

PREFACE

Within the last ten years, the concepts and strategies underlying the peace and security policy of the Federal Republic of Germany – in correspondence with those of the European Union – have changed rapidly. Among large sectors of the population, the understanding of peace and security has also transformed considerably. “The security of the Federal Republic will be defended, even at the Hindu Kush.” This statement made by the German Minister of Defence Peter Struck was met with fierce criticism and protest in the German public. But his statement only brought to the point a change of paradigm that took place in German and European security policies during recent years. This change of paradigm is expressed for example in the new “Guidelines for Defence Policy” (“Verteidigungspolitische Richtlinien”) issued by the German Ministry of Defence on the 21st of May 2003 – that were discussed in the general public with much less outrage – and in the new EU security strategy that was issued by the European Council in December 2003.

Unlike traditional military-political policies of security, these new strategies are not concerned anymore with the defence of one’s own state territory against attacks by external enemies. It is even stated explicitly that a “threat to German territory by conventional forces ... is not existent for the time being”, or that “large-scale aggression against any member states is now improbable”.

The basis for these documents is a new, much broader and seemingly vague concept of security that becomes clear mainly through the descriptions of challenges and threats and the defensive measures which have to be developed against them. Altogether the scenarios of threats against European security are extended considerably, but at the same time are considered not to be very real.

International terrorism, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, regional conflicts, state failure in some regions of the world and organized crime developing in these areas are mentioned as the “key threats”. But even “taking these different elements together” it is only believed that Europe “could be confronted with a very radical threat indeed”.

It is clear – along the lines of Peter Struck: “The first line of defence will often be abroad.”¹ At the same time it is assumed that “none of the new threats” can “be tackled by purely military means.”² Special importance is to be given to “preventative security policy”. The call for “more resources for defence” comes first in the EU strategy paper, taking precedence over examining possibilities for pooling the EU’s military capabilities, and using civilian means and diplomacy. This is corresponding to the German guidelines for defence according to which the German Army shall be turned more and more into an intervention army that is operational and able to react quickly. “International conflict prevention and crisis management – including the fight against international terrorism – are mentioned as the main tasks for this army.

The military tasks are extended into the field of development and foreign policy without any questioning. The borderline between civilian and military activities and missions gets more and more blurred, while the profile of qualification of the armed forces is far from being appropriate for these new tasks.

After the end of the confrontations between East and West and in the course of globalization, this concept of security was developed in the context of different discourses on security since the 1990s. It goes back to changes in the international balance of power and the role of nation states that rendered the importance of armies and military alliances like the NATO questionable and that at the same time became their new foundation of legitimacy. This was brought to a head by the terrorist attacks of September 11th 2001. The new security concept concentrates on global problems that might be a threat to European stability. From a Eurocentrist perspective, just as global strategies of defence are set against these threats, but without conducting a differentiated analysis of their causes. It is not taken into consideration how far this endangers the security of the people used for this strategy or affected by it in other countries. A perspective beyond that of state protagonists is totally missing in this scenario of threats and security.

A different concept of security that was also developed in the 1990s – that of “human security” – is based on the individuals’ need for security and puts their security concerns into the centre of analysis and concepts for action. This concept evolved in the context of

developmental policies and takes on a universalistic and at the same time relative perspective. It takes into consideration that the perceptions of threats and security depend a lot on the living conditions of the involved individuals, on their social and political state, as well as on economical and ecological factors.

This implies that competing securities and security needs do exist and that concepts for solutions have to ask the question: Which kind of and whose security is at stake?

For whom will security be established and against whom? Unlike the European states and the USA, the Scandinavian countries, Canada and Japan made the concept of human security the basis for their security policies. In May 2003 the “Commission on Human Security”, set up by the UN, released its final report³ which developed the concept of human security as a guideline for action.

Here the criterion for assessing security is in how far people are able to live in “freedom of want” and “freedom of fear”. Gender relationships and the respective gender constructions of a society have an important role in the development as well as the course of violent conflicts. This realization is owed to feminist research that has been elaborating the interrelation of domestic and foreign policies and individual, cultural and structural violence for years and thus formulated an “enlarged” concept of security. For a long time feminist scientists and women’s and peace activists have been calling to include gender perspectives into the analysis of security risks and threats, and into the development of concepts and action guidelines relevant to security questions.

Accordingly, the “enlarged” security concept of the European Union and the Federal Republic of Germany as well as the concept of human security of the UN Commission and countries like Canada have to be reviewed concerning their respective content of gender analysis and gender-policy implications.

How are the existing EU and German concepts of enlarged security to be evaluated? How sound is the UN Commission’s concept of human security regarding its political implementation? Which understanding of security is expressed in these concepts? Which role do they give to a gender-policy perspective? Which demands have to be made on a security concept from a feminist perspective? Which possibilities and limits to integrate the gender perspective has the human security concept compared to the concept of enlarged

security? What kind of relation do development policy concepts have to the different security concepts? Which implications have the pursuit of security concepts for the debate on women's and human rights and the standards that were already established in this debate by the women's movement?

What does this mean for the feminist political involvement in German and international security policies? In October 2003 the former Feminist Institute of the Heinrich Böll Foundation held an international symposium in Berlin in cooperation with the Friedrich Ebert Foundation and the Women's Security Council, in order to look into these and other subjects and problems of international peace and security policy in a differentiated way. In public discussion sessions, different panels and working groups, academics, practitioners from the field of peace and development policy and representatives of international organizations and governments discussed the presented concepts and a multitude of raised questions. The ambitious aim was – after clarifying and discussing the various security concepts and ideas in their differences and their (in-)compatibility – to further develop a model of human security oriented on social and political relevance, gives justice to normative feminist ideas and has the potential to be an effective political tool.

In many of the raised questions no final conclusion could be reached. But it became clear that the prevalent security concept of the current German and European policy has to be redefined and the security policy concepts based on it have to be redeveloped and advanced. They are not capable to provide or establish security for the individuals of a society; they particularly do not take into consideration the different living conditions of men and women, the specific threats and dangers that women face, for example in post-war periods. The concept of human security that takes external as well as internal threats to societies into account is a step into the right direction. It provides starting points to systematically assess the gender specific security situations and needs in the interest of establishing and securing women's rights. But because of its very broad definition of security its translation into practical international policy seems to be difficult. Therefore it is important to concentrate on the central aspects of human security, for example the physical and mental integrity.

This publication offers the central contents and results of the symposium for use and further discussion. To this end the contributions of the speakers – as far as they were placed at our disposal – are put together in analogy to the course of the conference, each with a short introduction. Essential / important points of discussion and questions that have to be further deployed are printed following the respective contributions.

The symposium and documentation “Human Security = Women’s security? No sustainable security without gender perspectives” picked up the thread of preceding activities of the Gunda Werner Institute in the field of peace and security policies from a feminist perspective. Since September 11th 2001, the international peace and security policy with its feminist and gender policy implications has been systematically developed into a work focus of the Gunda Werner Institute in correspondence with the focus of the Heinrich Böll Foundation (hbs) on “foreign and security policy and conflict prevention”.⁴

The symposium is a successful example of cooperation with the Friedrich Ebert Foundation and the Women’ Security Council, to whom I want to express my special thanks. I also want to thank all the others who widely contributed to the success of the symposium and the documentation: first of all the speakers, some of whom had to make intercontinental journeys, the freelance and permanent employees of the Feminist Institute, particularly Jutta Kühn, who took part in the conceptional preparation of the symposium, our intern Anja Feth who contributed a lot to the thematic and organizational preparation of the symposium and later – then as an external collaborator – also to the documentation, Filiz Türkmen and Ulrike Allroggen. Special thanks also to the interpreters of “Akzent”, and the translators of the documentation as well as to our colleagues from the hbs conference office, namely Gundula Fienbork, as the symposium would not have been possible without her efforts.

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Notes

1 European Security Strategy, II., p.7.

2 *ibid*, II., p. 8.

3 Commission on Human Security 2003: Human Security Now. In the web:

<http://www.humansecurity-chs.org/finalreport/index.html>.

4 The appendix for more information.