

# Including Security in the Post 2015 Development Goals

Germany Could Play an Active Role

*Carlos Domínguez*

Thirteen years ago the international community agreed on achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), a set of priorities that include eradicating extreme poverty and addressing the most urgent and pressing challenges of international development by the year 2015. As we approach the final deadline for the MDGs, the discussion on the “post-2015 agenda” has raised the issue of whether – and how – security, peace, and development concerns can be linked together. To engage in this negotiation process and take advantage of its strategic partnerships with countries outside NATO or the EU, the German government should take into account four proposals that may help to identify common ground.

So far, the discussion on the post-2015 agenda has been an extensive, multilayered process involving international agencies, traditional and emerging donors, civil society, academia, as well as individual countries and country coalitions. The process has also concurred with other discussions such as the UN Conference on Sustainable Development (Río +20) and climate change negotiations.

Although the post-2015 process has been going on for a few years, a crucial, defining stage will be the actual intergovernmental negotiations throughout 2014 and 2015.

Normative arguments about why peace and security are good for development (and vice versa) are – and will remain – an important part of the debate. However,

whether or not the agenda is eventually endorsed by member states will also depend on taking into account concrete political interests and national concerns.

## The concerns of new players

The most-cited argument for including security in the development agenda is the fact that conflict and post-conflict countries will not achieve a single MDG by 2015. This suggests that security, peace, and stability are preconditions for achieving development goals.

In this respect, the G7+ countries (a group of 18 countries that have recently experienced conflict, such as Côte d’Ivoire and South Sudan) have expressed support

for the inclusion of peace-building and state-building goals in the new agenda. Framed in this way, the debate justifies substantial flows of development aid for them.

Moreover, from the point of view of some leaders in traditional donor countries, the argument around security threats abroad is also helpful in justifying to their local constituencies why – despite widespread cuts in social services that have been triggered by the recent global financial crisis – they should still commit to invest resources and continue with aid flows to faraway countries.

Both lines of reasoning, however, could cause serious obstacles when it comes down to the actual intergovernmental negotiations. Even if all UN member states agree, normatively speaking, on the need to give these countries special attention, this does not mean that the inclusion of security goals in the development agenda is politically feasible.

For some countries, such as Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa (BRICS), and Mexico, it is perceived that discussions on international security belong to other forums and that an insistence on linking security, peace, and development in the post-2015 agenda mainly obey the interests of traditional donor countries in the North. This is not a minor political obstacle – because some of these countries have historically experienced different processes of colonialism, they hold strong feelings about their national sovereignty, and they tend to be highly sensitive regarding the possibility of foreign intervention in defining their policies.

At the same time, they host a large share of the people who still live in poverty and, therefore, overall, they are crucial for granting the new development agenda with enough legitimacy. They are also emerging donors that play a more active role and are much more influential in global governance debates now, in comparison to a decade ago, when the original MDGs were being promoted.

A recent example of how new players are increasingly more active in promoting their own views is Brazil's introduction of the concept of Responsibility while Protecting (RWP) as an alternative to Responsibility to Protect (R2P). Although the concept still needs further development to clarify its operational feasibility, RWP highlights the emphasis that Brazil's foreign policy puts on prevention, proportionate response, accountability, and use of force as a last resort.

There are also some middle-income countries, such as Mexico, that currently suffer from high levels of criminal violence and, therefore, some of the proposed indicators to measure the progress in achieving the goals of peace, security, and/or stability could give them a bad name. Moreover, as the concepts of governance and human rights have been linked to the debate on security and development, these countries also fear that the post-2015 agenda will be used to promote specific governance models and policies that do not necessarily respond to their local realities.

Finally, there are the concerns of small non-conflict countries that excessive attention to G7+ type countries will displace other issues on the agenda, take attention away from their own development challenges, and divert aid and development funding. This is the case, for example, with non-conflict countries such as Bolivia and Paraguay in South America, which still depend heavily on international aid, or countries in Central America where security and development problems need to be addressed urgently.

To address these concerns as a whole, the international community should frame the debate in a way that is more acceptable to different countries. Four proposals might be helpful: talk about the notion of “protecting achievements”; refer to “external stressors”; discuss means and goals jointly; and analyze concrete implications for the institutional architecture.

None of these proposals necessarily go against the recommendations of the

United Nations High Level Panel of Eminent Persons (UN-HLP), which is a group of 27 renowned figures who were invited by the UN Secretary-General to advise on the post-2015 development agenda, or efforts of the UN System Task Team, which includes a wide array of agencies, grouped together according to different topics and development priorities.

### **Protecting achievements**

Part of the debate is related to what we mean exactly when using the concept “security.” Despite the work by the UN-HLP and the UN System Task Team, it has been difficult to reach an understanding that is shared by members of both the development and the security communities.

On the one hand, development scholars and practitioners usually think of security as “human security,” understood as “freedom from fear” and “freedom from want.” There are two problems with this notion. First, the current MDGs involve, in one way or the other, the notion of human security. Framing the political debate in these terms could lead to the conclusion that security is already mainstreamed across the MDGs. Second, this framework runs the risk of equating security with development. If security is everything, it becomes meaningless.

On the other hand, foreign policy officials and international security experts usually refer to the more traditional, military-oriented concept of “national security.” This view leaves little room for considering the impact of non-traditional security threats that require attention beyond state boundaries.

The contrast between both views suggests that security can actually be applied differently, depending on the context. It is a flexible concept that refers, in general, to the ability to protect those things, material and immaterial, that are most valued by an individual, a society, a nation, or the international community. In the context of the post-2015 debate, security is not only significant in relation to protecting individuals

or countries, but it is also meaningful in relation to development goals and achievements themselves.

Despite the gaps and the shortfalls in achieving the MDGs, the development agenda has been praised for providing a conceptual and aspirational framework that has mobilized institutional, intellectual, and financial resources to fight poverty and tackle other development problems. Thus, even if individuals are the ultimate targets of development efforts, the goals and achievements themselves have political value and should be protected.

The notion of “protecting achievements” could be used to provide compelling reasons for those countries that have contributed greatly to achieving some of the MDGs and that, at the same time, have shown resistance in linking security and development in the post-2015 agenda.

### **Emphasize external stressors**

According to recent reports concerning progress on achieving the MDGs, the targets of fighting hunger and halving extreme poverty have already been met – or are in the process of being met by 2015 – in many regions of the world, particularly Asia, and to a lesser extent Latin America and North Africa. Although this is an outstanding achievement, the threshold (USD 1 a day) that has been employed to define who lives in extreme poverty and who does not represents a thin line, and it does not offer any guarantee against potential regressions in the future. An individual who lives above this line might not be in a situation of extreme poverty anymore but is still vulnerable to natural disasters, conflict, financial crises, food scarcity, and other external stressors that can easily pull him back below the USD 1-a-day line.

It is not surprising that conflict, violence, and natural disasters have sometimes been grouped together as part of the discussions and consultations on the post-2015 agenda. Despite the fact that these topics imply different challenges and demand spe-

cialized knowledge and policy approaches, they all represent external stressors that hinder development prospects or directly and indirectly jeopardize goals and targets that have already been achieved.

The concept of “external stressors” (ES) overlaps with the concept of “non-traditional security threats” (NTST), which usually includes climate change, food security, pandemics, terrorism, transnational organized crime, and cyber terrorism. Both concepts share the assumptions that threats do not necessarily come from other nation-states and that there is always uncertainty and incomplete knowledge about the specific timing and impact of threats and shocks. The key difference is that ES is a concept that goes back to the need to protect development goals and achievements themselves, making it less problematic politically.

Talking about NTST, on the other hand, could open the door to other discussions that may generate unnecessary gridlock during the post-2015 intergovernmental negotiations. The case of terrorism could easily trigger controversy and polarization around many unresolved issues, including the debate on disarmament and non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, the reforms of the UN Security Council, or recent intelligence scandals that also bring into question the legitimacy of linking security and development agendas officially.

In this respect, to talk about ES invites country representatives to find agreement on the best way to reduce the vulnerability of individuals and communities and to improve their ability to cope with adversity. In this way, the agenda would not be only about fighting poverty, but also about ways to guarantee that achievements endure in the longer term. At the same time, the discussions would include security concerns, but mainly as a function of development goals themselves while avoiding the risk of fully securitizing the agenda.

An emphasis on ES suggests a preventive approach that echoes the philosophy of some rising powers and widens the collection of legitimate policies, projects, and

concrete actions that different countries can implement. For example, a broader perspective on tackling crime would encompass the investment of resources in social prevention and other integrated schemes rather than focusing exclusively on increasing and improving state capacities in the areas of policing, surveillance, and prosecution.

This possibility might not lure countries such as China and India, but it could contribute toward diluting the anxieties expressed by Latin American countries such as Brazil, Colombia, Mexico, as well as those in the Central American region, where human rights concerns and/or the memory of authoritarian and semi-authoritarian regimes are still very present.

Given the uncertainty about the timing and extent of ES, the best approach is to enhance the social capacity to respond to crises and adversity in general. The notion of resilience – defined as the ability of an individual or a social system to cope with external shocks – might be relevant for this purpose. Unfortunately, although the concept has appeared intermittently throughout different stages of the post-2015 debate, it presents three main problems.

First, professionals in different fields of development (e.g., climate change specialists and peace-building experts) attach different meanings to it. Second, it has a hard-science connotation that makes it difficult to brand and sell to the broader international community. Finally, given these two previous difficulties, there is no clear constituency willing to promote the concept and – as the crucial intergovernmental negotiations to define the actual post-2015 agenda that will be endorsed by member states are fast approaching – it might be too late to gather support for this notion.

However, by focusing on the preparedness of individuals, communities, and countries, the ES approach implicitly includes a concern of resilience.

At the same time, the international community should be aware that the political

attractiveness of the MDGs lies, to a great extent, in the simplicity and universality of the goals and targets that were originally adopted. If the post-2015 agenda does not have a similar appeal and includes too many goals and/or too many indicators, it might become less universal and less useful to mobilize political support across different countries.

An emphasis on ES might be important if some of the goals and indicators that have been proposed by the UN-HLP or by other qualified UN bodies need to be sacrificed for the sake of reaching a political agreement. Even if concrete indicators such as the number of violent deaths per 100,000 are not included in the end, countries will still have leverage to invest resources that tackle the roots of conflict and violence with a long-term perspective.

### **Global Partnership for Development: The case of small non-conflict countries**

As part of the original development agenda that was endorsed in 2000, the international community agreed on building a Global Partnership for Development (GPD), which refers mainly to development financing and other means necessary to achieve the MDGs. Some examples include the commitment of industrialized countries to devote at least 0.7 percent of their gross domestic product toward official development assistance (ODA), debt-relief initiatives to help highly indebted poor countries, access to new technologies, and affordable medicines, among other things.

Different post-2015 documents, including the UN-HLP report of May 2013, talk about the need to create a global and enabling environment to catalyze long-term finance for development. However, the international community needs to be more transparent about the means necessary to address concrete security concerns.

A reason why these issues have not been properly addressed yet is because, despite the consultations and reports on the future

of the GPD, the post-2015 process has rested on the premise that the international community should first agree on a vision, then on goals and targets, and finally, as a last step, on the means necessary to accomplish them. Even if this strict linear thinking might make sense from a managerial point of view, the debate about including security in the development agenda requires that goals and means be discussed together. This is required as part of a comprehensive deal that takes into account the interests and needs of different countries, both in conflict and non-conflict situations.

International reports show that the majority of deaths due to armed violence happen in non-conflict countries. This situation hinders the achievement of development goals in similar or perhaps even more complex ways than in conflict countries.

In fact, according to the *Global Study on Homicide*, which was published by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) in 2011, countries such as Honduras and El Salvador have some of the highest homicide rates in the world per 100,000 inhabitants, even though they are not countries experiencing conflict. Among other causes, this is due to different kinds of crime, including petty crime, local gang activity, and high-impact crimes such as drug trafficking, migrant smuggling, and human trafficking, which are usually associated with national and transnational organized crime groups.

In this respect, there are compelling arguments (normative, theoretical, and empirical) for the inclusion of broader security concerns in the post-2015 agenda. Nevertheless, the intergovernmental negotiations will run more smoothly if small non-conflict countries are assured that an excessive focus on the G7+ countries will not result in less aid and development funding for them.

This would be a feasible way to moderate the resistance expressed by some countries. After all, when it comes down to political negotiations, the process will not only be

about normative arguments but also about national interests.

### **Global Partnership for Development: The case of middle-income countries**

A similar argument about the need to discuss means and goals together applies to middle-income countries and new players such as Brazil, Mexico, and South Africa, where security problems demand urgent action, despite the absence of civil war or internal conflict. In these cases, armed violence and urban crime are also a critical concern, albeit in a more geographically localized manner and due to different geopolitical drivers.

Even if some of these countries have “graduated” as middle-income countries and require less help from the outside to solve their own development problems, they are unlikely to endorse another reason for the international community to reduce the flows of aid and cooperation that they receive. Furthermore, their role as emerging donors does not mean that there are no areas where they still require assistance, training, technical advice, and other forms of support.

For example, in the case of Brazil, Mexico, and other Latin American countries, it is not clear how a substantive decrease in violent deaths can be achieved unilaterally without broader and more ambitious international cooperation schemes.

If peace-building efforts contribute toward the negotiation of truces between different ethnic, political, and religious factions in a given conflict country, this will most likely be reflected in a dramatic decrease in the number of violent deaths in the short term. However, a truce is more difficult and controversial when it mainly involves dealing with national or transnational crime organizations. Moreover, the activities of transnational organized crime groups have supply-and-demand drivers with specific geopolitical locations that require an international, trans-boundary approach in order to be tackled.

Even if member states could hypothetically choose their own baselines and targets, the only way to bring countries such as Brazil and Mexico on board is to be clear about the concrete ways in which the international community will support them in achieving a commitment to reduce violent deaths, despite being middle-income countries and without compromising their sovereignty.

### **The example of Mexico**

Mexico constitutes a relevant example that could be used to enrich the debate. Although the country experienced a decline in homicide rates – from 16.9 to 8.1 per 100,000 inhabitants between 1995 and 2007, respectively – the trend was reversed in the context of drug-related violence and the frontal attack on drug cartels that was launched by the Mexican federal government between 2006 and 2012. Official statistics and reports by international agencies suggest that around 132,000 people were killed in this period. Beyond the death toll, which itself constitutes a significant development setback, it is unclear what medium- and long-term consequences the current security situation will have on the country’s development path.

The Mexican experience illustrates the intricate ways in which security and development processes are connected. For example, despite a substantial increase in the resources devoted to fighting criminal activities (the budget for public security increased almost twofold between 2007 and 2011), the actual end result in the short- and medium terms was an increase in the death toll. In contrast, a hypothetical decrease in violent deaths would not necessarily indicate much about the ways in which this was achieved. Possible reasons could be the implementation of a *pax mafiosa* or the result of deploying police and military forces with little regard for human rights and the rule of law (as NGOs have actually claimed in the Mexican case).

In this respect, the post-2015 debate has indeed evolved from talking about security separately from other topics to becoming a more integral conception in which governance, human rights, and the rule of law have also been integrated. Although this progress is welcomed from a normative point of view, it brings new political sensitivities, as countries such as Mexico would prefer not to be identified as underachievers regarding these issues.

Thus, to bring these countries on board, it is necessary to talk about what sort of commitments the international community is willing to make in order to cooperate in the implementation of a more integrated approach. The possibilities include technical cooperation in the areas of data systems, monitoring and evaluation; specialized training; and innovation in the area of social prevention of crime.

For example, in the case of Mexico, a sensitive issue is the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, which contributes significantly to armed violence and high homicides rates in the context of the drug war. The Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on April 2, 2013, constitutes a significant step forward. However, two challenges remain.

First, the treaty insufficiently addresses the diversion of legally exported arms into the illicit market for used second-hand weapons. The second challenge is that arms control, both of new and used arms, requires scaling-up the surveillance and monitoring capacity of border authorities in Mexico. Thus, a renewed GPD should address these kinds of concrete issues. It could include commitments by the main exporters of small arms and light weapons (such as China and Germany) to promote and participate in technical cooperation schemes to boost the impact of the ATT.

A closer look at the Mexican experience also suggests that, even if the country achieves a substantial decrease in the number of violent deaths in the short term, there are other aspects that are more difficult to measure and/or that will only show

improvement over the longer term, even beyond 2030, which is often the year that is marked as the new post-2015 horizon.

Forced displacement of populations, psychological costs, impacts on social cohesion, and the socio-cultural roots of violence are dimensions that cannot be easily captured by straightforward indicators, but they are equally important for breaking the vicious cycle of insecurity and underdevelopment.

Furthermore, another lesson from the Mexican experience is related to the transboundary implications of criminal violence. Even if Mexico tackles successfully the spike in violent deaths, the geopolitical dimensions of the drug trade and other criminal activities will still contribute to the vulnerability of neighboring countries in Central America, undermining the region's overall stability.

Thus, although Mexico should be the primary actor responsible for tackling the country's development and security challenges in the long term, a GPD that also includes provisions on what kinds of development funding and cooperation instruments will be available to address these aspects could smooth the political negotiations.

### **Institutional architecture**

Closely related to the GPD, the debate about security and development should include an extensive and explicit analysis of the implications for global governance institutions. For example, an emphasis on protecting development achievements and external stressors implies that a broad set of institutions might need to be strengthened. In the case of the UN system, this would include agencies such as UNODC, IOM, OHCHR, UNESCO, UNEP, UNISDR, and UNFPA, just to mention a few. Moreover, an integrated approach on security and development also requires more coordination between the aforementioned agencies. Research on how different threats are interrelated (e.g., climate change and

conflict; or poverty and transnational organized crime) could inform the shape of this new architecture.

To talk explicitly about these institutional needs would send a sign that including security in the post-2015 agenda is not only about intervening in conflict states but about broader global issues that concern every country. It would also show that prevention and multilateralism are part of the package, thereby bringing different positions closer together.

### **Germany and the EU**

Three reasons render Germany a legitimate interlocutor that could contribute toward facilitating discussions and intergovernmental negotiations regarding the potential inclusion of security in the post-2015 development agenda.

First, Germany's emphasis on prevention and peaceful conflict resolution is in line with both the notion of protecting achievements and a focus on external stressors. This policy preference also echoes some aspects of the strategic bi-regional cooperation between the EU and Latin America, such as the EUROsociAL program, which was set up to promote social cohesion and prevent violence in the latter region. These kinds of experiences could be revised, scaled-up, and adjusted to address some of the concerns by new players and other non-conflict countries.

The second reason is Germany's explicit interest in advancing strategic partnerships with countries such as Brazil, China, India, Indonesia, Mexico, and South Africa. Beyond formal political statements, this is reflected in a German preference for applying a wide array of schemes and modes of international cooperation, including potential triangular cooperation with new players. This opens the possibilities for identifying concrete ways to link security-related goals with the means and funding necessary to achieve them, in accordance with the interests and concerns of different countries.

Finally, Germany's demonstrated interest in promoting multilateral solutions to global governance challenges makes this country a reliable partner to discuss the concrete implications that the inclusion of security in the post-2015 agenda has for the GPD and for the global institutional architecture. Germany's active engagement within the EU and the UN – together with a record as a civil power and its demonstrated distaste for engaging in combat abroad – are all traits that make this country a legitimate actor that can promote a dialogue between industrialized countries and new players on issues that carry strong political sensitivities.

© Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, 2013  
All rights reserved

These Comments reflect solely the author's views.

**SWP**  
Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik  
German Institute for International and Security Affairs

Ludwigkirchplatz 3–4  
10719 Berlin  
Telephone +49 30 880 07-0  
Fax +49 30 880 07-100  
[www.swp-berlin.org](http://www.swp-berlin.org)  
[swp@swp-berlin.org](mailto:swp@swp-berlin.org)

ISSN 1861-1761