

Panel 5 on Military and Political Security:

Widening the disarmament and development lens: from arms control to community security

Final report

By Nikhil Acharya, UNIDIR (Panel Moderator)
(nacharya@unog.ch)

The goal of the panel discussion was to create a forum for productive discussions on widening the disarmament and development frameworks, in the context of military and political security.

This paper will briefly summarize the broad structure of the panel on military and political security and identify key issues raised in the course of the discussion.

SECTION I: Problematizing ‘security’ and understanding the challenges to operationalizing human security

The discussion began by identifying some key terms and concepts, a common understanding of which was necessary to serve as a basis for further discussion.

Security, for example, is a contested concept and it was agreed that while it implies ‘freedom from threats to core values (for both individuals and groups)’ there are many different perspectives on whether the main focus of enquiry should be on ‘individual’, ‘national’, or ‘international’ security.

It was agreed that for the purpose of the discussion the UN definition of ‘freedom from want and fear’ would serve as a useful starting point for the discussion on human security. Participants were asked whether they thought this was too broad a definition that still managed to remain meaningful and to think of challenges to the operationalization of this concept. The issue of ‘Responsibility to Protect’, the ‘war on terror’ and ‘just wars’ were also raised. Discussions related to when conditions make it necessary for external or ‘humanitarian intervention to protect individuals such as in the event of a state-led genocide against it’s own citizens. The fear that the concept of human security could be abused to justify strategic geo-political interventions by one state against another or by a state against it’s own people was also discussed. There was agreement that no ‘one size fits all’ model of conflict resolution exists and specific interventions must be tailored to particular local situations. Legal and ethical implications of these interventions as well as the viability of drawing up a code of conduct using the concept of human security as a basis were also raised by the participants.

It was also agreed that ‘security for whom?’ and ‘security from what threat?’ were useful questions to ask which helped identify the ‘referent object’ of security. Finally, it was also understood that since absolute security is an impossible state to achieve,

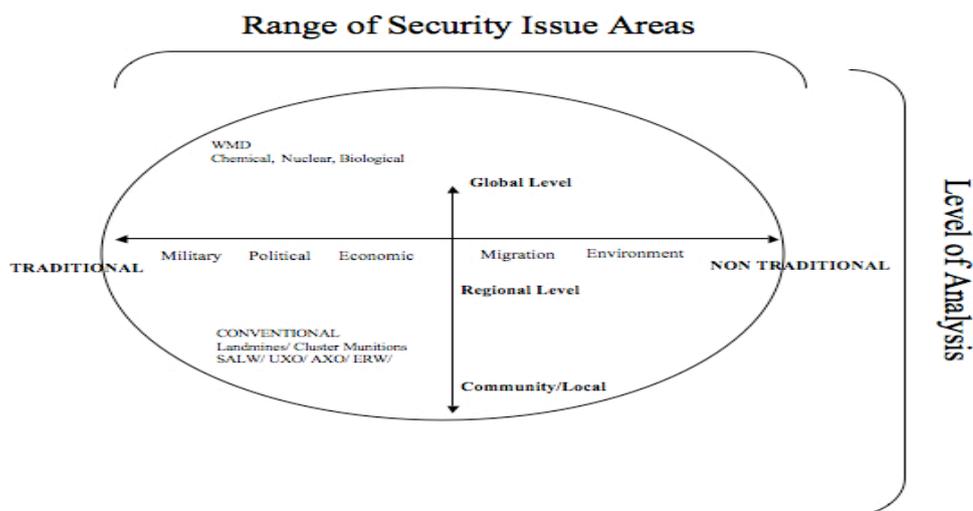
the degree of security is a function of the extent to which freedom from threats to core values has been achieved.

Section II: The ‘New Security Agenda’

Next, the discussion focused on how the range of issues seen through a disarmament and security lens has increased and what implications this has for the current state of political and military affairs.

The discussion centered around a ‘fridge-magnet’ draft conceptual framework (ref. Fig. 1) which while not meant to be an accurate representation served as a useful space on which to discuss how the range of security issue areas have expanded both horizontally and vertically. This framework also helped to understand at which ‘level of analysis’ (global/ international, regional, national, community, individual/ human) the referent object of security could be located. Importantly, this illustrates that rather than a ‘shift’ from traditional to new issues in security; the aperture of the security lens itself has widened to include a wider and deeper range of issues.

FIGURE I: **Changing trajectories of disarmament –a draft conceptual framework**



Widening lens (horizontal axis)- New issues related to the environment, trafficking, HIV-AIDS, migration and food security have appeared on the security radar. ‘New’ conflicts emerge that involve an increase in asymmetrical and guerilla warfare, international terrorist activity and internal violence.

Deepening levels of analysis (vertical axis): The level of analysis has expanded downward to the level of the individual (human security) and upward to the regional and international levels of analyses

The participants raised international terrorism as an example of a new security threat, focusing particularly on the fact that this is often financed using global networks. Issues related to the extent to which states are willing to protect or trade-off their sovereignty formed a basis for further discussion on the idea of a ‘global village’ and the implications of joining ‘cooperative’ institutions such as the European Union and the United Nations. The question of whether ‘national interest’ or ‘national security’ considerations are the primary motors driving state

participation in the international community or whether a sense of morality still exists on the international stage were also discussed.

SECTION III: Linking disarmament and development

Finally, the panel discussion focused on the relationship between disarmament and development and the importance of not engaging with these issues in isolation. It was reiterated that the relationship between disarmament and development could be traced back to Article 26 in the UN Charter and has continued to emerge in various forms throughout the history of the UN. It was recognized that while previous discourses on this relationship had focused on 'trade-offs' and 'peace dividends' a much more basic relationship exists between disarmament and development, particularly at the community level. The humanitarian impacts of cluster munitions and anti-personnel land mines on the every day life of affected communities as well as their negative long-term effects on socioeconomic development and community security were used as an illustration of this close and intertwined relationship.

Issues raised in the course of this discussion included the role of international policy tools such as the Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and Development and why such instruments have not been effective before as well as why 'armed violence' was not explicitly mentioned in the Millennium Development Goals. Links between wars and industrial development as well as the revolution in military affairs and the 'security dilemma' were also discussed.

In conclusion, there was general agreement that armed violence reduction is essential for sustainable and durable development and needs to be addressed more effectively in order to attain our development goals.

Contact details: I hope you enjoyed the discussion as much as I enjoyed moderating the panel; please contact me if you have any questions or are interested in the internship programme at UNIDIR.

Nikhil Acharya
Security Needs Assessment Protocol Project
United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research
A 514, Palais des Nations, 1211 Geneva 10
Tel (Off.): +41 22 917 2580
Email: NACHARYA@unog.ch, nikhilxs@gmail.com

Further reading:

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- Thomas F. Homer-Dixon (1999) *Environment, Scarcity, and Violence* (Princeton)
- Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and Development (available online at www.genevadeclaration.org)