



NATO Foundation
Defense College

SHAPING SECURITY HORIZONS

STRATEGIC TRENDS (2012-2019)

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Strategic Trends (2012-2019)

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Preface

STRATEGY: SPOTTING TRENDS AND SHAPING REALITY

ALESSANDRO MINUTO-RIZZO

The world is shaped by rapid changes of all kinds, and the international situation appears to differ from one day to the next. An exceptional set of challenges gives rise to the need for first-rate tools to aid understanding and decision making. This is an important part of our efforts to survive and prosper, and is part of the mission of this Foundation: charting ahead in order to reach a considered decision. For the decision-shapers we decided to launch a long-term programme called Strategic Trends in order to provide them with relevant, focussed and short analyses in an ever changing and complicating global arena. This book is the fruit of seven years of dedication and painstaking care since 2012 on nine great geographic or functional sectors.

The big news is that we now see before our eyes an unprecedented degree of freedom to act and to think in new ways, with the actors being to a large extent non-governmental. We have little experience with situations of this kind: participants with differing values and interests bring different influences to bear, sometimes using traditional approaches, but often breaking with conventional wisdom. Hundreds of millions in complex societies are emerging from poverty, there is increasing pressure on natural resources, and aspirations and expectations are on the rise.

The first casualty is the multilateral system born from the ruins of the Second World War. Uncertainty has become the norm and the international community resembles a fleet without a commander, where every ship's captain must assume the responsibility to avoid collisions. This is no easy task and everyone needs a good chart indicating the hazards that lie ahead. Success depends on many factors, not least of which is good intuition. However, change must be recognized and accepted, and the capacity to evolve is an essential component of human nature.

We cannot expect traditional norms to persist forever.

Some time ago, a “No One’s World” was a fashionable title summarising the emerging trends. At the same time, this is an “Everyone’s World”, as the number of actors of various sorts has increased exponentially. We must not forget terrorism, illicit trade, corruption, organised crime and other negative phenomena.

There is consensus that the speed of change offers opportunities as well as challenges. However, we perceive a reluctance to fully accept reality, a disinclination to look to the future rather than invoke rules of the past. Moreover, while security provision is a competency that is continuously in demand, security providers remain in short supply. Current trends within a shared big picture, therefore, call into question the role of the Atlantic Alliance. What kind of adaptation is required? How might the different Allies’ threat perceptions be connected? How different would security be without NATO?

We, the NATO Defense College Foundation, are convinced that such a sea change requires vision, clarity of purpose and a commitment to excellence. From this point of view, to aid in good decision making, the first objective is “a careful reading and a smart interpretation” of facts and trends.

Back in 2012 we took the decision to start a survey of world affairs, calling it “Strategic Trends”. Why did we adopt this kind of methodology? Because we thought that it would be useful to provide free access, on a periodic basis, to political analysis focused on relevant parts of the world: a brief, easily-digestible survey, enabling one’s orientation in the countries concerned. Putting together those “Strategic Trends” written over several years, we have a historical series of unparalleled content: we are probably the only think tank providing such a compact and reader-friendly product. It is the result of the work of many different specialists from many different sectors, whom I warmly thank for their invaluable contribution over a long period of time.

The publication of this volume is the embodiment of our aim to pay due attention to such a research project: a modest contribution, to better understand a world which is interconnected as never before in its history.

Some instructions for the busy reader.

THIS BOOK, REGROUPING RESEARCH ACTIVITIES FROM 2012 TILL 2019, CONSISTS OF THREE PARTS:

- I. a capstone article on global and macro-regional trends;
- II. a group of specialised articles for each of the nine sectors of our current Strategic Trends programme;
- III. a rather thick documentary appendix of all our trends until December 2018. The appendix is navigable both with area/subject bookmarks, the analytical index and year/area side page tabs.



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