



The Changing Character of War: Towards a New Global Security Architecture

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The global security architecture appears to be passing through a structural transition, as the strategic environment has changed considerably. The ongoing Ukraine war, the Iran-US/Israel conflict expanded to the Arab peninsula hinging on the fragile ceasefire, and the Israeli genocide in Gaza have brought disorder in the world order. The growing rivalry among major powers, the widening use of sanctions, and the emergence of missile, drone, cyber, and hybrid warfare have exposed limitations in the traditional alliance-based security system. The question arises: does the existing global security architecture still possess the deterrence, credibility, and political will required to perform the functions for which it was designed?

The extensive network of overseas military bases maintained by the major powers is central to this debate. The United States has a military presence through bases, facilities, missions and deployments across a large number of countries. These installations traditionally serve several purposes: deterring regional adversaries, projecting power, protecting strategic interests and sea lanes, gathering intelligence, facilitating rapid military response, and – perhaps most importantly – reassuring allies that they operate under a credible security umbrella. The United Kingdom, Russia, France and

China maintain similar overseas military facilities or forward deployments in areas of strategic importance.

Country	Overseas Bases/ Facilities	Across No. of Countries	Total Personnel
USA	~750	~80	~165,000
UK	~145	~42	~4,500
Russia	~21	~9	~20,000
France	~5	~5	~3,150
China	~2	~2	~2,000

*Comparison of Great Powers' Overseas Military
Projection*

Despite maintaining overseas military presence, recent conflicts have exposed a paradox for such countries: a military presence intended to provide security can, under certain circumstances, become a source of vulnerability. This is particularly evident in the Gulf, where American military facilities have historically been regarded as security assets by countries such as Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, the UAE, Oman and Saudi Arabia. However, during a major confrontation involving Iran, those same facilities became potential targets, while the surrounding states were exposed to missile and drone attacks, disruption of energy infrastructure, and threats to maritime commerce. The closure or disruption of strategic waterways

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such as the Strait of Hormuz demonstrates how quickly a presumed security guarantee can become a strategic liability. The result is an erosion of confidence in the assumption that alliances, forward bases and military superiority alone can guarantee security.

This brings the world to a conceptual crossroads. If the traditional bloc system is no longer adequate, and if the extensive network of overseas bases and conventional military deployments cannot by themselves prevent strategic disruption, what should constitute the next global security architecture? One possibility is a return to competing power blocs; another is the emergence of stronger regional security arrangements in which regional powers become the principal pillars of collective defence, supported by negotiated mechanisms among neighbouring states. Smaller states, which lack the military and economic capacity of major powers, may increasingly seek collective regional guarantees rather than dependence on a distant security provider. Missiles, drones, cyber operations, electronic warfare, artificial intelligence, space-based systems, information warfare, disinformation, economic coercion and hybrid operations are expanding the battlespace into multiple domains. Strategic waterways – including the Strait of Hormuz, the Bab-el-Mandeb

and the Black Sea – have demonstrated how a conflict in one region can rapidly become a global economic and security crisis through disruptions to energy, trade and supply chains.

The emerging challenge, therefore, is not merely to redesign military alliances but to rethink the entire concept of collective security. The future architecture may have to combine regional security arrangements, strategic deterrence, protection of global commons, resilient supply chains, cyber and technological security, crisis-management mechanisms and credible diplomatic channels. The central question for strategic thinkers is no longer simply who has the largest military presence or the greatest number of bases, but who can provide credible, sustainable and mutually acceptable security in an era in which geography, technology and the nature of warfare itself are changing. The proliferation of cheap missiles, drones and kamikaze boats has found its way into proxy networks. The quest for unconventional deterrence is gaining credibility. This is food for thought – and perhaps the beginning of a new conceptual debate on what the global security architecture of the twenty-first century should look like.

