

SHARED SECURITY

Building peace in an interdependent world



American Friends
Service Committee



Our world is
changing.

Never before have the fates of individuals, communities, and nations been so intertwined. And never before have our safety and well-being depended so much on the safety and well-being of others.

Today's problems—from violent extremism and weapons proliferation to climate disruption and public health crises—cannot be solved by any one nation. To address these problems, we need to abandon failed militarized approaches and invest in the tools needed to build security in today's world. These tools include preventive diplomacy, mediation, transitional justice and reconciliation, trauma healing, community building, and sustainable economies.

We need to recognize the interdependence of our global community and build on the remarkable opportunities of our highly networked world. We need to establish a sense of shared security.



What is shared security?

Shared security is a new paradigm for promoting the safety and well-being of people throughout the world. It is based on the simple understanding that shared problems require shared solutions, and that our interests are best served when we foster peaceful and just relationships and protect the natural resources we all depend on.

Current concepts of national or state security fail to address complex realities and fuel us/them paradigms. Wars feed the growth of violent movements, fuel instability and conflict, and undermine our own safety and well-being and that of others. As a result, outdated approaches, such as military intervention, are increasingly costly and ineffective.

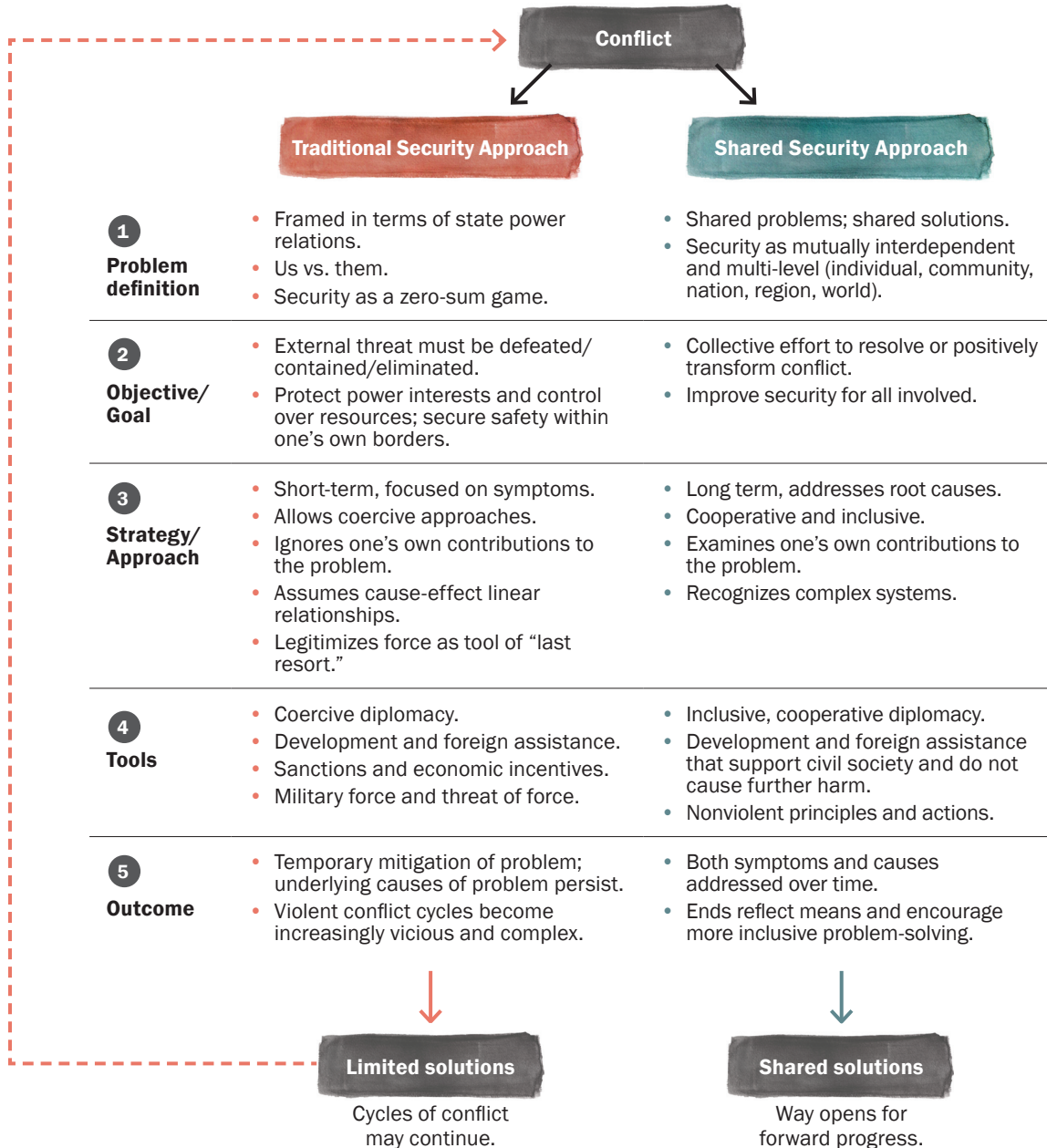
Shared security is both a different way of envisioning what is needed to build a more secure and peaceful planet, and a different way of acting to reach that vision.

A healthy community is built on high levels of trust and mutual understanding, adequate resources to meet basic needs, and healthy institutions that benefit all, equally. With shared security, communities directly address any breaches in trust or violations of others' well-being, but by seeking to heal the wound that has been inflicted rather than pursuing retribution.

Shared security joins the concepts of "collective security," which emphasizes cooperation among nations, and "human security," which focuses on the dignity and well-being of communities. The result is an inclusive approach to security where diverse actors are engaged at all levels, nonviolent options are chosen, and those most affected have a say in finding solutions.



Envisioning shared security





At its core, shared security is grounded in what Desmond Tutu calls *Ubuntu*, an inherent human connectedness that leads us to say, “I am because you are.”

AFSC's work for shared security

AFSC works with communities, decision-makers, and ally organizations to advance global shared security.

We do this by supporting evidence-based good practices, documenting success stories, and linking our work to policy recommendations. We promote nonviolent approaches to reduce violence and militarism, engage all actors in seeking peaceful solutions to conflicts, and support local people as positive change agents in their societies.

AFSC focuses its global shared security work on several key issues. They include:

- Peace building
- Reconciliation and healing
- Intra- and inter-religious conflict
- Migration
- Elections violence
- Restricted spaces
- Violent extremism
- Marginalized voices
- Business and conflict

Our work to promote shared security looks different in different places as we respond to community needs in specific contexts, but it is bound together by a search for truly shared solutions to our shared problems.



Shared security in action

In Guatemala and El Salvador

AFSC supports community members, including youth and women, in efforts to reduce urban violence. Those efforts include working with authorities to improve national policies and policing practices, neighborhood initiatives to transform public spaces, and civic opportunities for youth. These shared security approaches are repairing the social fabric, strengthening community resilience, and building greater security from the local level up.

“I learned that, as young people, we are important, and we can contribute to the future. Even when violence and crime are all around us, we can help build peace.”

—FATIMA GUADALUPE CASCO, EL SALVADOR
PEACE NETWORK PARTICIPANT

In Burundi

AFSC supports healing and recovery in the wake of civil war. Our efforts brought Burundian parliamentarians to South Africa for an international exchange on Truth and Reconciliation Commissions (TRC) prior to the launch of a TRC in Burundi. We have also partnered with many communities struggling to reintegrate ex-combatants, using a threefold approach that includes trauma healing, community building, and micro-loan and livelihood programs. Shared security approaches reinforce locally led recovery efforts and improve the chances that national peace processes will endure.

“My association members knew I was an ex-combatant, but they saw me saving, asking for loans, and always repaying on time. They believed in me, and now they treat me as [they do] others.”

—FRÉDÉRIC NGENZEBUHORU, BURUNDI
MICRO-LOAN PROGRAM PARTICIPANT



In Israel, Palestine, and the broader Middle East

AFSC supports people on all sides seeking to resolve conflicts and achieve security without violence. Internationally, we encourage inclusive regional diplomacy and urge a halt to military aid to the region. Locally, we support Palestinian and Israeli youth who are organizing to end the injustices and militarized approaches that fuel conflict in the region.

“I realized I would not be able to participate in depriving our Palestinian neighbors of their most basic freedoms in the name of security.”

—ELISHA BASKIN, AFSC FELLOW IN
JERUSALEM

In Asia and the Pacific

AFSC promotes conflict-sensitive investment practices and convenes multinational dialogues among foreign policy experts, government officials, and NGOs to explore shared security approaches to prevent conflict. In China, we worked with policy advisors from the think tank of the Ministry of Commerce to publish a book demonstrating how local community consultations can prevent conflict in complex environments. We have since helped pilot this approach between investors and NGOs in Cambodia.

“I know you guys are Quakers, but you had some real hawks in there from (both countries), and you had them thinking in different ways and engaging.”

—LAWRENCE KORB, PARTICIPANT IN A CHINA-
U.S. DIALOGUE AND EXCHANGE PROGRAM

(Lawrence Korb is a Senior Fellow at the Center for American Progress and the former Assistant Secretary of Defense during the Reagan administration.)



Re-imagining a world of shared security

As a global community, we have wasted too many lives and too much money under the misguided notion that we must always be ready for war and that violence is inevitable.

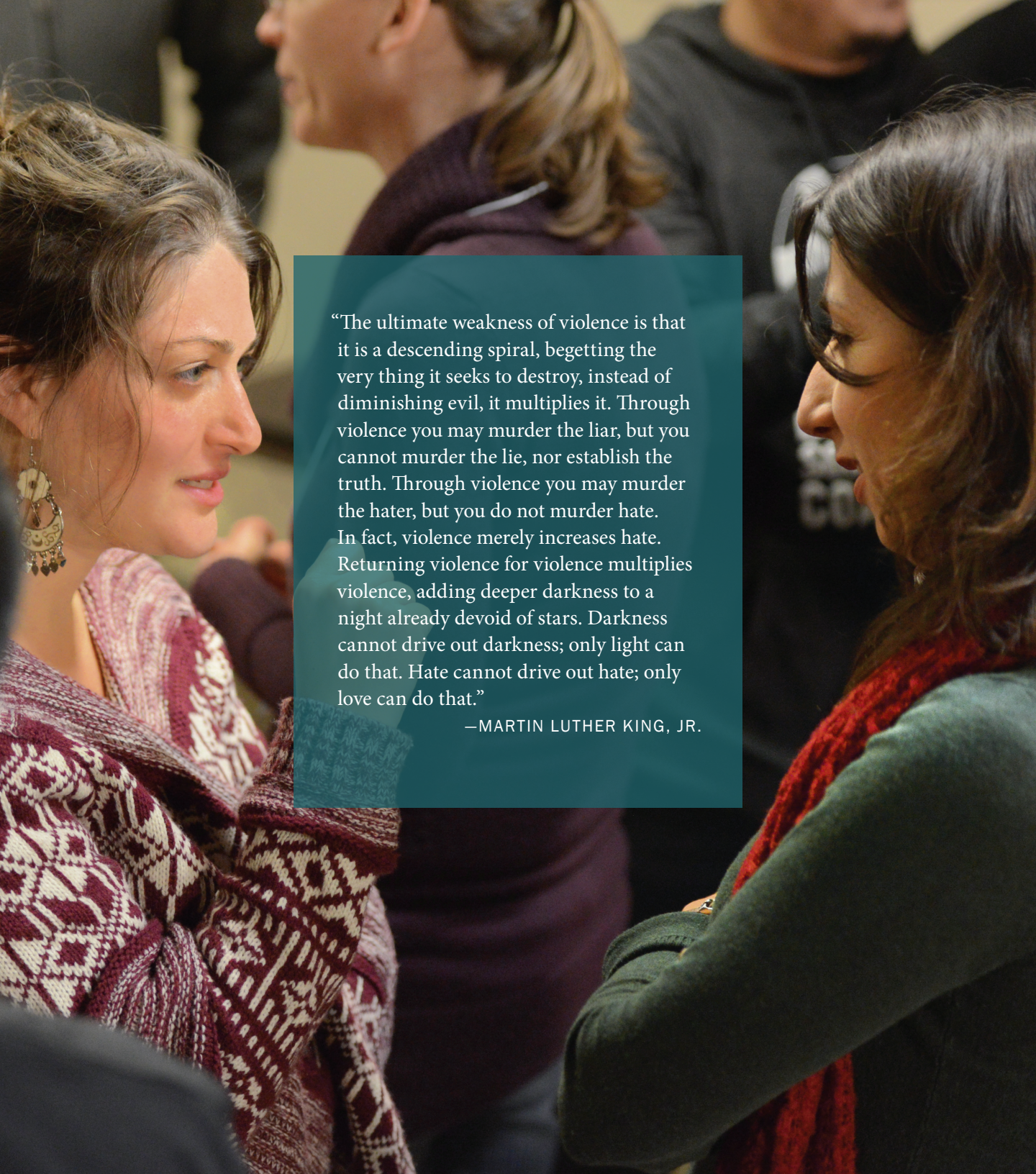
The simple truth, based on evidence spanning centuries, is that violence does not work to create safe and secure communities.

Yet peace can grow in the most surprising of places, with leadership from those one might least expect.

Just like war, peace requires preparation, strategy, investment, and ongoing practice. Building a global community grounded in shared security will require serious commitments to transforming political, economic, and social relationships; respecting human rights; and mending the harms caused by injustice and war.

We do not expect such a world to emerge easily, but we are convinced that it is possible. Please join us in making a commitment to shared security.





“The ultimate weakness of violence is that it is a descending spiral, begetting the very thing it seeks to destroy, instead of diminishing evil, it multiplies it. Through violence you may murder the liar, but you cannot murder the lie, nor establish the truth. Through violence you may murder the hater, but you do not murder hate. In fact, violence merely increases hate. Returning violence for violence multiplies violence, adding deeper darkness to a night already devoid of stars. Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that.”

—MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.

A shared security approach is both ethical and effective. It strives to match peaceful ends with peaceful means and to reduce human suffering, confronting complex and challenging problems with cooperative and practical solutions.



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