

Editorial

Relevance of Human Security in the Field of Ethnogeopolitics

Caspar ten Dam & Babak Rezvani

We are happy to announce the third and last issue of our journal this year. This is the first Special Issue of our journal, on the theme of Human Security (HS)—with contributions applying new and improved HS concepts and approaches to the South Caucasus as a whole or some countries and/or (border) regions within it.

The contributions are by young and aspiring scholars who already have made a track record in academia: Dr. Jason E. Strakes, Huseyn Aliyev and Anastasia Shesterinina. Their affiliations, areas of expertise and contact details can be found at the end of their articles.

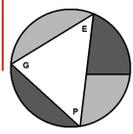
Dr. Françoise Companjen, who came to know our Association for the Study of EthnoGeoPolitics (EGP) and had read some of the issues of our journal *Forum of EthnoGeoPolitics*, approached us early this year with the proposal for a special issue on HS, in which she would be the Guest Editor and provide an Introductory article to the contributions (see the end of her article for her background and expertise as well).

Dr. Abel Polese already had reviewed the early versions of the contributions, and was willing to write a(nother) peer review as an open Critical Response to their final versions. We also found a second peer-reviewer willing to publish his comments on the contributions as a Critical Response: Dr. Jonathan Otto Pohl, who already has contributed with a major article on the Caucasus in the Spring 2015 issue of our journal.¹

The relevance, indeed critical importance of Human Security in the field of ethnogeopolitics ought to be so obvious as to almost go without without saying: the bottom-up HS concept, based on (but not limited to) the basic freedoms “from want” and “from fear”², can be used to explain most phenomena of violence, tensions and inequalities in human societies.

Actually, most of these phenomena appear to be ethnogeopolitical in nature, if only because both qualitative case studies and (semi-)quantitative datasets convincingly show that “most conflicts are internal, insurgent, ethnic and separatist in nature”—not just in our present times, but “since the dawn of human history”.³ So much for the so-called ‘New War’ theories and approaches, which describe forms of irregular and asymmetric warfare in present and recent times and assume these to be uniquely tied to these times—while in fact these have been quite frequent, indeed rampant, in ancient and other ‘pre-modern’ times as well.⁴

Be as it may, HS among peoples themselves should be able to explain most of the aforementioned phenomena far better and more fully than the top-down notions of national state(-sanctioned) security— notions that too often amount to *insecurity*, particularly for inhabitants in repressive states even in the absence of armed conflict. Moreover, HS seen



from the perspective of non-state and semi-state actors, and not just state actors, can more fully account for both the existence and absence of actual security in society.

After all, as the contributions in this Special Issue show, people—be they individuals or groups of people—may and often do organize their own security beyond the state, against the state or in spite of the state. They do this as socio-economic classes, political movements, kin groups (extended families, clans, tribes, etc.) or combinations of those.

Such arrangements can either promote human security, or rather prevent and hinder it through continuous violence, discrimination and corruption, particularly against groups one considers to be ‘enemies’ and alien ‘others’. Thus attitudes “towards the ‘Other’ in the republics of Azerbaijan and Armenia, Armenians and Azeris respectively, do indeed approach the *hatred zone*”.⁵ These phenomena belie the earlier romantic notions of HS as virtuous self-help arrangements invariably promoting and strengthening civil society, as Françoise Companjen points out in the Introductory article.

We hope and expect this Special Issue to markedly contribute to the research and academic debate on ethnogeopolitics in general and human security in particular. We hereby also celebrate the fact that it marks the five-year anniversary of our association and the three-year anniversary of our journal.

Caspar ten Dam, Executive Editor & Babak Rezvani, Editor-in-Chief Leiden/Tblisi, Dec. 2015

Endnotes—References

1. See J. Otto Pohl, ‘Scourging the Caucasus: The Soviet Deportation of the Karachais, Chechens, Ingush, and Balkars in 1943-1944’ *Forum of EthnoGeoPolitics* Vol.3 No.1, Spring 2015, pp.51-75.
- 2.. Clearly, a most basic “freedom from hurt” forms part of the “freedom from fear” in the HS concept—after all, the most essential fear among people is to be hurt painfully, either physically or mentally, through torture, mistreatment etc., which could even supersede the fear to be otherwise harmed or actually killed (relatively) unpainfully. Therefore, the “freedom from fear” encapsulates the “freedom from fear to be hurt” and ultimately the “freedom from hurt”—and from “lethal hurt” as well. Incidentally, the “freedom from fear” and “freedom from want” cover most if not all basic rights in human rights law and humanitarian law (on proper i.e. proportionate warfare).
3. C. ten Dam, ‘Looking at Conflict Patterns: Declining Frequencies yet Persistent Brutalities in both Ethnic and Non-Ethnic Conflicts’ *Forum of EthnoGeoPolitics* Vol.3 No.2, Autumn 2015, pp.9, 12.
4. Ibid., pp.11-12 (reason 1) & C. ten Dam, ‘How to Feud and Rebel: 2. Histories, Cultures and Grievances of the Chechens and Albanians’ *Iran and the Caucasus* Vol.15 Nos.1-2, June 2011, pp.239-240.
5. B. Rezvani, *Conflict and Peace in Central Eurasia: Towards Explanations and Understandings* Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2015, p.1. This study essentially hypothesizes that a “so-called *mosaic* type of ethno-geographic configuration (in combination with other factors) is an important condition in explaining the occurrence of ethno-territorial conflicts” (Ibid., p.3). NB: this study is an updated and adapted version of the one titled *Ethno-Territorial Conflict and Coexistence in the Caucasus, Central Asia and Fereydan* (Vossiuspers UvA/Amsterdam University Press, 2013) mentioned by F. Companjen and J. E. Strakes in their contributions to this Special Issue of our journal.