

Chapter 2

What Next?

A Search for Security in War and Peace

2.1 As Matters Now Stand

It has become abundantly clear that the global biosphere—its plants, animals, and associated ecosystems (biomes)—are being ever more seriously threatened by ever greater human arrogations on the one hand, and by ever greater human disruptions on the other. As our human numbers keep increasing, our combined human needs perforce increase apace; and, in turn, those needs are compounded by our even more rapidly growing discretionary uses.¹ One poignant example of our global overpopulation is the vast number of environmental refugees. The ongoing environmental devastation is, of course, a tragedy in its own right, but that environmental devastation impinges as well on what I have defined as ‘comprehensive human security’ with its unavoidable *environmental security* component.

Our inexcusably unsustainable utilization of the world’s renewable natural resources (woodland, grassland, fresh water, and ocean over-extractions)—as well as our inexcusably unsustainable utilization of the world’s sink capacities (terrestrial, marine, and atmospheric) via dumpings of solid, liquid, and gaseous wastes into all of those domains—derive largely, of course, from the now increasingly over-populated and over-consumptive *civil sector* of society. However, society’s *military sector* adds a certain amount to those environmental assaults from its peacetime activities (#123, #146, #182), and a substantial—and potentially huge—amount from its wartime activities. It has thus been my hope that at least the military contributions to these shortsighted actions can be minimized, especially those in wartime that lead to widespread long-term, and severe damage to the environment.

The most straightforward and elegant approach to dealing with the issue of wartime environmental disruption would, of course, be to eliminate an armed force’s recourse to achieving its aims through armed conflict, whether that force be

¹ The numbered references are provided in [Chap. 3](#).

governmental or rebel (guerilla, insurgent) (#202). The problem here, to lean on the 1945 *UNESCO* Constitution (UNTS 52), is that ‘since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed’. Those greatly needed peace-establishing ‘constructions’ have withstood the efforts of so many throughout human history as to make it clear to me at least that armed conflict has been, and will continue to be, a characteristic human endeavor. Indeed, there has probably never been a day of peace among humans throughout the long sweep of our existence on earth; and in modern times there are always a dozen or more armed conflicts in progress somewhere or other, whether international or non-international (#127, #179, pp 3–4). So the hope must be to minimize the deadly and destructive impacts of our many, many wars, doing so for both eco-centric and anthropocentric reasons. As outlined next, the approach in my view will have to be largely through the Law of War as reinforced, and in time strengthened, by a more socially and environmentally sensitized public opinion, that is to say, by appropriately expanded cultural norms (#365). And, more generally, those expanded cultural norms would serve as a prerequisite for strengthening environmentally and socially sensitive global governance.

2.2 The Law of War

Before the anti-environmental aspects of the Second Indochina War of 1961–1975 (cf. Chap. 4) and the Gulf War of 1991 (cf. Chap. 5) fade from the collective memory of the public at large, efforts must be made not only to keep that memory alive, but as well to ensure that the constraints on environmental destruction now imbedded in the Law of War (in International Humanitarian Law) are incorporated into the military manuals and rules of engagement of all the world’s armed forces (cf. Chap. 9). And it then becomes crucial that those existing constraints be widely publicized and, moreover, emphasized especially during officer training. Those Governments whose armed forces do not as yet have such documents should be convinced to develop them (perhaps with the readily available expert assistance of the *International Committee of the Red Cross* in Geneva).

Since so many of today’s wars are of a non-international (internal) nature, or largely so, the important question arises of how to instill the appropriate environmental norms into the many armed forces not under their Government’s control. Most of the Law of War is formally applicable only to international armed conflicts, and perhaps the primary multilateral instrument of relevance to internal wars, 1977 *Protocol [II] on Non-international Armed Conflicts* (UNTS 17513), provides only rather weak strictures. Moreover, Governments consider such armed conflicts to be internal matters and therefore not open to outside interference. Thus, as politically and diplomatically sensitive as the matter is, it might well be useful to have outside groups suggesting to rebel forces that for them to openly adhere to the Law of War would not only be beneficial to the land and people of

their own country and thereby give strength to their cause, but could as well help to legitimize it to the outside world.

Self-inflicted environmental damage in wartime, a self-inflicted so-called ‘scorched-earth’ tactic, occurs reasonably often. The Law of War is silent on this matter, and considerations of whether it is possible to minimize such damage is not here considered further, except indirectly insofar as widespread public education might be of some help to curb such instances.

The Law of War does now incorporate a certain amount of environmental protection from military actions (#154, #179, #232; #311, cf. Chap. 8). The important question arises of whether efforts should be made to strengthen the current Law of War with further constraints on environmental disruption. Here I would suggest that the now existing constraints are about as restrictive as most Governments will currently accept (with some of the major powers considering even the existing ones too onerous to accede to). Widespread *environmental education*—both *formal* at all levels of schooling, and *informal* especially abetted by the efforts of inter-governmental agencies and non-governmental organizations—is of the utmost importance (#241). Short of some future environmental cataclysm, it will have to be through such multifaceted environmental education that there can be any hope for the needed change to occur in public attitudes (societal values, cultural norms). Such change could on the one hand produce the necessary impetus for Governments to adopt new multilateral instruments strengthening the existing constraints on ecocidal actions (indeed, whether military or civil), and on the other to have them in fact be adhered to.

2.3 The Search for Security

So our mission for the future will have to be to strive to come ever closer to attaining environmental security together with social (societal) security—that is, to attempt this within the framework of comprehensive human security (#162, #188, #196, #210, #237, #371), a concept fully applicable to both non-industrialized (#213, #244, #277) and industrialized states (#294). There is, in fact, some modest hope for the viability of that aim since our cultural norms—first their social components, and more latterly their environmental components—have been to some extent evolving in the right direction since at least the end of World War II (#380).

As I have thought of it, *comprehensive human security* consists of a number of inexorably intertwined *environmental* and *social* components, with neither of those two categories attainable in the long run unless both are. And, additionally, neither of which are in the long run attainable unless human numbers become compatible with available necessities. Thus, to summarize the make-up of the two components of comprehensive human security: *Environmental security* is comprised of two sub-components: (a) *rational resource utilization*, that based on use or harvesting at levels and with procedures that maintain or restore optimal resource services or

stocks; and (b) *environmental protection*, that based on protection from at least medically unacceptable pollution, protection from permanent human intrusions in special areas (comprising at least 15 % of the global biosphere)²; and, of course, protection from avoidable disruptive military actions. And *social security* is comprised of four sub-components: (a) *political safeguards*, those based on participatory democracy by an informed public, a free press, and a robust legal system; (b) *economic safeguards*, those based on a guaranteed minimum income, access to housing, medical care, care of the aged, child care, and education; (c) *personal safeguards*, those based on justice, equity, equality of the sexes, and respect for others; and, of course, (d) *military safeguards*, those based on a purely defensive, non-provocative posture, and the rejection of weapons of mass destruction.

And, I must emphasize, neither environmental security nor social security will ever be realized: (a) unless there is widespread transfrontier (*i.e.*, regional) cooperation, for the simple reason that ecosystem boundaries rarely coincide with political boundaries (#191, #236, #245, #271, #287, #317, #318, #328); and also, for that matter, because few states are self-sufficient as to needed natural and other resources; and (b) unless human numbers overall become compatible with available necessities (#116, #203).

The task before us is to insure the worldwide pursuit of pervasive education, both formal and informal—in simplest terms, for the purpose of instilling the notions embodied in the 1948 *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (United Nations General Assembly Resolution No. 217[III] A, 10 Dec 48) on the one hand,³ and in the 1982 *World Charter for Nature* (United Nations General Assembly Resolution No. 37/7, 28 Oct 82) on the other. The widespread knowledge, understanding, and acceptance of the fundamentally important concepts enunciated by those two benchmark documents will in due course go a long way toward reducing environmental damage of the earth—whether of military or civil origin—an earth upon which all of us unavoidably depend, and upon which the other creatures with which we perforce share this earth also unavoidably depend.

So my hope is that pressure from an informed and sensitized public will lead to the necessary reorientation and restructuring of national priorities throughout the world in order to achieve the inexorably intertwined national environmental and social securities outlined above. But national restructuring will certainly not suffice without greater regional and global cooperation, to be achieved through a concomitant restructuring and strengthening of regional and global governance

² In fact, in 2010 the states parties to the 1992 *Convention on Biological Diversity* (UNTS 30619) concluded that it was necessary to conserve at least 17 % of the world's terrestrial and inland water areas and 10 % of its coastal and marine areas (www.cbd.int/sp/targets).

³ Most of the aspirational 1948 *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (United Nations General Assembly Resolution No. 217[III] A, 10 Dec 48) was subsequently formalized via a pair of complementary multilateral treaties: the 1966 *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights* (UNTS 14531); and the 1966 *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* (UNTS 14668).

systems. And the needed strengthening of global governance will in turn have to be realized through the widespread acceptance of a more powerful United Nations system, with UNEP serving as one of the key actors in that system, working in cooperation with an upgraded *United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development* (UNCSD).

<http://www.springer.com/978-3-642-31321-9>

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Pioneer on the Environmental Impact of War

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2013, XIII, 150 p. 8 illus. in color., Softcover

ISBN: 978-3-642-31321-9