

HUMAN SECURITY

Edited by

Michelle Becka (Convener), Felix Wilfred,
Mile Babic (Co-editors)

Published in 2018 by SCM Press, 3rd Floor, Invicta House, 108–114 Golden Lane,
London EC1Y 0TG.

SCM Press is an imprint of Hymns Ancient & Modern Ltd (a registered charity)
13A Hellesdon Park Road, Norwich NR6 5DR, UK

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ISBN 978 0 334 03148 2

Printed in the UK by
Ashford, Hampshire

Concilium is published in March, June, August, October, December

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Editorial

‘Human security’ as a term and a concept goes back to the United Nations Human Development Report of 1994, entitled *New Dimensions of Human Security*. The aim of this report was to explore the idea of security as the security of human beings and not that of states and powers:

For too long, the concept of security has been shaped by the potential for conflict between states. For too long, security has been equated with the threats to a country’s borders. For too long, nations have sought arms to protect their security. For most people today, a feeling of insecurity arises more from worries about daily life than from the dread of a cataclysmic world event. Job security, income security, health security, environmental security, security from crime – these are the emerging concerns of human security all over the world (UNDP, *New Dimensions of Human Security*, 1994, p. 3).

‘Human security’ places, not states, but people, at the centre and seeks their personal security and individual freedom. It demands freedom from fear and freedom from want. This formulation indicates the important recognition that it is not just material distress, but also fear of threats, loss or an uncertain future, and all the accompanying phenomena, that influences people’s sense of security. As defined by the Human Development Report, human security has seven dimensions: economic security, food security, health, personal security (in the sense of protection from violence and other threats), environmental security (protection from environmental disasters and threats such as lack of drinking water, desertification, etc.), community security (combining protection in communities and of communities) and political security (see UNDP, *New Dimensions of Human Security*, pp 24-33). It calls for protection and the creation of conditions that make possible the establishment of spaces of freedom and the development

of capacities in these areas. In view of the interdependencies and global effects of local policies, it can also only be understood in global terms and requires corresponding international political efforts.

Within the United Nations the concept of human security has played an important role since 1994. In 2001 a Commission of Human Security was set up. Recommendations on protection from threats to human security were drafted and developed and made more specific in other bodies and working groups. In 2012 the General Assembly passed a resolution on human security (66/290) that contains the following clause:

- a) The right of people to live in freedom and dignity, free from poverty and despair. All individuals, in particular vulnerable people, are entitled to freedom from fear and freedom from want, with an equal opportunity to enjoy all their rights and fully develop their human potential.

From this starting point human security is defined as comprehensive protection directed at individuals in specific contexts and focusing on prevention, and as empowerment of individuals and communities. This gives human security an unbreakable connection with peace, development and human rights. The resolution underlines the primary responsibility of states, though this is embedded in a partnership and collaboration between the international community of nations.

A redefinition of the concept of security such as that undertaken by the United Nations was sensible and necessary to take account of the multiplicity and complexity of needs for security and the threats to it, and to place the human person at the centre. Nonetheless the sensible concept, so prominent at the UN, seems to have had little effect in practice.

Almost 25 years after the appearance of the UNDP report, this volume of *Concilium* seeks to take up the issue afresh and to give it a new emphasis and examination in the context of theology. Fresh reflection on security seems necessary because the world and the understanding of security has changed drastically in the last two decades – as a result of 11 September 2001, but not only because of that. An additional factor is that insecurity prompted by concerns about everyday life and insecurity based on a world situation marked by disasters can hardly now be separated, as they were, justifiably or not, in the passage from the UNDP report quoted at the beginning of this editorial. This in turn seems to be used by states

as a justification for thinking in terms of national security. In the face of real and supposed threats talk of security is ever-present and serves as a superficial justification for limiting freedoms or for the use of violence. That cannot be the right course. On the other hand, it cannot be denied that there is a legitimate need for security.

Security remains an ambivalent concept, capable of many interpretations. This creates the need for a closer examination of what human security is or ought to be. The essays contained in this issue of *Concilium* adopt very different approaches to the topic, and understand ‘human security’ in different ways. Some contributions deal explicitly with the concept advocated by the United Nations, whether to develop it positively or to criticise it; others discuss security in a different context. For all the fruitful differences between the contributions, it is clear that what is not needed is a return to a concept of national or military security, but on the contrary a further development; a deeper content and greater precision of the concept of human security is needed. Theology’s contribution is important here because it enlarges the UN concept with important perspectives and gives it solid content. This attempt to provide a theological underpinning can, as the essays in this issue show, stress very different aspects, which does not make them contradictory but produces a complex and therefore more adequate picture of security – while at the same time exposing the promise of absolute security as untenable.

Regina Ammicht-Quinn explores the complexity of the concept of security and stresses its ambivalence. She notes a dominance of security in the countries of the global North and contrasts this with the phenomenon of a simultaneous lack of security – as a loss of trust on the one hand and extremely insecure conditions for some people on the other. In this situation absolute security is often promised, and in that promise security becomes more important than anything else. But such an absolute security is neither desirable nor realistic; it tends to become unjust security. In contrast to the vision of absolute security, Ammicht-Quinn calls for an intelligent limiting of security and introduces a concept of security that is not *securitas* but *certitudo*, which ‘keeps us vulnerable people, as secure as possible’. In this process religion has a particular role, in that through the assurance that we are in a fundamental sense accepted it helps us to cope with insecurity.

Erny Gillen examines the concept of human development as outlined by the UN and evaluates it. He goes on to criticise it because in his view it resolves the tension between security and freedom at the cost of freedom and in addition sets up as an ideal a concept of security that is both misleading and empty, and inevitably irrelevant for practical purposes. To give ‘human security’ more precise content and make it more practical, he follows Pope Francis and borrows four areas of tension within which the Pope sees human life taking place: time and space, unity and conflict, idea and reality, whole and part. Gillen acknowledges each pole of the four tensions and inserts the energy of each tension into the concept of human security; this gives it content and an ethical charge, thus giving it more relevant to real life.

The next group of essays brings together genuinely theological perspectives on ‘security’. Rainer Kessler outlines the various ways of understanding security in the Old Testament. On the one hand the reality of people’s lives is marked by experiences of great insecurity – whether individual threats from criminality or collective ones such as environmental disasters. In the Old Testament texts, especially the psalms, feelings of insecurity lead sometimes to laments, but more often to an expression of longing for a place of safety. Security in the Old Testament is more than a feeling, which can be deceptive, but also more than an armistice. Real security is often associated with the concept of ‘dwelling in safety’; this is not conceivable, argues, Kessler, without peace and justice, two elements that significantly enlarge the concept of security.

Knut Wenzel introduces a distinction between the need for security and talk about security, without denying the need for security. He shows how security is imagined in discussions – somewhat like the significance attached to astronomy in advanced cultures as something that makes order tangible and predictable in the face of threat and chaos. In contrast to the rule-based character of astronomy, he sees creation theology as guaranteeing security by tracing all reality back to a single causal principle, but without misunderstanding creation as a causal relationship and so sacrificing freedom. Instead creation has to be understood as a subjective action initiated by God out of love, and human beings within it as created beings also immune to interference so that their response is free – which means uncertain. This ‘deconstruction of security through the absolutism of love’ in creation takes Wenzel finally, via Psalm 121, to a perspective

in which security is understood as abundance, in theological terms, grace.

Matías Omar Ruz looks at the ambivalent role of the Church in discussions of security – in Argentina in the time of the military dictatorship and today. Against the background of the cold war, in the period 1960-1980 many people, including the Church in Argentina, regarded communism as the great threat. To defeat it, the doctrine of national security emerged, and developed into a ‘crusade against terrorism’ that treated political opponents as criminals. This process took place in close association with sections of the Church hierarchy; they helped to promote Argentine identity as a Catholic nation, and the defence of Christian values could become a dominant theme of the dictatorship. The background of this security discourse is influencing current events involving violence, as Ruz makes clear in the case of the Mapuche and pension reform. In the present situation there are signs of a considerably modified concept of security in the Church, according to which security cannot be produced by violence, but requires the protection of human existence in all its dimensions.

In the face of extreme poverty and violence the question of security in society becomes particularly urgent. Under the title ‘Insecurity, Poverty and Violence’ the following section brings together reflections from very specific situations of insecurity on various continents. In various different ways the relationship between the state and smaller groups and communities becomes very important. Especially where states do not perform the task of ensuring the security of human life, this task is often taken over at lower levels of society. Civil society groups and communities fill the resulting gap: they create security that includes the social dimension. Being located in a stable structure of relationships produces resilience and so provides an element of human security. This shows the importance of community and relationship for ensuring human security, but this does not release the state from its responsibility.

From Colombia Pilar Mendoza explains how violence and the associated displacement represents the loss of all security for many people. As a result of the decades-long armed conflict many people had to leave their homes and ended up without resources or protection, usually in the cities. Only in the last two decades has the state begun to fulfil its duty of protection to them. Mendoza shows how the displaced in the different environment of the cities, despite their loss, have not become trapped in their identity as victims, but are shaping their futures. Through networking with others

in various social or cultural groups, locally and at other levels, social integration is created that helps to remake Colombia and, with community as a basis, contributes to greater security.

Elias Opongo argues that in Kenya and other African countries, while the lack of security is generally recognised, the connection between armed force, instability and poverty is given too little attention. His reflections start from the United Nations concept of human security in its seven dimensions as a necessary complement to human development. Armed force from terrorist groups and others has direct effects on human security and development, and threatens it further through consequences such as displacement, disease, unemployment and political and economic instability. To bring about real human security, Opongo says, all these issues need addressing – but especially violence, because it is the cause of many other problems.

As an example from Asia, Jojo Fung puts the situation in the Philippines under the spotlight. The main factor in insecurity in the Philippines is the increasing number of so-called extra-judicial killings used to combat the drugs trade. Those most affected are the poorer sectors of the population. The Philippine churches are strongly critical of these practices, but the government retorts that they help to protect the population. But rhetoric trivialises extreme violence and ignores the causes of the drug problem, which have to do with gross social inequality. Fung criticises this idea of security with the help of biblical texts, and shows that in the bible peace is always the fundamental condition for security. He draws a parallel between the vulnerability and powerlessness of the biblical figures and the people in the Philippines and finds a basis for their hope amid existential insecurity on the cross. In so doing he also expresses the hope that the non-violent power of the cross can be a model for Church and state. Finally, the concept of human development is broadened as all security is recognised as rooted in God.

For Europe Michal Kapláneš considers the question of security in the context of Chechnya. In the light of the loss of all forms of security shown by various analyses, he looks at the question of how far the experience of communism can provide pointers to answers. Kapláneš finds in sections of Church and society a yearning for lost traditions and securities. It is true that under communism there was an experience of security, especially security in society, in that people might not have been very rich, but had

a secure income, health care, etc. While recognising this, he reminds us that it was security at the expense of freedom, and describes this sort of security as the peace of the grave. The Church, he says, is not helping when it looks for this sort of security. A theological response to the craving for security must start instead from the liberating experience of God's love and proclaim a security that is not based on all-round protection, but in trust in God's promise and so can endure uncertainties.

To end this section Jude Lal Fernando offers a very specific perspective from Korea. He criticises a reduced concept of human security deriving from the interests of neoliberal government policy and serving to justify military intervention and a security policy, driven by various countries and some fundamentalist churches, that is based on separation from the evil state of North Korea. In contrast, he stresses the work for reconciliation carried out by other churches, which is based on the idea of a just peace. This stresses, despite all the differences, the features North and South have in common and interprets the conflict in the overall context of world interests. This enables him to redefine 'human security' in close relationship with peace and justice.

In conclusion the Theological Forum presents essays about three important figures. The first records the life of a German religious sister and doctor who lived for sixty years in Pakistan and devoted her life in a unique way to people suffering from leprosy – Ruth Pfau, also known as 'the Mother Theresa of Pakistan'. Her love and devotion to the poorest knew no bounds and overcame various types of barrier. In terms of the subject of this issue of *Concilium* it could be said that she embodied a God-given human security for those who live without any security, the lepers. The fact that a Catholic woman in a Muslim country, Pakistan, was honoured with a state funeral speaks for itself and is a testimony to her universal spirit and compassion.

The two other people were distinguished members of the *Concilium* editorial board, Claude Geffré and Gregory Baum. They were faithful supporters of our journal in the early years and helped to shape the future of the journal to the end with contributions, wisdom and advice. With two longish obituaries we would like not only to honour them, but also to learn from their lives, which were themselves a theological message.

Last but not least, we thank all who have contributed to this issue, the authors and the present and former members of the editorial board

Editorial

who have helped to shape the direction and preparation of this issue in discussions and with helpful suggestions.

Michelle Becka (Convener), Felix Wilfred, Mile Babic (Co-editors)

Translated by Francis McDonagh