Global Vulnerabilities and Threats to “Human Security”

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Back in the late 1960s, long before the catchword “globalization” was on everyone’s lips, scholars in International Relations, observing the increasingly complex and intensive connections between states and societies worldwide, began to develop the theory of Complex Interdependence. John W. Burton (1972), who introduced the World Society Approach into the international debate, played a key role in this process when he broke away from the “billiard ball model” of international relations – a state-centric, pragmatic view in which sovereign nation-states at best influence each other through diplomatic pressure – towards a cobweb model of interactions. According to this model [see Figure 1], international relations consist of myriads of linkages and activities at many levels of interaction and decision-making, involving state actors but also non-governmental organizations, private business and international organizations.

One outcome of this involvement in interdependent structures at many levels of interaction is that with the globalization of trade and capital markets, environmental risks and the digital revolution, the nation-states are increasingly forfeiting their decision-making power, which is progressively shifting towards transnational systems. This

Figure 1: Multilevel politics, diversity of actors and different models of governance
is why, as early as 1969, the German political scientist Ernst-Otto Czempiel (1969) was already describing national sovereignty – still the “sacred cow” of international law and diplomatic rhetoric – as “anachronistic”. At around the same time, the concept of “world domestic policy” (Weltinnenpolitik) emerged for the first time – a prelude to the debate about a “world state” that would transcend the nation-states.

The theory of interdependence and the concept of vulnerability

A number of the world’s challenges (such as the social polarization of world society, global population growth, the pressure of migration from poor regions, climate change, international terrorism and instability in the international financial markets) can potentially have spillover effects and cause crises in global systems. The globalization of the economy, technology, communications and transport systems means that negative developments are also felt worldwide. Problems in apparently remote regions can thus have a knock-on effect at regional and sometimes even at global level.

The extent to which individual actors’ autonomy is constrained by this growing interdependence and the declining role of the nation-state as a result of globalization processes is determined by their economic, political and military power, their adaptive capacities and their level of vulnerability to the interactions within the cobweb. Protagonists of interdependence theory distinguish between sensitivity and vulnerability, according to actors’ options and their capacities to respond flexibly to international crises, minimize their costs, and identify alternatives.

The vulnerability of two CIS states (Ukraine and Georgia) was recently highlighted when Russia cut off gas supplies to these countries in a dispute over price increases. Unlike Ukraine and Georgia, the Western European gas-importing countries were able to respond to the acute shortage and the prospect of long-term scarcity by drawing on their reserve stocks and diversifying their sources of supply. Of course, rising oil and gas prices have affected the industrialized countries’ economies, share markets and price stability as well, but it is the least developed countries (LDCs) which have been hit hardest. They have to spend a higher proportion of their foreign exchange receipts on energy imports, making it more difficult for them to finance other essential imports and service their foreign debt. By contrast, Germany, for example – the world’s leading export nation – has benefited from the substantial foreign exchange holdings of, and increased imports by, the “new rich” in the oil- and gas-producing and exporting countries. There is thus considerable inequality in the distribution of sensitivities and vulnerabilities.

Even hegemonic powers are not immune to external shocks

In their classic analysis of complex interdependence, Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye (1977) provide a wealth of examples to illustrate the difference between sensitivity and vulnerability. They showed that back then, a hegemonic power such as the USA was less vulnerable than many developing countries which are dependent, for better or worse, on drip-fed foreign aid. This deceptive feeling of invulnerability was based on the USA’s military and technological superiority and encouraged its shift towards unilateralism. But then disaster struck, triggering geostrategic developments which forced Mars America – the hyperpower whose global and military pre-eminence was lauded by unilateralists such as Robert Kagan (2003) – to acknowledge its own vulnerability for the first time. Many
other OECD countries underwent a similar experience.

The terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 abruptly ended America’s belief in its own invulnerability. It also confronted the rest of the world with the reality of “globalized insecurity”, which became all too apparent when attacks occurred elsewhere in the world as well. The events in New York and Washington, Madrid, London, Mumbai or Java revealed the vulnerability of technical civilization, with a high level of expensive intelligence and surveillance now being required to protect countries everywhere. “9/11” radically changed international relations: the global “war on terror” was launched because these intermittent acts of transnational terrorism revealed the vulnerability of the global system. With internal security now taking overriding priority, fundamental principles such as the rule of law and human rights are becoming vulnerable everywhere, even in established democracies. Meanwhile, local terrorist attacks against tourist destinations have had a disastrous effect on tourism – the main source of foreign exchange and employment in many places – and on the airlines that fly to at-risk destinations and regions.

The number of attacks is worth noting: according to statistics from the US National Counterterrorism Center, approximately 11,000 terrorist attacks occurred in 2005 and resulted in over 14,600 deaths. The material damage caused by the 9/11 attacks is estimated at above US$ 30 billion (Krugman 2004, p. 2), and the increased vulnerability is reflected in higher insurance premiums. The death toll and material impacts are considerable. Nonetheless, the figures are far lower than the human and material “costs” of natural disasters or armed conflict. For example, the tsunami which hit South and South-East Asia at the end of 2004 claimed around 250,000 lives, while more than 85,000 people died in the earthquake in Pakistan in October 2005. According to epidemiological studies, the long-running war in the Democratic Republic of Congo has led to the loss of some four million lives.

Against this background, it is not just the actual extent of the destruction but the feelings of uncertainty and the reminders of modern societies’ vulnerability which make terrorism the number one threat to security at the start of the 21st century from the industrialized countries’ perspective. A widespread need for security, rather than the facts, plays a key role: many people react sensitively to a “ubiquitous threat” syndrome which they are reminded of daily by the media and security policy experts.

Vulnerability in disaster, environmental and development research

Vulnerability has been a central concept in disaster and climate change research since the 1990s. Different scientific disciplines with their specific approaches have been involved in these fields of research (see Dietz 2006, p. 14 ff.). Depending on the discipline in question and its particular focus of interest, a distinction was made between the economic, environmental or social vulnerability of a region, country or population group. The systemic relationships between human communities and the environment were then explored as the next interdisciplinary step.

The mainly natural-science-based field of disaster research, with its Natural Hazard Approach, has tended to treat natural disasters as environmental events which cause technical and administrative follow-up problems, and has generally disregarded social and political-economic aspects. By contrast, political ecology, environmental economy and human geography have countered this natural determinism with a Social Vulnerability Approach based on a multidimensional concept of vulnerability which attempts to take account of the links be-
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tween vulnerability and political, institutional and socio-economic structures. This is exemplified by the following definition of vulnerability as a “multi-layered and multi-dimensional social space defined by the determinate political, economic and institutional capabilities of people in specific places at specific times” (Watts/Bohle 1993, p. 43). This definition also includes an aspect which is especially important in vulnerability research, namely the capabilities of people and societies to mitigate their exposure to environmental crises by means of coping capacities. Strategies to manage environmental crises have focussed mainly on the concepts of exposure, mitigation and adaptation.

Important pioneering work on the multidimensionality of vulnerability was undertaken by Amartya Sen (1981, 1984), who drew attention to the vulnerability-poverty-development nexus. Sen developed the notion of entitlements as a means of explaining famines and starvation; in his view, setting aside natural factors (such as prolonged droughts), famines and starvation were often the outcome of a lack of entitlements to land, water, knowledge and available technologies as well as unequal endowment with production opportunities. Other authors – such as John Friedman (1992) – also defined vulnerability as a lack of power and political rights in the domestic arena, work and politics. The chance to reduce vulnerability therefore logically lies in social and political empowerment.

Robert Chambers (1989) established a closer connection between vulnerability and poverty. He defined vulnerability as “defencelessness, insecurity, and exposure to risk, shocks and stress” and was thus able to demonstrate easily that vulnerability defined in this way reduces the capabilities of people and societies to break out of poverty.

Vulnerability has remained a central issue in climate research. However, climate research itself has increasingly been integrated into development research and is now focussing more on how climate change impacts on conditions of life (see Dietz 2006). The reports produced by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) have made major contributions to developing the concept of vulnerability and ensuring that it is properly recognized in development policy. They also advocated the formation of the Vulnerability and Adaptation Resource Group (VARG), an informal network of UN organizations and bi- and multilateral development institutions. The World Bank has also discovered the paradigm of vulnerability in the context of climate change (see Sperling 2003; see also section 5 of this chapter).

The "économie dominante" as a factor in global economic instability

It is not only transnational terrorism which has shattered the West’s belief in its own invulnerability. With its energy-guzzling economic model, which is profligate in its use of its own energy supplies and increasingly dependent on energy imports from all over the world, the West has been forced to acknowledge that resource security has become the Achilles heel of its prosperity, economic and security policy. Energy and security expert Michael T. Klare (2004) has warned “oil junkie America” that the sensitivity that has already resulted from the soaring costs of oil imports could be transformed into dangerous vulnerability because the American way of life is increasingly dependent on oil imports, most of which come from unstable regions. What’s more, in these regions, other oil junkies are competing for access to the increasingly scarce lubricant of the global economy. At present, they are still doing so through diplomacy (e.g. the acceptance of corrupt autocracies) and various types of incentives.
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(loans, arms deliveries), but there are already signs of a willingness to resort to conflict, prompting many observers to speak of a “new Cold War”. Europe will also be affected by this trend [see Figure 2].

The USA’s dynamic growth, which is dependent on energy imports, is not only a driver but also a factor of instability for the global economy, which responds sensitively to fluctuations in the US economy. It is said that when the New York Stock Exchange sneezes, stock exchanges throughout the world catch a fever. On the one hand, the US market – which has been booming for years – plays a key role as a driver of demand and growth for the EU and the emerging countries, even though its own current account deficit has reached dizzying heights. On the other hand, a slowdown in growth as a result of further energy price hikes, higher interest rates or crises in the property market due to private refinancing problems could have serious knock-on effects throughout the global economy. Here, interdependent sensitivities and vulnerabilities become apparent – the undesired but hard-to-avoid side-effects of globalization.

Figure 2: Development of the world market price for Brent oil 1992–2006 US$/barrel

![Graph showing the development of the world market price for Brent oil from 1992 to 2006.](Source: www.handelsblatt.com)

Globalized insecurity and “renuclearization”

The “globalized insecurity” which is now being felt in almost every region of the world as a result of transnational terrorism is reinforced by new vulnerabilities that relate to nuclear weapons. The “renuclearization” of international relations is now regarded as a given. The issue of nuclear vulnerability dominated the East-West conflict for decades but slipped into the background in the 1990s after the end of the Cold War. Progress was also made on controlling weapons of mass destruction (WMD). Argentina, Brazil and South Africa have shelved their nuclear weapons programmes. As compensation for rejoining the international community, Libya has also abandoned its WMD programmes, and in Iraq, the ousting of Saddam Hussein has put paid to WMD projects for the foreseeable future.

Nonetheless, North Korea’s and Iran’s nuclear weapons programmes and the possibility that terrorists and criminals could use radioactive substances to manufacture a “dirty bomb” show that the nuclear threat is still very real (High-level Panel on Threats,
Challenges and Change 2004). And despite a diplomatic rapprochement, the India-Pakistan conflict with its nuclear component is still one of the most potentially explosive situations in the world. A further issue of concern is that the use of nuclear weapons – unlike biological and chemical weapons – is not regulated in international law.

The “Janus head” of globalization

The proliferation and intensification of transnational economic activities mean that almost every economy is now integrated into a set of global interdependences, narrowing the scope for national economic policy. The once-familiar concept of the “national economy” has become obsolete: major decisions on trade and financial policy are now taken by international organizations (such as the EU, ECB and WTO) and influenced by clubs like the G8. Interdependence means greater integration, but it also means vulnerability to external decisions and developments. Less diversified resource-based economies are especially vulnerable to demand and price fluctuations on the commodities markets. Unpredictable price fluctuations here can impact on every aspect of these countries’ economic life, including their financial policy and debt service capacity.

The increasingly integrated world market is akin to a benchmark test that influences the woes and wellbeing of nations and judges their competitiveness. Even the established industrialized countries and their traditional industrial sectors have come under growing pressure to adapt and become more competitive, in line with the adage: Adjust or die! While this competitive pressure forces countries to adapt structures which are no longer competitive and encourages technological change and economic dynamism, it has high social costs.

Many countries are concerned about their economic survival, putting national political systems under pressure to justify the changes that are taking place. While the wealthier countries have the scope to modernize as well as financial resources to cushion social problems, the least developed countries (LDCs), especially in sub-Saharan Africa but also many middle-income economies in Latin America, are failing to keep pace with global competition.

Opportunities and risks, winners and losers of globalization

The positive and negative aspects of globalization, its opportunities and risks are contentious issues, as is apparent from the report of the German Bundestag’s Study Commission on “Globalization of the World Economy – Challenges and Responses”. Reports by international organizations also fail to agree on whether globalization is a good or a bad thing: while the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, the WTO and the OECD emphasize its positive effects, reports by UN organizations tend to focus on the negatives. The apologists for globalization proclaim that they bring good news: liberalization of markets has the effect of encouraging growth, and more growth means a better standard of living. The critics of globalization – especially Attac, the transnational movement at the forefront of the anti-globalization campaign – protest that its blessings only extend to the powerful in the world economy, is merely of benefit to a few emerging countries, and then generally only to the minority of their population. It is certainly the case that the economic benefits of globalization are being distributed more and more unequally: in 2003, annual average per capita income in the industrialized countries was almost 23 times higher than the average for the LDCs, compared with just 16 times higher in 1981. Against
this background, critics of globalization have received powerful support from Nobel Prize-winning economist Joseph Stiglitz (2002), who contends that the majority of developing countries and their populations are living in the “shadow of globalization”.

The economic and social geographer Fred Scholz even introduced the term “New South”, as a universal social category, to describe the “rest of the world”, and hence the “mass of the world population”, who are excluded from globalization. The Human Development Report 1999 speaks of “globalization without a human face” that denies much of the world’s population a decent life.

The difficulty is that the two sides have a plethora of data with which to back up their claims. Globalization has winners and losers, both at state level and within society, both in the OECD countries and in the developing world. On the one hand, it offers competitive emerging countries fresh opportunities in the increasingly deregulated world market, and on the other, it threatens to marginalize whole regions economically and politically to an even greater extent. Globalization means integration and fragmentation, inclusion and exclusion, globalism and parochialism – that is, a reaffirmation of local particularities and strengths (“glocalization”).

According to forecasts by the WTO and the OECD, almost all groups of countries will benefit from the liberalization of world trade at some point – with the possible exception of the raw-material producing countries in sub-Saharan Africa, which can generally only export these raw materials after low-level processing, with proportionately little added value. Nonetheless, the chapter entitled International Raw Materials Markets: Rising Prices and Growing Conflict Potential shows that Africa too has benefited from the growing demand for mineral resources. The demand pull from China and India is driving up world market prices, but risks casting Africa back into its colonial role as a source of raw materials – a role which development policy has sought to overcome.

While the successful growth and development in the Far East are largely due to the export of competitive industrial goods and services, the raw-material producing countries are becoming increasingly decoupled from the expanding world economy. Sub-Saharan Africa has also been largely unable to take advantage of the preferential trading arrangements granted to the ACP countries by the EU under the Lomé Convention. But this decoupling is not the result of the forces of globalization; rather, it is the outcome of internal conditions in most of these countries, notably their dilapidated political structures and their ensuing inability to overcome the colonial legacy and hold their own in global competition.

In other words, globalization cannot be blamed entirely for the impoverishment and exploitation of people worldwide. But while globalization should not be demonized wholesale, there is justification in the criticism of its social injustices voiced by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization (2004, p. X), which stated that the global imbalances generated by globalization are “morally unacceptable and politically unsustainable”; “The current process of globalization is generating unbalanced outcomes, both between and within countries. Wealth is being created, but too many countries and people are not sharing in its benefits.”

**Human security in a fragmented world**

The “globalization without a human face”, mentioned above, denotes fundamental vulnerability and the loss of human security. The term encompasses both the guarantee of the individual’s physical and psychological integrity (*freedom from fear*) and the satis-
faction of basic socio-economic needs (freedom from want) (Commission on Human Security 2003). Human security enhances the concept of “human development” by focussing on radical deteriorations in people’s living conditions which require a response from the international community. In other words, human security relates vulnerability to the individual and makes him/her the normative and empirical reference point.

The threat to “human security” is especially apparent from the fact that one-fifth of the world’s population – more than one billion people – still lives in abject poverty on less than one US dollar a day. Nor does merely creating formal working conditions do much to improve this situation: 2.85 billion workers in the world do not earn enough from their formal employment to lift themselves above the US$2 a day poverty line. Nonetheless, there is a positive trend: the percentage of people living in abject poverty has fallen from 27.9% to 21.1% since 1990 – although this is almost entirely due to progress achieved in China and East Asia, whereas stagnant and even retrograde trends predominate in other regions of the world [see the chapter on Global Social Policy and Development].

Chronic malnutrition is one of the most basic violations of human security. Even today, 842 million people worldwide are still chronically malnourished, with South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa being worst affected. The food situation tends to deteriorate further in times of war. In Angola, for example, food production declined by 44% during the war. A positive development, however, is that in all regions of the world, the under-five mortality rate has decreased since 1970, even in sub-Saharan Africa, where it has fallen from 24% to 17%.

People in “fragile states” – in which the state’s monopoly of force has eroded and public institutions are increasingly failing to deliver core functions to the majority of their populations – are especially hard hit by the negative effects of a fragmented world order. Figures from the UK’s Department for International Development (DFID 2005) demonstrate the gravity of the situation: child mortality in fragile states is two times higher and maternal mortality is actually three times greater than in other poor countries. Around one-third of the population is malnourished. Fragile states are most off-track in relation to the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals; the probability that they will achieve these MDGs on target is less than 20%.

Globalized “casino capitalism”: causing sensitivities in some places and vulnerabilities in others

In the 1990s, seven regional financial crises occurred which caused massive turbulence in the international financial markets, primarily because no effective regulatory systems for these dynamic but highly unstable markets have yet been established. The various figures from the international organizations show that the banking crises which occurred in the late 1990s wiped out almost 20% of gross domestic product (GDP) in Mexico, more than 50% of GDP in Indonesia, 35% in South Korea, 40% in Russia and as much as 60% in Argentina. While the Western banks experienced losses, their survival was not at risk, but in Indonesia and Argentina in particular, the financial crises triggered grave economic and social crises which these countries have still not recovered from. The German Bundestag’s Study Commission on Globalization of the World Economy (2002, p. 77) summarizes the economic, social and political costs of financial crises as follows: “National and above all international financial crises are associated with major economic, social and political costs which can only partly be expressed in monetary terms. The life of society changes, even though statistics show that after some
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The crisis-prone nature of speculative “casino capitalism” – which is largely decoupled from real economic activity, is no longer primarily concerned with financing trade and services and is mainly about the literally boundless hunt for speculative profits – conflicts with the rules of “fair globalization”. Even the major financial speculator George Soros (1998), faced with the impact of the 1997/1998 Asian crisis, spoke of the “capitalist threat” of unbridled “casino capitalism”. And in its 2002 Global Financial Stability Report, the International Monetary Fund talked about the “key risks” to which the international financial system continues to be exposed.

These risks include the threats posed to financial integrity and stability by money-laundering. With the liberalization, deregulation and globalization of the financial markets, this has become a major problem on a global scale. Not only has the extent of this problem increased; so too have the associated risks to the economy, society and politics. 9/11 showed that the deregulated financial markets are not only a vehicle for greater prosperity in the world; they can also be misused as a means of financing organized crime and terrorist networks [see Figure 3].

So there are good reasons why Inge Kaul (2003), UNDP’s lead analyst on global public goods, and her colleagues in the International Task Force on Global Public Goods defined the stability of the international financial markets as one of the global public goods to be protected: global financial crises not only shake the foundations of the international financial system – the backbone of the world economy – but can also plunge many millions of people into poverty. It was the 1997 Asian crisis which...

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**Figure 3: Daily foreign exchange market transactions**

![Graph showing daily foreign exchange market transactions](image-url)
prompted Japan and other like-minded countries at the UN Millennium Summit in September 2000 to call for the establishment of a Commission on Human Security; they also demanded that the international financial systems be made less crisis-prone.

Even so, the managers of the international financial markets – both government and private – have failed to introduce a new international financial architecture which regulates the risks and distortions associated with financial crises, with all their grave economic and social costs. That being the case, since the Asian crisis, the East Asian countries, including Japan, have built up foreign exchange reserves totalling some US$ 2500 billion – mainly in US dollars. But this protective measure itself could destabilize the US economy. China alone, with its foreign exchange reserves amounting to US$ 900 billion, is capable of deliberately disrupting the US financial markets.

As the report by the German Bundestag’s Study Commission on Globalization of the World Economy demonstrates, there is no shortage of proposals on how the problems of international speculation and currency manipulation, money-laundering and tax evasion – all of which overstretch individual countries’ regulatory competence – could be addressed through international cooperation. However, international banks are powerful bodies, and it is in their interests to be subject to minimal national and international regulations. That is why only minor reforms have been undertaken to date, largely based on proposals from the Financial Stability Forum.

Normative standards and democratization

The “interdependence of interdependences” involves not only economic and social but also political and cultural interactions, to say nothing of the environmental sensitivities and vulnerabilities which will be discussed later in this paper. The authors of the bestseller *The Global Trap* (Martin/Schumann 1997) demonized globalization as an “assault on prosperity and democracy”. According to the two authors, in the attempt to square the circle between competitiveness, social justice and democracy, it is the former which threatens to triumph. Ralf Dahrendorf also recognized the inherent risks of “unbridled globalization” – namely growing social disintegration and political instability, which in turn could encourage people to turn to authoritarian solutions. Examining the situation from a democratic theory perspective, political scientist Karl Kaiser (1998) did not rule out the possibility that “the triumph of democracy at the end of the 20th century could be followed in the 21st century by its gradual erosion as a result of massive globalization”. He argued that the interdependence of modern societies undermines the democratic control mechanisms of the traditional territorial state.

Human rights groups fear that globalization could undermine much of the progress made on the normative development of human rights, with social rights being eroded as living and working conditions worsen in the global competition between locations, women’s rights diminishing due to even greater exploitation in factories producing for the world market and international trafficking of women, and child rights decreasing as a result of a greater reliance on child labour. Researchers working on women’s issues also blame globalization for subjecting “the globalized woman” to even more burdens and problems (Wichterich 1998).

The German Bundestag’s Study Commission on Globalization of the World Economy drew on a number of reports on the situation of women in the globalization process, all of which lamented the “gender blindness” of economic theories and statistics. The Study Commission’s own conclusions and predictions are also pessimistic,
The chapter on Gender Equity in its report bears out. Although gratifying progress has been made in some areas (such as education), women still suffer from a high level of human insecurity. In the domestic arena in particular, women are still vulnerable to violence – studies undertaken in more than 50 countries over the last decade show that this affects between 20% and 50% of women.

The opening up of markets for capital, goods and services, and globalized competition between locations, have weakened the ability of states to impose minimum social standards and have strengthened the bargaining power of multinational corporations. Their transnational structure and exit option if host countries attempt to control their activities have also weakened the power of national trade unions to organise. The WTO's efforts to drive forward globalization are aimed at dismantling barriers to trade in goods and international investment, but take no account of the competitive conditions in which these goods are produced. According to the UN's Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR), too, “globalization risks downgrading the central place accorded to human rights by the United Nations Charter in general and the International Bill of Human Rights in particular”.

At the same time, however, economic globalization in combination with the emergence of a world public allows more attention to be paid to the problems of human rights, labour and environmental standards even in remote regions of the world. As a result, multinational companies which seek to circumvent the industrialized countries' national regulatory systems by relocating to the global south are being held to account by international non-government organizations (NGOs), the media and international organizations.

So globalization is an extremely ambivalent phenomenon, facing both ways like a head of Janus. It offers fresh opportunities but also creates risks. This also applies to the question whether globalization poses a threat to human rights and the survival of democracies. It has become evident that globalization can also stimulate democratization, civil society engagement and international cooperation: the nation-states and globally operating companies are being called to account by the international community because their activities are increasingly being measured against standards which apply worldwide. This process is safeguarded by the media, which report from all over the world and which have created a critical world public, and the NGOs, which are increasingly networking and operating transnationally. They too utilize global telecommunications and the Internet in their various campaigning activities.

The “open skies” of global communications – the “communications guerrillas” – now even place dictatorships under pressure to justify themselves. The world has changed since the Congress of Vienna: states can no longer interact through exclusively diplomatic channels because world society and the world public opinion have become powerful influences in international relations. It could be said that these impacts and influences are akin to a positive form of sensitivity.

This trend is reflected in an increase in democratic government – borne out by empirical observations – which mainly took place between 1985 and 1994. The human rights situation has also noticeably improved. In 2004, 18% of countries featured in the two worst categories of the five-point Political Terror Scale (PTS); in 1990, the figure was 29%. At the same time, democratization processes are often at risk of failure: the State Failure Task Force (2003) found the odds of conflict and state failure to be seven times as high for partial democracies (states in transition from authoritarian to democratic rule) as they were for full democracies or, indeed, autocracies. People in one-fifth of the world’s countries still suf-
fer from a lack of political freedom and grave human rights violations.

The rise of China and India: new instabilities in the international system?

Many observers agree that the rise of China and India in the world economy and politics will permanently change the international system in the coming decades. Both countries are achieving long-term growth, reminiscent of the economic miracle which took place in the “Asian Tigers” such as South Korea, Taiwan and Singapore in the 1970s and 1980s. Nowadays, however, it is the world’s two most populous nations which are coming to the fore in the world economy and global governance architecture and changing the basic patterns of these systems. Over a period of just a few years, China has emerged as the world’s third largest export nation; it holds the second largest foreign exchange reserves in the world and is also one of the major CO₂ emitters. With a time lag of around ten years, India is now following suit. Both countries are playing an increasingly significant role in global climate policy, in the WTO, and – as key raw materials importers – in world politics. These structural changes could cause new instabilities in the international system, but offer fresh opportunities at the same time:

- If China and India successfully continue their economic rise, a shift away from the quasi-unilateral structure of the global system towards a multipolar system of power relations would result. The history of the rise and fall of old and new powers shows that phases of power transition in international politics generally cause turbulence, conflict, and sometimes even war. The West – especially the USA – will have to learn how to deal constructively with China’s and India’s claims to power. Western leaders will realize that the phase of “global domination” (Brzezinski) by a single superpower was merely a brief moment in history and that new forms of international cooperation must be developed which are suited to the new global distribution of power.

- China and India face a key challenge: to identify their new role as global governance actors in the field of tension between their own interests, traditional expectations that they will act as the “spokespersons of the global south”, and their growing global responsibilities. In this transition away from a Western- and towards a more Asian-dominated world order, the instabilities in the international system are likely to increase at first because old power structures and established international organizations will lose significance – an issue currently being debated intensively within the Bretton Woods institutions, for example. At the same time, new actors, such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), in which China, Russia and India coordinate their energy and resource policies, will increase in relevance. If a balance of interests can be achieved between the USA, Europe, China and India during this transitional phase, the world could be more stable in 2020 than it is today. An equally strong probability, however, is a revival of the rivalry between the major powers as they jockey for the dominant position in global politics.

- Although China and India are emerging as relevant actors in the global system, half the world’s people living in abject poverty live in these two countries. The “human security” of around 400 million Chinese and Indians remains precarious: even now, one in three Indians lives in abject poverty, surviving on less than US$1 a day. At the same time, rapidly
modernizing, competitive and export-oriented industries in China and India are increasing social insecurity in other regions of the world. In a globalized world, these two dynamics are closely linked. For example, if social polarization in China unleashed a crisis of the state’s legitimacy and serious unrest, this could trigger political and economic turbulence and instability throughout Asia and the wider world. At the same time, the flow of exports from China and India is prompting protectionist efforts by the industrialized countries, not least, which could put the world trade regime at risk.

So social and political progress in China and India is important in order to contain the vulnerabilities in these two countries’ political systems while reducing their potential to destabilize the international architecture at the same time. What applied to the USA for a long time now applies increasingly to China and India too: the domestic policies of these two giants have a direct impact on international politics. Against this background, European decision-makers would be well-advised to develop their strategies towards these two countries – which until now have focussed primarily on traditional development cooperation and foreign trade promotion – in a way which takes account of the new realities.

The changing role of China and India also means that the competition for access to energy supplies and other key resources for industrial production will become increasingly intense.

A new Cold War over resources?

Some years ago, the water crisis – already acute in some regions of the world, and likely to become global in years to come – was used to develop hypothetical scenarios of future “water wars”. According to headlines at the time, in future, water will become scarcer and more precious than oil; indeed, one of the vice presidents of the World Bank predicted that the wars of the 21st century will be fought over water, the basis of all life and economic activity. The water crisis has not been defused, and conflicts are flaring up in many different localities and between states over access to this scarce resource, either to supply a growing population with drinking water or for the irrigation of farmland. The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that two billion people worldwide are already faced with water scarcity; this includes 1.1 billion people who do not have access to clean water. According to the World Water Development Report (UNESCO-WWAP 2003), by the middle of this century, at best two billion people will still be water-scarce, and at worst, the figure could rise to seven billion people.

Nonetheless, attention has now shifted away from the threat of “water wars”; the key issue now is the threat of “energy wars”. The German news magazine Der Spiegel (No. 13/2006), in a series of opinion-forming articles, talked about a “new age of energy conflicts”: “The age of dramatic conflicts over access to increasingly scarce but also increasingly sought-after resources, in which international relations will be increasingly determined by energy security issues. The cards for the potential winners and losers in this new scenario are now being dealt”.

Notwithstanding Spiegel’s customary hyperbole, cooler-headed analysts and forecasters have described their view of present and future global developments in very similar terms. Frank Umbach (2006) from the German Council on Foreign Relations (DGAP) reflects on “Europe’s Next Cold War”, while Michael T. Klare (2001) talks about “The New Landscape of Global Conflict” shaped by resource scarcity. These
prophets of a “new Cold War” assume that the global competition for resources, especially oil and gas, will determine geostrategic planning in future and change the power relations between states. Every country and group of countries which are crucially dependent on energy imports now give maximum priority to securing their energy supplies. This applies to the EU as well (Umbrach 2006). In the Far East, Japan – still the world’s second largest economic power, but heavily dependent on resource imports – is competing with the upcoming economic and political power China, still by diplomatic means at present but sometimes with more or less overt threats, over disputed maritime zones and access to Siberia’s natural resources.

Vulnerability acquires fundamental significance because energy is the lifeblood of industrial production, the Western lifestyle and development. As a result of the energy price rises shown in Figure 2, many developing countries which are already suffering from energy poverty have become even more vulnerable than the industrialized nations because they have even fewer alternatives and are generally unable to profit from the purchasing power of the “new rich” who are buying up factories and industrial plant, luxury goods and arms. Table 1 shows that due to its meteoric economic growth and surging motorization in the 15 years from 1990 to 2004, China has almost tripled its oil consumption; oil consumption in India doubled over the same period. By contrast, Germany’s oil consumption actually decreased, while Japan’s showed a very slight increase [see Table 1].

**Energy wealth as a new power resource and Achilles heel**

The availability of exportable energy resources will significantly influence role allocation in global politics and the world economy and create a new geopolitical situation. This notion – long ignored or even a taboo subject among German political scientists – has undergone something of a renaissance in the debate about resource security. One reason is that around 70% of the world’s oil and gas reserves are located in a zone which extends from the Arabian Peninsula via the Caspian region to the north of Russia [see Figures 4 and 5].

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ranking</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>1990</th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>2004</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>779.0</td>
<td>887.8</td>
<td>927.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>116.6</td>
<td>219.8</td>
<td>308.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>247.7</td>
<td>255.0</td>
<td>250.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>198.8</td>
<td>123.5</td>
<td>131.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>125.6</td>
<td>129.4</td>
<td>123.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>57.9</td>
<td>98.0</td>
<td>115.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>58.4</td>
<td>100.1</td>
<td>101.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>78.4</td>
<td>93.0</td>
<td>100.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>South Korea</td>
<td>49.5</td>
<td>99.3</td>
<td>99.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>France</td>
<td>89.4</td>
<td>95.2</td>
<td>95.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>World</td>
<td>3,130.2</td>
<td>3,539.2</td>
<td>3,780.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: BP 2005*
with other natural resources – such as iron ore, platinum, nickel and aluminium – the oil markets have an oligopolistic structure. The geostrategic location of the reserves, and the dependence on a small number of supplier countries, are changing security doctrines and foreign policy priorities. They also protect autocrats from political sanctions: Saparmurat Niyazov in resource-rich Turkmenistan, a dictator who cultivates a bizarre personality cult, and his equally corrupt colleague Ilham Aliyev, the current president of Azerbaijan, who controls the starting point of the world’s most expensive oil and gas pipeline from Azerbaijan through Georgia to the Turkish port of Ceyhan, are prime examples.

The Chinese government has shown even fewer ideological scruples in its global efforts to safeguard its access to energy supplies. It blocked UN efforts to sanction Sudan over human rights abuses because it is exploiting the oil wells in the south of the country, with Chinese soldiers protecting the uninterrupted flow of oil from Sudan. It also granted Angola a $2 billion loan in exchange for a stake in the country’s oilfields – money which the World Bank wanted to make conditional on anti-corruption measures. China is investing in natural resource projects in Africa and Latin America, where it shows little regard for social or environmental standards.

Anyone who has access to energy sources has not only a source of wealth but also greater bargaining power. Oil has become a political weapon once again. In Latin America, President Hugo Chavez of Venezuela has had the temerity to ally himself with Fidel Castro and keeps Cuba running with a supply of cheap oil from Venezuela’s rich oilfields. He also repeatedly provokes the “big brother” with all kinds of verbal assaults. Chavez can launch these broadsides against the USA with impunity because it too is reliant on oil supplies from Venezuela and would find it hard to replace them with other sources of supply.

However, it is not only the importing countries which are vulnerable to disruptions in the energy markets; so too are the producing and exporting countries. The international primary product markets are extremely sensitive to the impacts of “global insecurity”. Already, oil installations and pipelines, which often cross several coun-
tries, are frequently the target of attacks by rebel groups and terrorist organizations willing and able to hit a vital nerve of the political regimes. In the Niger Delta, for example, a local rebel group is carrying out attacks on the multinational oil installations in an attempt to force the Nigerian central government to grant it a share of oil rents and regional autonomy. Terrorist acts in Iraq have prevented that country from achieving its pre-war volume of oil production, which could finance reconstruction and thus fulfill one aim of the war. Saudi Arabia’s crumbling regime – no stranger to “homegrown” terrorism despite a massive investment in the military and the presence of US troops – is viewed as especially vulnerable to Islamist terrorism.

In almost every country where oil revenue forms the political regime’s economic base, democracy and human rights tend to suffer. Oil revenue is a vehicle for what are essentially feudalistic autocracies, but it is also their Achilles heel. Keen to maintain and protect their own positions of power, they cannot turn off the oil or close down the gas pipelines, for this supply infrastructure is the highly vulnerable nerve centre in their system of rule. The “resource curse” – the diamonds, coltan, high-trade timber or drugs which bankroll the “new wars” [see the chapter on Fragile States and Peace-building] – operates in a different way in the case of oil: political stability is guaranteed in most cases, but oil hinders democracy (Basedau/Lacher 2006). And yet the wealth derived from natural resources can also be managed constructively, as the example of Norway shows. To ensure the wellbeing of future generations, Norway invests its oil export revenue into a pension fund on a medium- to long-term basis, and scores very highly against democracy, governance and economic indicators.
Table 2: Oil and bad governance: the world’s 10 oil-richest countries (in millions of tones) and their performance against democracy and governance indicators

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ranking</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>1990</th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>2004</th>
<th>GHRV 2004 (1 to 5)</th>
<th>Freedom Index 2006 (1 to 7)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>779</td>
<td>634</td>
<td>24,071</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Iran</td>
<td>12,694</td>
<td>12,263</td>
<td>17,199</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Iraq</td>
<td>13,417</td>
<td>15,095</td>
<td>15,430</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Kuwait</td>
<td>13,097</td>
<td>13,024</td>
<td>13,717</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>UAE</td>
<td>12,892</td>
<td>12,851</td>
<td>12,851</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Venezuela</td>
<td>8,257</td>
<td>10,750</td>
<td>10,801</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>6,760</td>
<td>6,609</td>
<td>8,163</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Libya</td>
<td>3,005</td>
<td>3,888</td>
<td>5,140</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Nigeria</td>
<td>2,320</td>
<td>3,053</td>
<td>4,784</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...</td>
<td>World</td>
<td>135,734</td>
<td>139,626</td>
<td>173,338</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

GHRV = Gross Human Rights Violations
Source: BP 2005; Freedom House 2006; Gibney 2006

Energy superpower Russia: a revitalized role as a key player on the world stage

Oil and gas have become power-political instruments which can also be used as a political weapon and a means of extortion. Russian President Vladimir Putin is using his country’s energy wealth in a targeted way to restore his country’s status as a key player on the world stage as well as an energy superpower (Rahr 2006). In pursuing these great-power interests, his main instruments are the energy corporations Lukoil (for oil) and Gazprom (for gas), which extract and market Russia’s massive energy reserves and now operate in almost every regional energy market. The Kremlin is also entering into agreements with the resource-rich CIS states (Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan) in an attempt to safeguard Russia’s control over the pipeline networks – the energy markets’ arteries which transport the oil and gas to the consumer countries in Europe and Asia. These networks, which run through Russian territory, could be interrupted, putting Europe’s energy supply at risk. For that reason, security of supply is now a key priority for the EU as well, especially after Russia’s attempt to bring political pressure to bear on rebellious Ukraine. However, the EU has yet to embed this priority in its security concept. The concept of “comprehensive security”, which was thoroughly documented in a study by the Federal Academy for Security Policy (BAKS 2001) is likely to focus on resource security to a greater extent in future.

The geostrategic machinations of energy-powerful Russia go even further. The Kremlin is pressing for an enhancement of the status of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), a forum in which major powers Russia, China and India cooperate with various regional powers. The aim is to make the SCO a kind of “new OPEC” which would soon oust OPEC itself from its key energy policy role, with the SCO thus emerging as a new major player on the world stage.
stage. Frank Umbach (2006, p. 21 f.) explains this possible shift in position and roles in the world energy market as follows, pointing out that it will have far-reaching effects on world politics: “9/11 gave the SCO the necessary security policy impetus. Now that energy supplies to the world market from the Persian Gulf and the old OPEC countries have become less secure as a result of the growing threat of Islamist terrorism, the new OPEC around Russia and the Caspian region is the only alternative source of energy for the industrialized countries of Europe, America and Asia.”

The threat of global resource conflicts

The current and foreseeable developments on the world energy markets, which will result in power shifts in global politics, are excellent paradigms of the distinction between sensitivity and vulnerability postulated by protagonists of interdependence theory. However, under the conditions of the “old” Cold War, they could not have foreseen that the OECD world, which at most has tended to respond sensitively to global economic trends, could also become so vulnerable as a result of its energy hunger – a hunger which can only be sated by imports. A glance at the gas pipelines of relevance to Germany illustrates very clearly where the weak points might lie [see Figure 6].

An insight into one’s own vulnerability can have a positive learning effect. Even the Bush Administration, known to have close links with oil interests, is now promoting renewable energies and energy-saving. Nonetheless, the conflict scenario outlined by Michael T. Klare (2001) is still realistic: the energy-guzzling military superpower – and others too – could be tempted to use their military capabilities, which can be deployed worldwide, in order to safeguard energy supplies. The threat of global resource conflicts therefore remains considerable. Water may be essential for life, but energy is the lifeblood of economic activity and modern lifestyles. It was the industrial

Figure 6: Gas-pipelines as the nerve system of global security
use of energy which started the Industrial Revolution, and it is these energy reserves which are now becoming increasingly scarce.

Environmental sensitivities and vulnerabilities

Environmental groups from around the world have united behind the critics of globalization because they believe that un fettered free trade will exacerbate global and local environmental problems. Jean Ziegler (2003, p. 113), one of the foremost critics of globalization, is especially outspoken: “The invisible hand of the globalized market not only destroys human societies. It also wreaks havoc on nature”. Globalization’s green critics highlight the following trends:

- The expansion of world trade leads to far more transport activity by land, sea and air. The revolution in transport has reduced the costs and time required for transportation, but has increased damage to the environment through higher CO₂ emissions, which are one of the main causes of the greenhouse effect and hence climate change.

- Increased international competition may lead to “eco-dumping” if lower spending on environmental protection can give a particular location a cost advantage. Domestic and foreign businesses are then able to produce with little environmental expenditure and to export more cheaply. This is a distortion of competition, making eco-dumping a competitive advantage and penalizing those who invest in environmental protection. China is a worrying example. The conflict of interest between free trade and environmental protection will only cease if the external costs of environmental damage are reflected in prices, i.e. “costed in”.

- The liberalization of international trade in agricultural products promises exporting countries higher profits but causes them to develop ecologically disastrous monocultures, to overexploit their natural means of survival, and to neglect the domestic provision of food from their own resources.

- For the tropical destination countries, the growth of long-haul travel generates higher foreign exchange revenue and creates more jobs than their export sectors in many cases, but it also increases air traffic and the consumption of natural and environmental resources. Social geographer Karl Vorlaufer (1996, p. 229) is extremely critical of “tourism by the rich to the countries of the poor” from both an ecological and global perspective: the damage that increased long-haul tourism causes to local ecosystems could make a mockery of the assumption that tourism promotes sustainable development.

- The OECD countries are responsible for most of the waste of resources and global climate change, which increases the fundamental vulnerability of the poorest countries. Climate researchers and the advocates of sustainable global development therefore refer with good reason to an ecological North-South conflict or even “ecological aggression by the North against the South”. But the “Asian elephants” – China and India – are catching up. According to the World Watch Institute, 75% of the Earth’s biological capacities are now consumed by the USA, the EU, Japan, China and India (Flavin/Gardner 2006). Global environmental policy is a policy field in which the developing countries, especially the dynamic emerging countries, have gained more bargaining power because the North is reliant on their cooperation in negotiating and implementing the environmental agreements that it views as important (Biermann 1998).

- China’s and India’s “successful” market-oriented development is fuelling global
climate change even more quickly than predicted in the 1990s. By 2030, these two countries’ contribution to global CO₂ emissions could be as much as 50%, unless growth is successfully decoupled from CO₂ emissions. Without effective climate policies, global warming could, by the end of the century, be well above the two-degree Celsius ceiling which climate experts say must not be exceeded. This development would exacerbate international food crises, unleash incalculable storms and weather dynamics, speed up the process of desertification, and cause freshwater crises. The vulnerability of individuals, affected countries and the international system as a whole would significantly increase as a result of this process. Economic globalization can only be stabilized and its benefits utilized if economic activities become environmentally sustainable.

Findings of vulnerability research

The impacts of climate change are amply documented by the reports from the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), which brings together the world’s climate experts to assess the scientific, technical and socio-economic information relevant to climate change, its potential impacts and options for adaptation and mitigation. Scientific models and even some feature films depict horrific scenarios in which entire island groups are submerged and no region of the world is spared. This is fundamental, human-induced vulnerability.

The chapter on Climate Change and Global Health Risks shows that health systems in all the world’s regions, albeit to differing extents, have become vulnerable and are likely to become more so as a result of the long-term effects of climate change, primarily because the spread of infectious diseases will change. The effect is most dramatic in relation to the spread of malaria, the world’s major tropical disease, and tick-borne encephalitis (TBE) which occurs in Europe. According to the WHO, approximately 40% of the world’s population – 2.4 billion people – is at risk of contracting malaria. Climate change is likely to increase this figure.

Natural and social scientists engaged in vulnerability research – an offshoot of disaster research – distinguish three dimensions of vulnerability:

- **Geophysical vulnerability**, as the tsunami disaster and numerous earthquakes worldwide have shown, deals with the exposure of a social system or region to natural disasters. Natural disasters may evolve into social disasters, especially in poor societies which can only afford rudimentary disaster risk management. But even the USA, a wealthy society, failed to respond effectively to the devastation caused by Hurricane Katrina along the Gulf of Mexico. We witness not only a growing number of natural disasters, especially after extreme weather events caused by climate change, but also a growing need for humanitarian and emergency relief to mitigate the immediate vulnerability caused by these disasters.

- **Social vulnerability** means the specific vulnerability of poor groups to environmental crises and their low coping capacity. A particularly significant factor is that around half the world’s LDCs are among the world’s most disaster-prone countries, with two-thirds of disaster-related deaths occurring here. Earthquakes are also described as class quakes because they hit the poor hardest, who cannot afford safe housing and tend to live in especially at-risk areas. They are also particularly affected by lack of drinking water and food during prolonged droughts, progressive desertifica-
tion and soil erosion. They are vulnerable because their prospects of coping with various types of environmental crises, e.g. through mitigation or rapid adaptation of their production patterns and lifestyles, are very limited. They have no freedom of choice, which Amartya Sen, the Nobel Laureate in Economics, defined as the purpose of development.

Differential vulnerability focuses on the varying extent to which regions and groups are affected by environmental crises. According to figures from the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), there are now more environmental than war refugees. Experts predict an alarming increase in environmentally-related causes of flight, especially as a result of desertification, which will affect entire nations. The United Nations University (UNU-EHS 2005) predicts that by 2010, the world will need to cope with as many as 50 million people escaping the effects of environmental deterioration. Differential and social vulnerability overlap and reinforce each other.

In 2005, the various vulnerabilities collided, which is why some experts have called it the “disaster year”. Total relief provided amounted to around US$ 12 billion—roughly twice as much as the average for 2002–2004. This was largely due to the tsunami disaster in Asia and the Pakistan earthquake, but the appalling refugee crisis in Sudan also absorbed a substantial share of emergency relief.

The 2005 Report by the German Advisory Council on Global Change (WBGU) presented the findings of vulnerability research in more detail and provided convincing reasons why pollution of the Earth’s atmosphere and the oceans, the destruction and increasing scarcity of natural resources and above all climate change should be designated risks to human security alongside economic, political and health factors.

Spatial, temporal and systemic interdependences

Spatial interdependences arise when regional economic and financial crises impact on the global economy or local wars spill over to neighbouring countries. They also arise as a result of intra- and intercontinental migration and refugee movements, which are increasingly perceived as a threat to internal security, or as a result of the impacts of global environmental change on regions and continents.

Temporal interdependences also occur: today’s actions and omissions in various areas of politics and life will have an impact in the near and more distant future. Overexploitation of natural resources today puts the life chances and development opportunities of future generations at risk. Today’s sensitivity may become tomorrow’s vulnerability if finite resources are squandered. The stresses on the Earth’s ecosystems have potentially fatal consequences for the entire planet and the societies which it supports. Systemic interdependence is apparent here, which may impact on the survival of the planet. When ecosystems become vulnerable, so do the human communities supported by them, regardless of where they live and how they are organized. There is an unbreakable “interdependence of economic, social, and institutional phenomena”, as Gunnar Myrdal showed; he was awarded the 1974 Nobel Prize for Economics for his identification and analysis of this concept.

Summary and Conclusions

The management of interdependence, the mitigation of vulnerabilities and the guarantee of human security require a revival of multilateralism, tailored to the conditions of globalization. Global governance at the start of the 21st century is characterized by a fragmented UN system, increasingly hegemonic
unilateralism on the part of the world’s only superpower, the USA, and a failure to integrate the buoyant Asian countries. The participation of non-state actors is restricted to a few selected areas (notably human rights and social development); private economic actors are beginning to define new responsibilities in the globalization processes. Nonetheless, the “partial privatization of multilateralism”, as promoted in the Global Compact, lacks legitimacy and is tending to create corporatist structures rather than democratically controlled politics.

The mixed relationship between regulation and deregulation varies considerably in and between the various fields of action of global governance. In the global economy, for example, significant progress was made in the past on the institutionalization and juridification of economic relations through the World Trade Organization (WTO). At the same time, essential reforms to reduce vulnerability in the international financial markets have yet to be adopted, prompting Asia in particular to resort to self-help measures instead. As regards world peace, the establishment of ad hoc tribunals (for the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda) and special courts (for Sierra Leone and Cambodia) and the creation of the International Criminal Court are milestones in international law. These developments go hand in hand with more intensive standard-setting that aims to establish a responsibility to protect (ICISS 2001), borne by the broader community of states in cases of grave human rights violations and closely associated with the concept of freedom from fear which is integral to the concept of human security (Human Security Centre 2005). But there is still a clear need for regulatory action in relation to weapons of mass destruction. The USA, the United Kingdom, France and Russia do not rule out a nuclear first strike if hostile states deploy biological or chemical weapons or threaten a terrorist attack. Experts have now identified 15 countries around the world where military programmes to manufacture NBC weapons are under way. Pakistan, North Korea and Iran are especially critical cases. The USA’s security policy hegemony has been unable to avert an increase in the potential for vulnerability.

Ultimately, the normative frame of reference for new global governance arrangements is the wellbeing of the individual facing actual or potential vulnerability. The increasing importance of the “human security” approach was reaffirmed in the outcome document of the Millennium +5 Summit, held in New York in 2005 (UN 2005). The Commission on Human Security (2003) – whose establishment was primarily initiated by Japan – made it clear in its report, entitled Human Security Now, that the aim of human security can best be achieved through a combination of effective multilateralism (top-down) and empowerment of at-risk individuals (bottom-up). In short, the task is to protect people from serious threats, both natural and social, and to empower individuals and communities to make an informed choice between different options and act on the basis of individual responsibility (Ogata/Cels 2003, p. 274).

In light of the growing health and environmental risks, this type of empowerment means strengthening the coping capacities of individuals and institutions so that they can respond appropriately to new risks, thereby reducing their social vulnerability. Education and training play a key role in this process. At the same time, empowerment in a globalized world increasingly means that people even in the marginalized regions of the world should have access to the Internet. At present, 5.4 billion people are excluded from this core opportunity to participate in the globalization process. Closing this “digital divide” will be one of the major challenges in the coming decade, as access to knowledge increasingly determines who is able to utilise the opportunities afforded by globalization and who will suffer under its burdens and risks.
I. Introduction: Risks and Challenges


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