

Security, Society, and the State

A research programme sponsored by the Gerda Henkel Foundation, Germany

As security-related issues, the fading role of the state and the gradual elimination of borders are central themes in both political and scholarly debates today. "Failing states" as a safe haven for terrorists, transnational organized crime, a loss of overall legitimacy, shrinking state authority in conflict-ridden regions are the relevant keywords in this context.

There is good reason for a more fine-grained perspective, however. Current security issues are multi-faceted and dynamic, ranging from military protection to efficient public infrastructure and a viable social negotiation process. As a matter of fact, the state is not irrevocably losing ground in security-sensitive areas. In some areas of national and personal security, state authority and sound governmental practice are more important than ever.

The "Security, Society, and the State" research programme reflects these contradictory trends. It targets new security-related issues that are prime examples of the post-Cold-War era but have been largely neglected in mainstream research. The programme is intended to encourage junior scholars to pursue unconventional research agendas that are nonetheless crucial, while providing senior scholars with the opportunity to focus intensively on work in progress for a limited period. Moreover, the objective is to combine basic theoretical research with concepts that are applicable to present-day political issues of security policy.

The research programme covers five thematic areas:

(1) *Cyber Security as a Governmental Task* – The development of attack and defence capabilities on the basis of computer malware requires a particular concentration of information, intelligence, expertise and resources that neither non-state actors nor international alliances are able to organize. Thus, only individual states are currently capable and credible actors in this particular field of national security. At the same time, however, the challenges of information-technology-based threats to security can only be met if states join forces and participate in alliances of collective security and enter into political arrangements with the main creators and users of related malware. *The “Cyber Security as a Governmental Task” research field is designed to promote research into the contradictory renaissance of state activity in future key areas of public security policy as a result of new technologies in advanced information and knowledge societies.*

(2) *Public Administration and Human Security* – The physical security of humans and objects is fostered by the public administration of order and the government provision of services. The loss of the state’s monopoly on the legitimate use of force in relation to the military and the police does not automatically translate into a collapse of public order, as is illustrated by the provision of administrative and social services by armed groups in civil war societies. However, security gaps also occur in stable democracies with powerful governmental and administrative apparatuses due to political or economic counterincentives to effective control, a lack of inter-agency cooperation, or ignorance as regards warning signals. *The “Public Administration and Human Security” research field is designed to promote research devoted to the performance or failure of public administration outside the military and law enforcement services in relation to the state’s security-sensitive functions.*

(3) *Patterns of Conflict Resolution between the State and Traditional Actors* – Traditional civil society structures in crisis-ridden and post-conflict regions may exert either a facilitating or a restrictive influence on processes of conflict resolution and sustainable peace building. Whether the co-existence of democracy, autocracy and various types of traditional institutions such as chief systems or consensual systems foster or threaten peaceful civil life is a moot point. It makes a substantial difference as regards the re-stabilization of conflict-ridden regions whether the relationship between indigenous traditional and modern Western political institutions is regarded as tense, mutually paralyzing or possibly complementary. *The “Conflict Resolution between the State and Traditional Actors” research field is designed to sponsor research that focuses on the inter-*

dependency of the two domains with the aim to develop realistic concepts of security policy.

(4) *Non-Governmental Actors as Partners and Contenders of the State* – Governmental and non-governmental actors find themselves in an ambiguous relationship, often fraught with tension, when it comes to securing key functions of the state and its administrative infrastructure. On the one hand, as agenda setters non-governmental organizations have become serious competitors of nation states and their governments even at the international level. On the other, they also may act as vital sponsors of security provision in areas such as human rights protection, migration policy or the containment of intra-state violence and post-civil-war reconstruction in lieu of a governmental agency unable or unwilling to assume responsibility. By contrast to governmental actors, however, NGOs are exposed to incentives to ‘stay in business’ as experienced conflict managers. *The “Non-Governmental Actors as Partners and Contenders of the State” research field is designed to promote research focusing on the interaction of the productive and the precarious side of security-sensitive activities of non-governmental actors.*

(5) *Security Strategies between Doctrine Formation and Implementation* - The gap between strategic principles and their implementation is a notorious problem in security policy. While current scholarly and political debates focus extensively on the interpenetration of international and domestic security issues as well as the insufficient implementation of related policies within the framework of multi-lateral arrangements and national security doctrines, the degree to which such doctrine formation is appropriate tends to get neglected. What characterizes the interlinkages of “internal” and “external” security and how they vary internationally is as much a moot question as is how processes of doctrine formation actually evolve and how mutual learning among various schools of thought is organized. *The “Security Strategies between Doctrine Formation and Implementation” research field is designed to promote research targeting the ambiguous nature of the linkages of international and domestic security and the resulting doctrine formation in and its interaction with the practice of security policy.*

Types of funding

The research programme addresses scholars of all disciplines in the humanities and social sciences. Types of funding mainly include grants for research projects, but also conferences and workshops. Doctoral fellowships are granted only if connected to a research project.

The Gerda Henkel Foundation sponsors the programme in cooperation with the “Cultural Foundations of Social Integration” Center of Excellence at the University of Constance and scholars of the “Normative Orders” Center of Excellence at the University of Frankfurt and the Department of War Studies at King’s College, London.

The application deadline is July 16, 2012.

For further information please refer to our homepage at:

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