

Alain Oudot de Dainville, faut-il avoir peur de 2030? (Need we fear the year 2030?)

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The horizon of the year 2030 seems to have intrigued an impressive variety of futurists and scenario developers. This book is among them. Retired Admiral Alain Oudot de Dainville left military service in 2008, after 42 years, as France's Chief of Naval Operations. The author is known for questioning the validity of strategies selected in historic military undertaking – even some in which he was involved – and their effects on future inter-nation relations in a fast-globalizing world. He emphasizes that “[t]he century that we recently closed has left more martyrs and victims of the ideologies of war than all the rest of humanity's history” (p. 57).

The author foresees further growing complexity in such relations, exacerbated by terrorism and piracy, cyberwar, epic natural disasters, Chernobyls, epidemics, illegal immigration and the unanticipated sequels of any of these threats to security or defense. “Yet there is a great tendency today, especially in the pacifist European Union, to develop strategy while disregarding [...] one of its weightiest elements, that of menace” (p. 137). Indeed, one of the salient facets of asymmetric warfare, itself clearly defined only about 20 years ago, is that former codes and constraints (chivalry, the Hague and Geneva conventions) no longer suffice. Military behavior in war zones is now judged a posteriori: one recalls the Dutch peacekeepers who in 1995 witnessed the Serbian massacre of thousands of Bosniaks

near Srebrenica, or the use of armed drones by US forces to assassinate selected personalities in Pakistan, Somalia and Yemen.

Formulating a strategy will depend on the nature and extent of a developing crisis. Its context may be variable, necessitating adjustments of the political choices to be made. “This will implicate actors from all the fields of activity concerned – diplomats, economists and financiers, the military [...] All will not act within the same time frame; economists will offer shorter-term proposals while agents from the world of culture will adhere to a longer term in order to propagate [...] influence. Military strategy is thus foreseen as an effort coordinated between political leaders, those who determine [a strategy's] aims, and the military, those knowing how to exploit the means”.

“But beware of the pitfalls of our time”, continues our naval author, “whereby knowledge can cede to the benefit of appearance” (p. 140). Today's French President François Hollande, for example, has set as objectives both the security of the nation “as well as being at any moment able to respond to appeals from allies to participate in peaceful actions [...]” (p.141).

As strategy at the global levels evolves, Admiral Oudot does not see the rising rivalry between China and the USA leading to an armed conflict. On the contrary, to him the cold war is a phenomenon of the past, turbid century. China now risks becoming too expensive as the world's workshop and, thus, losing some of its overseas markets – handed over to fast-developing India – despite an overall Chinese economy which may soon surpass that of the USA.

Where do foreseeable shifts in the impacts of spreading jihadism and unceasing terrorism leave Europe? The European Union today has a skeletal diplomatic and international security corps. Known as the European External Action Service (EEAS), this body of functionaries should become eventually 6,000 strong, serving a total population of a half-billion citizens, as authorized by the Treaty of Lisbon's Article 27 (2009). Yet, is it not a military establishment?

Author Oudot continues, "We are thus awaiting a revolution in European military affairs; this can come only from the leadership, rather than from the base [. . .] This will probably require a serious, frightening threat [. . .] Will Europe's Sleeping Beauty then awaken from her lethargy? [. . .] The menace is real: financial, economic, industrial

and social crises combined with tension between the North and the South [i.e. Europe and the developing world] will lead to confrontation in different forms [. . .] roundabout the year 2030" (p. 192).

Admiral Oudot de Dainville, as a military intellectual, has assembled a thoughtful and possibly prescient essay. He has reported reasons for fearing, indeed, the advent of the year 2030. Your reviewer finds it perhaps noteworthy and not merely incidental to add that the French defense budget, already overcommitted because of French support actions in the sub-Saharan nations of Mali and the Central African Republic, was again reduced in early 2014.

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