

North American Security and Development Agendas Five Years after 9/11

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The 9/11 attacks made it necessary to analyze the relationship between security and development. By now, it is almost a cliché to assume that they go hand in hand and that security is not possible without development and vice versa. The relationship is symbiotic. However, until now, the temptation has frequently been to deal with each one separately without correctly correlating them. Thus, during the Cold War, the security agenda predominated over the development agenda.

The bi-polar world in which the United States and the Soviet Union competed, par-

ticularly militarily, left very little room for the development agenda. When the Cold War ended, the agenda for development began to have more maneuvering room, allowing throughout the 1990s for different debates such as those organized in United Nations summits about topics like childhood, the environment, women, social development, etc.

During that decade, the defense budget of most countries in the world declined, while important disarmament initiatives were developed. In addition, in 1994, the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) published its traditional *Human Development Report*, introducing the concept of *human security*. While this had been the object of reflection before, the 1990s international context favored greater sensitivity

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about issues linked to the agenda for development and people's welfare. That is, the development agenda tended to prevail over the security agenda for most of the decade.

This situation would change drastically after 9/11, when on September 28, the UN Security Council passed Resolution 1373 condemning the attacks on New York, Washington D.C. and Pennsylvania, pointing to terrorism as a threat to international peace and security. This resolution, together with September 12's Resolution 1368, strongly emphasized the need to use all available resources to face the terrorist threat. These resolutions' watchwords have become the minimum standards that all civilized nations should, in principle, adopt. Thus, a large part of the world's countries have put their signatures to conventions against terrorism, adding crimes like financing terrorism to their national legislation.

Nevertheless, the most important thing is that the attention terrorism has received from the UN's most important body has been in detriment to the agenda for development and the issues linked to human security that were so important throughout the 1990s. In other words: the agenda for human security is one of the big victims of the 9/11 terrorist attacks, which in turn, have occasioned a return to the traditional security agenda, equivalent to the one that existed during the Cold War, that is, state-centric, militaristic and dissuasive.

Certainly the UN has tried to maneuver to balance the security and development agendas since 9/11. The most concrete evidence of this is the documents written for the UN's sixtieth anniversary. Two of these, the December 2, 2004 report from the High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change,

called "A more secure world: our shared responsibility," and the UN Secretary-General's March 21, 2005 report "In larger freedom. Towards development, security and human rights for all," clearly point to resolving some of the most urgent challenges in matters of security, development and the terrorist threat. But, what does the United States think about this? Does Washington think these proposals are compatible with the "war" against terrorism? How will the North American region shape up in this debate about the relationship between security and development?

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United States against terrorism is asymmetrical and unbalanced. That nation's "hard" power can scarcely be equaled by the "soft" power of Al Qaeda or other terrorist organizations. Both Washington and the terrorists open hostilities although in no case would it be possible to annihilate either one (although U.S. economic, military, political and social exhaustion has been under a lot of debate lately).

In addition, U.S. government security measures after 9/11 have been seconded by many countries of the world, and in North America, Mexico and Canada are no exception. So, immediately after the attacks, the United States im-

plemented a policy that would no longer make a distinction between those who perpetrated terrorist acts and those who gave safe harbor to and/or protected them. The new U.S. policy also forced the international community to take sides about the terrorist threat, assuming that whoever did not support the U.S. was naturally against it. Mexico and Canada certainly closed ranks with Washington, although with a few qualifications.

While Mexico and Canada have not hesitated to pass laws making funding terrorist activities a crime, among other things, Ottawa has adopted norms that include giving their police forces broad powers for the arrest, interrogation and investigation into the guilt, even on suspicion, of different individuals. The 2001 Anti-terrorism Act (Bill C-36) adopted similar guidelines to those of the United States in the *war against terror*, including the description of new terrorist crimes and severe punishments for those who commit them. This legislation facilitates the use of electronic monitoring equipment against terrorist groups; allows the police to invoke investigation hearings that demand that individuals presumed to possess information about terrorist groups or crimes considered terrorist acts be brought before a judge to testify; creates criminal penalties for persons who collect funds, directly or indirectly, in order to carry out terrorist actions; strengthens the federal government's ability to deny or cancel aid to those discovered supporting terrorist groups; allows, in the national interest, certain information to be hidden from defense lawyers during court proceedings or in other judicial processes; and makes possible the arrest of individuals based on the simple suspicion that his/her

detention could aid in the capture of terrorists.

As we know, one of the consequences of the fight against terrorism is the increase in the world's military budget given that the war against terror is essentially military. In 2005, the global military budget was approximately U.S.\$1.001 trillion, the equivalent of 2.5 percent of the gross world product, or U.S.\$173 per inhabitant of the planet. This 2005 budget was a 3.4 percent increase over that of 2004; and from 1996 to 2005, military spending jumped 34 percent. The United States accounted for 80 percent of the increase in 2005 and represents 48 percent of the world's military spending today.

In this sense, the United States is increasingly supporting programs of military and police assistance and cooperation with Latin American countries, to the point that this item practically equals the resources earmarked for social and economic aid to the region. At the same time, in recent years the number of Latin American troops receiving training from the U.S. has grown substantially. For example, between 1999 and 2004, Mexico was the fourth beneficiary (after Colombia, Bolivia and Ecuador) of U.S. military training in terms of the number of troops involved, with 3,491 soldiers participating. This increases the indoctrination of personnel trained in identifying threats and ways to deal with them. Given that the U.S. security agenda with its militarist vision tends to dominate, it exercises pressure on countries like Mexico to cooperate more closely in this field.

One of the concerns related to this is the way in which the relationship between security and development can be dealt with in a country like Mexico. For example, on the occasion of the

Organization of American States-sponsored Special Conference on Security held in Mexico City in 2003, one of the topics that the Latin American and Caribbean countries most emphasized was the multidimensional concept of security, given that it cannot be restricted solely to the military sphere, but must be broadened out to include non-traditional threats. While it is desirable to make problems like the ones described above a high priority on national and international agendas, we run the risk of securitizing them and resorting mainly to the armed forces to deal with them. One of the best known examples is the fight against drug traf-

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ficking. Obviously it is a public security problem, but authorities have insisted on treating it as a problem of national security, bringing the armed forces into the fight, with very unsatisfying results. On the other hand, involving the police in intelligence gathering, surveillance and "arrests on suspicion," which have a negative effect on respect for basic human rights, is another worrying consequence of 9/11.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Five years after 9/11, the results of the anti-terrorist strategy vary. On the

one hand, it is true that U.S. territory has not been attacked again despite the fact that, after 9/11, given that initially no one took responsibility for it, it seemed imminent that the country would be targeted again. This perception was heightened by the fact that Washington assumed that Al Qaeda or other terrorist organizations, appreciating 9/11's "achievements," would be motivated to attempt new ones. However, it is possible that the force of the U.S. response, to the point of even calling its worldwide anti-terrorist crusade a "war," in addition to the questionable security measures imposed domestically, make it more difficult to perpetrate a new attack on U.S. soil.

This does not exclude, of course, the possibility that U.S.-based anti-government groups like that of Timothy McVeigh could perpetrate terrorist acts. In all, the United States is under severe attack abroad, especially in Iraq, where political and social conditions give Al Qaeda and other organizations ample room for action. Thus, it would seem that the relative "success" in "rooting out" terrorist acts on U.S. soil has led to Al Qaeda and other organizations—linked to it or not—operating outside U.S. territory, causing damage to its interests in the world and to Washington's allies.

This scenario makes it difficult to establish a balanced relationship between security and development. What is more, given the preponderance of the former over the latter, it is feasible that development policies will be securitized to the point that, as I suggested above, aid from nations like the United States to countries like the Latin American ones will be conditioned by their participation in the *war against terror*. ■■■