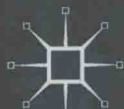


CONFLICT AND HUMAN SECURITY IN AFRICA

KENYA IN PERSPECTIVE

**EDITED BY ASFAW KUMSSA,
JAMES HERBERT WILLIAMS,
AND JOHN F. JONES**



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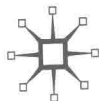
Edited by

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*and
John F. Jones*



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CONFLICT AND HUMAN SECURITY IN
AFRICA

FOREWORD

Achieving security, being free from conflict, free to move from place to place, to pursue a sustainable livelihood—these are motives common among all people, regardless of where they live. Throughout history the stories repeat the theme of finding one's place in a secure environment. A secure environment is about community—it is central to life, to be in a safe place where children, women, men, and families carry on their lives without fear. Security in sub-Saharan Africa has been studied for decades. In 1981, *National Geographic* published photos and reported on refugee camps and political instability in Somalia, a condition that continues to exist (*National Geographic*, 1981). What was unacceptable then remains unacceptable now. The influx of refugees into Kenya from surrounding nation-states, in addition to internally displaced persons from postelection violence, continues to impact human security and the achievement of sustainable livelihoods. The effectiveness of outside interventions by governments and nongovernmental organizations has been mixed in ending human suffering and environmental derogations.

Historically Kenya has maintained a relatively stable governance system. Using indicators of safety, human rights, sustainable economic opportunities, and human development, the Mo Ibrahim Foundation's 2010 Index of African Governance ranks Kenya twenty-sixth out of fifty-three African countries for its effectiveness in governance, though it ranks ahead of the bordering countries of Ethiopia, Sudan, and Somalia (Mo Ibrahim Foundation, 2010). Political conflicts and economic unrest in Somalia, Sudan, and Ethiopian continue to spill over into the sub-Saharan region of Kenya. The influx of refugees, old intertribal rivalries, and continued pressure for land and limited resources emphasize the need for human security. While communities are eager to resolve conflicts, the unavailability of adequate land and financial capital are two primary factors that contribute to domestic conflict. Country borders, illogically defined during colonial times, are also troublesome.

The aim of the authors in writing this book on human security in Kenya is to highlight what is evolving in the communities of

sub-Saharan Africa. The authors focus their attention on three districts in Northern Kenya. Learning about these communities, its people, traditions, and aspirations, helps frame the dialogue needed in the process of finding solutions. The authors' vision of conflict resolution and the creation of sustainable livelihoods is a contribution to the ongoing endeavor of governments, citizens, and NGOs to address the plight of the region.

President Barack Obama, in his address to the UN Millennium Development Goals Summit in 2010, emphasized that it is in the best interest of wealthy countries to maintain development assistance to poor nations. Noting the mixed results of efforts to alleviate poverty, and conscious no doubt of his familial African heritage, President Obama stressed that assistance to the poor around the world should be viewed as a vital part of each country's national security strategy. Moving countries from poverty to prosperity is more than transferring money, food, or medicine. To be effective, all assistance—whether national, bilateral, or multilateral—must focus on breaking the cycle of dependency by supporting the independence that stems from access to education, human services, and sustainable economic opportunities.

Conflict and Human Security in Africa: Kenya in Perspective describes in snapshot fashion a community fabric of diverse people and cultures living in sub-Sahara Africa. The awareness of this is a way of gaining insight into the threat of dependency that African scholars and policymakers alongside the international community clearly recognize. The book reinforces the momentum that has already begun across the world to create and sustain global development. Its chapters orient readers to the historical complexities and common aspirations of entire populations that share limited resources to support their families while protecting their culture and traditions. In advocating collaboration, innovation, and alliances, the authors present a perspective that would benefit not just Africa but also the wider world community.

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DAVID L. GIES

FOREWORD

Human security is a concept that addresses the political and socioeconomic concerns of individuals and communities that arise due to critical and pervasive threats to their lives, livelihoods, and dignity, including the downside risks of development. Human security covers both conflict and development aspects of social progress. In this regard, it refers to actions that put people first and provide them with a sense of security in their homes, at their jobs, and in their communities. It encompasses the idea of liberty, specifically in its two pillars “freedom from fear” (basic human rights) and “freedom from want” (basic human needs).

Past development strategies that focused on economic growth have succeeded in increasing income but the benefits of these initiatives have rarely trickled down to the poor and the marginalized who are the weakest groups of society. Forces such as conflict, along with social and economic inequality, have adversely impacted vulnerable groups such as poor farmers, pastoralist communities, internally displaced people, and illegal migrants.

To address the concerns of the people of Northern Kenya, UNCRD and the University of Denver, in partnership with the University of Nairobi, recently launched a research-cum-training project to assist the people of this region in addressing the challenges of conflict and human insecurity in order to reduce vulnerability and to promote sustainable peace and development in this part of Africa. The project also has a capacity-building component. The rationale for capacity building is to empower the local community through exchange of information, promotion of knowledge, and building of skills for improved livelihoods and to enable the local community to deal with conflicts in a sustainable manner. Through identification and promotion of both sustainable livelihood and conflict management strategies, the project attempts to address the two aspects of human security: freedom from fear (conflict) and freedom from want (creation of sustainable livelihoods).

The project is a three-year partnership between UNCRD and the Universities of Denver and Nairobi. During the first year, the project focused on research to identify the causes and effects of conflict in Northern Kenya. The second year will be devoted to capacity building, while the third will focus on regional programs and activities since conflicts oftentimes spill over from the conflict-prone zones of Ethiopia, Somalia, Sudan, and Uganda.

This publication is one of the outputs of the aforementioned partnership between the three institutions. The book, divided into ten chapters, gives an overview of the project, the methodology used to collect and analyze data, and discussions about the concept of human security, the social systems of the community in Northern Kenya, the causes and effects of conflict, the regional dimension of conflict, and the role of capacity building in enhancing the skills and knowledge of the community to deal with conflicts and issues of human insecurity in a sustainable manner.

It is my hope that this publication will further stimulate discussion about human security and conflict in Africa in general and Northern Kenya in particular. I also hope that the book will be a valuable reference material and textbook for scholars, policymakers, and representatives of the civil society groups who are engaged in human security and conflict issues in Africa.

In publishing this book, UNCRD would like to extend its gratitude to the Graduate School of Social Work, University of Denver, for its support of the project and to the researchers who have worked very hard and contributed to the successful publication of the book.

KAZUNOBU ONOGAWA
Director, UNCRD

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The views expressed in the book are the authors' own and not necessarily those of the United Nations or the University of Denver.

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INTRODUCTION: CONFLICT AND HUMAN SECURITY IN NORTHERN KENYA

Asfaw Kumssa and James Herbert Williams

BACKGROUND

The collapse of the Soviet System and the end of the Cold War have produced a new global political order and a different system of international relations. In the current global order, not only do old challenges persist but new ones have also emerged. These challenges include international terrorism, ethnic cleansing, climate change, human trafficking, transnational crime, HIV/AIDS, inequality between the developed and developing nations, and social and economic inequalities within nation-states.

Economic and political powers such as China have also emerged, which a number of scholars consider to be a threat to American strategic interests and dominance (McKay, 2008). After the September 11, 2001, terrorist attack on the Twin Towers in the United States, the attention of the international community primarily focused on the need to deter similar terrorist attacks in Western countries, by dismantling terrorist networks in both developed and developing countries. Although ideological conflicts and tensions between capitalism and communism (with the exception of North Korea and Cuba) have drastically declined, new cultural and religious challenges, which Huntington (1996) referred to as a “clash of civilizations,” have developed.

Economically, this new global political order has been instrumental in the expanding of global markets and the interdependence of economic linkages. Consequently, the planet is no longer divided into

a bipolar political order as it was during the Cold War era when the United States and the Soviet Union competed for ideological influences (Kumssa, 2001; McKay, 2008).

In the current global order, competition between nations is not so much for ideological supremacy, as it is for market and scarce natural resources. The collapse of the Soviet system has expanded the sphere of the global market, consequently encouraging foreign investment. The world economy is also more integrated, with greater interdependence that has led to globalization. While globalization has been criticized for creating excessive dependency in local and national economies, it actually opens up opportunities for workers in developing countries hard hit by unemployment. Furthermore, it allows nations to specialize in production and sale of commodities in which they have comparative advantages, resulting in a better division of labor worldwide. Globalization permits capital to move in accordance with the productive investment opportunities, thereby enlarging, the argument goes, the wealth of nations (*Economist*, 1997).

On the other hand, critics contend that while globalization is integrating the world economy, it is also creating social and economic inequalities. For instance, the income of the richest 500 billionaires in the world exceeds that of its poorest 416 million people (UNDP, 2005). Obviously, in the process of globalization, some are gaining while others are losing and others are being marginalized altogether. Despite the enormous wealth created by the integrated world economy, millions of people still remain in poverty.

The growth of the global financial markets and highly mobile private funds is weakening the ability of small open economies to manage exchange rates and design effective and sound macroeconomic policies, thereby eroding and weakening the economic power of individual nation-states (Bonvin, 1997; Ohame, 1996). Open economies are susceptible to volatile financial and economic crises, such as the 2009 financial crisis that started with the collapse of the US housing and financial sectors before spreading to other countries.

In most developing countries, especially in Africa, globalization also has some detrimental effects on women's economic and human security (Gills, 1997). Unlike men, women continue to be more disadvantaged by a global division of labor that leaves women with less power, besides rendering them more vulnerable than men (Green, 2009). Although women perform more unremunerated subsistence or household tasks, or low-paid work, which actually subsidize global capitalism, their economic security and well-being are threatened by a harsh economic system.

Nonetheless, globalization is a reality that all countries, including those in Africa, have to come to grips; they need to devise appropriate strategies to ensure a fair distribution of the fruits of globalization, while at the same time minimizing its adverse effects. The advantages of globalization include contemporary technology, such as access to the Internet, satellite, mobile phones, as well as the economic merits of living in an open and efficient economy. The twenty-first century is a time of tremendous technological progress and global wealth unrivaled in history (Jones, 2009). However, despite this enormous prosperity and technological revolution made, there are growing economic, social, and regional inequalities that threaten human security.

In the past, security implied the defense of nation-states and their territories from external aggression, or protecting the internal security of a country. It referred to the use of force to protect the territorial integrity, autonomy, and the domestic political order of a nation-state from other states (Bajpai, 2000). This classical definition of security focuses on the security of a nation-state rather than the welfare of an individual or a community. While the security of a nation-state ensures the safety of citizens, it is not sufficient enough to protect individuals and the community from the human insecurity that is fueled by poverty, environmental degradation, unemployment, lack of human rights and unequal access to basic human needs. Today's understanding of security goes beyond the national security issues and focuses on protection and welfare of individual citizens and their security (Bajpai, 2000; UNDP, 1994). The protection and welfare of individual citizens is referred to as human security. The UNDP *Human Development Report* (1994), while elaborating on the meaning of this concept, provided the following three propositions:

- people vulnerable to shocks are agents of their own destiny, with a series of rights that need to be fulfilled;
- governments and international bodies are bound to address the full range of risks and vulnerabilities that affect people living in poverty;
- social, political and economic stability, which is generally ignored or downplayed during debates on poverty reduction, equity, and growth, is fundamental in reducing human security risks. (P. 204)

Human security refers to interventions aimed at protecting and safeguarding individuals from the emerging threats of poverty, drugs, diseases, and international terrorism (Bajpai, 2000). It refers to actions

that put people first and provide them with a sense of security in their homes, at their jobs, and in their communities. Human security is complementary to human development, but the latter is a broader concept that refers to a process of widening a range of people's choices, while the former is about how people can exercise these choices safely and freely, without losing opportunities in the future. In this regard, human security is defined within the perspective of participatory development and encompasses the idea of human rights and liberty, specifically in its two pillars of "freedom from fear" (human rights) and "freedom from want" (basic human needs) (UNDP, 1994). The concept of human security is still evolving—there are continuous discussions among scholars and policymakers as to what the concept means and what it includes. Some scholars argue that the concept is vague and too general to explain the emerging challenges of security and, therefore, operationalization of the concept is also problematic (Shahrbanou, 2005).

The UNDP *Human Development Report* (1994) gave a holistic definition of the human security concept and articulated its essential elements. According to this report, human security encompasses economic security, food security, health security, environmental security, personal security, community security, and political security. These elements of human security are interrelated and complementary. For example, if the threat to political security is not controlled, it will directly impact other components of human security. Endorsing human security therefore entails protecting people from the threats that arise from problems such as disease, hunger, unemployment, poverty, crime, social and political conflicts, political repression, and environmental degradation. The threats to human security could be local—specific to a particular society or region—or global in nature. In the current global economy, human security threats could spill beyond national boundaries. Therefore, the international community has both a moral imperative and self-interest to address the various threats to human security.

The primary threats to human security in developing countries—poverty, disease, and armed violence—are what Amartya Sen (2003) refers to as the downside of development. Human security covers both the development aspects of peace and sustainable development. In this regard, it addresses the protection of people from critical and pervasive threats to their lives, livelihoods, and dignity. As a people-centered concept, human security focuses on the welfare of human beings and their communities rather than on the security of the state.

Three notable developments have been instrumental in reshaping the concept of security (UNHCR, 2000). The first is the shift in analysis, from a narrow focus on military security in the defense of national sovereignty, to consideration of internal sources of instability, such as communal strife, ethnic unrest, poverty, unemployment, crime, and terrorism. Mass population displacement in the form of internal migrations and cross-border refugee movements is also a common feature of such instability.

The second development is the recognition of the inevitable link between the welfare of citizens and state security. Nonmilitary barriers to stability can be economic, social, environmental, or civil. Drug smuggling, illegal immigration, corruption, human rights violations, disease, and poverty can threaten a government in ways similar to those manifested by armed invasion. Last, there is increasing awareness that national and subnational problems are amenable to, and sometimes require, international assistance or intervention. Suddenly, regional humanitarian issues have become geopolitical, as in Darfur, Bosnia, Kosovo, Rwanda, and Chechnya (Kumssa et al., 2009).

Human security has two important elements. The first focuses on human resource development or human capital formation while the second addresses multisectoral policy concerns with an emphasis on investment in education, health, and other social services (UNDP, 1994). The second concept also incorporates nontraditional ideas and threats, such as human rights violations, political repression, and environmental degradation. Related to these concepts, it is important to note the definition of human security provided by the African Union (AU, 2004):

Human security means the security of the individual with respect to the satisfaction of the basic needs of life; it also encompasses the creation of the social, political, economic, military, environmental and cultural conditions necessary for the survival, livelihood and dignity of the individual, including the protection of fundamental freedoms, the respect for human rights, good governance, access to education, health-care, and ensuring that each individual has opportunities and choices to fulfill his/her own potential. (P. 5)

Promoting human security entails the ability to squarely address the issues to which the AU forcefully draws attention.

Previous development initiatives have shown success with increasing income and, to a certain extent, increased access to social services and environmental improvements. However, the extent to which these initiatives have reached the most vulnerable groups is