



## Paradigm Change to Human Security\*

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### Abstract

*The global challenges confronting humanity are interlinked and interdependent. They are all global in nature, and none of them can be addressed successfully by individual nations acting on their own. In order to effectively navigate the closely interconnected world that we live in and address its challenges, we need new levels of organization and strategy, and the development of strong and more effective multilateral institutions than we have at present. One of the essential requirements is for widespread adoption of a comprehensive, integrated concept of human security to replace fragmented understanding and piecemeal solutions. We need to transcend the limitations of a rear-view mirror mentality to identify the very real possibilities for a better world and act decisively with determination and faith in our collective capacity to realize them. The pressure generated by the multidimensional crises we face can be utilized to break free of encrusted ideas and overcome the resistance of vested interests and rigid structures. Now is the time to initiate steps for such a transformation without waiting for further crises to compel us. The launching of a global campaign on Human Security for All (HS4A) by UNTFHS and WAAS exemplifies the effort to generate support for human security as a unifying approach that can be embraced and applied by people and organizations at all levels and in all fields of global society.*

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### 1. Social Responsibility of Science

The roots of the World Academy of Art and Science (WAAS) can be traced to a letter that Albert Einstein wrote to the US President Franklin Roosevelt in 1939, expressing concern

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over research on atomic weapons. This was followed a few years later by the establishment of the Manhattan Project by the US Government to develop an atomic weapon under the direction of Robert Oppenheimer, who later became a Fellow of the Academy. The nuclear arms race commenced soon after Russia tested its first atomic bomb in 1949 and the first hydrogen bomb in 1953. In 1954 Bertrand Russell, Einstein and nine other eminent scientists issued the Russell-Einstein Manifesto warning the world of the extreme dangers posed by nuclear weapons to the future of humanity.

The beginning of the nuclear age marked the point in time when it became clear that the future of civilization would rest on how humanity managed the apparently infinite power of science. The idea of science as a detached observer of reality seated in an aloof ivory tower and not responsible for the consequences of scientific inventions was no longer acceptable. This change in perception led to the First International Conference on Science and Human Welfare in Washington D.C. in 1956, the founding of Pugwash the following year, and the establishment of WAAS in 1960.

The Academy was founded on the concern that the security and the very future of humanity depend not only on the developments of science but also on the values and sense of social responsibility with which scientists act. The destiny of humanity rests on how we employ our knowledge and the power that it gives us. Since 1960, WAAS has expanded its field of work to include peace, population, food security, economics, employment, finance, environment, technology, culture, religion, and other issues.

## **2. Characteristics of Global Challenges**

In the sixty years that WAAS has spent studying solutions to the global challenges confronting humanity, it has identified several characteristics common to them all. All the challenges are interlinked and interdependent. We can no longer consider them in isolation from one another and deal with them piecemeal. They are all global in nature. None of them can be addressed successfully by individual nations acting on their own. In addition, both their causes and effects are interlinked and interdependent on one another, so none can be fully addressed without addressing the others. The 2008 financial crisis, for instance, severely impacted jobs, incomes, food, growth rates, social security, and the political stability of nations around the world. The issue of climate change has multiple causes and holds the future destiny of all humanity in its hands. The causes of the war in Ukraine are multiple and its impact is not limited to the warzone. It has already resulted in severe food crisis, massive migration, magnified healthcare challenges in the wake of the pandemic, including its psychological impact on both combatants and other citizens. It has also precipitated a global energy shortfall and soaring energy prices, inflation and rising unemployment, and has siphoned off for militarization of scarce financial resources urgently needed to address the other challenges.

In order to effectively navigate the closely interconnected world in which we live, we need new levels of organization and strategy, and the development of strong and more effective multilateral institutions. One of the other essential conditions that WAAS has identified is the need for a new concept of security.

### 3. Mind as a Rear View Mirror

The prospects for rapid progress in addressing global challenges have dimmed dramatically since the outbreak of COVID-19 in 2020, the war in Ukraine over a year later and growing apprehension regarding our inability to address the causes of climate change.

In 1989, no one foresaw what would unfold in the two years that followed. The succession of events that took place at the end of the Cold War was astounding and unthinkable until they actually took place. The sudden fall of the Berlin Wall, the reunification of Germany, the end of confrontation between Eastern and Western military blocs, the democratization and economic reform in former Soviet satellite states, the dissolution of the Soviet Union itself, the nuclear weapons reduction treaties, and a one-third reduction in global military spending within five years were unforeseen and unimaginable. Indeed, in July 1989, German Chancellor Kohl and Soviet President Gorbachev met in private and agreed that German reunification was inevitable, but that it would probably take another 30 to 50 years to become a reality. Within 12 months, Germany was reunited.

History is replete with erroneous predictions and unforeseen events. The human mind is often unable to distinguish between what is difficult for it to imagine and what is actually impossible. We see the threat of climate change, the war in Ukraine, and the pandemic impacting the whole world. They appear to us as intractable problems that defy solutions. We are unable to look beyond the present to discern practically implementable remedies. So too, the victors of World War II could not imagine colonial empires would soon dissolve. But within 25 years, instead of the 55 signatories to the UN Charter, UN membership expanded to 120 independent nations.

In these and many other situations in the past, the unimaginable has become reality. Looking back, what happened appears obvious, logical, inevitable. Our minds tend to be more like rear view mirrors. We are able to make sense of things when we look back in history and trace the logical chain of events. But when we try to look forward, we are inhibited by what seems to be a lack of imagination.

Be it our inability or our refusal to imagine a different future, maintaining the existing systems and the status quo will only multiply the problems and threats confronting humanity. The problem lies in the fact that collectively we are not changing fast enough to keep up with the evolution of scientific development and societal evolution. We need to adapt and respond much faster than before.

For the first time in history, in 1948 the world community agreed on a universal set of values as enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, yet the signatories were unwilling to give legal status to this statement of ideals. In 2015, 193 nations agreed to embody the principles set for the UDHR as a concrete set of 17 Sustainable Development Goals and 169 specific targets which all these nations committed to pursue collectively. Never before have so many nations of the world unanimously committed to a plan of such magnitude.

But for all our progress, the current pace is not sufficient. Progress on achieving the SDGs lags far behind schedule. Humanity is not moving fast enough to tackle the severe existential

challenges we face. Political systems and powerful elites resist change and cling to outmoded principles. The nation states that founded the multilateral institutions of global governance refuse to let go of the power they possess. Educational institutions are slow to adapt to change in a fast-changing world. The business community thrives in a global economy that remains largely an unregulated Wild West, rather than a global system designed to maximize the wellbeing of all its members.

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#### 4. Evolutionary Change

The existential crises we face today cannot be addressed effectively through incremental changes in our existing policies, institutions and ways of functioning. We need evolutionary solutions that affect quantum changes in our institutional base. We need to look beyond our limited imagination to what the world essentially needs. That requires an understanding of the limitations of our institutions, systems, policies and even our way of thinking.

We need a shift in the balance of power. In addition to nation states, governments and political leaders, our global institutions must be given the authority required to represent humanity as a whole. This is an evolutionary challenge. For the first time in history, humanity has the means to unite as a single entity. Powered by technology, we can connect and collaborate globally to address the problems humanity faces. No nation, no matter how powerful, can be truly secure as long as nuclear weapons continue to exist in the world. No nation can solve the problem of the nuclear threat unilaterally. It has to be done collectively at the global level. The world’s current military expenditure of \$2 trillion comes at the expense of much needed investment in essential areas. These resources must be shifted towards climate, energy, food, health, water, and the environment.

We also need fundamental changes in education. Our educational institutions have not kept pace with change in the world. They do not reflect the magnitude of the need for changes in pedagogy and content. Our approach to knowledge is a highly fragmented system of disciplinary silos divided into more than a thousand disciplines and sub-disciplines at a time when all the major issues we are grappling with are interconnected, interdependent, interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary and transdisciplinary. More and more specialized knowledge cannot address these challenges effectively. The divisions between economics and politics, environment and business, business and society, human welfare and psychology are arbitrary. Life is not so conveniently divided. We also need a fundamental change in our concepts and theories. In Economics, for instance, we can no longer chase the mirage

of growth and measure our welfare in terms of per capita GDP when both are persistently accompanied by rising levels of insecurity, unsustainability and widening inequality.

At a more fundamental level, we need a change in the way we think. We must overcome the artificial divisions of reality. We often act as if the different aspects of our life and the different problems of the world exist independently and can be addressed separately from one another. We must learn to look at things in a more holistic, organic way. We need to transcend the limitations of our rear-view mirror mentality to identify the very real possibilities for a better world and act decisively with full confidence, determination and faith in our collective capacity to realize them.

## 5. Understanding Real Human Security

We need also to challenge and modify the basic concepts on which our approach to the world has been based and confined. One of the critical changes needed is in our concept of security. The world today exists in a competitive security paradigm where the stronger a nation is relative to other nations, the greater is its sense of security and the greater the sense of insecurity of other nations. In the case of collective security of a military alliance, the greater the sense of security of those within the alliance, the greater is the sense of insecurity of those who are left out of the alliance. The very concept of national security must shift from a competitive to a globally cooperative model.

For centuries the term security has been applied primarily with regard to the capacity of sovereign nation-states to defend their national borders from aggression, regardless of whether they were representative democracies or oppressive authoritarian autocracies. In the process, the security of a small group of powerful leaders has been protected at the expense of the population as a whole. Attempts to broaden the concept of security to encompass the lives of individual citizens have repeatedly been met with opposition from those who insist on the predominant rights of the state rather than its people.

In reality, national security and human security are closely intertwined and interdependent. No nation can be fully secure unless its people enjoy political, economic, social, personal, community and ecological security as well. People without access to food, medical care and education are not secure. So too, people cannot enjoy full security as long as their borders are threatened by water scarcity, soil degradation, the destruction of biodiversity, environmental calamities, violence, war, crime, corruption or social unrest. Human security is an inclusive concept or umbrella encompassing all 17 SDGs, viewing them all together in their relationship and impact on the lives of individual human beings around the world. Human security approach looks at security as an integrated whole.

The seven major pillars of human security that the United Nations seeks to address are economic, food, health, environmental, personal, community and political. We see individually and collectively, how each of these seven pillars is closely interrelated and interlinked, how all human needs are closely interdependent. If we do not stop war, we cannot ensure food security, economic security, employment or education. Without protecting the environment, protecting all life on earth, and preserving the biosphere, there can be no

guarantee for human security. Climate change threatens all areas of human security and all dimensions of the SDGs.

Threat to national security can come from outside or from within. Externally it can come from other nations. Internally it can come in the form of the polarization of society, increasing discontent, extremism, drug abuse, crime, violence, corruption, revolution and civil war. We have been focusing too narrowly on the national dimension, not giving enough to the global dimension, and at the same time not giving enough to the individual human dimension.

Humanity needs to recognize the common security of nations and the individual security of its people as complementary aspects of real security. We need to adopt a balanced perspective that reconciles the legitimate rights and security of social collectives with the equally legitimate rights of their individual citizens. Only when we embrace both human security and common security can we arrive at a formulation which can truly provide a common basis for the security of all. The common security of all nations and the security of every individual are mutually interdependent.

## **6. Multilateralism and Human Security**

All forms of security depend on the strength and functioning of the multilateral system. No nation can ensure its own individual and collective security without cooperation from the multinational system. The global pandemic, the impact of the war in Ukraine on global food and energy supplies, and the multidimensional threats imposed by climate change testify to the fact that we are all in this together and only through cooperative initiatives can we secure the security of all.

The UN system was founded primarily to protect the security of nation states from recurrence of world or regional war. Its founders vested some power to promote international cooperation but retained ultimate authority over their own internal matters and the rights and welfare of their citizens. Efforts to reform the multilateral system have been limited for decades by national political considerations and are unlikely to be successful unless another organized center of power representing the shared collective aspirations of humanity acquires more influence over global affairs.

Efforts to build a third layer of influence consisting of major civil society organizations have been retarded both by the resistance of member states and limited forms of representation offered by the multilateral system, as well as by the fragmentation of CSOs into countless sectoral groups focused on different global issues such as climate, environment, peace, disarmament, health, human rights, economy, education, research, religion, etc. Even within sectors, collaboration is limited by the inevitable competition of organizations for limited funding, media attention, and policy access. In spite of their differences, a vast number of these organizations share common values and perspectives that could form the basis for a common global platform.

Beyond CSOs, the last remaining court of appeal is to global humanity as a whole, which does not presently enjoy any direct form of voice or representation in global society. Giving voice to vast numbers of people around the world is for the first time technologically and

organizationally feasible, but such a voice would not carry any official or legal authority under the present system. A decade ago, WAAS envisioned the possibility of fashioning a global platform as a transnational institution to give a direct voice to humanity. Initially, its influence could only be informal, but over time it could develop into a cost-effective way to monitor global public opinion free from restrictions imposed by nation states or national biases. It could eventually evolve into a global institution for conducting referendums on issues of greatest concern to the global public.

It would also be necessary to educate the global public about the link between multilateral institutions which seem to be far removed from them and their own basic needs and individual security. Empowerment of the individual, the community, and of different stakeholder groups is important. The emotional commitment, endorsement and participation of the whole of society would be needed. A unifying theme that brings together hundreds of millions of people from different countries would be essential to be sufficiently powerful and influential.

Human security is such a unifying theme that has the potential to serve as a rallying cry and unifying cause to bring together and empower the vast multitudes which constitute global humanity to press for a shift in focus to fully recognize the security needs of individuals around the world and at the same time press for the strengthening of the multilateral system.

Human security is a key policy issue that can be placed on the national and local legislative agendas of countries around the world in an effort to influence policy making. Leaders of technology companies can adopt the human security perspective to identify ways in which further technological innovation can be harnessed to address human security needs. Educational curriculum can be modified to introduce themes related to human security in every academic and professional field in order to broadly educate the next generation of youth regarding major human security needs and how to meet them. The media, arts, cinema and social media can also play powerful roles in shaping this narrative.

The World Academy of Art and Science and the United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security recently launched a global campaign on Human Security for All (HS4A) which is intended to generate support for human security as a unifying message that can be embraced and acted upon by people and organizations at all levels and in all fields of global society.

A major paradigm shift to a focus on human security is a challenging idea. Paradigm shifts usually happen only when humanity is under extreme duress, as it is today. The pressure of severe crises has provided the necessary rationale and pressure to break free of encrusted ideas and overcome the resistance of vested interests and rigid structures. Now is the time to initiate steps for such a transformation without waiting for further crises to compel us.

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