Mapping the Nexus Between Security and Development in the 21st Century

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In emerging literature – political, industrial and academic alike – there is a seeming consensus that "security" and "development" are in some way interrelated and interconnected. This "nexus" has led regional, national, international and transnational actors – both in public and private sectors alike – to invest important amounts of resources in trying to understand the relationship in order to appropriately address it. It is therefore now beyond doubt that attention to the "security-development nexus" has become commonplace in scholarship and policy-making (Stern & Öjendal, 2010, p.5). Hence, this paper's purpose is to assess if this "nexus" exists, and if so, to what degree it matters and what constitutes it.

To begin our analysis, the paper first outlines the historical origins of the security-development nexus. Particular focus will be spent on the policies of the United Nations since their actualisation is frequently understood as the closest thing to the "consensus" interpretation of what constitutes the nexus. Next, the paper explores the empirical causality between development and security and vice versa. While it is largely accepted that underdevelopment in some way causes insecurity at the individual level, the real battleground of the nexus is located within the specific correlation between development and interpersonal violence arising at the community level. For this reason – and in order to stay coherent – the nexus is primarily assessed against the empirical evidence of intra-state wars, as the latter have characterised a vast majority of the modern conflicts of the late 20th and early 21st centuries.

The last section investigates the ontological/epistemological nature of the security-development relationship. To do so, the paper identifies within "the nexus" a web of disparate ideas, processes and objects (Stern & Öjendal, 2010, p.6). Rather than trying to "fix" or "contain" this network, the paper limits itself in presenting its elements as discursive "narratives" which arise from the interrelational and intersubjective. The paper concludes that while a nexus between security and development does indeed exist, the reality of what constitutes this relationship is much more ambiguous and less identifiable due to its unsettled parameters.

Historical Origins of the Development-Security Nexus

With the end of the Second World War, the new institutional liberal order devised a twofold security agenda in the hope of avoiding repeating the violence that had characterised much of the first half of the 20th century (Dowdeswell, 1996, p.25). The first aim consisted in preventing the eruption of large-scale conflicts by encouraging inter-state harmony through dialogue and cooperation. The second objective was to "broaden and deepen" the international security agenda by securitizing social, political and economic human wellbeing at the individual level. In 1945, the US secretary of state made this clear by stating: "The battle of peace has to be fought on two fronts. The first is the security front where victory spells freedom from fear. The second is the economic and social front where victory means freedom from want. Only victory on both fronts can assure the world of an enduring peace." (Dowdeswell, 1996, p.25).

Nowadays, the materialisation of the second "front" is located within the broader theoretical framework of the "security-development nexus". At the core of the nexus lies the assumption that, as former UN secretary-general Kofi Annan once stated, "development and security are inextricably linked" (Stern & Öjendal, 2010, p.5). The argument

runs in two relational directions. First, underdevelopment not only directly threatens the security of people but also contributes to the indirect formation of a fertile breeding ground for other threats, including wars (Stern & Öjendal, 2010, p.5). Second, these conflicts lead to both human and developmental insecurity, thus trapping communities within the vicious cycle of low development-conflict-worse development-harsher conflict.

The institutional outcome of this shift has been largely reflected within the policies of the United Nations Development Programme – coined by the term "human security" – which are now integral to much more ambitious and complex programmes of disarmament, democratic reform, capacity-building, economic development and societal and state reconstruction (Duffield, 2010, p.58). A clear example is the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which directly addressed poverty, education, gender equality, child mortality, maternal health, HIV/AIDS and other diseases, environment and global partnership (United Nations Millennium Development Goals, 2015). Consequently, human security is no longer exclusively associated with economic growth but now encompasses the most critical aspects of human wellbeing.

The Relationship Between (Under)Development and (In)Security

The new intra-state wars of the post-Cold War period led to a reassessment of what dimensional factor constitutes the primary cause of conflict. The predominant explanation points towards cultural and ethnic divisions, arguing that the civil violence in Yugoslavia and Rwanda were a consequence of the ethnocultural tensions which arose between different groups fighting each other for domination or autonomy (Stewart, 2004, p.269). The most popular interpretation of this account is Huntington's "Clash of Civilisations", which influenced US foreign policy for more than a decade. However, while culture has been an important factor for the mobilisation of people during the late 20th and early 21st century, it is evident that it cannot account for the many multicultural societies that co-exist in peace, nor for the others that live in harmony for centuries and then suddenly erupt in conflict (Stewart, 2004, p.269). Development, on the other hand, is a multi-dimensional explanation which can group within its scope various social, economic and political accounts. To prove this, the paper will explore three development-linked hypotheses that can account for the outbreak of most of the late 20th and early 21st-century intra-state wars.

Group Motivation and Horizontal Inequalities

The cultural explanation of conflict is correct in affirming that most of the new wars which arose after the dissolution of the USSR have been fought between different "groups". Certainly, ethnic and religious diversity have been important elements in determining what constitutes "self" and "other". However, intra-state wars do not erupt over such differences alone (Cohen, 1974, p.94). As political scientist Abner Cohen wrote: "When men do, on the other hand, fight across ethnic lines it is nearly always the case that they fight over some fundamental issues concerning the distribution and exercise of power, whether economic, political, or both" (Cohen, 1974, p.94). Horizontal group inequalities are a fundamental element of development studies and have often been used by political leaders to exploit resentment and deprivation to mobilise support. If this support does not or cannot obtain its objectives through non-violent channels, then society recurs to conflict. In the words of von Clausewitz: "*War* is a *mere continuation* of *politics* by other means" (Clausewitz, 1832, 1:1:24). For this reason, abundant studies on the clashes between Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland, Muslims and Hindus in India, Tutsis and Hutus in Rwanda and amongst different groups in Yugoslavia all show that sharp horizontal inequalities constantly existed between the warring sides (Nafziger & Auvinen, 2000; Stewart, 2001).

Private Motivation

Just as any rational action, war confers both costs and benefits alike. For this reason, an analysis of the private motivation of the actors involved in conflict will tell us a lot about its causes. These motivations are yet again more than often dictated by the developmental dimension of communities. Collier and Hoeffler argue that the net economic advantages of war to some offset the costs and consequently motivate them to participate (Collier & Hoeffler, 2000). A study by Keen identifies these specific benefits according to the developmental situation of particular categories of society (Keen, 1998). For example, conflict allows young and uneducated men to gain employment; it offers opportunities to loot and rape, to profit from shortages, black market and aid and to bear weapons (Stewart, 2004,

p.273). Consequently, where resources are untapped or employment low, underdevelopment permits war to become progressively probable, prolonged and intensive. For this reason, as Keen states, "increasingly, civil wars that appear to have begun with political aims have mutated into conflicts in which short-term benefits are paramount" (Keen, 1998, p.12). In a sense, conflicts act as an unethical social elevator which empowers bad actors, enabling them to make gains and avoid costs.

Failure of the Social Contract

This explanation focuses on the inability of the state to deliver essential welfare services which generally would be widespread in an ordinary hypothetical contract between the state and its citizens. Violence is thus a result of the state failing to fulfil its most reasonable and rudimentary duties. Such a failure could easily be constituted by extremely high vertical inequality, very low per capita incomes, low life expectancy and severely negative economic growth. Econometrics studies have revealed that the incidence of conflict is more significant when all these factors are present within a country's society (Nafziger & Auvinen, 2000; Collier & Hoeffler, 2000; Elbadawi, & Sambanis, 2001). In the conflicts in Sudan, Sierra Leone, Somalia and Sri Lanka we see extremely adverse developmental conditions, with the countries' respective societies tainted by significant variations in income distribution, high infant mortality rates and economic stagnation. It is probably for this reason that the rise in the number of UN integrated missions, which have the task of furthering development through aid and investment, has been associated with the decrease in civil wars and intra-state conflicts. In these cases, proponents of the usual mantra "correlation does not mean causation" will be disappointed, as tests for the direction of causality suggest that the negative relationship from underdevelopment to conflict is even stronger than the reverse relationship (Stewart, 2004, p.276).

The Relationship Between (In)Security and (Under)Development

As French philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre once famously wrote: "When the rich wage war, it is the poor who die" (Paul-Sartre, 1960, p.12). The evidence to support the claim that there is an inverse relationship between conflict and development (the greater the conflict, the less the development) is evident and plentiful, but it is probably best illustrated by a single example: intra-state war and its effect on the Millennium Development Goals. Countries which find themselves involved in armed conflict frequently show regress rather than progress in MDG indicators, with the strength and frequency of war being directly related to the failure to further development (Stewart, 2003, p.325). In fact, the percentage of less-developed countries that are currently in conflict equates to 33%, which increases to over 50% if we take into consideration the past quarter century (Stewart, 2003, p.326). Moreover, without taking into account war-caused famines, the proportion of people who have been killed by conflict in countries that scored lowly in the MDGs is ten times higher than the one of medium-developed countries and twenty times higher than high-scoring MDG countries (Stewart, 2003, p.326).

The complex interaction of events which characterises conflict (fighting, movement of people, deaths, physical destruction, international embargoes, military expenditures etc.) has a drastic impact on all levels of a country's economy (Stewart, 2003, p.330). At the macro-level, intra-state war is always associated with a clear decline in gross national product, a dramatic fall in growth rate prospects and an increase in budget deficit. A rapid reduction in imports and exports is also in most cases inevitable, accompanied by record-high inflation and unemployment. As a result, at the meso-economic level we often see a shift to non-tradables, namely in the form of subsistence or black market. Often these activities cause the production of outlawed commodities, such as drugs and weapons, which become more accessible and lead to negative externalities. Within the government sector, a shift to military expenditure is likely at the expense of the welfare state (Stewart, 2003, p.331). At the micro-level, intra-state conflict is frequently responsible for a decline in domestic savings and investment. Of all economic sectors, the agricultural one is usually the most affected, with a decrease in food consumption per-capita leading to further problems such as malnutrition, disease and famine.

"Fixing" the Nexus? Mapping Discursive Narratives

From the above analysis it appears evident that a security-development nexus does indeed exist. There is clear empirical evidence on the existence of a vicious cycle, with underdevelopment being instrumental to the outbreak of

conflict and in turn conflict having incredible costs on development. Conversely, there should be no reason to why a virtuous cycle should not exist, with high levels of security leading to development and development further promoting security (Stewart, 2010, pp.278-279). Nevertheless, following the move from traditional to critical security, coherent scholarship has the duty to also take into account how knowledge and meaning are constructed and imposed through overarching narratives, subplots, counter-stories, normative judgements and what the referent objects are (Butler, 2004, p.4-5). As a result, beyond the recognition that a development-security nexus does exist, consensus on what this "nexus" is rapidly comes tumbling down. The current academic debates on the nexus reveal how both the notions of "development" and "security" emerge from disparate discursive ontologies. The following section does not have the aim of "fixing" this nexus by finding a universally agreed upon interpretation. Rather, it will identify and "map" four incompatible storylines of various ontologically and epistemologically different accounts of the nexus. By doing so, we understand that the security-development relationship is not something given, clear and shared (Stern & Öjendal, 2010, p.10).

The "Teleological" Narrative

This storyline suggests that development became a key strategy for state-building in the 20th and 21st century because it ultimately signifies an evolutionary process of becoming what a country is "supposed to be" (Nisbet, 1980; Simon, 1999, pp.17-54). Security is inevitably linked to a special-temporal teleology, with the nexus being located in particular geographical bounds which temporally divide what is "developed" and "secure" (and thus a model to imitate) from what instead is "underdeveloped" and "insecure" (and thus a system to eradicate). Consequently, the process of modernization, especially when regarding postcolonial nations, should follow the linear trajectory projected by western states (Rostow, 1962; de Janvry & Kanbur, 2006). Moreover, the nexus is portrayed to work only when there is a strong country that can pursue development by exercising a just form of control over its territory and population. When this is achieved, then the nexus is triggered and development also contributes to forging and reinforcing the state's sovereignty. This is what ultimately differentiates between the "security successes" of the UK and the "security failures" of Somalia.

The "Human" Narrative

In contrast, we can identify two main alternatives to the above narrative. First, following Wallerstein's "World System Theory" (1974), we can view development as the independence of "peripherical" and semi-peripherical" countries from the capitalist "core". As a result, through this prism security is understood as the "delinking" of poorer countries from richer capitalist ones through self-sufficiency, thus destroying the relationship of "dependencia" (Prebisch, 1950; Frank, 1969). Second, we see a school of thought which approaches development with the aim to reconnect the discipline to its "true" subjects by flipping the mainstream narrative inside out and upside down. This reading is known as the "human" school od security and shifts the referent object from the state to individuals. The human security-development nexus is hence often expressed through the mantras of "small is beautiful", "put the last first", "appropriate technology" and "empowerment" (Schumacher, 1973; Chambers, 1983; Friedman, 1992; Pietersee, 2000). Both these critical views directly challenge the state-centric universalism of the teleological narrative, with the security-development nexus shifting its focus on who the most vulnerable are and how they are supposed to become secure through sustainable development.

The "Globalized" Narrative

A third interpretation of the nexus is the one concerning globalisation and the transversal forces and increased interdependence and interconnection which characterize the phenomenon. This reading provides yet another alternative to the traditional and critical conceptions of the nexus, with development acquiring a worldwide dimension which ultimately undermines the "methodological territorialisation" of the traditional theories. Because of hyperglobalisation, countries have become always less able to regulate dangerous transnational forces which when unchecked become a threat to the security of their most vulnerable subjects. These security threats include global climate change, global food security, natural disasters, global energy and water scarcity and gender-based violence, as well as threats and risks associated with armed conflicts and terrorism (Stern & Öjendal, 2010, p.21). As a consequence, the security-development nexus becomes a way of addressing through a holistic approach the global

interrelated and mutually constitutive forces that constitute a threat to the development of nation-states and the wellbeing of their subjects.

The "Governmentality" Narrative

The last interpretation this paper is going to identify consists in a critique of all the above trends. This reading argues that development has increasingly become a technique of biopolitical governmentality (Sylvester, 2006). Through this prism, the other nexuses are techniques of control which have the purpose to regulate human lives and marginalize what is perceived as expendable, thus leading to a dangerous politics of inclusion/exclusion. The recurring themes within mainstream development narratives such as aid, good governance, humanitarian intervention or the "War on Terror" are instead tools of sovereign biopower (Sylvester, 2006). Understood this way, scholarship should evaluate the biopolitics of security-development to expose its contribution in the "governing of the other". This is seen as the only security-development nexus with the potential to emancipate the marginalized and excluded, while the other readings are merely instruments of power and control.

Final Remarks

The conclusion which this paper has reached is primarily twofold. First, as explored in the initial section, some sort of mutually relational nexus between security and development does indeed exist. Just like it seems obvious that one's security is at risk because of war, it also seems empirically evident that underdevelopment represents a danger to the maintenance of peace. Consequently, achieving a higher quality of life (also) means achieving security (and vice versa). This is important because if it is true that traditional security studies focus on questions of war and peace and that underdevelopment leads to conflict, then the security-development nexus is collocated within both the critical *and* traditional agendas. Once the nexus is labelled as a cause of war, it becomes (theoretically) irrelevant who the referent object is or what methodology is used to explore this relation.

This brings us to our second concluding remark, which has caused much confusion within the study of the relationship between security and development. The four interpretations above are only part of a myriad of different narratives, but what they all show is that while "the nexus" may exist, it has no ontological/epistemological fixed reality. The content of this relationship is still ill-defined and unclear and as an unfortunate consequence, policy-making results in a wide variance of contrasting accounts. It therefore becomes fundamental not if there is a security-development nexus, but rather how we perceive, pursue and reproduce this nexus through academic scholarship and public policy. As such, if in the coming years both traditional and critical security studies do not address this crucial question, the discipline will find itself to have an increasingly difficult relationship with development, with possible negative repercussions on the real lives of those who are not secure.

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