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The Security–Development Nexus Program

IPA's Security–Development Nexus Program aims to contribute to a better understanding of the linkages between the various dimensions of violent conflicts in the contemporary era and the need for multi-dimensional strategies in conflict management. Through its research projects, conferences and publications, the program seeks to make concrete recommendations to the United Nations system and the broader international community for more effective strategies, policies and programs in achieving sustainable peace and development.

Acknowledgements

The IPA Security–Development Nexus Program gratefully acknowledges support from the Rockefeller Foundation and the Governments of Australia, Belgium, Canada, Germany, Luxembourg, Norway, and the United Kingdom (DfID). This IPA program also benefits from core support to IPA from the Governments of Denmark, Sweden and Switzerland, as well as the Ford Foundation and the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation.

THE SECURITY–DEVELOPMENT NEXUS: Research Findings and Policy Implications

The necessity of linking security and development has become a policy mantra. This is a welcome development after the deliberate bifurcation of development and security policies during the Cold War. Yet, the ready consensus among policy makers and advocates has served to obscure the difficulties involved in aligning security and development policies.

Since the early 1990s, there has been a growing body of knowledge, policy innovations and operational responses at the intersection of security and development. IPA's Security–Development Nexus Program undertook a two year, multi-track research program to examine several questions:

- What are the linkages between security and development at the thematic, policy, operational, and institutional levels?
- How have national and international actors revised their policies and operations to address security and development as part of their conflict management strategies?
- What empirically grounded assessments can be made of current approaches to linking security and development in conflict-prone, conflict-torn, or post-conflict contexts?

The program involved research on violence, poverty, environment, globalization and demography; case studies of Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Kyrgyzstan, Namibia, Somalia, Tajikistan, and Yemen; research on rule of law and security sector reform programming; a collaborative project with the University of Queensland (Australia) on the South Pacific region; the Peacebuilding Forum with WSP-International (Geneva); and other thematic studies. Program publications are listed on the back page, and will include four forthcoming edited volumes.

Our cumulative findings take issue with the rhetoric about the growing convergence between security and development. Instead, research findings point to serious contradictions, tensions, and trade-offs between different conceptions of security and development, as well as between competing priorities and policy objectives. This is not to deny the need to strive for greater coherence between security and development policies that are mutually supportive. However, our findings call for a more realistic understanding of the variable configurations between security and development in different contexts, and for differentiated national and international responses.



RESEARCH FINDINGS

Research findings can be grouped into five broad categories: conceptual confusion; policy integration; operational and implementation issues; institutional challenges; and the political dimensions of policy coherence across the security-development spectrum. These have far-reaching implications for policy and practice.

1. Conceptual Confusion

Both policy and academic debates face a common problem: how to define development and security, which are broad and elusive concepts. Development has multiple dimensions from human rights to

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environmental sustainability, from economic growth to governance. Similarly, the concept of security has gradually expanded from state security to human security and now includes a range of military as well as non-military threats that recognize no borders. This naturally leads to a dilemma: What should be integrated with what? As a result, there is a panoply of theory, policy, and practice on the interplay between security and development.

The current debates encompass perspectives from various academic disciplines and policy arenas. Often the timeframes and levels of analysis are different. For example, some, like the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), focus on human security and development. Others, such as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's Development Assistance Committee (OECD DAC), take a functional approach to security-development linkages in particular policy areas such as peacebuilding or conflict prevention. Still others, like the High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change, examine the interdependence between security and development at the global level.

Despite the differences in their starting points and policy objectives, the various approaches all use the same terms: the interdependence between security and development. The appropriation of the same terminology for distinct goals at different levels of policy intervention has generated considerable confusion. Human security is a worthwhile policy goal, but it does not necessarily lead to national development or international security, nor is the reverse true. Nonetheless, they are equally desirable and *potentially* mutually reinforcing goals. The security-development nexus does not apply automatically across policy arenas (prevention, state-building, peacebuilding) or across levels of policy implementation (global, national, local).

Equally important, the security-development nexus terminology is often used indiscriminately, regardless of a given country context or conflict phase. A rigorous analysis quickly reveals the need to go beyond generalizations about security and development to concrete issue areas and policy contexts where key concepts, insights, or instruments from these hitherto distinct fields need to be examined jointly.

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2. Policy Integration

Research on discrete issue areas such as poverty, globalization, demography, environment, and human rights demonstrates the cross-cutting nature of the pressures faced by developing countries. The patterns of vulnerability (or “risk factors”) are not country-specific. Instead, they are often the outcome of broader social, economic, and political forces beyond the control of governments and states that are at risk. Nonetheless, these problems tend to be examined at the country level and addressed through fragmented policies. On the big policy

issues (trade, debt, migration, employment, international financial flows, energy, global warming, and disarmament) there is little evidence of the convergence of security and development concerns nor of a corresponding re-allocation of resources and policy priorities. Although some donor governments have begun, usefully, to adopt a linked-up govern-

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ment approach to align their diplomatic, defense, and development policies, the "three Ds" do not include other critical areas such as migration or trade. Even in the most prominent area of policy intervention—poverty alleviation—the current focus on the MDGs involves implementing a narrowly cast development agenda irrespective of security considerations.

Meanwhile, the incremental—but ultimately limited—policy adjustments in official development assistance, humanitarian aid, poverty alleviation, debt relief, disease control, sanctions, and peacekeeping fall far short of addressing the structural risk factors that lie at the source of physical insecurity, societal vulnerability, and violent conflicts in the developing countries. There is continued disconnect between the policy rhetoric about integrated security-development approaches at the international level and policy realities at the sectoral level.

This is replicated at the country-level. Comparative research from the field demonstrates that, depending on their levels of development and the nature of threats to their security, countries experience positive, negative, or no correlation in their security and development conditions. Tajikistan and Namibia, for example, are on different security and development trajectories. They require a different mix of security and development policies specific to their needs. In spite of this, national and interna-

tional policy makers rely upon a standard set of policy tools that are not necessarily compatible. As a result, serious tensions and inconsistencies arise from the pursuit of divergent agendas. These are rarely acknowledged or effectively managed by national governments or their external supporters. For example, at the country level, promoting economic growth, enhancing social cohesion, executing an anti-terrorism campaign, and ensuring regime stability are often identified as policy priorities although they might be working at cross purposes.

The reality is that in many countries, even socio-economic policies on discrete issue areas such as education, employment, or crime are fragmented and often contradictory—and these are regularly supported by donors through sector-specific assistance programs. With development policies far from integrated, their coherence with security policies is even more problematic. National security institutions focus on traditional threats to state or regime security rather than the wider range of threats to human security. Despite claims to the contrary, there are few successful examples of proactive or preventive strategies to deal with structural or proximate sources of conflict through

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linked-up security and development policies. The gaps, contradictions, and dilemmas across policy areas at the national level also arise within a single policy area. For example, research on rule of law programs reveals serious tensions between law enforcement and human rights agendas. Similarly, there are dilemmas between rule of law approaches supporting market liberalization vs. those in favor of equitable development. Yet few mechanisms exist through which such tensions can be resolved. More often than not, policies are translated into discrete projects and programs with their own objectives, divorced from a broader security or development strategy.

In short, policy coherence is more an ideal than reality. The overwhelming evidence emerging from thematic, program level and country case studies is the absence of integrated national or international policies to address complex and interlocking socio-economic, environmental, political, and security problems. Instead, there is a growing range of discrete programs, projects, and aid packages across the vast security-development spectrum without any coherent policy framework. Nonetheless, the rhetoric of linked-up policies has become axiomatic.

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3. Operational and Implementation Issues

Compounding the shortcomings at the policy level, research consistently points to failures of policy implementation. Almost invariably, there exists a huge gap between policy makers and policy implementers, between headquarters and field operations. For example, the various security sector reform (SSR) and rule of law (RoL) policies designed to promote security and development rarely translate into effective programs on the ground.

Sectoral and country-based research confirms that there is extremely weak knowledge management within organizations, inadequate mechanisms to incorporate lessons learned, insufficient efforts to monitor and evaluate programs, and little institutional memory in terms of the range of new programs that are implemented in various countries. As donors have become involved in hands-on programming in such sensitive issue areas as the security sector, human rights, democratization, and civil society promotion, the absence of consistent and rigorous planning methodology and management capacity is increasingly becoming apparent.

At the country or field level, cooperation

frameworks between program implementers, national authorities and donors are far from effective. As a result, there are numerous unconnected programs and projects in such different sectors as gender equity, human rights training, police reform, election monitoring and poverty alleviation. Neither multidisciplinary task forces across projects or programs (e.g., with expertise in conflict, legal affairs, management, financing, budgeting, and human resources) nor a common understanding of the linkages among program areas (e.g., justice, security sector, public finance) are standard parts of the design of externally-supported initiatives. The complicated relationship between project implementers, their external funders, national governments, and beneficiaries has exacerbated the perennial challenges of transparency and accountability between donors and recipients.

4. Institutional Challenges

One of the most persistent policy research findings is the absence of effective institutional interface between external and domestic actors across a range of policy areas. External actors continue to pay lip service to "local ownership" while the necessary mechanisms for more effective alignment of donor and recipient strategies and programs lag far behind. Many policy and planning tools promoted by external actors, such as the poverty reduction strategies (PRSPs), the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and the UN Development Assistance Framework and Common Country Assessments (UNDAF/CCAs), are not only sectoral in nature—they are rarely the primary policy tools employed by national governments.

Traditionally, external actors dealt directly with national authorities in their own sectoral areas. As the range of sectors and issue areas for collaboration has expanded, new external actors (including international non-governmental organizations

[NGOs] and the private sector) have become involved in conflict prevention and peacebuilding. The multiplicity of national and international actors has led to the fragmentation and dissipation of their efforts, creating two contradictory problems. On the one hand, national governments often lack the capacity or the appropriate systems to deal effectively with a growing range of external actors, each with its own mandate and requirements. On the other hand, there is resistance to being confronted with a "donor cartel" that comes in with a unified agenda.

In reality, the international community is far from united. Although the linkages between such sectors as health, environment, poverty, population, environment, housing, and crime are increasingly better understood, international institutions dealing with these problems are highly fragmented and often operate in isolation from each other. There have been some efforts by "vanguard professionals" in each sector to reach out to other sectors. For example, UN agencies working on property, land, and housing now find common cause with agencies working on the rule of law. Similarly, demographers and security experts are beginning to work together on demographic and security trends, while police reform is increasingly linked to peacekeeping. However, the institutional linkages across issue areas are at best informal. Macro-level mechanisms for better coordination among external actors, such as multi-donor trust funds and consultative mechanisms at the country level, are still far from common—especially for conflict prevention.

There are strong policy exhortations for more effective collaboration among donors, more efficient use of international resources, and greater accountability. However, it is extremely difficult to establish effective collaboration mechanisms within countries and across various sectors. The many international actors, programs, and projects rarely add up to a comprehensive sectoral or country program.

5. The Political Context

Perhaps the single most important key to understanding the links between security and development policies is the centrality of politics—both for problem identification and policy response. Neither sectoral policies nor national and international responses can be understood without factoring in political dynamics at the country and international levels.

Despite historical and structural legacies which shape a country's security and development conditions, policy options as well as policy outcomes are not pre-determined. The intervening variable between structural problems and policy outcomes seems to be the nature of a country's political processes, dynamic, and institutions. The political "ecology" of security and development is highly context-specific and defies universal prescriptions.

Shying away from overt involvement in politics, donors have increasingly sought to influence national politics through good-governance programming. More recently, under the impact of 9/11, the focus has shifted to state-building. Country-based research challenges the effectiveness of governance programming and state-building efforts in certain contexts. The heightened donor focus on strengthening formal institutions of the state (through

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constitutions, elections, courts, military, police, parliaments, and ministries) can come at the expense of informal processes of political accommodation, dialogue, and priority setting.

As the scope of official development assistance expands to highly sensitive political issue areas (including security sector reform, rule of law, democratization, and human rights) the perennial

question of sovereignty emerges as a key challenge. The fact that domestic conflicts are increasingly "internationalized" with the active involvement of external actors has far-reaching implications for a society's ability to address its problems through locally-sustainable political processes.

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Ultimately, external engagement in conflict-prone, conflict-torn and post-conflict countries is profoundly political in nature. The absence of a grand international strategy linking the multiple goals pursued in such contexts does not diminish the political role of external bilateral and multilateral actors. Rather, it confirms the limitations of current approaches to conflict prevention, state-building, and peacebuilding by external actors.

Not only are security and development policies beset by serious problems of coherence, coordination, and consistency—in reality, it is difficult to speak of the existence of "international policies" that are equal or appropriate to the multifaceted security and developmental threats facing many developing countries in the early years of the twenty-first century. Instead, the policy orthodoxy on the security-development nexus serves to reveal the great chasm between global vulnerabilities that cut across human, national, and international levels, and the structural shortcomings of an international system that is shaped by the national interests of its member states. In the absence of a central authority and vast power differentials, external actors (including governments, regional and international organizations, the private sector, and the multitude of non-governmental actors) pursue competing security and development agendas while calling for policy coherence.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Extracting generic policy prescriptions from these

research findings would be self-defeating. Multidimensional research provides support to the growing dissatisfaction with the policy mantra for integrated security and development strategies for conflict prevention, conflict management and post-conflict peacebuilding. Security and development do not only intersect in varying configurations in different contexts; they are not necessarily mutually compatible at all times. Over the long term, investing in both security and development is necessary since they are independently worthwhile goals. Moreover, addressing environmental destruction, unchecked population growth, transnational crime, and intra-state conflicts is bound to reduce vulnerabilities—thereby promoting security and enabling development. Beyond the obvious, however, different policy actors need concrete and context-specific recommendations. Indeed, each of our research tracks has generated highly specific and targeted recommendations which are contained in our policy reports and forthcoming volumes. The following recommendations are necessarily limited in their application and modest in their claims.

Modify the current rhetoric: From the United Nations to bilateral and multilateral donors, from NGOs to regional organizations, there is urgent need to unpack the policy mantra that without security there is no development and without development there is no security. Security and development co-exist in different configurations at various levels and in distinct contexts. They can be mutually supportive, mutually harmful or independent of each other. The same is true for other presumed causal connections: security sector reform or rule of law do not automatically promote security or development, even though they can be instrumental in doing so indirectly. Claiming the contrary can only lead to faulty diagnosis and inappropriate responses.

Differentiate between contexts: Both social scientists and policy makers work on generic phenomena—yet countries consistently defy general-

izations. Simplification of country characteristics or their incorrect assignment into ready-made categories like "failed or failing states," "countries at risk," or "difficult partnerships" tends to create policy blinders. Since the problems of post-conflict and pre-conflict countries are significantly different, the mix and sequencing of policy interventions has to be different. Similarly, while historical precedents are important, they are not reliable guides to policy. The end of the Cold War and September 11th have demonstrated the variable impact of exogenous events on countries as diverse as Kyrgyzstan, Yemen, and Somalia.

Always factor in politics: Instead of evading politics, external actors need to acknowledge the political nature of their interventions, and the political choices that these entail. This is particularly true in the case of rule of law and security sector programs. These areas of intervention should not, however, be viewed as a substitute for resolving highly complex political problems. For example, SSR involves reform of the one of the most innately political institutions of any state and normally takes place amidst a contested political context. Many SSR programs are designed in technocratic terms. However, their success depends greatly on overcoming resistance by powerful groups whose interests are at stake. Thus, SSR should not be confined exclusively to security professionals who may not possess the requisite political skills or knowledge.

Strategic frameworks: Programmatic design in new areas of external intervention such as security sector reform or rule of law repeatedly calls for attention to strategic frameworks. This can be strengthened through rigorous conflict analysis which can help diminish the risk of the "one size fits all" syndrome. Strategic frameworks also allow for realistic timelines. Both development and security require investments beyond the two- or three-year project cycle. Reform in such areas as the rule of law and the security sector can actually be undermined by

short-lived international support. It should be recognized (and accordingly planned for) that reform is a process that cannot be achieved within the short project cycles established by donors but has to be part of longer term strategy.

Facilitating ownership: The issue of "ownership" as it relates to external assistance for development and security poses a conundrum. It has been suggested, particularly in post-conflict contexts, that ownership can be broken into six distinct dimensions: responsiveness, consultation, participation, accountability, control, and sovereignty. Not only are these sub-concepts conceptually clearer, but they can also be translated more easily into programmatic objectives.

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Not privileging the formal: In development, as in security, the state and its formal institutions represent only one reality. In many developing countries the informal sector comprises a larger reality in the socio-economic, legal, and security realms. External actors are particularly ill-equipped to deal with the informal sector. While it is vital—for both practical and symbolic reasons—to strengthen the state's formal sectors, these efforts will only be successful if they are supplemented by investments in the informal sector. Understanding, working with, and integrating the non-formal sector is a difficult process, requiring a more intimate understanding of language, cultures, and contexts. However, to ignore it is to court irrelevance or failure.

Need for better communication and management: The manner in which security and development policies are managed frequently militates against the achievement of intended goals every bit as much as the difficult and contested environments in which they take place. Good management, in turn, needs to be grounded in the effective percolation of policy from headquarters to the field.

Thinking holistically: While both development and security require "holistic thinking," they can only be achieved piecemeal. Integrated approaches should not negate the need to work on specific problems. For example, SSR can be fruitfully undertaken in smaller portions while recognizing the need for broader reform.

Our research has identified the limitations of current efforts to link security and development. It has also uncovered the gradual deepening and broadening of the international community's approaches to both

security and development through integrated thinking, more accurate diagnosis, and innovative action to overcome the traditional boundaries between these realms. The starting point of theory, policy, and practice has definitely shifted significantly towards greater disciplinary and sectoral integration than was the case throughout much of the Cold War. However, the next generation of scholarship, policy, and programming needs to go beyond the current orthodoxies as the basis of more effective action.

This report can be accessed online at:
www.ipacademy.org/Programs/Research/ProgReseSecDev_Pub.htm

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