to war again in the Persian Gulf, it will not constitute a settling of old scores, or just an enforced disarmament of illegal weapons, or a distraction in the war on terror. Our next war in the Gulf will mark a historical tipping point-the moment when Washington takes real ownership of strategic security in the age of globalization.

That is why the public debate about this war has been so important: It forces Americans to come to terms with what I believe is the new security paradigm that shapes this age, namely, Disconnectedness defines danger. Saddam Hussein's outlaw regime is dangerously disconnected from the globalizing world, from its rule sets, its norms, and all the ties that bind countries together in mutually assured dependence.

The problem with most discussion of globalization is that too many experts treat it as a binary outcome: Either it is great and sweeping the planet, or it is horrid and failing humanity everywhere. Neither view really works, because globalization as a historical process is simply too big and too complex for such summary judgments. Instead, this new world must be defined by where globalization has truly taken root and where it has not.

Show me where globalization is thick with network connectivity, financial transactions, liberal media flows, and collective security, and I will show you regions featuring stable governments, rising standards of living, and more

deaths by suicide than murder. These parts of the world I call the Functioning Core, or Core. But show me where globalization is thinning or just plain absent, and I will show you regions plagued by politically repressive regimes, widespread poverty and disease, routine mass murder, and-most important-the chronic conflicts that incubate the next generation of global terrorists. These parts of the world I call the Non-Integrating Gap, or Gap.

Globalization's "ozone hole" may have been out of sight and out of mind prior to September 11, 2001, but it has been hard to miss ever since. And measuring the reach of globalization is not an academic exercise to an eighteen-year-old marine sinking tent poles on its far side. So where do we schedule the U. S. military's next round of away games? The pattern that has emerged since the end of the cold war suggests a simple answer: in the Gap.

The reason I support going to war in Iraq is not simply that Saddam is a cutthroat Stalinist willing to kill anyone to stay in power, nor because that regime has clearly supported terrorist networks over the years. The real reason I support a war like this is that the resulting long-term military commitment will finally force America to deal with the entire Gap as a strategic threat environment.

FOR MOST COUNTRIES, accommodating the emerging global rule set of democracy, transparency, and free trade is no mean feat, which is something most Americans find hard to understand. We tend to forget just how hard it has been to keep the United States together all these years, harmonizing our own, competing internal rule sets along the way-through a Civil War, a Great Depression, and the long struggles for racial and sexual equality that continue to this day. As far as most states are concerned, we are quite unrealistic in our expectation that they should adapt themselves quickly to globalization's very American-looking rule set.

But you have to be careful with that Darwinian pessimism, because it is a short jump from apologizing for globalization-as-forced-Americanization to insinuating-along racial or civilization lines-that "those people will simply never be like us." Just ten years ago, most experts were willing to write off poor Russia, declaring Slavs, in effect, genetically unfit for democracy and capitalism. Similar arguments resonated in most China-bashing during the 1990s, and you hear them today in the debates about the feasibility of imposing democracy on a post-Saddam Iraq-a sort of Muslims-are-from-Mars argument.

So how do we distinguish between who is really making it in globalization's Core and who remains trapped in the Gap? And how permanent is this dividing line?

Understanding that the line between the Core and Gap is constantly shifting, let me suggest that the direction of change is more critical than the degree. So, yes, Beijing is still ruled by a "Communist party" whose ideological formula is 30 percent Marxist-Leninist and 70 percent Sopranos, but China just signed on to the World Trade Organization, and over the long run, that is far more important in securing the country's permanent Core status. Why? Because it forces China to harmonize its internal rule set with that of globalization-banking, tariffs, copyright protection, environmental standards. Of course, working to adjust your internal rule sets to globalization's evolving rule set offers no guarantee of success. As Argentina and Brazil have recently found out, following the rules (in Argentina's case, sort of following) does not mean you are panicproof, or bubbleproof, or even recessionproof. Trying to adapt to globalization does not mean bad things will never happen to you. Nor does it mean all your poor will immediately morph into a stable middle class. It just means your standard of living gets better over time.

In sum, it is always possible to fall off this bandwagon called globalization. And when you do, bloodshed will follow. If you are lucky, so will American troops.

SO WHAT PARTS OF THE WORLD can be considered functioning right now? North America, much of South America, the European Union, Putin's Russia, Japan and Asia's emerging economies (most notably China and India), Australia and New Zealand, and South Africa, which accounts for roughly four billion out of a global population of six billion.

Whom does that leave in the Gap? It would be easy to say "everyone else," but I want to offer you more proof than that and, by doing so, argue why I think the Gap is a long-term threat to more than just your pocketbook or conscience.

If we map out U. S. military responses since the end of the cold war (see the following pages), we find an overwhelming concentration of activity in the regions of the world that are excluded from globalization's growing Core-namely the Caribbean Rim, virtually all of Africa, the Balkans, the Caucasus, Central Asia, the Middle East and Southwest Asia, and much of Southeast Asia. That is roughly the remaining two billion of the world's

population. Most have demographics skewed very young, and most are labeled "low income" or "low middle income" by the World Bank (i.e., less than \$3,000 annual per capita).

If we draw a line around the majority of those military interventions, we have basically mapped the Non-Integrating Gap. Obviously, there are outliers excluded geographically by this simple approach, such as an Israel isolated in the Gap, a North Korea adrift within the Core, or a Philippines straddling the line. But looking at the data, it is hard to deny the essential logic of the picture: If a country is either losing out to globalization or rejecting much of the content flows associated with its advance, there is a far greater chance that the U.S. will end up sending forces at some point. Conversely, if a country is largely functioning within globalization, we tend not to have to send our forces there to restore order or eradicate threats.

Now, that may seem like a tautology-in effect defining any place that has not attracted U. S. military intervention in the last decade or so as "functioning within globalization" (and vice versa). But think about this larger point: Ever since the end of World War II, this country has assumed that the real threats to its security resided in countries of roughly similar size, development, and wealth-in other words, other great powers like ourselves. During the cold war, that other great power was the Soviet Union. When the big Red machine evaporated in the early 1990s, we flirted with concerns about a united Europe, a powerhouse Japan, and-most recently-a rising China.

What was interesting about all those scenarios is the assumption that only an advanced state can truly threaten us. The rest of the world? Those less-developed parts of the world have long been referred to in military plans as the "Lesser Included," meaning that if we built a military capable of handling a great power's military threat, it would always be sufficient for any minor scenarios we might have to engage in the less-advanced world.

That assumption was shattered by September 11. After all, we were not attacked by a nation or even an army but by a group of-in Thomas Friedman's vernacular-Super-Empowered Individuals willing to die for their cause. September 11 triggered a system perturbation that continues to reshape our government (the new Department of Homeland Security), our economy (the de facto security tax we all pay), and even our society (Wave to the camera!). Moreover, it launched the global war on terrorism, the prism through which our government now views every bilateral security relationship we have across the world.

In many ways, the September 11 attacks did the U. S. national-security establishment a huge favor by pulling us back from the abstract planning of future high-tech wars against "near peers" into the here-and-now threats to global order. By doing so, the dividing lines between Core and Gap were highlighted, and, more important, the nature of the threat environment was thrown into stark relief.

Think about it: Bin Laden and Al Qaeda are pure products of the Gap-in effect, its most violent feedback to the Core. They tell us how we are doing in exporting security to these lawless areas (not very well) and which states they would like to take "offline" from globalization and return to some seventh-century definition of the good life (any Gap state with a sizable Muslim population, especially Saudi Arabia).

If you take this message from Osama and combine it with our military-intervention record of the last decade, a simple security rule set emerges: A country's potential to warrant a U.S. military response is inversely related to its globalization connectivity. There is a good reason why Al Qaeda was based first in Sudan and then later in Afghanistan: These are two of the most disconnected countries in the world. Look at the other places U. S. Special Operations Forces have recently zeroed in on: northwestern Pakistan, Somalia, Yemen. We are talking about the ends of the earth as far as globalization is concerned.

But just as important as "getting them where they live" is stopping the ability of these terrorist networks to access the Core via the "seam states" that lie along the Gap's bloody boundaries. It is along this seam that the Core will seek to suppress bad things coming out of the Gap. Which are some of these classic seam states? Mexico, Brazil, South Africa, Morocco, Algeria, Greece, Turkey, Pakistan, Thailand, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Indonesia come readily to mind. But the U. S. will not be the only Core state working this issue. For example, Russia has its own war on terrorism in the Caucasus, China is working its western border with more vigor, and Australia was recently energized (or was it cowed?) by the Bali bombing.

If we step back for a minute and consider the broader implications of this new global map, then U. S. national-security strategy would seem to be: 1) Increase the Core's immune-system capabilities for responding to September 11-like system perturbations; 2) Work the seam states to firewall the Core from the Gap's worst exports, such as terror, drugs, and pandemics; and, most important, 3) Shrink the Gap. Notice I did not just say Mind the Gap. The knee-jerk reaction of many Americans to September 11 is to say, "Let's get off our dependency on foreign

oil, and then we won't have to deal with those people." The most naive assumption underlying that dream is that reducing what little connectivity the Gap has with the Core will render it less dangerous to us over the long haul. Turning the Middle East into Central Africa will not build a better world for my kids. We cannot simply will those people away.

The Middle East is the perfect place to start. Diplomacy cannot work in a region where the biggest sources of insecurity lie not between states but within them. What is most wrong about the Middle East is the lack of personal freedom and how that translates into dead-end lives for most of the population-especially for the young. Some states like Qatar and Jordan are ripe for perestroika-like leaps into better political futures, thanks to younger leaders who see the inevitability of such change. Iran is likewise waiting for the right Gorbachev to come along-if he has not already.

What stands in the path of this change? Fear. Fear of tradition unraveling. Fear of the mullahs' disapproval. Fear of being labeled a "bad" or "traitorous" Muslim state. Fear of becoming a target of radical groups and terrorist networks. But most of all, fear of being attacked from all sides for being different-the fear of becoming Israel.

The Middle East has long been a neighborhood of bullies eager to pick on the weak. Israel is still around because it has become-sadly-one of the toughest bullies on the block. The only thing that will change that nasty environment and open the floodgates for change is if some external power steps in and plays Leviathan full-time. Taking down Saddam, the region's bully-in-chief, will force the U. S. into playing that role far more fully than it has over the past several decades, primarily because Iraq is the Yugoslavia of the Middle East-a crossroads of civilizations that has historically required a dictatorship to keep the peace. As baby-sitting jobs go, this one will be a doozy, making our lengthy efforts in postwar Germany and Japan look simple in retrospect.

But it is the right thing to do, and now is the right time to do it, and we are the only country that can. Freedom cannot blossom in the Middle East without security, and security is this country's most influential public-sector export. By that I do not mean arms exports, but basically the attention paid by our military forces to any region's potential for mass violence. We are the only nation on earth capable of exporting security in a sustained fashion, and we have a very good track record of doing it.

Show me a part of the world that is secure in its peace and I will show you strong or growing ties between local militaries and the U. S. military. Show me regions where major war is inconceivable and I will show you permanent U. S. military bases and long-term security alliances. Show me the two strongest investment relationships in the global economy and I will show you two postwar military occupations that remade Europe and Japan following World War II.

This country has successfully exported security to globalization's Old Core (Western Europe, Northeast Asia) for half a century and to its emerging New Core (Developing Asia) for a solid quarter century following our mishandling of Vietnam. But our efforts in the Middle East have been inconsistent-in Africa, almost nonexistent. Until we begin the systematic, long-term export of security to the Gap, it will increasingly export its pain to the Core in the form of terrorism and other instabilities.

Naturally, it will take a whole lot more than the U. S. exporting security to shrink the Gap. Africa, for example, will need far more aid than the Core has offered in the past, and the integration of the Gap will ultimately depend more on private investment than anything the Core's public sector can offer. But it all has to begin with security, because free markets and democracy cannot flourish amid chronic conflict.

Making this effort means reshaping our military establishment to mirror-image the challenge we face. Think about it. Global war is not in the offing, primarily because our huge nuclear stockpile renders such war unthinkable-for anyone. Meanwhile, classic state-on-state wars are becoming fairly rare. So if the United States is in the process of "transforming" its military to meet the threats of tomorrow, what should it end up looking like? In my mind, we fight fire with fire. If we live in a world increasingly populated by Super-Empowered Individuals, we field a military of Super-Empowered Individuals.

This may sound like additional responsibility for an already overburdened military, but that is the wrong way of looking at it, for what we are dealing with here are problems of success-not failure. It is America's continued success in deterring global war and obsolescing state-on-state war that allows us to stick our noses into the far more difficult subnational conflicts and the dangerous transnational actors they spawn. I know most Americans do not want to hear this, but the real battlegrounds in the global war on terrorism are still over there. If gated communities and rent-a-cops were enough, September 11 never would have happened.

History is full of turning points like that terrible day, but no turning-back points. We ignore the Gap's existence at our own peril, because it will not go away until we as a nation respond to the challenge of making globalization truly global.

[Sidebar]

DISCONNECTEDNESS DEFINES DANGER Problem areas requiring American attention*(outlined) are, in the author's analysis, called the Gap, Shrinking the Gap is possible only by stopping the ability of terrorist networks to access the Core via the "seam states" that lie along the Gap's bloody boundaries. In this war on terrorism, the U.S. will place a special emphasis on cooperation with these states. What are the classic seam states? Mexico, Brazil, South Africa, Morocco, Algeria, Greece, Turkey, Pakistan, Thailand, Malaysia, the Philippines, Indonesia.

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