



‘Human Security’ Relativized: Insights from Six Recent Global Events

Fadwa El Guindi

Retiree Anthropologist, UCLA;
Trustee, World Academy of Art and Science

Abstract

This article argues, on the basis of insights¹ drawn and generalized from six recent global events identified as relevant in this analysis, that the notion of Human Security as currently presented needs further refinement. The six global events (2019-2023) are: The COVID-19 Pandemic, The Ukraine War, COP-27 in Egypt, The World Cup in Qatar, The Arab-China Summit in Saudi Arabia, and the Syria-Turkey Earthquake. Based on my analysis, the conventional concept of Human Security is absolutist and resembles an ideology dressed in ‘humanist’ clothing. I argue in this article for a more balanced perspective that embeds relativized principles which respect differences of cultural traditions and moral values and a recognition of built-in biases of Western nations towards those in the East.

This observation of absolutism and bias becomes of particular relevance in light of tendencies to deploy notions such as human rights, western feminism, a particular mode of Christianity, and now LGBTQ as tools of image manipulation and resource control. Also, there is differential aid, attention, and media coverage in human-made (such as invasions and wars) and natural crises (such as earthquakes) and in dealing with refugees resulting from both kinds of crises. This modality of bias was demonstrated in Afghanistan and Iraq prior to and during US invasions, in the case of Syrian refugees versus Ukrainian ones, and is selectively used to influence negotiations and in aid and rescue, as in the recent earthquakes in Syria and Turkey. The recent attempt to use ‘human rights’ to pressure Saudi Arabia, a long-term ally of the US, to make it bend to US positions not only failed but also backfired. The bias in the attitude shown in the case of the two episodes of assassinating journalists is a case in point. Consider the attention given to the killing of Jamal Ahmad Khashoggi, the dissident Saudi journalist who was then working for the Washington Post, versus that of Shireen Abu Akleh, the Palestinian-American journalist who was working at al-Jazeera, the Arabic Television News Channel out of Qatar, who was killed by Israeli forces during an assignment.

The most recent devastating natural disaster includes the earthquakes that struck Syria and Turkey, in which close to 30,000 people were killed. So much so that the Secretary-General of the United Nations made a public appeal to donors providing assistance for the earthquake to avoid politicising the rescue process in Syria.

This manipulation of image and attempt to control nations of the East is deployed in tandem with apparent colonial designs and invasion strategies similar to imperial colonial

times but applied in their later contemporary forms, as demonstrated in countries such as Algeria, Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, and Syria, and recently, in a non-war setting, against Qatar prior to and during the World Cup.

This latter case can easily be considered an attack on cultural tradition by imposing symbols of gay marriage and calling for providing beer in sports stadiums. The pressure was exerted in the name of universal values and Western democracy. Wearing rainbow armbands to express support for LGBTQ people and allowing the presence of alcohol in stadiums during the games would violate traditional Arab values and be an imposition of Western neo-liberal standards on the rest of the world. Those attempts were rejected and failed to materialise. Instead, the world saw a smooth flow of World Cup activities, which were popularly embraced by thousands of spectators and millions of viewers around the world. Qatar was steadfast in rejecting them and instead projected a different cultural vision to the world, one that was widely embraced.

1. What is Human Security?

A famous quote from the now-President of Egypt touched the hearts of the protesting crowds in Tahrir Square who were demanding the end of the presidency of Morsi of the Muslim Brotherhood. El Sisi, then head of the Armed Forces during former President Morsi's regime, was mediating between the protesting Egyptian people in Tahrir Square and former President Morsi. The quote says, "The Egyptian people could not find anyone showing empathy to them." It was like magic to the ears of the protestors. It rang so true. The Egyptian people did not feel secure, safe, or protected.

According to the recent report of the UN Development Programme (UNDP, February 8, 2022), "6 in 7 people worldwide are plagued by feelings of insecurity." This growing sense of insecurity among people, the report goes on to say, while the world has seen years of development growth, is prompting calls for a refocus of development efforts. So where is the notion of "human security" in those calls? According to UN sources, the concept of human security was first introduced in UNDP's 1994 Human Development Report, and at that time it "signalled a radical departure from the idea that people's security should be only assessed by looking at territorial security, emphasising the importance of people's basic needs, their dignity, and their safety to live secure lives." The focus was on human security to replace national security. Both, of course, are considered as if in opposition, which, as I argue here, they are not and should not be.

The website of The World Academy of Art and Science describes the idea of "human security" as one that "addresses all the critical issues confronting the world today, including peace, human rights, inequality, health, food, education, jobs, safe communities and personal safety, energy, pollution, biodiversity, and, of course, climate change. It's a flag that supports all 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals, which 193 countries have already approved and rallied around. But it speaks of these things in a personal language that everyone can identify with. It is a message that can rally widespread support for the commitments already made by national governments, UN agencies, communities, corporations, NGOs, religious groups, and others to make the world a better, safer place for everyone." It goes on to stress, as the

UN did 26 years ago in 1994, that “security can no longer be solely concerned with national or military security. It must encompass all aspects of human wellbeing: health, food, employment, living standards, education, public confidence, and social tolerance. Human security, therefore, is a broad conceptual approach purported to be applicable to all areas of development policy.” This is the position of the article by Samayov, along with many others, that security cannot be confined to the military factor. “The first duty of the state is to serve and protect its citizens. It cannot be adequately met today by an emphasis on military power alone. It is necessary to counter the threats of environmental degradation as well as to ensure the personal health and wellbeing of people.” (Sayamov, 2021). True, not alone, but as we watch global conflicts today, states must protect their sovereignty and the safety of their people from encroaching powers.

*“Human Security
is posed to counter
national security and
is intended to be a
global ideology.”*

WAAS sees human security as “an integrated approach (that) can accelerate positive action to address threats such as pandemics and climate change, to coordinate and accelerate the implementation of the SDGs, and to enhance multilateral cooperation.” The Academy statement goes on to say: “Human security is all about placing humans at the centre of development. It is a unifying theme and force that serves as a core frame of reference to enhance the effectiveness of a wide range of high-priority social objectives” “Human security,” the statement states, “must be established as a **universal benchmark** for effective development **strategies in the future**” (emphasis added).

The logo of the World Academy of Art and Science is “*Leadership in Thought that Leads to Action*”, which in my view is a very laudable description of what the Academy is, or should consistently be, about. For our purposes here, the proposed framework of human security implies that *thought and action*, the two pillars of the Academy, will merge through its adoption of the proposed framework of human security, which has become a focal project or campaign of WAAS.

Perhaps this presumed merging is more so at the theoretical level. At the practical level, however, and for the various reasons stated earlier, it is doubtful that human security at the idea or ideal level would lead to real human security on the ground. I have called in earlier publications for the dismantling of the world dominance structure, whether as enacted through the veto structure of the UN Security Council, by unilateral acts by dominant nations enforcing sanctions against other nations, or by allowing the strong nations to follow the military-industrial complex’s need to sell arms, thus driving nations towards confrontations leading to war.

But as the six global events that recently played out on the global scene have shown in different ways, national security is of paramount importance, and as security should be for all, it must be provided with respect for the sovereignty of nations and respect for the different cultural traditions and social landscapes. The six global events identified in this article turned the world on its head, as it were. The universalist posture broke down and was replaced by multiple alliances, different partnerships, and a challenge to the dominant

structure of military and economic power. Embedding national security in common security as an element towards human security for all is in accordance with the character of the United Nations, which itself is composed of member sovereign states, not peoples, individuals, communities, or humans.

The United Nations currently uses the phrase 'common security'. I do not consider common security to be interchangeable with human security, although both suggest 'security for all'. The former is strategic, emphasising that security has to be implemented by all entities. A recent article called for a change of focus to China in the context of its growing impact on climate change instead of focusing only on the competitive market, pointing out that US intelligence may have missed this significant factor and its impact on global relations (KLARE 2023).

Human security, if not monitored carefully, can become an ideological package of a universalized western view linking democracy with a western vision of human rights to be imposed on the rest of the world. It is posed to counter national security and is intended to be a global ideology. Such absolutist postures and their consequence of homogenization reflect a built-in bias that imposes western (Euro-centred) perspectives and values as a standard against which such imposition is justified. It is, however one looks at it, an imposition of dominance and hegemony on the whole world. And it is this element in the model that ought to be reconsidered.

The exploration of the six global events presented in this article aims to shed light not only on the specifics that each event contributed to the world reset but also on how insights drawn from them reveal not simply a new world order emerging but rather the end of 'world disorder by design', thus the ushering of a qualitatively different world altogether. We might find kernels for an alternative paradigm in insights drawn from the six global events of import identified in this analysis. Global events are explored next.

2. The COVID-19 Pandemic & The Ukraine War

The first two global events to be addressed here are the COVID-19 pandemic and the Ukraine War. My anthropological exploration, as seen in previous publications of both the COVID-19 pandemic (El Guindi 2020a; El Guindi 2020b; El Guindi 2022b; El Guindi in press) and the Ukraine War (El Guindi 2022a), has pointed to how the two global events with wide global impact have uncovered the deep and wide interconnectedness that has been gradually building among peoples across the world and the close interdependencies among nations in many areas, which include the financial, the technological, the informational, and more.

At the same time, those same events revealed imbalances of wealth and power within countries and among the nations of the world, which may have been apparent to a few prior to the pandemic but took centre stage with the rapid spread of the infection across borders. Politicians had to confront such a reality as they struggled to maintain control of information and protect their offices. Businesses were laying off employees to cut costs, but in return, many people were rejecting reporting to work when the choice of working from home became possible.

It is quite interesting, and significant, I suggest, that according to UNDP Administrator Achim Steiner, it was found that “despite global wealth being higher than ever before, a majority of people are feeling apprehensive about the future, and these feelings have likely been exacerbated by the pandemic. In our quest for unbridled economic growth, we continue to destroy our natural world while inequalities widen, both within and between countries. It is time to recognise the signs of societies that are under immense stress and redefine what progress actually means. We need a fit-for-purpose development model that is built around the protection and restoration of our planet, with new sustainable opportunities for all”. Regarding world health the UN found that “[T]here are large and widening gaps in healthcare systems between countries. According to the report’s new Healthcare Universalism Index, between 1995 and 2017, the inequality in healthcare performance between countries with low and very high human development worsened”. Inequality includes the marginalization and denial of services to *indigenous populations*, not only minority groups in society, who have shown themselves to be the best protectors of the natural environment.

As one observer put it in describing the COVID-19 virus, it is “a dance² as old as life on our planet. The choreography is logged deep within life’s immune system”. For perspective, I bring up as an example the flatworm, which had millions of years to evolve, “experimenting, rejecting, tweaking, and innovating...” (Forrest et al., 2023) Just as we observed the Corona virus to be doing, to survive and thrive, it kept mutating, making new variants. The virus has no intent, no malice, and no feeling. It is doing what organisms are programmed to do. The human body also works the same way, except that medical advances, a human invention, intervene and interrupt the process.

I was particularly intrigued by the finding that high rates of infection appeared more prevalent among prosperous nations in Europe and the United States, with lower rates in general in Africa, except for South Africa, and in Egypt (El Guindi 2020a; El Guindi 2020b; El Guindi 2022b). Are factors such as natural immunity on a genetic basis or from local diets to be considered as important as the nature of the virus, its character, and its rate of spread? Is not social inequality more associated with prosperous nations? Unmasking the extent of phenomena in rich countries such as homelessness, absence of health services, racism against black people, and discrimination against immigrants exposes a factor that politicians prefer to use for campaigning for office and then rapidly ignore.

The observation of the pattern of high infection rates in European countries with advanced public health infrastructure challenges initial biases expressing an expectation that the viral infection would most likely most strongly hit countries such as **those in Africa** given their lower level of public health preparedness and standards of living. The reality that the pattern was different than expected shocked Europe and led to the rush of European countries to close their borders to each other after a long process of removing travel obstacles among themselves to show unity and trust. The border closing was based on the fact that the virus spread very rapidly and, of course, did not recognise ‘walls’ and ‘borders’. In other words, the health threat came from the same source that nurtured trust. Europe, acting as separate bordered nations, closed the doors it had previously opened to demonstrate the amity and unity of a European Union. The COVID-19 virus did not recognise such utopian images.

Transmission was rapid and brutal. It led to isolation and masking. This had a very toxic effect on people whose 'oxygen,' as it were, is generated by togetherness.

"Wars are not inevitable, and that path must be challenged because alternatives do exist. But there must be a will to consider these alternative paths. Perhaps the use of wars to make profit should be criminalised by the United Nations."

A report recently appearing in *The Atlantic* describes a recent long-term study conducted by Harvard this way: "Since 1938, the Harvard Study of Adult Development has been investigating what makes people flourish. After starting with 724 participants—boys from disadvantaged and troubled families in Boston and Harvard undergraduates—the study incorporated the spouses of the original men and, more recently, more than 1,300 descendants of the initial group. Researchers periodically interview participants, ask them to fill out questionnaires, and collect information about their physical health. As the study's director (Bob) and associate director (Marc), we've been able to watch participants fall in and out of relationships, find success and failure at their jobs, and become mothers and fathers. It's the longest in-depth longitudinal study on human life ever done, and it's brought us to a simple and profound conclusion: Good relationships [properly nurtured] lead to health and happiness." (Waldinger and Schulz 2023).

Another matter the virus exposed was the unmasking of domestic inequalities, a reality that politicians prior to such exposure mostly utilised when running for office and then pushed to the back burner until elections came around again. Weakness in trust in governance was beginning to emerge. Suddenly, there were large numbers of homeless people in the strongest and richest countries. Politicians rushed to make promises. The homeless populations continue to grow, and the absence of social and health services continues to exist.

Alongside such exposures, a denial of strengths and rights among nations of the Global South unmasked deep racism and systemic attitudes of a "double standard". This became prominent with the Ukraine War, the other global event to be discussed next, when sympathy poured on the poor Ukrainian victims of aggression and their losses of home and security. This appeared to be different for the Iraqis, Syrians, Libyans, Palestinians, and so on. Ukrainian refugees needed urgent help. Syrian refugees were exploited and rejected. African refugees are undesirable and unwanted, except to be trafficked and exploited. Ukrainian refugees were to be sheltered and protected. The double-standard in the humanitarian attitude was unmasked.

The Ukraine war brought attention to the phenomenon of war itself. Questions were raised by concerned institutions about the inevitability of war and the alternative paths that should be taken. Importantly, the World Academy of Art and Science (WAAS) recently published in 2022 an issue of *CADMUS* (its flagship journal) in the form of a Report to

WAAS with a focus on the War in Ukraine, in which I contributed an article (El Guindi 2022a). It addressed the fact that “the path of war” to solve problems among nations is taken as inevitable and therefore goes unchallenged. Wars are not inevitable, and that path must be challenged because alternatives do exist. But there must be a will to consider these alternative paths. Perhaps the use of wars to make profit should be criminalised by the United Nations.

3. The Modality of War

We know that wars are a source of huge profits. They are used by the dominant powers as marketplaces for testing and selling arms, officially and unofficially, as well as a means for discovering the current technological and military capacity of ‘the enemy’. The mercenary component traffics in weapons, drugs, refugees, and body parts. These drivers make warfare inevitable, even desirable, in order to serve the military-industrial complex and mercenary groups illegally running operations for huge profits. Unfortunately, this renders the United Nations into ‘sitting duck status’, rather than rising to deal with what it was originally founded for: as an active player in seeking ways to prevent reaching the point of no return that leads to invasions and wars.

Today, the modality ‘de jour’ authored by the neo-Cons and neo-Liberals of the United States is a scenario of “endless wars” and what is ironically labelled “constructive chaos,” both indices of a major failure of both imagination and mental intelligence. President Putin introduced a modified version of this scenario: endless war and destruction. It is on the drivers of profiteering from war that we have to focus some of our attention, as well as on sovereign concerns of national security. Why should national security remain a privilege of the dominant? The United States would never tolerate any “enemy” presence near its borders or flying over its territory. Why is this not applicable to other nations?

As the UN seems to be deploying the phrase “common security,” perhaps security for all should embody national security, a combination that might be a way towards an equation of war prevention. Just as the world was seeking a vaccine to counter the viral pandemic, we should seek a ‘vaccine’, as it were, to prevent “the infection” of needing to go to war.

The two recent world events mentioned earlier, the pandemic and the Ukraine War, have challenged the structure and turned the whole world upside down, as it were, economically, politically, and ideologically. Stating over and over that the world is moving from unipolar to multipolar oversimplifies to the point of irrelevance. The change, as seen in recent global events, is much more complex than that, as this article will show.

There is clearer recognition as to who is contributing more to the deterioration of our world. The UN finding that “the more highly developed countries tend to capitalise more on the benefits from planetary pressures and suffer less of their consequences, highlighting how climate change is pushing inequalities further apart.” There is a new level of transparency regarding health deterioration. The UN states that “in 2021, despite the highest global GDP in history and despite COVID-19 vaccines becoming more readily available in some countries, global life expectancy declined for the second year in a row. Declining by about one and a half years on average compared to a pre-COVID world.”

According to Asako Okai, UN Assistant Secretary-General and Director, UNDP Crisis Bureau, “[a] key element for practical action highlighted in the report is building a greater sense of global solidarity based on the idea of *common security*. Common security recognises that a community can only be secure if adjacent communities are too. This is something we see all too clearly with the current pandemic: nations are largely powerless to prevent new mutations of this coronavirus from crossing borders”.

“Our identity and roots are anchored in our culture.”

In contrast to any security are the entwined ideas authored by the United States (George Bush), part of which is brought up by Cockburn, who raises the point of the Ukraine becoming an endless war (Cockburn 2022), a point that was not hidden in Russia’s agenda of border security. It was deploying previous agreements, such as the Minsk Accords, promising restraint in encroachment on the part of NATO and respect for Russian national security. Otherwise, it stated that a war would be both *endless* (borrowing language from the US) and, in lieu of constructive, *destructive*. Endless and destructive is not what the world needs at this or any future time. Nor was the idea of constructive chaos sold as positive. It masks the real agenda of dismantling states and forcing regime change.

It was at that point, when Russia was expressing concern about NATO expansion and the encroachment on its border security, that the United Nations could have exercised its power to bring all parties together at the table, yet it had not. Are the US and the UK too overwhelming for the United Nations, thus leading to a weakness and inability to act? Has the combined power of the military industrial complex and the world banking system rendered the institution that was put together after a very destructive world war to maintain peace neutral and incapacitated?

This is the point at which the world should have been concerned, empowering the United Nations, the institution that was built exactly to deal with such matters, to take strong action instead of inaction in the face of ‘bullying’ nations taking unilateral actions against other nations. Perhaps this is a goal that WAAS should vigorously embrace. If we cannot or do not, then perhaps we should, as people and nations, build an alternative that works. This is particularly so since the UN is calling for a reconsideration of the vulnerability of nations in conflict. It states that “about 1.2 billion people live in conflict-affected areas, with almost half of them (560 million) in countries not usually considered to be fragile, indicating that the traditional ideas about which countries are most vulnerable to conflict need to be revisited.” Perhaps WAAS should at least lead such a revisit.

4. COP27 in Egypt and World Cup 2022 in Qatar

The two global events to be discussed next are of a different character from the first two but lead to equally relevant insights. They are COP27, organised by and held in Egypt, and the 2022 World Cup, organised by and held in Qatar. The fifth one, to be discussed later, is the Arab-China Summit held in Saudi Arabia. Three significant world events were held in three Arab countries. This alone is a new recognition.

We know that regarding our natural environment, it is the dominant and prosperous nations who have abused it the most, polluting the planet most acutely, while the rest of the world “pays” for the damage to health and diminished livelihoods. It is also the prosperous nations that are driving the world into major wars at great cost to humans, culture, and nature. The goal of COP27 was to bring balance to the world by establishing a fund in which the strong nations contribute (as has been pledged over and over for many years) so the weaker nations are able to join the path of development. It is a project aiming for balance and justice.

It is significant that COP27 was organised by Egypt and held in Africa. Africa is a re-emerging, youthful continent rich in human and natural resources. COP27 puts it on the contemporary world stage of relevant global events, equally sharing in discussion and debate in the search for innovative solutions to issues of world concern. Participation was a step on a path to inclusivity, diversity, and balance. Importantly, World Youth were full participants. Through the event, Egypt led the effort to establish a fund through which the prosperous nations would go beyond pledges to actually make their contributions towards the participation of poorer nations in the development process.

This also assisted in recognising an Egyptian identity. To Egyptians, following the turmoil resulting from intolerant forces that sought to divide the Egyptian people by faith, to fragment an otherwise seamless fabric of diversity united by their love of their land and identification with its history. In a recent publication, 2022, appearing in the *International Journal of Levant Studies* in both Romanian and English, *Tears of Civilizational Identity* described how the identity of Egyptian people is intricately woven by a long civilizational history, embedding it into a regional landscape that is a geo-political cross-roads bridging continents and seas, which makes it simultaneously African, Mediterranean, Arab, and Islamic. This uniqueness of diversity that is woven into a seamless fabric of identity is what Egyptians celebrate and almost lost when intolerant forces injected disruptions. Hosting COP27 enabled Egypt to demonstrate a kind of renewed regional leadership and rising role in global politics that was orchestrated with remarkable organisational mastery, recognised according to UN standards. COP27 was explicitly declared a successful event by the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

5. Post-COP27 in Athens

In Greece, academics and administrators successfully organised a Post-COP27 Workshop immediately following COP27, held in Athens on December 13-14, 2022, to engage in dialogue and critique regarding the path forward. In my presentation, I stated that “while the pandemic uncovered our humanity, the Ukraine War revealed our incapacity to use our knowledge and unique intelligence properly” ‘Humanness’ is different from human or humanity as commonly used. The reference is to being human as a species among other species. It has been shown that our need for togetherness is firmly rooted in our form of society and that our identity and roots are anchored in our culture (on that point, see El Guindi 2022), but we have not succeeded in using our uniquely human intelligence to protect our societies or the sources of our cultural identity.

Both similar and different is the case of the World Cup hosted by Qatar. Qatar demonstrated with its usual elegance combined with a renewed passion to host that it will

not be intimidated by efforts to thwart its goal by holding the stick they call human rights to focus attention on labour issues and away from societal concern and cultural tradition. People from all over the world joined the Arabians of Qatar in celebrating what was nothing short of a miraculous success. They went to homes, danced in the streets, and inundated markets, turning the sporting event into a celebration of the integrity of a culture. The response by the people on the ground was one of passionate appreciation for Qatari hospitality, a trait that is prominently Arabian. They donned distinctive Arabian clothes and joined families in their homes to eat Arabian food. FIFA President Gianni Infantino declared the event “the best World Cup ever” There is another message, though.

6. Rainbow, Beer and Bisht

There was much more to the World Cup held in Qatar than being an international sports event. The image of Lionel Messi of Argentina carrying the World Cup Trophy offered to him by FIFA President Gianni Infantino as the Emir of Qatar, Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani, donned a traditional Arabian *bisht* over his shoulders became iconic and circulated around the world in social and mainstream media. The *bisht* is the loose, flowing robe worn by Arabian men with different levels of ornateness for different occasions. The ornate ones embroidered with gold threads are worn on special occasions, particularly by a groom at his wedding. It was a high honour for the Emir to don the traditional outfit for the winner of the World Cup. As my study of Arabian dress for men and women has explored, more traditional forms of the “*bisht*” were worn by nomad Bedouins as they in previous times roamed the desert. An analytic description of Arabian dress appeared co-authored in the Berg Encyclopaedia of World Dress (El Guindi and Al-Othman 2010).

The ‘Rainbow’ and the ‘Beer’ refer to the attempts by western nations to draw attention more to what they presented as human rights issues of gay rights but were considered by many to be ways of ‘smearing’ the event held in Qatar and the culture itself by defying Arabian tradition and traditional protocol. First, issues of labour and human rights were deployed, followed by attempts at parading LGBTQ emblems through certain teams, such as wearing armbands with rainbows, followed by requests to sell beer inside stadiums in defiance of the Islamic ban on alcohol. These modes of pressure were seen by many as ways to embarrass Qatar as it paraded its successful and popularly received event.

As the Emir concluded the successful series of tournaments with a ceremony rich in cultural tradition, dressing the World Cup recipient representing Argentina football, Lionel Messi, with the Qatari *bisht*, like grooms are dressed on their wedding day (El Guindi and Al-Othman 2010), symbolised a number of very significant points. It was telling the world that as the west is embroiled in a destructive war, the Arabs are offering a torch of peace. As the West tried and failed to impose rejected values, when the French minister of sports wagged her upper arm with a rainbow, Qatar not only rejected the improper imposition but also demonstrated in full view of the whole world that there is a viable alternative tradition that neither adopts such values nor needs alcohol to entertain the people. It is a victory not only in organising but more so in putting forth the legitimacy of cultural tradition and national

sovereignty. This brings us to the fifth global event of import: the Arab-China Summit held in Saudi Arabia.

7. The Arab-China Summit

The Summit of 2022, hosted by Saudi Arabia and bringing the Arab World together with China, was set to establish a framework for cooperation and a common strategy. It is perceived as the Chinese alternative to coalitions of constructive chaos and endless wars. It reaffirmed a relationship of 2000 years of shared history of trade extending from Arabian seas and deserts onto the Silk Road. Some commentators considered it of interest that China had not competed in the World Cup, not due to being disqualified but by choice, a choice of another path of cooperating and competing, that of trade, which brings back to life old routes linking the peoples of the world through a flow of goods and services.

Yet, in the view of some observers, the distance from competitive sports is not replaced by a focus on trade. Rather, in an Arabic newspaper article, the commentator Gouda (2022) discussed what he called “the other face of China”, noting that China’s focus was not on entering competitive sports but on another area altogether—the area of competitive research and invention. China, he argues, is beyond building a sizeable export of products and beyond the size of a foreign currency reserve. Both are exponential in China. So it goes beyond the production and export of goods. It is China’s record of scientific and technological patents. And this is directly linked to its education system. This, the writer argues, is the point from which China is spreading its wings onto Supreme Power status. And this is where we need to look when we look at China: invention and discovery.

From this angle of competitive but nonviolent strength, President Xi Jinping of the People’s Republic of China and Prince Salman of Saudi Arabia joined hands to seal a partnership for a joint alternative to a framework of war, destruction, and exploitation of weaker nations. The world, as the Summit established, has changed, not as simplistically portrayed from unipolar to multipolar, but qualitatively in its very fundamental core, from polarities of hostility and divisions for exploitation to a differently choreographed world, one that Gregory Bateson’s famous query about patterns, in which he rejects looking at patterns as fixed, Instead, he considers it more like “a dance of interacting parts” (Bateson 1979: 13). To extend the Batesonian notion of pattern to the world order, I would propose that the paradigm of single dominating power (militarily and financially) and its coalitions of war, such as AUKUS, NATO, and that of Endless War and Constructive Chaos, resulted in a world of violence and disorder, a disruption of economies and lives.

The interacting parts alternatively emerging in China, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and India reveal a different strategy for building a qualitatively different order, one with a flexible currency structure, countering the “endless war, constructive chaos, you are either with us or against us” unipolar structure. Here we are celebrating different traditions, different values, different kinds of relations, different strategies, and alternative currencies (Hilal 2022). President Xi Jinping of the People’s Republic of China rejects interfering in sovereign countries’ affairs, stresses the unity of its historical lands, opposes a weaponized use of human rights, prefers relations based on mutual interest, complete strategic partnership, the

use of yuan and local currencies versus the dollar and euro, and a new global world order. He also supports a Palestinian state.

8. The Syria-Türkey Earthquakes of 2023

An estimate of 35,000 deaths in Syria and Turkey and many wounded, many homeless, as aid trickles in from different parts of the world. We observe differential media coverage favouring Turkey since, as the UN Secretary-General points out, aid, which is supposed to be humanitarian, is in fact politicised. Moments of human care show a baby born under the rubble saved, a baby surviving days trapped, and other stories of human interest. This is a devastating phenomenon that cannot be prevented by reform or climate change activism. However, it might be possible to provide oversight to UN committees to keep watch over earthquake-prone regions and provide assistance in measures guiding the construction and maintenance of habitation structures to minimise human loss. Some governments do not enforce protective measures. The world is confronted by the gravity of natural disasters that are not related to climate change.

9. Concluding Remarks

The world is changing. It is moving away from coalitions, and even blocs, to shifting alliances.

The global events discussed above reflect different aspects of the change. The Arab-China Summit, in coordination with the other global events identified here, highlighted very prominently how the effects and harm of colonialism have impacted those who are now rising from its ashes. Whether in the response to COP27 being held in Africa, the victory of Morocco over France and Portugal, the defeat of the UK against France, or the final victory of Argentina over France, the euphoria among the peoples around the world was a theatre of anti-colonialism. It was *football* that teams played, not soccer.

Egypt showed the world that it can hold a world meeting successfully and achieve some steps, and Qatar thrived on showing the peoples of the world what Arabian hospitality means and what Arab identity is about. The World Cup became a showcase of the change in world balance. It was a demonstration of the legitimacy of other ways of life, other cultural traditions, and different values just as worthy as those imposed by the West. Most prominently, the World Cup was a live demonstration by people in support of Palestine and the rights of the Palestinians. The people demonstrated their power by defying the Abrahamic Accords woven by governments. The Palestinian flag was prominently waved by football players and spectators alike. The message was clear: Palestine is there forever.

Given a platform for expression, whether it is social media or the World Cup, the people will freely express their true sentiments. This, mingled with showing off Arabian cultural traditions unfiltered, was a most powerful 'voice' by people directly, a new dawn of people by people. The people were rejoicing over victories over those who colonised them. Memories of pain from subordination exploded in the streets. Many rejoiced when the UK lost, and the world rejoiced when Argentina won the Cup. These are voices that could not or would

not be muted. It was evident that peoples from around the world (as distinct from states and corporations) expressed themselves in the popular football event held in Qatar, the World Cup, by explicitly expressing a posture that is against the world's homogenization of rights and values.

There is a new confidence emerging among Arab nations, a sign, as it were, that they are just now emerging from under the long hold of colonial occupation, oppressive control, and exploitation of human and natural resources. It is not fully understood yet that long after a physical colonial presence ends, the process of real liberation by a people from such entrenched control and degradation of body and soul takes a long time. Ending occupation is a physical and political act observed when occupying forces leave. The process of liberating previously controlled minds and rebuilding cultural identities damaged by colonial occupation is harder and longer.

In my article published in both Romanian and English in the publication *The International Journal of Levant Studies* of the Institute for Advanced Studies in Levant Culture and Civilization (Bucharest, Romania) and the Centre of Excellence of the World Academy of Art and Science, I wrote: "The view that progress is achieved by looking to the future and not to the past dominates US policy. Another aspect is the view of international relations based on military coalitions. NATO in Europe and AUKUS in the Anglo-Saxon axis are cornerstones. The verbalised suggestion by former President Trump addressed to Saudi Arabia that the US would like to see an "Arab NATO" blew off without impact. The Abrahamic Accords are the last attempt by the US to find room for Israel in the Arab world; normalisation efforts so far have remained cold and only at the official level". Alternatively, there is an emergent model out of Egypt, which I have published about, arguing that other ways are emerging to build relations globally.

The two events of COP27 and the World Cup are particularly good examples of emergence onto the world scene in renewed form, with a new confidence in one and a desire to reaffirm the legitimacy of cultural tradition in the other. There was a visible regional euphoria over Morocco's win over Spain and Tunis' victory over France, which suggests a message much deeper than winning a football match. According to George Galloway, it is the first African, Arab, or Muslim football team to reach the semi-finals of the World Cup. Millions around the world showed support.

The fact that the team prominently displayed the Palestinian flag was a further expression of the "liberation" of Arabs united against the occupation of their lands. The victory of Moroccan football in the World Cup over their previous colonists, Portugal and France, drove the football world into a frenzy. As the team and spectators raised the Palestinian flag and sang in unison in Arabic, "Ana dammi falastini" (My blood is Palestinian) sent the strongest message that 'normalisation' with Israel is a mirage enacted by official governance for official reasons but is strongly rejected by the people, whether in Egypt, the Arabian Gulf, or elsewhere in the Arab World. The two paths run in parallel, and "never the twain shall meet" This is demonstrated on the ground over and over. It is the failure of misguided diplomacy and an imposed counter-reality.

It was a very powerful feeling of reciprocity and solidarity when Palestinians responded to such expressions of support for their freedom from occupation, stating in Arabic, which I translate in English as follows: “Moroccans already have a ‘gate’ in our Quds; now they entered our hearts through a thousand gates,” which went viral through social media. As some commentators put it, the winner is Palestine. I add that the loser is bigotry.

Finally, the question I raise here is: Can the framework of human security reflect both the insecurity of the world today as well as the rise of the voice of the peoples of the world countering their own and other governments and public media and against those who dominated most of the world previously with a strategy of exploitation? Does not this Phoenix rising out of the longtime ashes of exploitation and dominance, as expressed by and during COP27, the World Cup, and the Arab-China Summit in Saudi Arabia, send a message opposing the imposition of power and values?

Qatar rejected ‘rainbow and beer’ in its stadiums, and the people of the world who fully participated in the World Cup competition and cultural events in Qatar were fine without both. This was a strong statement reaffirming the integrity of cultural tradition and the sovereignty of nations trying to express their own values and freedom of expression. Has not the World Cup in Qatar demonstrated loud and clear that any proposed framework must be one that is communicated by the people and for the people and that the only way forward is to recognise that construction is better than destruction, cooperation and exchange are better than war for the people, the world economy, the balance of power, and a safer planet for all? Perhaps the notion of “human security for all” could be “one planet for all”—people, animals, nature, and culture.

Egypt led Africa and the world to confront the reality of imbalance among nations; Saudi Arabia demonstrated a viable alternative economic world when it hosted China in a summit with the Arab world leaders; Qatar, the small Arabian affluent state that was ever starved for ‘nationhood,’ achieved the world legitimacy of Arabian cultural traditions when it rejected “rainbow and beer’ and prevailed; and on December 18th, 2022, it celebrated its National Day as an integrated nation with a strong identity and a winner of the World Cup of football, *not soccer*.

The notion of human security needs to be ‘dressed down’, away from rhetoric and jargon, to implementable ideas. The focus is perhaps better on the defence of ‘home’ and the safety of ‘people’ at home and around the world. It should also reveal how it can apply to human populations that become victims of natural disasters that are not caused by climate change, such as earthquakes. A final challenge is a question raised by the protesting population of France against the government-proposed retirement reform. Do we work to live or live to work? Human security as an idea should address that.

Author’s Contact Information
Email: felguindi@gmail.com

References

1. Bateson, Gregory 1972 *Steps To An Ecology of Mind: Collected Essays in Anthropology, Psychiatry, Evolution, and Epistemology*. San Francisco: Chandler Publishing Company.
2. 1979 *Mind and Nature: A Necessary Unity*. New York: E. P. Dutton.
3. Cockburn, Patrick 2022 *Will Ukraine Become Another Ceaseless War?*
4. *In CounterPunch: CounterPunch*.
5. El Guindi, F 2020 *Suckling: Kinship More Fluid*. London: Routledge.
6. El Guindi, F., and W. Al-Othman 2010 *Dress from the Gulf States, Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, UAE*. In Berg Encyclopedia of World Dress and Fashion: Central and Southwest Asia. J.B. Eicher, ed. Pp. 245-251, Vol. 5. Oxford: Berg Publishers.
7. El Guindi, Fadwa 2020a *Rediscovering Our Humanness*. The Institute for Advanced Studies in Levant Culture and Civilization Centre of Excellence of the World Academy of Art & Science
8. ISACCL. 2020b "What the Coronavirus Crisis Needs From Anthropology." *Anthropology News website*, April 27, 2020.
9. 2022a Globalization Weaponized, Dominance Fragmented, World Stability Ruptured. CADMUS 4 (6):159-166.
10. 2022b Turning the world on its head: The virus that disrupted "business as usual". *Economic Anthropology* 9(1).
11. 2022 *Tears of Civilizational Identity: Egypt's Emergent Paradigm for Global Cultural Diplomacy* (Romanian and English). The International Journal of Levant Studies (Bucharest: The Institute for Advanced Studies in Levant Culture & Civilization) 3 (2021).
12. *in press The World Upside Down: The Pandemic Redefines Globalization*. In Issues in Ethnology and Anthropology: Special Issue on Pandemic. V. Vucinic, T. Reuter, and S. Patnaik, eds. Belgrade, Serbia: Belgrade University.
13. Forrest, S., et al. 2023 *Mother Nature's 7 Lessons for a Safer World*
14. *The best defense can be learned from the evolution of the animal immune system*. Nautilus.
15. Gouda, Suleiman 2022 *The Other Face of China*. In Al-Masry Al-Youm. Cairo, Egypt.
16. Hilal, Aliyeddin 2022 *2023 Policies of World Powers in the Middle East* (Arabic). In al-Masri al-Yawm. Cairo, Egypt: al-Masri al-Yawm.
17. KLARE, MICHAEL T. 2023 *The Pentagon's Massive Intelligence Failure on China: Climate Change*
18. *In CounterPunch*. New York: CounterPunch.
19. Sayamov, Yury 2021 *COVID-19 and the Global Problem of Human Security*. *Eruditio - e-Journal of the World Academy of Art & Science* 3(1).
20. Waldinger, Robert, and Marc Schulz 2023 *What the longest study on human happiness found is the key to a good life*
21. The Harvard Study of Adult Development has established a strong correlation between deep relationships and well-being. The question is, how does a person nurture those deep relationships?
22. *In The Atlantic*. New York: The Atlantic.

Notes

1. Insights drawn in this analysis from world events benefit from the author's anthropological gaze and perspective (On the anthropological gaze and perspective, see El Guindi, F 2020 *Suckling: Kinship More Fluid*. London: Routledge.). El Guindi is a four-field anthropologist who is retiree at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) who has served by invitation at Qatar University as Distinguished Professor and Head of Department of Social Sciences. She has conducted intensive field research, funded by the competitive funding by QNRF. Arabian culture is one of El Guindi's three field immersive sites of anthropological research. The other two are Egyptian Nubia and the Valley Zapotec of Mexico. Her publications, scientific and public, cover all three field research areas, but the perspective is one: that of four-field anthropology.
2. In this regard look at Bateson, Gregory 1972 *Steps To An Ecology of Mind: Collected Essays in Anthropology, Psychiatry, Evolution, and Epistemology*. San Francisco: Chandler Publishing Company.