48 Security, Development and UN Coordination

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48.1 Introduction

Secretary-General Kofi Annan has made it a key objective to reform the United Nations (UN) from a “culture of reaction to a culture of prevention” (Annan 1997). Annan’s reform initiative is based upon the idea that there is an inherent relationship between development and security, and that investment in development efforts is the most effective way for the UN to fulfill its goal, as stated in the Charter, of “saving succeeding generations from the scourge of war” (Annan 2001). The question of the prospects for conflict prevention and on the more general relationship between development and security currently receives intense scholarly and political attention.1 Indeed, an international consensus has emerged on an inherent relationship between development and security, as has been mentioned in the final document of the 2005 World Summit in September 2005, which states that “we recognize that development, peace and security and human rights are interlinked and mutually reinforcing” (UN 2005).2

Given this high-level political consensus on the imperative to invest in conflict prevention, and to address the nexus between development and security, as has been mentioned in the final document of the 2005 World Summit in September 2005, which states that “we recognize that development, peace and security and human rights are interlinked and mutually reinforcing” (UN 2005).2

This chapter explores this question, pointing to key changes in the thinking on development and security since the early 1990’s3 (53.2), exploring the emergence of ‘prevention’ as a systemic norm within the UN (53.3) and, analysing efforts within the UN aimed at integrating development and security policy (53.4).

Rather than analysing the UN merely as an arena where states meet to negotiate and formulate policy, the UN is treated as an actor - as a bureaucratic organization comprised of distinct policy fields differentiated by their mandates, forms of expertise and institutionalized, issue-specific interests (Barnett/Finnemore 2005). Within such a perspective, it is possible to combine a focus on how divergent interests of UN member states interact with the conflicting views and interests embedded in the different policy fields that make up the UN.

As shown below, the recognition of the primacy of prevention and of the need to bring development and security policy closer together has yet to materialize in significant institutional changes within the UN. Instead, coordination has emerged as a solution to increased calls for comprehensive, system-wide approaches that deal with the inter-linkages between development and security. This can be explained by the continued existence of deep-seated disagreements between different parts of the UN bureaucracy, where different organizational units jealously guard their turf, and the more fundamental issue of divergent views among UN member states about the proper role of the world organization in global politics.

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1 Influential think tanks and research institutes, such as the International Peace Academy, the Center on International Cooperation, NYU and the Social Science Research Council in New York with close links to policy debates within the UN, have research programmes on peacebuilding and conflict prevention.

2 See the Report of the Secretary-General’s High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change (UN 2004); Annan (2005); United Nations (2005): para 9: 2.

3 In this chapter the concepts ‘security’ and ‘development’ are analysed as they are used by official actors and institutions in the UN system. This chapter does not intend to distinguish between different meanings of security, except in those instances where different interpretations of these terms have a bearing on the institutional changes within the UN system. For more detailed analyses of these developments, see above chapters 50 by Dedring, 51 by Einsiedel/Nitzschke/Chhabra and 52 by Kaul.
48.2 Evolution in Security Thinking

The policy-field of security was confronted with a series of new challenges during the course of the 1990’s. For one, the cognitive-normative framework of global politics increasingly defined state sovereignty in relative, not absolute terms. And, importantly, the end of superpower rivalry meant that the UN Security Council could play a more active role in global politics. The character of many violent conflicts that reached the UN Security Council were markedly different from those of the cold war era.

Spurred by the end of the cold war, the international community began contemplating how the UN could assume a much stronger role beyond the negotiation (or enforcement) and monitoring of peace agreements. Experiences from El Salvador and Mozambique, from Angola and Cambodia, suggested that a central challenge for the UN would be to formulate policies and strategies that focused on laying the foundations for a peaceful re-building of war-torn societies. This required more holistic approaches, well beyond the mandates and policy tools of UN peace operations. It included efforts aimed at good governance, democratization, social inclusion and poverty eradication.

The challenge for the UN was how to transform the short-term presence of peacekeepers into efforts aimed at societal transformation aiming at building peace, as opposed to providing security. It brought security thinking and practice into closer collaboration with development policy.

Underlying these changes in security thinking was not only the recognition of a new character of violent conflicts to which the UN had to respond. The gradual incorporation within security policy of a concern with human rights, democracy, and justice had much to do with the normative and political changes that took place in the 1990’s. Human rights norms assumed a much stronger status. Such norms helped broaden the security-agenda, and it paved the way for the formulation of the ‘human security’ agenda which infused concerns within security debates about the extent to which the international community could intervene in a sovereign state to protect the security of individuals.4

Moreover, problems related to so-called “failed states” and the international structures of sovereign states emerged as a key concern within security policy (Boutros-Ghali 1992, 1995). This meant, among other things, that efforts aimed at institutional reform - a key element within development policy - became an increasingly important issue in discussions about ways to address violent conflicts. It was in this context that conflict prevention and the contribution of development policy to peacebuilding strategies came to form a central focus of political and scholarly debate during the latter half of the 1990’s.

48.3 Emergence of Prevention

Motivated by the different political context, after the end of the cold war, security analysts and peace researchers increasingly focused on intra-state war and the “wider cycle of conflict; the structural and short term causes of conflict...” and “the processes of conflict resolution and the substance of peacebuilding” (Dwan 2002: 98). The research partly addressed the so-called ‘root causes’ of violent conflict. Both research and advocacy for conflict prevention were triggered or motivated by the perception that the UN and the international community had failed to meet the high hopes for a new international order of peaceful relations in the post-cold war era. As one commentator observed, “the sobering experiences of the United Nations and the world at large in Somalia, Rwanda, and Yugoslavia gave rise from the mid-1990’s onwards to the realization that there exists a clear need to reassess the role of the UN and other international entities in conflict prevention and conflict management” (Tanner 2000: 542).

Much literature emerged on the long-term aspects of ‘peacebuilding’ and the prospects of identifying and addressing the underlying and intermediate causes of conflict (Lund 1996; Chayes/Chayes 1996; Gurr/Davis 1998; Schmeidl/Adelman 1998; Wallenstein 1998). Linked to this policy-driven research were an increasing number of states and NGOs that approached the UN with a comprehensive preventive focus.5 When Kofi Annan assumed office as Secretary General in 1997, the momentum for conflict preven-

5 The International Crisis Group, International Alert, and the European Platform for Conflict Prevention and Transformation - a network launched in 1997 of more than 150 organizations advocating conflict prevention - were active in pushing the conflict prevention agenda. Some governments (Canada, the Netherlands, Sweden) supported actors involved in research on and advocacy for conflict prevention (Björkdahl 2002), e.g. the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs (1997).

4 On the evolution of the concept of ‘human security’, see the chapter by Dedring above.