

*Strengthening the Security-Development Nexus: Assessing Policy and Practice since the 1990s* – International Peace Academy, Conference Report, New York, April 2004.

“Long term development is regarded as hinging on security, and lasting security depends upon sustainable development” meaning that both spheres of development and security are increasingly intertwined. The 1990s have indeed shown that intra-state conflict have by far been more deadly than interstate conflicts, causing 7 million deaths, 75% of which amongst civilians. Consequently security needed to be redefined as encompassing people’s security in the expansion of the number of peacekeeping missions and the involvement of development agencies in conflict prevention, management and recovery. The link between development and security needs thus to be better understood and studied, and simple models must often be discarded, one panelist arguing that the correlation between generic development assistance and peace “has yet to be proven”, for on occasion aid has ignited conflicts rather than prevented them.

The key elements in the security-development nexus are governance structures, the security sector, which, if it is unaccountable and un-impugned is a direct impediment on development, and the rule of law, which is the background for both security and development to be sustainable.

However policy makers are faced with tremendous challenges in programming for good governance, SSR and the rule of law, the conference pointing towards lack of intra and inter agency coordination, while there also is a certain gap between policy and implementation, policies devised in headquarters being too often unreflective of the realities prevailing at ground levels. There is also obviously lack of resources in personnel and funding.

In face of these challenges, the “ways forward” suggested to shape the future of conflict management strategies is to relevantly reorient current research, which must be “demand driven and responsive to actual needs at the field level”. “Local programme staffs need to be engaged far more than in the token manner that they currently are”, for they remain long after international agencies depart, this being another challenge, for in fact in many cases in conflict management and recovery, longer term involvement is required. Reforming security sectors, justice systems and embedding good governance structures are indeed long-term processes.

Overall therefore the security-development nexus needs truly to be better studied and understood, to improve conflict management strategies that “will be highly dependent on the ability of international leaders to address unprecedented global threats, such as extreme poverty, income disparity, environmental degradation and terrorism”.