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Post 2015: Peace, security and development belong together

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Post 2015: Peace, security and development belong together

Bonn, Berlin, 22 April 2014. Rhetorically speaking, all agree: peace, security and development belong together. The experience with the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) supports this statement. Countries that are affected by conflict, violence and political instability are the furthest away from achieving the MDGs. According to the World Bank, two thirds of the poorest people in the world and 60% of the malnourished live in regions affected by conflict. Current trends indicate that extreme poverty will be increasingly concentrated in fragile states. In the international discussion almost all background studies on the post-2015 agenda have a particular focus on stability and peace – and the General Assembly of the United Nations (UN) will also discuss the topic this week. In the context of its foreign policy reorientation Germany should therefore take a leading role on this topic.

Political obstacles

There are, however, obstacles that hinder a stronger link between development and peace and security issues. Many emerging and developing countries are worried that the development agenda will be misused for security policy objectives. If poverty or a lack of rule law and basic social services become part of the security agenda, this could create new grounds for the international community to justify military intervention in these countries. Over the past 15 years the UN Security Council has, for example, considered HIV/AIDS, climate change and drug trafficking from a security perspective. Not least due to the authority of the Council to take coercive measures against governments, developing countries from the G77 states reject the idea of an enhanced role of the Security Council.

Other states fear that development aid will be increasingly concentrated on fragile states. Although there are no signs of this yet, poor, conflict-free states in particular would be affected by such a reallocation of development aid.

Potential compromises

In the post-2015 debate it is necessary to strike a balance between neglecting poverty-relevant security topics and unnecessarily politicising the development agenda. Hence, it is particularly important that the political obstacles described above are discussed at an early stage.

A clear strategy is needed. In debating the post-2015 agenda, the focus should lie on strengthening the institutional basis for a peaceful society. Internationally, states have identified principles that are

essential for social resilience to insurgencies and armed conflicts: accountable and capable administrations, a fair and effective justice system, physical security of individuals, employment opportunities and a minimum degree of opportunities for participation. In 2011 these principles were agreed on in the *New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States* by a group of 44 countries. A certain degree of fragility, i.e. the insufficient ability of the government to implement policies hierarchically and, where necessary with coercive measures, is the rule globally and historically rather than the exception. Thus, pragmatism should be employed when formulating global objectives. The international community now needs to translate the general principles of the new deal into specific goals of the post-2015 agenda.

Identifying specific goals may also promote political compromises between the UN member states. The goal of reducing violent deaths per 100,000 inhabitants is one example. Such a goal set at the international level creates comparability between countries without infringing the sovereignty of individual governments. Although countries would not be directly "liable" for achieving the goal, citizens and civil society organisations would have a further strong argument for requesting commitment from individual governments.

New alliances

Germany should take a leading role in this discussion and push for goals that are as specific as possible. A 13-point plan of the German government regarding the post-2015 agenda is a positive start and contains clear goals for the promotion of more stable and peaceful societies. The next step is to find partners to place these ideas firmly in the post-2015 agenda.

As a country that promotes civil crisis prevention and aims to demonstrate a "new responsibility" in its foreign policy, Germany carries more credibility in negotiating with developing and emerging countries than the US or France for instance. With the initiative of the g7+ states, a group of 18 fragile countries, and the common position of the African Union, the foundation for new alliances has already been laid.

It is now up to the German government to actively support these countries and commit itself to the idea of respecting ownership of partner countries and promoting development co-operation that is sensitive to conflict. The debate this week in New York presents a clear opportunity for this.