

Introduction

At the heart of a global social covenant is a commitment by political authorities at all levels—global, national, regional, and local—to protect individual human beings from life-threatening harms. The first part of this book focused on social protection; this part is about protecting people from violence—the domain we usually describe as security even though, as these chapters stress, protection from violence is difficult to disentangle from protection from other kinds of risks.

Four themes run through this part of the book. The first theme is the changing nature of the sources of insecurity. In the past, the most important external security threat was considered to be an attack by a foreign state. That threat has all but disappeared since the end of the Cold War. Now the sources of insecurity are usually identified as a range of global risks. Some have to do with potential or actual violence: terrorism, war and counter insurgency, ethnic cleansing, the spread of weapons of mass destruction, massive human rights violence, and organized crime. Others have to do with natural disasters: famines, pandemics, cyber warfare, and even financial crises. Many of these sources of insecurity have always been around; they have just become visible in the aftermath of the Cold War. Because an East–West conflict seemed like the worst possible eventuality, other sources of insecurity were accorded a low priority.

Some sources of insecurity are new or have new features that are the consequence of growing interconnectedness, such as new forms of communication that speed up mobilization and that facilitate long-distance violence, or weak states that are the legacy of the collapse of dictatorships, or the drying up of superpower aid to clients and of neo-liberal economic strategies.

A second theme is the interrelatedness of different types of global risk. A transformation in the way we conceive and implement security is a precondition for addressing other global challenges and vice versa. Take the global economic crisis, for example. At present our security capabilities consist largely of conventional military forces designed to meet the threat of a foreign attack. High levels of military spending primarily by the United States, which accounts for half of all global military spending, are an important explanation for the huge public deficit and consequently for external imbalances. Yet military forces do not make us more secure. On the contrary, the use of military force in Iraq and Afghanistan greatly exacerbated levels of violence in those countries and served as recruiting grounds for extremist Islamist terrorists. At the same time, the consequences of economic crisis—high levels of joblessness, increased migration, climatic pressures, severe global inequalities, rapid urbanization, and weak rule of law—all can contribute to the spread of radical ideologies, the growth of criminality, and the growing privatization of violence.

A particular concern in these chapters is the blurring of criminal and political violence. Much contemporary violence inflicted in the name of a political cause is criminal in the sense that it violates international law, including the laws of war and human rights law. Organized crime, traced by Misha Glenn, has flourished in zones of generalized insecurity both because it offers a way of financing political violence and because the lawlessness associated with political violence provides a favorable environment for organized crime. In many such zones, the state monopoly of organized violence has been eroded, and it is often difficult to distinguish warlords, private militia, and criminal gangs from legitimate forces. Soaring crime rates are often associated with stagnant or negative rates of growth, as desperate people seek alternative ways of surviving.

A third theme is the interconnectedness of global risks. It is no longer possible to maintain domestic security merely through the protection of borders, despite the fact that border security has become more and more elaborate. Insecurity travels through refugees and displaced persons; through the spread of ideologies that arise out of resentment and fear in

the inner cities of the industrial world and not just in the more insecure part of the world; and through the long-distance projection of violence through the new techniques ranging from suicide bombers to advanced drones. A critical factor alluded to by all the authors in this section is the dramatic improvement in communication. On the one hand, this makes it possible for the entrepreneurs of violence to link up with each other and mobilize support through publicizing what they do via Web sites, videos, and even radio. On the other hand, it has led to an increased human rights consciousness, whereby people in advanced countries are no longer willing to stand by while they observe atrocities inflicted in faraway places.

Finally, the fourth theme has to do with the need for a new approach to security. Such an approach has to comprise three elements:

First of all it is a cooperative or comprehensive approach to security. It is comprehensive both in the sense of covering a broad range of risks and in the sense of being globally shared. Mary Kaldor uses the term “human security” to refer to the shift from national, that is, state-based security, to the security of individual human beings and the communities in which they live. Such a comprehensive approach is law-based rather than war-based. It is about extending the kind of security that is supposed to operate in well-ordered societies to the whole world; it involves a blurring of the internal and the external.

Second, such security requires a new set of institutions. Although nation-states are primarily responsible for human security within their borders, external institutions are required as agencies of last resort when states themselves are the source of insecurity or when states lack the necessary capabilities. Global institutions that guarantee legal arrangements and that watch over the behavior of states are needed; so are local security providers—cities, for example—that are capable of mobilizing the trust needed to maintain security.

Third, there needs to be a transformation of security capabilities. John Ikenberry writes about a protective infrastructure that would be the equivalent of global social services. Part of that infrastructure is the capabilities required to cope with security in a classic sense. Such capabilities would need to include a combination of military and civilians as global emergency services. The military would be required for very violent situations but they would operate quite differently—more like police than military—aiming to tamp down violence and to protect civilians rather than to defeat enemies. Kaldor spells out the kind of principles that would guide their use.