



Report on the Singapore Kick-Off Conference

BACKGROUND¹

In a two-day conference on December 3–4, 2014, a new Reflection Group on the »Monopoly on the Use of Force 2.0?« was initiated. The Kick-Off Conference officially established the Global Reflection Group, and served four major purposes in particular:

1. To set the overarching conceptual stage for the subsequent thematic reflection group meetings.
2. To provide an opportunity to jointly define priorities, topics, and outputs for the reflection group.
3. To provide reflection group members with the opportunity to get to know each other and understand each other's context-specific »starting points« (specific frameworks/working environments).
4. To define the roadmap for the Reflection Group's next two years of work.

CONCLUSION: PRIORITIES, TOPICS, AND OUTPUTS

The following topics and priorities for the next meetings of the Reflection Group emerged in the course of the kick-off conference:

- A strong need for **further conceptual clarification**, to be substantiated in short articles by the members of the Reflection Group. These papers will be submitted by the end of February 2015. In addition to papers already promised by participants, all members of the Reflection Group are invited to identify gaps in our conceptual debates that need to be tackled within the project. The members who were unable to participate in the kick-off meeting in Singapore are in particular invited to join in identifying the

conceptual gaps and contributing to filling them.

- The deliberations should substantially reflect on the relevance, experiences, and realities of **sub-state/local levels of governance** (also hybrid forms) and security provisions – and their interrelations and tensions with the national level – for the future of the monopoly on the use of force. This dimension often gets sidelined in current international debates on these topics, despite its huge importance for human security. The Spring Conference 2015 will therefore place a strong emphasis on these questions and will seek to map the various forms of security provision.
- The former point by no means implies that the dimension of the state and the international order, as enshrined in the UN charter – which is constructed on the basis of states and their monopolies on the use of force – should be sidelined. To the contrary, **at the end of the day it is still the state level of governance that will be most crucial** when it comes to sketching out pathways to a security architecture for the 21st century. Therefore the Spring Conference 2016 will focus on the relationship between states (as holders of the monopoly on the use of force in most cases) and the international order.
- Beyond this »state versus non-state« dichotomy, there is a broad realm of intermediate forms of security provision, often initiated by different forms of privatization of security (**outsourcing** to private security companies, **franchising** to proto-state organizations, or **hostile takeovers** of state functions by militias, rebels, organized crime, or other violence entrepreneurs). Some of the papers promised for the Spring 2015 conference by group members will seek to shed light on these forms of undermining the monopoly of the use of force.
- Another important takeaway from the kick-off conference was that regional realities, priorities,

¹ This report is based on the author's individual perception of the debates. It is selective in the sense that it highlights those issues that appeared to be of particular relevance for further deliberations because there was either broad consensus, significant dissent or a need for further clarification/discussion. Comments by the chairs and participants have been included.

and perceptions differ strongly. Regional and national contexts are very important for our understanding and interpretation of the topic. Especially the global tour d'horizon on day one of the conference, as well as the various papers submitted by members of the group illustrated the significant variety of approaches with regard to backgrounds and understandings of participants from different regions. Accordingly it was agreed that **case studies** and **evaluations of regional initiatives** will be important to come to a shared but also differentiated understanding about the topic and substantial, policy-relevant conclusions. Throughout the upcoming conferences, the organizers will try to systematically include case studies in the program and members of the group will focus some of the agreed articles on concrete case studies.

Finally there were a couple of practical agreements for process moving forward

- The flagship output of the reflection group process will be a comprehensive report to be published in the second half of 2016, as well as a short policy brief that will highlight particularly important findings.
- Furthermore, there will be separate reports from all conferences in the course of the reflection group process. The conferences are all held under the Chatham House rule and accordingly the public reports will not contain any attributed statements.
- A basic website will be hosted on the FES homepage («business card of the Reflection Group on the net»). It will describe the concept of the reflection group, list its members, and supply all reports and related papers published in the context of the group's deliberations.
- In addition, it is desirable, but up to individual members, to publish academic articles submitted to the reflection group conferences in other formats (journals, Reflection Group website or blog).
- FES will provide a contact list with e-mail addresses to all members of the group, in order to facilitate networking and direct exchange.

ROADMAP

Responding to the dynamics of the discussions, the organizers and chairs agreed to modify the original schedule of meetings and not proceed in a top-down sequence of topics (starting with the relationship between monopoly of force and international order) but rather from the bottom up. Accordingly, the Spring

Conference 2015 will continue the conceptual debate and embark upon the discussion of non-state, non-statutory, sub-state, traditional, and hybrid security actors and architectures. It will be convened in the week 27-30 April and will be hosted in Berlin. The venue and schedule for the Fall Conference 2015 will be decided by the time of the Spring Conference.

NEXT DATES

- Fixing of dates and venues for Spring and Fall Conference 2015 by January 31, 2015 (possibly earlier)
- Submission of articles by members of the reflection group by February 28, 2015
- Week of April 27- 30 Spring Conference 2015, Berlin
- Fall Conference 2015, Latin America (tbc)
- Winter/Spring Conference 2016, New York (tbc)
- Spring/Summer Retreat, tbd 2016

CONCEPTUAL DISCUSSIONS IN SINGAPORE

The discussions in Singapore were guided by the thematic background paper introduced by the two chairs in the first session. In the course of the discussions convergence and shared understanding emerged on most of the topics, but terminological ambiguities arose with regard to others, which need to be further deliberated in the Spring 2015 conference. It was agreed that major concepts will have to be revisited (including R2P; the risk of securitization; the nexus between peace, security, and development; security sector reform in theory and practice). Particularly important questions to be tackled within the reflection group are: Who provides security? What are the limits of security provision by the state? When is security provision perceived as repression? How to deal with non-state groups mimicking state functions? How to cope with the erosion of the state domain of providing security? Is there a future beyond the present ideal of the monopoly of the use of force? As expected, given the range of different backgrounds, differing emphases and priorities were placed on the possible role of the state in security provision.

POINTS OF CONVERGENCE

In general there was strong convergence within the group that the diverging realities of communities and societies worldwide do not fit easily with the theoretically universal notion of a «monopoly on the use of force» in the form of functioning nation states. While this might remain the «ideal type» to which a spectrum of societies aspire – and which some states might even have achieved to a reasonable degree – the practice of security provision often contradicts this basic notion underlying our international system. Yet, it was also questioned whether this was particularly

new, or whether some of the identified trends and incongruence have in fact existed for most of history.

Closely related to the critical perspective on a narrow »state-centric« understanding of security and the monopoly on the legitimate use of force, a strong argument was made for discussing **hybrid security architectures** and also reflecting on the potential and limitations of **traditional and communal providers of security**. While it was cautioned that one must be careful not to »romanticize« traditional authorities, it was widely acknowledged that they need to be taken into account. A diversity of models for providing the monopoly of force (or a plurality of concepts) could be envisioned.

In a similar vein, many members of the group repeatedly argued that the traditional state-centric understanding and approach neglects the particular relevance of the **local level** of security provision, which should be taken into account more thoroughly by the group, too. It was stressed that even where state monopolies on the use of force are challenged or non-existent, local security practices ensure that the often-quoted »anarchic spaces,« »ungoverned spaces,« or »insecure territories« hardly ever exist in reality, and daily life in conflict-affected societies, civil wars, and areas under control of organized crime is in many cases far from »nasty, brutish, and short«. Usually, »normal life« continues in such places. Indeed the alarmist warnings about ungoverned and anarchic spaces in fact reflect a lack of understanding about societal realities in these territories and often serve to justify particular forms of intervention. At the same time it was also stressed that – even though complete anarchy hardly ever prevails – a mere reduction in violence (as seen in some cases of areas controlled by organized crime) does not justify accepting illegitimate and criminal forms of order as »second best« option.

Additionally there was a strong desire to **critically reflect on the state** not only as a **provider and guarantor of security** (by means of its monopoly on the use of force) but also as a **potential perpetrator of violence and insecurity** (by means of its monopoly on the use of force). Both dimensions need to be taken into account in the course of the Reflection Group's deliberations. In this context there were repeated calls to earnestly reflect on questions of the legitimacy of the use of force. It was stressed that the desired monopoly on the use of force is usually qualified in the discourse as a monopoly on the »legitimate« use of force. In practice however, questions of legitimacy are usually sidelined.

Processes of securitization were a widely-shared

concern. The Reflection Group will need to consider the positive aspects of including non-traditional (not hard military) threats and risks in security considerations and the extension of the notion of security beyond military and defense issues, as well as the risk of »securitization« of other policy domains. While the point was made that securitization might have some merits as well – for example increased willingness on the part of certain countries to invest significantly in development cooperation and aid, if they are framed as relevant contributions to national security – the dominant perception of this trend was rather anxious.

In relation to the whole complex of securitization, there was agreement within the group that conceptual progress with regard to the monopoly on the use of force and the provision of security must fundamentally take into account a gendered understanding of security and insecurity.

One important aspect was only mentioned on the fringes of the discussion yet remained undisputed throughout the debates in Singapore: issues of **security policy** and the larger **notion of a monopoly on the legitimate use of force** do not so far seem to have been **proactively embraced from a progressive political perspective**. While progressive political actors have forcefully worked to place certain aspects of social policy on the national and international political agenda (for example with regard to social security programs and human rights) there has been limited impact on security policy. Much of the progressive work has been focused either on governance and accountability of traditional (state) security providers, or on local innovations aimed at concretely reducing insecurity and victimization; it tends to be marginalized by powerful »securocratic« and military-industrial actors. While some of the policy innovations in the aforementioned fields were truly remarkable, political approaches to dealing with security challenges have largely remained in the confines of rather conservative, heavy-handed approaches.

The list of major recent trends and challenges for security provision, enumerated in the background paper to the kick-off meeting will remain on the agenda of the Reflection Group.

POINTS OF DIVERGENCE/CONTROVERSY THAT REQUIRE FURTHER DEBATE

While there was broad consensus on most of the fundamental questions, there was also debate and some controversy with regard to other aspects.

One protracted dissent throughout the debate concerned the question of whether the state should

serve as the sole normative starting point for the reflection group. There were some quite insistent contributions pointing to the problems of a state-centric approach. It was suggested that even differentiating between the roles of state and non-state actors would be problematic, since the modalities of this differentiation would ensure that the state remained the central point of reference. While all participants conceded that this might be an interesting academic perspective and debate, the overwhelming majority agreed that at the end of the day states currently are – and will remain – at the core of both the problems and the potential solutions in this field. Accordingly the idea of completely sidelining the state as the initial point of reference was rejected by most participants. This does not mean that non-state actors are of no importance. On the contrary: one specific characteristic of the debates within the Reflection Group (and the eventual final report and recommendations) could be an emphasis on bringing the role of the non-state actors more forcefully into state-centric international order.

This debate materialized most vividly in the question of whether a monopoly on the use of force established by actors from the sphere of organized crime should be seen as just another form of security provision and monopoly of force like the state. With regard to this specific point, it was conceded that there are indeed some striking similarities to states, especially when considering the historic development of certain states. However, the core difference identified by other participants is a very important one: While states might in some cases in practice resemble organized criminal syndicates in important ways (monopolizing violence in a certain territory, providing limited public goods, and extracting protection money/taxes from the population), the expectations towards and responsibilities of a state are completely different. Organized criminal syndicates are obviously not expected to be susceptible to upholding human rights and international law, while the **norm of protection** is the core of what citizens may legitimately expect of their states.

Without completely excluding the analytical merit of the aforementioned fundamentally critical perspectives – which also may be conducive to the group's discussions at some points – there is a strong need to keep the state at the core of the proceedings. This need is both normatively founded in a human-rights-based approach (given that human rights were originally defined and codified by states assembled in the United Nations) and a practical necessity if the Reflection Group's results and report are to have a policy impact in the current international system.

NEED FOR FURTHER TERMINOLOGICAL CLARIFICATION

Right from the start the discussion also highlighted terminological and conceptual uncertainties in the field, and it was widely agreed that the group must contribute to clarifying some of the confusion and misunderstandings in the international debate. The following conceptual and terminological complexes, which attracted particular attention, should be addressed in the course of the coming meetings and in short conceptual articles by members of the Reflection Group:

- **Security provision vs. monopoly on the use of force:** The title of the Reflection Group itself raised some questions. While the overarching theme puts the monopoly of the use of force at the center, the discussions very often focused on the question of security provision and security policy. There was a feeling in the group that this discrepancy might be rooted in the different timeframes: While provision of security is usually analyzed as a policy challenge with a short- to mid-term timeframe, the notion of a monopoly on the use of force relates to the structural/institutional order and a long-term conceptualization of the international order in the arena of security and peace. The Reflection Group must aim to think beyond security.
- **One monopoly or a plurality of security providers:** The reality of security provision and security architectures shows that there often seems to be no true (or functioning) monopoly on the use of force within nation states, but rather responsibilities shared between different actors (terminologically an »oligopoly«). The question of whether the term »monopoly« – implying a unitary concentration of the legitimate means of force in the hands of one actor/institution – is really adequate to describe a public security order with various relevant/overlapping/competing actors providing for security arose repeatedly.
- The term »security« was discussed in **various connotations:** From state or **regime security, via collective security, comprehensive security, and human security to cooperative security.** While the suggestion was originally to try to agree on one of the two different versions of human security (merely »freedom from fear« or »freedom from fear and from want«) as a common point of reference, there was no clear, unambiguous support for so doing. Indeed there was instead a call to embrace the differences and tap the analytical merit of the conceptual differentiations in the course of the group's

proceedings and map the relevant conceptual frameworks. It would therefore be important to start the process without subscribing to any particular concept/definition; such a position might, however, find a place in the final report after a process of arguments and insights.

- One alternative suggestion was to **opt for the language of »safety« instead of »security«**: The counterargument was made that safety generally refers to »accidental harm« instead of »harm due to use of force/violence« and would therefore not be primarily relevant to the issue of the future of the monopoly on the use of force. Safety is increasingly perceived as a private matter. Apparently, there is a need to clarify terminology here, particularly because in some languages one word covers both security and safety.
- Aside from question of security and safety, there was also a call to **reconsider the meaning and use of »peace«** in the context of the Reflection Group's deliberations. In particular against the background of its implicit invocation in heavy-handed »pacification programs« employed in some contexts – for example in reestablishing state control over neighbourhoods controlled by organized crime – there is a practical need to analyse this concept/terminology, too.
- **Violence beyond conflict**: Also in connection with the distinction between peace and security, another concern was raised about the threats to security and a monopoly for the use of force. While from an international perspective the default focus is usually on internal or transnational conflict, other sources of violence – like those stemming from organized crime – all too often remain out of sight. A discussion about the monopoly on the use of force would have to take into account both conflict-related violence and non-conflict-related violence. At the same time, there was a strong concern to keep a clear focus in the deliberations and not widen the object of debate too far. Including aspects of structural violence, for example, would not seem recommendable for the process.

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

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