

Abstracts

Articles in the French and English editions of RDN this month

The geopolitics and geostrategy of climate change*

Michel Rocard

Scientific consensus on the problems of global warming has taken a long time to emerge: on its extent; on its causes; and on its predicted consequences. It is just about achieved today. The article sets out the history of the negotiations that have led to the current situation, and then the setback (doubtless temporary, but none the less certain for all that) of the Copenhagen conference. It reminds us of what we know about global warming, and evokes its likely consequences: the desertification of entire regions in the centre of our continents and in the Mediterranean region, reductions in biological diversity, rising sea levels, melting polar icecaps, and growing tensions in the energy economy.

What does resilience really mean?*

Loup Francart

In this wide-ranging article the author reflects on the notion of resilience and the different domains in which its application is relevant, and sketches out a concept that acknowledges the ambivalence of the term. He then considers what is meant by the resilience of a nation, and outlines a concept of French resilience.

The social role of the armed forces: the quest for a national redefinition

Sophie Lefeez

It is wrong to look at the question of the social role of the armed forces solely in terms of the help they can bring to resolving social problems. While it is important that the population recognises the need to have armed forces, this must be based on an understanding of

* The full text of articles marked with an asterisk is published in the English edition of this month's RDN; all articles appear, in French, in the French edition.

their role and special needs, even if this may be difficult in the absence of any perceived threat.

Public opinion and external operations

Barbara Jankowski

Through a detailed analysis of existing polls, this discussion attempts to evaluate the degree of acceptance of external operations by a public that is naturally more sensitive to pressing questions concerning its own security than to operations far away. The capability to mount operations abroad is a sign of national determination, and implies the legitimacy of the use of force.

When security becomes green

Romain Lalanne

Environmental security is a relatively recent concept which gives rise to intense debate at the heart of the theory of international relations. What is the referent object of environmental security? To what extent can the scarcity of a natural resource be the cause of a 'green' war? Is climate change a threat to national security? This article tackles these questions through a review of the literature on the theoretical work dealing with environmental security in the field of international relations.

The ecological crisis: a question of justice

Hervé Kempf

The question of ecology has become a major issue for international relations in the next half-century. But it poses new problems of worldwide justice more than questions of power politics, and its solution will always be a reflection of internal social issues in the countries concerned.

Climate: an issue of security or of strategic control?

David Mascré

For the United States, climate has become a national security issue. In September 2009 the CIA created a Centre for Climate Change to monitor space and the biosphere, and to verify the levels of pollution of every country worldwide. This initiative is more than just a new

mission; it marks a change of policy which acknowledges the new security-related troika of climate, economy and strategic control.

Wars about water, but above all civil wars

Frédéric Lasserre

Will the twenty-first century be that of water wars? Growing scarcity and changes in climate make an explosive mixture whose destabilising effects are beginning to make themselves felt in many regions. Some analysts reject the idea of wars over water, believing such things to be impossible; others consider them to be inevitable. In reality, even if interstate wars over water alone are improbable, violent conflicts within many societies are gradually building up.

Some American priorities in 2010

François Lafond

President Obama's foreign policy is already very different to his predecessor's. Seen from Europe, four major thrusts can be identified: bury the contentious issue of the 'clash of civilisations'; hand over the 'war of necessity' in Afghanistan to the locals; accept the implied risks of cooperation with Russia; and reconsider the question of strategic alliances. 2010 will show whether the new president has any real prospect of modifying the international scene. What is certain is that the efforts already made can only serve to encourage those who are happy to note a revitalised image of the United States in the world, and thus aid the thrust of the international community towards better world governance.

China/United States: a new power duopoly?

Inerio Seminatore

Close examination of the China-US relationship leads the author to explore the question of the strategic positions of the regional powers and their structural links in Asia. He evaluates the various combinations of possible leaderships, and accords China a new strategic centrality.

Year 9 in Afghanistan*

Henri Paris

In 2010, their ninth year of war in Afghanistan, the Americans have adopted a new, last-chance strategy of counter-insurgency, based on joint civil-military action. This new strategy is strongly influenced by the research of French analysts in the 1960s; it has little chance of success, since it cannot transcend military and political contradictions.

The logistics of Operation EUFOR DR Congo

Claudia Major

This article analyses the logistic performance of EUFOR DR Congo in 2006, and proposes solutions relevant to future operations. It starts with a description of the overall situation, underling the logistic challenges and recalling the conditions in which EUFOR was deployed. It then describes the logistic operation from three different perspectives: the framework (destination, distance, demand and duration); the multinational and multi-partner characteristics of the operation; and the use of logistic subcontractors. Finally, following a general evaluation, recommendations are made concerning sustainability, self-sufficiency and the efficacy of crisis-management operations.

The armed forces: a profession like any other?

Julien Duthu

France has known peace on its frontiers for over 60 years, during which time both the environment and the context of the use of its armed forces has changed. These days the profession of arms tends to lack definition and its public image lacks clarity; the end result is the weakening of the nation. Despite the current (and fashionable) concept of a 'soldier of peace', the political class in particular and French citizens in general should remember that the military man has a quite singular job, whose end purpose is combat. This frame of mind can and must be generalised, and to achieve this is the responsibility of both the armed services themselves and their political masters. Several ways of approaching this objective are worth further study.

Towards the creation of a French-style National Guard*

Stéphane Dossé

The White Paper on defence and national security highlighted the need to have a way to respond to internal crises, and to reinforce the resilience of the population. The creation of a National Guard would reinforce French security, particularly in the eventuality of a major catastrophe. It would be formed from citizens who had been trained as part of either an obligatory or a voluntary civil emergency organisation; it would also reinforce national solidarity and promote the fundamental values of the Republic.

The serviceman's relationship with death: an evolutionary requirement

Simon-Pierre Delaoy

Notable advances have been made in the psychological treatment of servicemen faced with trauma-inducing experiences. But they are still not morally prepared to face up to these situations, as they do not have the time to reflect on an individual approach to a vocation which could well involve the supreme sacrifice. Their training should therefore include a module on dealing with the question of death, so that they are better prepared to face that possibility.

The case for a redeployment of NATO in Central Asia**

René Cagnat

According to the author, America and NATO have already lost the war in Afghanistan. The terms and conditions and limits of a withdrawal need to be considered while the Expeditionary Force is still credible. Various observations lead one to conclude that, if the proper assets are made available, a redeployment in Central Asia would not only be possible, but also the sensible thing to do.

** This translation of an article that appeared in the French December 2009 issue of this journal has been provided by the author.