



Providing Security in Times of Uncertainty: Implications of the Reflection Group's Final Report for the United States and Recommendations for U.S. Foreign Assistance

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REFLECTION GROUP FINAL PAPER

INTRODUCTION

Security is under siege across the globe. Monopoly on the use of force, always contested but long regarded as the cornerstone of sovereignty, stability and development, is under siege as well.

At the end of the Cold War hopes were high for a new era of peace and growing prosperity. The hopes were fleeting, however. The bipolar world was replaced by a multipolar landscape in which rising and declining powers contend for influence. The number and scope of deadly conflicts is again increasing after a brief respite at the end of the 20th and the first years of the 21st centuries. Great power rivalries, mass movements of refugees, agile extremist movements, cyber-crimes, international traffickers in arms, drugs and people unsettle the international landscape. Many of the same factors plus insurgencies, national criminal gangs, anti-government militias undermine security and order within states. The combination of threats has spurred a resurgence in military, law enforcement and intelligence spending at the expense of investment in sustainable economic development, social improvements and public goods other than security.

Why has insecurity become the hallmark of our time? What role can and should the state and monopoly on the use of force play in establishing or reestablishing security? How do the many non-state actors in the security space contribute to security or insecurity? The Reflection Group's final report, "Providing Security in Times of Uncertainty," distills the findings of a two-year effort by more than 20 experts from different countries and different parts of the globe to find answers to these questions and to offer recommendations on how to overcome rising insecurity and its attendant ills.

This paper examines the practical application of the report's findings to the United States and U.S. foreign assistance. It then offers recommendations for U.S. assistance to counter current adverse trends. To do this, the report's findings are first summarized.

REPORT FINDINGS

The Reflection Group's report steps back from day-to-day events to examine the underlying forces of increased insecurity. The resurgence of great power rivalry — the United States, Russia and China — and rising regional powers have ramped up insecurity and violent conflict in familiar but no less unsettling terrain. At the same time, globalization and fragmentation are shaping the international environment in powerful but less familiar ways. Both trends challenge state sovereignty and its monopoly on the use of force. Although ideal types of the modern state system, the sovereign state remains the organizing unit of the international order and its monopoly on the use of force (MOF) has been the cornerstone of state sovereignty. In reality, the exercise of sovereignty and the state's monopoly on the use of force have always been uneven at best. Moreover, state exercise of authority and force has too often been repressive. However, more representative governments exercising a monopoly on the legitimate use of force appeared to be gaining ground in the wake of the Cold War. The important qualifier, legitimate use of force, elevated society as the arbiter of progress toward inclusive security provided as a public good.

The trend toward monopoly on the legitimate use of force has been undercut by globalization and fragmentation in all regions of the globe today, albeit to varying degrees. Although neither is new, the intensity, intrusiveness and reach of each is magnified by technology posing greater threats now to the state and MOF than heretofore.

What are these forces?

Globalization captures increasing interdependence and integration across the world. Integrated production streams, global capital flows, movements of goods and people, crypto-currencies like Bitcoin, as well as instantaneous communication have made political borders increasingly porous. Quantum leaps in technological innovation and capabilities have propelled these changes, while multiplying transnational actors and transnational threats that individual states are unable to master. The requirement for multilateral and international approaches underscores the reduced ability of individual states to secure and govern their own spaces effectively.

But globalization alone does not govern the current situation. Fragmentation is an equally powerful force that in some ways is a counter-point to globalization. Also enabled by technology, fragmentation has been fueled by a pervasive unease with rapid change, cyber

insecurity, perceived loss of community and national identity, coupled with growing disparities in wealth and opportunity that have left significant parts of populations left behind in a globalized economy.¹ Social cohesion is unravelling; a surge in identity politics is tearing apart newly independent as well as long established polities. The proliferation of "information" sources and a wide-open internet with no requirements for facts or evidence, reinforces the fragmentation. Trust in others as well as in institutions, including government institutions, has eroded.

The relationship between globalization and fragmentation is more complex than that of dueling forces, however. Globalization also reinforces fragmentation by breaking down institutional authority, cultural norms and social cohesion. The relationship is more like a kaleidoscope with its almost infinite permutations.

Globalization and fragmentation are reflected in different arrangements — consolidation versus fragmentation; inclusion versus exclusion. The report maps the arrangements along a four-point grid with inclusive and exclusive security provision at opposite ends on the vertical axis; consolidated and fragmented security provision are on opposite ends of the horizontal axis.

The variable impacts of globalization and fragmentation are expressed in four future security scenarios:

- [The UN Charter's World](#)
- [The Networked World](#)
- [The Orwellian World](#)
- [The Unregulated \(or Hobbesian\) World](#)

The four scenarios are not discrete; rather, states, transnational actors and threats, and multiple security providers are present in several. The grid illustrates this in the placement of worlds. For example, both the Networked and Unregulated or Hobbesian Worlds fall in fragmentation quadrant; although the former offers the promise of inclusive security, while the latter provides only exclusive security provision. The UN Charter's World and the Orwellian World both offer consolidated security but security in the latter is exclusive.

¹ One of the great ironies of history is that the demise of communism as an alternative path to development led to the erosion of welfare states in the West and increased pressure on developing countries under the Washington Consensus to give markets free reign while reducing investments in basic services. Communism's emphasis on economic development, education, upward mobility, full employment and social benefits, however imperfectly implemented, had created security incentives for market democracies to build welfare states to pre-empt revolutionary momentum at home. When the competition ended, the incentives disappeared. More than two decades of reductions in social services and support, weakening of labor unions, de-regulation of business, tax reductions that benefit primarily the wealthy have been embraced by conservative governments. These policies have contributed significantly to the erosion of tolerance, generosity, social trust and cohesion.

Like all scenarios, these are not intended to be predictive. Instead, their purpose is to help policy makers and practitioners develop strategies to counter negative trends and support agents of inclusive security in whatever mix they may appear. Elements of the scenarios are already present in parts of the world.

In the UN Charter's World, the state continues or re-emerges as the dominant actor making progress toward the monopoly on the legitimate use of force. For all its imperfections, the state remains the best hope for providing consolidated, inclusive security.

The Networked World consists of a mosaic or hybrid security arrangement in which the state is one of many actors providing security. All actors are harnessed to a framework of regulations that insure inclusive and accountable security. The operative model is an effective division of labor.

In an Orwellian World, authoritarian states exercise a monopoly on the use of force to provide selective security. State MOF entails unchecked repression of the "opposition" whoever the state deems that to be. Technology increases state surveillance and control capabilities.

An Unregulated or Hobbesian World is characterized by multiple actors which provide exclusive security for select groups. Actors include private security firms, terrorist groups, insurgencies, militias, criminal gangs, all of which operate today. The result is pervasive insecurity generated by the competitive search for security. Violent conflict is the norm.

Current trends show the Orwellian and Hobbesian worlds gaining strength.

Orwellian indicators include the growing number of authoritarian regimes, unchecked repression of minorities and/or political opponents, the slippage of young or potential democracies (think of Hungary, Poland, Turkey), and the absence of new democracies. Xenophobia is resurgent in many parts of the world. Right-wing extremists are infiltrating democratic institutions and winning elected office. Their upsurge is shifting the locus of politics in democracies and weakening the institutions that once safe-guarded them. Echoes of the late 1920s and 1930s should not be overdrawn but should not be ignored, either.

The Unregulated or Hobbesian world already dominates areas engulfed in violent conflict such as South Sudan, Syria, Eastern Congo, Afghanistan and Iraq. The number, duration and scope of violent conflicts is on the rise again. Pervasive insecurity perpetuates conflict.

Although the winners and losers created by conflict should make the Hobbesian World untenable over the long term, an enormous price in human suffering and material destruction is paid in the meantime.

REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

Of the four worlds, Reflection Group members preferred the UN Charter's World closely followed by the Networked World. Members agreed that they provided the best options for inclusive and just provision of security and developed general recommendation to counter negative trends.

The report recommends strengthening the state to provide inclusive security wherever possible despite its troubled performance. The next best option is to adapt to the networked world. Some in the group regarded this option as more realistic, given the many actors already operating in the security space. In a growing number of established democracies and particularly in fragile and conflict affected polities, the state is not in a position to provide inclusive security through a monopoly on the use of force. Instead, mosaic or hybrid security arrangements include many non-state actors such as private firms, community organizations, traditional security providers, as well as the state. For such a hybrid or mosaic security arrangement to work as intended, a new security architecture are necessary. A regulatory framework to harness the many security providers into an inclusive and accountable security architecture is proposed. How the framework would be created and who would enforce compliance remain critical challenges.

APPLICATION OF FINDINGS TO THE UNITED STATES

The United States is confronted by many of the challenges to MOF outlined in the report. Government security institutions at the federal, state and local levels are perceived as increasingly unable to meet their primary responsibility of providing security in the face of international organized crime, illegal immigration, terrorism and cyber-attacks — all enabled by global mobility. Private security companies and neighborhood watch groups have sprouted from a lack of confidence in official law enforcement. Anti-government groups including some 240 armed militias and gangs of various stripes flourish in a porous security environment. Right-wing extremists have gained recent prominence in the political landscape and threaten the security of minorities and others who do not share their views. Personal grievances leading to deadly violence are regular features in the news. Abuse of intrusive technology by individuals and criminals erode both privacy and security. A gradual but steady unravelling of the social compact is undermining trust in public institutions,

mirroring a collapse in trust of institutions globally. (The 2017 Edelman Trust Barometer documents the largest-ever drop in trust across the institutions of government, business, media and NGOs worldwide.) <https://www.edelman.com/news/2017-edelman-trust-barometer-reveals-global-implosion/>

Although a preponderance of attention and resources are devoted to terrorism, other, less dramatic threats, are actually doing more damage to the monopoly on the legitimate use of force in the United States. Much needs to be done to rebuild the competence and legitimacy of government institutions, beginning with the security and justice systems. Careful vetting of law enforcement personnel and judicial appointees for commitment to the rule of law and provision of inclusive security are essential first steps. The punishment for violating either must be swift, harsh and predictable. Extremists and anti-government militia members must be excluded from positions of authority. Conversely, cooperation with constructive² community organizations could help rebuild the capacity and legitimacy of justice and law enforcement institutions. Active engagement to support candidates committed to inclusive security in elections at all levels can provide another positive corrective to eroding public trust.

RELEVANCE FOR U.S. FOREIGN ASSISTANCE

That a U.S. government does not currently exercise a monopoly on the use of force should temper expectations of and demands on fragile and conflict affected states. Practical and effective assistance must begin with existing conditions, structures, and practices in the host country where multiple and competing security providers are the norm. Many non-state actors enjoy a legitimacy that state security institutions do not. U.S. government assistance providers took too long to value traditional assemblies and councils (shura and Jirga) as legitimate governing mechanisms in Afghanistan, for example, rather than as outmoded practices to be replaced by a state run, western style system. Tribal chiefs, clan elders, councils, and militias are part of the security and governing landscape in most fragile and conflict affected states.

To constructively navigate this terrain, U.S. assistance providers require deep local knowledge and a time horizon measured in decades or generations. They must know local traditions and actors, including their incentives and reputation with the local population much better than most do today. Only then will donors be able to distinguish security providers who enjoy legitimacy and can play a constructive part in a hybrid

system from spoilers with predatory intent. Only then will donors be able to partner with local actors and organizations that have credibility in the host country. In turn, local partnerships are the centerpiece of local ownership, recognized as indispensable to sustainable security and development but seldom practiced³

Multiple and competing security providers constitute the point of departure in conflict affected and fragile states. The first step is to begin to move away from the pervasive insecurity of a Hobbesian World. U.S. together with other assistance providers can pool their leverage to help shift relations among contending state and non-state actors toward a degree of co-existence, if not complementarity.

One path from the Unregulated or Hobbesian World leads toward an authoritarian order that suppresses security providers outside the state. U.S. actors should resist the temptation to support authoritarian governments as an acceptable alternative to a Hobbesian world. This option is, at best, a detour from the hard work of establishing inclusive, sustainable security. Moreover, support for authoritarian regimes has undermined U.S. credibility as well as influence over time.

A more positive path leads to a Networked World. Although multiple state and non-state security providers are characteristic of the Hobbesian and Networked Worlds, only in the Networked World do the many security providers work together in the provision of increasingly inclusive security.

How the Networked World is to work in practice remains problematic. An optimistic projection is modeled on international regimes, such as telecommunications or navigation of the sea, which operate without an overarching enforcement authority. But where has such an arrangement worked to provide inclusive security within a country? No example springs to mind.

If mutuality is unrealistic, who will establish the security framework and enforce regulations? Which actors will be able to govern, monitor compliance and punish those actors that fail to comply? If the state has the capability, why would it not establish a monopoly on the use of force?

² This excludes groups like the KKK.

³ The principles of local knowledge, coupled with local partners and local ownership are not new. They were central to the Marshall Plan, arguably the most successful post-war reconstruction program. The same principles are central to the OECD DAC "Paris Agreement on Aid Effectiveness," 2002; EU Development Policy, 2005; USAID's "Nine Principles of Development and Reconstruction Assistance," 2006; "Potomac Statement on Aid Effectiveness" 2007; The New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States (2011), UN's "High Level Independent Panel Report on Peace Operations," 2015 to name just a few.

If the state does not have the capability, competition among security providers to expand their territory and client base seems more likely than cooperation. How would conflicts among them be resolved? The risk of devolving from a Networked world into a Hobbesian world is ever present.

Therefore, a mosaic or hybrid system is unlikely to provide a long-term solution to the security dilemma prevalent in the 21st century.⁴ Non-state actors, including private security firms, by definition provide exclusive security, limited to a specific group or region. Exclusive security provision reinforces divisions, planting the seeds for future conflict.

An interim period of hybrid security provision may last decades however; therefore, U.S. assistance providers should think in terms of a long and calibrated transition. Either-or categories — either the state or a plethora of security providers — will not be helpful. Instead, working closely with local partners to assist an uneven and difficult transition from multiple providers of fragmented security toward a state monopoly on the legitimate use of force will benefit both the host country and U.S. national security.

Efforts to establish or re-establish state monopoly on the legitimate use of force will not work, however, if public mistrust of institutions generally and government institutions specifically documented around the globe is not addressed. Judicial actions to punish officials guilty of human rights abuses, abuse of power and corruption at all levels of security institutions are essential. Security and justice personnel must be carefully vetted at all stages of reform. U.S. and other assistance providers can help first, by not (inadvertently) supporting those guilty of malfeasance and second, by ensuring that their own operations meet the highest standards of accountability and transparency.

4 Timothy Donais, "Engaging NonState Security Providers: Whither the Rule of Law," *International Journal of Stability and Development*, 31 July 2017. <https://doi.org/10.5334/sta.553>

CONCLUSION

Current trends favor an Orwellian or Hobbesian future. Security is under siege globally. Too many people, disgruntled by rapid change and animated by a long list of grievances that governing institutions fail to adequately address, are vulnerable to mobilization by unscrupulous leaders to embrace extremist policies and solutions, both locally and internationally.

The large majority of people who value inclusive security, just societies and human rights should take nothing for granted. Active engagement to strengthen and reform institutions that are not performing well is needed. Support for electoral candidates committed to inclusive security is an important part of this effort.

Authoritarian states remind us how repressive state monopoly on the use of force can be. Nonetheless, as imperfect as they are, the state still has the best potential to provide inclusive security as a public good. Whether in the United States or in fragile and conflict affected states, hybrid or mosaic security arrangements do not provide a durable and sustainable solution to insecurity. For both, only state monopoly on the *legitimate* use of force can do this, albeit in different time frames. In conflict affected and fragile states, the path from a Hobbesian to a Networked World will be long and fraught. Nonetheless, progress toward the state monopoly on the legitimate use of force must remain the ultimate objective. There are no short cuts; no technical solutions; only hard work with host country actors will gradually improve the reach of security and justice.

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/reflection-group-monopoly-on-the-use-of-force-20/>

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 reflect how the group and selected additional experts »think« about the topic and hopefully stimulate further engagement with it.

The Think Pieces are not required to fulfill strict academic requirements and are not thematically peer-reviewed by FES. To the contrary they shall provide an unfiltered insight into the respective author's arguments and thoughts. Accordingly, the authors are free to further develop their arguments and publish academic articles based on these arguments or containing elements of them in academic journals, edited volumes or other formats.

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