

Geneva Peace Week 2022

Thematic Track Report

Moving beyond securitization: Risk management and new horizons for peacebuilding

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1. Overview

The fourth track of the Geneva Peace Week 2022 (GPW22) was titled “Moving beyond securitization: Risk management and new horizons for peacebuilding”. Narratives around humanitarian, development, environment and peace concerns are increasingly framed in the language of existential security threats. These threats, according to such narratives, justify a variety of extraordinary measures and militarized responses that go beyond the bounds of normal political procedures and processes. From evoking “states of emergency” to counter violent extremism, to articulating ecological, health or migration concerns in security terms, a variety of international issue areas are being conceived as arenas robust stabilization efforts. Arguably, these securitisation dynamics are particularly pronounced in settings in which a variety of conflict and disaster dynamics intertwine to produce chronic socio-economic, political and environmental concerns to which there are no quick-fix solutions. This thematic track sought to critically reflect on some of these trends, raising the following questions:

- Security approaches and human rights: Where do such “securitisation moves” leave notions of human rights, sustainability, inclusivity or solidarity?
- The impact of fear in practices and policy making: What are the challenges of constructing programming narratives around discourses of fear?
- Including the peacebuilding framework: And what roles can peacebuilders play in turning the tide on the way threats are perceived and instrumentalised for political or economic purposes?

It is worth noting that the track “Moving beyond securitization: Risk management and new horizons for peacebuilding” received a lower number of applications than the other themes, as well as a lower number than in previous years, flagging the evolving attention of the wider peace field. It took place on Friday 4 November and was composed of 5 workshops (3 in person and 2 online) that focused on **combating violent extremism and the rehabilitation of returnees, securitization of conflict zones with a local, people-focused approach , the operationalisation of the HDP (Humanitarian-Development-Peace)/Triple Nexus concept in practice and linkage between Foreign Feminist Policy and increasing militarisation**. The track finished off with **a conversation with the UN special rapporteur on counter-terrorism and human rights** during the closing session of the GPW22.

2. Key Insights & Takeaways

In order to achieve sustainable peace in conflict affected areas or in other situations of extreme violence, stakeholders and peacebuilding actors should have a holistic approach in **preventing violent extremism (PVE)** with a full understanding of the specific challenges in context by taking a localized approach in each area where extremism is anchored. It has been demonstrated that while religious beliefs play a part, other equally if not more notable factors include social and economic factors such as limited access to public service, educational opportunities, access to food and water and political/military factors such as weak institutions, porous border, multiple direct military interventions, the presence of armed groups and the proliferation of small arms and light weapon. These key drivers can have a role in the radicalization of local populations, including decisions to join armed groups, who recruit via promises of better living conditions, which in many cases do not materialize. Prevention of radicalisation to violent extremism is therefore a key factor in achieving sustainable peace as vulnerabilities increase chances of recruitment by armed groups. Stakeholders must also further prevent gaps between identity groups (ethnic, tribal, religious) and approach the matter of violent extremism by tackling local specificities when it comes to security and justice. To conclude, security measures taken by authorities should not come at the cost of impacting people's livelihoods.

Repatriation, reintegration, rehabilitation, and resocialization of former armed groups combatants might be challenging for States of foreign fighters nationals. In these cases one main recommendation is to have a tailored and multidisciplinary approach that is flexible and adaptive to each returnee, bringing psychological, social work, legal and policing elements together to more effectively manage the return of foreign fighters and their families. Cooperation by concerned States are also suggested to overcome structural or security threat challenges. An emphasis has been made on developing and implementing services to ensure gender sensitivity and understanding of radicalization as women involvement in fighting is usually misunderstood due to a lack of evidence. Considerable efforts have nonetheless been made by States in reintegrating children into the education system to prevent further radicalisation.

As a common statement, it is understood that long term peace in conflict affected areas cannot be achieved without a **local understanding of social practices and conflict dynamics** that might vary from one another. Over-securitization might jeopardize peacebuilding efforts as it disrupts local practices, affects social cohesion, economic stability and exacerbates marginalization which might trigger further the increase of violent extremism in these areas.

The concept of the **Humanitarian-Development-Peace nexus** (HDP nexus) takes a similar approach by reiterating the need to have a local understanding of the situation. To operationalise the HDP nexus, it is recommended that it should be co-designed and implemented in partnership with local communities though it might be challenging for mandated-organisations to identify relevant local structures to engage with. Further collaboration between donors and peacebuilding organisations should be fostered to allow some degree of flexibility in its implementation.

Another aspect of moving beyond securitization revolved around Feminist Foreign Policy (FFP) to see whether FFP could help assuage increasing militarisation and to interrogate whether increasing militarisation and feminist foreign policy can co-exist, both in the realm of international relations and within individual governments' foreign policymaking.

3. Conclusions and Next Steps

While workshops focused on practices at the operational level, the closing session featured a conversation with Fionnuala Ní Aoláin, **the UN Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism**, based on her latest report *Promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism* (September 2022).

The United Nations have developed over the past 20 years a counter-terrorism (CT) architecture that is undermining peace efforts with an increasing of UN financial resources flowing towards securitization and counter-terrorism to support the creation of CT country offices, the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact or other preventing and combating violent extremism programmes run by UN entities. Because there is not a globally agreed definition of counter-terrorism, national legislations might differ in defining counter-terrorism that enables States to avoid their international obligations under international humanitarian law and international human rights law thus challenging the notion of due diligence.

The Special Rapporteur discussed how CT frameworks have progressively displaced peacebuilding frameworks over the past two decades. The growth of CT architecture has infiltrated peacebuilding narratives, impacting the core objectives of the UN as the standard-bearer of norms related to human rights and peace.

“A level of growth and practice without adequate human rights due diligence, conflict and peace analysis, including gender-sensitivity analysis controls or institutionalized constraint of other peace and security mandates. Serious institutional attention must be paid to the interplay of these architectures both internally and externally, and the Organization must reassess its core goals and functions to ensure and protect its capacity to successfully engage in peace work in all its manifold dimensions.”¹

The report recalls that “peacemaking, peacebuilding and peacekeeping, is designed by, for and in the interest of primary beneficiaries – “the people of the United Nations” – not simply its Member States.”² Counter-terrorism measures should therefore comply with international law standards. It also urges the UN system to correct itself as CT measures impact peace and all the work done in the past decades. Ongoing peacekeeping operations do not do peacekeeping work anymore but are rather party to a conflict, complicit and actively supporting States in their human rights violations.

“States are increasingly engaged through a terrorism rather than a peace lens, often displacing core international legal frameworks and undermining the ability to engage in local - level peacebuilding and human rights work or facilitate or support the mediation of local conflicts. This places the United Nations in complex interfaces that challenge norms of neutral peacekeeping principles and compliance with human rights and rule of law standards.”³

The report recommends for future developments that the United Nations support holistic mediations and observations of peace negotiations and address consequences of excluding certain armed groups from peace negotiations keeping in mind the notion of accountability and responsibility for such groups. The UN should also develop guidance on dealing with armed groups designated as terrorist organisations and proper monitoring evaluation frameworks regarding P/CVE programming. There is the need for a “linguistic ceasefire” on the use of some of these terms that can be hugely seductive. The politicization of the UN system triggers a lack of legal procedures for designating and sanctioning abuses. Member States should therefore advocate for a reform of the CT architecture to achieve the core mandate of the UN that is long term peace.

¹ United Nations General Assembly, Promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism, A/77/345, Interplay between counter-terrorism and the peace architecture, page 8/22 ,16 September 2022

² United Nations General Assembly, Promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism, A/77/345, summary, page 2/22 ,16 September 2022

³ United Nations General Assembly, Promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism, A/77/345, summary, page 2/22 ,16 September 2022

The conversation ended with a call for the UN's "New Agenda for Peace" to shine a light on the harms of CT and the securitization of peacebuilding, from its lack of impact assessment and human rights oversight to its precariously political norms.