
GLOBAL OUTLOOK

Managing Competitors and Preventing Miscalculations

General Raymond Odierno retired in 2015 as the 38th Chief of Staff of the Army. His four decades of military service included a command role in the Persian Gulf War and three deployments to the Iraq War. His troops captured Saddam Hussein in 2003 and his direction of the 'surge' in 2007-2008 led to increased protection for the population and a marked reduction in civilian casualties. He recently spoke with editor, James Hoge.

GENERAL (RET.) RAYMOND T. ODIERNO
Senior Advisor, Teneo

What new element characterizes the security environment in today's world?

In the last 10 years, people have had more access to information. Technology-based globalization has changed the security dynamics because of the ability to move information quickly. In 2003, few countries had access to digital information; no cell phones, not much internet. Today, citizens even in undeveloped countries, have significant access to digital information. So they are more aware of what is going on. Just as information travels faster so does misinformation and this is having an impact on the security environment. In the 1980's the West had one enemy, the Soviet Union, on which we could focus all of our capabilities. Today, problems can pop up quickly and unpredictably all over the world. Unlike facing a peer competitor with a huge military operation, we must be able to respond simultaneously on several continents. In my mind, that is more difficult because the environments are all different. We might have to respond to Russia in Europe, and ISIS in the Middle East, and China and North Korea in the Pacific. In addition, we might have to contend with challenges from inside Africa from ISIS and other terrorist

groups. If we leave them to grow, they will become major problems. ISIS, for example, could become much stronger in five years if we don't act now. Each one of these threats is different and would require different types of responses, which translates into a requirement to have diverse and advanced capabilities.

What capabilities do we need to meet today's security challenges and are they in place?

We need a variety of capabilities to operate in all these regions and we will have less capacity due to five years of reduced military budgets. What people don't realize is that the forward presence of forces, whether it be through forward stationing of forces or rotating forces, though expensive, are the most effective means of deterrence and better protects the United States. An aggressive forward approach also requires the development of strong coalitions and alliances led by the United States. The task is more difficult than heretofore because some small countries (i.e. North Korea) are developing nuclear and ballistic missile capabilities and add to that the threat of terrorism from non-state actors, such as ISIS, that are here to stay. Then there is Russia, trying to increase its influence on the world stage while grappling with economic and social problems at home. I believe the Russian government is using national security to reestablish their international influence. And then there is China: will it mount a significant military threat in response to the UN Tribunal's rejection of China's claims to sole control of the South China sea and what will this mean to future economic development?

What new requirements stem from the information revolutions?

Our air and ground forces must be multi-capable, more responsive to a variety of threats, lighter, faster and able to communicate worldwide immediately. What has really changed in the past 10 years is the movement of information and the ability to utilize information to gain advantage over adversaries. So we have to really understand not only how to move information effectively but also how to sort through it. The problem used to be not having the information. Now the problem is too much information and how to sort through it to get the right data for making the right decision.

So, what grade would you give our military modernization efforts?

We have been forced to reduce some modernization efforts due to budget cuts, but the necessary adjustments have been made and we will be much better five years from now. We must be more efficient and integrate new technology more quickly. To date, I would award us a C-.

Beyond military capability what are key ingredients to an effective security program?

Today more than ever, you must have a synchronized effect between diplomacy and economic and security policy. When we go into a region, we have to make sure our diplomatic efforts are coordinated with how we intend to conduct security and how we want to invest economically. We can no longer afford to have three separate uncoordinated efforts.

Are there lessons from our multiple-year engagement in Iraq?

There are several major things that I take away from my tours of duty in Iraq. First, we have to learn to look at things from other peoples' viewpoints. Seeing things only through Western eyes fosters damaging misunderstanding and miscalculation. For example, we completely missed the impact of the social devastation created by Iraq's previous 25 years of conflict and tyrannical brutality. When we got there, we woefully underestimated what we would find once we overthrew the government. Secondly, unless you have a political solution that is sustainable, it doesn't matter what you do militarily. There are limits to military power and without sustainable political and economic solutions, populations will revert back to fighting thus allowing opportunities such as AQE and ISIS to flourish. To the question, can the United States go in and defeat ISIS, the answer is yes militarily but what happens next is the problem. Thirdly, we cannot do alone the job of pacification and rebuilding. In the Middle East, there has to be coalitions of United States, European and Middle Eastern governments, probably led by the United States.

Turning to the challenge of a rising power, what is your assessment of China's effect on international security? It has gone from being a large and poor country to being an increasingly rich one with big ambitions.

China wants everybody to understand that it has the will and the assets to be the hegemon in the Asia/Pacific region. It wants to control the region's great economic growth while limiting US influence. China's biggest problem may be the rising expectations of its growing middle class. Social unrest, environmental pollution, ballooning energy needs and desires for more personal freedoms may comprise the biggest threat to the ruling regime. As for the United States, Chinese officials have sometimes questioned whether the US is even a Pacific nation. We, on the other hand, must signal that the US will vigorously protect its Pacific involvement, as China becomes more assertive it is essential that the United States with our Asia/Pacific allies establishes a strong political and military presence to protect our interests. While China is indeed more assertive, I believe it wants to be treated as a major player alongside the US but doesn't have designs on being a world hegemon.

What then is to be made of China's blunt assertion of sovereignty over the South China Sea's shipping lanes and islands and its air and sea provocations of US forces in the region?

I think the Chinese consider the US to be responding somewhat weakly to threats around the world and therefore it is a good time to test our resolve. They continue to invest significantly in modernizing their military much like their Russian counterparts. These countries understand and respect military capabilities. In order to deter and reduce the risk of miscalculation we must maintain strong military presence with our allies and maintain a strong diplomatic voice.

Is the build up and modernization of China's military excessive or about right for a country of its size and concerns?

The Chinese continue to significantly invest in their military capabilities in part because they can afford to and in part because they realize how far behind they were to us. They are learning by watching how we do business. A key result is the reorganization of their military leadership to improve joint opportunities between naval, air and ground forces. They are going to continue to modernize to ensure their ability to influence economic and diplomatic policies in the region.

For example, both China and Japan are extending their influence and economic interests through Asia.

Under Putin, a more adversarial Russia has emerged. Is an abiding confrontation between Russia and the West unavoidable?

I believe Putin has fueled nationalism in Russia and built his popularity on confronting the West. He is attempting to weaken US influence, as well as the European Union and NATO and weaken or divide their member states. Putin doesn't respond to weakness. He responds to strength and he sees weakness now both militarily and politically. He is testing the waters to see how far he can go. Eastern Europe, with its history of Russian occupation, worries that Western European countries will abandon them once again. In addition to fashioning a greater Russia on the world stage, Putin may be hoping that an image of power and weakening of the West might translate into economic benefits within Russia.

Are there vulnerabilities cropping up in Europe?

Since the fall of the Berlin Wall we have seen a steady decline in European investment into military capabilities across the board. European countries believed it was no longer necessary – Russia was no longer a threat; so they also contained forces in Afghanistan. And terrorism was seen as an American problem. Now Belgium, France and the United Kingdom have alienated extremist communities in their countries that are a potential threat. Economic

and war refugees, migrating to Europe, are not being integrated. Until policies are in place to assimilate these people there will be significant problems.

How should the emergence of ISIS, the radical Islamic caliphate, be dealt with and by whom?

We need a coalition of nations to take back the land ISIS is occupying. If we do not eliminate them from holding ground, we will not be able to fight the perception of success of this radical extremist organization. Underlying the turmoil in the Middle East is the Sunni-Shia schism and the rivalry for regional leadership between Sunni Saudi and Shia Iran. There are no easy answers to the problems of the Middle East. The United States ought to continue espousing democracy while allowing time for it to grow in the region. Meanwhile, we must employ diplomatic and economic tools to move the region's autocratic and partially-democratic regimes in a positive direction.

Are some of the region's states concluding that they need nuclear weapons?

It is critical that we do all we can to limit the proliferation of nuclear weapons. In terms of the Iranian Accord, I'm absolutely for anything that reduces their nuclear ambitions, but the problem is broader. We must ruthlessly enforce the treaty with Iran. The question is: will we? If Iran goes nuclear, I believe Saudi Arabia, the UAE and others will quickly follow suit. This is not in anyone's best interest.

On the domestic scene, has penetrating cyber security outstripped our capabilities to defend against it?

I think it takes heavy investment on the technical side for corporations to protect against criminals, competitors and hostile governments. Naturally we must have better public/private counsel. Congress passed a critical infrastructure law last year that requires coordination, as well as sharing information and intelligence between the private sector. To me, we must vigorously and quickly implement these critical partnerships. Industries must come together, whether it be from the financial industry, energy sector or the electric grid, as a whole. They must look beyond industry competitiveness and

cooperate. Cybersecurity is incredibly dynamic; It changes daily. To protect yourself, you need to have the right information and intelligence. I believe that we have intelligence and information that can help protect ourselves inside our government, but I don't believe that we understand what is the kind of information and intelligence that certain industries need – it needs to be this cooperation moving forward that allows us to protect our key infrastructure. We should be running table-top exercises between the private sector and government about what happens if we do get attacked so we can quickly mitigate the risks. We can do that and we need to do that as quickly as possible. And we need far more partnerships, coalitions and sharing of information. Cyber is the poor man's weapon of mass destruction.

Both within our society and between us and elsewhere, who is going to start this initiation?

It has to be the President. It has to be the United States. We're the only ones that can do it. It goes along with the fact that the globalization impact makes the world much smaller. People now can navigate the world very quickly and gather information and other things. If we don't work together in solving this problem, people are going to soon find the fissures and exploit those fissures between nations. The other piece, which I didn't mention, is that we need to have a review of international law. International law has been set up specifically along nation state lines. We have non-state actors that are using that to their advantage as they conduct operations, specifically in the social media realm and the realm of communications and digital capabilities. I think it's time to ask what adjustments may be required to protect nation states. The incoming US president and the new administration needs to think about rebuilding coalitions and America's influence around the world. They need to be thinking about both how we are going to deal with cyber both domestically and then internationally. And, they need to think about how they're going to integrate security, economic and diplomatic policies that will drive greater stability around the world.
