



## Book review: Jeremiah O. Asaka, Alice A. Oluoko-Odingo: Human Security and Sustainable Development in East Africa<sup>12</sup>

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Jeremiah O. Asaka and Alice A. Oluoko-Odingo wrote their book in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, in collaboration with a number of renowned experts on human security and sustainable development in Africa. Routledge published this groundbreaking multidisciplinary approach to the concept of human security in 2022.

The authors are Jeremiah O. Asaka and Alice A. Oluoko-Odingo. Dr. Asaka is an assistant professor of Security Studies in the Department of Security Studies at Sam Houston State University. His teaching and research activities focus primarily in the area of security studies, with a special emphasis on human security, environmental security, and sustainability. Dr. Asaka pays particular attention to the interrelationships between human and environmental security, especially in developing countries. His research often examines the impacts of climate change, natural resource management, and environmental conflict and its effects on societies. It aims to contribute to sustainable development and the promotion of global security. Alice A. Oluoko-Odingo, the associate professor of Geography and Environmental Studies in the Department of Geography, Population and Environmental Studies at the University of Nairobi, specialises in environmental science, geography, and population studies, with a particular focus on sustainability and environmental change.

Dr. Oluoko-Odingo's work focuses on the study of climate change impacts, sustainable development issues, and natural resource management. His research often focuses on the social and economic impacts of climate change, particularly on rural communities and vulnerable populations. She is the National Coordinator of the United Nations' University and Partner Universities Program on Education for Sustainable Development in Africa (ESDA).

The main chapters present an in-depth analysis of human security issues and sustainable development challenges in the East African region. Acknowledged experts in the field, the authors offer a comprehensive overview of the region's complex problems and propose sustainable solutions.

The book focuses on the concept of human security, which includes the security of individuals and communities from a variety of threats, such as conflicts between peoples,

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<sup>2</sup> Jeremiah O. Asaka, Alice A. Oluoko-Odingo: Human Security and Sustainable Development in East Africa. Routledge, 2023. ISBN: 978-1-03-211696-9 (hbk). ISBN: 978-1-03-211698-3 (pbk). ISBN: 978-1-00-322108-1 (ebk).

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ethnic groups, nations, regions, poverty, food safety and security, health challenges, and environmental threats. The authors describe in detail how these factors affect daily life and social stability in East Africa. In several chapters, they illustrate the intricacy of human security, showing how it differs from military security and necessitates consideration from various perspectives.

Sustainable development is a daily challenge of our times. The book stresses the importance of sustainable development in the context of human security, which seeks to achieve a balance between economic growth, social well-being, and environmental sustainability. It presents existing sustainable development strategies and programs in the region and analyses their effectiveness and challenges. It discusses in detail environmental issues such as climate change, natural resource depletion, and biodiversity loss and shows how these problems affect human security and sustainable development.

Among the factors affecting human security, the authors also highlight political instability and economic and gender inequalities, which have a significant impact on the security and development of the region. The authors analyse the role of different government policies and international cooperation in addressing these challenges.

In addition to clarifying the extensive conceptual framework of human security, the book aims to provide a comprehensive overview of the human security and sustainable development challenges facing East Africa and practical recommendations. The authors highlight the importance of engaging local communities and the role of international cooperation and support for development in the region.

The 13-chapter book begins with a chapter on the structure of the book, followed by a detailed section exploring the concept of human security, in which the author strongly emphasises the close link between human security and sustainable development.

In the following chapters, the authors support the hypothesis that sustainable development fundamentally determines human security by reviewing the literature on specific issues and/or concrete case studies. Thus, Chapter 3 details the impact of Somali refugees on Kenya's economy, society, and, by extension, its human security. It discusses the link between human insecurity (low levels) and the process of radicalization, which can ultimately lead individuals to join terrorist organizations—further exacerbating human insecurity. It is thus a circular process, with elements generating each other.

Chapter 4 also discusses Somali refugees and Kenya and Uganda's refugee responses. The author points out that it is the long-term stay of refugees that poses a major challenge to host communities. The author of the chapter argues that for both refugees and host communities, a transformation of refugee policy in a way that develops self-sufficiency programmes for refugees, harmonised with the needs of local residents, would offer a chance for sustainable living. The author suggests a perspective on refugee arrivals that could potentially address some of the challenges faced by host communities, ensuring that they not only contribute to the community but also enhance it. The chapter stresses that the possibility of resilience could be provided through the introduction of various integration programmes. Aid is not a solution to the long-term



presence of refugees, but only a complex strategy to ensure their integration and self-sufficiency can address the situation, which is fundamental to the peaceful coexistence of migrants and local residents.

The chapter analyses the management of Somali refugees in Kenya and Uganda in the form of a case study. The geopolitical situation of the two countries is a key factor in the relationship with Somali refugees, as Somalia borders Kenya directly, and the access of refugees to Uganda is more complicated. The author explains that there are a significant number of Somali refugees in Uganda, some of whom have come from Kenya due to mistreatment there. The chapter outlines Uganda's efforts to formulate a refugee policy based on liberal principles, which aims to attract refugees to the country. In analysing Kenya's relationship with Somali refugees, the author argues that the large numbers of refugees and their long-term stay place a heavy burden on host communities and that there is a clear negative attitude towards refugees among the population. Locals perceive the refugee camps inhabited by Somalis as a breeding ground for radicalism, which in turn fosters the development of terrorism, particularly in light of the increase in terrorist attacks. This attitude further complicates efforts to integrate refugees. Overall, the author argues in this chapter that complex refugee policies that support refugee integration can ensure the human security of refugee host communities, taking into account the case studies, general refugee policy, and economic and social perspectives.

In Chapter 5, the authors emphasise the importance, relevance, and complexity of human security by exploring the causes of recurring conflicts in South Sudan. The authors present human security as nothing less than the only means to peace in the region. In their analysis of the conflicts in South Sudan, the authors conclude that the failure of several peace agreements in the region is due to the parties' lack of full engagement in creating the conditions for peace. Moreover, there is a deficiency in a comprehensive human security strategy that aims to eradicate poverty, uphold and ensure fundamental human rights, and eliminate discrimination and social inequalities. The authors argue that the only way to promote peace is to establish human security, taking into account the collective interests of both the individual and the state.

The impact of individual rights on human security will be discussed below, but in addition to the rights most frequently mentioned in international practice, it will also address a less often touched upon area: the right to land. Chapter 6 examines the issue of land rights in Tanzanian and Ethiopian practice. The aim of the chapter is to draw attention to the fact that the issue of land rights has the potential to fundamentally determine the level of human security. In addition to food and clothing, the author mentions 'shelter', i.e., land and ownership of land, as one of the basic conditions of life. The chapter highlights the problems of land rights in Tanzania and Ethiopia by presenting specific cases. The state wields the most power over land tenure in these two countries, frequently depriving individuals of their land, just like in other parts of the world. This practice results in immediate insecurity for the individual and their family, particularly if the land previously served as a source of livelihood. Smallholder

subsistence farming, which is prevalent throughout Africa, forms the foundation of household livelihoods. Depriving households of land can in fact push the masses into livelihood insecurity, as most of them cannot afford to feed their families with market products. Food security is the most basic element of human security, and its absence creates additional problems that threaten human security at other levels.

On the issue of land tenure rights, the author proposes that the incentive of the international community is the key to addressing land tenure rights. African countries that neglect individual rights in land tenure issues need to develop legal practices that align with the principles outlined in international human security conventions and agreements. The author argues that a major incentive for reforming land distribution practices and transposing international recommendations into law could be the accountability of land rights policy institutions. In this way, there is an opportunity to regulate not only the two African countries discussed in this chapter but also land rights issues in other regions of the world, thus contributing to reducing human insecurity.

Rwanda serves as an example to illustrate the connections between economic development and human security. In Chapter 7, the author outlines Rwanda's tangible efforts and aspirations toward ensuring human security following the 1994 Tuzhou genocide, recognizing the inseparable link between economic development and human security. The country's Vision 2020 human security programme has now been updated and will continue to be known as Vision 2050. The National Strategy of Transformation was successfully implemented between 2017 and 2024. The chapter concludes that, although there are still significant disparities in human security among certain groups in Rwanda's society, efforts to achieve it have been successful and are expected to continue to improve.

The author presents a system of human security in Rwanda based on three pillars: economic security, food security, and health security. The author presents Rwanda's efforts to eradicate unemployment and reduce the poverty rate, which include the introduction of business loans and direct subsidies. In the area of food security, Rwanda is integrating into its programme a response to climate change, and in the area of health security, Rwanda is taking full account of the importance of the cooperation and collaboration seen during the COVID-19 pandemic. The author's analysis of Rwanda's situation reveals the need for further individual-level research, despite the country's overall success in achieving human security. Achieving human security does not only mean having the basic security factors in place but also ending the fear of not having them.

The authors further demonstrate the close links between health, food, and economic security in Chapter 8, where they address a common problem in the East African region, namely the contamination of certain food groups with aflatoxins. The region's warm, humid climate is particularly favourable for the proliferation of fungi that produce aflatoxins. *Aspergillus* fungi produce toxins in maize, lentils, rice, sorghum, wheat, and potatoes, as well as in primarily export-orientated foods like coffee, tea, peanuts, and various spices.



Aflatoxin not only directly affects health safety by causing immunosuppression, jaundice, liver damage, acute liver failure, liver cancer, and even death, but it also indirectly contributes to the development and escalation of human insecurity by decreasing the competitiveness of contaminated food in the market. As in the previous chapters, the authors strongly emphasise that, although military security is the typical focus of human security in the East African region, the examination of other factors is also of utmost importance and that a multidisciplinary approach to human security is essential. In formulating their recommendations, the authors positively assess the established testing methods for aflatoxin contamination control in the East African region and recommend further development, including routine testing at the household level. Recommendations are made to identify and further investigate specific vulnerabilities and, on this basis, to develop action plans to reduce aflatoxin contamination.

For the East African region as a whole, the role of government policies in human security is crucial, as Chapter 9 demonstrates. While governments often aim to ensure military security, they also design policy institutions to address other aspects of human security, including the pressing issue of environmental security, which is an integral part of it. The author analyses in detail the critical role of governance in environmental security and discusses the place of governance in the creation of environmental security. The first part of the chapter provides a review of the relevant literature, while the second part analyses the results of interviews with researchers, government policymakers, security practitioners, and civil society actors. The author highlights the food and environmental security challenges posed by climate change, specifically in the East African region. He highlights the strong potential of governance to influence human security through environmental security, provided that it can create the legal and institutional policy frameworks for the exercise of environmental security practices.

Climate change poses a global challenge to all aspects of human security, and the authors of the following chapters—Chapters 10 and 11—accentuate the novel, complex approach to human security as a multidisciplinary field. Chapter 10's theme, which explores the relationship between Kenya's roads and climate change and its impact on the human security of the Kenyan population, highlights the complexity of human security. The author highlights the fact that roads are critical infrastructure elements that fundamentally determine access to education, health care, jobs, and markets—in effect, major elements of human security—by describing the state of Kenya's roads. The author shows that Kenya's generally inadequate roads are often impassable due to unpredictable weather conditions resulting from climate change, preventing access to some of the essential elements of human security just listed. The author formulates specific links between poor regions in Kenya and poor roads, drawing on primary data from country-conducted research and information from interviewees involved in the study.

Chapter 11, which provides some evidence of climate change, explores the visible signs of it in the East African region over the past four decades. Drawing mainly on a

literature review, it demonstrates a clear link between climate change, food security, and sustainable development. It draws attention to the complexity of human security and the importance of a new approach to it.

The last two chapters of the book illustrate the link between urbanisation and human security through examples of two East African cities: Kampala, Uganda, and Nairobi, Kenya. While Kampala is facing the challenges of so-called internal migration within the country, Nairobi is struggling with those posed by foreign migrants. But the end result is the same in both regions: growing human insecurity (including declining food and health security).

In Chapter 12, the authors dedicate the first part to defining human security, followed by a detailed analysis of the links between urbanization, housing, and human security, using the case of Kampala. They describe how the population of Kampala, Uganda's administrative and commercial centre, is growing at a tremendous rate, with rural populations seeking to settle in the city in search of better livelihoods and employment opportunities. The chapter shows how Kampala's urban planning is struggling to cope with the influx of people and housing, with the result that people are settling on the outskirts of the city. This rapidly growing population is creating informal settlements, which is a fundamental challenge to human security in these settlements.

Kampala's geographical location presents a significant challenge, with valleys surrounding the city on all sides and water-near habitats bordering it. Construction significantly affects the condition of wetlands surrounding the city and the quality of water, placing the population of informal settlements built on wetlands at significant risk of flooding. Overcrowding, water pollution, and periodic floods increase the risk of disease, damage to buildings, and make food production impossible. Inadequate transport facilities make it difficult to access health care, education, markets, and jobs, which are essential elements of human security. The authors conduct a detailed analysis of the situation and recommend changes to urban planning, plot sizes, and building construction methods.

The increasing number and size of informal settlements is also evident in the neighbouring Kenyan capital, Nairobi. The author of the last chapter, Chapter 13, argues that the Kenyan capital is a sample city for research on the relationship between urbanisation and migration. High levels of foreign immigration, in addition to urbanisation within the country, burden the city, leading to the development of crowded informal settlements on its outskirts. The author highlights that high population growth presents significant challenges for health, education, and employment. It also complicates transportation, thereby limiting access to jobs, health care, and markets. Consequently, the instability of human security in the city and its surrounding settlements will lead to an increase in crime.

Exploring and analysing in detail human security issues in East Africa through concrete case studies, this book provides a clear and understandable picture of the region as a whole and of specific areas with specific challenges by explaining cause and effect in a logical way. By delving into the concept of human security from various perspectives, it



becomes evident that it is far more intricate than it initially appears. Unlike previous interpretations, it does not equate to military security, which is merely one aspect of human security. For instance, hunger can trigger migration, and migration processes can lead to famine in a refugee-stricken region, thereby generating health challenges, contributing to radicalisation, and ultimately leading to armed conflict. Consequently, famine and migration can result in a complex web of interlinkages that impact human security.

The volume is not only useful for experts dealing with the challenges of the African continent but also for researchers and professionals working in any area of human security, including economic, health, environmental, and educational sectors, engineers, and even politicians. This is because ensuring human security is a multifaceted task that requires a multidisciplinary approach and a complex perspective. The authors of this volume highlight connections that allow the reader to simultaneously perceive the local and global interrelations and direct or indirect interactions among healthcare, trade, law, politics, nature conservation, and even military affairs. This perspective is essential for any professional working toward ensuring human security.