HUMAN SECURITY: PERSPECTIVES FOR HUMAN RESOURCES AND POLICY MANAGEMENT

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Summary

Since the end of the Second World War, security and development have been dominant issues in the world system. They are also interrelated, with multidimensional flows and feedbacks. Yet social systems, unlike their natural and mechanical analogues, are not inherently self-correcting. Rather, self-correction is a function of awareness, learning, perception, and will, not built-in automatically. The cultural "software" of any form of association contains the seeds of grater instability, but also offers opportunities for innovative thinking and problem-solving.

Between 1945 and 1989, global interactions were dominated by East–West (i.e. bipolar) security concerns. Fear of the "other side" provided the context for the convergence of doctrines of military security, with their corollaries of internal and external "enemies." North–South interactions were predominantly characterized by Western scholars in developmental terms, the latter frequently masking the softer side of civic action and counterinsurgency. With the end of the Cold War, security and development issues cannot be viewed from this zero-sum perspective. Instead, security and development must be perceived as encompassing much more than military issues and economic growth, with "trickle down" to prevent revolutions. A negative-score game perspective, where there are possibilities of winning together, or losing together has to be incorporated in the new security equation.

Human security is based on the probability of "risk reduction": the abatement of insecurity. It emphasizes the prevention of its causes, rather than the measures for the containment of its symptoms. The insecurity we are concerned with is that experienced by the bulk of the population, especially by those sectors subject to greater quantitative and qualitative vulnerability and exposure. Risk-reduction in the global system, other things remaining constant, depends on achievement of security at the lower and more exposed levels: any system being only as strong as its weakest link, which makes all its components mutually vulnerable. A secure and sustainable community means the existence of a political system capable of managing, and solving, socioeconomic and environmental problems by relatively consensual adjustments. Its central ethical principles are respect for life and the recognition of mutual vulnerability and human dignity as foundations for social action.

Human security implies, at a minimum, a number of interwoven dimensions (subsystems or regimes) of human dignity. The latter are broadly synonymous with human rights, encompassing the ecosystem, the economy, the society, the polity and the culture. The concrete interplay among and between these subsystems and regimes (and their linkages) defines the nature of systemic entropy, or homeostasis, at any given point in time and at any level, whether global, regional, national, local, or household.

All these individual and collective dimensions of security are equally central to the realization of human dignity, but the political dimension holds the key to safeguarding the physical–environmental, economic, social, and cultural "rights." Politics constitutes the organizing principle of a community's life; without it, the realization of other "securities" would be impossible. The ability of a polity to overcome crisis and provide

security for its members depends, more than in its resource base and autonomy, on that polity's learned capacity for conflict-management, or governance.

Security threats emerge as a direct consequence of dysfunctional regimes in their multiple and overlapping systemic dimensions. The reproduction and expansion of mutual vulnerabilities and insecurities both at the micro and macro levels expresses itself through closely interconnected thrusts: environmental, economic, social, political, and cultural. The same is the case with its opposite: security. Mutual vulnerability is constituted by multiple dysfunctions that are sequentially and structurally linked in vicious cycles of multiple causality.

1. Introduction

For many casual and conventional observers, the post-1989 world order may seem to present few security threats. The East-West conflict and the Cold War have ended, auguring not only a significant reduction of the nuclear threat, but also an apparent global victory of political and economic liberalism. Without a bipolar conflict, the plight of the underdeveloped nations, articulated in the Non-aligned Movement, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and the South Commission, have also vanished as a source of nuisance for the West. Furthermore, the crippling debt-burden finally brought most of these countries to accept the conditionalities imposed by the international financial community. And in the absence of international socialism to assist local revolutionary movements, 1970s-style insurgency looks rather unlikely.

Major "hot spots" have cooled off: in Central America, the Middle East, Southeast Asia and in Southern and Northeast Africa. Germany has been unified. For the first time since the end of the Second World War, it is possible to conceive a reduction in military expenditures, a slowing-down of refugee-flows and a downturn in transnational terrorism. For the remaining superpower and its more developed allies, demobilization, in theory at least, means the possibility of a "peace dividend." In addition, Western cooperation under US hegemony, as in the Gulf War and the "peace-making" operation in Somalia, has brought decisive, yet generally unfocused, intervention to enforce a kind of "international law." Some, in an optimistic and a critical vein have asserted that life for the majority of the world's citizens is getting steadily better in almost every category (Gee 1994).

However, there is another more somber side of the picture. As Pierre Sané, Amnesty International's Secretary General stated in his 1993 address on Human Rights Day, the world was far from accountable democracies, prosperity and cooperation. Quite to the contrary, he noted the persistence of civil wars and governments resorting to the old methods of repression; even more people plunged into poverty, sickness and despair; and a world community floundering in the face of human-rights disasters.

The disintegration of Eastern Europe has meant the unleashing of underlying vicious social, political and ethnic tensions, the symptoms of which are persistent civil strife, failed states, military intervention and border disputes. Conflict has also spread throughout central Africa, with the flaring up of deeply seated genocidal confrontations.

Likewise, the negotiated dismantling of South Africa's apartheid system and the implementation of a Palestinian-Israeli accord have been accomplished in the midst of persistent violence. Bloody ethnic conflicts go on unabated in South Asia, with prospects of national disintegration. The Kurdish question is becoming an explosive issue, with ramifications well beyond the Middle East. With constant turmoil, refugee-producing zones have just been replaced by new and more active ones. Robert Kaplan's apocalyptic 1993 article in the Atlantic Monthly summarized Western paranoia about the "revenge of the poor." In his "premonition of the future" he envisions the threat of global demographic, environmental, and societal calamity, in which criminal anarchy becomes the real strategic danger.

Less apocalyptic, but equally concerning observations come from those who warn about the lack, in the current world system of governance, of a codified approach to clarify and act on regional and universal crises when governments fail. Response mechanisms have not been developed to mobilize early and equitable external responses before events spin out of control. This is particularly dramatic because the potential threat posed by numerous such disasters in the near future seems clear, and the world community is inadequately prepared to confront them (Winter 1992).

There is an urgent need to develop analytical frameworks to understand this seemingly random, turbulent and chaotic period, and the emerging global configurations. There is also a need to construct operational criteria and mechanisms for conflict-management, based on that understanding. The many conceptual and ideological structures which we took for granted and gave us a grasp of "reality" have crumbled: the Cold War, "really-existing socialism," the nation-state, the "Three Worlds of Development" and the myth of progress. Some observers have gone as far as to make this turbulence synonymous with the "end of history." Yet history is still unfolding. All that has collapsed is the persistency of old dogmas and the particular visions associated with them. The way we saw the world is no longer the way it is. Much of the assumptive scaffolding underpinning development studies, international relations and security studies, all fields of research which emerged in the context of the Cold War, has lost consistency.

At the level of hegemonic ideas and discourse, the crisis is one of imagination; as if our capacity to make sense had vanished. Perhaps reality changes so rapidly that only ex-*post-facto* rationalizations are possible, thus signaling the end of utopias and ideologies. Or perhaps, the opposite is the case and we are moving into a new and post-modern age of ideology. Though this crisis of paradigms has had a fundamental impact on academia, it appears that scholars have been slow in reacting to global transformations and in filling the intellectual void and have tended to reproduce old schemes with new labels. For instance, Samuel Huntington's 1993 article intended to explain the conflict between the West and "the rest" under the mantle of a construed "Clash of Civilizations." For him, the fundamental source of conflict in this new world, more than ideological or economic, will be cultural. In his own words: "the fault lines between civilizations will be the battlelines of the future."

This "neo-realism" may show a remarkable misunderstanding of history and culture. It may also be inadequate to account for the complex, nuanced and dynamic nature of our age of extremes, while perpetuating the cult of war and Western superiority. However, it

has become an appealing paradigm among policymaking circles in the West. Our inability to structure theories able to explain and understand the present crises as part of a global system and process and not as mere "freaks" or abnormalities is precisely at the core of the crisis of paradigms. Nevertheless, irrespective of the present confusion in the conceptual compasses, and the absence of analytical and predictive instruments, decision makers still have to respond to events, make day-to-day choices and formulate polices in an increasingly chaotic environment. So do ordinary citizens who have to cope with the effects of these policies.

1.1 The Changing Foundations of the World Order

The momentous transformations of the world system affecting both its over-all structure (polarity) and those of its constituting regimes are rooted in three groups of changing circumstances. The first set of factors is the broader and long-ranging innovations of our age of pervasive technology (Nef *et al.* 1989). In this case, we are referring to the multiple and profound innovations in know-how which have occurred since the end of the Second World War. The second set of factors is the alterations in the ideological-political matrix which define the cultural polarities in the system. Specifically we are referring here to the sharp divide between "really-existing socialism" and liberal capitalism which characterized the Cold War, followed by the sudden deflation of one of these ideologies in the late 1980s, and the hegemonic role played by neo-liberalism. The third, and perhaps most important set of circumstances are those related to alterations in the economic fabric of the world order. This is the transition of world economics from international trade and finance (interactions among nations) into a global political economy of transnational relations.

1.1.1 Long Range Technological Changes

In the last 50 years, the development of technology has been exponential and has affected the nature of the world order in two ways. One is the impact of technological innovation on the instruments of war, both hard and soft. The nature and pace of technological innovation since Hiroshima set the parameters of an escalating arms race between those capable of harnessing the nuclear "genie." An astronomically expensive search for military superiority between the superpowers ensued. The stretching of natural, economic, social, fiscal and technological resources to their limits in the pursuit of security by supremacy (a "first" and "second-strike" capability) had long and broad-ranging implications. The former Soviet Union was the most catastrophically affected; but the US too experienced the ill-effects of over-readiness. From a broader perspective, the profoundly destructive consequences of the Cold War were experienced by the entire planet.

The other global effect of technology involved dramatic improvement in the speed and reach of communications and transportation. Information, finance, goods and people have become more mobile than in any previous period of human history. These developments shrunk the limits of time and space. What once was "politics among

nations" progressively and unavoidably became global politics. In this context, domestic concerns have become so intertwined with "external" factors as to make the distinction between the national and the global merely semantical.

In the 1950s, John Herz suggested that technology had undermined the territorial function of the nation state. Nuclear stalemate among the superpowers, and the subsequent possibility of a ladder of escalation, even under assumptions of "flexible response," made conventional military instruments less effective for conflict-management. Stanley Hoffman put it succinctly: power had never before been so great, but also never so useless. Instead, non-conventional, yet non-nuclear types of warfare (terrorism, clandestine and low intensity operations) as well as economic instruments (e.g. embargoes, concessions, and conditionalities) became more central. The strategic importance of weapons of mass destruction, especially nuclear warheads and long range delivery systems, has radically diminished since 1989. Nuclear deterrence theory, strategic thinking re: Herman Kahn and what John Kenneth Galbraith called the influence of "nuclear theologians", have become irrelevant. Likewise, the kind of Cold-War "realism" that permeated much of the international relations and security studies literature for four decades has been rendered meaningless.

With the disappearance of one of the superpowers, conventional wars do not seem to pose the same risk nowadays, of escalating into an all-out nuclear confrontation. However, this perception may be deceiving. The emergence of "Other World" powers, as exemplified by the Indian and Pakistani nuclear "muscle-flexing" in 1998, is a reality. In addition, the development of a new generation of high-tech tactical weapons, including non-lethal devices, has made small-scale wars once again "thinkable" options. The pre-nuclear solution of quantitative continuity between tactical and strategic instruments, as well as between those of deterrence, defense, compellance and offense has been re-established, albeit in a more fluid and less predictable context. This de-linking in the ladder of escalation, combined with the end of rigid bipolarism effectively reduced the patron-client, superpower control over theatre conflicts. Under these circumstances, a resurgence of small and medium-sized conflagrations and a tendency to regional polycentrism could be expected. Yet, the long-range effects of technological permeability on the territoriality of nation-states, and on the very idea of sovereignty, are bound to remain. A return to an overall pre-Second World War type of multipolarity is unlikely.

1.1.2 Changes in the Ideological Matrix

Perhaps more important than the technological changes mentioned above, have been transformations of the ideological parameters since the end of the Second World War. The period between 1945 and 1989 was defined by a clash of two cultures: liberal capitalism and state socialism. The semantics of this binary worldview included terms such as the Cold War, the Iron Curtain, or the Free World, which conveyed an inescapable logic: alignment as either friend or foe. Its corollary was a rigid and self-serving ideological bipolarism between two incompatible camps.

Culturally, the East-West conflict permeated national boundaries. The emergence of "Other World" nationalism expressed in Bandung in 1955 was a reaction against this

sharp ideological schism. Yet, non-alignment and the attempts to separate North-South issues from East-West confrontations, paradoxically increased a proclivity for clientelism, entangled alliances and ultimately facilitated the transnationalization of peripheral states. Foreign aid, the international transfer of technology, manpower training and the all-pervasive presence of military assistance during the Cold War increased reliance on external constituencies. Peripheral elites were integrated into a global structure by means of manifold linkages of complex dependency. This patron-client structure was developed by both power blocs, creating long-lasting conditions of structural dependency. External constituencies became and remain an intrinsic part of the political alliances partaking in the domestic public policy process. Besides the aforementioned transnationalization, based on essentially bilateral arrangements, there have been multilateral forms of transnationalization which are now entrenched. These result from the development and expansion of International Law and organizations. Furthermore, the legacy of collective defense and collective security, not to mention a complex body of international contract-law based on trade, has further limited territorial sovereignty. The Wesphalian principle, *rex est imperator in regno suo*, is no longer descriptive of the world order. The centrality of past elite nationalism has been displaced by elite internationalism.

Correspondingly, in an increasingly unipolar world, a global ideology with hegemonic pretensions, has gained predominance among the core sectors within the Group of Seven (now, with the inclusion of Russia, Group of Eight) countries. This ideology is Trilateralism. Substantively, the cultural software of this "New International" is distinctively neo-liberal, elitist and monistic. In spite of a seemingly progressive rhetoric of democratization, the support for individual freedoms, the "open society," and the "rule of law," this new worldview is every bit as Manichean and dogmatic as the old Cold War, national security discourse it replaced. Most important though, is the fact that the Trilateral view has a wide appeal to the affluent, globally-integrated and modern elite sectors in what used to be called the Third and Second Worlds. Its intellectual antecedents are partly rooted in nineteenth century social Darwinism and partly in the messianic universalism of neo-classical economics. From this perspective, the "triumph of the West," the "End of History," the "Clash of Civilizations" and "Manifest Destiny" blend in a neo-functionalist synthesis.

There is a great deal of optimistic triumphalism among those who espouse this doctrine. For them, the ideological superiority of this global project is demonstrated by the collapse of Eastern Europe, the disintegration of African societies or Latin America's "lost decade." Yet, the sharp schism of the planet into two worlds—"this" and "the other"—and the conflict between an expanding Western civilization and an increasingly fragile, unstable and besieged global and domestic periphery, offers a scenario of violent confrontation: a new phase of the Third World War. The growing squalor of the many, which makes the prosperity of the few possible, has intrinsically destabilizing effects. It is a direct threat to everybody's security. The extreme vulnerability of the South and the East, far from enhancing Northwestern security, are symptoms of a profound malaise of the entire global system. This dysfunctional trend is already eroding post-industrial civilization's own vitality, not only in what is contemptuously referred to as "down there" but essentially "up here" too.

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Biographical Sketch

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