



Tunisians demonstrate for peace during the 2011 revolution. © EZEQUIEL SCAGNETTI / EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

“A BETTER STATE OF PEACE” AMERICAN STRATEGY BEYOND THE LIMITS OF WARFARE

The United States (US) faces a variety of global challenges today – from ISIS and global terrorism, drugs and energy crises, to relations with Russia and China and regional instability in the Gulf, Asia and Africa. Finding new ways to analyze the causes and nature of conflicts more accurately and address them more effectively is critical to American and global security alike.

In this briefing, Saferworld discusses a series of key security challenges and offers constructive recommendations for a strategy that focuses American resources on creating the conditions for sustainable peace and security. To succeed in this strategy, all elements of statecraft – defense, diplomacy, economic cooperation and development aid – must be refocused to look beyond crisis management and to work towards the

long-term peace and security goals upon which economic prosperity and stable governance depend. The strategy must be consistent with operations on the ground, avoiding the contradictions that undermine success. Through a whole-of-government focus on peace, security, good governance and justice, the US can make a vital contribution to global stability at a time when it is greatly needed.

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OVERVIEW: KEY ISSUES FOR THE NEW ADMINISTRATION

2017 will mark a turning point in American foreign and security policy as a new administration takes the helm for the first time in eight years. That new administration will be met with a growing body of evidence that shows that current approaches to international security have fallen short and have, in some cases, made the problems worse. It will also face a rising tide of conflict, marked by the spread of violent movements within and across national borders, increasing injustice, poor governance and inequality leading to growing levels of state fragility, spikes in conflict deaths and forced migration, and declines in democracy and human rights. To reverse these trends, the new administration must consider breaking from narrow conceptions of security and examine alternative options. This briefing provides an overview of key areas of concern for US strategy and policymakers, highlighting promising options for managing complex transnational threats while establishing conditions for lasting peace that will reduce threats in the long term.

The symptoms of conflict and instability – such as terror attacks and forced migration – have reached historic highs, with the number of displaced people exceeding 65 million² in 2016. Terror attacks, and the increasingly myriad ways

in which they are carried out, are also on the rise.³ Nations around the world are devoting more and more resources in a losing battle to contain instability and violence, and doing too little to prevent them from arising in the first place. As conflict and poverty become increasingly concentrated together, the cost of responding to crises and providing relief are likely to rise further. Within this global context, and pressured by crises from all sides, Western national security discourse is often characterized by reactive, militarized responses that have proven ineffective and often counter-productive.⁴

The threats are real, but they are also neither as dire nor as inevitable as they may seem. They can be changed, they can be reduced, and most importantly, they can be prevented. During the upcoming transition, the new administration has an opportunity to reflect on current practice, building on and investing in what works, while acknowledging shortcomings in other areas and choosing to go in new directions. But to take full advantage of this opportunity, it will need to hit the ground running and chart a new, more effective course. This will require improved conflict analysis to distinguish what drives it and why the key actors

behave as they do. This must be used in turn to reshape American military, diplomatic and development efforts. Doing so will help achieve a more effective and sustainable balance between short- and long-term security; security and development; and the interests of the US in relation to the needs of local populations.

The temptation to react to security threats primarily through force is understandable given domestic pressures to act. However, the reliance of US foreign policy on militarized approaches and regional partners with questionable human rights records, has brought little success – and often led to long-term failure.

“The reliance of US foreign policy on militarized approaches and regional partners with questionable human rights records, has brought little success”

Global leadership and sound, sustainable strategy requires a pivot from the current reactive approach to emerging crises, to a new vision for preventing conflict and rebuilding global peace and stability. This means shifting away from the current strategy of attacking the symptoms of today’s conflicts to a more comprehensive and forward thinking vision that reduces their causes and builds healthy structures in their place. Such a shift would reduce economic and human costs as well as the unintended backlash, such as the bloody insurgencies and rebellions that have been the legacy of past military campaigns.

In this briefing, we will examine challenges in four key areas and explore policy options to address them. These should be seen as interconnected and mutually reinforcing, and should be treated accordingly in policy and operations.



A community security focus group in Kuajok, South Sudan. © SAFERWORLD/TOM MARTIN

REALIGNING AMERICAN STRATEGY TO PRIORITIZE PEACE

In the past 12 months, many people have died and been injured in political violence in Bangladesh, with huge impacts on businesses and livelihoods. As part of Saferworld and Conciliation Resources’ Capacities for Peace programme, civil society experts came together to debate their role in addressing conflict and violence across the country. © SAFERWORLD/TOM MARTIN



RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Invest in the Department of State and USAID’s capacity to work with local partners to develop a long-term vision and strategy for peace that goes beyond tactical efforts designed to achieve short-term stability.**
- **Conduct regular conflict analyses, making sure to include local perceptions, and share across departments and agencies.**
- **Design and evolve interventions based on up-to-date conflict analyses and with an appreciation of potential regional risks and unintended consequences of actions.**
- **Re-prioritize and invest substantially in the sections of USAID that focus on good governance and conflict resolution as a core part of preventive capability.**
- **Protect and expand the Complex Crises Fund (CCF), recognizing that all available evidence points to an increasing need for just such a capability to respond flexibly to emerging and changing conditions.**
- **Clearly separate the roles and responsibilities of military and aid implementers. Shift funding away from the Department of Defense for programming that would otherwise belong under development or diplomacy, and reduce the scope of Civil Affairs involvement in programmatic areas that were historically the domain of non-governmental organizations.**
- **Ensure a transfer authority is enacted to replace the now-defunct “1207” mechanism (2006–2010), which enabled the above shift in funding from military accounts to civilian implementation – but at the same time, avoid subordinating civilian and development interventions to military aims.**
- **Ensure that in conflict and conflict prevention contexts, all US departments and agencies contribute coherently to the strategic pursuit of peace rather than allowing short-term stabilization and military objectives to marginalize and supersede the long-term needs of peacebuilding, development and diplomatic engagement.**

“Timely and proactive interventions through diplomacy, development and concerted peacebuilding approaches that get at the root causes of fragility can go a long way towards preventing violence”

A number of studies predict that 60–80% of the world’s poorest people will live in fragile states in ten to 15 years’ time. Concentrations like this tend to both amplify fragilities and undermine attempts to improve them, increasing both danger and cost over time.⁵ This trend will concentrate the most difficult development challenges within contexts where people are already susceptible to violence. Moreover, these conditions are no longer contained within national borders, and have shown a worrying tendency to spread. Not only is conflict on the rise, but so are its drivers – chief among them oppression, injustice and inequality.⁶ However, timely and proactive interventions through diplomacy, development and concerted peacebuilding approaches that get at the root causes of fragility can go a long way towards preventing violence. The inclusion of Goal 16 (on peaceful, just and inclusive societies) within the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)⁷ illustrates that there is worldwide support for preventive approaches to conflict. The full implementation of the goals – bolstered by American support – could help reverse the trends that escalate the conflict, violent death and forced migration of recent years.

On average, preventing a conflict is 60 times more cost effective than intervening after violence breaks out.⁸ the 2014 estimate for the annual cost of a single US soldier in Afghanistan was \$2.1 million,⁹ and yet the 2017 Congressional budget request for the Complex Crises Fund – the primary pot of flexible money kept available for conflict prevention globally – is far less than the cost of fielding a single platoon. Violent conflicts displace millions of people, create massive humanitarian crises and fuel violent movements and organized crime. They are economically disastrous, rapidly reversing hard-won development gains, destroying livelihoods and jeopardizing trade and investment – including for neighboring countries that are at risk of spillover conflict.

Preventive action is often stymied as a result of overstretched resources spent on putting out existing fires – leaving few resources for countries and issues

that aren’t already ablaze. Perhaps for this reason, the US spent over nine times as much on defense as on diplomacy and development combined in 2015.¹⁰ Recalibrating the American approach to invest in prevention requires strong leadership, but is a necessary step to prevent strained resources from reaching an inevitable breaking point. A proactive and conflict prevention-focused foreign policy would enable the US government to anticipate future hotspots of violence and actively address their underlying drivers early, while a greater range of better and more sustainable options is still on the table. In fact, promoting improved governance, justice and equality abroad may not require increased resources as much as a redistribution of existing efforts and influence to ensure that agents of positive change always have a trusted ally within the US Government.

The US Government already has the tools to address the causes of fragility proactively, both within the State Department and especially within USAID. However, these tools are too often ignored in favor of military-led interventions and assistance packages. Since the operations in Iraq and Afghanistan began, military forces have increasingly been asked to do work that was historically implemented by civilian, government or non-governmental organizations (NGOs). All current and foreseeable US interventions contain some element of complex operations, in which military, civilian government and non-governmental entities operate within the same theater – but this hasn’t always worked well to date.

While the military, USAID, State Department, and NGO implementers are ostensibly working under a joint strategy as partners, the military maintains a privileged status, with primary possession of strategic language and resources. As a result, interagency tensions in theaters of intense US engagement have tended to remain unresolved. Improved results will require not only more active lesson-learning but also a rebalancing of the relationship between the “three D’s”

By understanding what drives groups like **Boko Haram in northern Nigeria and the Lake Chad Basin** to violence, the US government may uncover solutions to tackle the problem at its root. By working holistically and preventively at local, national and international levels, such a strategy would not only mitigate the problem but also help prevent its re-emergence. This approach would aim to strike a balance between efforts to uphold the rule of law and human rights, while also paying attention to historical, political and economic trends, such as marginalization, and the need for transformed relations between local people and security forces. The Lake Chad Basin is a prime example of a context in which attempting preventive, transformative approaches before resorting to military-led operations would help avert further regional conflict and destabilization.

of American statecraft – development, diplomacy and defense – so that development and diplomacy are equal partners that can contribute to sustainable peace and bring an end to the increasing violence and fragility of recent years. Defense should be used coherently and judiciously alongside the other two in the service of shared peacebuilding goals.

At present, preventive and non-military approaches to conflict are poorly resourced. The CCF, the only section of the US budget explicitly geared towards flexible crisis response and prevention, is constantly at risk of de-funding. Worse still, USAID departments focused on good governance and conflict resolution have atrophied as attention and resources have shifted elsewhere over the course of previous presidential administrations. While these departments cover some of the most vital issues for US foreign policy, they are unable to meet present demands, let alone support a strategic shift towards conflict prevention.

The new American administration can reverse these trends by crafting a new framework for tackling the most serious drivers of future conflicts. They can help return justice and sustained peace to fractured states and societies. Thorough and frequent conflict analysis is the foundation of prevention, providing policymakers and practitioners with a detailed picture of current conflict drivers, as well as potential triggers, regional and transnational implications, and opportunities for peace. Equipped with this detailed analysis, policymakers can design interventions which are effective and preventive and, most of all, tailored to the needs of the people most affected.

This analysis should recognize the complexities of modern conflicts and consider all the local and transnational

In **Yemen**, Saferworld has maintained engagement with community groups of women and young people throughout the tragic violence that has unfolded since 2011. For example, we have worked with community action groups in Yemen to identify security threats and come up with solutions to address them. Our efforts have supported such groups to remain active, understand their situation, document abuses, call for change and take initiatives to maintain well-being and solidarity. In Taiz, a Saferworld-supported group developed a plan to install street lights to reduce incidents of street harassment and crime. Such investments in the social fabric are always possible – even when war is at its peak – and show that external actors care about what is happening in Yemen and wish to promote people’s vision for a non-violent, inclusive future. They also help to ensure that society is ready to assert this vision when the violence comes to an end – and play a full role in the dialogue that will be needed to resolve divisions and address grievances.

drivers that bring about violence.

Drawing on this analysis, strategies should be geared towards addressing these drivers rather than seeking short-term stability by attempting to eradicate ‘enemy’ groups in coordination with questionable allies.

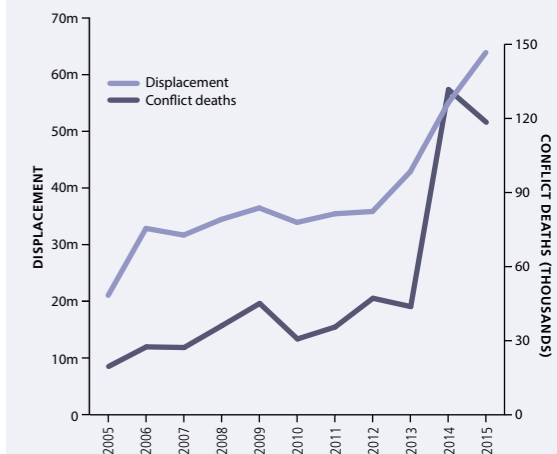
The US government already has many promising tools, including the Conflict Analysis Framework 2.0 and the Interagency Conflict Analysis Framework (ICAF), and offices such as the Conflict Management and Mitigation (CMM) unit within USAID, and Conflict and Stabilization Operations (CSO) at the State Department. However, the 2015 Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review (QDDR) stressed the importance of regularly sharing updated analyses outside of crises, in order to encourage a more effective focus on prevention. Prevention goes far beyond troops on the ground at an earlier stage. Sound conflict analysis offers policymakers entry points for tackling the drivers of conflict early on. Direct preventive action to lessen the risks of conflict through military force or security assistance can backfire, especially in contexts where the population at large harbors grievances about poor governance, past violence or negative security force behavior. Such contexts often need change as much as stability, and this is where development work and diplomatic engagement need to be allowed sufficient space to assist in bringing about long-term peace.

It is impossible to work proactively on all potential conflicts. But the US, due to its size, influence and available resources, is uniquely placed to make a contribution to peace by breaking the cycles of conflict and focusing on prevention.



A US marine supports an operation near the town of Al Buhardan, Iraq, April 2006. Despite the huge military-led nation building effort, Iraq remains deeply unstable. © CPL BRIAN M HENNER

Conflict deaths and forced displacement have sharply increased in the last five years. Sources: Uppsala Conflict Data Program; UN High Commissioner for Refugees



“Preventing a conflict is 60 times more cost effective than intervening after violence breaks out”

RETHINKING COUNTER-TERRORISM AND COUNTERING VIOLENT EXTREMISM

A Predator unmanned aircraft flies a combat mission over southern Afghanistan, 2008. Many analysts have concluded that drone strikes create as many problems as they eliminate.
© U.S. AIR FORCE PHOTO/LT COL LESLIE PRATT



RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Avoid over-reliance on militarized responses to violent transnational movements. Ensure that efforts to prevent, interdict and prosecute political violence are consistent with human rights and the rule of law.**
- **Ensure that the US is a key player in challenging abusive or repressive counter-terrorism strategies rather than reinforcing them.**
- **Shift analysis away from violent groups and individuals, or individual symptoms such as violent extremism, towards analyzing the whole system of conflict and fragility and what drives it.**
- **Focus US strategy on addressing conflict holistically, looking beyond strategies to tackle particular groups and their ideologies towards strategies that address injustice, inequality and poor governance regardless of whether they produce one particular symptom or not.**
- **Ensure that diplomatic and development options for promoting peace receive full consideration.**
- **Adopt a communications approach that challenges simplistic portrayals of conflicts and resists knee-jerk responses. Encourage deeper understanding of conflicts, causes and actors within the American public.**
- **Drop ‘quick fixes’ in favor of public and multilateral support for strategies that offer options to address drivers of conflict in the long term. Use evidence from past efforts to challenge the tough posturing that can detract from effective peacebuilding leadership.**

“Saferworld’s research concludes that an over-reliance on military force, together with security assistance to suspect partners, has served to harm civilians and entrench grievances that generate conflict”

From 2002 to 2013, Americans had a one in 110,000,000 chance of dying in an act of terrorism.¹¹ Paradoxically, according to recent polls, terrorism is one of the biggest public fears in the US. Such fears are far removed from the level of actual risk, but they have still justified a huge expansion of homeland security infrastructure in the US, as well as further securitization of counter-terrorism approaches abroad. These approaches have proved divisive and damaging – for countries targeted in the Global War on Terror, and even for those people within the US who have at times felt targeted and marginalized by current approaches.

Between 1968 and 2006, only seven percent of terrorist groups worldwide were disbanded as a result of military force, while 43 percent ended as a result of peaceful political solutions.¹² Nonetheless, in an attempt to quell public fear and demonstrate action, the government has continued to invest heavily in military solutions to the perceived threat from terrorism. This is exemplified by the continued reliance on drone strikes in countries such as Pakistan, Somalia¹³ and Yemen,¹⁴ “train and equip” programs to support both state allies and proxy armed groups, airstrikes and kill-or-capture special operations missions. All of these practices have clear outputs: body counts, airstrikes, number of recruits and operational units trained – but all have tenuous benefits. Saferworld’s research concludes that an over-reliance on military force, together with security assistance to suspect partners, has served to harm civilians and entrench grievances that generate conflict. Ultimately, this serves to provoke the further spread of violence.¹⁵

More recently, the US has sought to complement its robust counter-terror efforts with a focus on an agenda referred to as Countering Violent Extremism (CVE). This approach brings a welcome focus on preventively addressing a wider range of root causes than more assertive counter-terror approaches have done. However, to be successful, CVE will also

have to retreat from its current co-existence with securitized goals and methods more befitting the intelligence and military worlds, which tend to undermine social and political development.

CVE programs focus heavily on the reasons individuals join violent groups and seek to counter them – for example, by providing jobs, services and promoting activities that diminish the ideological pull of violent movements. Research illustrates how such movements feed on perceptions of isolation and marginalization, lack of access to justice, perceived injustice, trauma and exposure to violence – more than they do on economics and ideological messaging.

In contrast, securitized responses – especially those targeted at specific minority communities – can be counterproductive, as they can increase alienation and nourish grievances that drive conflict.

Looking closer, many of the problems defined as violent extremism can usually be traced back to longstanding issues such as abuse, corruption and poor governance. In such circumstances, counter-messaging tends to fall short, especially when these more fundamental drivers are ignored and left to continue unaddressed. At the same time, the logistical and intelligence needs of militarized approaches have locked the US into partnerships with many governments who uphold these same conditions within their own borders. The US strategy will struggle to achieve its objectives until it resolves this tension between a focus on symptoms and a focus on causes.

What does this mean in practice? Rather than setting out to eliminate terrorist groups, an improved approach would start by identifying what local communities believe to be the biggest drivers of conflict threatening their countries, and would seek to help authorities, informal authorities and civil society to work together to address them. The US should work much more closely with local and national actors to bring about constructive, non-violent change. Such a whole-of-society approach might focus on achieving security and justice

reforms, increasing state accountability and responsiveness, promoting inclusive state institutions, reducing corruption, empowering local communities economically and politically, and seeking to resolve divisions, injustices and trauma.

Moving in this direction will require considerable effort, especially to reframe the public debate about terrorism and what an effective response looks like. However, the evidence clearly justifies a break from the failed approaches of the past fifteen years in favor of strategies that can more effectively address the real causes of the problem.

LOOKING AT SECURITY THROUGH PEOPLE’S EYES

Saferworld works to promote peace and security within communities around the world. In the past three years, we have supported community driven security processes in contexts as diverse as Bangladesh, the Caucasus, Central Asia, Nepal, Pakistan, South Sudan and Yemen – training and supporting 106 community action groups to implement over 100 community led action plans. We have also trained over 200 civil society organisations in ten countries and supported them to influence government authorities. Over time, we have seen these people-led processes lead to systemic change. Across eight countries, 28 authorities at the national level and 64 at the sub-national level have developed or implemented new approaches to peace and security – in part as a result of our work with partners and communities.

RETHINKING AMERICA'S GLOBAL PARTNERSHIPS



President Obama meets key US partner, King Salman, in January 2015. Saferworld research in Afghanistan, Somalia and Yemen has documented the conflict risks arising from many US partnerships in counter-terror and stabilization operations. © WHITE HOUSE/PETE SOUZA

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **The best policy to reduce violence, insecurity and fragility is to uphold our own best ideals – unwavering support for justice, democratic governance and human rights. The new administration should use American influence to further those ideals, extending friendship to governments that choose to manage conflicts constructively, and withdrawing it to discourage counter-productive approaches.**
- **The US should strive to be a trusted ally to all people who seek positive change in conflict-affected societies. To achieve this, it should increase the scope and depth of outreach to civil society and informal power structures as well as to states. Wider and more inclusive consultation should be a hallmark of future US strategy.**
- **USAID programs and NGOs are also important channels. Funding should be expanded for peacebuilding, democracy, rights and governance programming in order to restore their centrality to America's strategic vision and capability.**
- **The government should recognize and acknowledge partners' misuse of American weaponry. All forms of military assistance, including weaponry, training and advising, should be made conditional upon adherence to human rights and good governance principles. At the same time, the United States should look at forming relationships with non-traditional partners that demonstrate a commitment to these principles.**



Secretary of State John Kerry meets President Al-Sisi of Egypt, to which the US has resumed military assistance despite the disastrous impacts of its ongoing war on terror on democratic freedoms and human rights. © U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE / GLEN JOHNSON

American strategy has progressively shifted away from direct, large-scale interventions in crisis situations and towards a greater reliance on regional partners to do the bulk of the fighting. However, important regional partners such as Egypt and Saudi Arabia have increasingly been accused of grave human rights violations and injustices that exacerbate, rather than reduce, fragility and violence.¹⁶ Turkey, another traditional ally, recently established a series of anti-democratic laws designed to criminalize dissent following a failed coup in the country.

One of the core values of American foreign policy is democratic peace theory, which enshrines representative democracy as key to peace and stability. To make this work in the way the theory is intended, the American government should focus on the long term by forging stronger connections with people rather than nations. This can help ensure that the needs, rights and aspirations of conflict-affected people have the opportunity to shape future governance.

Additionally, the confusion of military aid and civilian foreign assistance results in badly mixed messages, as when American humanitarian assistance is delivered to the same areas that are targeted by American-built weaponry. Such mixed messages can radically undermine the global standing of the US while reducing societal confidence in peace and development efforts and worsening the very problems they were meant to solve.

“Mixed messages can radically undermine the global standing of the US while reducing societal confidence in peace and development efforts and worsening the very problems they were meant to solve”

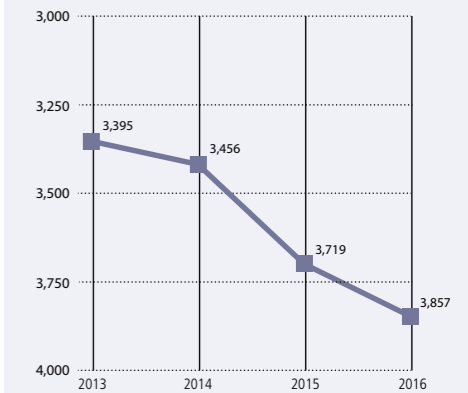
Building confidence in US efforts is critical and requires much greater engagement with civil society – especially with marginalized but critical groups such as women and youth. It is important that the road towards stability be inclusive and participatory, rather than elite-driven – reflecting the needs and desires of the local population.

The new administration is unlikely to want to abandon existing partners, in order to avoid creating power vacuums that could lead to further instability and necessitate international intervention. It will also be engaging with a more multipolar world. Through its defense, trade and development relationships, the administration will still wield considerable influence on the actions of its partners. By sending the right signals, the US can show friendship to governments that choose to manage conflicts constructively and ensure it does not incentivize counter-productive behavior.

“The greatest antidote to ‘violent extremism’ is restoring faith in our own best ideals”

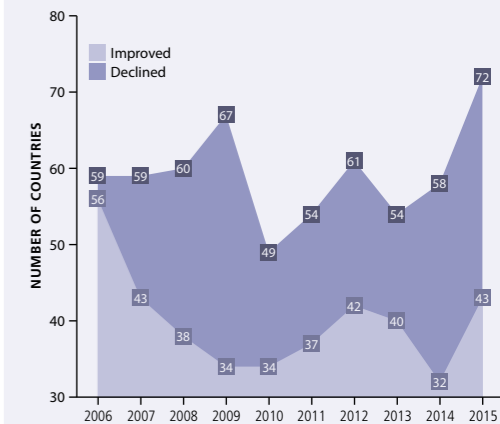
The greatest antidote to ‘violent extremism’ is restoring faith in our own best ideals. Viewing crises as battles to be won or lost limits our perspective and only allows space for ‘battlefield’ solutions. America has longstanding commitments to the ideals of justice, peace and good governance – these should be embraced as guiding principles of foreign policy. Short-term stability may seem to require the sacrifice of democracy and justice, but this is almost never the case. The problems we face are complex, and are based on power, resources and social and political interactions. These are not solvable through short-sighted battlefield solutions, but instead depend on our ability to help states and societies negotiate their way towards constructive change. Our partnerships should reflect this.

The decline in global levels of press freedom Source: Reporters without Borders



*Higher score = less media freedom

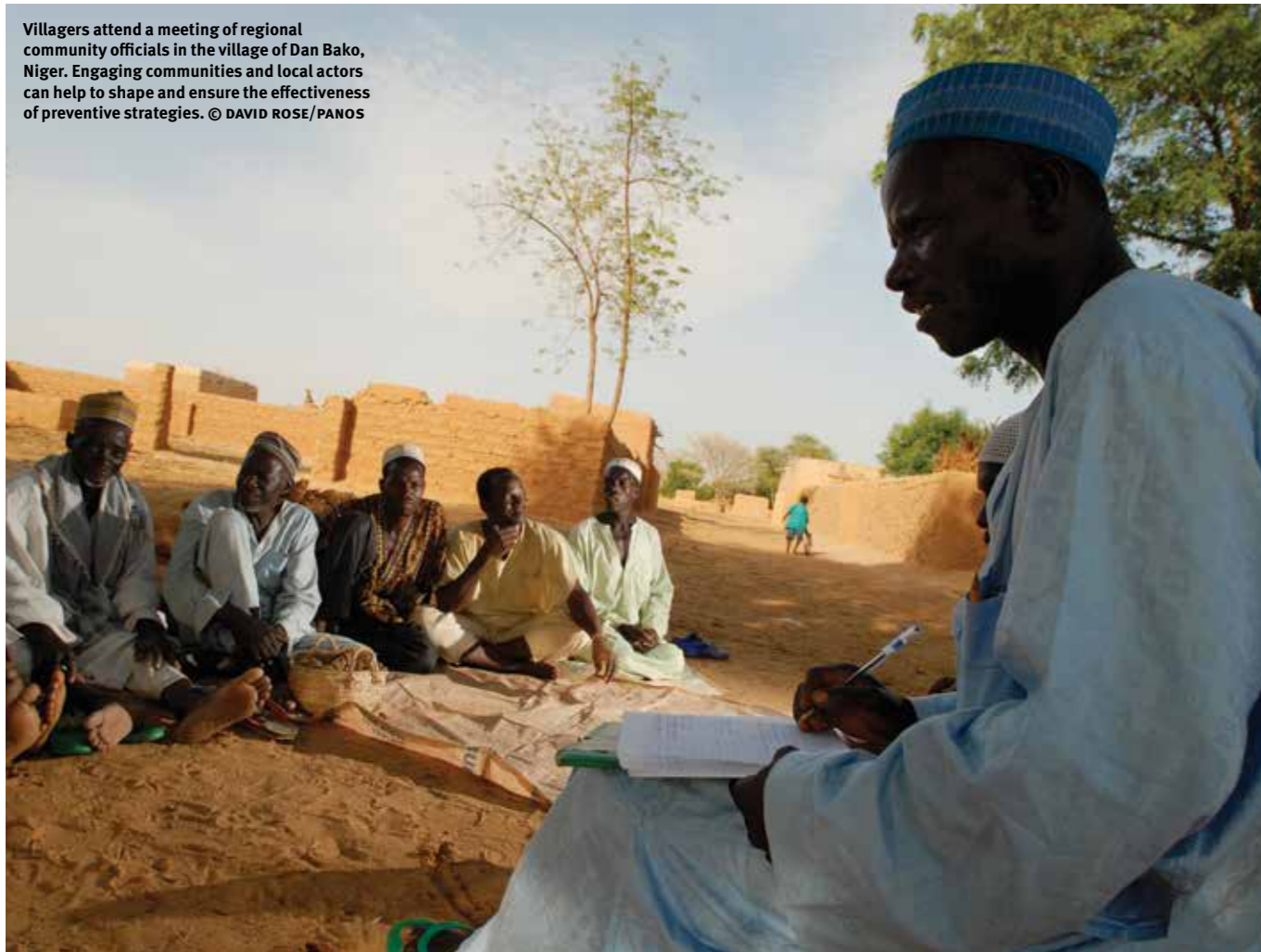
Improvements/reductions in freedoms in various countries. Countries with net declines in aggregate score have outnumbered those with gains for the past 10 years. Source: Freedom House



“America has longstanding commitments to the ideals of justice, peace and good governance – these should be embraced as guiding principles of foreign policy”

REALIZING THE POTENTIAL OF AMERICAN DEVELOPMENT AND DIPLOMACY

Villagers attend a meeting of regional community officials in the village of Dan Bako, Niger. Engaging communities and local actors can help to shape and ensure the effectiveness of preventive strategies. © DAVID ROSE/PANOS



RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Development and humanitarian objectives and methods should not be subordinated to defense and diplomacy. Instead, they should play a clear role in defining the overall US approach to conflict-affected regions, and should be defined and directed by the needs of local populations and sustainable peace and security rather than those of outsiders.**
- **The USAID Administrator should have the authority to shape the direction of the Agency. He or she should be empowered to address identified local needs.**
- **Strong relationships and the capacity to negotiate are fundamental to US effectiveness in resolving conflicts and promoting peace. The Department of State is the repository for American ability to negotiate and should be funded and empowered in American security strategy to play this role to the full.**

The line between American foreign assistance and foreign policy blurred significantly in 2006, when the US Agency for International Development was subsumed into the State Department as part of the “F Bureau.”¹⁷ The new administration faces a choice – whether to keep this arrangement the way it is, to move USAID out of the State Department as it was originally conceptualized, or to draw it even closer to American foreign policy.

The placement of USAID is far more than just an administrative issue. It has deep implications for the effectiveness of American foreign assistance. The more American foreign assistance is driven by American policy and needs, the more it will reflect the needs of domestic actors rather than the needs of the people it was intended to benefit. Furthermore, local conditions where USAID operates are by definition unstable and rapidly changing. As such, the Agency needs the flexibility and autonomy to respond to these changes, to avoid the prioritization of American political and security priorities at the expense of local needs.

Evidence shows that the merger has led to problems. Development work is more sustainable when beneficiaries and partners feel that they, rather than outsiders, have designed it and that it is

for their benefit. One clear example is the lethal drone program, which has been shown to be detrimental to both US strategic interests as well as foreign assistance. Funding should also be predictable,¹⁸ rather than fluctuating according to donor priorities. Similarly, peacebuilding efforts are more effective and sustainable when responding to human security needs of local people.

American foreign policy needs to shift its focus from the current threat-centric approach to recognize a greater role for diplomacy and development in a strategic peacebuilding approach, with funding for those areas increasing accordingly. To give appropriate weight to each of the three components of American foreign policy, USAID will need the power and agency to influence overall US strategies to work coherently towards just and lasting peace and the needs of its beneficiaries. The new US administration should ensure USAID is sufficiently empowered and independent to do this.

Engagement in fragile and conflict-affected states requires a clear understanding of the differences between local needs and American ones. Until this happens, efforts to address security threats will continue to be counter-productive and costly.

“Skewing development efforts to serve our own security purposes has been repeatedly shown to undermine its effectiveness and increase risk to aid personnel. So it shouldn’t be assumed that the security objectives of CVE can be integrated into development work without disrupting the primary purpose of development: to advance the rights and well-being of vulnerable people.”

David Alpher/Saferworld, ‘A look at the American ‘Countering Violent Extremism’ strategy’, 26 July 2016, www.saferworld.org.uk/news-and-views/comment/216-a-look-at-the-new-american-countering-violent-extremism-strategy

ABOUT SAFERWORLD

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

We are a not-for-profit organisation with programmes in nearly 20 countries and territories across Africa, the Middle East, Asia and Europe.

www.saferworld.org.uk



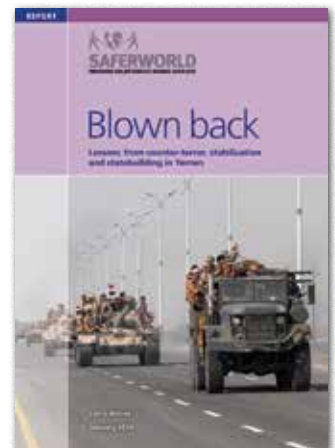
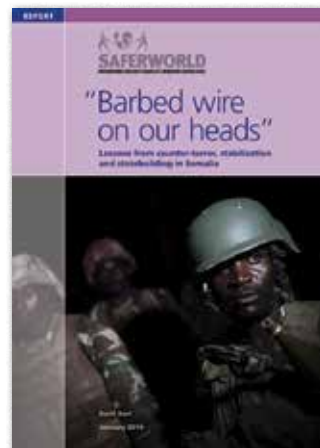
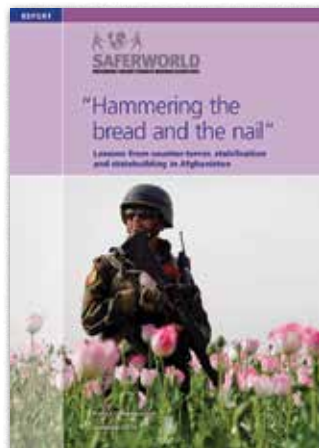
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Saferworld also produces regular policy briefs and submissions, all of which are available on our website.

Read more at: www.saferworld.org.uk



NOTES

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