

Applied Research Project

FINAL REPORT

Common Security: Concept and Good Practices for Parliamentarians

Geneva Graduate Institute / Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU)

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List of Acronyms

ASEAN: Association of Southeast Asian Nations
ATT: Arms Trade Treaty
AU: African Union
CELAC: Community of Latin American and Caribbean States
CS: Common Security
CSER: Center for the Study of Existential Risk
CTBT: Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty
DCAF: Geneva Center for Security Sector Governance
ECOWAS: Economic Community of West African States
GCC: Gulf Cooperation Council
ICAN: International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons
INF: Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty
IPB: International Peace Bureau
IPU: Inter-Parliamentary Union
MPs: Members of Parliament
NPT: Treaty on Non Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons
OECD: Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
OSCE: Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
SAARC: South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation
TPNW: Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons
UN: United Nations
UNDP: United Nations Development Programme
UNODA: United Nations Office of Disarmament Affairs

Executive Summary

This research considers the implications and role of parliamentarians in applying the approach of Common Security. In an insecure context, traditional state-centric security models fail to maintain a secure world, even if they are on the rise. The concept of common security, with at its core the principle that no nation can achieve safety at the expense of others, offers a sustainable alternative. However, to achieve this, structural shifts are required—mainly in the redefinition of the security narrative: What does security mean, for whom, and how is it achieved? In this vision, parliamentarians, through their functions (legislative, oversight, budgetary, representative, and diplomatic), are uniquely positioned to drive this shift at both national and international levels.

Through the insights of three case studies—parliamentary diplomacy efforts, how different parliamentary functions can promote nuclear disarmament, and a practical analysis of the security issues in the West African region—as well as semi-structured interviews with experts and members of parliaments, this research proposes key findings. Namely: a newly expanded definition of common security, building on the intellectual and historical foundations of the concept and adapted to today's international challenges; a grid designed to operationalise common security for parliamentarians, bridging the gap between theoretical principles and everyday parliamentary practice; and a set of practical recommendations for MPs according to the specific functions identified. This analysis demonstrates that common security is far more than a theoretical concept—it is a practical lens for action that can be implemented through the diverse parliamentary functions. The possibilities emphasised by the experts and parliamentarians in the interviews make it clear that parliamentarians can play a central role in shaping security policy strategies.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Context

This research project is a collaboration between the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) and students from the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies. It aims to explore the approach of common security and its application to parliamentarians.

After a decline in the number of conflicts in the world following the end of the Cold War, they have only increased since the early 2000s (Obermeier, Rustard, 2023). The 9/11 attacks and the global war on terror that followed established a security paradigm centred on military-driven state responses. More recently, the war in Ukraine and ongoing conflicts in Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo (particularly in the Kivu region) and Gaza have further reinforced this approach while drawing attention to intensifying geopolitical rivalries.

However, as we confront increasingly global threats (such as pandemics, social inequalities and climate change) that transcend borders, it seems evident that unilateral, state-centric measures cannot address them. In this context, the traditional approach to security as only safety from threats proves itself increasingly ineffective. The urgent need to shift away from nuclear competition and military escalation underscores the necessity for an alternative security paradigm to address today's complex, interconnected global challenges. The concept of common security (The Independent Commission on Disarmament and Security Issues, 1982) introduces a collaborative approach, founded on the principle that security should not be built at the expense of others. In this view, states should avoid reinforcing their security by undermining that of their counterparts. Instead, security must be constructed collectively, benefitting all parties and fostering inclusive, sustainable solutions. This work will be based on this renewed vision of security as a broader concept, not involving uniquely military threats but also environmental, political and humanitarian issues. In this context, parliamentarians have the opportunity, through their functions, to promote the principles of common security and help reshape the prevailing security narrative. The crucial question this research wants to answer is how the common approach to security can be effectively implemented into parliamentary work. In order to do so, a better understanding of the previous and current stages of the security realm (and, hence, of common security itself) is needed.

1.2 Objectives and Research Questions

There is a significant gap in the literature regarding how parliamentarians can effectively implement common security through their institutional functions. Furthermore, the concept of common security requires deeper analysis and development to improve the understanding of its application and potential.

This research also aims to *illustrate common security's role in promoting sustainable peace (Q1)*. Members of Parliament (MPs) are key actors in implementing this approach, primarily through their parliamentary functions, ensuring adherence to the common security principles and persistence in addressing global challenges.

The second question this work addresses is *the added value of common security and how it complements traditional security (Q2)*. Building on this, a question that stems naturally from these premises is *how parliaments and parliamentarians can better incorporate common security in their work (Q3)*. Thus, the ultimate aim is to provide practical guidance to parliamentarians to help them carry out their duty through the lens of common security.

This research mainly adopts a qualitative approach and draws on case studies and semi-structured interviews. This study aims to translate the concept of common security from the academic field into a practical approach to incorporate into the work of parliamentarians. The first part, the literature review, provides a comprehensive historical overview of how traditional security paradigms have evolved into the concept of Common Security. From this theoretical background, an expanded definition of common security is presented and articulated to help conceptualise and operationalise this approach. To explore how parliamentary work can integrate it, a grid which outlines the intersections between parliamentary functions and the six pillars of Common Security was developed. This is intended to provide MPs with a broader view of the topic, enabling them to assess the applicability of common security to bridge the gap between theoretical principles and their everyday parliamentary practice.

Based on these intersections, this report presents three case studies: parliamentary diplomacy efforts, how different parliamentary functions can promote nuclear disarmament, and a practical analysis of the security issues in the Saharan region. These case studies enable the identification of good practices and derive practical recommendations for the application of common security to parliamentarians' jobs. It will help the latter to identify the concrete path of actions that they can take in order to apply the common security approach in their policy making. Empirical evidence through case studies is needed to demonstrate the applicability of

the recommendations and to gather insights from actors directly involved in policy making in order to foster more sustainable and inclusive policies.

2. Literature review

2.1 Traditional Security Approaches

To understand the approach of common security, it is essential to view it as an attempt to expand traditional approaches to security, making it necessary first to define these conventional frameworks.

The smallest denominator of security is the individual. Barnett defines, in this sense, security as "the condition of being protected from or not exposed to danger" (Barnett, 2003:7) . At the national level, however, the focus shifts to the state as the main reference object, emphasising its interactions with other actors in the global arena. The realists adopt this traditional notion of national security that traces its origins in the Hobbesian state of nature, where individuals must prioritise their survival. Consequently, framing security ensures survival through violence and military force (Buzan et al., 1998 : 8 ; Haftendorn, 1991 : 6-8) . The United Nations follows this conception of traditional security, seeing it as the attempt to solve threats against the essential values of the state, such as territorial integrity and political sovereignty(Osisanya, 2014). Samuel Makinda (1998) offers another relevant perspective, defining security as "the preservation of the norms, rules, institutions, and values of society" (Makinda, 1998 : 282). These definitions contribute to the idea of state as a guarantor of security through strength. As a consequence, what emerges is a state-centric approach to security, where the protection of material possessions, territorial boundaries and sovereignty is the primary concern. This approach is directly linked to the Westphalian model of international relations, where the state is the object of reference of security.

This traditional security framework broadly defined security approaches until the 20th century. However, the Cold War era, with the growing threats of nuclear weapons and the accompanying threat of mass destruction, challenged this perspective. It became evident that escalating military capabilities did not create peace or secure the international order. On the contrary, the nuclear arsenals and the race to armament introduced a new dead end: nuclear armament undermined diplomatic negotiations rather than enabling peaceful means. And as

Granoff (2022) argues, the threat of nuclear weapons not only applies to humanity but also limits the utility of diplomacy. Indeed, behind all the effort of diplomacy lies the possibility that (nuclear) states shift the conversation to the threat of force, making every change susceptible to the approval of the nuclear power. This context compelled policymakers to rethink and redefine the foundations of security, shifting the focus toward understanding the root causes of conflict and addressing them through dialogue and mediation rather than relying solely on military defences against physical threats. Principles that are at the basis of both Human and Common Security.

Moreover, contemporary scholars often highlight the need to redefine security within the framework of policy agendas (Baldwin, 1997). This approach emphasises practical responses to emerging challenges, including human rights, environmental sustainability, and social justice (Grizold, 1994). The post-Cold War era, in particular, highlighted the limitations of the traditional concept of security, which, as Levy noted, "excludes environmental and other non-military threats by definition" (Levy, 1995:39). As firstly associated with border and foreign frontiers, the shift in perspective has broadened the concept and factors involved in the process of securitisation (meaning recognising a factor as a cause of threat in order to give it priority in the political agenda), bringing national security issues to be also associated with states' activities in foreign countries. Borders are not what defines a threat anymore. The world is increasingly facing challenges that go beyond physical borders and material concerns, such as climate change, global pandemics, migration, and non-state actors. All of these dangers have a transnational character, so national security threats can be located in other continents and countries, and they are defined more by societal divisions and internal vulnerabilities than by the territorial borders between them (with special reference to the US, (Zelikow, 2003).

According to Jonathan Granoff (2022), despite the evolution of all other systems (economy, civil society) to a global level, the notion of security has largely remained within the borders of the nation state. He argues that in that vision, the state continues to dominate security through its monopoly on the legitimate use of force and as guardian of sovereignty. However, there seems to be no universal agreement on its definition or specificity due to temporal, cultural and geographical factors (Haftendorn, 1991: 3-6). Edwards highlights that the term security: "is an inherently ambiguous and inconsistent concept" (Edwards, 1999: 311), reflecting in that sense the limitations of the traditional security paradigm. If the purpose and definition of security are contested, what about the means to achieve it? Historically, this failure to have a clear definition has often made military responses a viable or, by default, alternative. However, this perspective

does not take into account the fact that threats and individuals' needs are evolving with globalisation, social transformations and technological advances. Moreover, it is in response to these limitations and by reframing the referent object of security from the state to the individual that the concept of Human Security emerges (Granoff, 2022).

2.2 Shaping a New Security Paradigm: From Traditional to Common Security

Even though the precise term "common security" may not appear frequently, its principles can be traced across several academic approaches that aimed to broaden the traditional, state-centred and military-focused notions of security, to encompass a broader range of threats.

The need for international and global cooperation is first evident in the United Nations Charter (1945), which establishes a fundamental basis for collective security. The Charter's Preamble mentions "we the peoples [need] to practise tolerance and live together in peace with one another as good neighbours" (United Nation, 1945 : Preamble), which articulates the need for nations to work together in shared interests and advocates for the avoidance of military force. This is reinforced in Article 2(4) of the UN Charter, which prohibits the use of force. Similarly, this emphasis on mutual cooperation and the rejection of military alliances is reflected within the Non-Aligned Movement (1955), which "expressed itself in favour of universal disarmament [...] and the prohibition of the production or use of or experimentation with nuclear weapons"(Appadorai, 1955 : 214). Both are based on principles that resonate strongly within the common security framework.

Academic contributions further expand the intellectual basis for common security and likely influenced the Palme Commission's report in 1982. Karl Deutsch's theory of the "security community" (1957) describes communities of states that have developed an expectation of lasting peace, "in which there is real assurance that the members of that community will not fight each other physically but will settle their disputes in some other way" (Deutsch, 1957 : 72). This idea reflects the belief found within common security that war and violence are ineffective in resolving conflicts, favouring peaceful, cooperative mechanisms instead. Similarly, Johan Galtung (1969) introduced the concept of positive peace (in contrast to negative peace) where the objective is not just to end acts of violence, but to address the fundamental causes embedded in structural violence. This view suggests that addressing the

immediate acts of violence, as seen in traditional security approaches, is insufficient. Instead, the structural causes of conflict (embedded within social, economic, and political systems), such as poverty, discrimination, repression, climate change, and inequities, must be properly addressed to build a society where individuals can thrive sustainably. The final approach to consider is human security, which will be further elaborated as it forms a key pillar of common security. First introduced in the 1994 United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) report (United Nations, 1994), this approach shifts focus from state-centric security to a people-centred perspective. It prioritises the safety and well-being of individuals over territorial security, addressing broader dimensions of security, including welfare, psychological well-being, and cultural and physical protection (United Nations, 1994). This approach opens up to address both root causes of conflicts and the complex, always evolving nature of threats.

2.3 Defining Common Security in the Literature

To grasp the approach of common security, it is essential to begin by defining it. However, the term has not been widely used, making it challenging to establish a precise definition. This section will explore the concept and clarify how it is applied.

The first use of the term common security finds its origin in 1982 with the report *Common Security, A Blueprint for Survival*, written by the Independent Commission on Disarmament and Security Issues (named as the Palme Commission, after its chair, Swedish Prime Minister Olof Palme). This commission of international leaders and experts was established during the intensification of the Cold War, where the greatest threat (as perceived by the international community) was a worldwide nuclear war. The report emphasised the urgency for "decisive action [...] to halt and reverse the spiral of the arms race and the deterioration of political relations, and to reduce the risks of conventional and nuclear wars" (The Independent Commission on Disarmament and Security Issues, 1982 : 1). This call to action proposed a new approach to global security rooted in mutual responsibility and cooperation.

Two foundational elements make the basis of this report. Firstly, it argues for the necessity of international cooperation, asserting that nations cannot "achieve their security at the expense of others" (The Independent Commission on Disarmament and Security Issues, 1982 : 4), which underscores the principle that unilateral actions can make insecurities escalate quickly. Secondly, it redefines security beyond the military domain, stating that "armaments are not the

only cause of international conflict, and are often its symptom" (The Independent Commission on Disarmament and Security Issues, 1982 : 4). These two ideas are interconnected, as the report highlights that "frequently, armaments are acquired because of the erroneous assumption that security can somehow be achieved at the expense of others" (The Independent Commission on Disarmament and Security Issues, 1982, 4). The report proposes to rethink global security through disarmament and that it would only be possible to achieve it together and not one against each other.

The Common Security 2022: For Our Shared Future report updated the original Palme Commission's findings, adapting them to contemporary challenges. Building on the 1982 report, this report expanded the definition of common security threats beyond nuclear war, identifying six major risk areas: the erosion of multilateralism in a multipolar world, climate change, economic inequality, pandemics, authoritarianism, and militarisation (Olof Palme International Center et al., 2022). By broadening the scope of threats, the report emphasises that militarised security solutions are insufficient and advocates for a collective, cooperative response to these interconnected global issues.

At the UN Summit of the Future in September 2024, the "Pact for the Future", reinforced the urgent need for international cooperation and solidarity, declaring that "challenges [we face] are deeply interconnected and far exceed the capacity of any single State alone" (United Nations, 2024: 1). Highlighting the enduring relevance of common security, which necessitates a unified global approach to address complex and international threats.

In this research, we will adopt the updated framework of common security outlined in the "Common Security 2022: For Our Shared Future" report, as it broadens the scope of threats to modern and interconnected challenges.

3. Methodology

This research is based on a qualitative approach and focuses on three case studies and semi-structured interviews. Its aim is to translate the academic concept of common security into a practical framework for parliamentarians.

Case studies

The case studies aim to identify concrete and successful applications of the common security concept in a parliamentary context. Three key examples were selected: nuclear disarmament,

the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, and security challenges in the Sahel region. These cases explore the intersection between parliamentary functions and common security principles, as outlined in the grid.

Interviews

The interviews serve as a primary source of data and complement the literature review. They aim to identify gaps in the research field and make the concept of common security applicable to parliaments. Experts, current and former MPs, and parliamentary staff who have practical experience with implementation were interviewed. They were selected based on their expertise and relevance to the case studies.

Limitations

This research is primarily based on qualitative interviews and a limited number of case studies, and it has certain limitations regarding the generalisability of the results. The selection of experts and parliamentarians interviewed reflects specific regional and political contexts, which may limit transferability to other countries and parliaments. The case studies also focused on just certain parts of the security policies. Other security-related topics, such as cybersecurity or new technologies, were not considered.

4. Conceptualisation of Common Security into Parliamentary Practice

Defining Common Security

Common security is a transformative approach to peace and security that recognises that the security of one state or community is inseparable from the security of others, in an interconnected world. This approach challenges the traditional state-centric and military view of the security paradigm that assumes that security is a zero-sum game for states, where one's gain is inevitably another's loss. The latter, rooted in isolation and domination, contrasts with the core principles of common security, based on mutual security logic, where collaboration and cooperation between states enhance everybody's security. At its core lies the ambition to establish a common normative framework, grounded in the United Nations Charter, which already introduces the key principles found in common security. The Charter reflects the fundamental commitment of states to coexist peacefully and respect international law. This

framework aims to institutionalise the proposed principles and foster a vision of shared responsibility among states. It is based on the understanding that no state can achieve security at the expense of others, and that for peace to be sustainable over time, it requires transparency, trust and a collective sense of responsibility. Since the actions of one state (in terms of security, whether in armament, environmental policy or conflict response) can directly impact another state, fostering accountability for every state's actions is necessary to create a common framework. The cornerstone of common security is the international legal framework, built upon the UN Charter and reinforced by multilateral treaties that establish shared rules and norms. Common security acknowledges that security must tackle the root causes of insecurity and not only the visible symptoms of conflicts. At its core lies the redefinition of threats beyond the unique conception of military and state-centred threats, including transboundary threats such as climate change, inequalities and poverty, global pandemics, migration, technological threats and non-state actors. Common security relies on inclusive instruments such as dialogue, diplomacy, conflict prevention, disarmament and trust building. It emphasises the importance of accountability and the need for states to consider the impact of their actions on others at a local, regional or global level. It is a collective approach that demands effort from several stakeholders and levels, such as governments, parliaments, international and regional organisations, non-governmental organisations and civil society. Ultimately, common security must be seen as a lens to transform the tools used and the conception of security by redefining who is protected, what security means, and how it is achieved. This shift implies the need to redefine the traditional security narrative by proposing a vision where security is not a competition but something that can only be achieved collectively and not based on a framework that diminishes the security of others.

4.1 Conceptualisation of the Six Principles of Common Security

Building on the original concept of common security developed by the Olof Palme Commission in 1982, the “Common Security 2022: For Our Shared Future” report outlines six principles of common security that address contemporary threats. Based on this definition, the pillars were redefined to reflect the insight gained through the literature review, the case studies and the interviews. The following six pillars are not exhaustive; for example, an additional pillar on technological threats could have been included. However, the ones chosen were the most

relevant and impactful for our understanding and application of the concept of Common Security. The following pillars are further expanded in the Annex .

The 6 Principles of Common Security

To conceptualize the notion of common security, 6 pillars were identified. While not exhaustive, those principles represent the most relevant areas for actions.

1. **Human Security:** Shifting the focus of security from state to individual well being. Human security addresses “freedom from fear” (protection from violence) and “freedom from want” (protection from psychological and structural threats such as poverty, disease).
2. **Building Trust:** To achieve a sustainable peace, trust is fundamental. In a need for more than just the absence of conflict, trust is achieved through mutual respect and collaboration that assures long lasting relations.
3. **Comprehensive Disarmament:** The reduction of any type of weapons (nuclear, conventional and any type of military technologies) is essential for a sustainable trust and shared sense of security.
4. **Global and Regional Cooperation:** For a sustainable peace process, countries and stakeholders have to work together against common threats and understand that they can share solutions and initiatives in order to promote resolution of conflict through peaceful means.
5. **Conflict Prevention:** Addressing the root causes of the issues at stake through dialogue and inter parliamentary diplomacy in order to prevent the violence outbreak from happening or escalating.
6. **Practice of Common Security in International Forums:** International fora are often the easiest platform to foster dialogue and for diplomats and MPs to build mutual trust and cooperation, ensuring a durable peace.

4.2 Parliamentary Implementation of Common Security

Common security is a collective approach that demands a comprehensive effort from several stakeholders, including governments, international and regional organisations, non-governmental organisations, and civil society. They all play an important role in applying a

common security approach at their level. For our work, priority will be given to how members of parliament implement common security in their parliamentary practices.

How can parliamentarians contribute to the implementation of common security in their work? Parliamentarians play a crucial role in advancing common security through their parliamentary functions. These functions include legislation, oversight, budgetary decisions, representation and parliamentary diplomacy (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2024: 13-17). Legislation refers to the law-making body of the parliaments, where members can develop and adopt national laws. Oversight refers to the parliament's control over the government, ensuring accountability, transparency, and adherence to the rule of law. Through budgetary decisions, members of parliament have the power to amend and approve the budget proposed by the government. Representation allows the parliamentarians to advocate for their constituents. Finally, through parliamentary diplomacy, they can engage on the international stage and promote relations, both bilaterally and within multilateral institutions (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2024: 13-17). Based on the six principles of common security mentioned above and explored in more depth, as well as the parliamentary functions described in the IPU toolkit (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2024) and also in the playbook of *parliamentarians for peace* by Principles for Peace (2023), we have developed a comprehensive grid showing how parliamentarians can contribute to the achievement of common security. Based on this grid, we will select our case studies and examine the corresponding elements in more detail.

	Legislative	Oversight	Budgetary	Representative	Parliamentary Diplomacy
Right to Human Security	Pass laws ensuring protection of human conditions (economic security, food s, health s, environmental s, personal s...)	Monitoring government actions and implementation on human security policies (need to meet legal and ethical standard)	Allocation of funds for human security efforts (social protection programs, disaster response, and security sector reform focus on HS)	Advocating for the interests of the populations and policies ensuring safety and well being	Promote human security as a diplomatic priority in inter-parliamentary dialogues
Building Trust	Passing laws that foster trust and cooperation in fields such as security, human rights and trade. Legislate for transparency and accountability mechanisms	Evaluating and ensuring the implementation of trust-building agreements	Advocating for meaningful budgetary such as peacebuilding, reparations and support of victims of war	Promote interfaith and intercultural dialogue and facilitating discussions or bringing different parties to the negotiating table. Ensure inclusivity in policy making.	Engaging in active diplomacy and with foreign parliaments to build trust through confidence-building measures.
Comprehensive Disarmament	Enacting laws to support arms control and disarmament	Monitoring compliance with arms control agreements and Monitoring the development and use of new military technologies	Redirecting military funds toward peaceful purposes and Allocating resources for research and regulation of new technologies	Advocating for global peace and weapons reduction, raising awareness on arms control policies, and involving civil society in discussions on the limitation and reduction of military capacities.	Leading international efforts for arms control and disarmament and leading international diplomatic efforts to create international norms
Global and Regional Cooperation	Passing laws to support multilateral agreements	Ensuring compliance with international agreements	Allocation of funds for multilateral peace initiatives and international organisations	Advocating for multilateral cooperation and global peace frameworks	Fostering international collaboration and facilitating dialogue among nations.
Conflict Prevention	Creating laws to support effective and peaceful dispute resolution	Monitoring implementation of conflict prevention strategies	Allocating funds for peacebuilding and mediation programs	Promoting dialogue and preventive strategies to mitigate emerging disputes	Initiating proactive discussions on international level to reduce tensions and foster peace
Practice of CS in International Forum	Align national legislation with international common security principles	Ensure the government upholds commitments made in international agreements and institutions	Allocate resources to enhance national contribution to common security initiatives (e.g., UN peacekeeping, climate security).	Advocate for international cooperation and common security principles at domestic and international levels	Use parliamentary diplomacy to promote multilateral security governance in global forums

Figure 1: Intersections between Common Security and Parliamentarian's functions.

5. Case Studies

5.1 Intersection: Common Security Principles and Parliamentary Functions

5.1.1 Human Security and Parliamentary Functions

The representative role is a core function of parliaments and of members of parliament in particular. Parliamentarians are elected by citizens to represent their interests and implement them through oversight and lawmaking.

In the link between the citizens and the people speaking on their behalf lies the very essence of democratic legitimacy. If the position of the parliamentarians fails to reflect and address the perspectives and needs of the population, the parliament cannot be said to be fully representative. When this connection fails, the lack of confidence in political institutions causes

a detachment in public involvement, eventually weakening the basis of a democratic regime. Citizens need to feel capable of advocating for political change through the parliament and their representatives, and this accountability comes through transparency and information exchange between MPs and their voters.

This representative function becomes even more relevant when incorporated through the lens of human security as one of the key pillars of common security. As the term already suggests, it highlights the importance of adopting an approach centred on individuals rather than solely focusing on the state's ability to provide safety from military threats.

As part of the common security framework, human security is mainly concerned about the well-being and safety of people, alongside protection from hunger, political repression, and environmental degradation.

"Human security is not primarily about the conflict resolution between states, it is more about implementing sustainable development goals and ensuring human rights are implemented, it is putting the individual at the forefront of security" - Alyn Ware

In that context, as intermediaries between the state and citizens, parliamentarians occupy strategic positions to address the population's and individuals' diverse needs.

5.1.2 OSCE Case Study

The common security approach finds one of its most practical institutional expressions in the work of the OSCE, and particularly in its Parliamentary Assembly (PA). OSCE plays a key role in facilitating this framework and communication between representatives among European countries. It came into existence after signing the Helsinki Final Act in 1975, establishing ten principles that had the initial purpose of facilitating dialogue among the powers during the Cold War. Its purpose is now to guarantee, through a joint action, a comprehensive approach to security, through decisions made by consensus. Among its main bodies are the Parliamentary Assembly which provides a unique forum for MPs to coordinate action and contribute to the peaceful resolution of conflicts with its annual sessions and monthly meetings. In these occasions, the PA enables members to engage in multiple dimensions of diplomacy: influencing conflict resolution and fostering a productive environment to achieve peace, while ensuring compliance with International Law. The Assembly holds significant influence due to the openness and flexibility of its institutional infrastructure.

Parliamentary Diplomacy

“There's not always a winning player, so, common security relies in the first instance on diplomacy, on mediation, on ways of resolving the conflicts and mutually agreeable ways”.-

Alyn Ware

Among the peaceful means that OSCE can deploy in international legal practice, parliamentary diplomacy is definitely the one pointing in the direction of common security. OSCE being a forum for parliamentarians works twofold: it facilitates an informal exchange with ministers and high rank government officials of the countries involved in the conflict and also a confrontation with other parliamentarians. It can facilitate peace agreements by creating a good environment through establishing networks among parliamentarians for mutual understanding and willingness to find a common ground, hence serving as an ice breaker. As Paul Ingram points out: “Using the collaborative approach across boundaries to build confidence and trust. I think trust is important here”. As it is clear, Parliamentary Diplomacy, despite not being an alternative to the diplomacy conducted at the governmental level, can serve as a good complement and also eventually result in parties coming to the negotiation table.

Oversight

OSCE PA also possesses the ability to exert indirect parliamentary control, meaning a function of oversight on the government's moves and state's strategy, even though bound by institutional constraints that impede them from taking an opposing instance or deviating completely. Alongside with this, another tool worth considering for the application of common and human security is the PA's ability to constrain or check on executive power, through questioning ministers and the executive itself. This is useful in order to improve the transparency of decision making processes and to prevent the outbreak of conflicts due to the abuse of power.

These functions have proven extremely efficient in active conflict contexts such as the war in Ukraine. Since the outbreak of the conflict in 2014 - and even more so after its violent escalation in 2022 - the OSCE PA has worked to facilitate dialogue, de-escalation and to build trust between the two parties instead of focusing only on the military solution. Demilitarisation and peaceful resolution are two of the key features of Common Security, and especially OSCE PA President Margareta Cederfelt, on the 11th of May 2022 at an OSCE PA webinar devoted to the Russian war in Ukraine, emphasised that it is important to use all available tools in

bringing the war to an end. Upon her 2018 election as president of the third permanent commission of the OSCE on democracy, human rights and humanitarian issues, Cederfelt immediately organised a mission to Ukraine and produced a report documenting the situation (Cederfelt, 2022). It is crucial, she states, to document what they do and for other people to see it. Hence, raising awareness becomes one of the first tools of parliamentary diplomacy.

5.1.3 The Case of the British-Irish Parliamentary Assembly

Another case worth mentioning about parliamentarians being able to improve common security through their power is the British-Irish PA. The latter, as explained by Denis Naughten (ex-Irish MP), was initially a meeting of parliamentarians from the Irish Parliament and the British Parliament. It has a more institutionalised structure today, but it started to meet in the late eighties and early nineties, and was instrumental to the commencement of the peace process on the island of Ireland. This commenced with the parliamentarians and then led to intergovernmental and community engagement on the island of Ireland". The assembly's work is divided into four committees: Sovereign Matters, European Affairs, Economics, Environment and Social. The second committee, for example, regularly interacts with the EU and produces reports on the important issues at stake, such as cross-border trade with the EU after Brexit, the European Investment Bank, etc. These reports can be considered one of the strongest examples of the power of parliamentarians to raise awareness through the spreading of reports and also of how, through relationship and communication built over time, two governments with opposed views came to have a shared vision of their future, thanks to inter-parliamentary dialogue and good practices. Another example could be the 2022 Committee on Sovereign Matters' report on consolidating the bilateral relationship between the UK and Ireland, which was aimed at bettering the communication between the two governments in a post-Brexit context in which the United Kingdom and Ireland were not meeting as regularly as they did when they were in the EU Security Council (British-Irish Parliamentary Assembly, 2022). This report also aimed to re-establish a regular communication forum and adapt to the greater divergence that both countries face after exiting the European Union.

In conclusion, sharing knowledge of the best practices, building platforms to encourage dialogue, and monitoring and pushing the government's actions and their commitment to build peace and to preserve human rights are the instruments that allow conflict prevention and the protection of the individual in conflict environments. In the international contest we are facing nowadays, parliamentary diplomacy is also able to ensure that the voices of the people are

heard and reflected in international peacebuilding efforts, reinforcing the link between the citizens and their representatives.

5.2 Nuclear Disarmament

5.2.1 Disarmament Pathways: Step-by-Step vs. Nuclear Weapon Ban Treaty

There are two main approaches to achieving nuclear disarmament. The first is the step-by-step approach, which seeks gradual progress through verifiable and implementable measures. It is based on the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), which created a framework in which non-nuclear-weapon states committed not to acquire nuclear arms, and nuclear-weapon states committed to pursuing disarmament. Angela Kane, former UN High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, highlighted several partial measures contributing to disarmament. These include the Partial Test Ban Treaty, five nuclear-weapon-free zone treaties, and other agreements limiting the deployment of nuclear weapons. However, she also expressed scepticism about the step-by-step approach. With around 12,000 nuclear weapons still in existence and significant challenges in verifiably destroying warheads, she questioned whether this method would result in zero weapons or zero disarmament. Out of this scepticism, and the frustration felt by many advocates of nuclear disarmament, emerged the strategy of prohibiting nuclear weapons.

5.2.2 Step-by-Step Approach

The NPT marks the cornerstone of the global nuclear non-proliferation regime. The objective of the NPT is to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons, achieve complete nuclear disarmament, and promote cooperation in the peaceful use of nuclear energy. With 191 states having joined the treaty, including all nuclear-weapon states, it is the only nearly universal binding multilateral treaty with the goal of disarmament. In the step-by-step approach, the first step would be for nuclear-armed states to commit never to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-armed states, known as negative security assurances (NSA). Furthermore, a mutual no-first-use (NFU) policy should be introduced, clearly stating that nuclear arsenals exist solely as deterrence. As Paul Ingram emphasised in the interview, such a commitment could be achieved within a relatively modest timeframe, as it does not undermine the principle of nuclear deterrence. This framework would be a first step toward common security, focusing on building trust and cooperation between nations.

The goal of a no-first-use policy is also a key component of the Common Security Report by the Olof Palme Commission. As Sean Conner, Secretary General of the International Peace Bureau (IPB), the publisher organisation of the report, emphasised, there is a fundamental understanding among nuclear-armed states that a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought. This shared understanding provides common ground for establishing such a policy. Although nuclear weapons possession is de facto legitimised, Conner notes that this reality creates space to begin discussions on further steps. A verifiable and reliable no-first-use policy is a foundation for the path toward global zero. This policy can act as a security promise to other states based entirely on mutual trust.

Good Practices: NSA and NFU Policies

Parliamentary Diplomacy

In July 2018, over 300 parliamentarians from the OSCE met in Berlin and adopted a declaration calling on nuclear-armed and allied states to commit to a no-first-use policy. The declaration emphasised the importance of nuclear risk reduction and confidence-building measures, including structured dialogues to address regional conflicts and tensions (PNND, 2018). Another example is the landmark resolution on parliamentarians' role in nuclear disarmament adopted by the IPU in 2014. The IPU reaffirms in this resolution the goal of a world free of nuclear weapons and emphasises the crucial role of parliaments in promoting disarmament and non-proliferation. In its resolution, it calls on all states, especially nuclear powers, to fulfil their obligations under the NPT, to support multilateral disarmament negotiations and to prevent the use of nuclear weapons worldwide. It calls for concrete measures such as the ratification of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), the creation of nuclear-weapon-free zones and the safeguarding of nuclear materials in order to strengthen global security.

Representative

In November 2021, a group of 34 current and former legislators from NATO countries sent an open letter to President Joe Biden and U.S. Congressional leaders advocating for the adoption of a no-first-use or sole-purpose nuclear policy by the United States. They highlighted that such a stance would reduce the risk of nuclear war and contribute to global disarmament efforts (NoFirstUse, 2021).

Legislative

In January 2017, two members of the US parliament introduced the "Restricting First Use of Nuclear Weapons Act," which aimed to prevent the President from launching a nuclear first strike without a congressional declaration of war. While it does not prohibit first use entirely, the intention of the legislation was clear: to pave the way for an NFU policy (PNND, 2017).

5.2.3 Full Abolition of Nuclear Weapons

The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) lays the foundation for a categorical ban on nuclear weapons. It comprehensively prohibits all aspects related to nuclear weapons, including their development, possession, deployment, and use. While the step-by-step approach seeks global zero by gradually creating a conducive environment for disarmament, the TPNW focuses on the stigmatisation, prohibition, and eventual elimination of all nuclear warheads. This represents a significant normative shift toward fully delegitimising nuclear weapons (MIT Press, 2022). However, this approach is not without scepticism. Experts like Alyn Ware and Paul Ingram argue that it deepens divisions between nuclear-armed states and non-nuclear-weapon states. Despite this, Ingram acknowledges that the TPNW has helped reduce hostility between non-nuclear weapon states and nuclear powers. The TPNW was born out of frustration among non-nuclear weapon states, who felt that disarmament efforts were stagnating due to a lack of political will among nuclear-armed states to move toward global zero.

When discussing global zero, the TPNW cannot be overlooked. It offers a crucial approach for non-nuclear weapon states, emphasising the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons and their devastating impact on humanity. It also challenges the prevailing norms of security policies and questions the effectiveness of the step-by-step approach. Florian Eblenkamp from ICAN argues that nuclear deterrence, which relies on avoiding conflict between nuclear and non-nuclear weapon states, only works if nuclear states continually demonstrate their willingness and readiness to use their nuclear forces. For these states, nuclear weapons are seen as essential to national and international security (Brodie, 2021). The TPNW should follow the example of other successful treaties that have achieved a complete ban, such as the ban on chemical and biological munitions and cluster munitions. In this context, Eblenkamp asks why anyone would advocate a no-first-use (NFU) policy if the ultimate goal is a complete ban. Just as no one would propose an NFU policy for biological, chemical, or cluster munitions, the goal should be the complete abolition of nuclear weapons.

Good Practices of nuclear weapon ban treaty

Oversight

The Dutch parliament played a decisive role in the Netherlands' participation in the TPNW negotiations, as the only NATO member. A broad cross-party majority repeatedly called on

the government to actively participate in international efforts to ban nuclear weapons. Parliament was supported by pressure from civil society.. The call for more transparency and the withdrawal of US nuclear weapons from the Netherlands had also been an issue for years. Despite the subsequent rejection of the TPNW text, the Dutch participation in the treaty negotiations showed how strongly the parliamentary role can influence nuclear disarmament efforts (Shirobokova 2018).

Parliamentarians play a key role in encouraging the government to support the treaty on the TPNW, often presenting it as part of Switzerland's humanitarian responsibilities. Parliamentarians have submitted motions urging the Federal Council to sign the treaty, thereby maintaining political pressure and demonstrating continued parliamentary commitment to nuclear disarmament (Swiss Parliament, 2018).

Parliamentary Diplomacy

South Africa is actively promoting the universalization of the TPNW and hosted a regional meeting with representatives from 37 African countries to discuss strategies for encouraging all African states to join the treaty. Through such initiatives, both the government and parliament aim to highlight the importance of a nuclear weapons ban across the continent and raise awareness about the humanitarian and environmental consequences of nuclear weapons (ICRC, 2021).

Legislative

The global movement towards a world free of nuclear weapons is gaining momentum, particularly due to the pioneering role of non-nuclear states in ratifying key disarmament treaties. Each new ratification strengthens the international norm and brings the international community closer to a critical point. With broad support for the TPNW, the political and moral pressure on nuclear-weapon states is growing. In the long term, the narrative could shift away from voluntary disarmament towards an international expectation and obligation. If the vast majority of states take binding steps, the existence of nuclear weapons will become increasingly difficult to justify. Therefore, it is important that parliamentarians maintain pressure on the government and use their legislative tools to move their government toward signing the treaty. For example, such a move was taken by a group of 71 UK Parliament members, who adopted a motion calling for the UK to join the TPNW (UK Parliament 2020). Similar to Switzerland, where Parliamentarians are playing a key role in encouraging the government to support the treaty on the TPNW, often presenting it as part

of Switzerland's humanitarian responsibilities. Parliamentarians have submitted motions urging the Federal Council to sign the treaty, thereby maintaining political pressure and demonstrating continued parliamentary commitment to nuclear disarmament (Swiss Parliament, 2018).

The New Zealand Parliament unanimously passed motions supporting the treaty, and parliamentarians have been active in promoting nuclear disarmament as a cornerstone of the country's foreign policy. This parliamentary consensus played a crucial role in the swift ratification of the treaty in 2018, reinforcing New Zealand's long-standing anti-nuclear stance and setting an example for other non-nuclear weapon states (Converge.org.nz, 2018).

5.3 Ghana's Common Security Approach

5.3.1 The Military Regime (Takeover) in Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger

The military coup that took place in Niger in July 2023, which resulted in the overthrow of the democratically elected president, evoked a response of unparalleled outrage from the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) (Jabo, 2024). This response was aimed at compelling the military to reinstate the ousted president. However, this attempt was met with fierce opposition from most citizens in the country. ECOWAS threatened the three countries to either hasten the return of democracy in their respective countries or face severe consequences. In response to their failure to comply with ECOWAS's demands, a series of sanctions were imposed on the three countries. As a result, they created an Alliance of Sahel States, aiming to counteract any potential military strikes from ECOWAS.

5.3.2 The Exit from the ECOWAS Bloc to form the Alliance of the Sahel States

In January 2024, the three countries formally declared their exit from the organisation. This development has led to a breakdown in relations between the Sahelian States (Alliances) and ECOWAS (Jabo, 2024). Concerns have been raised by diplomatic entities across the West African Region, and by some national parliaments, notably that of Ghana, regarding the potential consequences of military intervention in a state already experiencing significant military tension and the possibility that this could lead to an escalation of the situation. This underscores the importance of Article 4 of the 1993 Treaty of ECOWAS, which emphasises

the fundamental principles of integration, including non-aggression, harmonisation of policies, peaceful resolution of disputes among member states, protection and promotion of human rights, accountability, and democracy. In pursuit of these democratic tenets, in which good governance is a key driver, ECOWAS has zero tolerance for changes in government through undemocratic means.

5.3.3 The Parliament of Ghana's Role in Common Security

In the context of the escalating tensions between ECOWAS and the Sahelian States, the case study of Ghana's role as a mediator between these two entities is of particular interest. The strategic decision to utilize Ghana as a conduit for diplomatic negotiations, rather than resorting to military intervention, is of significant political and diplomatic importance. In the context of the prevailing security challenges, the newly elected President of Ghana (H.E. John Dramani Mahama) has opted to assume a leadership role in diplomatic negotiations aimed at resolving the situation, while eschewing the use of military intervention. To this end, the president has appointed a presidential envoy to negotiate with the Sahelian States. In a further development, the Parliament of Ghana has allocated budgetary resources to support this initiative and has established a Parliamentary Select Committee to oversee negotiations with the Sahelian States and the ECOWAS. In this regard, during the 2025 budgetary allocation (appraisal) and debate, the leaders of the both sides of the house commended the initiative taken by the president with intention that what affects the Sahel States and ECOWAS directly and indirectly affects the common security of the Sub-region (Modern Ghana, 2025). In the course of the budgetary allocation for the 2025 fiscal year, the Member of Parliament for Diamongo (Hon. Samuel Abdulai Jinapor) raised a concern regarding the need for Ghana to take the lead in engaging the Sahelian States to embrace democratic governance and to curb terrorist attacks in the regions and subsequent recruitment of children into these groups (Modern Ghana, 2025). This is due to the fact that certain regions of the Sahelian States have been occupied by terrorist groups, which has given rise to concerns regarding the maintenance of peace in the West African Region.

To establish global and regional cooperation, which is the catalyst of common security, it is necessary to allocate funds for multilateral peace initiatives and international organizations. The allocation of funds to embark on the negotiation will facilitate the establishment of trust, which in turn will allow for the advocacy of meaningful budgetary allocations, including but

not limited to peacebuilding, reparations, and the support of victims of war. The allocation of funds for multilateral peace initiatives and international organizations is a necessary component of a comprehensive strategy to promote peace and stability in the region. This approach aligns with the primary function of parliament, which is to allocate budgets for the maintenance of peace and the establishment of common security measures within the region.

It is evident that Ghana's parliament, as the nation's legislative authority, wields significant influence over national budgetary allocations. This authority encompasses various sectors, including foreign policy, defence, and international cooperation (Abdulai, 2021). The Executive (Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, or Ministry of Defense) proposes a budget that includes contributions to ECOWAS or any engagement with AES-related activities, which are then reviewed, debated, and approved by Parliamentary Committees (especially the Finance Committee and the Foreign Affairs Committee) in the 2025 budget and fiscal year policy (Ghana Ministry of Finance, 2024). Although foreign policy is primarily an executive function, however, the Parliament of Ghana does have an influence position on regional issues by approving or withholding funds. For instance, the degree of support or opposition expressed by Ghana towards the Alliance of Sahel States (a coalition established by Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger as a counterbalance to ECOWAS) can be reflected in the manner in which Parliament votes on associated expenditures. Ghana is a founding member of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and contributes to its budget. Parliamentary approval is imperative for the security implications of the Sahel States, the ECOWAS, and Ghana (Aning & Danso, 2022), as well as for contributions to ECOWAS peacekeeping or mediation missions.

In periods of crisis (for example, military coups in Sahel states), Parliament has deliberated on Ghana's role and financial contribution to ECOWAS sanctions, diplomatic missions, and peacekeeping initiatives. In light of the security concerns engendered by the instability in the Sahel region, Parliament has also examined budgetary provisions pertaining to counter-terrorism collaboration with ECOWAS, as well as the role of the terrorist hub in the Sahel States in terms of recruitment and the generation of tension. Furthermore, Parliament has explored strategies for engaging youth in gainful employment, with a view to mitigating the impact of these activities on regional stability and national security. Parliament may issue resolutions or position papers on Ghana's involvement in ECOWAS vs AES dynamics, especially if it has implications for national security, regional stability, or Ghana's economic interests.

The reports of the 2025 Joint Committees (e.g. Foreign Affairs, Defence, Interior, and Finance) of Parliament offer guidance and reflect national consensus or dissent on regional alliances and how they can approve the budget to fund this course.

Ghana, as a constitutional democracy that advocates for regional stability, has adopted a cautious yet resolute stance through its Ministry of Foreign Affairs, supported by parliamentary debates and funding decisions (Modern Ghana News, 2024). Parliament has expressed concern over the imposition of ECOWAS sanctions, the strategies employed for mediation, and Ghana's financial obligations in the context of military takeovers in neighbouring states. A delegation from Ghana, including a parliamentary select committee visited Burkina Faso, Niger and Mali to solicit for the concern of the Alliances of the Sahelian States to be addressed by the larger body of ECOWAS (Modern Ghana News, 2025). There was an initiative called the “Accra Initiative” which brought the ECOWAS leaders and that of the Alliances of the Sahelian States together to deliberate on common security with the sub-region. There was an invitation extended to the Alliances of the Sahel States to ECOWAS at 50 launch which created an avenue to deliberate on how there will be peace and stability within the sub-region and how the larger ECOWAS bloc could come back together, if not original ECOWAS, but could form ECOWAS - AES bloc (Modern Ghana News, 2025)

6. Practical Recommendations for Members of Parliament

Common security is not only an abstract theoretical concept, it requires concrete action from parliamentarians. Parliamentarians have, because of their mandate and proximity with the population, some precious tools at their disposal to help shift the security paradigm from traditional security to Common Security, which will be outlined in the following chapter. The following examples are not an exhaustive list, but rather some practical elements that could be implemented or serve as guiding lines, divided by parliamentary function.

6.1 Legislative:

A. Change the policy of their country

Legislators in nuclear-armed countries can introduce and support legislation that restricts the first use of nuclear weapons, paving the way for formal NFU policies. Introducing legal and procedural barriers to unilateral nuclear decisions. Creating a pathway for future, more

comprehensive NFU doctrines. Legislation can also support transparency, and accountability mechanisms aligned with NSA commitments.

B. Enforcing International Law

Another important tool is ensuring the application of Public International Law. States often ignore or selectively comply with international law, and this is where parliamentarians can play an important role.

"{Common Security is about} resolving the conflicts in mutually agreeable ways" – [Alyn Ware](#)

However, if one of the parties is not interested in resolving the conflicts, "common security is about bringing in International Law" (Ware, 2025). If diplomacy, mediation and other communication tools do not work, there is a need to look to the legal bodies to resolve a conflict in a non-violent way. From that point forward, MPs can act as watchdogs to ensure their government's compliance with international obligations. They can hold governments accountable for their legal obligations and innovate new norms. However, the role of the MP does not stop with national borders. As Dennis Naughten highlighted:

"The UN fears offending governments, but MPs are the people's voice" – [Denis Naughten](#)

Indeed, the responsibility of compliance with international law is not only a governmental task, and parliamentarians can push to have a more direct link to UN agencies, for example, through direct briefing from those agencies (such as the OECD approach) or asking for information about their country's commitment to the international system. This implication impacts transparency within the national and international framework and could reconnect international policymaking with democratic institutions.

The idea underlying this is that without international law, common security is only rhetoric, and without common security, international law lacks a framework and an ideal to which the countries need to tend.

6.2 Oversight

A. Ask Questions

According to Margret Kiener Nellen (2025), a powerful tool that MPs have is asking questions. Parliamentarians can expose traditional security agendas and challenge the priorities by asking

questions, demanding answers, and publishing them. As she puts it, "ask everything," flood the defence ministers and lobbies with written questions, and then make their answers public. Those questions can enhance the transparency and bring the debate more publicly. Practically, parliamentarians can ask for evidence and require governments to cite academic sources for policy proposals. They can use the questions to audit the budgets or more closely related security departments. By making answers public, the parliamentarians can use public pressure to make moves because :

"Public opinion is sometimes more effective than the law." – [Margret Kiener Nellen](#)

Furthermore, when these questions enter the public debate, they often serve for journalists and experts to further investigate and in some cases can lead to the amplification of the issues at stake. In this way, a single question can help challenge the dominant traditional security narratives and open broader societal debates.

B. Use Reports, fact and science to prove

Another essential tool that parliamentarians can use to advance common security is asking for evidence (reports, research or transparent documentation). Too often, security-related decisions are driven by political interests, ideology, emotions or capitalist spending rather than facts, whereas assessing the real security needs of a nation to make the military spending reflect those needs would be ideal. As Dennis Naughten put it, when security measures are proposed, they should be based on academic evidence and scientific facts. In that sense, MPs should collaborate with academics and civil society to ensure that security-related decisions relate to reality rather than being driven by other components.

Margret Kiener Nellen (2025) emphasises that the facts are also political tools in themselves. The documentation and publication of abuses, violations, or contradictions in the security realm can have an important impact (even if not in terms of legal consequences). The MPs can also contribute by writing and publishing reports and briefings during missions or visits abroad (even if they are not often read), to expose the failures (or successes) of security efforts on the field. Parliamentarians can support the creation and the diffusion of public archives and reports that can pressurise governments or actors that violate the international legal framework (such as Cederfelt's report on Ukraine), to make visible all the invisible suffering.

6.3 Budgetary

A. Budget Transparency

Another important leverage that MPs can advance is through their influence over the national budgets. Concretely, the budgets are where the political priorities are visible, and it is where the parliamentarians can directly challenge excessive military spending.

In the countries where the budget process is transparent and parliamentarians have a significant influence, MPs need to advocate for an allocation away from armament and military spending and towards the root causes of violence. According to Margret Kiener Nellen, a key strategy is to make the comparison between two allocations visible: "one missile equals 500 homeless shelters" (Kiener Nellen, 2025). By doing that, parliamentarians can expose abstract numbers of the military budget and the human costs of that spending.

In the context of a lack of transparency in budget making, at the parliament's level, the MPs must push for greater transparency and oversight mechanisms to be informed about how the money is spent and collected. For example, progressive taxation can be a means of funding Human Security measures. Even if in some contexts it is almost impossible, parliamentarians can try to push to the maximum to demand audits of the security department or intelligence spending, redirecting the resources from weapons to welfare.

6.4 Representative

A. Access to clear information

Ensure that citizens have access to clear and unbiased information, which is crucial to raise awareness on the issues at stake in the international arena, and that is the first step to create networks of like-minded people ready to act on a specific issue. In order to obtain that, there is a need to ensure that their voices are heard and, as a consequence, reflected in MPs speeches and positions during assemblies, including OSCE PA. Citizens will speak if they have the correct information and feel their voice counts for something or is reflected in the Parliamentarians' lines of thought. Without these elements, they will not make their voices heard.

B. Reframing the security narrative

There is a need to reframe the security narrative. An important task for parliamentarians in this respect is to redefine what constitutes "security." Security is normally rooted in a traditional

(state-centred and military) vision, not addressing the roots of insecurity, such as inequality or climate change. Parliamentarians can challenge this status quo by creating spaces for dialogue with their constituents. In this sense, Paul Ingram (CSER) underlines that

"Security is not just about borders. It's about whether our constituents can afford food, healthcare, and a livable planet" – [Paul Ingram](#)

By allowing the public to express their grievances, they can be explicitly incorporated into security priorities and emphasise another vision of it, translating budgetary concerns into tangible trade-offs in everyday realities.

"Your rent rises because we fund missiles, not housing" – [Margret Kiener Nellen](#)

By linking the reality of militarisation budget to economic inefficiency and neglect of basic services such as housing, education, health or food security, parliamentarians can reorient the debate and show that social investment is better to guarantee stability. Kiener Nellen emphasised that parliamentarians have a duty to create discursive shifts in dominant narratives and introduce alternative narratives to challenge the current fear-based justification of armament race.

6.5 Parliamentary diplomacy

A. Establish working groups

Establishing inter-parliamentary working groups, such as the working groups under the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, can facilitate interaction between different fields of expertise, fostering interdisciplinary collaboration. They can bring together experts from different fields and disciplines, confronting them with civil society representatives, facilitate cross-sectoral exchange of information and opinion, allow MPs to identify shared priorities to push forward in the security agenda, and allocate more importance to them than to military solutions.

B. Use of International Forums

Parliamentarians can play a key diplomatic role by engaging in inter-parliamentary forums and initiatives that support NFU and NSA principles, encouraging dialogue where official diplomatic channels may be stalled or limited. They can build cross-party and cross-national

support for progressive security policies and contribute to shaping public discourse and media attention on NFU. Parliamentarians from non-nuclear weapon states, in particular, can use such forums to urge nuclear-armed states to adopt NSAs towards non-nuclear states and foster trust.

6.6 Conclusion of this section

The experts interviewed confirm that common security is not an idealism but the only realistic way to respond to threats. Often, MPs are unaware that their actions within their functions are already following the path of the common security framework. Through their functions MPs have a unique position to make this shift from ideas to tangible actions in multiple different ways.

7. Conclusion

In this research, we have inquired into the role and scope for action of parliamentarians in implementing the concept of Common Security. In an increasingly insecure global environment, traditional state-centred security approaches fail to provide sustainable solutions. Common Security, which is based on the principle that no state can achieve its security at the expense of others, offers a viable alternative. The starting point for our inquiry was the definition of Common Security based on six pillars: the Right to Human Security, Building Trust, Comprehensive Disarmament, Global and Regional Cooperation, Conflict Prevention, and the Practice of Common Security in international forums. Through interviews with experts and parliamentarians, we have developed our understanding, which emphasises tackling the root causes of conflicts, the importance of accountability, and the understanding of the impact of states' actions. Furthermore, clear rules can only be achieved through a commitment to collectively defined norms based on the international legal framework, such as the UN Charter and multilateral treaties. Finally, Common Security must be seen as an inclusive approach that involves governments, parliamentarians, international and regional organisations, non-governmental organisations, and civil society.

In order to inquire into the lens of Common Security for parliamentary work, we have developed a grid which outlines the intersections between parliamentary functions and the six pillars of Common Security. Based on these intersections, this report presents three case studies: parliamentary diplomacy efforts, how different parliamentary functions can promote nuclear disarmament, and a practical analysis of the security issues in the Sahel-West African region. These case studies enable it to identify good practices and derive practical recommendations for how parliamentarians can incorporate the Common Security lens. This analysis demonstrates that common security is far more than a theoretical concept; it is a practical lens for action that can be implemented through the diverse parliamentary functions. The possibilities emphasised by the experts and parliamentarians in the interviews make it clear that parliamentarians can play a central role in shaping security policy strategies. Good practices from the five core functions of legislative, oversight, budgetary, representative and parliamentary diplomacy demonstrate how parliamentarians have already promoted Common Security. Out of these findings, this report provides recommendations on how parliamentarians can incorporate the Common Security lens. Our recommendations emphasise actions such as asking specific questions, demanding transparency, utilising scientific findings or making the

humanitarian costs of military armament visible. Also, there is a need to redefine security narratives and challenge the status quo.

Furthermore, it is important to emphasise that international legal norms are only effective if political actors enforce them. Here, parliamentarians have a dual responsibility: on the one hand as national legislators, and on the other as representatives in international forums and networks. The key finding of this study is that common security is not idealism, but a realistic response to the complex global challenges of our time. Parliamentarians already have the necessary tools at their disposal - what is crucial is that they become aware of their ability to use them actively. This is the only way to shape Common Security from a theoretical concept to concrete political action.

This research, and particularly the grid, can be regarded as an initial point to inquire about the intersections in further research with more diverse case studies. Also, the definition of common security is not fixed and can be explored with other methods and perspectives.

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DeepL and ChatGPT have been used for language assistance in this research paper.

9. Appendix

9.1 List of Interviewees

1. Alyn Ware (PNND, Unfold Zero)
2. Florian Eblenkamp (ICAN)
3. Paul Ingram (University of Cambridge - CSER)
4. Sean Conner (IPB)
5. Augusta Nannerini (Principles for Peace)
6. Margareta Kiener Nellen (former Swiss MP, OSCE PA, PNND)
7. Joseph Osei-Owusu (former Ghanaian MP)
8. Denis Naughten (Irish MP)

9.2 The 6 Pillars of Common Security

1) Right to Human Security - All people have the right to human security: freedom from fear and freedom from want.

Human security marks a paradigm shift away from national security based on the state-centric approach and towards a people-centric approach. It prioritises the security of individuals over the security of territories. However, the contemporary traditional national security approach is based on the assumption that insecurity and the use of deterrence stabilise the global order (McCormack, 2008 : 115). Freedom from fear and freedom from want to describe the main aspects of human security. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Report (1994) defines freedom from fear as a narrower concept focusing on protecting individuals from violence, often linked to poverty, weak state capacity, and various inequities. In contrast, the broader concept, freedom from want, addresses threats beyond violence, emphasising social and economic development. This includes combating hunger, poverty, disease, and the effects of natural disasters (Hanlon & Christie, 2016: 5).

2) Building Trust - Building trust between nations and peoples is fundamental to peaceful and sustainable human existence.

Trust is the foundation for sustainable peace, as Johan Galtung (1969) emphasised in his distinction between negative and positive peace. Negative peace refers to the mere absence of violence. Positive peace, though, involves the presence of comprehensive social structures, relationships and active trust-building. It focuses on establishing systems that foster cooperation and mutual respect, thus ensuring lasting stability.

3) Comprehensive Disarmament - There can be no common security without nuclear disarmament, strong limitations on conventional weapons, reduced military expenditure and regulation of the use of new military technology such as in the realms of cyberspace, outer space and “artificial intelligence.”

Common security requires collective action to address nuclear and conventional threats, promote arms control, and redirect military resources for peaceful purposes. Achieving global security requires recognising that the threat of nuclear weapons, whether through direct destruction or indiscriminate impacts such as radioactive fallout or nuclear winter, affects all countries equally. The interdependence of nations in the face of nuclear threats must be acknowledged and regarded as a shared responsibility. In this context, common security means reducing the risk of war collectively, ensuring that all nations work together to prevent devastation (The Independent Commission on Disarmament and Security Issues, 1982: 6-7). reinstatement and enforcement of nuclear arms control treaties, such as the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF), the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), along with confidence-building measures like the Open Skies Treaty, are crucial for preventing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (Olof Palme International Center et al., 2022: 12). But also, in the area of conventional weapons, global binding rules are needed, especially for trade and acquisition. Weapons and ammunition are magnitudes for crime, genocide, terrorism and political repression. The Arm Trade Treaty (ATT) is a landmark agreement aiming to regulate the international trade in conventional arms and their ammunition (Garcia, 2014). Furthermore, in the case of a reduction in military expenditures, the concept of the peace dividend allows these resources to be used for peaceful purposes, addressing the root causes of conflict such as climate change, inequality, migration, scarce resources, and pandemics (Olof Palme International Center et al., 2022). Technological developments in areas like cyberspace, artificial intelligence, and drones present substantial legal and ethical challenges. The use of autonomous systems to identify military targets raises concerns about compliance with

international humanitarian law, since algorithms cannot always distinguish between legitimate and illegitimate targets or take moral considerations into account. In addition, there are new threats such as cyberattacks on nuclear systems, control and communication infrastructure, and the production of hypersonic missiles (Olof Palme International Center et al., 2022: 27). To create common rules for limiting the proliferation of these systems, including new military technologies, broad international cooperation is needed. Common security is essential for overcoming national interests and fostering collective benefits through shared prohibitions and restrictions.

4) Global and Regional Cooperation - Global and regional cooperation, multilateralism and the rule of law are crucial to tackling many of the world's challenges.

Common security can only be achieved through collaboration among nations. Renewing and strengthening global and regional peace architectures, based on legal frameworks and multilateralism, is essential for fostering confidence, trust, and dialogue. Regional organisations, such as the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), the African Union (AU), the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), can play a key role by developing frameworks that lay out the principles of common security (Olof Palme International Center et al., 2022: 10-11).

5) Conflict Prevention - Dialogue, conflict prevention and confidence-building measures must replace aggression and military force as a means of resolving disputes.

Preventing conflict through dialogue and peaceful means is essential for maintaining global peace and stability. Conflict prevention is a core principle of the United Nations Charter (1945). Chapter VI outlines various tools for conflict resolution, including fact-finding, negotiation, mediation, conciliation, judicial settlement, and arbitration. Establishing effective prevention mechanisms and confidence-building measures is essential to replace aggression and military force with peaceful means of resolving disputes. To achieve this, international and regional organisations, national governments, and non-governmental organisations must prioritise and integrate preventive strategies into their agendas and programs, fostering a proactive approach to peace and stability (Ackermann, 2003). The Open Skies Treaty serves as a prime example of how confidence-building measures can be institutionalised.

6) Practice of Common Security in International Forum

Parliamentarians play a key role in promoting common security. Aligning national legislation with international common security principles ensures coherence and credibility in global forums. Legislatures should hold governments accountable for fulfilling their international security commitments, respecting international law and ensuring adequate budgetary support for related initiatives (DCAF, 2023). By advocating for cooperation and shared security values at national and international levels, parliamentarians can bridge the gap between politics and diplomacy. In particular, dialogue and parliamentary diplomacy across borders and parties is an effective tool for promoting multilateral security governance, fostering dialogue and building mutual understanding

Right to Human Security	Legislative	Oversight	Budgetary	Representative	Parliamentary Diplomacy
	Pass laws ensuring protection of human conditions (economic security, food s, health s, environmental s, personal s...)	Monitoring government actions and implementation on human security policies (need to meet legal and ethical standard)	Allocation of funds for human security efforts (social protection programs, disaster response, and security sector reform focus on HS)	Advocating for the interests of the populations and policies ensuring safety and well being	Promote human security as a diplomatic priority in inter-parliamentary dialogues
Building Trust	Passing laws that foster trust and cooperation in fields such as security, human rights and trade. Legislate for transparency and accountability mechanisms	Evaluating and ensuring the implementation of trust-building agreements	Advocating for meaningful budgetary such as peacebuilding, reparations and support of victims of war	Promote interfaith and intercultural dialogue and facilitating discussions or bringing different parties to the negotiating table. Ensure inclusivity in policy making.	Engaging in active diplomacy and with foreign parliaments to build trust through confidence-building measures.
	Enacting laws to support arms control and disarmament	Monitoring compliance with arms control agreements and Monitoring the development and use of new military technologies	Redirecting military funds toward peaceful purposes and Allocating resources for research and regulation of new technologies	Advocating for global peace and weapons reduction, raising awareness on arms control policies, and involving civil society in discussions on the limitation and reduction of military capacities.	Leading international efforts for arms control and disarmament and leading international diplomatic efforts to create international norms
Global and Regional Cooperation	Passing laws to support multilateral agreements	Ensuring compliance with international agreements	Allocation of funds for multilateral peace initiatives and international organisations	Advocating for multilateral cooperation and global peace frameworks	Fostering international collaboration and facilitating dialogue among nations.
Conflict Prevention	Creating laws to support effective and peaceful dispute resolution	Monitoring implementation of conflict prevention strategies	Allocating funds for peacebuilding and mediation programs	Promoting dialogue and preventive strategies to mitigate emerging disputes	Initiating proactive discussions on international level to reduce tensions and foster peace
Practice of CS in International Forum	Align national legislation with international common security principles	Ensure the government upholds commitments made in international agreements and institutions	Allocate resources to enhance national contribution to common security initiatives (e.g., UN peacekeeping, climate security).	Advocate for international cooperation and common security principles at domestic and international levels	Use parliamentary diplomacy to promote multilateral security governance in global forums