

Chapter 10

Conclusions



Abstract In Part 1, geopolitics emphasizes territory, power, time, place and space regarding conflict and its resolution in geographical contexts. Concepts surrounding territoriality, resource control, defence and identity are assessed where the state continues to act as the framework for the UN and humanitarian law, despite globalizations. Defining and positively channelling nationalism remains challenging while territorialisation quests continue on planet earth, but also in outer space and possible future cyberwars. Conflict entails material and existential variables including Utopias, religion, development and democracy. The Democracy and UN HDI indices, shows strong correlations between conflict, crises and coping capacities. Kernel to development objectives are justice, human rights, endowment, entitlement and peace-building. Multiple causes exist for regional conflicts that can become radicalized. For sustainable development, planning with good governance supporting good citizenship is imperative, interconnecting central to local government and wider scales. In Part 2, humanitarian action and development contexts are appraised. Contexts, events and processes are core to global geopolitical orders and attempts at international governance, with humanitarian NGOs promoting action based on impartiality, neutrality and independence. The UN Responsibility to Protect has made progress in shifting the focus of international law to a more people-centred approach, keeping in mind hazards and risks. The impact of any disaster is proportional to the population's vulnerability levels and responses include multiple stakeholders aiming to support sustainable development. But the triad—food, power and hunger remains embedded in political-economy. A back to basics approach, encompassing food and health, money and work, environment and good governance must be kept to the forefront as attempted in the Sustainable Development Goals (2016–2030). In Part 3, the nexus between geopolitics, international organization and humanitarianism is appraised. This needs to be interpreted within the realpolitik of the global geopolitical environment of 1945, and original architecture of the UN—General Assembly and Security Council, with the latter including the five WWII victors holding veto powers, and effects of this during the Cold War (1947–91). Yet, humanitarian breakthroughs came with the Geneva Conventions, R2P and International Criminal Court. From the 55 original UN member states in 1945, this increased to 193 by 2011, and reforms in UN power structures urgently need to reflect this. Such is particularly evident in disjuncture between UN ideals and capacity to deliver, in contrast to the realpolitik being played

out in Ukraine and Crimea (2014 on), Syria (2015 on), Yemen (2015 on), DRC and Myanmar. UN agencies play a foremost role in humanitarian action, but the key players are NGOs and IFRC. Other significant examples of inter-governmental organizations include the Council of Europe, Europe Union, Organization of American States, African Union, Arab League and Organization of Islamic Cooperation. For the present, multilateralism remains the best deterrent to unbridled unilateral state action and its inherent dangers.

Keywords Geopolitics · Development · International organisations

In **Part 1** of this book, frameworks for studying geopolitics and conflict were interpreted emphasizing **territory and power, and the centrality of time, place and space** to any analysis of conflict and peace-building, and importance of the physical and human geographies in this for the geopolitical phenomena in **humanitarian crises and disasters**. **Territoriality** remains a key concept **linked to resource control, defence and identity**, where the **state and nation** continue to act as the framework for the UN, multilateralism and international law, despite globalization and changing expressions of political economy and geopolitics. Nonetheless, defining and channelling **nationalism** and its variable expressions remains a challenge in the shifting world order context and its constant reinventions. The **territorialisation quest continues not only on planet earth in real and virtual terms, but also in outer space**, continuing to intensify with China becoming the third outer space power after the USA and Russia. The **nexus between the outer space and cyber industries**, and military-tech and intelligence sectors has led to much speculation about future **cyberwars**.

Conflict entails material and the more nebulous existential variables, with the former being easier to identify. The **material substantial or quantifiable** includes economic and power variables, such as water, energy and mineral resources, fertile land, geostrategic competition, and zones of influence. Often more difficult to discern are the **non-material factors or existential**, the fruit of the imagination and utopian ideals. These variables are much less quantifiable but greatly impact on evolving conflicts and geopolitics, and include ideals, real and abstract grievances, and re-imagined golden ages.

Democracy itself may be classified as a **utopian ideal** with a long history, and various expressions feeding into the architecture of the 21st century global order and intergovernmental institutions. Hence political concepts and rankings regarding democracy remain markers in the **quest for peace and a better life**. However, democracy remains a contested ideal in many parts of the world, and of course its linkage to development issues and political economy. Nonetheless, the ranking of **countries in the Democracy Index and UN HDI indices, shows strong correlations regarding violent conflict and humanitarian crises and capacity to cope**.

Kernel to concepts of **justice, democracy, development and peace-building are endowment and entitlement concerns**, along with **action—context, structure and power** in humanitarian spaces. Hence the **human rights and democratisation dis-**

courses. These have to be juxtaposed with explicit and less overt **ideologies**, as well as religion, and fundamentalisms. Balancing **centripetal and centrifugal forces with ideals in democracies** has necessitated **mechanisms for attempting to resolve conflicts** turning into violence or degenerating into war as seen in democracies such as the UK vis-à-vis the Scottish National Party, and Northern Ireland since 1998. Similarly, Spain concerning the Catalonian independence movement, especially since 2017, in contrast to policies historically followed in the Basque country. Democratic states have elaborated various political mechanisms to cope with regional nationalisms as in power-sharing structures, with devolved government in Northern Ireland, guaranteed by the Good Friday Agreement (1998), and the evolving situations regarding the UK state and Scotland.

In its transition to democracy, since the dissolution of the USSR in 1991, Russia has faced major issues at the level of the state—top-down, but equally challenging has been the task of sectoral groups and individual citizens to adapt their spaces and voices to the emergent democracy in the Russian Federation. **States attempting moves towards democracy**, and encouraged to do so by the mature democracies, have faced vital concerns as with Kenya and Zimbabwe over the past decade. Despite results in ‘democratic elections’ as exemplified by Algeria in 1991, when parties with Islamist agenda won the elections, posing a major threat to many sections of Algerian society including women, and not only the ruling FLN party and military elite, but also having serious implications for regional and extra-regional states. Hence, states ranging from neighbouring Tunisia and Morocco to the EU, and especially France with a large population of Algerian origin, and the USA, were not eager to support the ‘democratically elected’ Islamists. Iterations of this have been witnessed in Egypt regarding ‘democratic elections’ over the past decade. Nonetheless, Tunisia’s positive transition to multi-party democracy since 2011, stands in sharp contrast to the experiences of Libyan citizens since the authoritarian Gaddafi regime was brought down in 2011 with the support of a UN approved coalition acting on the Responsibility to Protect Principle (R2P). The initial coalition consisted of Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Italy, Norway, Qatar, Spain, UK and US was expanded to 19 states including the UAE. Several competing alliances of Libyan groups have been struggling for control of the states, with strong regional hostilities between the Tripoli and Benghazi regions.

Multiple causes exist for regional conflicts, that can become radicalized fuelling regionalist and nationalist campaigns. For sustainable development, successful regional planning with good governance supporting good citizenship is imperative, interconnecting central to local government.

In **Part 2**, humanitarian action and development contexts are explored, starting with the different **phases in the history of international humanitarian law** as it has developed from the 19th century on. Here, **geopolitical contexts, events and processes** are all important as witnessed by the patterns of violent conflict and war with the extremes being WWI and WWII, followed by **new geopolitical orders and greater attempts at multilateralism and international governance**, with civil society and NGOs following the historic landmark lead of the Red Cross founded in 1863, with its **principles of humanitarianism, impartiality, neutrality and inde-**

pendence. Since the 1990s, and especially with the **R2P** (Responsibility to Protect principle), there has been increased progress in shifting the focus of international humanitarian law from being over **state-centric, to a more people-centered law.**

In all **humanitarian crises and disasters, the development levels and geographical contexts** have to be considered, whatever the categories of disasters, and associated **hazards, the vulnerability and risks** remain central. The level of impact of any humanitarian disaster is proportional to the level of vulnerability of the population concerned and **poverty** remains the key factor here. Responses to humanitarian disasters include **multiple actors or stakeholders.** The humanitarian crisis or disaster has to be interpreted as a **disruption in the development process,** and not an end point. Development cannot be conceived of as starting with a *tabula rasa* and hence the importance of the sustainable development framework in planning; despite the fact that humanitarian crises contribute to underdevelopment. Humanitarian action must be construed as coping with the emergency, but also working in such a manner so as to support sustainable development, once the emergency teams have left the affected area.

In this context the triad—**food, power and hunger**—this epitomizes the necessity for a sustainable development approach, as with famine and learning lessons from the past. Here patterns of global malnourishment help provide indicators of **vulnerability and early warning.** From this perspective, **women** play a vital role in food production in the NICs, that goes beyond cultural and gender discourses, being embedded in political-economy and poverty at local and national scales, but interlinked with globalizing economic variables. Significantly, there are key factors linking human vulnerability and risk of humanitarian disaster in many **post-colonial states, having experienced imperialism and colonialism,** and the **legacies.**

Regarding debates and strategies around development and associated ideals, people doing studies or research in this sphere, like many of those working in the sector, are confronted with a **myriad of interconnected anxieties, approaches, methodologies, reports, organizations and data.** Getting balances between holistic perspectives, and also dealing with a specific aspect or product in development, as in humanitarian predicaments, can lead to much frustration, and a feeling of not being able **to see the wood from the trees.** This has led to calls on many occasions for a **back to basics approach,** encompassing food and health, money and work, environment and good governance at local, national and global scales, with **empowerment being implicit in the discourse along with a human rights approach to development.** Attempts to bridge rational tensions in the development discourses are found in the architecture and policies of the MDGs (Millennium Development Goals 2000–2015) and the SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals 2016–2030).

In **Part 3, the humanitarian action and development relationship** is explored embedded within the **nexus of geopolitics and international organization,** juxtaposing historical and present perspectives. This includes the positive outcomes of the **United Nations Organization (UN)** since 1945 as a **major humanitarian player,** but we cannot ignore its failures and limitations, in contrast to the ideals propounded when it was founded. The five UN agencies with humanitarian mandates include the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (**UNHCR**), World Food

Programme (**WFP**), UN Children's Fund (**UNICEF**), UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (**UNRWA**) and World Health Organization (**WHO**).

Nevertheless, this must be understood within the **realpolitik of the global geopolitical environment** of 1945, and original architecture of the UN—General Assembly and Security Council, with the latter including the five major victors of the Second World War (1939–45) holding crucial **veto powers and permanent seats on the Security Council**. US and Russia/USSR Superpower competition engendered the Cold War (1947–91), with ensuing spatial and ideological consequences; while in 1971, the People's Republic of China replaced the Republic of China (Taiwan) in the UN (1945–1971) gaining a permanent seat on the UNSC in recognition of being an ally of the victors in WWII.

From the 55 original number of **UN member states** in 1945, this inter-governmental organization had grown to 166 member states by 1991, and with the demise of the Soviet Union, to **179 by 1992**, with the vast majority of these NICs being former colonies. The **Non-Aligned Movement** founded in 1956 by the regimes in Yugoslavia, India, Indonesia, Egypt and Ghana attempted to counteract the dominance of the Superpowers, and establish a politico-military independent voice for the former colonies, but with varying degrees of success; today it numbers 120 countries.¹

Calls for reforms of UN power structures, especially since the 1990s, and particularly regarding the **UN Security Council** and position of the **Permanent Five Veto holders** have been numerous. Essentially, arguments are made that the power architecture of the UN in 1945, despite some minor changes, are **no longer fit for purpose**, some seven decades later. This is particularly evident in the **disjuncture between UN ideals and capacity to deliver**, in contrast to the **realpolitik being played out in Ukraine and Crimea (2014 on), Syria (2015 on), and Yemen (2015 on)**.

As witnessed in the historical continuum of the League of Nations and UN, in the creation of international organizations and institutions, there is an **imperative for international cooperation and governance to promote development; to limit, mitigate and counteract conflict and war**. The struggle being to establish agreement and **the rule of law** and its application, alongside the standpoints of realpolitik at regional scales. Here highly significant inter-governmental organizations include the Council of Europe, and the Europe Union that is responsible for **ECHO**—European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations, and another Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development. The development geopolitics and geo-economic nexus is epitomized in the creation of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (**OECD**) in 1961. Other examples of the spatial-power nexus include the North American Free Trade Agreement (**NAFTA**), Organization of American States (**OAS**), African Union (**AU**), Arab League (**AL**) and Organization of Islamic Cooperation (**OIC**).

¹The non-Aligned Movement. <http://namiran.org/>.

Regarding the progress of international **humanitarian law** in the **geopolitical mosaic**, major breakthroughs came with the **Geneva Conventions, and International Criminal Court (ICC)** complementing the more recent UN Responsibility to Protect (**R2P**) actions: to prevent, to react, and to rebuild in humanitarian crisis and disaster situations. Major arguments supporting the R2P principle include that it is already catered for in the UN Charter, Chaps. 6, 7 and 8, and that it can act as a deterrent to human-made humanitarian crises and disasters.

Alongside the prominent arguments for the R2P, the criticisms of it reiterate that it is a violation of national sovereignty as specified in the UN Charter Chap. 2. Here, the state-centric perspective reiterates the power of the state in the historical evolution of statehood and concepts of sovereignty, fearing a diminution in its power or being directly controlled by outside states. Other noteworthy reproaches argue that there are double standards being witnessed regarding calls for, or implementation of, the R2P in selected countries and people; examples here include the Rohingya condition in Myanmar since 2017, and approaches to the Libyan crisis since 2011 and that of the Palestinians, and people of the Western Sahara. **Abuse of interpretation of the R2P** remains a constant danger in vindicating military action, as witnessed with the post-event rationalization proposed regarding the US-UK led coalition invasion of Iraq in 2003, and that of Russia in the conflicts around South Ossetia (2008), and Crimea and South-eastern Ukraine (2014 on), where there was a noticeable tendency to refocus R2P-related arguments in support of Russia's own actions.

The foundational **stance of IFRC** (International Federation of the Red Cross—Red Crescent Societies) concerning the **humanitarian imperative**, with independence, neutrality, and impartiality has acted as a guiding framework for not only other humanitarian NGOs, but the work of the Red Cross influencing international law and becoming embedded in the global geopolitical architecture, as was formally recognized when it was officially granted Observer Status at the UN in 1990. Critics of the R2P argue that the work of humanitarian organizations is being undermined in the perceptions and actions of populations, where there is synergy between foreign armed forces and humanitarian NGOs collaborating under the auspices of the R2P. Detractors of the R2P contend that it is too Utopian not only for application in the field, but also due to the structure of the UN itself and getting the emergency R2P response passed through the Security Council on a case by case basis and the time involved, as well as getting the 'voluntary' forces and financing needed by the UN to implement the actions necessary.

Even so, whatever the shortcomings of the UN system and R2P, the principle of **multilateralism** remains as a deterrent to **unbridled unilateral action and its inherent dangers** regarding conflict. Like the UN, inter-regional organizations endorse inter-state action promoting peacebuilding and post-conflict recovery, as evidenced in the increasing number of peace processes over the past 25 years, and approaches to such with truth and reconciliation strategies, in order to avoid falling back into conflict and war.