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A Responsibility to Rethink? Challenging Paradigms in Human Security¹

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As Victor Hugo once wrote, “not even armies can withstand an idea whose time has come.” In the case of human security he may very well be right, but the emergence of differing conceptions of it has affected the trajectory of its development as an alternative security paradigm. Human security is a new phrase with old roots with immense appeal for those interested in the creation of a more just world order. This appeal is derived from a combination of material changes and challenges in the global system as well as an ideational shift towards international citizenship and governance. Increasing interconnectivities in global economic, social and environmental systems have created impacts for citizens around the world and challenges for state regulation. There has been a corresponding reconceptualization of key concepts such as citizenship and sovereignty. In an increasingly interconnected world what responsibilities do states and peoples have to each other? This chapter poses the question: how radical a transformation is the shift from national security to human security?

At the core of the debate among proponents of human security is the perceived tension between the protection of individuals and addressing broader ‘root causes.’ I argue here that the concept of ‘responsibility to protect’ (R2P) is commonly presented as a pragmatic move to narrow human security into a more manageable concept, but the result of this betrays the deeper normative shift implied in the concept. By separating one of the many factors that contribute and lead to weak states, civil conflicts and large-scale losses of life, the root causes remain relegated to the bottom of the priority list, conceptually and practically, condemning populations to perpetual conflict and thus, *insecurity*. As a method for analysing this problem, I will contrast the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty’s (ICISS) report, *The Responsibility to Protect*, which focuses on the narrow definition, with the Commission on Human Security’s report, *Human Security Now (HS Now)*. I will analyse the strengths and weaknesses of each document and their fit in the broader debate on operationalizing human security. This analysis is broken down into an examination of the pragmatic rationale given for the narrow focus, as well as a discussion of deeper conceptual shifts embedded in the human security concept.

The significance of ‘narrow’ Canadian version of human security has been enhanced through its official sanction at the 2005 World Summit of the United Nations, as well as

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by an April 2006 UN Security Council (UNSC) resolution (Resolution 1674). The most powerful countries in the world – with several exceptions, perhaps – are on the UN Security Council, and the passage of a resolution supporting R2P provokes the question: does this acceptance represent a significant shift in how security is conceptualized? What is entailed normatively and practically in R2P, and why would the ‘narrow’ conceptualization be preferable to *HS Now*? These are questions fundamentally relevant to scholars of global order, conflict and development. The question of how radical the notion of human security is, and the scale of normative and practical change necessary to implement a human security policy framework cuts to the core of the ‘broad versus narrow’ debate surrounding this concept. In order to change the referent from the state to the individual, which means a shift from Westphalian state-based norms to fluid concepts of sovereignty, it has been suggested that human security needs to be focused on direct physical threats to human security, both for methodological and policy-related reasons.¹

The two conceptions of security outlined in this chapter rest on competing rationale. It is hypothesized that focusing on the ‘freedom from fear’ agenda will spur normative changes and this may ‘spill over’ to other aspects of human insecurity.² The focus for narrow human security is pragmatic, focusing on operationalizing within a power politics framework, conceptual clarity, and military force. On the other side of this debate, proponents of broad human security argue that, even at the state level, security threats are no longer confined to the military realm.³ Poverty, disease, and environmental degradation are all integrally related state security, and even more so for individuals. Due to the direct connection between human insecurity and state failure, focusing on one narrow aspect of human security fails to deal with the real structural issues perpetuating conflict around the world. Because of its conceptual simplicity, the narrow view has gained wider acceptance at an international level and, therefore, it becomes important to dig into the implications of the conceptual shift from broad to narrow.

Why Human Security?

There are two broad phenomena which prompted the rise of concept of human security. The first was the end of the Cold War and the second was the acceleration of ‘globalization’ and the resulting non-traditional security threats. The fall of the Soviet Union and Cold War alliance structures initiated a series of state collapses. Increasing incidences of civil war have highlighted the inability of the traditional realist (state-centric) definition of security to deal with the myriad of intra-state conflicts so prevalent today. The concept of human security also arose out of the recognition of the state-centrism’s failure to deal with non-military threats to countries and their populations. Mass migrations, transnational crime, environmental disasters, extreme fluctuations in capital markets and diseases fall outside conventional security analyses but cause many millions of deaths yearly. Roughly 20 per cent of the world’s population live on less than a dollar a day, and more than 45 per cent on less than two dollars a day. Because of these conditions, approximately 18 million people a year die of preventable causes, many of them children.⁴ Political and criminal violence on average killed about 800,000 people in 2000 according to the World Health Organisation (WHO), compared to 17 million for communicable diseases.⁵ The nexus of these two phenomena provides the basis for

human security, essentially a response to the failures of traditional state-centric and militaristic security frameworks.

Human security first gained international recognition in the UN Development Programme's (UNDP) *Human Development Report* in 1994. Originally outlined in its broadest conception, the report described seven types of security:

- economic;
- food;
- health;
- environmental;
- personal;
- community; and
- political.

This formulation posed a direct challenge to the traditional paradigm, and many analysts welcomed the new alternative. For Mahbub Ul-Haq:

... security of a people is now becoming the dominant concern. Security is increasingly interpreted as:

- Security of people, not just territory;
- Security of individuals, not just of nations;
- Security through development, not through arms;
- Security of all people everywhere: in their homes, in their jobs, in their streets, in their communities, and in their environment.⁶

The expansion of non-traditional security analysis furthered the appeal of the human security framework. Though critical of human security, Barry Buzan's work on securitization and non-traditional threats to the state overlaps to a large degree with the original broad conception that security is no longer solely a military matter. He argues that "as scholars and practitioners developed a better appreciation of how relations of economic interdependence affect the fundamental health and welfare of states, the purview of national security studies – and with it, the concept of security – expanded."⁷

There are two key issues of interdependence which human security has introduced. The first is a lateral linkage between different 'non-traditional' aspects of security: for example, health to education, economic to political, physical to environmental. A second issue of interdependence is the introduction of vertical linkages, positing that security for the state rests (and should rest) on that of its people. This can also be expanded to include the individual states within a global system to the system itself, which will be discussed in subsequent sections. With regard to the latter, it is difficult to conceptualize economic security for a citizen in a state with an economy oriented to cash-cropping and subject to tied-aid and increasing foreign debts. By integrating a diversity of security issues with a diversity of levels of analysis and responsibility, human security provides an admittedly complex but more realistic picture of the causes and conditions of security of peoples and states.

At the heart of human security, then, is the idea of non-traditional security – a conception broader than that of the state and realist conceptions of power politics. It

fundamentally changes *both* the referent object and the source of existential threats experienced by individuals. By reconceptualizing the referent object of security and the role of the state, complex questions arise regarding the importance of state sovereignty, intervention and self-determination. The concept of human security (with the UNDP) *began* as an interdisciplinary or even non-disciplinary exercise. Why then has it subsequently been narrowed by some, and what are the implications of this? In a post-colonial world with weak states, the destabilizing forces of economic globalization, compounded with long histories of ethnic strife and oppression, many states are either unwilling or fundamentally unable to meet the requirements of human security. William Bain notes the fact “that some of these states do not provide adequate security for their citizens, yet manage to ensure their own survival, signifies to some observers the moral bankruptcy of national security.”⁸ The R2P report was an attempt to address the problem of international intervention in response to the inability or unwillingness of states to stop genocide. Liberal-democratic states seem to be the states that most readily agree with the idea, and it is these states that disproportionately engage in actions deemed ‘humanitarian intervention.’ In addressing the problem of intervention, however, some critics argued that by subsuming the ‘rights’ of the state to the conscience of the international community, the concept of human security merely legitimized liberal-democratic imperialism through humanitarian intervention, particularly given the non-state forces contributing to human insecurity today.⁹

Two Policy Documents: R2P and *HS Now*

The Responsibility to Protect (R2P)

In 2001 the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty published its report *The Responsibility to Protect* with the goal of facilitating the development of human security policy. Ramesh Thakur, Senior Vice-Rector of the United Nations University in Tokyo, highlights the three main goals of this report:

First, it seeks to reposition the existing normative consensus on the subject by replacing the language of humanitarian intervention with the concept of the responsibility to protect. Second, it seeks to locate that responsibility with state authorities at the national level and with the Security Council at the global level. Third, it seeks to ensure that when intervention for human-protection purposes does take place, it is carried out with efficiency, effectiveness, and due authority, process and diligence.¹⁰

The core principle of R2P is that where states are unwilling or unable to react, the international community has a responsibility to protect the citizens of the country in question. The argument is that people have a *right* to protection from genocide, ethnic cleansing and large-scale atrocities. The need for this new formulation of sovereignty was spurred by atrocities committed in Bosnia and Rwanda and the failure of the international community to act, even when events were clear. One need only read Romeo Dallaire’s *Shake Hands with the Devil: The Failure of Humanity in Rwanda* to gain insight into the moral bankruptcy of an international system which would let such events take place.¹¹

Reframing sovereignty as a responsibility, not as an inalienable right, was a major accomplishment of the R2P report.

The issue of intervention is critical to the narrow conception of human security. The latter focuses on cases in which human lives are threatened by force and asserts that the international community has a moral obligation to react; in other words, to prevent another Rwanda. The focus in the report is on the physical security of both combatant and non-combatant individuals in conflict. It outlines threshold criteria which determine when intervention for human security purposes should be sanctioned: right intention (not for political or strategic objectives), last resort, proportional means and chance of success. In addition it places great stock in making sure that 'appropriate authorities' take action, highlighting the facilitating and legitimating functions of the UN. Lloyd Axworthy points out that "this is where the International Commission's report can be of real value, for it outlines criteria for post-conflict rebuilding under international auspices that keep the rights of the victim in mind ... the conditions' criteria ensure that the cure is not worse than the ailment."¹²

The report is divided into three sections: the responsibility to prevent; the responsibility to react; and the responsibility to rebuild. It states that "prevention is the single most important dimension of the responsibility to protect: prevention options should always be exhausted before intervention is contemplated, and more commitment and resources must be devoted to it."¹³ However, the bulk of its 91 pages is devoted to military humanitarian intervention, and though the desirability of preventative measures are noted, there is no attempt to link these in any real way with the actual intervention. For example, if a country or group of countries make no efforts to deal with systemic issues of poverty, inequality, disease, arms transfers, their ability to respond credibly in the people's interests is compromised.

Despite what the report says about the importance of prevention, however, in the narrow conception, the key focus is on protection of individual physical security at the time of the event and after, not on prevention. Furthermore, it is not concerned with diverse causes of the events, even the ones that derive from the international system itself, such as post-colonial relations, arms shipments or economic relations between foreign agents or countries.

Human Security Now (HS Now)

As a counterpoint to R2P, the Commission on Human Security (CHS) published *Human Security Now* in 2003. While acknowledging the need to protect humans from violent conflict, *HS Now* builds on the original UNDP broad definition of human security. Whereas R2P does not discuss the connection between development and large-scale abuses of people, *Human Security Now* does. It stresses the centrality of development to the prevention of conflict and the importance of addressing the root causes in addressing conflict in the global system. According to *Human Security Now*:

The Commission on Human Security proposes that a global initiative be mobilized to place human security at the top of local, national, regional and global agendas. The goals: to prevent conflict and advance human rights and development, to protect and empower people and their communities, and to deepen democratic principles and practices. All to promote a human security culture and framework.¹⁴

In contrast to the R2P report, *HS Now* concentrates its focus on making it clear that there are a variety of interconnected causes of human insecurity. It also stresses that a focus on only one cause will mean the failure to provide adequate capacity-building measures that contribute to sustainable human development. According to CHS:

Not only are peace and development both important, they are also interconnected. The chain from poverty and deprivation to violent conflict – and back – has to be followed carefully. Deprivation persists in countries that do not flare up in conflict, and conflicts flare up in relatively well-off countries. Deprivation and unequal treatment may not generate an immediate revolt, but they can remain in people's memory and influence the course of events much later. And while the leaders of conflicts often come from the more prosperous parts of society, poverty can provide rich recruiting grounds for the 'foot soldiers' of violent engagements.¹⁵

The report does not focus on the political feasibility of implementing a broad approach; it simply charts a new normative course for discussions of security. Issues deliberately left off the agenda of the R2P report, such as reform of the Security Council, are highlighted in *HS Now*. Like the broad concept itself, the report is a 'way forward' based not in the political realities of power politics but rather based on the prevention and alleviation of the suffering of people around the world. It is for this reason that the focus is so strongly on root causes and it makes what amount to idealistic prescriptions, including such steps as the vast redistribution of wealth, reform of the international trading system and substantial reform of the UN.

Sadako Ogata and Jonathan Cels outline the 10 foci of the *HS Now* report:

1. Protecting people's rights and freedoms.
2. Protecting people from the proliferation of weapons.
3. Protecting people on the move (since this reflects forces of globalization and violence).
4. Complimenting the responsibility to protect with the responsibility to rebuild.
5. Ensuring markets and trade benefit the poorest by emphasizing equitable distribution of benefits.
6. Developing a comprehensive approach to ensure livelihoods and work-based security.
7. Alleviating poverty related health threats as they are among the most critical and pervasive insecurities.
8. Meeting the challenges of current intellectual property rights so that technological and knowledge-based advances (particularly as they relate to health) are possible.
9. Empowering people through basic education.
10. Forming compassionate attitudes and ethical outlooks from a global perspective.¹⁶

Implementation of the 'sustainable human development' concept of human security has been laid out in broad strokes by *HS Now*. Of course then the challenge becomes operationalizing these goals. Plans to operationalize the vision include:

- coordination of a single UN development authority;
- implementation of a Tobin tax to finance human security projects (a ‘Tobin tax’ is a fee levied on transactions which ‘externalize’ costs to the global commons. Some suggestions have been for fossil fuels, currency trading and capital movements, and arms shipments); and
- the bringing together of dispersed agencies.¹⁷

This plan has been strongly supported by the Japanese government and various UN organizations (such as the UNDP), but in recent years is proving less ‘sellable’ at the international level than R2P. Both at the 2005 World Summit and in the 2006 UNSC resolution, R2P was the focus of debate in cases of large-scale threats to physical security, and no mention was made of economic, environmental, health factors in the situation or other areas outlined either by *HS Now* or the original UNDP 1994 formulation. The reasons for this are examined below.

Practical Implications: A Case for the Narrow?

Some have argued that the narrow R2P conception of human security is the most conceptually clear and feasible articulation of the concept. This argument will be examined below with regard to the issues of political will, sequencing in implementation, potential spillover to the broad vision of human security and finally the concern over ‘securitizing’ everything.

Political Will and Cost

Advocates of narrowing the definition of human security argue that the narrow approach is necessary as political will in the rich Western states capable of such intervention is weak, especially when one considers the cost, human or financial.¹⁸ They argue that a focus on the systemic inequities which often contribute to sustaining conflicts would be prohibitively expensive and conceptually un-sellable to domestic populations in the developed world. To prevent the most serious violations of human physical security then, it is necessary to be pragmatic about the interests and capabilities of states to live up to their ‘responsibility to protect.’ In order to avoid ‘Rwandas’ in the future, in the logic of R2P, we must legitimize certain interventions. And, although the threshold criteria set the bar for intervention high, they do, nonetheless, purport to institute a norm whereby sovereignty is subject to the ability of a state to keep its people ‘secure,’ as determined by powerful states in the Security Council or coalitions of interested states.

On one hand, a narrow focus is simply reflective of a lack of political will to act in places where a state perhaps has no major interests, and where any action would possibly be contrary to the interests of large or important domestic constituencies. The narrow focus also acknowledges that interventions are expensive, and taxpayers may be reluctant to foot the bill, and send their militaries, unless they can be convinced of the importance of the mission. Furthermore, military threats to human security are often clearer and easier to articulate to domestic constituencies than more nebulous, holistic and developmental projects. The immediacy of these threats is clearer. As a result, narrowing is necessary to generate the necessary coalitions to pay the high costs of interventions.

Ultimately what costs are ‘worth bearing’ is dependent on the ability of media and governments to frame responsibility.

For proponents of the broader vision, political will and cost also play a key role in formulating the human security concept. They argue that the narrow treatment of costs ignores the fact that prevention is often cheaper than waging full scale interventions after the fact. This is in addition to the avoidance of the human costs (for example, loss of life, livelihood, infrastructure) paid by local populations. Moreover, it is the political will that advocates of the broader vision of human security are aiming at, in the hope of changing what is currently an accepted norm and laying bare the contradictions and moral bankruptcy of ‘power politics.’ Political will is not a static feature of political life. While existing domestic power blocks in wealthy countries will indeed play a key role in determining which interventions are ‘in their interest’ these blocs are historically constituted and subject to normative and societal processes of change. Will is, and can be *shaped*.

In addition to the critique that political will is fluid and prevention is cheaper than reaction is a suspicion of the motives of powerful states. Some argue that the most powerful states of the West already intervene in other countries, but for purposes other than humanitarian concerns. Thus the problem is not how to enable them to intervene *more* but to aid in empowering types of interventions. Mahbub Ul-Haq criticizes the narrow conception and R2P, arguing that it is too closely linked to protection and thus intervention, rather than prevention. He argues that “it would be far less interventionist to send development, rather than soldiers, to poor lands ... and develop a ‘Human Security Council.’”¹⁹ Focusing specifically on protection rather than prevention, means ignoring the root-cause and neglecting to create the means necessary to build a more sustainable and secure system. It also ignores that the whole concept is predicated on capacity development.

Sequencing, Spillover and Securitization

Policy-makers often need to make choices between competing projects. As a result, there arises a need for a ‘priority list’ of human security issues. What comes first? Is it possible to deal with systemic inequalities and problems in the midst of conflict? Advocates of the narrow view often point out that the core (life) must be secured before other systemic issues can be addressed (root causes, capacity, development). As a result,

... the narrow ‘safety of peoples’ approach to human security emphasizes the importance of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of former combatants and tackling these problems first, before addressing social and economic problems, on the grounds that there can be no sustainable development unless the local security environment is conducive to reconstruction.²⁰

The sequencing advocated in *HS Now* is the reverse of the R2P sequence. In the *HS Now* logic, by addressing the root causes of conflict – which include: competition over land and resources, sudden deep political and economic transitions, growing inequality among people and communities, increasing crime, corruption and illegal activities, weak and unstable political regimes and institutions, identity politics and historical legacies, such as colonialism – one can meet both developmental goals and the more specific goal

of preventing violent conflict.²¹ The authors of *HS Now* do acknowledge that in the “Kosovos and Rwandas” there is a *responsibility to protect*, but this is only a part of a much larger picture focused on human empowerment.

The issue of sequencing of security measures is a complex one. There is very little debate about whether ‘real security’ can be attained without physical safety, obviously without physical safety, all other actions are moot. Rather, the argument is that by narrowing the focus of security to violent conflict, the issue is conceptual divorce, rather than sequence. Practitioners in the development community have long argued that empowerment, not (solely) military intervention, is the key to long term changes. According to this argument, “empowered people can demand respect for their dignity when it is violated. They can also create new opportunities for work and address many problems locally, and they can mobilize action and resources for the security of others.”²² Samuel Kim goes further and argues that “violence in general is not the outbreak of isolated random and discrete processes; it is a function of interlocking dominant processes and structures at both intra-national and international levels.”²³ Thus, focusing human security solely on one issue (i.e., genocide) ignores the multiplicity of processes at work locally and globally that bear responsibility. The state may be the final guarantor of security but many weak states are supplied, created or facilitated by the very powerful states that would intervene. Who, then, should bear responsibility?

The logic of sequencing is closely associated with the first with the spillover hypothesis. This hypothesis argues that once norms of human security are established around physical security from military threats and the principle of protection of the weak become entrenched in international society, it will facilitate the broadening of the field to the non-traditional aspects of security. The argument here is pragmatically driven in that it acknowledges that, given the dominance of realism and state-centred security policy, the broad conception of human security is too big a shift to gain any operational relevance. In this sense, the human security ‘agenda’ needs to be digested piece-by-piece into international normative frameworks.

The problem with this argument is that it ignores a central critique of conventional security paradigms. Thus, the argument ignores the fact that the elements of security are *not* separate, they are linked, and it is this very separation that makes traditional notions of security incapable of dealing with the complex interconnected links between environmental, economic, health and conflict issues. Currently these factors are:

Separated into discrete policy areas, such as reforming health care or safeguarding economic security, that function within relatively autonomous policy streams. A key challenge is to consistently link these realms, helping the public to recognize that they are all a piece of the basic aim of promoting human security ... each realm impinges upon the others and is intrinsically connected to wider political and economic considerations.²⁴

Relying on spillover from the military-dominated security studies into these other areas is like relying on the trickle-down effect in economics. Thus, although there may be a connection between military action and peaceful economic development, these links are by no means guaranteed, which obscures the seriousness of the non-traditional aspects of human security.

The question of theory versus policy relevance and practical experience is critical to the development and usefulness of human security as a challenge to traditional security. Taylor Owen notes that “human security as an analytic and theoretical tool, and human security as a policy mandate are not necessarily incompatible, but if they were to become so, the success and effectiveness of both would be undermined ... the theory and policy of human security are surely better together than apart.”²⁵ Relying on spillover to deal with the theoretical ideas implicit in human security by policy implementation of only the narrow version creates a disjuncture between the theory and practice and severely reduces the efficacy and legitimacy of the concept to challenge a deeply entrenched dominant paradigm.

Another related argument for narrowing the concept of human security centers on the issue of *over*-securitization. By treating all threats to human beings as ‘security matters,’ whether environmental, political, emotional, physical or economic, the concept becomes too amorphous to have any policy relevance.²⁶ Proponents of the narrow focus of human security cite, in Taylor Owen’s words, “pragmatism, conceptual clarity and analytic rigor” as reasons to focus human security on violent threats. They criticize the broad conception as a list of every bad thing that could happen, and point to the danger of including everything under the rubric of security.²⁷

In response to these critiques, proponents of the broad perspective have suggested that threshold criteria for all ‘critical and pervasive’ threats to human security be developed. Analytical clarity and policy prioritization would be preserved by using the scale of the crisis rather than its nature (i.e. military or health/environmental/economic) as the referent of securitization. The threshold-based concept, that limits threats by their scale and scope rather than their cause, for broad coverage while maintaining the high-prioritization of the ‘security’ label. Owen argues, “by bringing the wide range of issues, data sets and knowledge of threats together, we facilitate the very type of interdisciplinary analysis needed to decipher the complex relations that make up our human insecurity.”²⁸

Proponents of the broad vision of human security argue that criticisms claiming the broad definition includes everything in the definition of security and thus waters down the concept past the point of utility are unfair. It never intended that every issue should be included at the top of the list of policy priorities. As well, according to Taylor Owen, “shifting the focus away from the state, as Mack points out, was simply a way to address events that may not threaten the state as an entity, but do threaten the lives of its citizens.”²⁹ Although this may require varied policy tools, it does not, as critics have argued, amount to the securitization of all human problems. Even the original UNDP formulation in 1994 made a clear distinction between ‘development’ and human security. The former focused on continual improvement in the quality of life people enjoy and their capacities, while the latter concentrated on basic issues of survival – the ‘critical core’ of human life.

Conceptual Implications

Pragmatism is the driving factor for limiting the focus of human security, but as illustrated above the rationale relied on for this narrowing has a tenuous relationship to the development of human security as a distinct paradigm. It is important that the validity

of the concept is not lost in this pragmatism. Shifting the focus of security from the state and including more issues under the human security 'umbrella' risks diluting the concept and making it less useful, but Owen suggests that "The subsequent analytic and normative difficulties are unfortunate but unavoidable consequences of broadening the security paradigm beyond threats to the state."³⁰ He refers to difficulties centered on transnational implementation and use of concepts such as justice, rights and their implications for sovereignty and security.

Sovereignty

The concept of human security frames state legitimacy and sovereignty as a product of treatment of citizens, a vast shift from Westphalian norms. Conceptually, this is a radical shift that requires states to defend rather than assume their sovereignty. In practice, of course, sovereignty rights are routinely violated by the powerful, but the issue at hand is in establishing *legitimate* interventions. In the language of R2P, citizens have a *right* to be protected from large-scale losses of life. This creates an obligation or duty on the part of (1) the state and (2) the international 'community' to enforce this right. This claim is notable and controversial for a number of reasons. First, it establishes a rights claim between the citizenry and their government. While this may be enshrined in liberal-democratic countries, this claim is not universally accepted. Second, it establishes a rights claim on the international community. As the entities which give practical legitimacy to state sovereignty, the international community ostensibly has the means with which it can enforce this international norm.

To the extent that R2P shifts the discourse away from rights of states and to the rights of vulnerable populations it marks a major breakthrough. However, it retains (purposefully) a commitment to working within the acceptable bounds of the very system that created these conflicts in the first place. The only requirement in R2P is that self-interest is not the *sole* motivation. Lloyd Axworthy argues that human security and state security are not necessarily conflicting values; they are complementary conceptions that deserve equal treatment. State sovereignty has been an unquestioned feature of the international system for too long, and a shift to human security makes it more conceptually accountable to the citizenry of the world. He argues that human security can actually enrich and further legitimize sovereignty as a concept.³¹

In this era of globalization when states are less and less able (or willing) to control domestic economic, environmental, technological and political factors, there is a burgeoning call for a *strengthening* of state sovereignty and the self-determination with which it is associated. This does not necessarily contradict either conception of human security. As Stoett notes, "if globalization is a threat to individuality and may promote some of the less desirable attributes of large-scale change (population movements, environmental destruction and so on), we may end up defending the state and its right, or obligation, to take unilateral action to protect its citizens from the potential ravages of the global economy."³² Thus an assertion of state power may uphold the survival rights of its citizenry.

Rights and Responsibilities

Human security's focus on state and international community responsibility raises the following question: on what grounds do foreign powers or their citizens bear a

responsibility or duty to victims of genocide? One answer rests on an appeal to self-interest – i.e., foreign powers bear responsibility on the grounds that a stable international system requires stable states. Refugee flows, post-conflict reconstruction, and other ‘costs’ of conflict are detrimental to all members of the system.

Another answer rests on the need for strong states to be ‘good global citizens.’ They have the resources and a ‘duty of assistance’ in liberal philosopher John Rawls’ language as the world’s leaders. Yet, the responsibilities of the international community go far beyond this, as a deeper analysis of human insecurity makes clear that international institutions (particularly Bretton-Woods institutions, for example, the International Monetary Fund), dominated by the very states which are capable of acting, often contribute to and sustain the very states and systems responsible for insecurity. Thus the obligation framed in human security can be construed as one borne out of complicity in creating the conditions for conflict in the first place: colonialism, economic deprivation, environmental degradation and political instability. Powerful states have an obligation and ‘responsibility’ to prevent and protect citizens around the world because they shape and create the system in which those populations live.

A conceptual narrowing of human security ignores the processes which generated the conscience-shocking acts and the often diffuse parties responsible for them. R2P allows for a framing of responsibility of the weak and incapable state versus the strong rescuing international community. This does not allow for an analysis of the genesis of the conflict and is an ahistorical snapshot. This framing excuses global actors for their part in creating injustices and focuses only on their future role in solutions.

On the lateral level (expanding security across issue areas), narrowing also confuses the issues conceptually. If the target of human security is ‘conscience-shocking’ loss of life, why is there a distinction between violent acts such as murder and non-violent causes of death such as AIDS, starvation, or pollution of drinking water? Politically it may be easier to attribute blame to states and their militaries rather than the failure of economies to ‘raise all boats,’ or of companies to be good environmental or corporate citizens, but the distinction itself is not a necessary or natural one.

Justice

Another key concept underpinning human security is that of justice. In the use of terms such as ‘conscience-shocking’ and ‘morally bankrupt,’ both narrow and broad visions of human security refer to the idea that somehow grave injustice is committed in that the victims are either not getting their due or are being punished unfairly.³³ Justice can be variously conceived – from a liberal ‘duty of assistance’ on the part of developed states acting out of benevolence, to a cosmopolitan striving for equality.³⁴ At its heart conceiving human security as an issue of justice relates to the random assignment of a person’s status in the global order, within *or* between states. One did not choose to be born a Tutsi in Rwanda, and thus do not deserve the differential resources or opportunities afforded in the global allocation. This issue is particularly critical with reference to the broad concept of human security. A just international system would distribute the costs and benefits of global production, environmental degradation and a number of other factors equitably. To attain such a ‘just’ system would require vast redistribution of wealth in the world. While Rawls’ theory of justice is egalitarian at the domestic level, it famously does not apply globally.³⁵ He conceptualized a duty only in

well-ordered (i.e., developed) societies.³⁶ Another problem is that Rawls' 'duty of assistance' is more about aid after the fact and respect for the diversity of individual state units, not in changing unjust economic policies or reducing inequalities.³⁷ Rawls' framing begs the question: is there a logical reason to limit this duty to the domestic sphere? Those with a cosmopolitan or global perspective would argue this limitation is arbitrary and perpetuates injustice.

A cosmopolitan perspective on global justice challenges the domestic/international distinction in three important ways. First, theorists such as Brian Barry and Thomas Pogge argue distributive justice must be conceived globally, not just nationally. Brian Barry's notion of justice as impartiality is a main foundation for this view,³⁸ but Thomas Pogge also advances the power of moral universalism. He claims that Rawls

... runs afoul of moral universalism.... He fails to meet the burden of showing that his applying different moral principles to national and global institutional schemes does not amount to arbitrary discrimination in favor of affluent societies and against the global poor.³⁹

Second, it is a mistake to ignore the global basic structure in a moral theory of the international. Thus, as Allen Buchanan asserts, it is unjustifiable to proceed "either as if societies are economically self-sufficient and distributionally autonomous ... or as if whatever distributional effects the global structure has are equitable and hence not in need of being addressed by a theory of international distributive justice."⁴⁰ States are not separate, self-contained units. Their internal institutions and political cultures are affected by international structures.

Third, the argument that the advanced, industrial countries are not responsible for the developing countries' problems because they were caused by factors internal to the developing states is untenable in such a world. As Charles Beitz says:

It is not even clear that the question [about the relative importance of domestic versus international causes of development] is intelligible as it arises for contemporary developing societies which are enmeshed in the global division of labor: a society's integration into the world economy, reflected in its trade relations, dependence on foreign capital markets, and vulnerability to the policies of international financial institutions, can have deep and lasting consequences for the domestic economic and political structure. Under these circumstances, it may not even be possible to distinguish between domestic and international influences on a society's economic condition.⁴¹

Buchanan's convincing re-working of Rawls suggests that theories of domestic justice have global reach. This is partially due to the fact that advanced industrial countries and their international institutions are responsible for the current international system and its rules. They also freely buy the goods sold by such corrupt and unelected governments and offer them loans. Thus for theoretical and empirical reasons, distributive justice must be cosmopolitan in scope, and the role of international institutions must be scrutinized from such a moral perspective.

These ethical and normative issues, are indeed 'messy.' There is little to suggest that

powerful states in the international system have any desire to incorporate a concept of human security which requires them to ‘earn’ their sovereignty and fulfill duties internationally required by norms of global justice – even ones based on liberal-democratic philosophy. Conceptually, there is little to recommend a narrowing of human security solely to violence, but it is clear why that may be the only concept states are willing to acknowledge.

A Responsibility to Rethink?

The movement away from the UNDP’s broad conception emerged from the critique that it was counterproductive to lump all security concerns together. This occurred because of the belief that to be an effective challenge to the dominant paradigm, human security needed to evolve into something more clear-cut and manageable. But not everyone agreed with this. Peter Stoett, for example, argues against this move and asserts that:

... to some extent concepts soften as they broaden; that is, they lose analytic and legal precision.... But the terms *globalization* and *security* don’t mean much in their minimalist conceptions ... security for one state, or one empire, or one group of elites, is an impossible dream in this age of mutual vulnerability.⁴²

In this formulation, security of the individual or group is an impossible dream without a broad definition when confronted by the interlinked challenges of environmental degradation, economic globalization, population growth, transnational crime and disease (to name but a few). The concept of human security arose out of a very real need to reframe these threats to humans against the dominance of a militaristic state-centred security apparatus.

This paper has argued that it is not possible to separate the broad from the narrow and still maintain the values and goals that form the basis of human security. A critical point here is that human insecurity results directly from existing structures of power that determine who enjoys the entitlement to security and who does not. Such structures can be identified at several levels, ranging from the global, to the regional, the state and finally the local level. Human security is, at its core a radical concept and, as Caroline Thomas argues,

... ultimately human security requires different developmental strategies from those currently favoured by global governance institutions, strategies that have redistribution at their core. It also requires a different type of global governance, one that better reflects the concerns of the majority of the world’s states and citizens.⁴³

The narrow without the broad is a recipe for further dependence by conflict-torn countries on the rich, powerful and the international community controlled by them. It is liberal-internationalism versus ‘real’ development and empowerment.

One report outlined here entails a normative shift to acknowledging the need for a more just world order, and the other avoids the most controversial and systemic issues and applies band-aid solutions in hopes that at least some deaths may be averted. This is

ineffective as “despite the claims of a ‘new standard of intolerance for human misery and human atrocities’ since the end of the Cold War, nothing has changed since then to indicate that either ‘human misery’ or ‘human atrocities’ are taken any more seriously by powerful nations than they were during it.”⁴⁴ In a sense, should a concept of human security acquire the sanction of today’s great powers, one would be wise to be suspicious. A Bush administration ‘convinced’ of the merits of R2P should make one re-examine the concept being advanced. The reconceptualization of security from a traditional, state-centred and militaristic one to a human-focused and comprehensive one will not be an easy, quick or politically facile transition. But reconfiguring the concept itself to fit better within a dominant paradigm which subjugates vast sectors of the world’s population to insecurity and likely (if not inevitable) conflict is a clear mistake.

Without development of basic human capacities, the post-conflict country is inevitably tied to the international community, not empowered, and that because of this human security proponents get legitimately accused of propagating a system of nation-building and imperialism. Intervention and military protection form but a small part of the responsibility of states to peoples around the world. Human security arose out of a need to transcend the conceptualization of security as state-centred power politics and reframe it as a responsibility to citizens by their states. Lloyd Axworthy noted in *Navigating a New World, Canada’s Global Future* that the very success of normative shifts like the land mines issue rests on a refusal to compromise the key tenets upon which they are based.⁴⁵ Compromise is exactly what R2P represents, an unwillingness to shift the normative discourse to what really matters to human beings – the multitude of causes for their insecurity. Former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan has pointed out that

We know that we cannot be secure amidst starvation, that we cannot build peace without alleviating poverty, and that we cannot build freedom on the foundations of injustice. These pillars of what we now understand as the people-centered concept of ‘human security’ are interrelated and mutually enforcing.⁴⁶

The broad formulation of human security *is* a radical transformation acknowledging the need for global responsibility to critical and pervasive injustices. Baron de Montesquieu’s famous assertion that the natural effect of commerce is to lead to peace has not materialized. Our current system has more commerce than ever before in the history of the planet, yet wars abound. We find new and more expensive ways to kill each other, despite all the trade and production increases. Economic globalization led by Washington Consensus institutions has not led to peace or development, thus any concept of human security that leaves out economic issues and relations of power erodes the foundation upon which the power of the concept derives. Victor Hugo may be right, ideas may have the power to overwhelm armies, but human security can only do so if it retains the roots of its appeal: justice for all people and an accountable system of sovereignty, not arbitrary power.

Notes

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20. Hampson, *Madness in the Multitude*, p. 35.
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