FOREWORD

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Over the course of some forty years, I have served under four U.S. presidents, most recently as National Security Advisor to President George W. Bush. Despite the seismic shifts in the international landscape during those profoundly turbulent decades, a remarkably consistent thread has run throughout the fabric of U.S. foreign policy, namely, the defense and promotion of freedom and democracy. Those values, successive American presidents have asserted, are not "Western" but universal values, reflecting the aspirations of the human spirit. And, clearly, peoples and societies across the world have agreed. The number of democracies rose sharply in the 1980s and continued to rise until about ten years ago. Since then, people in many countries have fought valiantly against autocracy and dictatorship in hopes of creating societies in which governments are more accountable, governance is more transparent, and justice is fair and impartial.

Accountability and transparency have their enemies, however. From dictators in their palaces to warlords in their compounds to corrupt low-level officials in their government offices, those with vested interests in preserving impunity and fomenting social division form a motley but powerful army. Moreover, their power flourishes in the same conditions that retard the growth of representative and responsive political systems: instability, uncertainty, violence, hatred, and fear. All these conditions can be found in conflict-affected states—in those states that are either teetering on the edge of

full-fledged insurgency or war, or that have plummeted into that abyss, or that are trying to climb back out and reach a safer and more peaceful place.

Among the greatest dangers threatening to push fragile states over the edge into violent conflict or to prevent them escaping from its grip are "serious crimes." Serious crimes include organized crime, ethnic or religious violence, and terrorism that can undercut efforts to create greater transparency and accountability and to tackle corruption and impunity. This power to obstruct the paths of conflict prevention, peacemaking, and peacebuilding explains why serious crimes are in the crosshairs of those individuals, organizations, and governments working to strengthen the institutions of government and society that undergird stability and the rule of law.

But serious crimes are hard targets. The transnational nature of contemporary organized crime, terrorism, and trafficking make them hard to eliminate: one can cut off several tentacles in one country only to see the creature regenerate in the wider region and return stronger than before. The access to power that serious crimes enjoy is another challenge, with violent extremists and organized crime bosses not only often colluding with officials in conflict-affected states but also sometimes being one and the same. Yet another source of strength for serious crimes is the fact that their roots in a society can be deep or extensive, with many ordinary citizens turning to warlords, militias, and terrorist groups for protection when the state's security forces are incompetent, inadequately equipped, or themselves a danger to the security of the people they are supposed to protect.

Serious crimes were hard targets twenty years ago, but if anything they are even harder to hit today, given the increasingly transnational nature of these threats, the ever-closer interweaving of extremism and organized crime, and the dispiriting obduracy of corrupt autocracies and sectarian insurgencies in some parts of the world despite the best efforts of national and international actors to uproot them.

We would be wrong, however, to despair. To the contrary, we have reason to be guardedly optimistic, because not only do we have greater experience in fighting serious crimes but we are also learning the lessons, both positive and negative, of what has been tried in the past. As documented in the numerous text boxes in this invaluable book, concrete progress has been achieved in the fight against serious crimes in dozens of countries, from

Kosovo to Afghanistan, Iraq to Sierra Leone. Moreover, as *Fighting Serious Crimes* also details, the tools available with which to combat serious crimes have increased in their number, variety, and effectiveness. Tried and trusted tools—such as effective witness protection programs—continue to be used with success. Other weapons, which proved unreliable or blunt instruments in the past, have been refined and sharpened and now have a formidable cutting edge—for instance, legislative reform that now avoids the temptation of trying to transplant laws from other countries. In addition, we are beginning to see a shift away from traditional top-down approaches and toward bottom-up processes. Pressure from below is more likely than action from above to lay the foundations for governments that are responsive, transparent, and competent—governments for which their security forces will fight and which their people will support. Such governments are far more likely to prevent conflicts escalating into widespread violence and far less likely to be "captured" by the perpetrators of serious crimes.

They are also far more likely to be allies of the international community in the fight against such crimes. One of the most significant—and encouraging—changes that has occurred since the publication in 2006 of the predecessor to this volume is that national governments are now more determined to play a leading role in tackling serious crimes within their borders, and the international community is more cognizant and more supportive of that attitude. No foreign country—and that includes the United States—has the responsibility or the capacity to battle serious crimes across the globe. All of us who care about democracy and freedom have a responsibility to *assist* in that campaign, but each conflict-affected country should be at the forefront of the effort to defeat serious crimes domestically. Home-grown, bottom-up approaches are best positioned to reflect national cultures, aspirations, and realities. The most effective help the international community can provide is to facilitate and support those efforts, especially by helping local people to strengthen their institutions, giving them the resilience and capacity to combat serious crimes.

Fighting Serious Crimes reflects this shift in emphasis, away from an internationally orchestrated intervention and toward an approach in which national actors take center stage. At the same time, however, this book has a very great deal to teach *everyone*—national or international, policymaker

or practitioner—about how to tackle serious crimes. It identifies what has worked in the past and why it has worked. It spotlights current and new threats and opens a toolbox of instruments and techniques that can be used to address them. And it also looks forward, anticipating future dangers and suggesting the kinds of society-wide responses that will be required to avoid or reduce those dangers. This book also reflects the ongoing commitment of the United States Institute of Peace to provide peacebuilders from all fields with the tools they need to do their job effectively.