

ENVIRONMENTAL AND HUMAN SECURITY IN THE ARCTIC. Gunhild Hoogensen Gjørsv, Dawn R. Bazely, Marina Golviznina and Andrew J. Tanentzap (editors). 2013. London and New York: Routledge. xxii + 285 p, hardcover, illustrated. ISBN 978-1-84407-549-2. £65.00.

There is security and insecurity. That we certainly know. And it is especially in popular sources such as newspaper articles that these concepts are by and large linked with the realist assumption of an anarchic state system in which each state aims to gain utmost power, also using the threat of armed conflict. It is the fear- and military-based notion of security that prevails here. But is it really that simple? How does, for example, individual security fit into all this? The editors of *Environmental and human security in the Arctic* have chosen a different approach to security and step away from this traditional perception of the concept. Instead, the expert authors of the 15 contributions show how ‘security’ is an ambiguous concept that is not at all only weapons- and state-centred, but which is of importance to us all when it comes to our well-being and everyday lives. Therefore, the editors hope that ‘this book will act to strengthen further development of multi-actor-based debates towards complex challenges facing Arctic peoples, communities and the environment today, with a special space for the voices of the ordinary people living in the Arctic’ (page 4).

In my opinion the authors have indeed succeeded in doing so. Because what all contributors present in this volume is such a diverse picture of the concept of ‘human and environmental security’ that it is hard to summarize or evaluate. Because this book is truly multi- and interdisciplinary and cannot be confined to one specific readership. Next to a heavy political sciences approach, also natural sciences, health science and social sciences can be found here. It is therefore a truly enjoyable and highly informative read that is certainly of interest to all those wishing to get a broad understanding of the concept of ‘security’ in the Arctic and what kind of different facets ‘security’ can take on when it comes to life, living and surviving in the Arctic.

For example, in her chapter ‘Virtuous imperialism or a shared global perspective? The relevance of human security in the Arctic’, Hoogensen Gjørsv takes a ‘bottom-up’ approach and screens ‘human security’, in this case individual security, through an indigenous and gender lens and applies dominance/non-dominance criteria. She nicely outlines, for example, how low-intensity conflicts of indigenous peoples for increased rights in Arctic states have often been portrayed with an ‘us’/‘them’ divide, meaning that a traditional securitization of conflicts has occurred. What does that mean? It means that in stable states of the global North the sources of conflicts are perceived to be found elsewhere and not within the state itself, therefore not challenging the integrity of the state itself. Thus, the dominant state neglects the needs and security-interests of those on the political margins. Especially the individual security situation of indigenous women is of importance here and raises, once again, in the words of Gayatri Spivak, the question: can the subaltern speak (Spivak 1988)?

In fact, the last whole section of the book, ‘Part IV – human security: women and indigenous groups’, is dedicated to the issue in four chapters. I found especially chapters 13 and 14 by Kirsti Stuvøy and Maria Lvova respectively, intriguing as they deal with the security of women in the Russian Federation. To my knowledge, in the English literature dealing with human security the status of security for Russian women has not been widely discussed. Especially Lvova’s contribution that deals with prostitution and particular attitudes towards women in Russia that she traces throughout USSR/Russian history opens a new field that needs further investigation. In how far this is a timely and relevant issue also for western Arctic nations shows for example a forthcoming article by Victoria Sweet in which she depicts the state of trafficking of indigenous women in the American circumpolar North (Sweet forthcoming).

But timeliness is probably the biggest problem of this volume and leaves the critical reader sometimes rather surprised. It already starts with the Foreword of former Canadian Ambassador to Norway, which paraphrases a speech from 2004 at the Human Security in the Arctic Seminar, the kick-off seminar for the book project. Of course, rather timeless concepts like ‘human security’ are not conceptually year-bound, but since the inception of the project and the release of the book encompass a range of ten years, it is especially the chapters dealing with environmental governance and environmental changes that draw on sources that I would consider dated. For example, Oran Young’s chapter ‘The sustainability transition – governing coupled human/natural systems’ develops six lessons of relevance for sustainable policy-making to improve socio-ecological security. His most recent source, however, is from 2004. Although this chapter is undoubtedly very informative, it leaves the rich body of literature that has emerged in the last ten years and which has further developed the issues that Young addresses, unconsidered (see as only one out of many examples Smith and Stirling 2010).

Environmental and human security in the Arctic opens up and presents many timely and important issues that solidify the non-military approach to security. These are certainly not only relevant for the Arctic and should also be considered in a more global approach to human and environmental security. But the reader should be advised that there are many points that may not be up to date anymore. Of course, some issues do not change, but project findings that are even up to 15 years old as in Rowe’s et al. chapter ‘Health and human security – communicable diseases in the post-Soviet Arctic’ may not be of relevance anymore and must be seen in context with more recent data, if available. This is a pity and I would have appreciated more thoroughly updated chapters much more. Notwithstanding, those interested in a non-militaristic approach towards ‘security’ and those working with elements of human and environmental security will find this volume valuable (Nikolas Sellheim, Faculty of Law, University of Lapland, PO Box 122, 96101 Rovaniemi, Finland (nikolas.sellheim@ulapland.fi)).

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