



ISYP Workshop on New Challenges to Human Security 14-18 June, 2006, Wageningen, The Netherlands

Introduction

International Student/Young Pugwash (ISYP) and Pugwash Netherlands organised two workshops on “New challenges to human security” in Wageningen, the Netherlands from 14-18 June 2006.

The document *New Challenges to Human Security: Empowering Alternative Discourse* [1] served as the background for further debate during both workshops. The choice for this theme emerged from a renewed attention for formulating future areas of intervention by Pugwash. In particular, debate on this issue sought to contribute to find answers to the question of ‘how can organisations such as Pugwash – and its individual members – promote real progress on issues of the World Problematique [2]. There is no lack of opinions on what should be done, what we find missing is the question ‘how’. This is where Pugwash hopes to find new insight and to achieve practical results. This report describes the ISYP workshop’s programme, speakers, participants and outcomes in terms of the areas which require our attention.

As knowledge of human security is accumulating, the subject, holding complex interrelated problems, forced us to select a theme which could be discussed within a limited time frame by our participants and speakers. We therefore chose to study the dynamics and processes of present-day conflict situations from a variety of perspectives, with a particular emphasis on their relationship with human security (such as the political economy of war, the ethnic and religious dimensions of conflict, the influence of poverty and environmental degradation on conflict, et cetera.).

The ISYP workshop took place from 14-16 June 2006. Several of the participants of the ISYP workshop were invited to take part in the subsequent senior Pugwash workshop (from 16-18 June) as well. The call for applications to the workshop was spread widely within the ISYP and Pugwash community, inviting also non-members to apply. Selection of applicants was based on proven familiarity with the different facets of human security and on motivation. Eventually, out of 46 applications, 23 people were invited from India, Palestine, Iran, South Africa, Russia, USA, Australia, Denmark, Belgium and the Netherlands. Generous support from the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs made it possible to host the workshop in Hotel de Wageningse Berg in Wageningen and supply several participants from abroad with travel assistance [3].

The two-and-a-half-days programme featured one day of keynote lectures from several distinguished speakers and a full-scale moderated role-play of an actual international conflict situation. The programme was intensive, requiring participants to stay actively involved during morning, afternoon and evening sessions. During the last session, challenges to prevent conflict as well as the role that

ISYP could play in this were identified and presented to the participants of the subsequent Pugwash workshop.

The keynote lectures

During the first day of the workshop, the speakers elaborated on the issue of contemporary conflict. As an introduction to the discussion, Eric Ferguson referred to the Russell-Einstein Manifesto, written as a reaction to the nuclear threats to humankind. Now, approximately fifty years later, we are again at a point in time where it is necessary to question the current state of the world and the changing threats to humankind. Ferguson envisioned our society as people living on a steep hill. This hill is getting increasingly steep, carrying the risk that we can fall off together; successions of events could draw the whole world into a similar situation. The danger is that it is not possible to predict when the situation will pass beyond a point of no return. Ferguson furthermore emphasised that people often are captured in particular systems of thinking and reasoning, which disables them to achieve progress in situations of conflict.

While referring to the terminology as used by the Club of Rome, Ferguson emphasised that we should not look at the world 'problematique' but at the 'resolutique': the implementation of sensible changes in this real world can be seen as a task for Pugwash [4]

Ferguson's introduction aptly summarised what during the ensuing workshop proved to be one of the main challenges to conflicts: the approach of conflicts by the 'dominant discourses'. Inna van der Molen, who chaired the workshop, explained that the workshop aimed at a better understanding of contemporary conflict in relation to human security and to find the challenges for Pugwash in this context. She furthermore set out the questions, that were presented to the speakers: Do we ask the right questions? What are the hidden assumptions, and what are the intrinsic contradictions in these assumptions? What are the lacunas in our own research and where do our analyses and approaches fail?

Georg Frerks started by explaining that the field of conflict studies is not yet crystallised: looking at conflicts is a matter of perception and discourses which makes it difficult to provide a balanced picture. Historically, specific approaches or discourses have been linked to specific types of conflict. Whereas the cold war was related to proxy wars and the idea of a new world order was related to human intervention, the relatively new war on terror is associated with the so-called 'all means necessary' approach. This approach is increasingly problematic for the concept of 'human security'. Whereas the security and development domains were formerly separated, they are now interrelated, which is endangering and narrowing the idea of human security.

One of the challenges of conflict analysis is therefore to deal with this 'labelling' of conflicts. As conflicts are caused by a dynamic entity of external as well as internal factors, the 'labelling' of conflicts is one of the pitfalls in arriving at a solid analysis of conflict resolution. Mislabelling poses a threat to the world when, for example, the focus on terror results in a lack of attention to other dimensions, such as resources, environmental degradation, poverty or disease (e.g. HIV/AIDS). This means, as a consequence, that the 'répertoire' needs to be revisited: the analyses of contemporary conflict should

not be limited to solely the military discourse.

There is an increasing need for a broadened scope and integration of factors such as society and human rights in the discussion. The dichotomy between peace and conflict seems no longer to hold. Within this changing context the new challenges are not only to re-define conflict and its stakeholders, but also to revise the meaning of peace (nowadays it is not always clear where peace ends and violence starts). Eventually, this could lead us, on the one hand, to conclude that the concept of 'human security' plays a key role in the discussion on contemporary conflict, while, on the other hand, there is a risk of the constant narrowing of this concept within the current political climate.

Pyt Douma [5] talked about conflict in relation to poverty and the political economy of conflict. He continued, from another perspective, with the danger of labelling: measurement and determination of poverty from an academic perspective has the risk of creating an – artificial – line between who is poor and who is not poor. A solution can be found in the concept of 'relative deprivation' in which the notion of the group or community is taken into account. As poverty in itself will not always lead to conflict, a better analysis of the underlying factors leading to exclusion and deprivation (such as issues of distribution or self-enrichment of resources bases) is necessary. In relation to this, identification of stakeholder groups is difficult (who speaks for whom) and needs improvement.

Douma furthermore argued that challenges for conflict analyses are to be found in the area of research versus policy as well as within the analysis of conflict itself. The relation between research and policy is relevant as it concerns the question of to what extent conflict-analyses can influence practice.

With respect to conflict analysis, it can be concluded that there is a lack of insights into the various linkages of the factors that influence conflict: for example, how can we determine the role of 'drought' in relation to other factors that have a role in the origin of a conflict? Important questions arise, such as how we measure factors; how we link factors practically; and how we incorporate conflict dynamics. Conflicts are highly complex, meaning that a translation to the level of policy-making is not always possible. At a practical level, this creates the pitfall that policymakers will use an 'à la carte' approach of choosing and emphasising factors as the fundament of their policy towards conflicts. Within this dilemma, the question on the responsibility of academics can be an issue of specific interest for Pugwash.

Douma furthermore emphasised that new types of war can lead to increased difficulties with regard to the abuse of non-armed civilians: during day-time, civilians are peasants; in the night-time they pick up arms. This leads to the question of definition: when are people civilians and when are they part of armed groups? In addition, further analyses should be made of the linkages from outside the episodes of violence: how are goods, resources or finance provided? Douma gave examples of the Tamils, whose resource base is outside the country: the received financial recourses from diasporas make it more difficult for the Sri Lankan government to take away their resources as should be in a case where groups gain their resources from, for example natural resources exploited in the country itself. These linkages to the world economy are often a 'blind spot' in regulation.

Jolle Demmers [6] discussed lacuna, mantras and pitfalls in conflict analysis. Amongst other things, she argued that academics need to be aware of the 'political' interpretation of violence and conflict.

Often, the interpretation is closely related to the trend set by the international politics of the moment. History shows, in this perspective, the political interpretations set by the agenda of the international community: in 'ethnic conflicts' where an ancient hate was seen as a root cause, a non-intervention approach was adopted; in the current 'war on terror', often interpreted in religious terms, all means necessary are accepted. In relation to this, conventional views on new wars seem to create a 'them' and 'us' division: rather than on similarities the focus is set on differences.

Demmers furthermore stated that a multidisciplinary approach to conflict is not without problems. Obviously, everybody knows the mantra that 'every conflict is complex' and that it is necessary to 'approach conflicts from a multidisciplinary perspective.' Under the heading of multidisciplinary, problems can arise since the outcomes of analysis through different disciplines are not always homogenous; they often are contradictory. Whereas an increased focus on the underlying assumptions and contradictions can provide relevant insights, this does not mean that we should always try to come to a coherent approach as such may not exist.

Other lessons for conflict analyses are that, without saying that differences in identity cause conflict, identity is crucial but needs to be handled with care. Another pitfall in conflict analysis is the equation of conflict with 'clustered violence episodes'. Often different violence episodes are clustered together and are then headed under the 'master' conflict. Demmers gives examples of the Tamil Tigers and the Sri Lankan Government and the Hutus and Tutsis: not all violence in these areas is a result of these existing conflicts. A more solid analysis could provide better insights into these complex pictures. Finally, Paul Richards [7] argued that, in the last decades, the theory of war has been merely developed from a military perspective. As it was assumed, from the perspective of social scientists, that decisions of war were made by the people in charge, with broad social analysis of the phenomenon of war failing to occur. Richards pointed from this perspective to the relevance of the work of Émile Durkheim, which deals with social exclusion and social cohesion. For social bounding, the manners are the same all over the world: people need to feel included within a society.

Richards gave as an example the situation of the demonstrations in France: although the young people involved have been studying the language and literature of France, they have not been integrated within society. Durkheim argues that for social bounding, education, skill formation and employment are the fundamentals that create beliefs. Exclusion of these fundamentals will lead to a lack of cohesion, which can lead to conflict. This calls for an increased focus of conflict analyses on empowerment and a sociological approach of conflict. The relevance is moreover made clear by an example of the war in Iraq: despite the establishment of a constitution and free elections there has been no social bounding of the society. This lack of bounding can be tackled more successfully by providing employment and education. A more cautious distinction between security issues and employment issues should thus be made.

The role-play

Instead of asking individual participants to present papers on their views on human security, we chose to use a role-play on a present day conflict. This is a method often recurred to at international conferences and institutions of education that aims to increase the awareness of participants on the

interlinking issues of complex (international) problems. This role-play was set up as a public peace process, meaning that official negotiations were not the aim of the process; instead participants were given a better insight in the causes of the conflict, thus offering an opportunity to change their perspectives and mutual relationships. This implied that participants were asked to actively take part in the exercise, either playing an individual or representing one of the organisations involved in the conflict. Participants were provided with coaching, guidance and feedback during the process in which the conflict was 'enacted'. The role-play on this conflict was purchased from the Harvard Law School Program on Negotiation (www.pon.harvard.edu), combined with video material produced with support of the Dutch Peace Organization IKV (www.ikv.nl), and background material from the us Institute of Peace (www.usip.org). The role-play concerned the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh. The recent history of Armenia and Azerbaijan, as well as the domestic politics and foreign relations of both countries, are inextricably bound up with the conflict between them over the territory of Nagorno-Karabakh. During the Soviet period, this territory was an autonomous province within the Azerbaijan SSR with a predominantly ethnic Armenian population. The Soviet Union incorporated the predominantly Armenian region as the Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast (NKAO) in the Azerbaijan SSR in 1923.

In 1991, as the Soviet Union was collapsing, a referendum held in the NKAO and the neighbouring district of Shahumian resulted in a declaration of independence from Azerbaijan as the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic (NKR), which remains unrecognised by individual nations – including Armenia – and international organisations. In the final years before the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the region became a source of dispute between Armenia and Azerbaijan, culminating in the Nagorno-Karabakh War. Since the end of the war in 1994, most of Nagorno-Karabakh and several regions of Azerbaijan around it remain under Armenian military control. Since then, the parties have been holding peace talks mediated by the OSCE Minsk Group.

On the first evening of the workshop, general information on the area and conflict was presented and distributed by two experienced consultants. Next, each participant was appointed a character which he or she should play during the game. Roles existed for playing an Armenian or Azeri politician, historian, journalist, civilian, or representative of a local NGO. Preceding the role-play, ample opportunity was given to pose questions regarding the conflict background. On the subsequent morning of the role-play, a documentary ('Hope dies last') was shown on the human tragedies caused at both sides by the fighting parties.

As a start-up, participants told each other 'their' life story which they had to improvise based upon their character descriptions. Initially it turned out to be difficult to the participants to really get into their character and to overcome their rational and peace-minded self. However, the personal stories told created numerous tensions hampering the task to reconstruct a mutually accepted history. Increasing mistrust led to conflicts over procedures regarding speaking time and aim of the gathering.

Nonetheless, the participants were still too focused on reaching agreement instead of being part of the conflict. To aggravate the conflict situation, the coaches brought in a message on the 'kidnapping' of the son of one of the participants by the opposite party. At that point the conflict really ignited, bringing furious debates on the conditions of exchange. In addition, a perceived lack of support and respect led to the separation of people within one party, thus pressurising the remaining party members to come to

terms. A lack of clear stance felt by the parties even led to well-acted mistrust towards the coaches and meeting organisers.

During the evaluation of the role game in the final session, participants concluded that within a peace-building process or within negotiations peoples' personality and the group's dynamics are fundamental to success. As organisers, we have found this an extremely interesting and active way to engage people in the search for creative solutions.

Some conclusions and recommendations

The following day, in the final session of the ISYP workshop, participants were asked to identify – based upon their experiences during the role-play and the keynote lectures – the essential handles in preventing violent conflict. The experiences were collected in a brainstorm session and later on reformulated for presentation to the Pugwash workshop participants. The following recommendations both address the international community and Pugwash/ISYP.

1. The deconstruction of academic, national and international discourses on conflict, conflict resolution and peace processes should take place by asking what motivations are at the basis of arguments, recognising that the interpretation of conflict is political in itself. Attention should focus particularly on discourses that are used to obfuscate unilateral violence.
 2. Strategies to resolve conflict should be linked to an in-depth understanding of the different realities of conflict, as 'the conflict' is a master narrative, where violent episodes are all put under the heading of 'the conflict'.
 3. The 'them' and 'us' division may blur our understanding of solutions. We tend to pay attention to internal conflicts and external solutions, perhaps we need to pay more attention to the external dimensions of conflict and the viable internal solutions.
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1. Appropriate socio-economic strategies are essential for long-term stability. These should not only be developed at national levels, but also at the regional and community level. This includes:
 - Promotion of regional economies to counter devastating environmental and human effects of globalisation
 - Stimulation and review of the debate on economic empowerment strategies for deprived and poor communities. Where are the systematic exclusions of young people in societies occurring?
 - Devising of adequate strategies to re-integrate ex-combatants; community based approaches which take local priorities as an entry point.
 2. Pugwash can issue a journal dedicated to prevailing discourses on 'peace building'.
 3. Pugwash can identify and bring attention to situations of exclusion by taking exclusion as a point of departure for analysis, as:
 - Exclusion (of groups in general and youth in particular) is often at the basis of conflict and its perpetuation, forming a threat to human security

- Strategies to combat terrorism are a challenge to human security and civil liberties
4. Pugwash can provide a critical review of this discourse capturing the complexity of the problems. This review should acknowledge:
 - The feelings of horror provoked by terror and violence
 - Knowing the audience of terrorist groups: why does terrorism resonate culturally?
 5. Pugwash can provide a platform for discussion on democracies which are more adjusted to historical context, regional setting, local culture and being aware of different interpretations and expectations of democracy
 6. Regarding education, it would be important to discover whether Pugwash can provide alternative knowledge to current discourses
 7. ISYP can provide a depoliticised platform for youth
 8. ISYP should continue using role-plays as bringing knowledge across

At this point in time, no steps have yet been taken to put the recommendations into action. The ISYP participants are all staying in touch and exchanging information on human security matters using a group-oriented website.

Notes

[1] Workshop Announcement 'New Challenges to Human Security: Empowering Alternative Discourses – A Pugwash Study Group initiated by Pugwash Netherlands and International Student/ Young Pugwash (ISYP)', published on 24 March 2006.

(http://www.pugwash.nl/Documents/New_Challenges_Workshop.pdf) [2] The latter term was launched by the Club of Rome to describe and understand the many interlinked vital problems facing the world, and their underlying causes [3] Wageningen is in itself a very memorable location because of the battles that took place during Second World War in this location as for the official capitulation of the Germans in the Netherlands in 1945. [4] The Club of Rome states in its Declaration to The Club of Rome (Brussels, April 25, 1996) that: "earlier attempts to identify and analyse the world problematique convince us that we must, on the contrary, work towards comprehensive solutions that involve public participation and negotiation to overcome apathy and confrontation; this is what we call the 'resolutique'." During the senior workshop, Berma Klein Goldewijk referred to resolutique as the values that respond to the world problematique, of which human dignity is an important one. [5] Independent consultant. [6] Assistant professor at the Centre for Conflict Studies, Utrecht University. [7] Professor of Technology and Agrarian Development, Wageningen University.