

*In memoriam of Mónica Trujillo-López, friend, teacher, and colleague.*

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# **From Human to Post Human Security in Latin America: Examples and Reflections from Across the Region**

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# **From Human to Post Human Security in Latin America: Examples and Reflections from Across the Region**

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J.L.G.A.

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# Introduction

*María Eugenia Ibarrarán and José Luis García-Aguilar*

We write this introduction during the great COVID-19 pandemic of 2020. At the moment of this human tragedy, the number of infected people around the world is 30 million and deaths have reached 1 million. In Latin America, the number is about 7 million cases and 400,000 deaths. About half a million deaths are estimated for the region in December 2020. Despite holding 8% of the world population, according to the Observatory for the Containment of COVID-19 in the Americas (at the University of Miami), Latin America accounts for 50% of registered deaths worldwide since June, Brazil reporting 22% of such deaths and Mexico 12%.

The economic impact of this virus has been enormous. The World Economic Forum expects a contraction in global GDP of 5.2% in 2020, the deepest recession in decades. Advanced economies per capita income is expected to fall on average by 7% and that of emerging economies by 2.5%. Unemployment worldwide is estimated to reach figures of the Great Depression. More worrisome, only in 2020, extreme poverty has increased in 49 million people, globally, according to the World Bank.

Other aspects are troublesome for Latin America. The expected fall in per capita income is 7.2%, among the highest in the world. Most of our region, according to the International Monetary Fund, reported a reduction in their GDP during the first quarter of 2020 between 5% and 15%, with Venezuela facing a deeper fall. This will undoubtedly undo much of the progress attained in recent decades and estimates are that 2.7 million people will be pushed into extreme poverty in 2020. The economic effects of the pandemics will be larger as the informal sector grows.

This crisis is expected to be long-term, and will therefore lead to lower investment, erosion of human capital, and fragmentation of global trade and supply chains due to trade restrictions. This may have a negative effect on food security. As for governance, we are facing a significant increase in income concentration and therefore market power, and as a side effect, concentration of political power. A fact is that strong democracies have been able to cope much better with the pandemics, however, as of now, about half of the global population live under authoritarian regimes, from which Latin America is not an exception. This may

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affect human security at large, and particularly environmental protection that may affect other securities discussed in this book.

The world's response to the pandemic has shown the structural failures of the international system. States, instead of cooperating to fight together against this disease, choose to act by themselves, with uneven results. Some of them were more efficient in controlling the pandemic like New Zealand, South Korea, Canada, or Germany. Others, such as the United States, Mexico, or Brazil have managed the pandemic in such a way that results have been controversial, to say the least. Others, such as China, where the pandemic started, left serious doubts concerning the initial phases of the new coronavirus global spread and the obscure way that it handled the situation.

On the other hand, the World Health Organization, the international institution that ought to be a central actor in dealing with this kind of global threats, was almost paralyzed, with a secondary role in a situation that demanded a more definitive participation. Additionally, its resources are prone to a severe reduction if the United States cuts its funding, which is already insufficient to tend to this global threat, let alone others that are emerging.

This also demonstrated a more worrisome world trend: the lack of commitment to multilateralism to face global problems, in particular the absence of engagement of world economic powers. However, it seems that civil society worldwide is aware of the urgent need to provide global solutions to this human tragedy with greater solidarity, as stated in the UN75 Report, *The Future We Want, the Future We Need*. It also shows the necessity to look for a different way forward for all humankind.

This situation briefly described gives an unfortunate panorama regarding human security and the need to have a world view and cooperative actions in order to confront the threats that all humanity faces. The COVID-19 pandemic is just a signal of the urgent need to have a human security approach in States' actions to confront global non-traditional threats. If we add the environmental crises that we are suffering, such as the loss of biodiversity and climate change, to name a few, it seems that we, humans, as a species, have put in danger our very survival and that of the entire planet with all forms of life in it. In this regard we coincide with the UN75 report.

The preoccupation for the current situation of human security in the world and particularly in our region is the force that moved several colleagues from Mexico to write this book. We see with worry that the region is not in a better shape than the rest of the world regarding human security at large. Environmental issues in the region contribute to question the existence of food, water, and health security. Thus, we decided to take a hard look into these issues in Latin America.

We want to go beyond the common view of citizen insecurity in Latin America, often conceived purely in terms of chronic and endemic violence that requires public force intervention. As we know, human security, given the broadness of the concept, is particularly difficult to translate into concrete public actions. Notwithstanding this methodological difficulty, we discuss different practical cases that do not intend to be comprehensive, but to give examples of how these concepts play out in Latin America.



The book is divided into three parts. The first part discusses conceptual views of human security and dignity. The first chapter, written by José Luis García-Aguilar, presents a conceptual reflection on the origin and evolution of the concept of Human Security, its strengths and weaknesses, how it has evolved since WWII, and how it has broadened from the end of the Cold War to the present. He also provides a critical reflection that may inform the challenges and opportunities within the Latin American context. Chapter 2, authored by José Rosario Marroquín-Farrera, addresses human rights and dignity, and relates them to their ethical underpinning. It discusses how dignity plays a determinant role in attaining human rights and how the paradigm has changed in favor of a broader conception of life beyond humans, including non-human life. It also discusses the need to care for rather than only protect, at a planetary scale. These concepts are discussed in the context of the Amazonia.

The second part of the book represents reflections on environmental security. It is composed of three chapters. The first, by Paulino E. Arellanes-Jiménez, discusses food security, how the concept and the policies have evolved in the region and how it can be achieved through institutions. It provides evidence on the evolution of food security in Mexico and in several South American countries and how it has contributed to lower poverty and reduces inequality. The second chapter, by María Eugenia Ibarrarán, talks about the definition of water security and relates it to other environmental securities, to human rights and to the Sustainable Development Goals. The chapter discusses water security in Latin America and focuses on three case studies, in Bolivia, Mexico, and Brazil, and draws conclusions on the future the region faces in this sense. The last chapter of this part, written by Mónica Trujillo-López, deals with the evolution of health security and its relation to other issues, such as climate change and specific circumstances within the region. It describes at length the presence of dengue fever, zika, and chikungunya, three vector borne diseases that affect Central America, and the relation among social conditions of marginalization and the presence of organized crime that have prevented the conditions to change. It then directs the discussion to critical problems in global health security.

The first two parts of the book point at the need to look past human security. The last part discusses alternative views beyond human security. It only consists of one chapter, authored by Luisa Fernanda Grijalva-Maza, where she questions if we should focus on post-human security or on planetary security. She presents this discussion in the context of Abya Yala, that is, Latin America.

Finally, we want to stress that the book can help in the understanding of human security with the hope to open new horizons that will contribute to foster further research to solve some of its most pressing issues, and promote solidarity toward all forms of life on Earth.

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Part I

# **Conceptual Views of Human Security and Dignity**

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## Chapter 1

# Theoretical Reflections on the Evolution of Human Security

*José Luis García-Aguilar*

### 1. Introduction

We live in an era of daily life fear. Every day, millions of people around the world begin their days fearing being victims of some kind of violence in their personal lives and as a part of a collective called society. They not only are assaulted in the public transport system, violented in the streets of their cities and attacked in public spaces, such as schools, parks, and marketplaces, but threatened in their homes, cars, and personal property. Today's world is not one where our lives are threatened by the risk of a global nuclear war between superpowers, but one in which we feel our integrity and dignity as human beings are put at risk by external forces that are not sufficiently controlled by some authority, either local, national, or international.

The situation described above does not mean that there are threats that do not go beyond the personal sense of fear. In today's world, the risk of war between States and within States still exists insofar as armies design their strategies of national defense thinking in a foreign enemy or domestic ones. But there are other threats coming from nature, some of them created or accelerated by human actions such as climate change, water and food scarcity, and nature-related disasters. Poverty, inequality, and cyclical economic crises are just some examples that can cause fear. Now more than ever, international security is about human survival mainly in geographical areas, such as the Middle East, North Africa, and Central America.

Notwithstanding all the situations described above, we still must believe that it is possible to find some ways to protect ourselves from all those threats. But who are "we"? Whose protection? From what? By what means? This chapter tries to answer those questions. The first part describes the origins of Human Security and the international context in which it was developed. Secondly, it discusses

the place of Human Security as a concept in the field of International Relations theory and in the subfield of international security. Thirdly, it focuses on Human Security, its proposals from different authors and governments, particularly from Latin America, and some of the criticisms that such a concept has generated over the years. Finally, it provides some reflections on the value of Human Security as a policy tool.

## **2. Historical Origins of Human Security and its International Context**

The end of the Cold War, with two of the most symbolic facts that represented this era, namely the fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of the Soviet Union, also marked the beginning of the erosion of the traditional notions of international security which centers in the State as a referent object. Indeed, since the decade of the 1970s, world tensions began to loosen up in the period known as “détente.” In the early 1980s and with the ascension of Mikhail Gorbachov to power in the Kremlin and the implementation of the “perestroika” and “glasnost” that tried to make reforms to the old communist system, it seemed that the two superpowers found a *modus vivendi* in which both knew their particular movements and security concerns. This is not the place to discuss the end of the Cold War, but it suffices to say that the end of that decade and the beginning of the 1990s was very meaningful for international security studies in the sense that, once the bipolar tensions ended, other conflicts began to appear as substitutes of the old bipolar confrontation. The new conflicts such as Somalia, Sudan, and those in the former Yugoslavia represented some of the “new wars” that marked those years.

To better understand the widening of the Security Studies, authors such as Matthews elaborated in her early work on how to revitalize Security Studies, broadening its scope to include other areas such as demographic, economic, and environmental concerns. Thus, she proposed the need to shift the attention to other security considerations beyond the traditional notions of national security (Matthews, 1989).

In order to better analyze the complexity of the new context in which security can be studied, Buzan (1991) has divided security studies into the following sectors: military, political, economic, societal, and environmental securities. In another text, Buzan argues that the complexity of the threats has grown considerably in number and nature, promoting the need to consider a shift of the referent object of security from State security to a wider focus on the “human” (Buzan, De Wilde, & Waever, 1998).

As we can see, the international attention was directed to those conflicts that displayed human suffering resulting from insecurities from different sources. For example, the extreme violence in some kinds of wars, such as the civil wars. As a consequence, new strategies began to take place in particular at the United Nations, in which the Security Council started to consider those conflicts as threats to international peace and security. Kaldor (2006), in reference to the “new wars,” describes very aptly those times: