Women in Bargal, Puntland, Somalia. Civil society participation is vital to future stability. © SAFERWORLD

COMMUNITY SECURITY:
RETHINKING POLICY AND STRATEGY FOR MODERN SECURITY CHALLENGES

Evidence from the past two decades has shown that unchecked instability in conflict-affected and fragile contexts has the potential to affect the national security of Western states directly, including the US.[1] However, while the complex nature of these security challenges and the need for an appropriately conflict-sensitive response is recognized at the policy level by major international stakeholders including the US, interventions on the ground are failing to keep pace with these commitments.

This briefing is directed towards the US policy community and does two things:

- First, it lays out the definitions and rationale for an expanded and more relevant view of security and insecurity;

- Second, it sets out an approach to security strategy and foreign policy which re-balances the component parts in order to address insecurity more effectively.

STRATEGY vs TACTICS: EFFECTIVE LONG-TERM SECURITY RESPONSES

International development frameworks, OECD guidelines, and the policies of many international donors highlight broad-based civic participation and local ownership as key elements of effective security and development programming. US policy recognizes the need to integrate defense, diplomacy, and development efforts (the so-called '3D' approach) and acknowledges the role that civilians and civil society can and should play in security and development programs overseas. However, in practice, striking the balance between the different elements of such a policy and the motives that underpin it has proved problematic.

The US has continued to lend significant political and economic support to strengthening central governments, at times even propping up regimes known to be autocratic and abusive, in the name of 'stabilization'. This can involve building the technical and operational capacities of host government institutions such as the police and judiciary, without sufficiently prioritizing the development of transparency and good governance required to ensure those institutions deliver responsive and accountable security and justice services for all. Responses that lean more towards a so-called 'hard security' approach often prove ill-fitting for addressing modern security challenges in the long-term, responding to the symptoms (armed violence), but failing to tackle the root causes of violent conflict (for example, access to resources, poor and inequitable services, marginalization, livelihoods, poor governance, and corruption).

Implementing commitments to civic participation and a more community-oriented approach to security provision is not easy, particularly in conflicted contexts where national (state) security is the dominant narrative and 'community security' is seen as a by-product of

A COMMUNITY SECURITY APPROACH

- Community security programming provides an effective approach that enables the **delivery of security as a basic service** in a way that builds trust between communities and security providers and contributes to state legitimacy.
- Community security **programs** promote a **process** through which local populations articulate their security concerns and identify and prioritise responses, with external actors facilitating.
- Community security programs aim to have a **sustainable long-term impact** by transforming security-related behaviours and relationships both within communities and between communities and security providers.
- The degree of community security perception (i.e. how safe people feel) is an **indicator** that can be used to assess the impact of security and justice programs at the local level.
- As an **end state**, community security is a condition in which the individuals and groups that constitute a community feel relatively safe from real or perceived threats experienced at the community level.
- **Delivering community security programming at scale** can be challenging, but it is important to ensure that national security and justice policies and reforms are informed by and responsive to community needs and priorities.

'stability'. However, experience from Saferworld's research and programming in the Balkans, Caucasus, Horn of Africa, Middle East, Central and South Asia shows that empowering communities to articulate their security concerns and supporting appropriate state and non-state security responses is a critical and often overlooked part of promoting security and access to justice as core elements of sustainable peace. A community security approach, which places a premium on strengthening the dynamics that will be critical to long-term stabilization, such as democratic accountability, participation, and transparency, alongside technical and operational capacity, builds trust between the community and the state, helps strengthen the responsiveness and accountability of formal institutions to the populations they serve, and ultimately contributes to improving the legitimacy of state actors in the eyes of the people.

Supporting more people-focused approaches to security that create effective accountable institutions serving more secure communities overseas also means greater security for the US at home – and as such should form part of a robust, 'upstream' conflict prevention approach within US foreign policy. The community security approach introduced in this paper offers a theoretical and practical framework through which the US can support more constructive relationships between local citizens and the authorities responsible for delivering key security and development services. The paper briefly describes the community security approach, outlines some of the benefits, and discusses some implications and recommendations for US policymakers.

WHAT IS COMMUNITY SECURITY?

"Community security doesn't just happen at a local level. It can only be replicated sustainably and at scale if it is part of a broader national level approach to security and justice."

Communities (and individual community members) are not just victims of insecurity or beneficiaries of security programs, but active participants in creating situations of security and insecurity themselves. As such they should be involved as partners, engaged in efforts to address security threats, and tackle the root causes of conflict. Community security approaches place a premium on democratic accountability, participation, and transparency, with the inclusion and safety of marginalized and vulnerable populations a priority.

A community security approach stresses the need for regular and meaningful communication between communities and security providers, justice systems, and governance structures to build trust and a sense of 'us' rather than 'us and them'. Without this, when tensions occur, hard security measures that focus on operational capacity and 'keeping the lid on' without addressing the relationship between security providers and populations will be unsustainable at best and may actually compound feelings of insecurity, leading to renewed risk of conflict and further instability. Lessons from the ground reflected in recent policy discourse indicate that success depends not only on *what* is done to address security needs but also *how* it is done and *who* participates in the process.

Community security doesn't just happen at a local level. It can only be replicated sustainably and at scale if it is part of a broader national level approach to security and justice which recognizes the needs of states *and* communities and seeks the best possible balance. The overall impact of this approach should be a contribution to capable, accountable, and responsive security and justice institutions, an empowered citizenry, the development of broader state-society relations, and a strengthening of the social contract. There are various ways of ensuring that national and sub-national

Members of the Kalika community security working group have donated some basic equipment to support the local police post. Here, receiving the donations, the Chief of the District Police Office acknowledges the need for a better police–public partnership. © ANIL POUDEL

programs and policies are informed by and reflective of community perspectives. Currently, most international assistance for security and justice reforms (legislative reviews, training, equipment purchases, institutional capacity-building, and support for change management) takes place within some kind of national framework. Too often, these frameworks are developed without particular reference to local needs, priorities, attitudes, and perceptions, the result of which is that many national programs fail to achieve the desired results when they are rolled out across the country. Tools such as pilot projects and perception surveys (including focus groups, interviews, and validation workshops) can help to gather and analyze the views and needs of different communities and inform the design and delivery of more effective national programs.

In addition to the 'demand' side of security provision, a community-based approach to security also implies concomitant work with security providers and local and national authorities – the 'supply' side of responsive security and
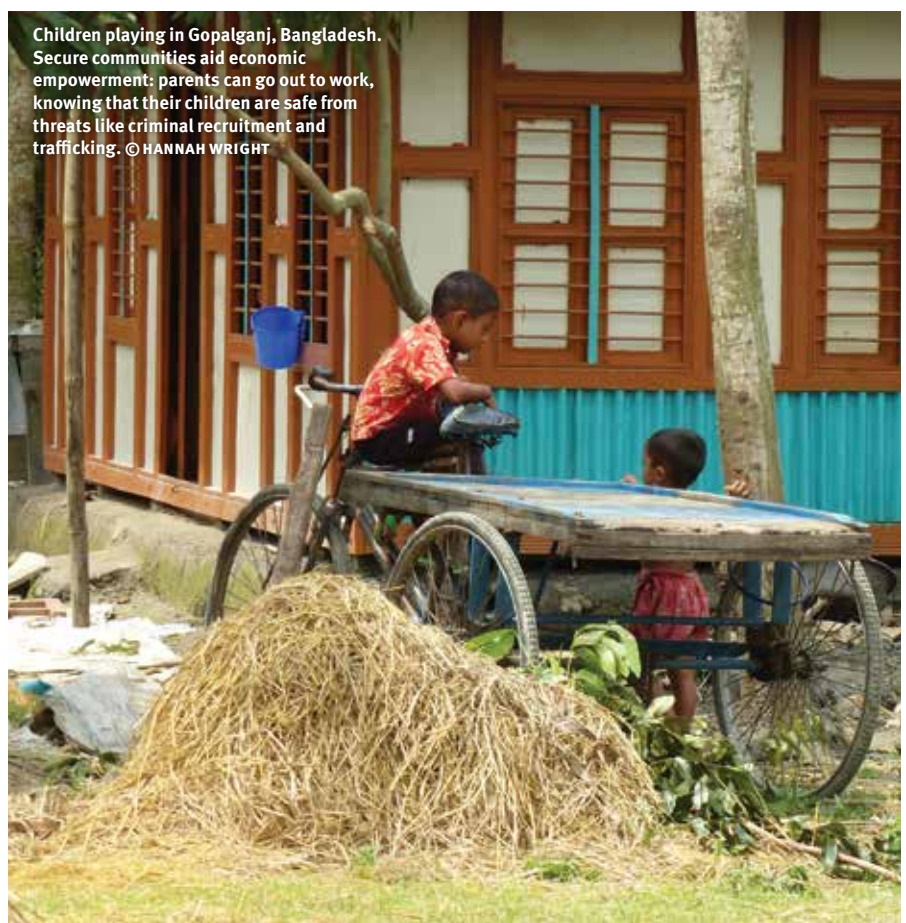
justice provision. This can involve both civilian and military personnel dealing with their counterparts in developing partner countries. Initially security providers may not be willing to engage with communities, seeing such an approach as threatening or undermining their role. Diplomatic and political engagement with national authorities and security institutions may be needed to overcome such concerns. They may also require support in responding to the identified (security) needs which often transcend the mandate of traditional security and justice institutions and require the engagement of different sectors. In such cases, support from development actors will be instrumental in delivering successful results. Community security, therefore, is made up of a complementary and reinforcing network of policies and programs at both the national and local levels that together should deliver effective security to local populations and ultimately improve the security of the state. Balanced diplomatic, developmental, and defense engagement on the part of donors is key to its success.

THE BENEFITS OF A COMMUNITY APPROACH TO SECURITY

A community-oriented approach to security produces benefits at local, national, and international levels. At the local level, by focusing on the concerns that communities themselves prioritize, community-based approaches to security can help address the causes of tension and violence. Similarly, supporting the ability and opportunity for civil society to engage in issues around conflict and security builds and reinforces important 'capacities for peace' within conflict-affected or fragile societies. It also recognizes that, in many contexts, local governance is fundamental to the organization of social, political, and economic life and as such can be considered as the first social contract that people experience. Addressing dysfunctional relationships and accountability at this level is key to ensuring sustainable ways of addressing many kinds of problems, including insecurity and violence.

"By connecting people more constructively with representatives of the state… community-based approaches to security can contribute to improved state-society relationships."

At the national level, in the longer term the increased trust and communication between communities, authorities, and security providers can improve policing, counter-terrorism, and efforts to combat violent extremism. By connecting people more constructively with representatives of the state – whether security providers or other authorities – community-based approaches to security can contribute to improved state-society relationships, increased state legitimacy, and ultimately state security. In brief, Saferworld programming and research has documented the following benefits from community-focused security interventions[2]:

Children playing in Gopalganj, Bangladesh. Secure communities aid economic empowerment: parents can go out to work, knowing that their children are safe from threats like criminal recruitment and trafficking. © HANNAH WRIGHT

- improved coordination between local, national, and international security actors
- improved trust and relationships between communities and security providers as well as local government representatives
- enhanced local governance by building the capacity of communities to constructively demand better service provision and supporting all actors to identify and implement solutions to community problems
- redistribution of resources to meet community needs

- increased civil society capacity to inform the work of security providers
- trust built between social groups
- women empowered to debate concerns around their security needs and make decisions to address those needs
- improved women's and girls' experience of safety and security
- youth mobilized to address security issues – a 'double dividend' given that unemployed or under-occupied youth may often otherwise be a driver of insecurity
- increased earning potential for poor and marginalized populations

Nepali female police officers at a community screening of a Saferworld docudrama, raising awareness of gender-based violence.
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ILLUSTRATIONS OF THE COMMUNITY SECURITY APPROACH

(i) Local level consultation and response: Bosnia

A small community was suffering from increasing levels of armed violence and sought solutions. Through Saferworld's participatory inquiry and community consultation, it became clear that criminals were using abandoned buildings as a base for their operations and a place to hide from the police. Women in the community did not believe an increased police presence would solve the problem as they felt the police were both weak and corrupt. They suggested that if the buildings could somehow be torn down or refurbished, criminals would no longer have a sanctuary from which to operate and the area would be much safer. By working through a community security approach with the local authorities and local police the women succeeded in turning one building into a community youth center. After the youth center

was opened the incidences of armed crime in the area dropped considerably, enhancing the safety and security of the community and strengthening the relationship between the community and the local authorities.

(ii) National level consultations: Somalia and Somaliland

In Somalia, a country plagued by decades of violent conflict and insecurity, civil society and community voices have been largely marginalized in discussions on peace and statebuilding. For the most part external intervention has not been based on an understanding of Somali needs and aspirations at different levels and as such has been perceived as illegitimate and imposed from outside by many Somalis. In an effort to address this challenge Saferworld has supported the formation of representative non-state actor platforms in South Central Somalia, Puntland, and Somaliland to

offer civil society and community voices in the policy processes that affect the region. Ahead of an international conference on Somalia co-hosted by the UK Government and the Federal Government of Somalia earlier this year, Saferworld, in collaboration with these partner organizations, consulted a broad range of civil society and non-state representatives to discuss recommendations for the Somali government. In addition to local level security, justice, and governance issues, participants in the consultations expressed concern about the poor relations between the federal and regional governments and the need to reinvigorate the national political and social reconciliation process. Such public consultations are key to improving the legitimacy of international and federal government efforts to address Somalia/land's ongoing security and development needs.

THE IMPLICATIONS OF TAKING A COMMUNITY-BASED APPROACH TO SECURITY IN US POLICY

At the international level the policy environment is conducive to taking a community security approach. International policy frameworks and discourse to which the US is party recognize the importance of state-society relations and highlight the need to understand and engage with the complex political and social dynamics that shape people's experiences of safety and security.

The 2011 World Development Report strongly advocates for restoring citizens' confidence in the institutions charged with providing security, justice, and economic growth. The OECD's 2007 Fragile State Principles affirm the need to build the legitimacy and accountability (as well as the capability) of states, and the recently developed New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States contains several 'Peacebuilding and Statebuilding Goals' relating to inclusive security, justice, and political space. Current discussions on the post-2015 development framework to replace the Millennium Development Goals have also focused on how to include peace, security, and governance in a way that encourages international efforts and enhances long-term sustainable impact on conflict and security issues.

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At the domestic level, the US national security strategy and overall foreign policy has since early in the last decade been framed by the 3D approach, which

COMPREHENSIVE SECURITY IN THE US NATIONAL SECURITY STRATEGY

'Successful engagement will depend upon the effective use and integration of different elements of American power. Our diplomacy and development capabilities must help prevent conflict, spur economic growth, strengthen weak and failing states, lift people out of poverty, combat climate change and epidemic disease, and strengthen institutions of democratic governance. Our military will continue strengthening its capacity to partner with foreign counterparts, train and assist security forces, and pursue military-to-military ties with a broad range of governments.' (2010 National Security Strategy[4])

places defense, diplomacy, and development into a tripartite framework. But while integration has now become accepted doctrine, little attention has been paid to how the integration should work and what central concepts should drive the strategy. The actual discourse of security, as well as the funding levels, has continued to be dominated by 'defense', which has left the other two effectively marginalized – a problem most visible in comparative appropriations and funding levels.

Rebalancing the National Security Strategy

Current US practice tends to frame security in relation to protection from physical violence and harm rather than interrogating the longer-term structural issues that give rise to conflict and insecurity. As a result, the analysis often conflates 'conflict' with the outbreak or onset of armed violence and responds to the symptoms rather than addressing the cause. This makes it difficult to move far enough 'upstream' to increase available options and leverage less costly, more productive, and more preventive non-military responses.[3] By examining the broader spectrum of causes, conditions, and definitions of security and insecurity and how they relate to conflict and violence, it's clear that the sound of gunfire is not the beginning of conflict

but a signal that grievances have been left unaddressed for too long. This recognition should enable a more comprehensive policy to take hold, which repositions the military in a broader context alongside development and diplomatic options to support efforts to address conflict further upstream.

When 3D was introduced as a framework for US foreign policy, it represented a significant paradigm shift – recognition that the three constituent elements operate in the same space and should be considered inseparable. Recognizing the connections between diplomatic, development, and defense efforts is important, but for a more community-oriented approach to flourish, military force and hard security options must be explicitly repositioned as a tactical part of the greater security and development context, rather than being allowed to dominate it. Current funding levels and planned appropriations do not mirror the inclusive, comprehensive language and appear to further marginalize diplomatic and development capabilities, while maintaining their rhetorical presence within the doctrine – and are thus detrimental to overall efforts to create a more sustainable security situation.

US Government officials and others within relevant policy and practitioner communities should actively engage with approaches that bring the security needs

Somali women at a gathering. © SAFERWORLD

of local communities into the center of efforts to enhance security and stability in conflict-affected and fragile states.

"Development and diplomatic efforts... offer a greater degree of flexibility, and create less anti-US sentiment."

The US National Security Strategy should explicitly prioritize civilian, development, and diplomatic measures as the core strategic pillar of sustainable security and balance military capability proportionately within that political and civilian framework. Unless US policymakers recognize these issues and develop a revised security strategy framework, future engagements will suffer the same disruptions as current approaches have in areas where there is co-location of development and military efforts (as in Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Iraq).

Development and diplomatic efforts are far less costly than military ones, offer a greater degree of flexibility, and create less anti-US sentiment – increasing the range of options available to planners and policymakers. A more effective and sustainable security framework which incorporates some or all of the community security approach outlined above would play to US strengths in mobilizing human and financial resources in development programming at a lower cost in lives, morale, and national treasure and would ultimately deliver more effective and lasting results for people living in conflict-affected and fragile contexts.

NOTES

1 See, for example, Fukuyama F (2012) *State-building: A New Agenda* (New York: Cornell University Press) and UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office (2012) *Human Rights and Democracy: The 2012 Foreign and Commonwealth Office Report* available at www.hrdreport.fco.gov.uk/read-and-download-the-report/

2 For more information and access to Saferworld resources on community security, please visit www.saferworld.org.uk/what/community-security

3 CNN estimates one of the many measures of the financial cost of troop intervention (http://security.blogs.cnn.com/2012/02/28/one-soldier-one-year-850000-and-rising/) as around $850,000 per soldier per year (possibly as "low" as $815,000, or as high as $1.4 million), which at the 101,000 height of troop presence in Afghanistan, 2011, would add up to nearly $86 billion in that one year alone – not including the far more important human toll, care of the wounded, hardware, and materiel, and so forth. That's compared to the $56 billion of the total combined State Department and USAID budgets for the same year… or the $2.9 billion allocated in 2011 for "development assistance" (www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/BUDGET-2011-BUD/pdf/BUDGET-2011-BUD-17.pdf). For more on the extensive work Saferworld has done on the subject, please visit www.saferworld.org.uk/downloads/pubdocs/Upstream%20conflict%20prevention%20briefing%20spreads.pdf

4 www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/rss_viewer/national_security_strategy.pdf

SAFERWORLD
PREVENTING VIOLENT CONFLICT. BUILDING SAFER LIVES

Saferworld is an independent international organization working to prevent violent conflict and build safer lives. We work with local people affected by conflict to improve their safety and sense of security, and conduct wider research and analysis. We use this evidence and learning to improve local, national and international policies and practices that can help build lasting peace. Our priority is people – we believe that everyone should be able to lead peaceful, fulfilling lives, free from insecurity and violent conflict.

We are a not-for-profit organization that works in over 20 countries and territories across Africa, Asia and Europe.

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- Modern conflicts have the potential to affect regional security and the national security of Western states directly, including the US

- US foreign policy recognizes that diplomatic, development, and defense efforts are all key to sustainable and effective overseas intervention, but military force and 'hard security' options currently dominate the US discourse and response to security threats

- Such interventions tend to focus on building the technical and operational capacity of security and justice institutions and pay less attention to the political and social system within which such institutions operate – without that focus, "train and equip" models can actually cause further destabilization. A commensurate focus on transparency, civic participation, and good governance is needed to ensure community buy-in and the delivery of responsive and accountable security and justice services to all those living in conflict-affected and fragile contexts – the community security approach

- A community-oriented approach to security at both national and local levels offers a chance to redress this imbalance and is critical to operationalizing recent steps towards new and comprehensive approaches to national security and stabilization operations

- Donors and strategic planners must focus more on preventative, upstream diplomacy and development interventions as the most useful, cost-effective, and sustainable way of dealing with the fullest range of security dynamics and rely less on reactive, military-led approaches to security concerns

- Community security is an important practical as well as conceptual vehicle for achieving this and should be integrated into strategic planning, future National Security Strategies, and Defense and Development Reviews

- US Government officials and others within relevant policy and practitioner communities should actively engage with approaches that bring the security needs of local communities into the center of efforts to enhance security and stability in conflict-affected and fragile states

- The US National Security Strategy should explicitly prioritize civilian, development, and diplomatic measures as the core leading edge and strategic pillar of sustainable security and balance military capability proportionately within that political and civilian framework

- All those responsible for budget appropriations processes should prioritize funding for capabilities to address *causes* of conflict in order to enable the most effective possible implementation of a comprehensive security strategy that looks beyond the immediate symptoms

PUBLICATIONS

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