

RETHINKING SECURITY GOVERNANCE: A NEW SECURITY ARCHITECTURE

Security risks are a constant for any human society. Human beings and human societies have always strived to create an order that secures their lives, jobs, properties and the future of their children. The risks that prevented the achievement of this goal have mostly been similar throughout history and include wars, famine, economic crisis, climate change, natural disasters, technological catastrophes, terrorism, and crime.

These risks have remained to be a reality even in modern times, but today they have become more difficult to address. In present times, they have become more unpredictable and operate in an unprecedented manner often blurring our ability to foresee them and take adequate preventive measures.



What is different today? Why risks today operate so differently from the past?

In order to better understand the change in the nature of the risks we need to consider two aspects.

The first is the increased global connectivity of present times that has also increased the speed with which security risks become global.

It is not suggested here that in the past the risks have not been able to spread across borders. On the contrary, in the past risks such as wars, virus, famine, financial crisis and terrorism crossed borders often and easily: for example, the bubonic plague (the Black Death) crippled human population in Europe and Asia in the 14th century; climate change caused human catastrophes across the earth in the 17th century; terrorism spread across Europe in the 19th century causing the murders of monarchs and politicians. In some instances a combination of these threats has in fact led to total collapse of social and political order.

However, the global connectivity that we see in present times has no precedence in the history of mankind and this increased connectivity has had a proportionate effect on the speed with which any risk spreads. In a new interdependent and interconnected world, a problem in one country can move quickly across borders and travel through regions. Many threats become more global in scope as a result of spread of knowledge,

easy access to technological advances and the movement of people. The United Nations High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change has confirmed this phenomenon in its report in 2004, where the panel observes - "Today, more than ever before, threats are interrelated and a threat to one is a threat to all. The mutual vulnerability of weak and strong has never been clearer."

(1) The examples are right before our eyes. The pandemics caused by avian flu and severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) showed how a disease can, in a few weeks, affect many different geographical regions of the world.

Al Qaida "brand" has become rapidly global and operational in many countries. In 2008 the subprime mortgage crisis that started in the United States of America led to a global financial crisis and recession. We should also consider that the global spread of dual-used technologies is making it easier to develop dangerous chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear (CBRN) weapons. As the cosmologist and astrophysicist Martin Rees put it, "The twenty-first century is the first in the Earth's history when one species, ours, has the power to determine the fate of the entire biosphere."⁽²⁾

The second aspect relates to the inability of the nation-state (notably the main actor responsible for security) to deal with global challenges. While global connectivity has increased the speed with which risks spread and consequently their magnitude, it has, at the same time, negatively impacted on the states' ability to control them. Privatization, deregulation, international rules and standards, limitation in taxation, all of them have restricted the freedom of states to operate in the area of security. Current political and legal structures are also proving to be inadequate for dealing with global challenges in areas such as information technology and biotechnology, where the speed, distribution and ease of using technology is growing while the costs for accessing the equipment and technology are dropping.

Neither existing international organizations nor other international systems can replace the state in confronting these risks. International systems and mechanisms have clear limitations, especially in terms of legal mandate, resources and consensus.

So what can be done to confront the security risks in present times?

It must be conceded that a specific cure is not available. However, if we start realizing that globalization, apart from changing the nature of risks, has also brought to us resources and opportunities that could not have been imagined before, we can start thinking and designing a new security architecture.

This new security architecture should reconsider security at local level. It should be able to understand the interconnection between different risks by juxtaposing state security with economics, health, food, social and environmental needs.

(3) It should also be able to untangle the chains of their causation of risks and predict the long term consequences of policy decisions. One of the basic tenets of such a security framework should be that security is no longer a monopoly of "traditional security agencies", rather security can be achieved only through involvement of relevant stakeholders from various disciplines - including science and security communities, international organizations, industry and civil society. This human-centric networked approach is necessary to better understand the nature of the global risks in present times, identify solutions and create consensus around decentralized governance of security.

The new security architecture should, however, not be seen as replacing the state-centric traditional solutions, but it should rather supplement them with the networked approaches. But designing the new architecture would entail a change in the constitutional nature of state, where, for example, domestic and international affairs of the state would have to be aligned rather than being carried out in isolation. To some extent, a drastic change in the nature of state functioning has already happened in recent times as states have more regularly been relying on the assistance of non-state organizations for the purposes of dispensing services in key areas such as policing, justice system, social security and armed forces.

Beyond the local level the new security architecture should also rethink security at international level. As the United Nations High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change noted: "No State, no matter how powerful, can by its own efforts alone make itself invulnerable to today's threats. Every State requires the cooperation of other States to make itself secure. It is in every State's interest, accordingly, to cooperate with other States to address their most pressing threats, because doing so will maximize the chances of reciprocal cooperation to address its own threat priorities."⁽⁴⁾

Yet a realistic "collective security" should consider that not all States are equal in terms of military, economic and intellectual power, and that there are more powerful countries that allocate large amount of aid to countries perceived as a risk to their own security interests. Indeed international agenda and funds are mainly governed by top-down approaches that seek short-term state-centric security solutions, treating

security in isolation.

To ensure the effectiveness of a global collective security strategy, international aid should incorporate local development strategies. In other words, in setting an international agenda and distributing funds for its implementation, the strategic needs of the few powerful actors should be combined with the local and strategic needs of the many developing actors.

If we believe that increased global connectivity has brought not only challenges but also unique opportunities for cooperation, then it would be worthwhile exploring new ideas to understand and face the changed nature of risks.

The views expressed of the author do not necessarily reflect the views and positions of UNICRI and the United Nations.

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(1) Report of the United Nations High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change, New York, 2004, page 19.

(2) M. Rees, *From here to Infinity: Scientific Horizons*, London, 2011.

(3) A. Swain, *Understanding Emerging Security Challenges. Threats and Opportunities*, London, 2013.

(4) Report of the United Nations High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change, page 21.