

THE SECURITY-DEVELOPMENT CONNECTION IN THE POST-2015 DEVELOPMENT AGENDA

Carolina Alves Pereira

pereira.carolinaalves@gmail.com

Degree in International Relations from the Faculty of Economics, University of Coimbra (2012)
Master's in Development Studies from ISCTE-IUL (2014).

Abstract:

This article¹ analyses the influence that political constraints and technical issues have on the connection between security and development, particularly in discussion on the post-2015 global development agenda. After theoretical grounding, an analysis is done to contextualise the most influential elements. Following some discussion, the practicalities of the post-2015 agenda for development is exposed, contributing to the materialisation of the problems (and opportunities) with the connection between security and development, as well as perspectives on the inclusion of concrete goals that seek this connection in a future global agenda.

Keywords:

development aid; security; security-development link; constraints; global agenda for the post-2015 development.

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Introduction

From the 1990s, multidimensionality has come to characterise the concept of development. This combined with changes in world geopolitics at the end of the Cold War and the important changes in the approach to the concept itself has meant that security has to take place in discussions on development. Security is no longer associated exclusively with the State or military matters; it relates to a much broader field of analysis that includes concerns about the theme of human rights. Living conditions of populations and their freedoms and rights have to be highlighted as key prerequisites for the full development of societies, with insecurity elements being considered obstacles to that condition (Fukuda-Parr, 2003: *passim*).

The current theoretical developments that defend the concept's multidimensionality, as well as current critical Security Studies (particularly from the contributions of the Schools of Copenhagen – like Barry Buzan, Ole Waever – and from Aberystwyth – Ken Booth and Richard W. Jones), support the extension of the respective concepts². In this way, they favour greater convergence of areas that they involve. As a result, a vast and interesting discussion has been generated, albeit with little consensus, raising questions about the 'securitisation of development'.

Consequently, despite being a much debated topic, security tends to show very little consistency in discussions about international development. The vast body of literature reveals that there is indeed room to debate security and its consequences for development, highlighting the security/insecurity duality that corresponds to prevention/reaction dimensions – the preferred approach in the discourse. Security as the absence of threats to collective well-being (based on prevention in view of the likelihood of those threats), and insecurity when such threats exist, is evident and constant. This is associated with a reactive dimension that is based on the action of insecurity factors (Fukuda-Parr, 2007: 3; Denney, 2013^a: 4).

² For example, Ken Booth argues that security itself 'can only be achieved by people and groups if they do not deprive others of it' (Booth *apud* Diskaya, 2013). This immediately shows the rupture with the traditional perspective that determined security as the exclusive responsibility of the State, as it puts the individual at the centre of the discussion.



Security implies more than the simple absence of threats. It should, in fact, be associated with the inability to guarantee the means and conditions necessary for the pursuit of sustainable and lasting development policies. The absence of threats, the availability of resources to meet the needs of all, equality, justice, stability, confidence (in government institutions) and build strong, robust and capable societies, can all be seen as security factors (Fitz-Gerald, 2004: 10).

Insecurity implies more than the absence of peace. From the perspective of endogenous factors (internal factors that influence the events in a given territory), insecurity is characterised by the prolonged existence of dangerous situations that threaten the well-being and stability of societies. Conflicts, armed and physical violence, discrimination, governmental and institutional breakdown, power struggles, shortages of resources or economic hardship and corruption, black-market economies and trafficking are factors that exist as threats, because they all fuel disputes and situations of instability and insecurity (McCandless & Karbo 2011: *passim*).

The aforementioned duality works as an argument to link the fields of security and development, which favours a consensus among theorists who work on it. The concepts turn out to be inextricably linked since it is the combination of factors that matters most. The impact of insecurity on low levels of development, however, is one that brings great consensus.

Inherent political and technical constraints of the security-development connection

The question of causality involving security and development encases the main issue of the link between those concepts. This raises political reluctance and technical difficulties that significantly influence decision-making when introducing a specific security objective in the global development agenda.

The more approached constraints of political order often relate to overlapping interests, benefits and privileges of actors in the international political agenda, particularly the donors that hamper the harmonisation of security and development agendas.

According to Blunt *et al.* (2011: 176), the real needs of the least developed countries are not yet satisfactorily covered by donor communities' aid programmes since they are more conditioned by the will and interests of donors, who are beneficiaries. The economic financial, economic and monetary capability of countries decisively influences the parameters of their aid programmes and, invariably, means an increase in disparities between developed and developing regions (Blunt *et al.*, 2011: 175-177). This coupled with the existence and implementation of a single model of development based on Western and neoliberal development patterns is often seen as a form of interference in the internal affairs of countries, discrediting their authority and legitimacy (Buur *et al.*, 2007: 31).

The consequence of these focuses in aid programmes is reflected primarily in the prevalence of the pursuit of donors' own goals as well as economic and political benefits. This is seldom done transparently, seeking to mask intentions and interests and increase geopolitical advantages. This trend is associated with the paternalist character and pretensions of Westernisation so often pointed to by donor countries, as



well as the prevalence of development models responsible for the handling and usurpation of official development assistance (ODA) (Blunt *et al.*, 2011: *passim*).

As a result, this eventual manipulation of programmes by power and political structure often turns out to be responsible for further damaging already-weakened situations, characterised by violent (or post-conflict) environments. Camouflaged securitisation and militarisation through aid programmes, together with the effects that this may have on the living conditions of receiver populations, is feared (Bonnell & Michailof 2012: *passim*).

This risk of misrepresentation and perversion that the concept can suffer, especially by political actors, reflects its conceptual vulnerability. This is due to the fact that it is at the mercy of needs, objectives, purposes and contexts of those who employ it or where it are located. The misuse of the term, considering the possible inclusion of security in the agenda as a way to legitimise the use of force under pretexts of ODA (humanitarian interventions or the case of the fight against terrorism, for example), distorts the nature of aid and contributes to the weak development of disadvantaged areas and deepening external dependence (Bonnell & Michailof 2012: *passim*; Buur *et al.*, 2007: 31; Cammack *et al.*, 2006: *passim*). Maybe to circumvent these reluctances, suggestions for the topic's inclusion in the political development agenda will involve security objectives in other areas, such as governance, justice and the rule of law (Denney, 2013^a: 7-8).

In the context of ODA in situations of insecurity, it is therefore recognised that the matter in question is the maintenance of a tricky balance between the interests and expectations of donors and beneficiaries. However, the self-interest of some donors has proven to be a real and difficult obstacle that is not restricted to isolated cases. In fact, just as some donors manage their programmes according to their own benefit and status, it is also true that some uphold more moderate actions. For example, rising economies seem to engage in an aid system that is more orientated towards cooperation and mutual assistance. In these cases, donors are faced with the difficult task of managing their interests with those of others. On the one hand, the importance of organising themselves as political actors and financiers remains, with duties that require a firm stance and efficient results to justify their investment. On the other hand, an actor has responsibilities in regards to the beneficiary's expectation and the need for support in economic terms, as well as training at a governmental and institutional level (Driscoll & Evans, 2005: *passim*).

There is a need for political harmony in ODA, which is as important as complex. When extended to contexts of violence and post-conflict that proliferate insecurity factors, this aspect becomes paramount.

Another aspect is technical constraints, which are related primarily to measurability. These include collecting data and creating viable monitoring systems to establish a causal link between security/insecurity and development factors, as well as standardisation (or generalisation) of policies and development programmes.

Measurability relates generally to the possibility of measurement based on indicators and goals that set out the results of a given action in order to reveal its impact. This definition also applies to the context of development and security. In these contexts, measurability appears to be associated with the opportunity and ability to measure the



impact of security policies applied in development programmes, and is considered to be a decisive factor in international aid in contexts of insecurity (Bush *et al.*, 2013: 45).

When discussing security and development agendas in conjunction, measurability or evaluation of impacts and results appears to be associated mainly with programmes of Demobilization, Disarmament and Reintegration (DDR) or Reform of Security Systems (RSS), as well as the tasks of peace-building and peacekeeping in post-conflict contexts and to all that is inherent to them: number of victims, the number of displaced people, the number of refugees, level of institutional and governmental performance, proliferation of arms, arms trafficking, the existence of mines, etc.. Monitoring these indicators allows one to evaluate the evolution of these programmes and missions, i.e. missions dealing with insecurity factors that endanger the lives of citizens, their means and resources, which are needed for daily activities. This corresponds with negative effects on the affected territory's development indices that take into consideration mines, weapons, violence and fragility (Menkhaus, 2004: 3; Bush *et al.*, 2013: *passim*).

Measurability tries to measure and evaluate the impact projects and programmes initiated under these missions have on those cited indicators, when the mission agenda is defined as a set of objectives with targets, indicators and assumptions. These indicators guide the pursuit of goals and objectives, contributes to their achievement and consequently enables the programme to reflect on the level of success after its completion (Menkhaus, 2004: 4-6; Bush *et al.*, 2013: *passim*).

According to Bush and Duggan (2013), the interaction between the context of the conflict and the evaluation system consists of four parts: methods, logistics, politics and ethics. These four strands interconnect and decisively influence the evaluation process of results obtained from the policies applied through peace-building and peacekeeping missions (Bush & Duggan, 2013: 8).

The interconnection between the mentioned aspects can put some limitations on measurability (manifested in the obstacles to evaluators' work). In particular, information restrictions, the action of external actors (those who require the evaluation, whether political authorities or other) and the actual physical environment that, due to insecurity, geographical formation or accessibility, impedes evaluators' access to a situation. Weakness or lack of information can also prevent data collection, preventing the formulation of results. These limitations ultimately put into question the reliability of interpretation of a programme's true impact (Bush & Duggan, 2013: 9-11).

The first limitation to be studied involves those responsible for projects and the proponents of the evaluation. It tries to condition access to documentation, allowing evaluators to use only properly 'filtered' sites and information 'of reference'. When submitting results, conclusions sometimes do not coincide with reality (assess positively when data indicate otherwise, for example). However, this encompasses problems associated with the choice of assessment methods as the client requires the use of dispersed and varied methodologies instead of others, endangering the soundness of the evaluation (Bush & Duggan, 2013: 9-11).

Another concerns the typical complications of conflict and post-conflict situations, i.e. when it is necessary to evaluate the impact of a programme in this context, the process becomes more complicated compared to other situations. This is because these environments have harmful characteristics, including instability, insecurity, corruption, institutional and governmental breakdown, lack of resources, poor access to



information (the basis of the evaluation process and essential to the effectiveness of measurability). These are essentially common elements of fragile states and places where armed violence proliferate (Bush *et al.*, 2013: *passim*).

Another issue is related with the obstacles to the evaluators when aggregating data, studying results and the subsequent reporting on the executed programmes. If the information collected is not reliable or consistent, the evaluation's work results become weak and obsolete (Menkhaus, 2004: 6).

Despite difficulties, measurability remains one of the conditioning principles of acting within the scope of development cooperation, particularly in regards to security issues. In fact, a main argument associated with the measurability/evaluation claims that including security in the international agenda through concrete and measurable topics (such as the number of weapons, mines, the number of violent deaths, etc.) contributes to regular interventions under the pretext of security and controls the interference of political pretensions (Denney, 2013^a: 8). This seems to help to establish a causal relationship between security and development, justifying the possible introduction of goals and objectives associated with the theme.

The ability to evaluate a programme and present the respective impacts in the form of concrete results is one of the key issues underlying donor initiatives, as seen in the CAD reports, DAC Statistical Reporting Directives (OECD, 2010) and '*Evaluating Peace-building Activities in Settings of Conflict and Fragility: Improving Learning for Results*' (OECD, 2012c). Of course, the perspective of donors and their respective criteria has a focus, i.e. donor countries of the OECD are considered to be beneficiaries under certain criteria and have certain actions that can be incorporated in the context of ODA. This means that the ODA programmes respond from the outset to the ability to measure results (OECD, 2012c: *passim*).

The development of monitoring is an equally important technical constraint. To find and formulate analytical indicators and ensure their viability, impartiality and reliability is a real challenge. Indicators permit the pursuit of objectives so that they are consistent with the work and success other aspects it is concerned with. Indicators are the most specific data monitoring formulation (along with the objectives and goals) and refer to the state of the achievement of goals. The purpose is for the agents responsible to realise, through indicators (collected from reliable sources), the goals that are to be met. This means that verifying the weakness of the indicators inevitably has repercussions on the rest of the programme, putting into question the soundness of conclusions drawn about the achievement of goals and consequently the achievement of objectives (UN, 2013: 23-25).

Also, contextual negligence when formulating ODA projects or programmes, in relation to the contexts in which they are inserted, is seen as a technical constraint (although some political dimension here does exist) to the formal presence of the security theme in the development agenda, especially by beneficiary countries. This underlines the trend towards generalisation, so often associated with the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), based on the approach 'one size fits all', as well as the existence of applicable categorisation (although susceptible to adaptation) in the various situations of fragility and conflict or violence. This approach is harmful to the proper pursuit of objectives, underestimating the realities to which the aid must fit (Bonnell & Michailof, 2012: *passim*).



As such, the recipients of assistance suggest greater attention to specifics and more personalised approaches, since they consider this 'standardisation' of projects to be detrimental to the pursuit of sustainable results. However, if the 'standardization' of projects by the donor community devalues the specifics of a given context, the context as a basis for those projects calls into question the feasibility of a global goal, i.e. it becomes unaffordable to justify or manage a goal based on the context of each reality, conflict, fragility or exposure to the use of armed violence (Bush & Duggan, 2013: 26).

Of course, neither the political constraints nor the technical constraints are isolated and merge and influence each other. Politicians, marked by confidence in policy, by investment, the maintenance of interests between donors and recipients and by the balance between universality and context, mainly focus on the struggle between the need to build universal objectives that significantly balance the various interests involved, and enforce the specificities of the different contexts and realities in which they apply. Already, the technical aspects end up being related to the collection, processing and presentation of data and results as well as their evaluation. However, interests and political wills inevitably affect the formulation of objectives and indicators to be included in the agenda, in addition to being present in each stage of the evaluation, because their definition through the methods chosen affect the formulation and presentation of results. Fundamental questions arise such as 'who asked for the evaluation? What are the methodology's chosen criteria? What is the form for the presentation of results? Which interests are served?' (Bush & Duggan, 2013: 10). Nevertheless, the ability to measure the impact of policy conditions the decisions of States, which require knowledge about the application of funds that they attribute (Bush & Duggan, 2013: *passim*).

It should also be noted that both political and technical constraints are susceptible to fluctuation, depending on how they fit on the level of global political discussion, on the level of development programmes and on the project level applied in specific contexts. The macro level (global) predominates the difficulty of involving areas of security and of development as well as the needs and interests of donors and beneficiaries concerned with it. The median level (organisations, diplomatic initiatives, etc.) can be seen largely as an obstacle related to the scope and the evaluation of results, which are more technical (Bush & Duggan, 2013: *passim*).

Both technical and political constraints emphasise the importance of clarity in the semantics used, because it is here that many of them result. It is essential to clearly define the contours of development policies and their respective objectives and indicators, as these will affect the verification of results. In turn, this verification will facilitate policy confidence in the view of donors and receptivity as well as beneficiaries, from which funding conditions will depend.

International discussion on security in the post-2015 era

The presented framework supports the practical discussion around the future of the ODA. This discussion takes place primarily in the context of the MDGs. Their expiration in 2015 means that the definition of goals and objectives that succeed them is urgent. It is fundamental to reflect on the work done with the MDGs and use them as a starting point for the creation of a new guiding international policy agenda for development. The



new policy must be able to combine a more updated, more flexible and assertive character with a continuity that reflects the learning lifted from the work on the MDGs (Aryeetei, *et al.*, 2012). We could conclude that the work carried out so far would serve to stimulate the decision-making of policy makers at the ODA level, and reflect more concrete action, as well as being less influenced by the constraints mentioned above. This is particularly important in terms of security issues, which at this point cement concepts and transcend clashing interests, allowing the existence of an international cooperation agenda that is workable and successful.

The Open Working Group (OWG)³ was established for this very reason. This working group was chosen at the United Nations General Assembly (the Rio+20 Conference) in January 2012 and was constituted of about 30 members (representatives of civil society, the scientific community and the UN). Its main function was based on the document '*A New Global Partnership: Eradicate Poverty and Transform Economies through Sustainable Development*' (2013) from the UN High-Level Panel⁴ to create the potential proposals of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), a successor to the MDGs. After 13 sessions in July 2014, the OWG released a document where 17 goals and respective indicators could come to constitute the SDGs. Among them, the 16th goal ('To promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels' (OWG, 2014b: 5)) encompasses the theme of peace, the importance of post-conflict reconstruction and draws attention to the negative consequences of insecurity factors in the development of States (OWG, 2014b: 2 and 18-19).

In the OWG's eighth session to discuss the SDGs in February 2014, the agenda specifically included the topic 'Conflict prevention, post-conflict peace-building and promotion of durable peace, rule of law and governance' (OWG, 2014). In this session, groups representing various sectors intervened – namely civil society (such as the Quaker United Nations Office, the International Peace Bureau and the Global Task Force), donor countries (including South Korea, Germany, France and Switzerland, and Australia, the United Kingdom and the Netherlands) and beneficiary countries (for example, East Timor, Rwanda and Zambia)⁵. This reflects the multiplicity of values, perspectives and goals that must be managed in the debates on the future global agenda for development (the macro level in this case).

Interventions by the participants at that session initially showed the predominance of contained political and technical dimensions. Indeed, these are conditioned by questions related to the connection's approach (should it be reactive or preventive; consider insecurity factors or encourage factors of security); the approach to the theme's presence on the agenda (direct or mediated, depending on whether they should insert a specific objective on security or assign it to other topics); the ability to assess and measure impacts and results; and the existence of monitoring systems and statistical data that help to measure these same results.

³ References to the work of the Open Working Group and the analysed documents are available on the official website <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/owg.html> [last visit on 6th October 2015]

⁴ This panel was appointed by the Secretary-General of the United Nations to delineate the first outline of the post-2015 development agenda.

⁵ The documents relating to the interventions are available on the official website at OWG <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/topics/sdgs/group8> [last visit on 6th October 2015].



Thus, when discussing the security-development link, those items involved are seen as fairly reasonable. By stating:

'The UN High-Level Panel on the Post-2015 Development Agenda calls for a transformative shift to recognise peace and good governance as core elements of wellbeing' (IPB, 2014:1)

or

'Inclusive, accountable and effective institutions are important aspects of dealing with the past and preventing countries relapsing into conflict or violence' (Gerber, 2014: 2)

or

'resilience and peace are central to eradicating poverty, and achieving sustainable and inclusive development' (Borges, 2014: 2),

civil society, recipients and donors are clearly cautious with regard to this connection in the future development agenda through a concrete goal.

These references express a preference for a preventive and mediated approach that means developing an objective that includes security issues, mostly from the association of these issues to other subject areas, such as justice, law and good governance, which include empowerment, ownership, efficiency, reliability and capability. In fact, in the new agenda it is crucial to promote the construction of solid, robust and capable societies, so as to progressively and effectively increase their accountability and subsequent development of policies.

This approach must therefore be based on the definition of objectives, targets and indicators that would favour a coherent evaluation of their outcomes. On the other hand, there is considerable concern about the existence of the means and resources for aggregating the necessary items in the evaluation (data collection and statistics, existence/creation/improvement of monitoring systems), since most interventions make reference to them, yet this is not verified in considerable numbers.

This is particularly noticeable in the discourse of donor countries where the importance of measurability/evaluation, such as access to statistical data and the existence/creation/improvement of monitoring systems, while legitimising assumptions of including the issue of security in the post-2015 global agenda largely feature. Statements like

'What can be measured gets done' (Gerber, 2014: 3);



'progress towards building peace and safe societies as well as rule of law and governance should and can be measured' (Gerber, 2014: 3);

or

'We want to see goals and targets on governance and the rule of law, peace, safety and justice for all' (Australia *et al.*, 2014: 3).

These show that the existence of statistical materials that can be used to measure the results of aid flows is one of the conditioning principles for the criteria of ODA donors. These seem to reflect more the technical aspects inherent to the inclusion of security on the post-2015 agenda when discussed.

There is a clear merging of both dimensions: although discussion on the introduction of a direct or mediated form of the theme is more affected by political issues, the technical component of creating a goal always underlies it. In fact, many allusions to the technical dimension are precisely directed to avoid the possibility of some political constraints (security aims and objectives, for example) and, through that causality, legitimise the possible presence of the security topic in the future agenda for development. An example of this is the perspective of donors such as Australia, the United Kingdom and the Netherlands, who claim that the assessment and monitoring instruments favours convergence among agents of development:

'Formulating tangible goals and targets will rally the international community' (Australia *et al.*, 2014: 3).

Conclusions

Analysing the work of the OWG allows interesting reflections, particularly in relation to existing theory about the connection between security and development, for example, with regard to the security/insecurity duality. This serves its theoretical framework which involves two types of approach (preventive/reactive) to the security-development connection. The definition of these concepts has become essential to understand the complexity of the studied connection. However, the very duality – part of the political dimension associated with the connection – eventually shows one of the main constraints of the security-development connection. Indeed, the fact that it involves the above approaches, which vary according to the encouragement of the pursuit of security factors or combating insecurity factors, reveals the conceptual vulnerability associated with the field of security and, invariably, the issues revolving around it. This vulnerability, which makes the concept subject to multiple interpretations, permeable to interests and objectives of who apply them, will significantly influence the decision-making by actors in the discussion of the SDGs.



However, it appears that the opinions among literature and practical discussion (in this case the OWG's 8th debate) differ in the degree of influence that associate each dimension, but converge on the constraints/opportunities that are part of them. This means that while some agree on the same opportunities and the same problems posed to maintaining the security theme in the development agenda, they differ on the level of impact that the dimensions in which they are embedded have on decision-making. As a result, the theory emphasises technical aspects while the practical work of designing the future agenda highlights the political dimension.

Finally, evaluation safeguards for political manipulation is a frequent arguments by the most optimistic literature in regards to the convergence between security and development, demonstrating the link between political issues and technical aspects. From this viewpoint, the technical elements appear to contribute to a greater sense of confidence in the security-development link (which is well structured), while monitoring will serve to moderate the most ambitious political intentions. Despite this – and being made important references through proposed goals and objectives on the part of actor – the technical dimension including this type of concern does not appear to be so prominent in practical work.

This finding therefore demonstrates that the political and technical dimension decisively influence the maintenance of a security goal in the post-2015 development agenda, in so far as they are necessary conditions to the process. These constraints will invariably occur when debating the existence of a concrete objective about security in the future global agenda for development.

The work of policy makers is undeniably more subjugated to political constraints, something particularly evident in the constant concern to bring consistency and coherence to the discussion and the topic itself. Effectively finding soundness in this debate is crucial, since security turns out to be a theme among many others seeking place in the future development agenda. In this way, only strong foundations and well-founded arguments can contribute to the increased receptivity of political agendas to the theme's presence in the discussion⁶.

Despite this, as well as more responsibility given to the political dimension, the truth is that in the concrete discussions the most strategic component is not highlighted exponentially beyond the aforementioned concern for discourse consistency. Clear Interests and political positions on the inclusion of security issues in the agenda are ultimately not observed with clarity in the statements in question. The areas of security and development thus remain connected with difficulties, especially in the context of international cooperation for development. In this way, even when appearing in debates, any presence of the theme in the global agenda for development remains somewhat uncertain.

⁶ It is worth referring briefly to the debate on 'human security' and attempts to introduce the notion of the international agenda. It was its conceptual vulnerability to political agendas which turned out to derail the progress of discussions around the concept and its respective operationalisation. Universalism identified as a feature of *human security* presupposed the possibility of multiple interpretations which could represent, according to the less enthusiastic, any distortion and perversion of the concept. This could consequently be more harmful than beneficial to the safety of people in discussions on *human security* were they not much later on (Freitas, 2002).



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