



Dialogue on Globalization

BRIEFING PAPERS

FES-Focus

Regional Renaissance? Security in a Globalized World

In the 1990s the focus of security thinking shifted more and more from the East-West to the North-South axis. But while the North – led by the US – has been discussing „new threats from the South“, reconceptualizing security strategies, and intervening on the ground, it has largely focused out the specific security perceptions and processes of other regions.

The Friedrich Ebert Foundation is making this gap one of the focuses of its work. The thematic emphasis is on the perception of security in the regions of the South, the options and scopes open to regional security cooperation, and the interplay between national, regional, and global security elements. Together with a number of different partners, the Friedrich Ebert Foundation is conducting meetings and conferences on these issues in regions of the South as well as in Brussels, New York, and Berlin. The foundation's publications aim to inform a wider public on issues bound up with security and security policy from a regional perspective (see also www.fes.de/globalization).

1 Security challenges

Against the background of a set of framework conditions that have changed fundamentally (since the end of the East-West conflict) recent years have seen the emergence of a number of new security risks and threats – both *within* societies and *between* states. The scenarios differ from region to region:

In East Asia security perceptions range from the discussion on North Korea and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) to „internal separatism“ and transnational trafficking in drugs and arms. The Middle East continues to be marked by the Israeli-Arab territorial conflict and a hegemonic conflict on the Persian Gulf. In Latin America Colombia's destabilization potential is being observed with growing unease. It is here (but also in Russia) that the impacts of a criminal „shadow globalization“ are most strongly in evidence.

Criminal networks (arms and drug trade, kidnapping) are striking roots in territories in which weak state structures have long since lost their monopoly on power: in the „exclaves of economic and social apartheid“ – be they the poverty belts surrounding the teeming metropolises of Latin America, be they Russia's abandoned industrial centers. In Subsaharan Africa, finally, it is civil war and resource conflicts that go into the making of today's central security challenges.

In recent years the „classic“ state-centered concept of security has come in for criticism in response to these varied security risks. Its underlying assumptions – threats are as a rule external in nature, primarily military in character, and call for a military response – are too short-sighted. We now have a noteworthy number of multidimensional security concepts:

At the substantive level, the concept „comprehensive security“ expressly considers numerous further factors as relevant to security (economic disintegration, ecological crises, human rights violations).

At the operational level, many countries have set their sights on intergovernmental types of (security-) cooperation – an idea which has recently begun to take on systematic shape in East Asia in particular. However, the doctrines favored in this connection, above all by the West, also call for an expansion of military options as an integ-

ral component of international crisis and conflict resolution.

While this approach continues to focus on the state as the decisive source and goal of security thinking, the concept of „human security“, which is subscribed to by UN organizations, centers on threats to individuals – food and water shortages, corruption, crime, poverty, but also suppression of the media. But the sources of human insecurity being as numerous as they are, any attempt merely to string together growing numbers of highly diverse conflict dimensions is doomed to fail to come up with any practicable and sharply outlined concept of security. It would no doubt make more sense to look more to what might be called „societal security“ as a means of focusing more sharply on security constellations that in fact pose a real and present danger to collectivities – be they states or major social groups.

2 Cooperative security policy – Waiting for Godot?

The hopes for a more peaceful world that burgeoned as the Cold War came to an end were quick to wilt. The end of bipolarity brought with it a security vacuum, a „new global intransparency“, for which no political action patterns have yet been developed.

The key structural feature of today's world order is the overarching predominance of the US, which, with its military superiority, its economic efficiency, its cultural hegemony, has become the world's lonesome superpower. New global counterweights (e.g. the EU, China, Russia, India, Brazil) have just begun to take on shape. While in the early 1990s there was still reason to hope for an „assertive multilateralism“ (Bill Clinton), the US has since increasingly turned its de facto unilateral *position* into a unilateral *policy* attuned at best to selective multilateralism, or a multilateralism à la carte.

Recent conflicts have gone to show that the US position of unipolarity will not create stability. But even the UN system, potentially the institutional backbone of a robust world peace order, has as yet been unable to fill the vacuum. The UN's intervention potentials have been seriously undercut by a lack of acceptance of the UN as the world's supreme decision-making authority. Since the mid-1990s more and more harm has been done to the multilateral world order – a

development that reached a head in the crisis of the UN Security Council in the run-up to the war against Iraq. But not only the US, the Europeans as well as the rising new and declining old powers (China, Brazil, India / Russia) have in recent years shown a growing tendency to look to bilateral action at the global level. And weaker countries, too – not least against the background of recent international experiences – have come to see their sovereignty as a shield protecting them against an order largely determined by the countries of the North.

There is a large measure of skepticism regarding overarching security structures whose political (and cultural) orientation remains uncertain. Compared with other policy fields, the density of regimes and rules in the sensitive field of security has so far remained relatively low. Still: despite all the difficulties and setbacks experienced in recent years, there is no practicable alternative to a cooperative security-related „global governance“ if pressing problems are to be brought to a reasonable solution. Effective global governance – and this has become particularly clear in the field of security policy – far from being keyed solely to the global level, has no choice but to look to the options for action *at all political levels* – including the (sub)national and regional. Cooperative regional security arrangements may very well turn out to be spawning grounds of a new global security structure.

3 Focus: „Regional renaissance? Security in a globalized world“

In the 1990s the focuses of security thinking shifted more and more from the East-West to the North-South axis. But while the North – led by the US, with its new „National Security Strategy“, but also by the EU with its „Solana Paper“ – has been discussing „new threats from the South“, reconceptualizing security strategies, and intervening on the ground, it has largely focused out the specific security perceptions and processes of other regions. But these regions too are showing signs and developments that may very well indicate the dawn of a renaissance of regional conceptions of security. The Friedrich Ebert Foundation's thematic focus for this reason centers on the security perspectives of the regions of the South. It is geared to the following questions:

a) Perception of threat scenarios

The way in which security threats – or the agenda of security problems – is perceived differs considerably between North and South, but also among the different regions of the South. In the framework of a new „North-South debate“ the countries of the North are largely in a position to define threat scenarios (terrorism, the drug trade, proliferation of WMDs), even though these scenarios are often not wholly consistent with perceptions in the regions concerned.

- *What security problems do given regions regard as particularly pressing?*
- *How do various regions differ in their perception of threat scenarios?*
- *Do the countries of the South share a common „agenda of pressing security problems“?*
- *Is there any agreement on a common understanding of these different perceptions – shared both by North and South as well as by the countries of the South?*

b) „Regional renaissance?“ – Security policy in the world's regions

In the past many ambitious regional projects in the South remained patchwork, unable to contribute fully to the resolution of conflicts – not least because many important actors of the South declined to cooperate. In recent years, however, some new – halting though dynamic – approaches have emerged in connection with regional security debates. One – and not the least important – condition required for cooperative regional approaches is transparency and democratization of the security sector, which – compared with other sectors – has tended to be a more or less hermetic policy field largely closed to society.

- *What role is played by regional or global actors in conflicts or for cooperative security arrangements?*
- *What actors have been actively involved in security processes and discussions, and how can the spectrum be broadened?*
- *What elements of regional security cooperation are already in evidence?*

- *What is the scope of cooperative regional security arrangements?*

c) Security policy as multilevel policy

An efficient security architecture will hold promise of success only if the various political levels and security instruments involved are closely intertwined.

- *How are existing security structures in countries of the South assessed – do they tend more to alleviate or to aggravate conflict, are they more cooperative or asymmetric in nature?*
- *To what levels should tasks and decision-making competences be transferred?*
- *What level of political and cultural acceptance is met with by different forms of intervention (UN/EU/NATO/regional mandates, protectorates, observer missions, demilitarized zones, etc.)?*

d) On the way to a new global security architecture?

- *Which are the demands raised by the South?*
- *Which key elements of security policy should be reinforced from their point of view?*
- *How can the South itself contribute to a cooperative architecture?*

4 The program of the Friedrich Ebert Foundation

The Friedrich Ebert Foundations goal is to support the process involved in shaping and formulating public opinion on security policy in the regions of the South and to feed back the relevant positions and political developments into the German and European debates as well as into the UN process.

Together with a number of different partners, the Friedrich Ebert Foundation is conducting meetings and conferences on these issues in regions of the South as well as in Brussels, New York, and Berlin. The foundation's publications

aim to inform a wider public on issues bound up with security and security developments in the South. In addition the Foundation's website, www.fes.de/globalization, contains an extensive pool of documents on security issues:

Regional Conferences

- Asia: 21-23 June (Shanghai): Regional Security Architecture and the Future of Multilateralism
- Latin America: 23-25 June (Brasilia): Hacia una nueva arquitectura de la seguridad global: El aporte de America Latina
- Middle East: 26.-28. June (Cairo): Arab Perspectives on Regional Global Governance Africa:
- 28-30 June (Maputo): Africa's Evolving Security Architecture: Regional Approaches to Managing Conflict
- Caribbean: Autumn 2004

Conferences in Cooperation with the United Nations Foundation

- 17-18 May (Mexico City): Governance, Democracy, and Free Markets – What Relation to Security?
- 21-23 May (Cape town): UN and Regional Organizations: Intervention and Peace-Building

Conferences in Berlin

- 18 May (Berlin): European Security in a Global Perspective
- 21-22 September (Berlin): Global (UN-)Governance – Security Policy in a Time of Terror
- October 2004 (Berlin): Die regionalen Strategien der NATO
- November 2004 (Berlin): Europäische Entwicklungspolitik im Spannungsfeld zwischen Außen- und Sicherheitspolitik