Risks to Peace:
A Review of Data Sources

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Introduction

The White Paper on Peacebuilding calls for a broader conversation about how countries themselves can most effectively move towards sustainable peace and how the UN and other international actors can assist them in this endeavour. The need for this conversation is based on the assumption that the next decade will see more pressures on states and societies. This, in turn, will likely result in more conflicts as local, national, regional and international systems are put under stress. This paper gathers the current data behind this assumption.

Building on the spirit of the White Paper of listening to different voices and perspectives, the paper draws on key reports about future risks and presents a selection of their data and trends. The key reports are:

- KPMG International (2013) *Future State 2030: The Global Megatrends Shaping Governments*, Zurich: KPMG.
- National Intelligence Council (2012) *Global Trends 2030: Alternative Worlds*. Washington D.C.: NIC.
- Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) (2012) *Think Local, Act Global: Confronting Factors that Influence Conflict and Fragility*, Paris: OECD.
- Oxford Martin School Commission (2013) *Now for the Long Term*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- The Millennium Project (2014) *2013-14 State of the Future*, Washington DC: The Millennium Project.
- World Economic Forum (2015) *Global Risks 2015*, Geneva: WEF.

In addition to these reports, the paper draws on data from supplementary sources, as referenced in the footnotes. Most data presented in this paper are direct citations and constitute a listening exercise of what information exists on

The Geneva Peacebuilding Platform is a joint project of four institutions:

risks to peace. This paper does not engage in a critical analysis of the methods, sources, validity, and politics behind the cited data.[1]

The data presented in this paper tells a story about our present understanding of risks to peace in the future. This understanding highlights five trends:

- Demographic trends – more people, aging populations, increased urbanization;
- Economic trends – more inequality, more unemployment;
- Power shifts – changing constellations, diffusion of power, less control by states;
- Environmental pressures – more consumption, more natural disasters; and
- New conflict dynamics – geo-political tension, chronic violence, new threats.

The paper is structured around these five factors. Overall, they emphasize the increasing pressures on states and societies and that these pressure are likely to overwhelm existing dispute resolution and management systems at all levels. The result might be more conflict. Given this spectrum of risks, the peacebuilding community can point to an ever-increasing evidence base about the use of dialogue, trust-building, and consensus-seeking processes as an effective way to deal with the new strategic landscape; and thereby assist countries move towards a more sustainable peace.

1. Demographic trends

More people

- "There were only 1 billion humans in 1804; 2 billion in 1927; 6 billion in 1999; and 7.2 billion today. The UN forecasts a range from 8.3 billion to 10.9 billion people by 2050, with 9.6 billion as the mid-projection."[2]
- "Population growth is expected to be most rapid in the 49 least developed countries, where it is projected to double in size from about 900 million today to 1.8 billion in 2050."[3]
- "Over 60 percent of the global population is likely to live in Africa and Asia by 2050. Approximately 70 percent of the growth is likely to occur in 24 of the world's poorest countries."[4]

Aging populations

- "The world's population is getting older, with the population over 60 growing fastest. In less than 40 years, one in every five people will be at least 60 years old. Average lifespan is projected to be 83 years in the developed world and 72 in the less developed world by 2050, compared with 78 and 67 today, and 66 and 42 in 1950."[5]
- "From 2011-30, pension spending is forecast to grow and additional 1.3% of GDP in developed countries, 2.2% of GDP in developing countries."[6]

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[1] For further discussion about the political and problematic nature of data see Peter Andreas and Kelly M. Greenhill (eds)(2010) *Sex, Drugs, and Body Counts: The Politics of Numbers in Global Crime and Conflict*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, and Morten Jerven (2013) *Poor Numbers: How We Are Misled by African Development Statistics*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
[2] The Millennium Project (TMP) (2014) *2013-14 State of the Future*, Washington DC: The Millennium Project, p. 42.
[3] TMP, *2013-14 State of the Future*, p. 42.
[4] Oxford Martin School Commission (OMSC) (2013) *Now for the Long Term*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 14. Based on UNFPA's *The State of World Population 2011*.
[5] OMSC, *Now for the Long Term*, p. 14. Based on data by the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs' *World Population Prospects: The 2012 Revision* (2013) and *World Population to 2300* (2004).
[6] KPMG International (2013) *Future State 2030: The Global Megatrends Shaping Governments*. Zurich: KPMG, p. 14.

Increasing urbanization

- "Today's roughly 50-percent urban population will climb to nearly 60 percent, or 4.9 billion people, in 2030. Africa will gradually replace Asia as the region with the highest urbanization growth rate. Urban centers are estimated to generate 80 percent of economic growth."[7]
- "In 1950, only three of every ten people lived in cities. In 2008, the number of people in cities was greater than that in rural areas for the first time. (…) By 2030, over two billion people may well be living in urban slums."[8]

2. Economic trends

More inequality

- "Globalisation has been associated with growing inequality. Incomes of the world's top 1.75 percent of earners reportedly exceed the combined total of those of the bottom 77 percent (…) 39.3 percent of the world's wealth is reportedly held by 0.6 percent of its adults."[9]
- "The wealth of 80 individuals is now the same as that owned by the bottom 50% of the global population (…) In 2010, it took 388 billionaires to equal the wealth of the bottom half of the world's population; by 2014, the figure had fallen to just 80 billionaires."[10]
- "Women and girls account for six out of ten of the world's poorest and two-thirds of the world's illiterate people. According to the UNDP, women perform 66 percent of the world's work, but earn just 10 percent of the income and own only 1 percent of the property."[11]

More unemployment

- "At the global level, the number of unemployed people will continue to increase unless policies change course. Global unemployment is expected to approach 208 million in 2015, compared with slightly over 200 million at the time of publication [2013]."[12]
- "Over 70 million young people are out of work, and the number is projected to grow. In advanced economies, 35 percent of young unemployed have not had a job in over six months … The 2013 *World Development Report* stated '621 million young people are 'idle' – not in school or training, not employed and not looking for work'"[13]

3. Power shifts

Changing constellations

- "The US, European, and Japanese share of global income is projected to fall from 56 percent today to well under half by 2030. In 2008, China overtook the US as the world's largest saver; by 2020, emerging markets' share of financial assets is projected to almost double."[14]

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[7] National Intelligence Council (NIC) (2012) *Global Trends 2030: Alternative Worlds*. Washington D.C.: NIC, p. v.

[8] OMSC, *Now for the Long Term*, p. 15.

[9] OMSC, *Now for the Long Term*, p. 25.

[10] Oxfam (2015) *Wealth: Having it All and Wanting More*, Oxfam Issue Brief, January, p. 3.

[11] OMSC, *Now for the Long Term*, p. 16.

[12] International Labour Organization (2013) *World of Work Report 2013*. Geneva: ILO, p. 1.

[13] OMSC, *Now for the Long Term*, p. 24.

[14] NIC, *Global Trends 2030*, p. v.

- "(...) the world's economic prospects will increasingly depend on the fortunes of the East and South. The developing world already provides more than 50 percent of global economic growth and 40 percent of global investment. Its contribution to global investment growth is more than 70 percent."[15]
- "The shift of economic power to emerging markets is in full swing. Reports suggest that the GDP of developing countries is now at least equal to the developed world (...) China and India are on track to have 35 percent of the world's population and 25 percent of its GDP by 2030."[16]

Diffusion of power

- "Whilst the state remains the principal actor in world politics, there are now almost four times as many states as there were in 1945. This increase in players makes international consensus harder to reach."[17]
- In 1945 only 41 NGOs held consultative status with the United Nations' Economic and Social Council, while in 2014 the figure was 4,155.[18]
- "Currently about 50 countries are in the awkward stage between autocracy and democracy, with the greatest number concentrated in Sub-Saharan Africa, Southeast and Central Asia, and the Middle East and North Africa."[19]

Less control by states

- "The majority of states in the global South can (...) be described as hybrid political orders. Nominally, many are constitutional liberal democracies that operate according to formal, legally enforceable rules. But they coexist with, or are overshadowed by, other competing forms of socio-political order; these have their roots in non-state, indigenous societal structures that rely on a web of social relations and mutual obligations to establish trust and reciprocity."[20]
- "By 2030, no country (...) will be a hegemonic power. Enabled by communications technologies, power almost certainly will shift more toward multifaceted and amorphous networks composed of state and nonstate actors that will form to influence global policies on various issues. (...) Networks will constrain policymakers because multiple players will be able to block policymakers' actions at numerous points."[21]
- "By 2020, there are expected to be four billion people online, 31 billion connected devices, 450 billion online interactions performed per day, and up to 50 trillion gigabytes of data."[22]
- "During the next 15-20 years, the hardware, software, and connectivity aspects of IT will experience massive growth in capability and complexity as well as more widespread diffusion. This growth and diffusion will present significant challenges for governments and societies, which must find ways to capture the benefits of new IT technologies while dealing with the new threats that those technologies present."[23]

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[15] NIC, *Global Trends 2030*, p.vi.
[16] OMSC, *Now for the Long Term*, p. 17.
[17] OMSC, *Now for the Long Term*, p. 18.
[18] United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (2014) *List of NGOs in consultative status with ECOSOC as of 1 September 2014*, New York: United Nations.
[19] NIC, *Global Trends 2030*, p. vii.
[20] Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (2011) *Supporting Statebuilding in Situations of Conflict and Fragility: Policy Guidance*. Paris: OECD, p.25.
[21] NIC, *Global Trends 2030*, p. 19.
[22] OMSC, *Now for the Long Term*, p. 23.
[23] NIC, *Global Trends 2030*, p. 86.

4. Environmental pressures

More consumption

- "Demand for food is expected to rise at least 35 percent by 2030 while demand for water is expected to rise by 40 percent. Nearly half of the world's population will live in areas experiencing severe water stress."[24]
- "Globally, three billion people still have inadequate access to water (…). The World Bank estimates that two in every three countries will be water-stressed by 2025, at which time around 2.4 billion people will face 'absolute water scarcity'."[25]
- "FAO estimates that some 30% of the [world's] population (2 billion people) suffers from hidden hunger. (…) Some 30% of fish stocks have already collapsed, and 21% of mammal species and 70% of plants are under threat. (…) Global waste has increased 10-fold in the last century, and it could double by 2025 from where it is today"[26]
- "Total energy consumption per year is almost six times what it was in 1950; per capita use has more than doubled. Food production accounts for close to one third of all available energy, and agriculture accounts for around 70 percent of water withdrawals worldwide."[27]
- "Shell forecasts global energy demand to triple by 2050 from 2000 levels, assuming that the major socioeconomic trends continue. This, they assert, will require 'some combination of extraordinary demand moderation and extraordinary production acceleration.' BP forecasts a 41% increase in world energy demand from 2012 to 2035 of which 95% will come from emerging economies."[28]

More natural disasters

- "Each of the last three decades has been successively warmer at the Earth's surface than any preceding decade since 1850. The period from 1983 to 2012 was *likely* the warmest 30 year period of the last 1400 years in the Northern Hemisphere, where such assessment is possible (*medium confidence*)."[29]
- "Impacts from recent climate related extremes, such as heat waves, droughts, floods, cyclones, and wildfires, reveal significant vulnerability and exposure of some ecosystems and many human systems to current climate variability (*very high confidence*)."[30]
- "Until mid-century, projected climate change will impact human health mainly by exacerbating health problems that already exist (*very high confidence*)."[31]
- "In urban areas, climate change is projected to increase risks for people, assets, economies and ecosystems, including risks from heat stress, storms and extreme precipitation, inland and coastal flooding, landslides, air pollution, drought, water scarcity, sea-level rise, and storm surges (*very high confidence*)."[32]

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[24] NIC, *Global Trends 2030*, p. v.
[25] OMSC, *Now for the Long Term*, p. 19.
[26] TMP, *2013-14 State of the Future*, pp. 13, 20, 21..
[27] OMSC, *Now for the Long Term*, p. 18.
[28] TMP, *2013-14 State of the Future*, p. 155.
[29] The Core Writing Team; Rajendra K. Pachauri; Leo Meyer (eds.) (2014) *Climate Change 2014: Synthesis Report*. Geneva: International Panel on Climate Change, p. 1. Available on http://www.ipcc.ch/pdf/assessment-report/ar5/syr/SYR_AR5_LONGERREPORT_Corr2.pdf.
[30] The Core Writing Team et al., *Climate Change 2014*, p. 8.
[31] The Core Writing Team et al., *Climate Change 2014*, p. 15.
[32] The Core Writing Team et al., *Climate Change 2014*, p. 15-16.

5. New conflict dynamics

Geopolitical tensions

- "(…) the risks of interstate conflict are increasing owing to changes in the international system. The underpinnings of the current post-Cold War equilibrium are beginning to shift. (…) If the international system becomes more fragmented and existing forms of cooperation are no longer as seen as advantageous to many of the key global players, the potential for competition and conflict also will increase."[33]
- "(…) interstate conflict is this year considered the most likely high-impact risk over the next 10 years, or indeed perhaps event sooner".[34]
- "World military expenditure in 2013 is estimated to have been $1747 billion, representing 2.4 per cent of global gross domestic product or $248 for each person alive today."[35]

Chronic violence

- "87 countries in all of the world's regions can currently be identified as facing the prospects of potential violence, prolonged deadlock, or a relapse into violent conflict over the next two to three-year period. Of these, only 23 are currently receiving formal mediation assistance from the UN, including by the virtue of a peace operation".[36]
- "There were an estimated 475,000 deaths in 2012 as a result of homicide. Sixty percent of these were males aged 15–44 years, making homicide the third leading cause of death for males in this age group. Within low- and middle-income countries, the highest estimated rates of homicide occur in the Region of the Americas, with 28.5 homicides per 100 000 population, followed by the African Region with a rate of 10.9 homicides per 100,000 population."[37]
- "More than 526,000 people are killed each year as a result of lethal violence. One in every ten of all reported violent deaths around the world occurs in so-called conflict settings or during terrorist activities, while 396,000 intentional homicides occur every year."[38]
- "While the number of refugees uprooted by conflicts has decreased in the past twenty years, many more have been forced from their homes and stayed within their own country. More than 33 million people are internally displaced and the average length of displacement is 17 years."[39]

New threats

- " (…) cyber threats remain among the most likely high-impact risk." [40]
- "Already, cyber attacks account for USD300 billion to USD1 trillion in global losses"[41]

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[33] NIC, *Global Trends 2030*, p. 64.
[34] World Economic Forum (WEF) (2015) *Global Risks 2015*, Geneva: WEF, p. 16.
[35] Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (2014), *SIPRI Yearbook 2014: Armaments, Disarmament and International Security, Summary*, Stockholm: SIPRI, p. 8.
[36] Chetan Kumar (2011) 'Building National Infrastructures for Peace: UN Assistance for Internally Negotiated Solutions to Violent Conflict' in S. Allen Nan, Z. Mampilly, and A. Bartoli (eds) *Peacemaking: From Practice to Theory*, Santa Barbara: Praeger, pp. 384-399, at p.384. Based on UNDP data.
[37] World Health Organization (2014) *Global Status Report on Violence Prevention 2014*, Geneva: WHO, p. vii.
[38] Geneva Declaration Secretariat (2011) *Global Burden of Armed Violence: Lethal Encounters*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 1.
[39] World Humanitarian Summit (2014) *Serving the Needs of People in Conflict*, Scoping Paper. New York: WHS, p. 1.
[40] WEF, *Global Risks 2015*, 13.
[41] KPMG, *Future State 2030,* p. 62.

- "The next 15-20 years will see a wider spectrum of more accessible instruments of war, especially precision-strike capabilities, cyber instruments, and bioterror weaponry. (…) Current trends suggest that deep interconnectivity between different software systems and devices is likely to become the norm, enabling remote access to all kinds of systems that are offline today. (…) As societies become more dependent on software and systems become more interconnected, the potential levels of damage that cyberweapons will be able to inflict will increase."[42]
- "The military is expected to increase its use of robots to reduce human exposure in high-risk situations and environments as well as the number of troops necessary for certain operations. The ability to deploy such robots rapidly, for particular tasks, could help military planners address the wider resource demands present in a more fragmented, multipolar world."[43]

Conclusion: Towards a tipping point?

This paper has reviewed key reports and distilled a selection of data and trends about risks to peace. What the studies show is that there is a wealth of data and trend analysis and that a more systematic effort to analyse future risks to peace focusing on specific regions would be a useful exercise to inform peacebuilding policy and practice. Such analyses may also point to several other risk factors that do not feature prominently in the selected reports such as large footprint investments,[44] parallel and criminal markets,[45] as well as national or regional political conflicts that escalate into violent confrontations.[46] The origins of the war in Ukraine are a reminder that the data and trends presented in this paper are by no means the sole cause of conflict. In many regions, they interact or amplify existing conflict dynamics.

In conclusion, we want to ask how the data and trends compare to analyses of the 1980s, 1990s and 2000s, and make a suggestion about what may be different in the next decade. Over a decade ago, a major report on conflict prevention made the case that

> "Conflict and instability are increasingly driven by non-traditional factors like failures in governance, health crises and environmental degradation. Globalization and technological change are increasing interdependence and inter-connectedness in ways that magnify the security-related impact of developmental challenges around the world. (…) Even when the connections are less direct, non-traditional threats are increasing the risk of broad instability. Local economic stagnation, environmental degradation, demographic shifts, urbanization, failures in governance and declining health status are all creating pressure on governments around the world."[47]

One may also point to the 1987 Brundtland Commission report 'Our Common Future' or the 1996 report of the Commission on Global Governance 'Our Global Neighbourhood' that also

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[42] NIC, *Global Trends 2030*, p. 67, 69.

[43] NIC, *Global Trends 2030*, p. 91.

[44] See for instance OECD (2007) Infrastructure to 2030 – Volume 2: Mapping Policy for Electricity, Water and Transport, Paris: OECD. International Council on Mining and Metals (ICMM)(2012) *Trends in the Mining and Metals Industry*. London: ICMM. W. Anseeuw, M. Boche, T. Breu, M. Giger, J. Lay, P. Messerli, and K. Noble (2012) *Transnational Land Deals for Agriculture in the Global South*. Bern, Montpellier, Hamburg: CDE, CIRAD, and GIGA.

[45] United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)(2010) *The Globalization of Crime: A Transnational Organized Crime Threat Assessment*, Vienna: UNODC. For different regional threat assessments see: http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/data-and-analysis/TOC-threat-assessments.html.

[46] See Friedrich Glasl (2008) *Enriching Conflict Diagnosis and Strategies for Social Change: A Closer Look at Conflict Dynamics*. Berlin: Berhof Handbook Dialogue No.6.

[47] Carla Koppel with Anita Shama (2003) Preventing the Next Wave of Conflict: Understanding Non-Traditional Threats to Global Stability, Washington D.C. Woodrow Wilson International Centre for Scholars, p.1.

identified a similar set of risk factors.[48] If we have known about the risks to peace for about three decades, what may be different in the next decade? The difference could be that the next decade pushes the slowly evolving mix of risks towards a certain 'tipping point' – "that one dramatic moment when everything can change all at once."[49] Until this moment comes, the peacebuilding community has an opportunity to expand the evidence base about the effectiveness of dialogue, trust building, and consensus seeking processes to address and mitigate risks to peace. This evidence can subsequently be conveyed across institutions and sectors to ensure better implementation of peacebuilding practice as a response to risks to peace.

About the authors: Aske Nørby Bonde holds a degree in Conflict and Security Studies from Simon Fraser University, Vancouver, Canada, and is currently pursuing a Master's degree in Development at the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies. He also works as a Research Assistant at the Graduate Institute's Centre on Conflict, Development and Peacebuilding (CCDP). **Dr. Achim Wennmann** is Researcher at the CCDP and Executive Coordinator of the Geneva Peacebuilding Platform. He is an expert in economic perspectives on violent conflict, dispute resolution, and peacebuilding and has a broad research and advisory experience. He currently also serves on the Editorial Board of Global Governance.

About the White Paper on Peacebuilding: The White Paper on Peacebuilding is a collaborative, multi-stakeholder process initiated by the Geneva Peacebuilding Platform and supported by the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs. It has the objective to situate UN peacebuilding within the broader peacebuilding universe and to articulate visions for the future for building peace in violent and fragile contexts. The White Paper places peacebuilding within the changing characteristics of armed violence and security, and within the practical evidence of engagements in peacebuilding contexts emanating from a diversity of fields. Ensuring a better relationship between UN peacebuilding and the broader peacebuilding field is a complementary effort to the existing work surrounding the 10-year review of the UN peacebuilding architecture and an effort to take stock of the nature and evolution of the broader peacebuilding universe.

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[48] World Commission on Environment and Development (1987) Our Common Future. Oxford: Oxford University Press and Commission on Global Governance (1995) *Our Global Neighbourhood*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
[49] Malcom Gladwell (2000) *The Tipping Point: How Little Things can Make a Big Difference*. New York: Back Bay Books, p.9.