

**TORRES CAZORLA, María Isabel, and GARCÍA RICO, Elena del Mar (Dirs.); BAUTISTA HERNÁEZ, Andrés, and PASTOR GARCÍA, Alicia María (Coords.), *Medio ambiente, seguridad y salud: Grandes retos del Derecho en el Siglo XXI*, Tirant lo Blanch, Valencia, 2024.**

The relationship between the environment, safety and health is no longer questioned today. It is an unequivocal, close, complex and multidimensional correlation between three areas that were once analysed separately, but are now interconnected with a common system of risks, policies and human rights protection that shapes the current international stage. Contemporary international law reflects and regulates this interconnectedness.

Environmental and health challenges are no longer merely technical or sector-specific issues; they constitute challenges to (human) security. Protecting health and safety necessarily requires safeguarding ecosystems, just as environmental protection demands safe and healthy conditions for people.

As is well known, the consequences of environmental degradation – such as air, water and soil pollution, biodiversity loss, deforestation and climate change – have direct effect on human health, leading, for instance, to respiratory, cardiovascular and infectious diseases or illnesses resulting from extreme weather events. Environmental degradation also generates food, water and energy insecurity, which can result in diverse tensions and conflicts and therefore pose risks to international peace and security. The COVID-19 pandemic made clear, among other things, that health issues have direct implications for both national and international security, while also raising awareness of the relevance of the concept of “health security”, widely used in recent times by the United Nations and the World Health Organisation (WHO). This concept requires strengthened public health systems, epidemiological surveillance and enhanced cooperation among international subjects and actors involved.

For all these reasons, I consider that this relationship between the environment, safety and health must be studied jointly, without losing sight of the framework provided by international law as a whole. This relationship also presents major regulatory challenges for contemporary international law. The approach adopted by the co-directors of this collective volume – Professors María Isabel Torres Cazorla and Elena del Mar García Rico – is therefore particularly appropriate. They have selected seven major themes, grouped into three overarching areas – environment, security and health – which are analysed in light of the challenges they pose in the current international context.

Thus, the first part of the book is devoted to the environment and is composed of two chapters. In Chapter 1, *María Isabel Torrez Cazorla* (University of Malaga) examines whether the International Court of Justice (ICJ) has devoted too little or too slow attention to environmental protection. To address this question, the author reviews how the environmental protection considerations have appeared in the ICJ case law and pays particular attention to the recent work of various principal organs of the United Nations

concerning States' possible obligations regarding climate change, which led to a request for an advisory opinion from the ICJ on this complex issue.

In Chapter 2, *Nicolás Carrillo Santarelli* and *Francesco Seatzu* (University of Cagliari) introduce the protection of future generations as a transformative element of international law within the broader discussion of environmental, security and health challenges. This issue is also explored as a guarantee of the environment for future generations. In this regard, future generations are studied from the perspective of the possible international subjectivity of the legal order that protects their interests, and it is analysed whether those who have not yet been born may be afforded legal protection. The authors advance that they consider a novel hypothesis, namely that safeguarding future generations is both a legitimate aspiration and consistent with the recognising rights for future generations and corresponding obligations to preserve and respect them.

The second part of the volume focuses on various issues related to security, which are addressed in three chapters. Thus, in Chapter 3, *Javier Roldán Barbero* (University of Granada) examines the relationship between environment and international conflict. The author considers internal conflicts through a geostrategic lens and places environmental protection among global public goods. He then analyses the interplay between the environment, peace and security, concluding that a green dimension of the international humanitarian law has emerged on the international scene.

The following two chapters explore topics linking security with health. In Chapter 4, *Daniel García San José* (University of Seville) analyses the responses of international law to the risks and challenges posed by neurotechnologies to human dignity and the protection of fundamental rights and freedoms. Special attention is given to the interaction between artificial intelligence and neurotechnologies, which have undergone significant recent developments. In Chapter 5, *Elena del Mar García Rico* (University of Malaga) examines the interactions between security and health from the perspective of unilateral sanctions, which have become particularly relevant in contexts of health vulnerability such as the COVID-19 pandemic. This author raises the legality of such sanctions and the extent to which countermeasures may affect the protection of human rights in general and the right to health in particular.

Health is the third major topic addressed in this volume through two chapters. In Chapter 6, *José Manuel Sánchez Patrón* (University of Valencia) analyses the declaration of a "public health emergency of national concern" made by the WHO Director-General in during the COVID-19 pandemic. The analysis is carried out from a normative point of view, with particular emphasis on its shortcomings revealed in practice and offering proposals for reform to ensure better and more appropriate responses to future pandemics.

Finally, Chapter 7, by *Jorge Antonio Climent Gallart* (University of Valencia), provides a detailed study of the case law of the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) concerning the forced sterilisation of Roma women. The analysis focuses primarily on the ECtHR's jurisprudence on Articles 3 and 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), which refer to the right to protection of private and family life, and the right not to be subjected to inhuman or degrading treatment, respectively. This chapter

also offers a critical assessment of the ECtHR's failure to rule on Article 14 of the ECHR which provides for the right not to be discriminated against in relation to the situation of Roma women subjected to forced sterilisation.

In my view, this book deals with highly topical issues and is an essential reading for understanding the complex triad of "environment, security and health". Beyond the *Introduction*, the volume might have benefited from a chapter specifically devoted to analysing the points of convergence and interaction among these three thematic areas which would have provided ever greater contextualization. Nevertheless, the scholarly contribution of this collective book is unquestionable, particularly in a doctrinal field where academic studies in Spanish remain scarce.

Gabriela A. OANTA

Full professor of public international law  
University of A Coruña





