Sustainable Common Security
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Disintegration is spreading. Overlapping crises are accelerating. In many parts of the world people feel deep insecurity. In the search for solutions, idealism may be considered naïve, but it's now as critical as cooperation. And, we desperately need hope, along with a guide to addressing urgent global challenges.

Sustainable common security might help with each. It's an umbrella concept premised on the higher ideal of enduring, shared security; one that may also provide a unifying 'bridge' between progressive social movements, which also need wider support and solidarity.

To date, concepts of cooperative security – whether "collective security," "comprehensive security," "common security" or "human security" – have been helpful but insufficient. ꭥe emancipatory potential of each was evident early on, just not agreeable to the most powerful. As a result, our key systems and institutions did not shift as hoped. Within a few years it was back to national security, preparing for war and business as usual. Despite a rapidly globalizing world, transformational change continues to be resisted in all the state-centric institutions. This raises a fundamental question: how do we break from this pattern to do better?

Security concepts usually have a fifteen- to twentyyear shelf-life. They linger until new challenges arise exposing their limits. In this, they're vaguely similar to paradigm shifts, but often without the wider transformation intended. By definition, paradigm shifts occur when prevailing systems are deemed inadequate or failing and when another option is widely viewed as better.

Slowly, people are recognizing the need for a new approach to security, particularly one that is attuned to costs and consequences over the long-term. With the Global Peace Index* reporting the cost of war and armed conflict reached a staggering $13.6 trillion over the past year, even children know that's unsustainable. In "A world in need: the case for sustainable security," * Paul Rogers of the Oxford Research Group writes that,

A hurricane of crises across the world – financial meltdown, economic recession, social inequality, military power, food insecurity, climate change – presents governments, citizens and thinkers with a defining challenge: to rethink what "security" means in order to steer the world to a sustainable course. The gap between perilous reality and this urgent aspiration remains formidable.

The Oxford Research Group identifies four interconnected trends that are most likely to lead to substantial global and regional instability, and largescale loss of life:

- Climate change
- Competition over resources

- Marginalization of the majority world
- Global militarization

Sustainable security shifts the emphasis toward the long-term impact and consequences of our policies, as well as the underlying causes of insecurity, desperation and conflict. The central premise is that the consequences of insecurity are beyond control and fighting the symptoms will not work sufficiently; the focus must shift to resolving the deeper causes.

Common security provided a blueprint for survival that helped to stem the last Cold War, stopped provocative deployments, calmed tensions and cut both conventional and nuclear weapons, largely by stressing our interdependence and mutual vulnerability. It's premised on basic understanding that applies to Russia and America, India and Pakistan, Iran and Saudi Arabia, even to people everywhere; we may share security, but we can no longer fight to win it. The competitive pursuit of national security at the expense of others now incurs unacceptable costs and risks. A common security approach relies on deeper cooperation, empathy and mutual respect for the golden rule: treat others as you would wish to be treated.

A synthesis of sustainable security and common security should be timely and sufficiently broad as an 'umbrella'. Sustainable common security is also considered synonymous with positive peace. Both are more holistic than the narrower notions of national and international security or the conception of negative peace (the absence of direct, overt violence). Both are increasingly interdependent across systems, beliefs and borders. Both make the connection between direct violence, structural violence (exploitation and exclusion) and cultural violence (prevalent in divisive politics, religious extremes, media and academe), and are helpful in efforts to curtail each.

Clearly, we must encourage progressive internationalism, cosmopolitanism and a one-world perspective. Further, both a revitalized United Nations and a more preventative approach to security are needed, to ensure that whenever possible challenges are addressed before they manifest as threats.

Notably, 'sustainable peace' was a common theme across the three recent UN high-level reviews of security and peace. As with sustainable common security, they stress a much-needed holistic vision and the primacy of politics at all stages. Now, one priority will be to build and sustain support for UN peace operations, with sufficient troops and police, as well as adequate financing. Second, the UN has asked member states to transform their advanced Cold War military efforts into capacity for peace operations. It's time to encourage a wider shift from war-fighting to providing prompt help and useful services. And, if governments are serious about preventing armed conflict and protecting vulnerable civilians, the responsible option is to develop the proposed UN Emergency Peace Service (UNEPS).

Obviously, there is no one magic bullet or policy option panacea that will deliver sustainable common security. Too many of our dominant systems – capitalism, climate, democracy, sovereign states, even the international security system – are stressed, if not dysfunctional. Similarly, decline is apparent in the world order, the neo-liberal order, Pax Americana and the transatlantic post-war alliances. Rather than plan a coherent transformation, officials still aim for "pragmatic", "incremental" reforms to existing arrangements, that increasingly fail to advance security in any meaningful way.

Like it or not, our diverse global systems and challenges tend to be 'linked-in' and interdependent. They're unlikely to be solved or fixed by isolated efforts. Progress in one area may depend on progress in others. Unity of effort and purpose may help to develop the more comprehensive understanding and integrated approaches required.

Hopefully, sustainable common security will appeal widely and build a wider bridge to cooperation and solidarity among progressive social movements; one that expands our base and potential to help with what's ahead. Might it offer a unifying vision for the deep transformations now needed? It's already

attracted diverse NGOs in Canada to share a common platform for security and defence policy, along with others working on nuclear disarmament. those are encouraging steps.

In sum, sustainable common security may provide a shared vision and objective for the diverse movements addressing vital global challenges. On this occasion, the task ahead is to build a movement of movements from the bottom up. As Naomi Klein noted in accepting the Sydney Peace Prize, "Let's set aside whatever is keeping us apart and start right now."

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