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Extractive industries and human security: An overview

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1. Introduction

Poor governance of extractive resources has long been acknowledged as a risk to human development and sustainable peace in primary commodity-producing countries across the Global South (Beevers, 2015; Collier et al., 2003; Iguma Wakenge et al., 2021; Le Billon, 2001). However, where extraction and trade of mining resources have played a significant role in maintaining structures of colonial inequity and armed violence, hitherto employed peacebuilding and state-building strategies have often proven insufficient in ensuring substantial peace dividends or human development for communities affected by extractive activities or the population at large (Bebbington et al., 2008; Nem Singh and Ovadia, 2018). This special issue takes stock of challenges in contemporary natural resource governance and reforms in the mining sectors of Sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America. By linking international dynamics across formal and informal economies to human impacts on the local level, our comparative engagement with human security in extractive industries across countries enables synchronic and diachronic analyses of regulatory and institutional frameworks, labor conditions and relations, and the spatialization of extractive processes as they all undergo deep legal, economic, and technological transformations.

For the past 25 years, the resource curse paradigm has served to explain how countries dependent on extractive resource exports underperform in economic, social, and political terms (Gilberthorpe and Papyrakis, 2015; Humphreys et al., 2007; Ross, 2015; Sachs and Warner, 1997, 2001). Resource curse proponents have used the paradigm to justify policy trends such as international regulatory standards, national reforms aimed at expanded formalisation and administrative capacities, and industry accountability initiatives (Cusato, 2021; Humphreys et al., 2007; Wenar and Gilbert, 2021). Like the underlying theorem, these efforts seem to remain bound to state-centered or macro-level security-development analyses. As the contributors to this special issue suggest, this works to the detriment of detecting everyday (in)securities in the lives of individuals and communities involved in and affected by natural resource extraction. Furthermore, the compartmentalization of national-level governance issues hinders a systemic assessment of new and historical pressures arising from international relations, globalizing markets, or climate change. Their compounded effects on populations should instead be seen as inexorably linked to the sustainability of peace and development on a local level. A quarter-century since its inception, our approach to human security seeks to respond to this conceptual and empirical articulation in the context of extractive capitalism.

Human security has gained traction among scholars and practitioners since the United Nations Development Program introduced the term in 1993 (UNDP, 1994, 1993). Some have praised it for its people-centered and multidimensional approach (Henk, 2005; Oberleitner, 2005; Tadjbakhsh and Chenoy, 2007). Others have criticized its lack of operationalization (Glasius, 2008; Newman, 2016), analytical vagueness (Buzan, 2004; Mack, 2004), limited usefulness for setting

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policy priorities (Macfarlane, 2004; Paris, 2001), and potential for interventionist rhetoric (Christie, 2010; Klein Goldewijk, 2008). The approach recognizes that human insecurities cannot be addressed in isolation but that a comprehensive and integrated approach is needed to improve people's lives (c.f. Ros–Tonen et al., 2021, this issue). Importantly, the lens of human security has seldom been applied to natural resource governance (e.g., Alao, 2010; Engwicht and Grabek, 2019; Guesnet, 2017), and often only partially – in direct contravention of the original idea behind it. Examples are studies that interpret human security narrowly as access to natural resources and livelihood security (e.g., Iwasaki and Shaw, 2009; Peras et al., 2021) or relate it to armed conflicts and violent actions of paramilitary groups, mine security personnel, or armed robbers (Bond and Kirsch, 2015; Nyame and Grant, 2014; Rochlin, 2015).

2. Unpacking human security

We contribute to this debate by moving beyond the concept of governance implicit in the resource curse debate toward context-specific and empowering approaches. Contributors present a range of contemporary and emerging resource governance challenges from a human security perspective and re-examine the usefulness of the concept as a tool for resource policy impact assessments. This approach also contributes to the securitization scholarship (Balzacq et al., 2016; Balzacq and Guzzini, 2015) and associated debates on peacebuilding and human development (e.g., Tschirgi, 2013), and neocolonial critiques of anti-security (Ayoob, 1997; Krause and Williams, 1997; Peoples and Vaughan-Williams, 2010). Critically, the thematic combination of extractive practices and mining with the field of human security proposed in this special issue brings international policy reform interventions as well as global and local market forces to the fore. We discuss and re-evaluate these stances on the human security approach.

Security is a cover term for topically distinct issues (Christie, 2010; Newman, 2010; Peoples and Vaughan-Williams, 2010) for people implicated in diverse security regimes and for whom security is differently experienced (King and Carnegie, 2018). Despite the anxieties, fears, and debates fueled by security, or the lack thereof, the concept itself remains tacitly self-evident. This special issue is in part propelled by our dissatisfaction with the theoretical nebulousness of security and its lack of explanatory elasticity in the context of extractive economies. Each contribution approaches human security not as an inert object but as a set of practices produced or in the process of construction and themselves generative of socioeconomic transformations.

Our understanding of security goes beyond the study of military threats or disputes to state and national security or the invocation of threat as a bulwark of the legitimizing force of security. More than a tool of statecraft, we take security to be embedded in the lived experience of communities in extractive sites and their quotidian existence of insecurity. In so doing, we offer an alternative to approaches based on securitization as a discursive field of security threats premised on the performative role of a speech act (e.g., Rychnovská, 2014, Stritzel, 2014). Securitization derives its strength from discourse in an intersubjective and socially constructed field of threat. It offers a ready-made and all-encompassing tool based on the idea that anything can potentially become a referent object of security as long as it is constructed as a threat or deemed a risk. What is more, it often fails to consider the form and means taken by the speech act, the socio-political role of the securitizing actor, or, still, the conditions of possibility enabling the representation, legitimization, or acceptance of a given security threat. Critical security theorists such as Krause and Williams (2015), Newman (2010), and Peoples and Vaughan-Williams (2020) have sought to escape state-centric approaches to security by a more inclusive understanding of security politics. Still, a narrow focus on threats remains, failing to grasp how several groups at the margins of securitization are differently mobilized or empowered by claims to and contestations of security.

This special issue is an effort to reconceptualize human security as an alternative security formation, beyond identifying an existential representation of danger and threat. It also moves beyond the narrow focus on securitization as the speech of dominant elite actors that can only emanate from one singular place and for a particular audience. Instead, we are interested in different ways of performing, enacting, and constructing security as well as the various means mobilized to ascribe meaning to (in)security across contexts. Our effort is three-fold. First, we avoid assigning institutional legitimacy to certain security interventions, as if only states or mining companies can authoritatively decide on behalf of a community or collective. Second, we offer an alternative to the politics of exclusion that derive from security discourses at the expense of marginalized voices or human-based rights approaches. Finally, we seek to offset the neglect of historical and social contexts when considering how certain discourses, practices, or power formations become possible or excluded.

We are under no illusions about the limitations of the human security framework (c.f. Ros-Tonen et al., 2021, this issue). It has been rightfully criticized as a totalizing framework where every aspect of human life is deemed a matter of security and insecurity, from economic, environmental, personal, community, food, health, or political. In contrast to previous theorizations of security, additional attention is needed for the socio-cultural and economic conditions underpinning discursive formations, agency, or power, as well as the institutional, political, and social dynamics that determine the success, or the lack thereof, of security policies. In "A Political Ecology Perspective on Resource Extraction and Human Security in Kenya, Bolivia, and Peru", Janpeter Schilling, Almut Schilling-Vacaflor, Riccarda Flemmer, and Rebecca Froese apply a political ecology lens to the human security approach in response to this weakness. The authors find that resource governance "reproduces, amplifies or creates power imbalances and divisions on and between different scales," highlighting how the "glocal" nature of resource governance transcends local, national, and international scales. By combining a multi-scalar political ecology lens, sensitive to power structures and political dynamics, with a human security framework, attentive to environmental, livelihood, and political insecurities, the authors uncover the multilayered inequalities which are not easily solved by "glocal" governance models (Schilling et al., 2021, this issue).

Where securitization narrowly focuses on existential threats to (state) security or a given polity, human security broadens the scope to include security as the sum of a series of core key human dimensions or normative goals. Our empirical focus on extractive sites allows for a novel approach to security along the following lines. First, it repositions the enactment of security as an intersubjective arena of contestation and negotiation. Unlike the promulgation of exceptional security measures that allow for the suspension of "normal" politics, the actors of extractive economies have long experienced a quotidian normalcy of insecurity, potentially immersing these communities in co-constructed processes of (in)security. Second, this is not a unidirectional process. We take seriously how audiences-qua-communities are constituted, how they respond to different (in)securities, and what alternative voices and ideas about security are expressed beyond the immediate presence of an existential threat. Finally, our approach to human security furthers the temporal construction of security, bringing history to bear on how security is progressively and incrementally transformed and seen as politically divisive by those subject to its effects.

A case in point of the positive heuristic valences of this broadened understanding of human security – both contextually and temporally – comes from Felix Marco Conteh and Roy Maconachie's contribution, "Artisanal mining, mechanization and human (in)security in Sierra Leone." In it, the authors examine the growing adoption of mechanization in alluvial mining in Sierra Leone. Drawing on fieldwork in Kono District, the authors argue that laws and regulatory policies have not kept pace with the increased use of heavy machinery and other mechanical means of extraction. Common narratives to justify mechanization employed by elites, the authors suggest, negatively impact the

human security of disenfranchised miners, undermining livelihoods and the environment. Although mechanization has some benefits, disproportionately accruing to elites, it consistently erodes the human security of mining communities by devaluing labor and impacting local livelihoods if not accompanied by meaningful policies and safeguards (Conteh and Maconachie, 2021, this issue).

Taken together, the contributions gathered in this special issue offer a common framework that allows for comparison. To recover an old truism, we work through a people-centered and multidimensional human security concept, bridging the security of individuals with collective security representations. In this, we are attentive to the conditions and effects of human security, broadly defined as the ensemble of dependency, dispossession, and exclusion at interconnected scales, from local strategies to transboundary and translocal processes. Second, we bring empirical relief to the undertheorized production of (in)security, asking how certain security dimensions resonate with individuals and communities and how and through what processes these dimensions are produced. By emphasizing the various insecurities of marginalized voices and examining how insecurities affect people's daily lives, we bring a humanist alternative to the orthodox view of security.

Inspired by this approach, Filipe Calvão, Catherine McDonald, and Matthieu Bolay examine in "Cobalt Mining and the Corporate Outsourcing of Responsibility in the Democratic Republic of Congo" the unintended effects of formalizing the artisanal cobalt mining sector in the country. Flipping the question of corporate social responsibility on its head, the authors demonstrate that the imposition of formalisation, while aiming to support the livelihoods of miners and offering a legal pathway to the sector, ends up reinforcing the exclusion and vulnerability of these miners. This occurs through the outsourcing of responsibility, which shifts the risks and responsibilities away from corporate actors onto miners themselves. The authors suggest that the human security framework highlights the blurred distinction between formal and informal mining that stems from the "responsible" integration of ASM sources in formalisation schemes. In so doing, the article gives voice to marginalized actors in the context of industrial and corporate mining and calls for broadening human security to incorporate social protections against job loss, illness, price fluctuations, or the risks of willful wageless employment (Calvão et al., 2021, this issue).

The importance of this analytical move is nowhere more apparent than in Mirjam A.F. Ros–Tonen, Jane J. Aggrey, Dorcas Peggy Somuah, and Mercy Derkyi's contribution "Human Insecurities in Gold Mining: A Systematic Review from Ghana." This review of the vast literature on gold mining in Ghana finds that, by and large, human security cases were framed in terms of environmental and health insecurity, but less on economic, food, and community insecurity, whereas personal and political security were rarely mentioned as human security dimensions. Working against a siloed approach to gold mining governance in Ghana, the authors suggest an integrated landscape approach to foster a more holistic response to the various insecurities associated with mining. Against the risk of inaction, when anything is potentially a matter of security hampering our ability to choose and act, the article calls our attention to the adverse effects of reactive approaches to human security. The authors suggest that representing adverse effects of artisanal mining as threatening "insecurities" that need to be mitigated or adapted for the sake of human, social, and environmental well-being may inadvertently lead to a "securitization trap" that posits certain activities as eminently menacing (Ros–Tonen et al., 2021, this issue).

Nina Engwicht and Christina Ankenbrand take a similarly critical stance from the side of reforms and initiatives targeting the artisanal and large-scale diamond mining sectors in Sierra Leone. Their contribution "Natural Resource Sector Reform and Human Security in Post-Conflict Societies: Insights from Diamond Mining in Sierra Leone" examines the effects of reform measures through a human security lens. Drawing on field research in Kono District, the authors argue that state-led reforms and private sector-led initiatives over the years had no appreciable positive impact on various human security dimensions. This applies to artisanal and large-scale mining regardless of whether measures accounted for the priorities of communities and miners. While neopatrimonial networks seem to hinder effective state-led reform with positive human security impacts for extractive communities, it remains to be seen whether the new private sector-led initiatives are more successful in contributing to the human security of miners and communities (Engwicht and Ankenbrand, 2021, this issue).

3. The future of human security

Each contribution to this special issue engages with the sociopolitical and socioeconomic consequences of extractive activities and governance on the well-being of individuals and communities. And yet, human insecurity is still the norm despite numerous governance reforms in Sub-Saharan Africa and elsewhere. This should not be a surprise as it has been well documented that efforts to improve the management of mining resources have failed to deliver tangible benefits or the empowerment of local communities (Kasimba and Lujala, 2021; Maconachie, 2010; Yanuardi et al., 2021). This is largely because, these papers suggest, governance reforms promoted by international and national elites leave control over the mining sector largely unchanged, failing to address the root causes of conflict, violence, power, and insecurity.

As a descriptive lens, human security is valuable for impact assessment, pointing to specific areas and populations where reforms fall short of their promise, and it is well-suited for identifying human insecurities, even if it falls short as an explanatory framework. The contributions to this special issue seek to refine our understanding of the conditions and effects of natural resource dependency by examining the interconnected scales and practices of security, from local strategies to transboundary extractive resource management. They also bring a renewed look at the success of reform strategies from the prism of human security and the lived condition of individuals and collectives, shifting the focus away from the ownership of resources to production, management, and use. In so doing, each contribution expands the scope of human security as a helpful heuristic tool for bringing the depth of insecurities in mining communities to the forefront.

What does the future hold for human security as a tool for studying various insecurities in the immediate aftermath of ongoing mining activities and extractive reforms? Presently, the proliferation of security studies and responsible mining initiatives has placed the problem of labor, conflict, and environmental damage center stage (c.f. Calvão et al., 2021, Ros-Tonen et al. 2021, this issue). Human security offers an apt lens to address these concerns, even if it tends to overlook deeply embedded power dynamics and political struggles inherent in mining communities and the broader society. In response to this – and in the absence of the emancipatory potential that many thought would be brought by the human security framework almost three decades ago – we identify three critical areas for future research: decolonizing certification efforts, technological advances in mining work, and neoextractivist violence. These debates are not new but coalesce increasingly around a multidisciplinary field of research that seeks to further our understanding of responsibility, sustainability, and standardization.

In its explanatory purview, human security underscores the concrete outcomes of security processes, ultimately linking human experience to macro-effects of transnational capital or commodity flows and labor relations. Similar issues are dealt with in various due diligence and regulatory guidelines for the global mining sector, increasingly adopted – and at times co-opted – by private corporations or national governments on their behalf. Human security allows for a critical view of these standards, their implementation, target population, and (un)intended effects. Crucially, human security approaches should be attentive to the political ecology and economy of digitalization efforts in certification mechanisms, building on recent critiques of the racialized nature of such " 'technical fixes' to clean mineral supply chains" (Le Billon and Spiegel,

2021). If the racialized "localwashing" of victimhood or suffering can be used to legitimize the action of multinational extractive companies (Murrey and Jackson, 2020), a human security approach to new emergent digital certification efforts offers an opportunity to decolonize processes of "digital extraction" by addressing relations of power and asymmetries in knowledge across mineral supply chains (Calvão and Archer, 2021).

The human security framework should equally deepen our understanding of the transformative impact of technology in reimagining mining work. With diminishing ore-content deposits, falling commodity prices, and rising labor costs, there is a growing take-up of automated and digitally-enabled tools in the mining and metal sectors – a tendency that is expected to increase exponentially in the near future. The prospect of fully automated mines and the impact of automated mines on the waged labor force, and the growing adoption of mechanization in the ASM sector (Conteh and Maconachie, 2021, this issue) is equally indicative of the challenge ahead for the more than 44 million people worldwide depending on artisanal mining (World Bank, 2020). Human security is particularly attuned to how the expansion of extractive and mining frontiers into new spatial and technological domains, for instance, in sectors critical for the future global energy transition (Narins, 2017), may set off new forms of exclusion and economic insecurity, particularly in resource-rich countries of the Global South.

Finally, the unequal and asymmetric distribution of promises and grievances associated with mining – at once the potential driver of stability and livelihoods as well as of environmental degradation and violence (c.f. Sovacool, 2019) – is a prominent area for human security-inspired future research. Increasingly, the commodities consensus coupled with colonial and neocolonial forms of enhanced extractivism have repositioned debates about dispossession, imperialism, and plunder (Acosta, 2013; Svampa, 2015). The pervasiveness of neoextractivist social and economic violence should not deter researchers from documenting how local and Indigenous communities resist mining activities, evoking a deep collective memory of looting or the unfulfilled promises of wealth redistribution (Kohl and Farthing, 2012). The human security framework is uniquely positioned to bridge the plural and often contradictory relations between indigenous and commodity values, hope and dissatisfaction, the potential of future development, and a history of extraction subsumed by dispossession, inequality, and conflict.

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