

8. Security and development: a primer

Overview

Security and development have traditionally formed distinct discourses in international studies. Development has in the past been defined as economic growth and well-being, and recently it has been expanded to include capabilities, opportunities and choice. Meanwhile, within the international relations discourse, security has been interpreted in a variety of ways: as individual, human and state security (including sovereignty issues focusing on ‘the threat, use, and control of military force’ to ensure territorial integrity). These policy domains concern different actors and focus on different threats—internal and external, existential and otherwise. The focus of each threat often differs in time scale: development threats are a generational endeavour, while security threats are often immediate.

Nonetheless, in an increasingly interconnected and complex world, it has become clear that security and development are inextricably linked, especially in least developed countries. Threats to security can have socio-economic roots, including contests over natural resources, spillover effects of environmental degradation, economic and social inequalities, natural disasters, economic and political migration, and illicit drug trafficking, among others. It is not new to say that they are related; indeed, for over 20 years, development has been linked to security through the concept of human security. And the relationship can be complex: lagging development can lead to grievance, and conflict can threaten development. The United Nations Millennium Declaration emphasized peace and security as prerequisites for poverty reduction and recent stocktaking on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) reaffirmed that the countries most affected by conflict, instability and displacement have fallen farthest behind in poverty reduction. This often becomes a vicious cycle, as economic shocks, including those associated with environmental pressures, migration and food price fluctuations, can then lead to new insecurity.

As the world sets a new global agenda for sustainable development, security and development research bridges these two domains and brings expertise on security to bear on issues faced by the developing world. This chapter introduces a number of sustainable development themes to the SIPRI Yearbook audience and discusses some of the development implications of insecurity and conflict for the world’s most vulnerable populations.

Section I reflects on the current international understanding of how security and development intersect in less developed (and, increasingly, in middle-

income) countries. This section assesses the current understanding of fragility and frames the concept in systems thinking, rather than a state-centric model, in order to facilitate a deeper analysis of the linkages between the symptoms and causes of fragility, as well as the impact of various processes on one another. Fragile systems are settings where low security and low development interact to form complex challenges for both development and security.

Section II focuses on one such fragile system, by demonstrating how recent violence against healthcare workers has affected service delivery in a number of fragile states.

Finally, incorporating a gender perspective within a systems framework helps to identify structural inequalities based on social norms. Gender analysis, for instance, can illustrate how men and women experience insecurity and fragility differently—also see chapter 4 in this volume—thereby informing more effective policy. Drawing on these findings, Section III examines how gender norms and culture interact with security and development through complex systems. In this way, an improved understanding of the relationship between structural inequalities and security and development processes could contribute to increased peace and security.

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