

# Pre-empting Terror: Take a Networked Approach

JOHN ARQUILLA

**I**N WAR, the sometimes subtle interplay of attack and defence is best described by the concept of pre-emption—striking first so as to thwart or disrupt an impending blow. Pre-emption has long been used to offset numerical inferiority. This was the case when Sir Francis Drake raided Cadiz in 1587, wreaking enough havoc to delay the sailing of the Spanish Armada for one, fateful year. Closer to the present, in 1967, the Israelis struck at the far larger Arab armies that they thought were about to attack them, winning a remarkable, against-all-odds victory. In the current conflict, pre-emption has once again come to the fore, this time not to offset greater numbers, but rather to mitigate the problems posed by the porousness of open societies and their inherent vulnerability to terrorist attack.

It is hardly surprising, then, that both President Bush and Prime Minister Howard have articulated a shared vision about how to improve security by means of pre-emptive attacks. Theirs is clearly the most logical way to take the initiative in the terror war as, no matter how vigilantly defences are manned, there are simply too many places to protect and too many modes of attack to anticipate. Al-Qaeda and its allied terror networks are conducting a campaign designed to strike almost anywhere in the world, and they have shown aptitude at 'riding the rails' of our technology to strike at us. Clearly, a solution lies in pre-empting their plans, keeping them either running

or hiding as much of the time as possible.

Yet both the United States and Australia have encountered much reluctance to accept the pre-emptive doctrine they prefer, both in Europe and across a band of Muslim-populated countries running from Morocco to Malaysia. There are three main objections raised to pre-emption. First, some

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see a slippery slope, where disrupting an impending attack can evolve into full-blown preventive wars against those who aren't planning an assault, but whose capability to do so is growing. This concern bedevilled the efforts to cobble together a 'coalition of the willing' against Iraq.

A second concern about pre-emption is that it erodes sovereignty, in that it seems inevitable

that the pre-emptor will have to strike against terrorists located on foreign soil. This makes it a bit more complicated to invoke Article 51 of the United Nations Charter—the self-defence clause. The third objection to pre-emption is less legalistic, being more a general concern that a doctrine of pre-emption fosters dangerous unilateralism, leading to actions that might undermine international amity. It also implies that many nations simply do not want to be led—they want more say in setting strategy for the terror war.

Given the obvious good sense of a pre-emption doctrine, policy-makers must now focus on thinking their way through these objections, the goal being to set a new strategy that takes the initiative militarily and yet still strengthens the global coalition of nations allied in the fight against terror networks. An important first step would be to recognize the difference between pre-empting an oncoming attack and engaging in a preventive war. If the policy clearly distinguishes between the two, and focuses simply on pre-emption, much opposition will melt away. Sovereignty issues can be easily dealt with by the simple expedient of being sure to obtain permission from the relevant government prior to launching any pre-emptive action—a point that Prime Minister Howard has made and that President Bush should echo.

As to the resistance seen in many nations, to their being 'led', this is a thornier problem, and it requires some truly new thinking.

**REVIEW**

A recommended solution is that, in this first great war between networks and nations, it behooves the latter to form their own networks—for it is growing ever clearer that it takes a network to fight a network. If the terrorists are operating in over 60 nations, then our own counter-terror network must span 60 nations—and more. ‘Networking’, in this instance, consists of the widespread sharing of information and co-operation in the field between intelligence, military, and law enforcement organizations in all countries involved. It means pre-emptive attacks will result from shared intelligence and will feature multinational assault forces. It means that nobody leads, but rather that all strive together toward a common goal.

In many respects, Australia and its neighbours are well poised to build a co-operative regional counter-terror network. There is ample precedent for regional networking in the experiences all have gained in fighting high-seas piracy over the past decade—a struggle in which the many successes have almost all been due to swift information-sharing and joint operations. Regional networking was also crucial in response to the crisis in East Timor. Most recently, the success in pre-empting a truck bombing campaign in Singapore—planned by an al-Qaeda affiliate—was another shining example of the power of sharing even very sensitive data about terrorists with each other.

If pre-emption is to prove an effective tool against terror in the months and years to come, it must be empowered by networking. And the beauty of the concept is that, even as it makes us more efficient, it also helps to master the political, legal and social objections to taking the initiative against terror.

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# The Road to Serfdom

## How Africa is Sliding Back to Servitude

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**D**S AFRICA trudging the road back to serfdom? Friedrich A. Hayek, the 1974 Nobel Laureate in Economics, wrote in his book, *The Road to Serfdom*, that central planning systems are the surest way of enslaving people. Asked Hayek, ‘Is there a greater tragedy imaginable than that in our endeavour consciously to shape our future in accordance with high ideals we should in fact unwittingly produce the very opposite of what we have been striving for?’

With over 50 million Africans living on less than \$1 a day, African policymakers have focused on policies that encourage external donor funding to their governments. According to the World Bank, aid inflows to sub-Saharan Africa rose from 3.4 per cent of GNP in 1980 to 16.3 per cent in 1995. These official inflows typically funded basic government programmes, together with all or most of government development expenditures. Dependence on aid has led to African governments virtually ceding the shaping of their economic and social policies to external agencies. Wealthy nations and international institutions such as the World Bank and International Monetary Fund have become the central economic planners for Africa. The end result is sporadic project implementation, corruption, and poor economic performance attributable to inept policies, political tensions as each ethnic community jostles to partake of the ‘national cake’, and

disaster unpreparedness due to donor anaesthesia.

At independence, the African leadership was faced with the task of building nations and economic development. Given that the colonialists were mostly capitalists, the African elite sought to embrace socialistic strategies as a way of identifying with the masses. For the past 40 years, African countries have got stuck on the inherited economic systems that rely on production and export of primary resources. Sub-Saharan’s share of world trade has declined over this period from 3.1 per cent of world merchandise exports in 1955 to just 1.2 per cent in 1990. The entire continent of Africa accounted for a lesser share of the world’s exports than Belgium, 2.3 per cent against 3 per cent. Agricultural goods and raw extracted minerals form the bulk of the exports.

Most of the agricultural activities in Africa take place on patches of impoverished soil tilled by smallholder farmers. Seventy per cent of the African population is in the rural areas and depends mainly on agriculture. Sixty per cent of Africans are in absolute poverty, with 80 per cent of Africa’s expenditure going on food. Repeated attacks by pests and diseases, and expensive farm inputs coupled with natural disasters have put this industry in jeopardy. Food crises have exposed Africa to manipulation by wealthy nations that use food aid to further their agendas. Without analyzing the long-term impact of their decisions, African