



International Peace and Security[±]

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Since the end of the Cold War there has been a series of changes and crises in the international system. The emergence of these new problems can be seen in ethnic conflicts, the struggle for control of resources, the outbreak of “new wars” (to use Mary Kaldor’s term) and some of the most serious cases of genocide such as that in Rwanda or the more recent conflict in the Sudan. Against this backdrop a series of trends affecting international stability can be singled out:

1. The worsening of global problems which affect countries in the South in particular: armed conflict in institutionally weak states, humanitarian crises and the undermining of democratic systems, the violation of human rights, poverty, inequality and the failure to cover basic human needs.
2. Security as the overriding concern determining both domestic and foreign policies in the United States and the industrialized West, along with the resort to force rather than negotiated solutions for conflict resolution.
3. New forms of international terrorism associated primarily with fundamentalist religious groups.
4. Attacks on the multilateral system, particularly on the United Nations, as well as the violation of International Law.
5. Growing inequality on a world scale due to the distribution of wealth, something made worse by the globalisation process.
6. The strengthening and defending of national and cultural identities of an exclusive nature based on ethnicity, religion or social class.

The worsening of global problems

The worsening of global problems such as poverty, the environment, migratory flows, refugees, the collapse of weak states and international trade have thrown up a series of challenges for the international system and for national governments. Security is not viable in a world faced with growing inequality. Furthermore the steps that have been taken to deal with some of these questions such as the ratifying of the Kyoto Protocol or the creation of the International Criminal Court have been delayed. The use of force is still considered the best political response to maintain security and to achieve political objectives.

The neo-liberal model does not provide answers to these worldwide problems. In fact it suggests that the State itself is the cause of problems such as unemployment, poverty and economic crises. The reorganisation of political systems and of the State along economic lines has been suggested, with the promise that the deregulation of the economy and opening up of world markets will solve humanities most urgent problems. However, an economic system divorced from politics is an illusion ever since without a state or public services security is not possible; and there will be no education, health policy or security in the social perspective. It is necessary to push for an inclusive idea of politics, one able to regulate potential disasters inherent in the world economy. It is necessary to strengthen institutions able to tackle the roots of our insecurities.

The redefining of ‘security’ implies a new way of looking at the most pressing threats, one which is based on cooperation rather than the use of force...The United Nations, in its High-

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Level Group report on the threats, challenges and changes which we are facing, entitled: *A safer world: the responsibility we share* mentions six groups of threats which should be of worldwide concern at the present time:

- Violence between States
- Violence within States, including civil wars, large-scale human rights abuse and genocide.
- Poverty, infectious disease and deterioration of the environment
- Nuclear, radiological, chemical and biological weapons.
- Terrorism
- International organised crime

These threats have an international character, are interrelated and must be dealt with at a regional, national and global level. No state, however powerful, can consider itself immune. Military answers are not sufficient and therefore rearmament does not equate with increased security and means using up funds which could be spent in other areas. The only way to improve national security is through international cooperation. However the help given to poorer countries is being redirected at the fight against terrorism. And problems such as AIDS or climate change face a crippling lack of financial support. There is a risk that the progress made towards better health and education as well as in the fight against poverty as considered in the Millennium Development Goals will not be enough owing to the redirecting of resources and international attention to military spending and the war against terror.¹ It is necessary to establish a joint security system which obliges states to cooperate with one another and to reach a new consensus on the meaning and the responsibilities of joint security.

The primacy of the security question on the political agenda

The September 11th attacks in New York and Washington and the following attacks in Morocco, Madrid or in Bali have put security firmly at the top of the political agenda both in international and domestic spheres for the majority of governments. The use of indiscriminate terrorist violence is one of the realities with which we have live in our open or "at risk" societies². The obsession with absolute security, apart from being implausible, is leading to the loss of freedoms for which humanity has fought for centuries. In the name of security and the fight against terrorism some governments have justified illegal practices and have limited democratic freedoms, applying repressive and authoritarian practices. It is necessary to fight violence from a democratic position respectful of human rights.

Within the international system force is once more considered the best way to build security and to achieve political ends. This has led to a very worrying situation. The wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, the doctrine of pre-emptive strikes of the Bush administration and the support for the "hard line" policies of Israel and Russia offer clear examples and have led to the stalemate of conflicts such as those in Chechnya, the Middle-East and Colombia. The search for security through force is inefficient as it does not tackle the factors leading to instability, rather it accentuates them, creating a cycle of violence from which is very difficult to escape.

To confront the new forms of international terrorism the Bush administration has declared war. However it is not possible to be at war with terrorism in the same way that it is not possible to declare war on drug trafficking, illegal immigrants or organised crime. These phenomenon can be the object of political, diplomatic, economic or police actions but not of a war. Furthermore the means which the US. Government has adopted to fight terrorism are not only inefficient but have added to the continuing cycle of violence. The adoption of the rhetoric of war coupled with the administration's threat to attack those states which promote

¹ Michael Renner "Refiniendo la seguridad" en *La situación del mundo 2005*, Fuhem/Icaria, Madrid 1995,p. 53

² Ulrich Beck, *La sociedad del riesgo global, Siglo XXI*, Madrid 2002.

terrorism has only fed and strengthened the terrorists' cause and offered them a rationale to continue killing. Such unilateral action is not only inefficient but it has also undermined international cooperation, violated international law and has been used by extremist commentators in their discourse concerning the clash of civilisations.

The United Nations and the multilateral system

Security in a globalised world cannot be tackled from a national perspective because it is a question that requires transcending the limits of the nation-state. It is necessary to put into operation a multilateral strategy which allows us to tackle global problems, one of which is the question of international security. It is necessary to review and revise the international mechanisms regarding collective security, with particular reference to the United Nations, creating updated mechanisms which are more flexible and effective and which lead to the strengthening of the institution as a whole.

However in the last two years there has been a direct attack on the United Nations in which there has been an attempt to dismiss the Security Council as "irrelevant". The Iraq war, the unilateral policies of neo-conservatives, and the attacks against the General Secretary Kofi Annan have been aimed squarely at undermining the credibility of the institution.

This is a very serious situation as the world will not be a better place without the United Nations nor with the return of a situation in which any state can use unilateral violence to pursue its interests limited only by the power of others.

The recent appointment of John Bolton, who has expressed his rejection of and contempt for the United Nations, is a continuation of this policy of weakening the United Nations. However, the reforms which the institution has implemented, the publication of the report, *A safer world: the responsibility we share*, and the initiatives which different participants have begun in the last few years offer new possibilities and challenges.

The rise in inequality at a worldwide level

The gap between rich and poor has never been so wide: 1% of the world's population (less than 50 million people) has the same income as the 2,700 million poorest. The incomes of the richest 20% are increasing while those of the poorest 50% are falling³. According to the United Nations report *A safer world*, the average per capita income has decreased in 54 countries since 1999.

This has had a devastating effect in many societies: weakening sovereignty and the state in political, economic and other areas; the weakening of institutions, increased economic inequality and the breaking up of both social and political spheres.⁴ The rise of internal violence with the appearance of street gangs (*maras*) and other manifestations of juvenile violence is one of the most visible effects.

The relationship between conflicts, under-development and the absence of democracy, is a circular one. The lack of fair and sustainable development and of democracy in the widest sense can lead to social tensions or speed up conflicts. At the same time, if this happens then social differences become greater and development is slowed down. It has been calculated that the African continent loses 2% of its yearly economic growth as a result of its conflicts, and that in some countries, between 40% and 75% of financial income and currency is used for war⁵.

There are various international initiatives aimed at reducing International inequality and fighting extreme poverty. At the Summit on Development Funding in Monterrey, in September 2002, the so called "Consensus of Monterrey" was approved, offering a series of recommendations and good intentions but lacking definite commitments or a timetable for

³ See the Informes de Desarrollo Humano, PNUD

⁴ Juan Tokatlián, *Glozalización (sic) narcotráfico y violencia*. Grupo Editorial Norma, Bogotá, 2000.

⁵ For more information see: Commission on Human Security, *Human Security now*, Commission on Human Security, New York, 2003.

their implementation.⁶ On the other hand, the adoption of the Millennium Objectives by the United Nations marked the taking on board of a series of initiatives designed to aid social development and reduce extreme poverty levels⁷ as well as a worldwide agreement on the necessary steps to achieve this. Despite all the difficulties the fulfilment of the Millennium Objectives has come to form part of the agenda of many organisations in civil society around the world.

The reinforcing and defence of exclusive national and cultural identities

In the last decade there has been an increase in the so called ethnic conflicts. There are a myriad of causes of such conflicts and no single explanation is sufficient. In different countries, from Yugoslavia to the Sudan, there has been a strategy adopted by some political participants which consists in exaggerating cultural differences and presenting them as somehow irreconcilable. It is a question of attracting support as a way of increasing power; to do this they invoke essential values based on questions of race, ethnic origin, sex and, in some cases religion or social class. They appeal to national identities and to values stemming from this, closing all channels that might lead to dialogue, comprehension and approach to the "other".

In Europe and the US this can be seen in the strengthening and defence of exclusive national and cultural identities and the rejection of immigrants or refugees or those who are different. Immigration Laws calling into question the rights of refugees and criminalizing immigrants are promoted. However, it is necessary to have policies which guarantee the rights of refugees and immigrants and that allow them to participate actively in the societies in which they live.

In the present international climate, immigration has become the motor of change and development in many countries. But, along with other related questions such as health, environment, poverty or nuclear proliferation, it is essential that a new political system is put in place which includes, among other things:

- a. *A strengthening of the multilateral system and its mechanisms* in all areas (from peace to trade, from human rights to the management of the environment, among others);
- b. *Development and strengthening of the regional sub-systems for security* in order to solve problems between states in a peaceful way, carrying out peacekeeping missions when communities see themselves threatened by genocide or massive human rights violations.
- c. *Progressive reform of the international multilateral institutions* for the management of global questions (the United Nations and its various bodies, the World Trade Organisation, the World Bank and so on), with increasing participation and influence from the Southern hemisphere states.
- d. Increased participation by the *civil societies of the Northern and Southern states*, with greater *collaboration between them*, placing special emphasis on *the links between peace movements and those critical of globalisation* as well as between those sectors able to call on resources (*philanthropists, private foundations, state agencies or multilateral cooperation agencies*), influence opinion or provide information (*universities, study centres and the media*).
- e. A greater collaboration between governments and civil society in the triangle made up of the United States, Europe and the Southern hemisphere states.
- f. The need to face up to problems of security, including terrorism, by looking at their root causes and by finding non-violent solutions.

⁶ SANAHUJA, José Antonio. "De Doha a Bagdad. La fuerza contra la cooperación internacional" en Mariano Aguirre y Mabel González Bustelo (coords), *Tiempos difíciles. Guerra y Poder en el sistema internacional. Anuario CIP 2003*, Madrid, Centro de Investigación para la Paz (CIP), 2003, pp 242-246.

⁷ Extreme poverty refers to those who live on less than one dollar a day.

A safer world requires social, political, economic, cultural and educational changes if it is to move forward towards global governability. It is also essential that there is coordination on all actions and on various levels, from the global to the local, combined with a greater number of participants which will include international and national institutions, local governments and businessmen as well as civil society.