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DEVELOPMENT'S SECURITY

A NEW PERSPECTIVE ON INTERNATIONAL SECURITY

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For the past several decades, the need for international security has developed alongside the global economic order that characterizes international relations today. Since the early 1970s, with the New International Economic Order and the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, countries have been banding together to face security and development challenges, growing global threats, and military antagonism. Despite these initial efforts, however, cooperation must be further strengthened. Given the increasingly interconnected nature of countries' political, economic, and social spheres, such coordination is growing ever more significant.

International security must be based on mutual trust among the countries involved. When nations view themselves as individuals as they work to counter security threats, they ignore the dangers of leaving developing countries to fend for themselves. As a result, there must be an element of trust to allow countries to act as a unified front against global security issues. Trust-based strategies would give the international community powerful leverage over weak global regulations and would also help to reduce disagreement on collective security and development issues. Subsequent attempts to tackle economic development and security would take into account the capacity of individual countries to participate in global regulations and discussions. There has always been a divide between developed and developing nations because of institutional capability, but if international policies are to be based on trust, these institutions must be fluid. Trust-based systems would allow developing countries to participate in responses to security challenges, but would not push them beyond their economic capacities.

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We must recognize that global security is undeniably entwined with national development. This reality presents challenges for developing countries, and a new security system will have to address such issues. In addition to overcoming individual differences in order to create a unified front, a new security system should also bolster the development of participating states in the interest of security. This system must reflect a set of shared normative values, which will be defined and promoted through dialogue and support from the international civil society. International consensus on issues such as the fight against transnational terrorism, combined with a more comprehensive framework for a new collective security system, must be discussed and founded in a setting that nurtures a culture of peace through economic development. Instituting such a plan necessitates constant assessment and adjustment to account for differing nations' capacities. But it is only by taking such an approach that the international system will be able to effectively face the emerging security challenges of a globalized world.

Security Weaknesses of Developing Countries

In a traditional sense, a country defines security as the absence of military threat. Previously, security imperatives required that nations build, individually or within the framework of alliances, security apparatuses that were adapted to well-defined threats. While menaces of such character remain important, we are now exposed to an additional array of areas in which risks manifest themselves. This profusion has increased the difficulties of determining threats, not to mention those of responding to them. In order to surmount these risks, new international initiatives must help developing countries adapt to the changing nature of security breaches.

Lesser-developed countries are not equipped to combat the multidimensional security problems that are evolving today. Security policies develop in a fluid and evolving environment. States, therefore, must also constantly adapt their means of protection. A tangible example of the changing character of security challenges is the end of the traditional war-peace pattern. In contrast to earlier decades, the world now faces a notion of "crisis," especially in regards to terrorism. The challenges of this transformation are numerous. It is difficult for nations to ascertain the level of a crisis beforehand, and there are a multitude of problems that arise in attempting to respond quickly to it. If these problems are emerging in developed countries in Europe and North America, they are even more acute in developing ones. Low levels of intelligence infrastructure and slow mobilization processes make every step more arduous and less likely to succeed in such countries.

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Developing countries' vulnerabilities are further exacerbated by conditions of poverty, environmental deterioration, and economic uncertainty. Destabilization takes root within zones of lawlessness characterized by weak regulations and loose social ties. Terrorism, drug trafficking, and environmental, migratory, pandemic, and sociopolitical problems require solutions that span many facets of society. As a result, achieving a state of security requires simultaneous action in many different dimensions—military, diplomatic, political, social, economic, and environmental.

The problem we face today is that many countries do not have the means for the extensive policing required to cover all such facets. They are therefore much more prone to these multidimensional security risks. Any system of efficient risk management must be established with the acknowledgment that vulnerabilities of international scale are especially severe in developing nations.

Development and Security

Progress in security or development will require a profound awareness of increasing global interdependence as well as a gradual transformation of the international community through normative values of trust. The outcome of such a process will be a reduction of the economic vulnerabilities that burden developing countries. These countries will be able to tackle global security challenges only after implementing reforms that meet their objectives for security, good governance, respect for human rights, democracy, and stable legislative and economic frameworks. Success also depends on strengthening countries' relative autonomy in the face of the uncertain evolution of the international playing field. In this respect, alleviating the burden of external constraints—namely indebtedness, terms of trade deterioration, technological dependence, and obstacles to market accessibility—allows developing countries to establish their own creative strategies for mobilization and action.

Most developing countries were swept into globalization without being prepared for it. As a result, their dependence on more developed nations has expanded. Economic transformation and uncontrolled urbanization have weakened developing countries' ancestral identities and deep internal solidarities. Drawn into a global flow that increases their security requirements as well as their vulnerabilities, these countries have been forced to expend resources on regional and international problems. With a simultaneous need to restore their own political and economic stability, developing nations' response capacities are insufficient or ill-suited. Only by strengthening state institutions and regulating capacities can states face the shifting challenges of globalization and security. In this context, both soft and hard security capacities are connected, with a country's economic development advancing with the enhancement of its national security.

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The settlement of conflicts and the elimination of hotspots in the developing world are therefore increasingly linked to economic recovery and integration into a global framework. In this respect, the innovative programs initiated by African countries through the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) demonstrate the importance of supporting the continent's recovery efforts. Founded on the principles of shared responsibility and partnership, NEPAD creates a framework that fosters dialogue with developed countries on Africa's development prospects. Past attempts in the North-South Dialogue, namely the momentum created between 1974 and 1979, the launching of the European-Arab Dialogue, the implementation of the Mediterranean Chapter of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, and the Montreal and Kyoto Protocols on environmental protection and climate change, could be considered good examples of cooperation.

During the past few years, contributions by members of the G8 proved that cooperation between developing and developed countries is the most efficient way to fight poverty. Such a partnership can also facilitate efforts to check extremism and monitor situations that are likely to generate serious crises. These examples illustrate that developing countries are willing to adjust their relationships with developed countries. Globalization provides developing countries with the opportunity to set the terms of a constructive dialogue with developed states in areas of security and development. The stability and progress of humankind depends on our ability to resolve these major issues together.

Algeria's Example

It is against this background that Algeria's 35-year contribution to the promotion of international cooperation and collective security should be considered. The fostering of greater understanding in international relations has been at the heart of the nation's good-neighborliness policy and the confidence-building initiatives and actions it has undertaken. Algeria's commitment to cooperation is evident in its proposal to hold a Conference on the Mediterranean to discuss security and development issues as well as its active part during the Paris conference on the North-South Dialogue. By settling the Ethiopia-Eritrea conflict, facilitating reconciliation processes in Lebanon, Mali, and Niger, and working as a main negotiator in the Barcelona Declaration and Program of Action to bolster relations between the European Union and Mediterranean countries, Algeria is upholding its duty to actively participate in global security and development. Algeria was also one of the five countries given the mandate by the then Organization of African Unity (OAU) to create NEPAD. While other countries may theoretically agree with supporting relationships between North and South, Algeria has been an active participant in ensuring the success of countless international efforts.

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The coherence and consistency of Algeria's external actions form the guiding principles of its fight against transnational terrorism. Algeria's example deserves consideration because it highlights the importance of the force of the law and the strengthening of institutional and operational capacities to achieve national reconciliation. Indeed, the attainment of such objectives is key in the political fight against terrorism and is the best answer to instability, insecurity, and lack of public confidence. It is a prerequisite to forming the solid foundation on which to build security and implement programs that foster renewed political and economic identities for the developing world. It is only through reform efforts that meet objectives for security, good governance, human rights, and stable legislative and economic frameworks that developing countries will be able to tackle global security challenges. Thus, considering global security within the context of internal stability is a requirement.

Global Justification for Strengthened Cooperation

With the growing interdependence that has come to characterize the world stage, developed nations have practical justifications for cooperating with developing nations. It is essential to place the notion of security in a larger and more comprehensive context—that of globalization and interdependence. Indeed, the risks that arise in one country can certainly affect security on an international level. The very concept of security has expanded to include not just one sovereign state, but also a wider group of actors. With the increases in mobility and cross-border communication that have come with modernization, what would once have been a local threat can now morph into an extremely dangerous, transnational threat. As the obvious example, terrorist networks that arise in one location can become prominent in certain neighboring countries due to a lack of border regulation. The ease with which hazards may diffuse across borders underscores the importance of a collective response to current security challenges.

Governance problems, underdevelopment, and humanitarian conflicts are risk factors that first plague developing nations and then quickly morph into international crises. The risks are high, ranging from uncontrolled arms races to the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and nuclear, chemical, biological, and radiological-armed vectors. These are risks that predominantly affect developed countries. Yet without proper prevention tactics, such threats can expand to levels that require large expenditures of resources by indirectly-involved countries. Even then, the problems may be impossible to resolve. Lessons should be drawn from the failures to address security challenges in the past, which are mainly due to lack of confidence in the United Nations, "insurance-based" strategies, absence of bilateral and multilateral arrangements, weakness in communication and coordination, and diverging visions of regional security.

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Developed nations must realize that adapting their policies and aiding developing states will prove beneficial for themselves in the long run. Effective measures involve cooperation from all parties, even those that see themselves as unaffected by these issues. These new methods of managing security must encompass preventative measures that developing countries may not be able to implement on their own. An adequate response will consequently necessitate a multilateral approach that translates efficiency and justice into global governance. A new security system must monitor many facets on a global level, while at the same time aid developing countries on the national level.

Given the complexity of a sufficient response mechanism, countries should acknowledge several aspects to a global fight. First, the success of any cooperation for security requires greater mobilization of world public opinion. For example, the tragic events of September 11, 2001, revealed that all states, even the most powerful, are vulnerable to external attack. At the same time, the event served as the catalyst for international cooperation in the fight against terrorism. Indeed, communication and public perception of security threats can constitute an equally important element in such an approach. Thanks to overexposure in the media along with a dramatization of the events, such risks have had a considerable impact on public opinion. This mobilization, however, is a double-edged sword, as the media can also influence the psychological conditions of protection itself. In certain situations, media exposure can serve as an echo chamber to the threat, amplifying terrorist acts. The sensitive question of the media's role lies at the heart of the fight against terrorism. Even in view of the political and societal consequences of terrorist acts, it is clear that mass communication remains a key component in the struggle to overcome this threat. Without public support, there can be no effective government efforts to address security issues affecting the nation, let alone the world. The media phenomenon reflects the strength and weakness of globalization, as well as the necessity of including nuanced measures in security proceedings.

More importantly, countries should use the institutional frameworks that globalization has established to address the crucial problems of economic development. The solutions to these predicaments include the development of cooperative regulating capacities and institutions that aim to foster development in developing countries. These efforts should be combined with a push for more equitable treatment within previously established international exchange bodies.

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All of these measures could be part of the answer to international risk, as lawless organizations often attempt to exploit economic instability for their own gain. The difficulty lies in knowing which measures should be adopted as countries work to prevent economic security threats. To address this uncertainty, a coalition of nations should form to cover and monitor the many facets of economic instability. Complex prevention and assessment could easily take shape within an international governing body such as an Economic Security Council, which would be tasked specifically with identifying and tackling these issues. A reformed and revitalized United Nations system could then successfully fulfill a dual role as a forum for common aspirations and a representation of the international society.

Toward a More Viable Collective Security System

This evolving era requires that we agree on new ambitions for humanity and undertake concerted and coherent action at the global level. The convening of an international conference or the creation of a permanent international organization would give the appearance of a united front against security threats. This positive external image would then have to be supplemented by sufficient effort to surpass previous attempts at integration. The UN High-Level Panel has already outlined a policy of prevention for old and new threats. While it acknowledged that development would be a cornerstone, it also stated that collective security was primarily the business of “efficient and responsible states.”

In contrast, the states involved in an effective organization must be a coalition of developed and developing nations. This kind of cooperation is itself important for the eventual eradication of security threats, as it builds permanent foundations of trust between countries of different cultures and economic standings. It is essential that globalization be turned into a positive reality for people of all countries. With this in mind, the United Nations and Bretton Woods institutions should establish a coordinated approach to peace and development. Defense and the promotion of human rights are crucial elements in this new proposed system of collective security, while economic development lies at its core.

In sum, the promotion of social justice could be the best answer to the challenges of global security. Likewise, for all countries to progress economically, they must be integrated into a new security system. This integration requires a methodology different from any we have yet seen in international relations. It may be possible to create new institutions within our existing ones; the United Nations can be reformed to accommodate the updated security system, or different organizations can be formed. However, in direct response to our integrated context, we must work to create a fluid system in which all countries contribute to global regulations and policy, while sharing their ever-changing, and hopefully growing, capabilities.