

Summary Report

Integrating Human Security into National Security Policies in North-West Africa

**Regional conference, Rabat, Morocco,
23 -24 November 2010**



Geneva Centre for the Democratic
Control of Armed Forces (DCAF)

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Hosted by the Centre for Human Rights and Democracy Studies (CEDHD) and the Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF), the conference focussed on developing national security policies in North-West Africa, under the title “Integrating Human Security into National Security Policies in North-West Africa”. The event took place in Rabat 23-24 November 2010 and brought together high-ranking representatives from Algeria, Burkina Faso, Mali, Mauritania, Morocco and Senegal as well as a number of international experts. The conference was supported by the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs.

The conference discussed national and transnational security challenges in North-West Africa and analyzed various national responses in terms of their impact on human security in the region. A central theme of the conference was the effort to take stock of national experiences in dealing with various security threats and understanding how national security policy could help reduce the fear and want citizens face. Participants also explored how approaches to national security policy would need to change in order to better respond to the needs of people in the region: Can countries in the region work together to learn from each other’s experiences? Can they design and implement national security policies in a way that benefit all people in the region? What regional mechanisms could be developed to assist national security policy-makers in North-West Africa?

The presentations, discussions and debates produced new and practical insights for policy-makers in North-West Africa on the benefits of

developing public national security policies that reflect a human security perspective.

The participants acknowledged at the very beginning of the conference the limitations of a narrow concept of security: The dominant concept of ‘state security’ was seen to be insufficient for tackling and overcoming globalised and transnational threats. They recognised that national security policies need to embrace a broader concept of security and build on existing regional cooperation in order to guarantee the future safety and well-being of citizens in the region.

The conference discussions focused around seven thematic sessions:

1. Why develop a national security policy?
2. Defining shared security interests and common threats to national security
3. Adopting measures to protect security interests and face security threats
4. Establishing a national security policy
5. Ensuring implementation and monitoring of a national security policy
6. The regional dimension of national security
7. Regional mechanisms for strengthening national security

The discussions highlighted three inter-linked understandings:

- A national public security policy responds to the needs of the state and individual citizens. It improves the state’s capacities in planning,



orienting and shaping expectations, and in adapting rapidly and flexibly to fast-changing insecurities and threats.

- Security, development and democratisation are interdependent and mutually reinforce each other. A broad human security approach is more apt to tackle current threats characterised by trans-border crime, terrorist activities and an internationalisation of agents of insecurity.
- A modern national security strategy requires improved regional cooperation based on a clear understanding of the countries' and peoples' common interests, and a political will to develop a collective and coordinated response to shared threats.

The conference closed with the adoption of a final statement, which included practical recommendations for establishing and institutionalizing a dialogue on national and regional security policy.

The tangible output of the conference is a unanimous expression of interest in establishing a process that provides for a regular exchange on national security policy development amongst countries in North-West Africa.

INTRODUCTION

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North-West Africa

The North-West African region is at the crossroads of the Sahara and the Sahel regions. It is a space of trade, ethnic diversity, and migration. The region has immense economic and cultural potential. However, it also characterised by tensions, conflicts and insecurity. The long straight lines of most borders dominate the shape of the region's map. They illustrate best the colonial arbitrariness with which those states came into being. For colonial powers control over strategic locations sufficed to meet their limited interests. Yet, today the independent states that inherited these extensive arbitrary borders are at pains to patrol and manage them. This is complicated by the fact that they cross lands feared for their adverse geographic conditions. At the same time all countries in the region are facing multiple security, environmental and socio-economic challenges. The nature of these threats forces governments to take bold steps and adapt their public policies accordingly. Hence, the development of adequate national security policies is and will remain a major challenge for all the countries of the region.

Human Security

In the last decade many countries have come to the conclusion that national security in terms of economic sovereignty and territorial, institutional integrity is not achievable without protecting the psychological and somatic well-being of its citizen. Human security, that is freedom from physical violence, fear and want, has thus become an integral part of their vision for national security policy. In a globalised world, state security does not guarantee the safety

and well-being of a state's citizens. A broader conceptualisation of security was needed to respond to the threats that have emerged concomitant to the exponential increases in transnational flows of goods, information and people. Therefore, security can no longer refer solely to the state, but must include individual human beings.

The conference provided a space for deliberation on the challenge of integrating human security into national security policies. The presentations, discussions and debates produced some groundbreaking and very practical insights for policy-makers in North-West Africa on the benefits of developing public national security policies that reflect a human security perspective. This report summarizes what participants found useful to retain from the conference.

Conference Outline

Recognising that a broader notion of human security based on regional cooperation shows more potential for national security policies to guarantee the safety and well-being of citizens, the conference focused discussion around seven thematic sessions:

1. Why develop a national security policy?
2. Defining shared security interests and common threats to national security
3. Adopting measures to protect security interests and face security threats
4. Establishing a national security policy
5. Ensuring implementation and monitoring of a national security policy



6. The regional dimension of national security
7. Regional mechanisms for strengthening national security

The Structure of the Report

In synthesising the seven thematic sessions, this report answers the three key questions of the conference:

- **Why is a national security policy necessary?**
The first section highlights participants' views on why a national security policy is necessary and what benefits integrating human security into such a policy might offer. The conference concluded that the rationale for developing a national security policy stems from the evolving and changeable nature of the threats and insecurities states face. Therefore, the first section begins with an appraisal of participants' perceptions of the threats and insecurities hovering over their countries and the North-West African Region.
- **How to develop national security policies?**
A cornerstone of the conference has been participants' reflections on the requirements, means and methods to successfully develop a national security policy. Hence, the second section presents findings from the conference on how to develop national security policies and addresses the main challenges that countries in the region face in such a process.

- **Why regional cooperation?**

The conference illustrated the limitations of narrow national approaches and the impossibility of developing adequate responses to current and future threats without regional involvement of both states and other important stakeholders. The third section discusses practical needs for the improvement of regional cooperation and coordination.

Finally, the conclusion assesses the success of the conference and its significance in the region. It also provides a brief analysis of the potential entry points for follow-up processes.

SECTION I: WHY INTEGRATE HUMAN SECURITY INTO NATIONAL SECURITY POLICIES?



Threats and Insecurities in North-West Africa

Trafficking and Smuggling

The economy of North-West Africa has rested for many centuries on the resources of the sea and a mosaic of pastoral societies, with extensive trade routes crossing the region with little regard for official borders. Characterised by a high degree of mobility of goods and people the region has in recent years witnessed a considerable surge in agents and factors of insecurity. The obvious preoccupation of the conference participants resided in the expanding networks of criminal activity. These networks engage in the trafficking of drugs, arms, and human beings as well as smuggling, theft and kidnapping to extort ransom money. Mr Moulaye from Mali expressed his concern that “drug trafficking has become increasingly problematic as the narcotics are not just transiting the country, but are also consumed more and more by the local people.” In combination with the proliferation of small arms, a major concern for Mali is changes in attitude that may contribute to a rapid escalation of armed violence in society. In this vein, the failure of societal conflict resolution mechanisms heightens the risk of simple family feuds spiralling into civil war.

Colonel Bambara, made clear that threats are not isolated. Organised crime and the trafficking and smuggling of small arms across porous borders triggers a spiral of insecurity that can only hamper a country’s development.¹ A particular challenge posed by criminal networks is their

partial collusion with multinational companies and sometimes foreign states pursuing their own geopolitical and economic interests. In some cases, criminal organisations (regional and global) and local bandits trade services, establishing “joint business operations”. In other cases, multinational companies exploit the spaces of weak governance in the region for money laundering or pay – and sometimes use – non-state armed groups to secure their ventures and markets.

Terrorism

The primary security concern of international actors is a perceived threat of terrorism related to what has been described as the emergence of “Al-Qaida au Maghreb islamique”(AQMI) or “Al-Qaida in the Maghreb”. In contrast, for policy-makers in the region, terrorism rates substantially lower on the list of perceived threats. Conference participants discussed whether AQMI represented a real threat or whether it was more a convenient buzzword to help advance the policy interests of different states. Several thought that Western states had an interest in exaggerating the terrorism threat as this could serve as a pretext to justify an international security presence in the region and allowed forces to tap existing funding instruments, which had been developed for combating terrorism. The borders delimiting the states of North-West Africa have always been rather porous and encouraged all kinds of trafficking. Mr Mohamedou from Mauritania reminded the audience that the vast extension of the regions’s borders as well as the combination of difficult climate and terrain render their protection and surveillance onerous. Some

¹ See “Une perspective de politique de sécurité nationale. Burkina Faso”, DCAF, Geneva 2010, p. 7.



participants from the region pointed out that much of what was described by external analysts as terrorist activity could also be described as the activities of criminal networks and trafficking gangs.

Economy and Ecology

Against this backdrop, it may be less surprising that some conference participants complained that criminal networks often have access to more sophisticated weapons and equipment than state security forces. Furthermore, the privatization of security, rendered attractive in resource extracting economies, increases insecurity for the people. Hence, the economic dimension is key to understanding the state of insecurity in North-West Africa. Poverty is a major factor in insecurity, as criminal gangs find it easy to recruit amongst people who are desperate for any employment opportunity. Even ecological threats are feared primarily for their economic impact, as these can undermine the livelihood of entire regions. For example most strategic documents submitted to the conference allude to environmental degradation such as desertification as a factor threatening the livelihood of large parts of the population. Thus one of the major conclusions of the conference is that insecurity find its roots in the people's lack of socio-economic perspectives. As Police Inspector General Mahamadou Niakaté from Mali argued, the opportunities available for people given current levels of development among the states of the region cannot possibly compete with the potential profits of criminality.

Under-development and Insecurity

Conference participants shared the understanding that poverty and the lack of good governance and democracy constitute major threats to the security of the populations living in the region. Mr Mohamedou's list of important security threats for the region placed under-development first among his concerns. Similarly the Algerian participant, Mr Khiati saw deficits in public services, democracy and participation as further sources of insecurity equivalent to terrorism and organised crime. Mauritania's document covering perspectives on national security also sets under-development, poverty, food insecurity, and environmental hazards at the top of its threats list.² In the region's perception, the lack of transparency and efficiency of state institutions ranks even higher as a threat to security than terrorism and organised crime. The Mali document differentiates between three types of threats, of which human development is set down as its own category next to internal and external threats.³

² See "Une perspective de politique de sécurité nationale. Mauritanie", DCAF, Geneva 2010, p.6.

³ See "Une perspective de politique de sécurité nationale. Mali", DCAF, Geneva 2010, p.7.



Benefits of a Public National Security Policy

In 2010 both Burkina Faso and Mali adopted a public national security policy for the first time.⁴ The conference in Rabat thus offered an opportunity to discuss the benefits and potentials of a national security policy in the light of their recent experiences. Mr Moulaye from Mali opened the discussion by noting: “The security challenges are becoming increasingly complex. The states cannot manage those situations like firemen, they need a clear vision.” The participants shared a clear understanding that being prepared to face immanent threats and prevent crises from erupting are clear advantages to formulating a national security policy. From their discussion, five major benefits of elaborating and introducing national security policies crystallised:

- **Developing a shared understanding:** The process helps governments and stakeholders to develop what Mr Mohamedou of Mauritania called, “a shared approach based on strategic reflections.” This means stakeholders in the process have the chance to define a common vision of security – a necessary step to ensure that the government addresses threats in a comprehensive manner. Devising an appropriate preventative strategy is only

possible with a complete picture of the threats and insecurities looming. The procedural and cyclical character of national security policy-formulation ensures the regular revision of current threat analyses and the adaptation of responses to changing threat scenarios. As a result policy becomes more responsive.

- **Improving overall planning capacities:** A national security policy dramatically improves the planning capacities of the state as a whole. The security sector becomes more effective as the contributions of the different government branches are optimised. As inspector general Mahamadou Niakaté of Mali underlined “security might be priceless, but it comes at a certain cost.” Without proper planning, resources are wasted and efforts duplicated. National security policies assure more efficient use of resources but do not necessarily imply smaller budgets. In Mali, because the security forces had opened up and increased budget transparency, citizens placed more trust in their security forces and accepted budget increases. Colonel Birame Diop from Senegal highlighted that their national security policy has made their budget more coherent and, as it was subjected to legislative approval, more legitimate.
- **Building consensus:** Several participants stressed that security is a public good. The state has the obligation towards its citizens to guarantee their safety. With the appropriate process, a national security policy can build domestic consensus around a particular conceptualisation of security. It mobilises

⁴ Mali has adopted its NSP on 20 October 2010; See “Une perspective de politique de sécurité nationale. Mauritanie”, DCAF, Geneva 2010, p.6 ; And also see “Une perspective de politique de sécurité nationale. Burkina Faso”, DCAF, Geneva 2010, p.5.



social partners and civil society to contribute accordingly to tackle relevant threats and insecurity. This is even more necessary in a context where threats to security stem primarily from under-development and societal deficiencies. It should also not be overlooked that a national security policy also shapes expectations and makes the government and its decision-making more predictable and comprehensible.

- **Boosting democratisation:** National security policies, particularly when integrating human security, can boost democratisation and the reform efforts of governments. For example, Colonel Diop of Senegal rightly mentioned that security is not a universal concept, but has different meanings in different countries. Hence, security is based on specific needs and a sound national security policy requires the participation of a large proportion of society. Participation is also an on-going process. For example in Mali, according to Inspector General Niakaté, citizens can make inquiries about security with the ministry responsible.
- **Enhancing regional cooperation:** Colonel Boulahbach from Morocco argued that countries in the region needed to develop national security policies, if they wanted to boost regional confidence and develop their security cooperation. Participants also emphasized that it would take more than political will to enhance regional security cooperation: Countries in the region would need to build competent and responsible institutions, improve their planning

capacities, develop clear understandings of each countries' resources and formulate shared expectations.

Why Integrate Human Security?

Broadening the Security Concept

The conference yielded a simple answer to the question of why human security should be integrated into national security policy. Human security broadens the notion of security, making a national security policy more comprehensive. Human security also adds depth to national security policies by improving the assessment of both threats to security and actors of insecurity. Many threats simply become more visible when their effects are observed at the level of the citizen and social groups. For example threats targeting mainly a minority of the population, would probably evade a state security perspective, as would many environmental and developmental hazards.

Linking Human Development and Security

The conference stressed on many occasions the links between development and security. General Mahamadou Niakaté noted that criminality currently yields higher profits than the opportunities afforded by states' current levels of development. Although threats like terrorism, AQMI and organised crime may seem the most pressing, poverty and the lack of good governance are in fact root causes of insecurity. Human security simply offers clear entry points for linking and harmonising security and development strategies.



Transforming Conflicts

Mr Moulaye reminded participants of the need to develop capacity to transform conflicts peacefully. When such capacities are lacking, insecurity and fear increase; the use of violence becomes a feature of everyday life. Participating in gangs or other forms of organised criminality not only yields economic benefits, but also functions for some as a mechanism of protection. Features of democracy, such as the rule of law and inclusive political participation are key to transforming conflicts without recourse to violence. Thus, Colonel Boulahbach concluded that a sustainable national security policy could not be developed in the absence of democracy.

Sharing Vision of Security

Transnational criminal networks and cross-border crime illustrate the need for a regional understanding of security and more effective regional cooperation. From a human security perspective borders are not primarily conceived as territorial delimitations, but in more strategic terms as boundaries marking specific groups' needs for protection. For example, the increasing cocaine trafficking coming from Latin America affects the population of all countries in the region equally, irrespective of national borders. From a human security perspective, that threat would need to be recognised by the states as a shared regional threat and addressed collectively through a common approach. In the absence of a shared approach, individual national attempts to control the flows of drugs risk being ineffective. Hence, the conference developed the insight that cooperation and security in the region could considerably increase if the states of North-West Africa developed a shared vision of security.

SECTION II: HOW TO DEVELOP AND IMPLEMENT NATIONAL SECURITY POLICIES?



Processes and Strategies

Building on Regional Experiences

Burkina Faso's and Mali's recent experiences provide interesting examples on which countries in the region could build to enhance thinking on national security policy. Both countries provided the conference with their own views of the requirements and the process involved in developing and implementing a national security policy. In Mauritania, the executive also recently initiated a public policy process, seeking broad consultation with civil society, Mr Mohamedou explained. Morocco reportedly also attaches importance to the development of a national security policy and may initiate steps towards developing one.

Participation of Experts and Civil Society

As one participant pointed out, the task of drafting a public national security policy remains a prerogative of the state. In Burkina Faso and Mali, the development of a national security policy, though initiated and steered by the government, involved the participation of experts, scholars, civil society representatives, and traditional leaders. As Mr Sejari from Morocco concluded the development of a national security policy requires a societal process that ensures consultation, conciliation and consensus.

In Mali, regional consultations on threats and threat perception began early on in the process. Later, several rounds of national consultations produced over 127 recommendations. Based on these consultations, the Ministry of Security drafted a strategic document that the

government subsequently adopted. Before the implementation of the new national security policy, the government initiated information sessions with stakeholders and social partners. Inspector General Niakaté stressed that the development of the first national security policy took approximately ten years. Now, the policy is updated regularly as a routine process.

Civil society participation, some speakers warned, should not be taken too lightly. The democratic process must be effective and not just a rhetorical exercise for the sake of appearances. Therefore, civil society and members of parliament need appropriate training. Colonel Diop from Senegal added another caveat: prioritisation is the key to success. One should not attempt to do everything and thereby end up doing nothing.



Measurement and Monitoring

Coordination Group

Colonel Bambara from Burkina Faso noted that the practical test of any security policy depended on the measures developed for ensuring its implementation. Coordination is a crucial element and that is why Burkina Faso created a coordination group with control over the budget. The group coordinates all government sectors that contribute to security.

Changing Mindsets

Administrative and financial capacities are necessary, but not sufficient for success, a participant from Mali explained. He noted further that responsibility for governance must be shared and security policy must place the citizen at its center. To achieve this, the mindset of security forces must evolve from one of repression to prevention. Yet, armed forces in North-West Africa are still influenced by their colonial roots, which taught them to protect the colonial power not the people. Civil society, if more organized, could play an important role in bringing about this change of mindset, he concluded. To guarantee the credibility of such a policy, it would also be important to ensure proper monitoring of its implementation. Too often, a participant said, policies remained only ink on paper.

SECTION III: WHY REGIONAL COOPERATION?



“If criminals cooperate beyond borders, why wouldn’t the security forces do the same?” The conference pointed at the widening gap between criminal networks operating internationally and security forces thinking nationally. It was thus suggested that it was high time that the security response too became transnational.

Cooperation is so important because in an interconnected world security is interdependent. Security challenges in one country, regardless whether of a criminal, environmental, economic or demographic origin, may also challenge security in neighboring states. Participants view regional cooperation as beneficial because it adds scale to the response and thus makes it more effective.

Regional cooperation in North-West Africa, a participant pointed out, has remained hostage to political disputes. He referred to the Western Sahara as an unresolved issue, which remains a major obstacle to regional security cooperation. The participants agreed that the geostrategic nature of the region’s location has increased international competition for access to strategic resources and markets.

Shared Interests in Shared Investment

Colonel Diop explained that common interests could act as a driver for regional security cooperation. For example the current state of technology and equipment in the region allowed for only limited airplane-detection. Effective control of airspace and borders thus could only be achieved through increased regional cooperation on financial and technical issues. This would have to translate into common investment in

the necessary equipment and the creation of a common information system. Colonel Zagré from Burkina Faso emphasized that cooperation must include development efforts as only simultaneous investments in development and security would lead to a real improvement in the situation.

Adopting a Pragmatic Approach

The participants pointed out that the countries of North-West Africa were party to many regional and sub-regional organisations and that some countries had developed bilateral cooperation on specific issues. Yet, there was a tangible feeling that existing mechanisms were not delivering on real needs and expectations and that therefore the region would need to develop its own regional policy. Mr Luethold reminded the audience that in many cases mechanisms are built up quickly, but soon forgotten, because their design fails to deliver on real needs. While coordination is widely appreciated, few countries like to be coordinated. Conference participants suggested that the focus should be less on big reforms and large cooperation projects, but rather on concrete and achievable projects targeting a specific problematic issue. Small successes could then result in positive spill-over effects and gradually lead to more ambitious cooperation projects. Colonel Camara from Mali was optimistic that in the region there exists a real will to engage in cooperation. He pointed at bilateral efforts between Algeria and Mali to exchange information in real time and suggested that these could be broadened to progressively include more and more countries.

CONCLUSION

The conference demonstrated the critical role that national security policy should play in preparing adequate responses to today's transnational security threats. While the conference reflected a broad-based recognition of the need to coordinate security policies amongst the countries of the region and to develop collaborative responses to common security threats, the structures for regional dialogue and cooperation remain underdeveloped and under-utilized. At the national level, security policy planning processes have either been insufficiently institutionalized or else reflect a vision of security that remains focussed on state security rather than human security. As a result, national policies or actions aimed at addressing specific security challenges often remain sub-optimal. Strengthening national capacities for security policy development may thus be a necessary first step in paving the way to a regional dialogue and increased cooperation on regional security.

In their final statement (see annex), conference participants thus encouraged states in the region to develop national security policies and to share them. They pleaded for a broad and participative approach to security, in which the objectives of peace and stability, rule of law, democracy and development are interlinked and mutually re-enforce each other. Participants expressed an urgent need for strengthening existing cooperation amongst countries in the region at both strategic and operational levels.

Participants expressed their appreciation for this initiative and requested the organizers to ensure that it be followed by other regional meetings

in order to establish a process that facilitates a continuous and regular exchange on national security policy development in the region. They also expressed the hope that a structured dialogue on these issues may over time lead to the formulation of a regional security policy shared by all states in the region.

In their further practical recommendations, many participants expressed their wish to have Niger associated to this process. They proposed that the process should be pragmatic and needs-based. It should focus on converging issues and interests, and be specific. The discussions should be oriented towards problem-solving and yield, wherever possible, immediate benefits as this would enhance the political support for such a process.

Participants also made clear that the development of a shared regional vision on security and development in North-West Africa would require the support of a neutral third-party. For regular coordination purposes, participants would need to consider establishing a small secretariat.

Regional Conference

Integrating Human Security into National Security Policies in North-West Africa

Hôtel La Tour Hassan, Rabat, Morocco

23-24 November 2010

FINAL STATEMENT

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The first ever regional conference on “Integrating Human Security into National Security Policies in North-West Africa” was hosted in Rabat 23-24 November 2010 by the Centre for Human Rights and Democracy Studies (CEDHD) and the Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF), with the support of Switzerland. The conference brought together a large number of high-ranking representatives from North-West Africa and the Sahel region (Algeria, Burkina Faso, Mali, Morocco, Mauritania and Senegal) as well as a number of international experts. This was the first event of its kind to consider the development and implementation of national security policy from the regional perspective of North-West Africa. An analysis of common interests and threats to the security of the countries of the region revealed:

- The importance of national security policy-making
- The important synergies between national security and human security
- Implementing national security policy requires a peaceful and stable environment where human rights are respected and democracy and development promoted
- The drafting and implementation of national security policy requires a participatory approach, anchored in consultation, conciliation and confidence-building
- The need to approach national security policy-making and implementation from a regional perspective that reflects the interdependence of the countries of the region, their complementarity and the multiple axes of existing regional cooperation

- The urgency of reinforcing existing cooperation between countries of the region at the strategic and operational levels in order to meet the common challenges they face
- The desire to continue to reflect on the development of a regional security policy

Participants called for the continuation of this initiative through the sharing of information and analysis, continual exchange of ideas and experiences, and through further meetings to be held at the regional level in order to develop and deepen reflection on matters of regional security.

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