HUMAN SECURITY IN WORLD AFFAIRS

PROBLEMS AND OPPORTUNITIES

EDITED BY

Alexander K. Lautensach
Sabina W. Lautensach

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HUMAN SECURITY IN WORLD AFFAIRS

PROBLEMS & OPPORTUNITIES

Preface

Today, two decades after human security emerged in the literature and began to inform the political agenda of countries, the people who engage with the topic still tend to be experts with diverse academic backgrounds who share a general concern about the well-being of human individuals. They gravitated towards the field autodidactically, exploring relevant aspects and communicating about them with like-minded colleagues. Their diverse disciplinary perspectives range from human ecology to political theory, from cognitive psychology to clinical medicine, from cultural anthropology to international law – to name just a few of the fields represented by the authors of this text. In the absence of sufficient venues for cross-disciplinary communication that diversity of backgrounds and plurality of discourses often hinders cooperation among human security analysts and slows their progress in addressing important challenges collaboratively. The various unidisciplinary approaches to human security have also left some important fields underrepresented.

Surveying the rapidly expanding literature on human security we are impressed by the abundance of contributions, while at the same time feeling apprehensive about how little of that wealth of insights has actually contributed towards improving human security in the real world. We suspect that one reason for the shortfall may lie in theoretical misconceptions about reconciling the concepts of security, development, growth, and sustainability. Again what adds to the problem is that most authors do not address all four of those concepts together, and that indeed the four concepts are 'owned' by different fields of specialisation. Another observation that led us toward the concept of this textbook is that, to our knowledge, no textbook exists that is designed as a resource for teaching about human security in the didactic style of an effective learning aid.

We hope that this book will change all that. At this juncture in history, humanity faces new challenges, unprecedented in kind and in magnitude, that jeopardise its security and possibly its continued existence. Earth's policy makers, as well as all its citizens, need to make informed, responsible de-

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cisions because their actions will determine the fate of many more generations. The more informed those decisions are, the more effective and sustainable the resulting policies can be, and the more secure our collective future can become. Responsible decision-making means that the interests of all affected parties and individuals are taken into account equitably and to the best of our abilities. Irresponsible decisions tend to be contested, misinterpreted, or ignored, which ultimately contributes little to the security of people.

Education systems around the globe are beginning to grapple with the challenge of empowering young people to make those decisions. Even at the university level, an increasing number and diversity of interdisciplinary programs are changing the profile of graduates from unidisciplinary specialist to multitalented, flexible, concerned generalists – people who share the necessary knowledge, skills, and dispositions to make a real difference. This text is designed to help students become that sort of graduate, through the following objectives.

PROVIDE STUDENTS WITH A TRANSDISCIPLINARY OVERVIEW OF HUMAN SECURITY ISSUES

Each chapter in this text is written by a different author or team but focuses on common issues in human security. Some chapters introduce the student to an aspect of human security through the lens of a single discipline. Other chapters summarise diverse viewpoints and distil from them analytical conclusions that rely on a plurality of disciplines. As a result, the student develops a broad familiarity with the most pressing challenges to human security through a kaleidoscope of perspectives and ways of knowing.

INTRODUCE STUDENTS TO DIVERSE CONCEPTUAL MODELS AND ANALYTICAL APPROACHES TO HUMAN SECURITY

Through the range of subject disciplines represented in the text the student becomes familiar with, and learns to compare, different ways of thinking about security and different ways of communicating about it. The overall message for the student is twofold: Analysing security challenges productively requires in-depth familiarity with the investigative approaches of more than a single discipline; and producing effective solutions relies on the synergistic application of multiple disciplines that are integrated in a pragmatic and eclectic fashion.

INFORM STUDENTS ABOUT MAJOR SOURCES OF HUMAN INSECURITY, BOTH IN THE PRESENT AND AS PART OF PROBABLE FUTURES

Comprehensive models of human security indicate that sources of insecurity are located in the socio-political, economic, ecological, and health-related

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aspects of human existence. Students will learn to apply those diverse lenses to some of today's most pressing security concerns, including global poverty, international crime, epidemics and pandemics, peak oil, violent conflict, scarcity of food and fresh water, climate change, and ecosystem deterioration. Established trends will be extrapolated and combined to synthesise probable visions of the future, given the understanding that change is a certainty.

> Prediction is of course impossible but forecasting is essential for understanding change and developing proactive policies. Effective prediction needs to be based on alternative possible futures. The methodology of forecasting must be open and transparent. (Chen *et al* 2009: iv)

At the same time the many unsustainable and unsafe policies and practices that have led to the status quo make directed reforms imperative. Underlying those manifestations of crisis and counterproductive policies the student will recognise the dominant cause for the security crisis: *Homo sapiens* – our numbers, our behaviour, our thinking, and our values and beliefs.

EXAMINE THE TENSION AND COMPLEMENTATION BETWEEN THE LOCAL AND GLOBAL DIMENSIONS OF HUMAN SECURITY ISSUES

Human security focuses on the concerns of individual human beings and of the communities they live in. At the same time, many security challenges as well as workable solutions extend from the local to the global dimensions while their manifestations may vary among those dimensions. With the help of case studies and scenarios students will learn to examine human security issues along that continuum and across several orders of magnitude. At the heart of this learning process lies the principle of inclusivity, stating that fair decisions must take into account the interests of all affected parties, both those alive and those yet to be born.

PROMOTE CREATIVE THINKING ABOUT STRATEGIES TO ADDRESS SECURITY CHALLENGES

The transdisciplinary approaches explicated in this text provide the student with the cognitive instrumentarium and the multiplicity of lenses to practice their skills of creative thinking and critical analysis and to apply them to search for causations, strategies, obstacles, and solutions. Students will realise that the answer to a problem greatly depends on how the problem is framed and in what language it is discussed. Every piece of discourse contains implicit ideological elements – beliefs, values, ideals, etc. Students who learn to identify, analyse, and evaluate such content will be much better prepared for complex decision-making tasks.

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Yet not all such alternative discourses are equally useful or meritorious; truly creative thinking must include metacognition – thinking about what modes of thinking can lead us to the most desirable goals in the most productive ways. That reflective process must also extend into ethics to allow the student to distinguish which values, beliefs, and ideals are conducive towards promoting human security and which are counterproductive. Only through such metaethical analysis can we transcend the paralysis of moral relativism.

ENCOURAGE THE DEVELOPMENT OF DISPOSITIONS TOWARDS CARING ABOUT HUMAN SECURITY AND BECOMING ACTIVELY INVOLVED IN ITS PROMOTION

Among the reasons why we believe this book will make a difference is that many of its chapters encourage the student to develop a personal disposition towards security issues, to take sides, and to become actively involved in solutions. We take seriously the educator's duty to discuss competing values, attitudes, beliefs, and ideals, and to encourage moral reasoning. Without giving the student opportunities to become familiar with and to discuss the moral dimension of academic knowledge it would be disingenuous to expect graduates to make the 'right' decisions.

The need for a textbook on human security

We believe this to be the first book about human security that is specifically designed for teaching. In other words, we endeavoured to structure it according to pedagogical priorities rather than to reproduce the format of the standard academic monograph. In the light of the topicality of security issues worldwide we consider such a textbook to be long overdue. We also aimed to avoid representing an exclusively North American or European perspective, which already abound in the literature; the chapter authors of this text contribute perspectives from many diverse cultures and geographical locations.

We also perceive a very pressing need to address the implications of global ecological overshoot for human security. As we explain in the introductory chapter, those implications are largely neglected in the literature on human security, even though environmental security is now well represented. With respect to higher education, the potential benefits of this emphasis seem invaluable in terms of contributing to a transition towards a sustainable future.

Another reason for engaging in this project is that the perennial spectre of violent conflict is changing. The boundaries between global terrorism and counter-terrorism are blurring. Given the might of the global military industrial complexes, it seems uncertain to what extent the threat of violent

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conflict originates with actual terrorist groups, so-called rogue nations, or counter-terrorism, and to what extent such threats are confabulated, staged, or exaggerated through the power wielded by influential groups with a vested interest in perpetuating violent countermeasures.[1]

When the cold war ended those groups must have regarded the prospect of a peace dividend with some concern and doubtlessly engaged in efforts to promote their distinct interests. No corporation worth its stock would have done otherwise. Yet this probable backstage circumstance highlights a grave threat to human security that is also borne out by some of the scenario studies described in the introduction: the co-opting of security policies and security assessments by corporate actors. This reinforces our general argument that traditional security thinking is becoming less and less adequate to address the challenges at hand.

Fourth, and perhaps not unconnected with the developments mentioned above, we observe an increasing number of governments with explicitly neoliberal agenda in developed countries, some even with absolute majorities. To us, this points to the possibility of the citizenry being increasingly governed by people who listen to corporations more than they listen to average individuals. Recent political developments in Canada at the time of writing clearly support that proposition. This lack of representation is accompanied in many places by increasing and inequitable taxation and socioeconomic inequity, and increasing deficits to finance corporate bailouts and incessant wars. Apart from vociferous minorities such as the Occupy movement, civil society seems ill prepared to oppose those counterproductive policies or even to recognise the underlying problems. In the absence of strong and independent media, education about human security seems to offer a promising avenue for addressing those problems in the long term.

About the organisation of the chapters

Although the book is organised broadly to proceed from challenges towards solutions, the chapters can be read selectively and independently. Each chapter begins with a *summary*, the equivalent of the abstract of a journal article and is followed by a list of *learning outcomes & big ideas* to inform the reader of the chapter's objectives and suggest to the instructor possible criteria for assessment. The body text of each chapter is organised into numbered subsections to make it easy for the reader to locate specific topics.

At the end of each chapter a list of summary points allows for brief recapitulation and review, and connects with the learning outcomes & big ideas listed at the beginning. A section entitled *extension activities & further re-*

1 For example, a disconcerting discovery that raised such questions regards the chemical analysis of dust samples from the 9/11 attacks. It revealed traces of unexploded nanothermite, a novel, heretofore unkown, military-grade explosive (Harrit 2009). The study was never published in North America.

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search follows for the benefit of students and instructors; it provides opportunities and guidance for pursuing important ideas beyond the confines of the chapters. Lastly, after a glossary of *terms and definitions* a list of *further reading* specifies which sources the authors of the chapters consider most beneficial for the reader, while the bibliographic references from the chapters have been pooled into a cumulative list at the end of the book.

Each chapter has undergone a thorough process of peer review and editing. Nevertheless, as editors we take full responsibility for any errors that may remain. To the best of our knowledge this is the world's first textbook of human security. We hope that students and instructors will find its use as gratifying as we found its conception.

Best wishes,
Sabina Lautensach & Alexander Lautensach

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