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Regionalising Human Security in Africa

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The presentation wants to link three issues : (i) human security, (ii) regional integration and (iii) African development. The main argument is that human security needs to be looked at a regional rather than national level in Africa and that regional integration if driven by human security concerns has a lot of potential for development in Africa. First, the problem of human security in Africa will be discussed. Secondly, the link between regional integration and human security will be explored and thirdly a regional approach to human security in Africa will be advocated. Finally, it will be argued that TICAD should play a role in developing visions, monitoring schemes, institutional and social support for a *Human Security driven regional integration* in Africa.

1. The problem of human security in Africa

Essentially, human security is about creating the conditions or conducive environment for individuals, peoples and communities to live in ‘freedom from want’ and ‘freedom to’. The first refers to the absence or protection against hunger, natural disaster, torture and so on. The second refers to the opportunities that individuals should have

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to develop their potential as much as possible and to enjoy life to the fullest. In effect, human security approach is about creating and enhancing access, protection and empowerment of people and individuals to the material or quantitative dimensions of human existence, i.e. food, shelter, clothing, education and health care; and the non-material or qualitative conditions of human existence, i.e. freedom, liberty and participation in the decisions of the community that affect their lives.

As such, the human security concept is more and more linked to development. In fact, in the development field, scholars are now talking about the “*securitisation of development*”, in the sense that insecurities and underdevelopment create the conditions for wars and armed conflicts. Hence, development has to be addressed as a security issue, in particular, the effect on individuals, people and communities.

Human security also incorporates a multi-dimensional focus on creating and protecting the conditions for the eradication of both income poverty (material dimensions) and human poverty (promotion of human dignity). The multi-dimensional nature of the concept of human security therefore requires multi-level and multi-faceted interventions by a variety of actors to address the multiple threats to security faced by human beings in contemporary society today. An essential part of the human security approach is also its focus on the interlinkages between the multiple threats and issues such as socio-economic deprivation, health, environmental issues, physical threats and violent conflicts.

The substantive notion of human is therefore about sustainable human development and democracy, in terms of democratic participation and empowerment. It sees individual security as the primary focus and as such it is much broader than ‘national

security' as it embraces non-state and non-military issues next to the traditional security agenda.

Looking to Africa from this perspective, it becomes clear that the continent is challenged by multiple human security threats more than any other region in the world. The threats to human security are many and varied ranging from military sources of threats such as wars and armed conflicts, criminal violence and terrorism, and on-military dimensions of threats to human security such as poverty, disease (in particular HIV/AIDS), environmental degradation, and natural catastrophes such as flooding, drought, famine and desertification. To this needs to be added the impact of demographics. Sub-Saharan Africa's population growth rate is still among the highest in the world and this despite AIDS. But the result of the ravages of AIDS is that it is distorting the demographic profile. It has been estimated that by 2020, half of the population in Sub-Saharan Africa will be under the age of fifteen. All of this has devastating consequences on human security and on the conditions of human existence at local, national and regional levels.

In addition, the nature of domestic politics in the majority of African countries based on political clientelism and neo-patrimonialism have not catered for the efficient political and economic management of the state, hence compounding the human security problems as reflected by the depressing social and development indicators in the UNDP Human Development Report of 2003. 29 countries in Africa, more than two-thirds of the States in Africa are listed in the low human development category, with a further 47 % of the population of Africa living on less than US\$ 1 a day. Since 1970, more than 30 wars have been fought in Africa, the vast majority of them intra-

state. The number of refugees, returnees and displaced persons has been estimated at more than 8 million.

Human insecurity is the greatest obstacle to peace and development and the only way to achieve the Millennium Development Goals is a sustained investment and commitment to the promotion of access, protection and empowerment of human security in all its forms in Africa. Africa therefore needs special attention and international commitment to prevent the scourge of human insecurities and underdevelopment.

In the report of the *Commission on Human security*, the question is asked whether the rethinking of Security is imperative for Africa. The answer is yes. First because of “the internal struggles of African people against colonial rule” that have brought their notion of security beyond the classical notion of external threats. Secondly, “the persistent marginalisation of countries in Africa from processes of economic growth and development” has emphasised the inter-linkages between development, poverty eradication and peace-building and state-building.

Indeed, the economic growth engendered in the rest of the world by globalisation and by scientific and technological advances is not happening in Africa. Domestic and foreign investments remain problematic in states that are not able to secure a peaceful and stable (political and economical) environment and in which the rule of law is often lacking. On top of this, Africa’s comparative advantage lies in agriculture and here the policies of the United States and the European Union seem to block a resurgence of the agricultural sector by means of domestic agricultural subsidies and high duties and non-tariff barriers.

The Human Security concept broadens the focus from state security (meaning first and for all security of borders) to the security of people whether they live inside or across borders. But at the end of the day the Human Security concept still relies on national organisations to provide solutions to security problems. The state remains the central provider of security in all circumstances. Especially in Africa, such an approach will not work.

First, because there is the problematic status of borders. African borders have been to a large extent been designed by the European colonisers who used sometimes arbitrary lines based on latitude and longitude to map out Africa. Not surprisingly then, the African borders do not reflect historically grown territorial divisions, neither do they take into account ethnic divisions.

Secondly, often those boundaries are very porous and they allow rapid spill-overs of security problems. This is partly linked to the boundaries having only a limited significance to the people. It is also linked to the movements of refugees across borders, to movements provoked by famine and by the salience in Africa of threats without borders such as HIV/AIDS.

Thirdly, in the case of failing states, there is hardly a national governance tissue that can be of help in dealing with Human Security. Such states are not in a position to guarantee the security of people and they do not fully control their territory. Buzan and Waever (2003, p. 220) have argued that most of the security problems of Africa largely hang on the failure of the postcolonial state.

The *Human Security Now* Report thus notes rightly that regarding Africa, “*the thinking on security takes place alongside focusing on regional and continental cooperation and regeneration*” (p. 3). The report refers to how issues of security are present in the founding documents of regional integration arrangements such as the African Union, the New Partnership for Africa (NEPAD) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC).

2. Regional integration and Human Security

Human Security issues spill-over territorial borders and are therefore more than just national concerns. Given their very international nature they require international cooperation. A Global approach to Human Security, such as advocated in the *Human Security Now* Report, thus makes sense. But how to translate such a global approach into concrete actions ? The answer to that question might be : by mainstreaming Human Security in the work of regional organisations concerned with regional integration.

Regional integration can be defined as a process of social transformation characterised by an intensification of relations between states. In the last half century, the world has witnessed different waves of regional integration.

After the Second World War, a first wave of regionalisation focused on trade and payments liberalization between neighbouring countries in order to spur inter-country transactions and minimize the risks to inter-state conflicts. Such regional integration is thus a process of deepening cooperation over areas that parties agree on as common interests shared by each one. In essence this involves a process of economic

liberalisation among countries. This process is heavily dependent upon the political will and commitment of the governments concerned, and a sustained desire to co-operate over the long term.

The current wave of regionalism is different, as it is increasingly no longer about trade only, but presents itself as a “ multidimensional form of integration which includes economic, political, social and cultural aspects and thus goes far beyond the goal of creating region-based free trade regimes or security alliances. Rather, the political ambition of establishing regional coherence and identity seems to be of primary importance.” (Hettne, 1999a:xvi). This *New Regionalism* aims to promote certain “world values” as security, development, and ecological sustainability, better than globalism. (Hettne, 1999a).

Regional integration and globalization are the two phenomena challenging the existing global order based upon sovereign states at the beginning of the XXIst century. The two processes “deeply affect the stability of the Westphalian state system, thus contributing to both disorder and (possibly) a new global order.” (Hettne, 1999b:1). Global governance has to evolve nowadays in an international context deeply marked by the phenomenon of globalization framed in a world-wide process of changing and evolving levels of governance between city-regions, states, macro-regions and the global level.

The EU is a good example of such *new regionalism* as it has managed to develop a model of integration that incorporates political elements in a deep economic integration. We now have in Europe a complex multi-level governance system with a deep co-operation between states, with firm devolution of power within states and a strong international legal framework. This has created a political model, which challenges assumptions about governance all over the world.

New regionalism is a multi-faced phenomenon, which touches therefore a much wider number of policies as the old trade-based regionalism did. As such new regionalism is of relevance to Human Security. Regional integration initiatives have the potential to contribute to the following eight important functions (Van Langenhove, 2003:4):

- The strengthening of trade integration in the region;
- The creation of an appropriate enabling environment for private sector development;
- The development of infrastructure programmes in support of economic growth and regional integration;
- The development of strong public sector institutions and good governance;
- The reduction of social exclusion and the development of an inclusive civil society;
- Contribution to peace and security in the region;
- The building of environment programmes at the regional level; and
- The strengthening of the region's interaction with other regions of the world.

Each of these eight functions can be directly related to Human Security issues as they cover the conflict-related aspects as well as the poverty-related aspects of human security and they refer to mechanisms and institutions needed to create human security initiatives.

Regional Integration and Human Security go hand in hand. The development of the concept of New Regionalism, which includes not only economic but also social, political and security dynamics, seems to come from the understanding by states that

in order to profit the most out of Regional Integration, they need stability and therefore the achievement of the goals of Human Security. Indeed, the concepts of New Regionalism and Human Security have been growing together.

Buzan and Waever (1998, 2003) have laid the foundations for a regional approach to security. They have argued that regional security dynamics is a significant part of the overall constellation of security in the international system. In doing so, they have followed Lake and Morgan (1997) who also called for security analysis ‘to start with regions’. In their view “the regional level stands more clearly on its own as the focus of conflict and cooperation for states and as the level of analysis for scholars seeking to explore contemporary security affairs” (Lake and Morgan, 1997, pp. 6-7). The problem of Buzan and Weaver’s regional security complex theory is however that they primarily focus on state security. But their arguments for a regional approach hold even more when thinking in terms of human security. So the challenge is to explore how a regional human security complex theory can be developed.

But how can this be of use for the rethinking of Human Security in Africa ? To answer that question, it is necessary to have a look at how regional integration manifestates itself in Africa (van Ginkel et al., 2003).

Africa’s internal market is in economic terms only about two times larger than that of Belgium, yet it is fragmented into over fifty countries. When one considers the small size and fragmented nature of the African economies and the challenge of competition in a global context, then it becomes clear that progressive integration holds great potential for minimising the cost of market fragmentation, and thus represents a precondition for integrating African economies into the global economy. As such

there is a rising realisation among African countries that Africa's socio-economic situation can hardly improve without regional integration.

The drive towards regional integration in Africa, both continent-wide (cf. pan-Africanism) and at a sub-continental scale is not new at all. After a first post-colonial wave of regional integration a second wave started in 1991 with the signing of the Abuja Treaty regarding the African Economic Community.

Some regional organisations have gradually evolved from an economic role towards including security functions, with more or less success, as highlighted by Francis (2003) who explored the nexus between economic and security regionalism in West Africa, through the prism of ECOWAS regionalism and its expansion into the complex security frontier in the form of the ECOWAS cease-fire monitoring group (ECOMOG). Obviously, there is an added value of having regional rather than global security interventions. Laakso (2003, p. 5) mentioned in this respect that regional organisations as 'third parties' can facilitate mediation and provide guarantees to the weaker parties that peace settlement will hold.

A special feature of African regional integration is that African countries have chosen to create and belong to several regional integration initiatives to pursue their integration on multiple tracks. Today, of the 53 African countries, 27 are members of a Regional Economic Community while 18 states belong to as many as three RECs. Regional integration in the African Union may well proceed initially on a narrower geographical scale, to coincide with the many sub-regional integration initiatives that are currently developing across the African continent. These parallel processes and

initiatives need not conflict with the broader goal of the African Union, and may even offer scope for synergies and increase the potential for further co-operation.

There are currently a variety of examples of regional integration in Africa, the researchers being challenged by the different aspects of the African mosaic of overlapping, and sometimes competing forms of regionalism. Different modes of regional governance (Söderbaum, 2002) have been distinguished in Africa: political stability clubs (like the SADC), the governing of conflict and plunder (ECOWAS), the market-driven open regionalism, and finally micro-regionalism (for instance the Zambia-Malawi-Mozambique Growth Triangle recently studied by Slocum, Mordonu and De Lombaerde, 2003).

But integration is no magic potion and simplistic recipes of encouraging integration in the hope of producing significant economic and political effects are not realistic (Goldstein, 2003). African regional integration has notwithstanding its long tradition achieved little concrete results up to now. This can be explained by an unwillingness of certain African governments to cede sovereignty as well as to failures to resolve deep-rooted conflicts (Diabré, 2003). Next to a lack of structural stability (including peace and security), an inadequate institutional design certainly also accounts for the often disappointing results (Kennes, 2003). Nevertheless, nowadays regional integration itself has changed and as such it still holds promising potential for Africa. I do not want to seem over-optimistic in this assessment, as one is daily confronted to images of conflicts, instability and disintegration in certain areas of the African continent. Nevertheless, wars and ethnic violence are themselves often derived from the problem of boundaries. Instead of trying to re-draw boundaries, regional integration presents the advantage of allowing to 'de-signify the boundaries' (Griggs,

1997) by the organization of a common regional effort towards peace and development, towards an 'African Renaissance'.

On one hand, NEPAD seems to represent an important step in this sense, as it tries to bridge all the divides by creating an inter-face between the several regional agreements, the continental-wide UA and the development goals of the UN. This initiative represents a complex and promising project, as it acknowledges that efforts towards economic integration can neither be separated from peace and security concerns, nor from the need to be driven by African civil society and African leaders. On the other hand, in order to achieve success, all efforts towards effective integration need to be supported by an adequate institutional infrastructure.

3. A regional approach to human security in Africa

The concept of Human security has evolved into a comprehensive and integrated approach to security. As such it is closely related to Human Development as both consider economic well-being and social welfare as an essential basis for individual security and stable communities.

But Human security is to be regarded as clearly distinct from 'domestic' issues of welfare and governance as the Human security challenges spills over national territorial borders and causes a range of wider regional threats and sources of instability such as refugee flows and illegal trafficking in narcotics and humans. As Human security is not linked to traditional national borders, a regional focus is essential. This implies studying the regional variation of Human security issues such as epidemics, displacement and vulnerability to sudden economic downturn.

Following from Human security Report recommendations, African regional organisations could play an important role in tackling human security problems by addressing some of the basics : i) protecting people in violent conflict; ii) protecting people from the proliferation of arms; iii) supporting the human security of people on the move; iv) establishing human security transition funds for post-conflict situations; v) encouraging fair trade and markets to benefit the extreme poor; vi) providing minimum living standards everywhere; vii) according high priority to universal access to basic health care; viii) developing an efficient and equitable global system for patent rights; ix) empowering all people with universal basic education; x) clarifying

the need for a global human identity while respecting the freedom of individuals to have diverse identities and affiliations.

What does a regional approach to human security mean ? It means acknowledging that contributing to increasing the human security cannot be done from a ‘national’ point of view as many of the factors of human insecurity have a cross-national aspect. It also means that regional integration has to be seen as part of the solution. An increased level of integration can contribute directly and indirectly to more human security in a region.

Of course, not all regional integration will automatically lead to an increase in human security. As noted by Söderbaum (2003, p. 187) the ‘fire brigade’ approach as used recently by SADC and ECOMOG is not sufficient. The case studies performed by Söderbaum suggest that the interventions carried out under the banner of ECOWAS or SADC either sought to cement authoritarian regimes in the name of ‘security’ or to promote a political economy of violence. The alternative is a more pro-active preventive approach based upon broader concepts of security and regional integration.

A regional approach to human security only makes sense if it is linked to the idea of a transnational (regional) civil society. Only in that way a sense of regional identity can flourish and also gives prospects for the development of so-called informal or bottom-up regional development.

Regional institution building can enhance human security in Africa. First of all, there is evidence that support for regional integration can increase the objective positive interdependence, which in turn is a prerequisite for regional human security. But as

noted by Laakso (2002, p. 5) this needs to be complemented by a subjective positive interdependence. This is where the civil society comes in. The main issue here seems to be the emergence of a sense of regional identity. This, of course, is something that needs to grow and that cannot be “imposed”. However, the international donor community can help in stimulating the economic conditions that foster the indigenous generation of regional identities. Kivimäki (2002, p. 27) mentions: supporting regional development projects, treating regions as meaningful actors, channelling aid through regional institutions.

The foregoing suggests that new regionalism can be an important tool for Africa to allow the continent to profit at maximum from globalisation and to protect the African people from the dark sides of globalisation at the same time! But regional integration is a complex process that needs vision, monitoring sound institutions, resources and a broad societal support.

- In my view, human security should be at the core of the vision that regional integration in Africa needs ! In other words, the economic goals of regional integration need to be complemented by a broader vision that incorporates Human Security goals. At UNU-CRIS we are developing and implementing tools for visioning on regional integration in Africa.
- Human Security driven regional integration also implies adequate monitoring. First, Human Security targets need to be incorporated in the regionalisation processes. Secondly, these targets need to be backed by indicators and reporting of progress made. Such targets and indicators might cover infant mortality, deaths in civil conflicts, refugee flows across borders, illegal arm transfers and so on. It should be noted that formal review processes by regional organisations perhaps can

help improve national policies. Much work still needs to be done at the level of developing indicators for monitoring regional integration. At UNU-CRIS, we currently have a research programme running on this topic.

- Regional integration needs adequate institutional support. Not only is a good secretariat necessary, also there are adequate resources necessary for investments and adjustment. This is where TICAD comes in : donors and international organisations should support efforts to develop common regional strategies for promoting human security. In Europe we have seen that the Structural and Cohesion Funds in the EU have helped promote upward convergence of poorer areas within the Union. A similar approach will only work in Africa if it takes into account the wider security aspects.
- Taking into account the human security dimension of regional integration needs both a political commitment at the highest level and a broad social support. As mentioned in the recent ILO report “*A Fair Globalisation*”, this implies that regional integration should be advanced through social dialogue.

Concrete actions on all these levels are possible. TICAD could play a major role here!

So for me, one of the challenges today is to contribute to a *Human Security driven regional integration* in Africa. Such a project will allow the necessary cross-border and international approach to Human Security challenges in Africa. It will also allow a more optimal use of the limited technical and human resources available. And above all, it will allow to link local and people-centred concerns with a global perspective.

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