



Provided by the author(s) and University of Galway in accordance with publisher policies. Please cite the published version when available.

Title	The task of envisioning security for the Anthropocene
Author(s)	Morrissey, John
Publication Date	2023
Publication Information	Morrissey, John. (2023). The task of envisioning security for the Anthropocene. Irish Studies In International Affairs, 34(1), 17-26, <a href="https://doi.org/10.1353/isia.0.a904027">https://doi.org/10.1353/isia.0.a904027</a>
Publisher	Royal Irish Academy
Link to publisher's version	<a href="https://doi.org/10.1353/isia.0.a904027">https://doi.org/10.1353/isia.0.a904027</a>
Item record	<a href="http://hdl.handle.net/10379/17851">http://hdl.handle.net/10379/17851</a>
DOI	<a href="http://dx.doi.org/10.1353/isia.0.a904027">http://dx.doi.org/10.1353/isia.0.a904027</a>

Downloaded 2024-05-12T12:38:17Z

Some rights reserved. For more information, please see the item record link above.



# The Task of Envisioning Security for the Anthropocene

John Morrissey

*Professor of Human Geography, University of Galway*

---

## ABSTRACT

Our Anthropocene age is defined by a wide array of anthropogenic pressures on planet Earth, which have produced multiple human and environmental insecurities. From climate change to population displacements, from ecosystem degradation to global pandemics, we are faced with unprecedented human and environmental emergencies. Safeguarding the future hinges on generating a wider understanding of ‘security’ that sees the need for holistic strategy, global solidarity and multilateral cooperation. We need a security imaginary transformed by critical and responsible thinking on economic production and planetary precarity, and we require such a vision to manifest in new governmentalities that set us on the right path towards a shared future. This paper reflects on the challenge of establishing holistic understandings of security which can be drawn upon more effectively to respond to the intersecting crises unfolding on the planet. In seeking to reframe global security strategy, the paper underscores an interlinked sense of human-environmental security which extends the UN’s human security concept to address the overlapping precarities of our human and non-human worlds. It considers in particular the role of legal and regulatory mechanisms in curbing the ecological excesses of late modern capitalism; and in seeking to transcend narrow statist formulations of security, the paper illuminates our global interconnections, which require us to renew and support networks of international solidarity and multilateral cooperation.

## INTRODUCTION

Every gauge of planetary well-being alerts us to our anthropogenic emergency: carbon emissions, temperature rise, ozone depletion, deforestation,

---

Author’s e-mail: [john.morrissey@universityofgalway.ie](mailto:john.morrissey@universityofgalway.ie)

ORCID iD: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9987-010X>

*Irish Studies in International Affairs*, Vol. 34 , No. 1 (2023), 1–10

This is an Open Access Article under the terms of the Creative Commons attribution license, which permits use, distribution and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.



Open Access funding provided by IReL.

land degradation, biodiversity loss, methane emissions, over-farming, over-fishing, and more.<sup>1</sup> These human-induced environmental stresses have been mirrored in recent years by a growing number of infectious zoonotic diseases, of which COVID-19 is just one, albeit the most globally felt. In the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic, there seemed to be a greater realisation of our collective vulnerability to the environmental stresses across the planet. That vulnerability is experienced unequally, of course, along multiple social hierarchies; but the seeds of recognition of how we are part of a global ecosystem of interlinked precarities give hope to the urgent task of communicating a shared vision of safeguarding human-environmental security for the Anthropocene age.

There have been encouraging signs since the outbreak of COVID-19 of a growing contrapuntal concern for the most precarious in our societies: UN Secretary General, António Guterres, for example, has argued that the pandemic has pressed us to ‘redouble’ efforts to ‘build more inclusive and sustainable economies and societies’, in a collective fashion.<sup>2</sup> But there has been a noted lack of attention on issues of ‘capacity’ and ‘responsibility’ in integrated global governance practices. Many have pointed to the inadequacies of the World Health Organization (WHO), for instance;<sup>3</sup> and long-standing critiques of the WHO are even more relevant since COVID-19. Such critiques prompt a range of questions respecting a more systematic and effective governance of security concerns—primarily human health security concerns, but these can no longer be parsed out from the wider set of human-environmental security threats unfolding on the planet. I have sketched elsewhere the imperative of adapting a conjoined human-environmental security strategy in tackling the evolving crises of the Anthropocene.<sup>4</sup> What follows below is an extension of the argument to reframe and re-resource strategies of security that tackle more holistically the interlocking emergencies of our human and non-human worlds. The United Nations Environment Programme set out the polycrisis thus: ‘multiple and often interacting threats to ecosystems and wildlife [...], zoonoses [...], habitat loss and fragmentation, illegal trade, pollution, invasive species and, increasingly,

<sup>1</sup>Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), *Climate Change 2021: The physical science basis. Sixth assessment report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change*, IPCC, 2021, available at: [https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg1/downloads/report/IPCC\\_AR6\\_WGI\\_Full\\_Report.pdf](https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg1/downloads/report/IPCC_AR6_WGI_Full_Report.pdf) (31 March 2023).

<sup>2</sup>Antonio Guterres, ‘Recovery from the coronavirus crisis must lead to a better world’, *The Guardian*, 2 April 2020, available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/apr/02/un-secretary-general-coronavirus-crisis-world-pandemic-response> (31 March 2023).

<sup>3</sup>Adam Ferhani and Simon Rushton, ‘The International Health Regulations, COVID-19, and bordering practices: who gets in, what gets out, and who gets rescued?’, *Contemporary Security Policy* 41 (3) (2020), 458–477; Kelley Lee and Julianne Piper, ‘The WHO and the COVID-19 pandemic: less reform, more innovation’, *Global Governance* 26 (4) (2020), 523–33.

<sup>4</sup>John Morrissey, ‘Planetary precarity and “more-than-human security”: the securitization challenge in the aftermath of COVID-19’, *Journal of Human Security* 17 (1) (2021), 15–22.

climate change.’<sup>5</sup> Addressing these intersecting crises impels us to start with a vision for human-environmental security.

## SECURITY WITH A WIDER LENS: MOBILISING THE HUMAN SECURITY CONCEPT

In the mid-1990s, the UN concept of ‘human security’ emerged as an alternative vision of cooperative global security.<sup>6</sup> In 1994, the United Nations Development Programme’s *Human Development Report* redefined security by setting out an interconnected global sense of ‘human security’, ‘relevant to people everywhere’.<sup>7</sup> The report outlined seven components—community security, economic security, environmental security, food security, health security, personal security, and political security—and conceived them as intersecting across multiple scales. In developing the deployability of the concept in practice, the UN’s subsequently established Commission on Human Security underlined the need for integrated strategies by ‘states, international agencies, NGOs and the private sector’, to resource and plan for governing human-environmental systems that ‘give people the building blocks of survival, livelihood and dignity’.<sup>8</sup> A core aspect of the commission’s framing of global security was the demarcation of overlapping human and environmental risks that cut across communities and therefore compel integrated, holistic security responses.

Despite its promise and relevancy in addressing the complex and multifarious polycrisis of the planet, the concept of human security has infrequently been enacted over the last 25 years, mostly due to the hegemony of statist and military delineations of national security.<sup>9</sup> In dominant logics of military security, human security concerns are habitually missing in the abstracted geopolitical and military interventionary rationales. A key task remains, therefore, for the human security concept to bring into view human geography and planetary ecosystem well-being, in an overarching vision of safeguarding against human-environmental vulnerability.

In recent years, a number of authors have returned to the concept of human security in the context of migration, human rights and bordering practices,

<sup>5</sup>United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), ‘Coronavirus outbreak highlights need to address threats to ecosystems and wildlife’, *UNEP News and Stories*, 3 March 2020, available at: <https://www.unenvironment.org/news-and-stories/story/coronavirus-outbreak-highlights-need-address-threats-ecosystems-and-wildlife> (31 March 2023).

<sup>6</sup>For an overview of the deployment of the concept over the last 25 years or more, including its successes and shortcomings, see the introductory chapter of: John Morrissey (ed.), *Haven: The Mediterranean crisis and human security* (Cheltenham, 2020).

<sup>7</sup>United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), *Human development report 1994: New dimensions of human security* (New York, 1994), 3, 4.

<sup>8</sup>Commission on Human Security, *Human security now* (New York, 2003), 4, 10. For a further elaboration of the UN’s integrated human security vision, see: UN Trust Fund for Human Security, *Human security in theory and practice* (New York, 2009).

<sup>9</sup>I outline the hegemony of military security concerns in international relations since the Cold War in chapter one of John Morrissey, *The long war: CENTCOM, grand strategy, and global security* (Athens GA, 2017).

showing why and how the concept offers much in devising humanitarian global governance strategies.<sup>10</sup> The UN has also long advocated the law as an indispensable instrument of effective global governance, envisaging ‘human security’ and ‘human rights’ as ‘mutually reinforcing’ in delivery, as set out by the UN’s Commission for Human Security.<sup>11</sup>

Attaining human security objectives necessitates a committed legal activation and administrative resourcing from governments. And when this happens, we find illustrative success stories. One such success can be found in the Caribbean, where the extension of Cuba’s Risk Reduction Management Centre model across the region from 2011, via the Caribbean Risk Management Initiative (CRMI), has been central in efforts to tackle pan-national climate insecurities. CRMI deployed many of the core components of the UN’s human security vision, especially its emphasis on the transfer and scalar implementation of locally-attuned human-environmental knowledges and practices. The initiative comprises preparedness plans that involve both local knowledges and local forms of governance being integrated into administrative systems at regional, national and transnational levels.<sup>12</sup> Its success showcases the possibility of bottom-up climate resilience when participatory knowledges are integrated in an organised system of environmental custodianship. It is a clear example of a highly functioning human-environmental security framework.

## COMMUNICATING HUMAN-ENVIRONMENTAL SECURITY NEEDS

An interlinked human-environmental security vision is vital in tackling the multidimensional polycrisis the world now faces; the overlapping dimensions of human-environmental insecurities are sadly omnipresent across the globe. Consider, for example, how climate change has contributed significantly to both migration and violent conflict worldwide for decades;<sup>13</sup> or the alarming picture of further climate-induced migration across the globe in the future.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>10</sup>See for example: Des Gasper and Giulia Sinatti, ‘Investigating migration within a human security framework’, *Revista Migracion y Desarrollo* 14 (27) (2016), 19–63; Oscar Gómez, Hanatani Atsushi, Murotani Ryutaro, Kubokura Ken, Makimoto Saeda, Muto Ako and Jacob Assa, *Protecting our human world order: A human security compass for a new sustainability decade* (New York, 2020); Natalia Ribas-Mateos and Timothy J. Dunn (eds), *Handbook on human security, borders and migration* (Cheltenham, 2021).

<sup>11</sup>Commission on Human Security, *Human security now*, 10.

<sup>12</sup>Yairen Jerez Columbié and John Morrissey, ‘Subaltern learnings: climate resilience and human security in the Caribbean’, *Territory, Politics, Governance* 11 (1) (2023), 19–38. The CRMI’s success has also prompted similar government initiatives in responding to human-environmental insecurities elsewhere; see, for example, Kenji Isayama and Naoya Ono, ‘Steps towards sustainable and resilient disaster management in Japan: lessons from Cuba’, *International Journal of Health System and Disaster Management* 2 (3) (2015), 54–60.

<sup>13</sup>Rafael Reuveny, ‘Climate change-induced migration and violent conflict’, *Political Geography* 26 (6) (2007), 656–73.

<sup>14</sup>Kanta Kumari Rigaud, Alex de Sherbinin, Bryan Jones, Jonas Bergmann, Viviane Clement, Kayly Ober, Jacob Schewe, Susana Adamo, Brent McCusker, Silke Heuser and Amelia Midgley, Groundswell: *Preparing for internal climate migration* (Washington DC, 2018); Viviane Clement, Kanta Kumari Rigaud, Alex de Sherbinin, Bryan Jones, Susana Adamo, Jacob Schewe, Nian Sadiq and Elham Shabahat, *Groundswell Part II: Acting on internal climate migration* (Washington DC, 2021).

Mitigating against the global security risks of climate-induced migration requires a holistic understanding of the intersecting human-environmental crises of the Anthropocene. As Abraham Lustgarten reasons, if political leaders ‘take fewer actions against climate change’, then ‘food insecurity will deepen’, and ‘poverty [and] populations will surge, leading to greater suffering’.<sup>15</sup>

‘Seeing’ suffering, and bringing it into view, is crucial in eliciting governmental responsibility to act, especially given the embedded regimes of invisibility of the most vulnerable and those without a voice across the globe. The ongoing Mediterranean migrant crisis is instructive here, particularly in relation to the safeguarding of human rights in the transnational governance of migration.<sup>16</sup> Governmental responses across the European Union remind us of the enduring significance of postcolonial critiques of Self/Other binaries still functioning in Western European culture. Indeed, across the ‘Global North’, migrants are predisposed to be ‘invisible’ and are not ‘constituted as liberal democratic subjects’.<sup>17</sup> Their representation mirrors how we ‘see’ and ‘frame’ senses of identity, sameness and difference.

The task of insisting upon the cosmopolitan ethics and values of *human securitization* centres on challenging and disrupting the dominance of top-down understandings of *statist securitization*.<sup>18</sup> If we look at current European Commission research funding on the European migration crisis, for example, we find that it is dominated by statist formulations of security, migration and population management, which serve to occlude questions of human security. Research calls are commonly framed in the language of technocratic ‘security solutions’, and are typically ‘presentist’ in an overly simplistic fashion. Frequently missing too are any appeals to historicise today’s complexities.

Migration to Europe from the Middle East and North Africa today must be understood in the historical and geopolitical contexts of displacement. We must learn from prior Western interventionary violence and indiscriminate backing of authoritarian governments. The consequences of historical and contemporary imperialism and unilateral forms of security need to be acknowledged in orientating a more progressive and productive human security strategy towards the region, in which international solidarity and multilateral cooperation are imperative.

<sup>15</sup>Abraham Lustgarten, ‘The great climate migration’, *The New York Times Magazine*, 23 July 2020, available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/07/23/magazine/climate-migration.html> (31 March 2023).

<sup>16</sup>Morrissey (ed.), *Haven: The Mediterranean crisis and human security*.

<sup>17</sup>Jennifer Hyndman and Wenona Giles, *Refugees in extended exile: Living on the edge* (London, 2017), 1.

<sup>18</sup>Lorraine Elliott, ‘Critical human security: reclaiming a cosmopolitan ethics of dignity and recognition’, in Morrissey (ed.), *Haven: The Mediterranean crisis and human security*, 21–38.

## SOLIDARITY AND COOPERATION FOR AN INTERCONNECTED WORLD

Post-COVID-19, the great hope is that a heightened awareness of the planet's interconnected precarity has elevated the import of international solidarity in effective global governance. Responsive action to global pandemics needs to be holistically envisaged, but it also needs to be collective. Nation-states are inescapably part of a globalised world of transnational emergencies, and political leaders must be pressed to have global concerns in addition to national interests. To this end, there is a need to document strategies of solidarity that illustrate how cooperative, collaborative practices in the work of governments, social movements and civil society can collectively confront the broad range of global insecurities we face. The recent German government report derived from its 'Future of Agriculture' commission, for instance, highlights how human-environmental sustainability is possible in agricultural production if there is an attendant regulation of intersecting human-environmental security concerns. The report is built upon a protracted campaign, involving multiple stakeholders. It showcases how to governmentally 'end ruinous economic and environmental practices in the country's agrifood sector'.<sup>19</sup>

The German example above is but one illustration of wider global efforts to address the overlapping human-environmental vulnerabilities on planet Earth as a result of unregulated capitalist production.<sup>20</sup> Such endeavours hinge on framing a broader sensibility of security in which humans are but one part in an interconnected ecosystem. In bringing more concern for non-humans and the environment into scriptings of security, we need to insist upon the imperatives of international solidarity and multilateral cooperation in addressing urgent global challenges. To this end, there seems a key opportunity still to capitalise on the perceived urgency to draw upon the experience of COVID-19 to orientate global solidarity in combatting the planet's longer-term human-environmental crises. A recent Ipsos poll, for instance, highlighted how people feel the future of the planet should be secured:

Seven in ten consider climate change as serious a crisis as COVID-19, and a similar proportion feel their government will be failing them if it doesn't act on climate change now. Two thirds globally support a green economic recovery from the crisis.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>19</sup>Derek Scally, 'German report signals agrifood revolution', *Irish Times*, 7 July 2021, available at: <https://www.irishtimes.com/business/economy/german-report-signals-agrifood-revolution-1.4613438> (3 April 2023).

<sup>20</sup>Rob Wallace, Alex Liebman, Luis Fernando Chaves and Rodrick Wallace, 'COVID-19 and circuits of capital', *Monthly Review*, 1 April 2020, available at: <https://www.monthlyreview.org/2020/04/01/covid-19-and-circuits-of-capital> (3 April 2023); Partha Dasgupta, *The economics of biodiversity: The Dasgupta review* (London, 2021); Paul Raskin, *Journey to earthland: The great transition to planetary civilization* (2nd edn, Cambridge MA, 2021); UNDP, *New threats to human security in the Anthropocene: Demanding greater solidarity* (New York, 2022).

<sup>21</sup>Ipsos, *Earth Day 2020: how does the world view climate change and Covid-19?*, Ipsos, 2020, available at: <https://www.ipsos.com/sites/default/files/ct/news/documents/2020-04/earth-day-2020-ipsos.pdf> (03 April 2023).

In the context of migration, the ‘Alarm Phone’ project can be showcased as an illustrative and inspiring example of what is possible in networking solidarity and empathy in envisioning human security for the most vulnerable.<sup>22</sup> Founded in 2014, Alarm Phone was initiated by a collective of civil society actors and activists across Europe and Northern Africa. It centres on attending to an emergency phone portal for migrants in distress in the Mediterranean Sea: it reinforces their SOS calls by further alerting the relevant coastguards and, if necessary, mobilising extra rescue support. The initiative, in effect, is about reinforcing binding circuits of governmental responsibility to protect lives. It is about rendering visible precarity, underlining human rights and enabling human solidarity.

In an age of populist, impoverished and polarised politics, we need to believe and champion that human beings throughout the world have an enduring capacity for solidarity in the face of injustice and precarity. The global response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine in some ways shows us what can be achieved when there is concerted agreement in addressing human suffering deemed a security need. There has been a racialisation to the Western response, which needs to be critically acknowledged—and there is no doubt that we need a similarly empathetic response to crises everywhere on the planet—but we should recognise what animated human empathy and solidarity can achieve.

Ukraine’s political response to the Russian invasion is also indicative of the requirement of strategic essentialism in effectual public communication in our contemporary world. Straightforward, succinct messaging that is underscored with hope resonates, as Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky has shown. Zelensky’s use of social media typically limits the length of his communications to prioritised information, and calls out specific actions from partners in pleas for solidarity and support. This is what we need to increasingly do in convincingly imploring necessary action to safeguard the future of the planet. We need to make the environmental threats and human insecurities viscerally real, and then draw upon stirred human empathies of solidarity and collective well-being to articulate clear and cohesive demands for action from our leaders.

## SAFEGUARDING HUMAN-ENVIRONMENTAL SECURITY

In practical terms, a more sustainable future for planet Earth requires the orientation of a cooperative global security strategy that involves binding legal and regulatory mechanisms. Such mechanisms necessitate commitments from national governments on a wide range of agreed global conventions, existing laws and regulatory powers. These need to be strengthened and extended in the *longue durée* of political action, and there are hopeful examples to point to. In 2022, for instance, the European Commission released a draft proposal to

<sup>22</sup>Maurice Stierl, *Migrant resistance in contemporary Europe* (London, 2019).

restrict intentionally added microplastics in products owing to the multiple overlapping human and environmental risks.<sup>23</sup> The legal proposals were preceded by a long campaign to highlight the human-environmental threats.<sup>24</sup> In that discursive battle, proponents successfully advanced a joined up human-environmental security vision that transcends borders and animates senses of solidarity and necessary cooperation. Given the vested interests of corporations that use microplastics in their products for largely profit reasons, it would be naïve to think that human-environmental security regulation can be actualised without the fullest activation of the governing law. This is why any effectual regulatory framework must comprise sufficient punitive measures that will politically and economically induce compliance from the principal actors of late modern capitalism, namely powerful multinational corporations and nation-states.

There are many mechanisms of responsible and ethical governance that can be mobilised in safeguarding human-environmental security in our contemporary world. Financial incentivisation is another, which can ‘reward investments that reduce planetary pressures’ and ‘penalize or restrict investments that increase those pressures’, as outlined by the UN’s 2020 Human Development Report (HDR).<sup>25</sup> The 2020 HDR helpfully elaborates on the focal role of empowered ‘public entities’ that can ensure regulatory oversight, and these include national governments’ central banks. And again there are success stories, for over a generation, which we can point to that illustrate the possibility of linking green financial incentivisation to environmental sustainability objectives.<sup>26</sup>

The UN’s 2020 HDR also outlines a range of additional legislative, administrative and long-term strategic tools that can be marshalled in a more responsible governing of the planet. These include: attaching stringent sustainability requirements into ‘pricing carbon’ initiatives; introducing ‘green supporting and brown penalizing factors’ in capital investments; compelling ‘minimum amounts of green assets’ to be retained on financial institutions’ balance sheets; instigating ‘collective financing mechanisms to scale up nature-based solutions’; over-seeing incentives to ‘protect biodiversity’ through ‘market mechanisms’; ensuring ‘transparency and accountability mechanisms’ function in national governments; and complying with global ‘regulatory frameworks’, including the Sendai Framework and Paris Agreement.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>23</sup>European Commission, ‘Commission Regulation (EU) amending Annex XVII to Regulation (EC) No 1907/2006’, Comitology Register, 22 August 2022, available at: <https://ec.europa.eu/transparency/comitology-register/screen/documents/083921/1/consult?lang=en> (5 April 2023).

<sup>24</sup>Arthur Neslen, ‘EU proposes ban on 90% of microplastic pollutants’, *The Guardian*, 30 January 2019, available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2019/jan/30/eu-european-union-proposes-microplastics-ban-plastic-pollution> (5 April 2023).

<sup>25</sup>UNDP, *Human development report 2020: The next frontier. Human development and the Anthropocene* (New York, 2020), 159.

<sup>26</sup>Simon Dikau and Ulrich Volz, ‘Central Bank mandates, sustainability objectives and the promotion of green finance’, *SOAS University of London, Department of Economics Working Paper No. 232* (2020).

<sup>27</sup>UNDP, *Human Development Report 2020*, 159–60, 165, 173, 180, 188, 191, 206.

Activating the governmental mechanisms above is key to regulating more environmentally the economic modalities of late modern capitalism. Its violently extractive and ecologically destructive dimensions are what define the Anthropocene age, and a new direction demands systemic changes in how our economies work and who they serve. We simply can no longer accede to the fables of neoliberalism, such as the idea of perpetual economic growth. Such neoliberal discourses serve profit more than people, finance more than health, and presentism more than the future. Endless economic growth is fundamentally incompatible with ecological sustainability for planet Earth, and there seems no doubt that governments increasingly need to deploy the concept of ‘degrowth’ in efforts to reduce economic over-production and over-consumption, in line with global-scale strategies for environmental sustainability.<sup>28</sup> In calling out the dangers of relentless economic growth, the degrowth concept insists upon the Earth’s finite planetary boundaries, in a vision for sustaining the health and well-being of the connected global ecosystem.

In endeavours to steer a path away from the destructive rudiments of late modern capitalism, revising how we measure ‘success’, ‘prosperity’ and ‘well-being’, in ways other than econocentric modelling, is also important. To this end, the UN’s 2020 HDR introduced ‘planetary pressure adjustments’ to measure ‘human development’ in a manner that classifies a country’s development not simply in terms of GDP but additionally in relation to carbon emissions and resource use per person.<sup>29</sup> This important focus on planetary pressures and valuing ecosystem health was reiterated in the UN’s initial response to COVID-19, which underlined the disease’s place in the ‘transboundary risks’ of the Anthropocene, including ‘pandemics’, ‘illegal wildlife trade’, ‘habitat loss’, ‘pollution’ and ‘climate change’.<sup>30</sup> Focusing attention on the transboundary risks of the Anthropocene is more important now than ever before—it accentuates ‘shared responsibility’ and ‘global solidarity’.<sup>31</sup>

## CONCLUSION: IMAGINING PLANETARY SECURITY

In the task of envisioning a shared sense of planetary human-environmental security, the concept of ‘futurescaping’—discourses of the future that serve the present—can also aid us.<sup>32</sup> In the late 1970s, the French philosopher Michel Foucault highlighted how one of the core features of modern forms of

<sup>28</sup>Jason Hickel, *Less is more: How degrowth will save the world* (London, 2020).

<sup>29</sup>UNDP, *Human Development Report 2020*.

<sup>30</sup>UN, *Shared responsibility, global solidarity: Responding to the socio-economic impacts of COVID-19*, Framework Statement, March 2020, 16, available at: <https://unsdg.un.org/sites/default/files/2020-03/SG-Report-Socio-Economic-Impact-of-Covid19.pdf> (5 April 2023).

<sup>31</sup>UN, *Shared responsibility, global solidarity*.

<sup>32</sup>Barbara E. Adam, ‘Future matters: futures known, created and minded’, *Twenty-First Century Society* 3 (2) (2008), 111–16.

government was the operation of power based on the fear of securing what he termed the 'aleatory'.<sup>33</sup> For Foucault, the aleatory was an uncertain future, a wide 'milieu' laden with insecurities.<sup>34</sup> In responding to the world's polycrisis today, governments are, in effect, charged with securing multiple dimensions of uncertainty and risk, and futurescaping is an important discursive tactic in the formulation and justification of security practices. These formulations can be inflected critically and productively by academics, activists and concerned citizens. We need to collectively work to offer expertise and knowledge in documenting the widest set of concerns in safeguarding the planet, and in illuminating our global interconnectedness. In this endeavour, it is crucial to script the aleatory with compelling visions of a more cooperative and sustainable future.

Successfully scripting the overlapping human-environmental insecurities we face in safeguarding the future of the planet hinges on generating a wider understanding of 'security', one which sees the need for holistic strategy, global solidarity and multilateral cooperation. As we respond to the broad range of anthropogenic pressures on planet Earth, we need to frame a vision of nature in which humans are part of the planetary ecosystem. Protecting that ecosystem necessitates a diverting of governmental resources. It must also involve activating binding circuits of governmental and corporate responsibility, regulation and accountability. In the final analysis, accountability to a shared planet is how human actions in the Anthropocene will be judged. We need a cooperative security imaginary, transformed by critical and responsible thinking on economic production and planetary precarity, and we require such a vision to manifest in new governmentalities that set us on the right path towards a shared human-environmental future.

<sup>33</sup>Michel Foucault, *Security, territory, population: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1977–1978* (trans. Graham Burchell, Basingstoke, 2007), 11.

<sup>34</sup>Foucault, *Security, territory, population*, 20.