Forward Resilience: Protecting Society in an Interconnected World Working Paper Series

Forward Resilience: Five Warnings

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Forward resilience is an instantly attractive concept to any security buff, and should not be hard to explain to the public either. It echoes the traditional concept of 'forward defense' applied by NATO in Cold War times, but goes much further than that. Forward defense used to mean concentrating military capacity, and thus deterrent effect, in the Alliance's border areas closest to the potential foe. The proposed focus of forward resilience lies beyond, and often well beyond, the borders of our own nations and alliances. It applies not narrowly to traditional defense, but to the myriad other dimensions of modern security in which borders have lost most of their meaning. Our economic security depends on far-reaching chains of supply, of services and labor as well as energy sources and other essential goods. Our modern infrastructures now typically involve region-wide links and even global co-dependencies in areas like transport, communications and IT security. Our human security is exposed to challenges ranging from non-traditional violence and crime, through pandemics, to short-term and chronic environmental hazards: all capable of spreading rapidly across huge distances, and even if not, of threatening us with secondary effects from failures in the weakest links. Pursuing security 'upstream' to improve resistance, resilience and recovery in those territories and systems - both physical and intangible - on which we depend so critically should be an eminently worthwhile use of resources.

To be sure, before operationalizing such a concept it needs to be carefully defined and delimited. The military vulnerabilities of important partners abroad are commonly covered, at least in principle, by extended deterrence (including nuclear balances) and regional alliances. Conflict risks that are damaging both for their locales and for ourselves are dealt with under the headings of conflict prevention, intervention, and peace building. Many human security problems in less fortunate areas are best addressed through the familiar range of means associated with aid for development.

Especially when the latter extend to supporting good security governance, however, they overlap with the proposed new concept and could fruitfully be challenged by it. When helping a poor country or one recovering from conflict to build efficient, democratic armies, why not also consider how trained military personnel (and their assets) could and should be used in civil disasters? When building law and justice systems, why not look at emergency response capacities in parallel? They also belong to the 'responsibility to protect' and may raise similar issues of human dignity and equal rights. When looking at economic and financial hindrances to sustainable growth, why not include the issue of disaster funds and insurance? (Good ideas on 'micro-insurance' might be almost as productive as the experiments made so far in micro-finance.) In the

crucial field of climate policy, meanwhile, we have already grasped that adaptation - to improve the odds on surviving unavoidable climate shifts and disasters - demands no less attention than mitigation.

Generally, it seems right to develop the forward resilience concept within the bounds of what we would call the homeland security or societal security agenda in our own jurisdictions. That leaves an extremely wide sphere for action, especially if interpreted with sensitivity to local conditions. The top ten challenges for policies aiming at resilience in Sweden, Spain or Canada will hardly be the same in Ukraine, Nepal, Mozambique or Peru. Further, in Western nations (and institutions) the competence of agencies specializing in this field can be shaped by quite arbitrary factors, including variations in the civil-military dividing line and the ability of other specialized departments to defend their territory. When extending our vision potentially to the whole world's resilience, it would be wrong to separate off *prima facie* any given field of civil security policy, whether it be public health or climate change or the handling of civil disorder. An open mind should also be kept on the vexed issue of migration. Its upstream causes and ultimate effects may lie well beyond the reach of resilience policy; but as a physical process it puts strains – both material and psychological – on the issuing, transit, and receiving territories that share many features with other civil emergencies and raise parallel issues of management.

A second demarcation issue arises when planning the policy's active content. We have reason to be concerned about every phase of comprehensive security management in neighboring regions and others that we depend on. But how much should a programme of forward resilience, as such, attempt to cover? Should it try to absorb existing activities upstream in the security cycle, such as threat and risk assessment, and efforts for mitigation by such means as conflict prevention, international regulation, development assistance and humanitarian aid? It may be more practical, at least at first, to focus on phases nearer the end of the cycle such as short-term forecasting of attacks and disasters; management of actual emergencies with or without international participation; recovery, reconstruction and lesson-learning. However, depending on the context, an essential stage in working with others – both nations and non-European regional organizations - may be to introduce and debate the whole over-arching concept of resilience with them. It should certainly be possible to cover aspects of preparedness such as 'hardening,' diversification and redundancy, as well as exercises and training. And if focusing on resilience in new frames of partnership throws up new understandings and insights about how other specialized areas of security governance might contribute, by all means let those ideas be shared with those responsible. The new concept should not become another stove-pipe.

All this said, like many things in public policy, forward resilience may prove easier to sell than to deliver. In the rest of this chapter, five pieces of unsolicited advice will be offered about possible mistakes or omission and commission that should be avoided when developing the concept. The author's only motive is to create the best possible conditions for its success.

I: 'Forward' in every sense

One of the most clichéd mistakes in security policy is the Maginot mentality. Because resilience literally implies 'bouncing back' to a normal condition, it is tempting in our

own as well as other countries to define the goal as perpetuation of a *status quo*. This is clearly not satisfactory for nations whose security and/or governance is still sub-standard; but it also carries the risk of missing upcoming shifts in the threat and risk pattern. We should not be speaking to outside partners on the basis of our past experience so much as of their future needs. The ongoing trend in our *relationship* with neighbors and partners seems fated to be one of increasing connection and dependency: but the local trend in their civil security *environment* – and hence the demands on and potential of their resilience – could either converge further with or diverge from our own under the influence of climate, economic development, and geo-strategic factors among others.

As just one example, we have recently become accustomed to pandemics that move from poorer locations to richer ones, generally having originated in human-animal contact. Our ideal towards the affected partners would be to help them stop the threat at source. But the spread of chronic 'rich men's diseases' already goes in the other direction, and who can say that a future plague might not start from a rich country because of antibiotic resistance? For such reasons, longer-term forecasting and speculative 'foresight' efforts should be part of the larger conception of a forward resilience policy, and wherever possible should be integrated into the resulting exchanges with others.

II: Recognize responsibilities

The separation between 'upstream' and 'downstream' in today's security connections is in fact increasingly artificial. Not only do human movements like tourism and migrant labor bring growing numbers of people into contact with previously remote risk environments, but the very question of where responsibility and ownership lie for a given security space can be called in doubt by economic and technological processes. For instance, who is responsible for human and environmental resilience in the context of Arctic shipping? The ships, their cargoes and crews do not belong to, and were not even invited in by, the people of the Arctic's own sparse settlements. It makes sense to speak to the latter about how they might be helped bear the local impact of a disaster like an oil spill, but not about how to extend 'forward' protection for the ships, or the possible new oil and gas rigs, themselves. The responsibility as well as capacity for that clearly lies with the owners and operators from the West and Russia who introduced this new activity to a remote and fragile area. It has in fact been recognized recently by the International Maritime Organization's adoption of a Polar Shipping Code where responsibilities and costs lie firmly with the shipowners, even if flagged at the other end of the earth.

To take another case, the spate of outsourcing of services as well as manufacturing processes to remote developing countries over the last two decades has been driven by economic forces with scant regard to security. Insofar as it may force local people to work in inhuman and dangerous conditions, as exposed by scandalous cases like factory fires, it amounts to a morally reprehensible outsourcing of risk. But it also makes little sense in terms of security of supply, or the continuity of service which is key to companies' own reputation, to root your whole operation in a locale that has both a far worse risk profile (given natural conditions, disease, civil disorder etc) and weaker capacities for resilience.

Where entities in the prosperous countries themselves own and initiate activity in exposed locations, economic logic as well as morality should guide them to extend their own standards of health, safety, security awareness, protection and insurance to the communities concerned. Their own resilience and business continuation planning needs to stretch right down the supply chain, and might then best be defined as 'extended resilience', rather than 'forward resilience' which implies an external partner. Of course, it is easier and cheaper for a multinational company to follow the alternate track of resilience planning that involves diversification and redundancy: simply to shrug off a location where something goes wrong, and invest again – with the same lack of security foresight – in another. Here, if the drive for forward resilience is serious, it may ultimately need to resort to regulation: developing a concept of extraterritorial security liability in parallel with the provisions already existing for sexual and terrorist offences abroad.

III: Respect local ownership

Despite the point just made, the great majority of what needs to be done for improved resilience beyond our own borders should be and will be done by the local authorities, business sectors, and communities themselves. When launching a new program of dialogue and cooperation with them under the flag of forward resilience, much trouble could be saved by reflecting on the lessons long and painfully learned in the field of conflict management about local ownership. There are several aspects here, including the care that must be taken to avoid over-reliance on aid, and the dangers of a ´talking down' approach that results in double standards. Especially when we are trying to protect shared networks and lines of dependency, or to tackle hazards of universal incidence like pandemics, the logic of building common standards, operating procedures, and so forth should be far clearer than in some other realms of security. Our partners, however, can only become co-owners of these systems if they have the economic and other practical means to carry their share. The financing of forward resilience may seem a sordid and unwelcome issue to raise at this stage, but it needs to be debated well up front – and it needs to be sustainable.

It is not, however, only shortage of means that may make local partners hesitant to join in common efforts for resilience or at least, to keep them going for long. Resilience has crucially important psychological and cultural components that can combine with material factors – and differences along the temporal scale – to demand very different solutions for different environments. The story of violent conflict offers plenty of cautionary tales against simply imposing an outside model, but also against the superficially more reasonable approach of trying to find a local argument and/or constituency for the solution we prefer. Successful and lasting settlements are those that not only give active roles to all local players who need to be included, but build on deep-seated local strengths and traditions. If these are different from the factors that underpin resilience in our own systems, so be it; in learning about them we can only improve and expand our own understanding of what the concept means.

IV: Be(a)ware of politics

A further, less rational complicating factor in the civil security field is that of political differences both within and between states. No one having watched Europe's efforts to handle abnormal southern migration flows in 2015-16 could fail to see that EU nations

– closely integrated as they are - have very different political attitudes and sensibilities about migrants, by no means simply proportionate to the material interests at stake. Germany has shown an example of internal differences, where the political establishment have taken one attitude and large parts of the general public have begged to differ. Naturally this undermines the chances of successful nation-to-nation cooperation, and has even raised the specter of backsliding in some established European common endeavors such as the Schengen zone.

Not all areas of public policy important for resilience, of course, have the same politically explosive quality as migration and multi-culturality. Yet what is non-sensitive for one country (or regional grouping) may be a political hot potato for another. Even among the five Nordic states, who have made special efforts since 2009 to upgrade their joint efforts for resilience through the 'Haga' process, fundamental issues have been posed by diverging attitudes towards the role of the military and towards sharing leadership with the private business sector. Approaches to emergency handling may also run into issues of central/local power-sharing and legal/judicial processes where even heavily integrated nations feel strongly about preserving their own models. The only general advice that can be offered here for a forward resilience initiative is to research the ground carefully and try, if possible, to avoid the pitfalls of political sensitivity and division that risk sabotaging rational cooperation from the outset. Who offers the partnership and how it is offered could easily become the first stumbling point.

V: Be sure you have the answers

There are two issues here, both related to competence. First, decisions on which international organizations to work with and through for a forward resilience program should be based on their capability and general appropriateness, not on institutional politics or wishful thinking about boosting the institutions themselves. For the Euro-Atlantic community, both NATO and the European Union (EU) may seem natural tools for outreach in resilience policy, not least as they have large and well established frameworks of external partnership. But when the two sides of the Atlantic wish to cooperate themselves in non-military security and emergency handling, they do so to an overwhelmingly greater degree through the EU than through NATO. The EU has the sectoral competence, the funds, and the ability to regulate that the Alliance lacks. Through the hold it exerts over its several applicant countries, it has a unique chance of getting them to join common systems and standards even while they await full entry. NATO is indispensable, rather, in any context that requires the application of 'hard' military expertise and assets, which may be relevant at many stages starting with data acquisition and analysis. It goes without saying that the best results will be reached by using both institutions in combination on a basis of comparative advantage.

However, there are many specific fields of resilience promotion in which different institutional frameworks might be the first choice. For globally interconnected systems, action at the UN level or in the various specialized agencies makes most sense. At the other extreme, for certain kinds of physically limited emergency shaped by the local environment, neighborhood institutions like those existing in Europe's Far North, the Baltic Sea region and the Black Sea region can prove surprisingly effective, for reasons that include their low political salience and ability to mobilize non-state constituencies. In other parts of the world, the possibility of structuring partnership in a top-down way

through existing regional security organizations should at least be looked at, since it might have potential to strengthen those institutions as well as guaranteeing transnational approaches.

The remaining point is that 'we,' in this context meaning basically the Euro-Atlantic community, cannot build a forward resilience program on the assumption that we know all the answers – even for our own cases. Time and again, in contexts ranging from the UK's winter floods of 2015-6 to the region-wide migrant crisis, Western societies and governments have been caught out by essentially known hazards and have suffered more damage and slower recoveries - including political fallout – than their publics might reasonably have expected. The reasons may include any and all of the difficulties discussed above, but perhaps also broader factors like the debilitating effect of the still not surmounted global economic crisis. Against such a background, it is commendable that the developed West should contemplate new efforts for exporting security in a new conceptual framework that has potential to advance local partners' interests even more than our own. It seems best, however, to develop any initiative for forward resilience in a sober spirit that recognizes how much we have to learn as well as teach.