

# 1 INTRODUCTION

## Analytical Focus

THIS STUDY CHALLENGES the prevailing understanding of how security provision works within the contemporary international system. Conventional thinking about international stability rests on five main assumptions: (1) states and intergovernmental organizations are “the dominant locus of authority in global society,”<sup>1</sup> as “territorial state sovereignty is the natural and right form of political organization that delineates and produces world order”;<sup>2</sup> (2) armed nonstate groups are illegitimate “spoilers,” disrupting security and triggering political disorder and violent conflict;<sup>3</sup> (3) the mass public consistently demands state government protection;<sup>4</sup> (4) private bodies can enhance security only if they do not rely on the threat or use of violence, as with transnational market-based or humanitarian organizations;<sup>5</sup> and (5) if a state is not providing stability, “a strategy of strengthening and expanding governmental capacity would be a sensible response to the governance deficit.”<sup>6</sup> Both scholars and policy makers have relied on these tried-and-true premises for centuries.

Since the end of the Cold War in 1989, central state governments have typically been considered the most important or even the sole sources of stability, and subnational and transnational nonstate forces have been identified as a major source of global instability, facilitating ominous disruptive flows of people, goods, and services that have moved readily across international boundaries. Although these claims have some validity, both contentions appear to be too sweeping. In a world where it is possible to identify the devolution of authority from the state to armed nonstate groups,<sup>7</sup> these mainstream security beliefs merit reexamination.

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So in contrast, this study calls into question all five commonly held contentions about global stability. A careful assessment of prevailing assumptions and recent real-world trends creates a startling set of counterpropositions: (1) areas exist where it makes little sense to rely on central state governments for stability; (2) attempts to bolster such governments to promote stability often prove to be futile; (3) armed nonstate groups can sometimes provide local stability better than states; (4) power-sharing arrangements between states and armed nonstate groups may sometimes be viable; and (5) these changes in the international setting call for major analytical shifts and significant deviation from standard responses. Figure 1.1 summarizes the differences between conventional and unconventional thinking about stability promotion. These differences reveal a drastic rather than an incremental shift in thinking about global security, one that creates challenges for policy that call for nothing less than a new security framework promoting global order.

**Figure 1.1.** Conventional and unconventional security orientations

<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Conventional security mode</i></p> <p>Territorial state sovereignty is the natural and right form of political organization that delineates and produces world order.</p> <p>Armed nonstate groups are illegitimate “spoilers,” disrupting security and triggering political disorder and violent conflict.</p> <p>The mass public consistently demands protection specifically from the central state government.</p> <p>Private bodies enhance security only if they do not rely on the threat or use of violence, as with market-based or humanitarian groups.</p> <p>If a state does not provide stability, strengthening and expanding government capacity is a sensible response to the governance deficit.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Unconventional security mode</i></p> <p>Areas exist where it makes little sense to rely on central state governments for stability.</p> <p>Attempts to bolster such governments to promote stability have often proven to be futile.</p> <p>Armed nonstate groups can sometimes provide local stability better than states.</p> <p>Power-sharing arrangements between states and armed nonstate groups may sometimes be viable.</p> <p>Recent changes in the international setting call for major analytical shifts and significant deviation from standard responses.</p>

### CENTRAL THRUST

This study's central thrust is to analyze conceptually and empirically the ongoing global shift in security governance from public to private hands. It focuses on when this shift is most and least conducive to stability, when armed nonstate groups are most and least effective in promoting stability, and when power sharing between central state governments and armed nonstate groups makes the most and least sense. Thus this investigation emphasizes a fluid "emergent actor" approach rather than a reification of the state system,<sup>8</sup> addressing a crucial security gap in understanding the opportunities and dangers posed by nontraditional coercive sources of authority in international relations.

The two pivotal focal points in this study are stability and armed nonstate groups. When considering stability, the study concentrates on the role of armed nonstate groups; and when considering these groups, it concentrates on their impact on stability. This investigation deemphasizes other nonstate stability sources, including noncoercive subnational and transnational groups; and other outcomes, including justice and human rights. Throughout, there is awareness that the relationship between the study's two main concepts is both two-way and dynamically interactive—besides the impact of armed nonstate groups on stability, the presence or absence of stability may affect the likelihood of emergence and strength of armed nonstate groups.

The United States National Intelligence Council, the American intelligence community's center for long-range strategic thinking, has recognized the centrality of both armed nonstate groups and stability. Armed nonstate groups, whose importance the National Intelligence Council noted because of their growing power in the increasingly multipolar global system,<sup>9</sup> are important because, conceptually, anarchy permits coercive forces other than states to assume some security governance functions; and, empirically, several recent armed nonstate group control attempts have challenged states as the exclusive source of international stability. Within the post-Cold War setting, prevailing security conditions have been conducive to the reemergence of these groups and to their filling existing authority voids. Stability, whose importance the National Intelligence Council underscored through the creation since 2004 of an Instability Watch List,<sup>10</sup> is important because (1) conceptually, stability is widely considered a central facet of local, national, regional, and global security; (2) empirically, the current scope and direction of worldwide instability are truly ominous; and (3) empirically, the United States in its foreign military

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policy has recently begun using the phrase “stability operations”<sup>11</sup> to describe a key component of its strategy—post-combat goals of “winning the peace” and engaging in successful post-conflict reconstruction, or of minimizing the disruptive impacts of failing states and ungoverned areas. Within a chaotic world containing multiple competing core values, stability merits attention as a necessary but not sufficient security prerequisite, for stability is perhaps the only common security goal transcending profound cultural differences. Examining the emerging relationship between armed nonstate groups and stability brings into question crucial related notions, such as “good” security governance, sovereignty, and legitimacy.

This study’s central thrust links up with important broader security issues. These include:

1. changes in security governance, incorporating the contraction of state and expansion of nonstate security functions
2. diversity in both form and function of customary authority structures across countries
3. transformation of the notions of sovereignty and legitimacy in the current global security setting
4. differing conceptions of stability, leading to contrasting and potentially contradictory policies toward armed nonstate groups
5. backfire effects of security governance initiatives on stability, emerging when inappropriate actions are undertaken toward armed nonstate groups
6. proliferating marginalized areas without effective security governance in today’s world
7. state reluctance to negotiate or share power with armed nonstate groups
8. difficulties encountered by international law and international organizations in recognizing armed nonstate groups playing a role in security governance
9. acceptance by affected populations of coercive rule if protection and basic survival needs are effectively provided for
10. greater savviness by armed nonstate groups than states in coping with imminent global instability challenges
11. differentiation advantages in policies toward cooperative and uncooperative armed nonstate groups

12. accountability losses resulting from increasingly intertwined nontransparent relationships between public and private authority structures, and among the armed nonstate groups themselves

Key questions emerge about when armed nonstate groups work in a top-down versus bottom-up manner, operate comfortably within and outside of prevailing security norms, and trigger opposition, nonresponse, or cooperation from or collusion with states.

This study thus connects what goes on within states to what goes on across states, explores the changing web of linkages between state and nonstate parties, and emphasizes the growing role of subnational and transnational forces in international relations. The analysis emphasizes wherever possible how the impacts of armed nonstate groups on stability are both causes and consequences of other more widely studied global security transformations. In the end, any attempt to alter the role of armed nonstate groups in affecting stability would require both a fuller understanding of these relationships and an ability and willingness to address and transform key security parameters intertwined with these changes. Such willingness may on occasion necessitate compromising the principles embedded in enlightened liberal democratic values situated in an open globalized world.

Examining patterns of armed nonstate groups' impact on stability provides a unique lens through which to analyze today's global security dilemmas. One could grapple with fundamental security questions in international relations about the impact posed by (1) armed nonstate groups compared to central state governments; (2) armed nonstate groups compared to transnational organizations not relying on coercion, such as private multinational corporations and private humanitarian organizations; and (3) state and nonstate stability challenges in the current international system compared with state and nonstate stability challenges in previous global settings (including during the Cold War). This special lens also permits analysis of the preparedness of targets coping with armed nonstate groups compared with targets coping with other kinds of security concerns. Placing this study's central thrust in the broader context of threat, vulnerability, and preparedness seems helpful in understanding how the impact of armed nonstate groups on stability presents similar and different challenges compared with other security concerns.

This analysis is explicitly from a security perspective, because armed nonstate groups appear to have their most direct influence in the security realm,

and because these security impacts seem to be more important and have more far-reaching consequences than any other type of impact. Given the frequency and severity of instability in recent decades, leader and mass public fears have intensified about the loss of protection and the potential coercive destruction of the political regime, civil society norms, and persons and property. The disruptions generating these fears involve pernicious implications that merit both increased understanding and improved management. Despite this study's security focus, there is a concerted effort to integrate insights from any relevant work dealing with the topic from the widest range of different analytical angles.

Several elements of this study make it unique. First, it represents the first major study to look comprehensively at the potential of armed nonstate groups to promote stability and improve security governance. From a scholarly standpoint, most international relations security literature is still state-centric and does not focus on the significant "coercive transition"<sup>12</sup> occurring globally. From a policy standpoint, states and international organizations are still wary of any form of support or acceptance of security control by armed nonstate groups. Second, this study is the first systematic conditional analysis of when and how armed nonstate groups are most and least likely to enhance stability, in the context of assessing the comparative advantages of the full range of potential stability enhancers. Third, this is the first comparative assessment of armed nonstate groups exclusively focused on their stability impact, and the first conceptual examination of global stability that highlights the ways in which coercive private forces can sometimes be viable alternatives to states. Fourth, this is the first study to include policy recommendations for simultaneously facilitating cooperative armed nonstate groups and impeding uncooperative armed nonstate groups. Fifth, this study is the first to analyze the ongoing security governance transformation in supply-demand terms. Sixth, it is the first study to examine in detail the ties between this security transformation and clashing societal values. Finally, this study is the first exploration of exactly when and how power sharing can occur between central state governments and armed nonstate groups, and when and how such cooperative arrangements are most and least likely to promote stability.

**INVESTIGATOR MODE**

A crucial premise endorsed by this study is that the impact of armed nonstate groups on stability is neither random nor haphazard, and has significant enduring patterns meriting investigation. Exploring these patterns should allow

deeper understanding of the roots of armed nonstate group behavior and stability on the local, national, and global levels; improved comprehension of the short-term and long-term impacts of armed nonstate groups on stability; better anticipation of what these groups might do in response to differing opportunities and roadblocks they encounter and how resulting stability challenges might transform in the future; and sounder ideas about effective management of armed nonstate groups and effective promotion of global stability. Although the primary thrust of the book is more explanatory than predictive or prescriptive, it does offer future projections and policy guidelines about armed nonstate groups and stability.

This book utilizes comparative case study analysis to explore the security transformation and the impact of armed nonstate groups on stability. Although a burgeoning set of local, national, and transnational armed nonstate groups exist, and there are many instances where these groups have attempted some form of security control, this study emphasizes major cases that had significant repercussions on stability, with attention to whether these impacts have been positive or negative. For each of the twelve cases included in the study, security importance trumped other considerations, including the amount of research material available.

Four obstacles impede rigorous research on this topic: (1) the prevalence of biases about armed nonstate groups; (2) the absence of hard data and the associated impediments to valid generalizable research findings; (3) the challenge in finding a meaningful and relevant definition of stability; and (4) the difficulty of isolating armed nonstate group control attempts from those of the rest of society.

First, many researchers seem to operate with a foregone conclusion that armed nonstate groups are always dangerous, eager to promote violence, devoid of legitimacy, and utterly destabilizing. Second, there are no reliable aggregate data—qualitative or quantitative—on global armed nonstate group behavior, owing heavily to secrecy: accounts are often tainted with subjectivity, with little cross-checking because there is no systematic way of verifying claims. Much literature contains colorful, idiosyncratic illustrations of how a particular armed nonstate group operates in a particular situation, but it is difficult to tell how representative these are of broader patterns. The reality that both law enforcement groups and armed nonstate group members often closely guard data relevant to armed nonstate group control attempts creates a huge investigative roadblock.<sup>13</sup> Third, no universally accepted yardstick exists for stability,

with differences often reflecting clashing cultural values, and consensus within states—in the eyes of either the central state government or the mass public—varying markedly. Some metrics directly contradict others, and even when they do not, the result can be dangerously conflicting policies for stability promotion among neighboring countries. Fourth, it is hard to differentiate among the roles of the different shady and not-so-shady players involved in armed nonstate group activities and to distinguish these from activities undertaken routinely by the rest of society. Moreover, “the identities of terrorists, guerrilla movements, drug traffickers, and arms smugglers are becoming more slippery,” with considerable “identity mutation” apparent.<sup>14</sup>

To overcome research bias regarding armed nonstate groups, this study is committed to minimizing stereotyping of armed nonstate groups, to qualifying its arguments about these groups’ activities, and to avoiding any fixed, universal deterministic assumptions about these groups or their relationship to stability. This investigation probes dispassionately into optimal stability-promoting security governance without prejudice about what type of parties—state or nonstate—are the providers. Perhaps most important, from the outset this inquiry has been as open to seeing cases where armed nonstate groups wreak havoc and chaos as it has been to seeing cases where they have stabilizing effects on the affected population.

To maximize the validity and generalizability of its findings, this investigation covers the widest range of both successful and unsuccessful—and constructive and destructive—efforts to achieve security control by armed nonstate groups. To increase the credibility of findings and to address the absence of hard data, this study utilizes diverse independent sources in investigating each case, highlighting controversies and differences of opinion for any firm conclusions reached. Furthermore, because many conventional assumptions about armed nonstate groups’ impact on stability seem wrongheaded or ill advised, with many political leaders possessing conflicting contentions about how to deal with armed nonstate groups and undertaking policy responses that fail to achieve stated goals, this study recognizes its responsibility to look at the widest range of evidence to be able to improve the understanding of patterns across the differing cases and thus of the coherence of resulting policies. Failing to consider a broad enough range of cases, so as to be able to identify predictable patterns of resulting stability impacts by armed nonstate groups, could inadvertently reduce the possibility of developing globally applicable policies to manage the embedded security dangers.



To address the challenge of finding a relevant and meaningful definition of stability, this study derives—from a comprehensive review of the different stability metrics and the underlying stability controversies they highlight—four essential stability functions. The selection of these four functions as relevant and meaningful across the board is carefully justified, and they are applied consistently and evenhandedly to all cases to determine stability outcomes of armed nonstate group control attempts. Even though no definition of stability is perfect, it seemed imperative for this study to settle on a single, overarching operational definition.

To remedy the ambiguity surrounding armed nonstate groups and their activities—and to overcome the obstacle of isolating armed nonstate groups and activities from those involving the rest of society—this study's cases identify those areas where the dividing line between licit and illicit, covert and overt, legitimate and illegitimate, and officially sanctioned and unsanctioned is the murkiest. The cases acknowledge both the constant morphing of armed nonstate groups and the significant state of flux in the relationships between armed nonstate groups and states, and between armed nonstate groups and stability. Although the domestic and global boundaries between public and private governance, and between formal and informal rule, are blurring,<sup>15</sup> it is still possible to detect and isolate distinctive patterns relevant to this study's central thrust.

The study's scope is global, given that armed nonstate groups operate throughout the world. This means is that, although attention is paid to both local and global stability, there is no special focus on armed nonstate groups or on stability in any particular country or region, or in any one set of narrow security interests—including those of the United States. Many analysts assume that armed nonstate groups are a developing-country issue, not touching advanced industrial societies, but this study challenges that premise through its case studies. Moreover, there is neither a summary of trends by country or region nor a comparative analysis across countries or regions, for patterns uncovered transcend national borders and do not reveal cross-regional differences. The expansion of armed nonstate group control attempts to include different parts of the world and forms of illicit behavior has made encompassing an international scope—incorporating both advanced industrial societies and the developing world—essential for capturing the full range of security implications.

Because of the major impact of the end of the Cold War upon (1) the dramatic unleashing of armed nonstate groups, (2) the increased volatility of the

global security context, and (3) the intensified security-policy maker needs for assistance in facilitating or impeding armed nonstate control attempts, this study's time span is the post-Cold War global security environment. There is a significant difference in the parameters surrounding armed nonstate group activities between the bipolar superpower-dominated Cold War and the increasingly multipolar post-Cold War eras. Many of the armed nonstate groups explored have transformed dramatically to adapt to the changing opportunities present within the contemporary global security environment. The decades since the fall of the Berlin Wall allow reflection on how the emerging patterns have changed since the early 1990s, and especially after September 11, 2001 (referred to as 9/11). Most important, this analysis emphasizes how the impact of armed nonstate groups on stability is likely to transform in the future, given twenty-first-century changes in the global security context.

Because of the wide range of armed nonstate group control attempts and a desire to be comprehensively inclusive of their stability implications, this study's span of concern incorporates both human security and state security impacts. More narrow and traditional conceptions of stability focus on perpetuation of the political regime in power, and so from that perspective it might seem as if a focus on stability would tilt this analysis toward state rather than human security. However, as will be discussed in Chapter 2, this study develops and utilizes a much broader notion of essential stability functions that squarely emphasize protecting the people and providing for basic survival needs, fully incorporating the range of human security impacts as well as more traditional central state government security concerns.

**BOOK ORGANIZATION**

This volume provides a step-by-step exploration of the nature and desirability of the global security upheaval taking place, chronicling the dramatic shift in security governance—for better or for worse—from public to private hands. This study presents the controversies surrounding armed nonstate groups and stability, the transformation of global security control, case analyses revealing empirical evidence surrounding armed nonstate group security control attempts, analysis of these case study patterns, complexities surrounding private coercive stability promotion, and policy guidelines pertaining to the impact of armed nonstate groups on stability. Each chapter builds on the discoveries and findings of the preceding chapters, allowing comparison and integration of key insights. Wherever possible, the study endeavors to avoid leaving the reader

with sweeping generalizations and instead to uncover specific conditions under which the patterns identified and the conclusions reached are most and least likely to occur.

Because of the scope of the topic covered and the complexity of relationships discussed, two mechanisms are frequently employed for clarification. First, each chapter uses figures to highlight key conceptual points, allowing readers to gain a quick understanding of a section's main thrust and to compare at a glance multifaceted findings across topics and sections. Second, the book contains extensive cross-referencing, allowing readers who want more background on a topic to easily find the appropriate discussion in another section.

This introductory chapter explains and defends the study's central thrust. Then Chapters 2 and 3 explain the study's two central emphases—stability and armed nonstate groups. Chapter 2 analyzes common instability metrics, underlying stability management controversies, the essential stability functions, and the modern stability conundrum. Chapter 3 presents the major state and nonstate sources of stability, armed nonstate groups' essential qualities, the major types of armed nonstate groups, and the major types of armed nonstate group control attempts. So as to provide an interpretive context for what follows, Chapter 4 details the transformation of global security control through exploring the changing supply of and demand for global security and the global shift in security governance.

Chapter 5 presents detailed case analyses that focus on major incidents of armed nonstate groups attempting to achieve security control. That chapter explores the general background, armed nonstate group efforts, and stability impacts in twelve cases—Chechens in Russia, Executive Outcomes in Sierra Leone, Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) in Colombia, gangs in Somalia, Hezbollah in Lebanon, Irish Republican Army in the United Kingdom, Islamic Army of Aden in Yemen, Lord's Resistance Army in Uganda, Mara Salvatrucha in the United States, posses in Jamaica, Taliban in Afghanistan, and Yakuza in Japan. Chapter 6 then analyzes the general patterns evident from these cases, including the overarching findings about the relative success of armed nonstate groups and of armed nonstate group security control attempts, the conditions under which armed nonstate groups are most likely to enhance stability, and additional lessons from the case studies. Chapter 7 explains the complexities surrounding this form of private coercive stability promotion, incorporating dilemmas surrounding the clash of conflicting societal values, tensions between coercive force and stability, private coercive stability

promotion challenges and risks, and needed rethinking of how to frame stability promotion. Chapter 8 concludes with a discussion of policy guidelines that include identifying what to do and not do in order to promote stability; specific strategies to facilitate cooperative armed nonstate groups in order to maximize their contributions to stability; and specific strategies to impede uncooperative armed nonstate groups in order to minimize their disruptions to stability.

**TARGET AUDIENCE**

This study takes a fresh, integrative, conceptual look at armed nonstate groups' potential as stability enhancers. As such, it does not provide an encyclopedic empirical review of existing knowledge pertaining to armed nonstate groups and stability, but rather it generates new, balanced insights about when it would be most beneficial or most detrimental to incorporate armed nonstate groups in power-sharing arrangements with central state governments to promote stability in contemporary international relations. The emphasis is thus on probing unconventional conceptual analysis, not on providing exhaustive factual detail.

This study explicitly attempts to avoid making judgments about the universal desirability of armed nonstate groups' impacts on stability. Instead, the goal is to identify the controversies, costs, and benefits surrounding these impacts, so that readers can think about them in the context of their own beliefs. This analysis takes into account widely differing political, cultural, and economic values; and the work's aspiration is to have its conclusions apply to issues related to sovereignty and the evolution of the state system, military strategy and stability operations, and counterinsurgency movements and the spread of global violence well into the future as the identified trends develop.

The ideal reader would be a person who is an independent critical thinker, who loves being exposed to conceptual wrinkles involving opposing viewpoints, and who appreciates the opportunity to draw his or her own conclusions. In contrast, a reader who craves definitive, sweeping conclusions spelled out and ready to consume might become frustrated. The measure of success of this study is its ability to get readers of all types to rethink and question their assumptions about states, armed nonstate groups, and stability, and be stimulated into new thinking about how to promote durable authority under global anarchy.

Because many readers may find the central thrust of this book to be counterintuitive if not objectionable, the arguments presented attempt to acknowledge and take into account opposing "devil's advocate" positions. That should

encourage readers to decide for themselves whether to accept the dominant global security paradigm or be open to the kind of alternative approach presented in this study. One way or another, they should end up taking a different look at common international security assumptions.

Despite its iconoclastic nature, the intended audience for this book is wide. Students and academic scholars of international relations should find it intelligible, and its writing is designed to communicate to those outside the ivory tower, such as researchers in think tanks and analysts in government security agencies. Expressing ideas in such a way as to promote dialogue among these different constituencies should help with both understanding contrasting perspectives and discovering creative solutions to the security challenges identified. Toward this end, there is a concerted effort to avoid obscure jargon and mysterious acronyms.