

# **ETHICS, ENVIRONMENT AND INTERNATIONAL SECURITY**

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- The international issues which are becoming nowadays global in character have already occupied the classical philosophers. On ethics, Aristotle has written **Nicomachean Ethics**; on environment, Plato has written **Critias**, in which he refers, inter alia, explicitly to the abuse of the environment; Thucydides focused on international security of his era in the **Peloponnesian War**. As we know, the cities of Greece constituted at that time the states of the world. A combined approach of these issues constitutes the subject of this presentation.

- Environmental security has been developed as an extension of economic security. And thus we reach the concept of human security.
- It is for this reason that a trend for a re-definition of the very notion of “security” is increasingly felt.

- Thus, the environment has become a global security issue taking into consideration the overall degradation of the environment and the relevant risks. In addition, factors such as population growth and poverty add to the overall fragility of the security of a nation or region.

- Competition is not the environment's dominant system of interaction. The human beings are focusing on competition while synergies is the target. Symbiosis in nature is not the exception but the rule. In this light, who is to dictate what is good for nature or the environment and what is not? We can consider as an example, the division between artificial and natural: "what means a great deal to people, means nothing whatever to nature". (Easterbook)

- As the Commission on Culture and Development notes “the principles and basic ideas of a global ethics furnish the minimal standards any political community should observe”. (**Our Creative Diversity**, UNESCO, 1995)
- Agenda 21 makes no direct reference to ethics, which are not delineated explicitly in any official United Nations document (even non-binding). Even in the report *Global Neighbourhood*, which preceded the report of the de Cuellar Commission, reference is made to values and not to ethics, which are not identical. The only reference made to ethics is in the recent report of the independent World Commission on Culture and Development.

- Practicing responsibility means avoiding the largely now applied NIMBY (Not In My Back Yard) approach, or, even worse, the NIABY (Not In Anyone's Back Yard) approach. Both are mainly exercised in cases where an agreement must be reached on where waste will be disposed, establishing power installations, and so on.

- Another threat also affecting security indirectly - is resistance to change. The best possible equilibrium between tradition and modernization must be sought, and this can happen only under the combination of culture and development.



- On the other hand, some basic needs have to be observed and covered. This was formally initiated via the consensus decision of the 1976 International Labour Organization Conference, on basic needs: that is adequate food, shelter, safe drinking water, sanitation, educational and cultural facilities.

- Migration is another indirect security issue, which is linked with the environment and ethics. Desertification, soil erosion, floods and other natural disasters have led to massive movement of people, so called “environmental refugees”, a term formed more out of convenience than an accurate description of the relevant cases. Measures must be taken both in favour of them and of the affected environment of the host countries and the country of the migrants’ origin. This is an ethical imperative. Living in close proximity, conserving resources for mutual gain, we can reach a win-win situation in advancing common interests.

- As soon as the concept of security is expanded, the need for ethic rules becomes all the more imperative.

- Preventive measures must also be considered. They have to be based on the precautionary principle and the polluter pays principle. They should refer to a cooperative, safe use of natural resources.

- Another important factor that affects the environment both in terms of security and ethics must also be considered: business enterprises and particularly the TNCs, are also involved in this process due to the interdependence of resources and security. They gradually produce environmentally friendly products and introduce environmentally friendly and sound technologies.

- The Global Compact of the United Nations, on a voluntary basis is one effort towards the end.

- There is also the view that respect for the environment has become a new commodity in our consumer society. Even water has become gradually a commodity issue, because of its scarcity. Therefore, in this connection, a code of ethics has to be introduced.

- The above have been already expressed ten years ago. Not great change since then. The issue of ethics is not at the forefront of security. The European Union started to refer to ethics in connection with transparency. The road is long but it is worthwhile to follow it.



- The topic of ethics, environment, and international security cannot be exhausted within the limits of this presentation. However, we have to bear in mind that the world is one. We are all travelling on the same boat. In order to stay afloat we have to face the concepts of security and ethics together, in order to achieve a harmonious symbiosis between nature and humankind.