



GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY PRESS

Washington, DC • www.press.georgetown.edu

Q&A with the author of *Exporting Security: International Engagement, Security Cooperation, and the Changing Face of the U.S. Military*

Q: In the book, you make the assertion that exporting security has become more important for the U.S. than exporting democracy. Why do you think this is the case?

Reveron: Simply, without security, democratization and development are not possible. In too many countries, sub-national groups like gangs or illicit traffickers out-man and out-gun governments that lack the capacity to provide security for development and access to global markets.

At least since World War II, it has been the interest of the United States to guarantee American security by reducing threats from abroad and encouraging a system of global trade to promote American prosperity and create global interdependence. This has continued over the last 20 years and is giving way to the prominence of internal security issues in developing countries. Former Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said, “it is clear that managing the problems of state failure and ungoverned spaces will be a feature of U.S. foreign policy for the foreseeable future – whether we like it or not.” Consequently, preparations for war are giving way to military operations that focus on humanitarian assistance, stability operations, and security assistance. These operations attempt to pre-empt impacts on the United States, but also follows American idealist thinking to make the world safer.

Q: How is the current U.S. military’s training of other countries’ forces different than the same strategy employed during the Cold War?

Reveron: In some sense it is similar. The best example of a high-energy effort to train and equip another country’s military is South Korea. Devastated by the Korean War, the U.S. and South Korea have built a very effective military over the last 60 years. The United States is attempting to do something similar in Iraq.

Today, the key difference is lack of non-exclusivity. During the Cold War, the United States provided security assistance to pre-empt Soviet influence or undermine it. Today, there is no such political dynamic. Instead, the United States provides security assistance agreements to almost every government in the world from Afghanistan to Zambia. There are still some exceptions for political reasons (Cuba and Venezuela in the Western Hemisphere or Sudan and Zimbabwe in Africa), but the exceptions are few.

Q: You suggest in the book that the Department of Defense might want to rename itself the Cooperative Security Department. Has the change really been that drastic since the Department was named?

Reveron: To be sure, the military has reluctantly embraced its role in international engagement. Some object within the military to these new missions because they distract from the traditional role that the military plays in war-fighting. However, the military has come to recognize over the last two decades that a superpower is not a superhero. It cannot command the commons as some have suggested; drug traffickers, pirates, and illicit flights illustrate the contrary. Consequently, the military has recognized that partnership is essential to U.S. national security. This is not just a function of the size of the U.S. military. Rather, it is recognition that threats to international peace and security lie at the sub-national level. By working with partners, the United States attempts to pre-empt localized crises from developing into regional or global ones.

Q: What is the difference between security assistance and counterinsurgency?

Reveron: My book does not directly address operations in Iraq or Afghanistan, but there are some important lessons emerging from those conflicts that are reshaping the military outside of counterinsurgency operations. First is the impact of intervention itself; forced democratization tends to produce semi-democratic governments with political instability and internal conflict. Second, to bring stability to post-conflict zones requires new ways of using military forces. For example, General Barry McCaffrey noted that success in Afghanistan would be achieved when there are Afghan police units in every district, a greatly expanded Afghan National Army, and significant agricultural reform. Absent from this solution is stepped up lethal operations. A Navy SEAL (well-known as a lethal actor) remarked that crop substitution from opium to foodstuffs is the key way to bring stability to Afghanistan, which would also alleviate food security concerns in the region. Finally, combat operations have taught the military that lethality cannot solve security problems. Instead, training and equipping indigenous forces to protect and control their territory is essential for long-term stability.

These lessons have gained traction and have been extended to weak states in more permissive environments. Paul Collier argues that the role for advanced militaries of the world is “to supply the global public good of peace in territories that otherwise have the potential for nightmare.” Security assistance is the current approach to do this.

Q: What drove you to write this book?

Reveron: As many scholars have recognized, the international system has changed substantially enough to merit reconsidering fundamental ideas about power and security. This book is an addition to that literature and suggests that power cannot be measured in military terms alone and non-state actors increasingly challenge traditional understanding of national security. Further, how countries advance and defend national interests is changing too. There are clearly limits to coercion; cooperation is becoming an international norm. This book provides an explanation for the impact on U.S. foreign policy and the reliance on the military to reduce security deficits around the world.

Q: What do you think are some of the most exciting non-traditional missions that the U.S. military is undertaking?

Reveron: Overall, the rationale for security assistance has been based on the assumption that instability breeds chaos, which would inevitably necessitate military intervention. Accordingly the U.S. military should support other countries through military-to-military contacts, equipment transfers, and combined training activities to help foreign governments help themselves prevent tragedy.

Probably the most exciting dimension of this is how adaptable the U.S. military is proving to be. The United States has embarked on a program to illustrate that its superpower capabilities can be used for good. The same capability that can accurately drop a bomb on an adversary’s barracks has been used to deliver food aid in the mountains of Afghanistan. The same capability used to disembark Marines from Navy ships to a foreign shore have been used to host NGOs providing fisheries conservation in West Africa. And the same capability to track an enemy’s submarines can detect changes in the migration of fish stocks in response to climate change. To be sure, swords haven’t been beaten into plowshares, but military capabilities once used for confrontation are now used for cooperation.

CONTACT: Jacqueline Beilhart, Publicist, (202) 687-9298, jb594@georgetown.edu
#