



## SUMMARY

- Two trends dominate today's international arena: globalization and fragmentation. Although diametrically opposed, both trends dilute the monopoly on the use of force.
- Non-state actors challenge existing states from different perspectives. In fact, among the list of non-state actors, only criminal networks prefer a weak/corrupt state or no state at all.
- Violent conflict precludes development and undermines prosperity. At the same time, a sovereign state with a monopoly on the use of force does not always produce prosperity. However, the link between legitimate monopoly on the use of force and sustainable prosperity is evident.
- Our energies should focus on concrete ways to improve legitimacy and strengthen the effectiveness of the state in its monopoly on the use of force. In a parallel effort, we should push states to work together to create strong international regimes to manage and mitigate the transnational threats.
- Progress toward mutual dependence within states would provide a foundation upon which to build effective international regimes to master transnational threats to security, order, and prosperity.

## Prosperity and Monopoly on the Use of Force

Ann L. Phillips

Sovereign states have been the primary actors in what became known as the modern state system. Monopoly on the use of force is a distinguishing characteristic of state sovereignty. Of course, neither sovereignty nor monopoly on the use of force has ever been absolute, but current challenges to both appear greater than ever. From a Western perspective, the relative predictability of the European balance of power system since the Peace of Westphalia and the Cold War security architecture after World War II, however tense, has given way to an era of prevailing uncertainty.<sup>1</sup> That twenty-five years after the collapse of the Warsaw Treaty Organization and the implosion of the USSR, »post-Cold War« is the label used for the current international environment underscores its fluid and opaque contours.

Two countervailing trends dominate today's international arena: globalization and fragmentation. Although both phenomena have been present throughout much of history to varying degrees, they have more far-reaching impact today. The term globalization is meant to capture the more extensive and deeper integration and interdependence that appeared to remake international relations toward the end of the twentieth century. At the same time, fragmentation emerged as an equally powerful trend. Although diametrically opposed, both trends undermine sovereignty and dilute the monopoly on the use of force. Indeed, the clash between centripetal and centrifugal forces seems to be the hallmark of the twenty-first century.

The clashing forces have produced considerable angst expressed in numerous book and article titles, such as *World on Fire*, *A World Adrift*, *The Unraveling*, and *Years of Living Dangerously*. At the same time, the overheated media environment has magnified calls to overhaul the concepts of sovereignty and monopoly on the use of force or jettison them as anachronistic. Before giving in to intellectual fashion, however, a pause to reflect on the implications of doing either is in order. Our reflection begins with two questions: First, how »new« is the current disorder? By extension, how embattled is the state as the organizing unit of the international arena? And second, what role has monopoly on the use of force played in progress and prosperity? Conversely, what has its absence meant for economic and social development?

<sup>1</sup> For many outside the West, order remained elusive—from the European competition for colonies in the nineteenth century through the Cold War when decolonization, wars of national liberation and proxy wars dominated their environment.

## HOW NEW IS THE CURRENT DISORDER?

Change is usually disconcerting and when living in the midst of change, patterns and rhythms are difficult to discern. Yet, history shows that periodic, tectonic shifts in the international environment are normal. Indeed, rising and declining powers give rise to instability and conflict roughly every fifty years or so. Once the major power redistribution is settled, a new order is enshrined.<sup>2</sup> Of course new features emerged from each shake-up of the existing order and many who lived through turbulent times no doubt thought that the end of civilization was at hand. The point is not to discount the importance of current upheavals but rather to suggest that they follow a historical pattern.

But this upheaval is different, it is said, because states, the organizing unit of the international system, are at greater risk than at any time in more than a century. The demise of the nation-state has been predicted for some time. The argument rests on the growing strength and influence of non-state actors. The list of non-state actors is long: multinational corporations, international financial networks, international criminal networks, non-governmental organizations, insurgent organizations, and terrorist networks. Which of these is new? None of them, actually, although technology enhances their mobility, visibility, and capacity while the media magnifies and dramatizes the threat that some of them pose.

The emphasis on non-state actors as agents of the state's demise usually lumps all of them into one category. In reality, however, their potential impact on state power differs substantially. Many insurgent groups struggle to break away from an existing state in order to achieve independence by creating their own, not to eliminate the state as an organizing principle. Abu Sayyaf, the Tuareg, and Boko Haram are current examples. Others, like Al Shabaab and the Islamic State, strive to seize control of an existing state or states; not to abolish states altogether but to impose their own power arrangements and rules. NGOs and multinational corporations (MNCs) also challenge existing states, but with agendas very different from insurgent or terrorist groups. Instead of trying to usurp the power of the state, many NGOs pressure existing states to become more just. They recognize the essential role that the state ideally plays in protecting the space between government and individual in which civil society operates. In a similar vein, MNCs rely on states to protect their assets and to enforce contractual agreements. In sum, non-state actors challenge exist-

ing states from different perspectives and for different reasons. Therefore, analysts must take care to not equate challenges to existing states and territorial borders as a threat to the state itself. In fact, among the list of non-state actors, only criminal networks prefer a weak/corrupt state or no state at all.

## MONOPOLY ON THE USE OF FORCE

Current challenges to existing states do undermine one distinguishing characteristic: the monopoly on the use of force. Many argue that the profusion of actors, access to advanced weaponry, and privatization of security have relegated this concept to history. If accurate, what are the implications? In *Leviathan* (1651), Thomas Hobbes argued for a strong state to overcome a »state of nature« in which life is solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short. A strong state was necessary to impose order, he reasoned, because human beings left to their own devices would engage in constant conflict in their search for security. So for Hobbes, any state able to monopolize the use of force was better than none.

Later philosophers distinguished between types of states. Living in the latter part of the seventeenth century, John Locke, one of the most influential Enlightenment thinkers, expressed a more positive view of human nature, arguing that people were governed by reason. Government was important to organize society, but should be based on the consent of the governed. A century later, Immanuel Kant, another Enlightenment thinker, expanded on the benefits of government by consent in his theory of democratic peace. His theory posits that republics were less likely to go to war because the citizenry would provide an essential check on a ruler's ambitions. Conversely, unchecked autocrats were much more likely to engage in conflict. In the early 1900s, Max Weber's essay, *Politics as a Vocation*, emphasized a monopoly on the *legitimate* use of force as the essential quality of the state. Three types of authority—lineage, charismatic, and rational-legal—could exercise a legitimate monopoly on the use of force. Although all three imply consent of the governed, Weber preferred rational-legal authority as superior and more durable than the other two.

Monopoly on the use of force includes not only the authority to kill and imprison but also to make and enforce the laws and rules to which citizens must adhere. So what is the connection between monopoly on the use of force and prosperity? The link is complex.

<sup>2</sup> The hundred-year peace in Europe following the Napoleonic Wars was an anomaly in this pattern, perhaps due to the shock induced by the revolutionary ambition of France. And even the hundred-year peace included two significant wars: the Crimean War and the Franco-Prussian War.

## PROSPERITY AND MONOPOLY ON THE USE OF FORCE

It is uncontested that violent conflict precludes development and undermines prosperity for most. History is rife with examples. At the same time, a sovereign state with a monopoly on the use of force does not always produce prosperity. However, regime type is not the critical distinction that one might expect. To be sure, many authoritarian leaders who exercise an effective monopoly on the use of force not only exact a high price in human terms from their citizens, they also plunder their country's wealth for their own benefit and that of a select few. Limited economic growth and widespread poverty are common in such countries. North Korea, the Central African Republic under Emperor Bokassa, Zaire under Mobutu, Haiti, and Russia under the Tsars until 1905 come to mind.

By contrast, other authoritarian leaders committed to development have driven substantial economic progress in their countries, albeit sometimes at a high human cost. Spain under Franco, Chile under Pinochet, the People's Republic of China, the USSR under Stalin, and the Asian Tigers are perhaps best known. Authoritarian systems laid the foundation for economic modernization, which led, in turn, to successful democratization movements in Spain, Chile, South Korea, and Taiwan. Whether economic progress is sustainable over the long term without political liberalization remains a contested issue.

That said the link between *legitimate* monopoly on the use of force and *sustainable* prosperity has been evident for generations. The emphasis on *legitimate* and *sustainable* is critical. The essential interdependence of those who govern and the governed is a central theme of Robert Bates's work. In *Prosperity and Violence: The Political Economy of Development*, he argues that the process of development shifts coercion from a private to a publicly provided good. As such, coercion becomes the means for promoting the creation of wealth. He identifies the taming of violence and the delegation of authority to those who will use power productively as central features in the development of modern, prosperous states. The mutual interdependence of the rulers and the ruled was a critical variable in that process in Europe.

To those who argue that sovereign states and a monopoly on the use of force are passé in the twenty-first century, let us examine the implications. A good place to start is where they are missing. Libya, Haiti, Iraq, Yemen, Somalia, Afghanistan, Ukraine, Mali, Nigeria, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo, and South Sudan spring immediately to mind.

Reports from these countries in The Fragile States Index are called »Postcards from Hell.« Neither pockets of relative stability, people's incredible resilience, nor the arrangements they contrive to survive can provide security or prosperity where a reasonably responsible and effective government does not exist.

Therefore, we acquiesce to an environment in which the state is just one actor among many and we relegate monopoly on the use of force to the past at our peril. Privatization is not the answer for poor and unjust government performance. Neither private security arrangements nor civil society nor private enterprise can substitute for a reasonably effective and legitimate government. Private security forces simply magnify unequal access to security. Order provided by powerful criminal organizations such as drug cartels remains arbitrary and is based on impunity. Both licit private enterprise and civil society depend upon government to protect their space and enforce contracts through a legal framework. Only illicit activities and uncertainty thrive where the state and monopoly on the use of force are absent.

To be sure, many governments are repressive, corrupt, and fail to work for the benefit of society as a whole. Moreover, transnational forces—climate change, international criminal networks, and cyber threats in particular—undermine the state's effective control of its territory in divergent ways. No state can manage any of them alone.

But it is not helpful to abandon the state because of the malfeasance of some and the limited ability of states to date to work together effectively to mitigate transnational threats. Rather, our energies should focus on concrete ways to improve legitimacy and strengthen the effectiveness of the state in its monopoly on the use of force. In a parallel effort, we should push states to work together to create strong international regimes to manage and mitigate the transnational threats. Some international progress has been made on climate change and international crime. New urgency is attached to cybercrime. Diplomatic immunity, international air travel, and postal service agreements are successful examples of reciprocity upon which states could build in efforts to address current transnational threats.

## CONCLUSIONS

The new forces of the twenty-first century do not confront us with a Hobbesian choice between anarchy or absolute authority, even though some pundits write in these terms. It is equally clear, however, that the status quo is not viable. Instead, the increasingly vague

and fluid demarcation of public and private spheres of authority must be examined and recalibrated in order to establish order conducive to both security and prosperity for society as a whole. The answer is not to jettison sovereign states and their monopoly on the use of force but rather to revitalize them in ways suitable to contemporary conditions. The erosion of the mutual dependency between those who govern and those who are governed in Western democracies should be a matter of great concern. The failure to establish that mutual dependency in many countries, including many where elections are held, should focus our attention and energies. Progress toward mutual dependence within states would provide a foundation upon which to build effective international regimes to master transnational threats to security, order, and prosperity.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The proposed recommendations are intended to start a discussion.

- Mutual dependency between citizens and government leaders must be the focus of reform efforts in all societies in order to establish or re-establish viable, legitimate governance.
- Politics and governance reside at the heart of fragility and conflict. Too often government officials look for technical solutions to political, social, and economic problems. Government bureaucracy is set up to reinforce this approach. The development assistance »industry« is a perfect example. The technical approach regularly fails. It is time to focus on the domestic distribution of power and influence if states are to become more viable and their monopoly on the use of force legitimate.
- In order to become more effective, government institutions need to become more flexible. They currently get lost in the labyrinth of their own complexity. Rules and regulations try to manage every contingency, driving out common sense and reflection. For practical suggestions, see *Anticipatory Governance: Upgrading Government for the 21st Century* ([https://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/Anticipatory\\_Governance\\_Practical\\_Upgrades.pdf](https://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/Anticipatory_Governance_Practical_Upgrades.pdf)). Government institutions should support creative thinking and invest greater responsibility and trust in well-qualified civil servants.
- The crowded media environment is both positive and negative. It is positive in that no one actor has a monopoly on information. It is negative in that quality filters, standards of evidence, and professionalism have deteriorated substantially. Drama drives coverage. The internet and the twenty-four-hour news cycle allow anyone to say or write anything. As a result, today's media distorts as much as it illuminates. Is there a way to inject more thought and evidence into information? Government leaders might begin by refusing to allow the overheated media environment to drive the agenda. Thoughtful governance cannot follow a 24/7 media cycle.
- Equal attention must be focused on creating new international regimes to manage and mitigate transnational threats.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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### REFLECTION GROUP MONOPOLY ON THE USE OF FORCE

The Reflection Group “Monopoly on the use of force 2.0?” is a global dialogue initiative to raise awareness and discuss policy options for the concept of the monopoly for the use of force. Far from being a merely academic concern, this concept, at least theoretically and legally remains at the heart of the current international security order. However it is faced with a variety of grave challenges and hardly seems to reflect realities on the ground in various regions around the globe anymore. For more information about the work of the reflection group and its members please visit: [http://www.fes.de/GPol/en/security\\_policy.htm](http://www.fes.de/GPol/en/security_policy.htm)

### THINK PIECES OF THE “REFLECTION GROUP MONOPOLY ON THE USE OF FORCE 2.0?”

The Think Pieces serve a dual purpose: On the one hand they provide points of reference for the

deliberations of the reflection group and feed into the final report of the group in 2016. On the other hand they are made available publicly to provide interested scholars, politicians and practitioners with an insight into the different positions and debates of the group and provide food for thought for related discussions and initiatives worldwide. In this sense they both reflect “thinking” about the topic within the group as well as hopefully stimulate thinking on the topic beyond it.

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