

# Human security: Looking back before looking forward<sup>♦</sup>

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## Part I: What is Human Security?

### 1) What is Human Security

The concepts of “security” and “insecurity” have relative connotations in different contexts. For some, insecurity comes from the sudden loss of guarantee of access to jobs, health care, social welfare, education, etc. For others insecurity stems from violation of human rights, extremism, domestic violence, spread of conflicts, displacement, etc. To be meaningful, therefore, security needs to be redefined as a subjective experience at the micro level in terms of people’s daily experience.

The simplest definition of security is the absence of insecurity and threats. In realism, security has usually been associated with threats to the survival of states. Human security instead poses threats to individuals and communities as its focus. Threats can be to their **survival** (physical abuse, violence, persecution, or death), to their **livelihoods** (unemployment, food insecurity, health threats, etc), and to their **dignity**. Thus, poverty, for example, is conceptualized as a human security threat. Not only because it can induce violence which threatens the stability of the state, but because it is a threat to the dignity of individuals.

Human security, in its broadest term, therefore means freedom from want, freedom from fear and a life of dignity.

Although there is no widely accepted universal definition of human security, there are three schools of thought at the moment:

- 1) A first school, mostly of the realist and neo-realist tradition for whom human security lacks analytical rigor,

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is not an analytically useful paradigm but a political agenda. To this group, human security is not a new or acceptable paradigm worthy of study.

- 2) A second school, which while accepting the term, insists on limiting it to a narrow definition focusing on “freedom from fear” and factors that perpetuate violence;
- 3) A third approach for whom a broad definition, based on “freedom from want”, “freedom from fear” and freedom from indignity is an essential tool for understanding contemporary crises.

The minimalist approach to human security, i.e., ‘freedom from fear’, is adopted by Canada and the Report of the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty, *A Responsibility to Protect (in 2001)*. This approach concentrates on direct threats to individuals’ safety and to their physical integrity: armed conflict, human rights abuses, public insecurity and organized crime. The maximalist broad approach is adopted by the UNDP, by the Government of Japan, and by the Commission on Human Security (2003) and concentrates on threats, both direct and indirect, both objective and subjective, which come from traditional understandings of insecurity, under-development and human rights abuses. The broad definition insists on integrated solution for multifaceted issues.

In a nutshell, human security means:

1. The recognition of new threats beyond traditional tools of violence.
2. The recognition of new security referent objects beyond the state (with emphasis on people and communities)
3. The recognition of how development, human rights and security are interlinked

## 2) Why Now?

The human security approach responds to the need to address the major changes in international relations and, above all, to the increased inter-dependency of threats. The end of the Cold War did not result in the expected peace dividend. While conflicts continued unabated, new insecurities confronted states and individuals.

The genesis of human security was thus conditioned by the new possibilities and new threats emerging with the end of the bipolar power blocks. While on the one hand, the risks of a global confrontation and major inter-states conflicts decreased, the shift from a polarized to a globalize environment meant increased awareness of intra-state conflicts, ethnic confrontations, terrorism, migration and forced displacements, extreme poverty, marginalization and exclusion of groups and communities, HIV/AIDs and new diseases, etc. Furthermore, globalization enabled the unfettered movement of capital and technology as national barriers were removed for rapid movement of goods, capital and people. This unrestricted movement led to financial meltdowns and economic downturns as seen in the Asian (1997) and Russian (1999) crises, as well as increased trafficking of drugs, people and arms - all with devastating human impacts.

### **3) What Has Been its Achievements Conceptually?**

The shift from state-based to individual-based security introduces three new answers to the questions: “security of whom”, “security from what” and “security by what means”.

*Security of Whom?* Human security designates the individual(s) rather than the state as the “referent object” of security, although this does not abrogate the security of a state. There no longer is a *raison d'état* beyond the *raison d'être* of the security of people. The relationship between state security and that of individuals is complementary, dependent and mutually reinforcing. Without human security, state security cannot be attained and vice versa.

*Security from What?* Because it concentrates on the well-being and dignity of individuals, the human security approach recognizes menaces beyond violence to include a host of other threats together with their inter-dependence. Human security threats include both objective and tangible elements, such as insufficient income, chronic unemployment, dismal access to adequate health care and quality education, etc., as well as subjective perceptions, such the inability to control one's destiny, indignity, fear of crime and violent conflict, etc. They can be both direct (those that are deliberately orchestrated, such as systematic persecutions) and indirect (those that arise inadvertently or

structurally, e.g., under-investment in key social and economic sectors such as education and health care).

The human security framework postulates three assumptions about threats: that equal weight has to be given to under-development and human right violations as ‘threats’ alongside traditional insecurities, that threats are inter-linked and inter-connected, and that these linkages mean that they should not be prioritized.

*Security by What Means?* Mahbub Ul Haq, who coined the concept in the 1994 UNDP *Human Development Report*, put it bluntly: Human security could be achieved through “development, not through arms.”

Security is not just the end of war or the absence of violence, but also the ability to go about one’s business safely, in a safe environment -- to have a job, to participate in political processes, to have choices for the education of one’s children, to live a healthy life and to do all this with the knowledge that achievements will not be taken away abruptly. Hence, insecurity should not be dealt with through short-term military or policing solutions, but a long term comprehensive strategy that abides by promises of development and promotion of human rights. The survival, well-being and dignity of the individual become the ultimate goal, and constructs such as the state, the institutions of political democracy, and the marketplace are relegated to secondary status as simply means to achieve that goal.

Human security is therefore both an ethical rupture with traditional security paradigms (by making the security of people and communities as the ultimate goal), and a methodological one (with the idea that by securing individuals first, the security of the state, the region and the international system can also be ensured).

#### **4) What Have Been the Most Important Critics Conceptually?**

To better understand the various critiques of this relatively new concept, we can group them into four clusters:

- 1) The *conceptual critiques* look at how the very definition (or lack thereof) of human security impedes its progress. These sets of critiques mostly argue against the broad definition of

- human security, accusing it to be too vague to act against threats, understand causalities and explain behaviour.
- 2) From an *analytical point of view*, the concept challenges the existing academic disciplines by denying the traditional rules and realities of international relations and driving towards a reductionist understanding of international security. Among these critiques, the problem of over-securitization is questionable not only on moral grounds but also intellectually.
  - 3) The *political and moral implications* of a human security agenda is also criticized on the grounds that it challenges the traditional role of the sovereign state as the sole provider of security, as well as the very sovereignty of the State in the international context.
  - 4) Those interested in operationalizing human security point to a number of *implementation* difficulties in creating a bridge between rhetoric and policy. For these critics, the complexity and subjectivity makes prioritization difficult and measurements of success unclear.

Despite these critiques, however, human security has become a key concept in international relations that is increasingly studied by academics in the fields of development and of security studies. Politically, it has followed its own rocky road.

## **Part II: The Politics of Human Security**

### **1) What is its Genesis?**

Within international politics, Mahbub Ul Haq was not the first to use the terms “freedom from fear” and “freedom from want”. They had already been introduced in the January 6 1941 State of Union Address of the American President Roosevelt as part of his vision of a “world founded upon four essential human freedoms”. Of the four freedoms that Roosevelt used, two became used as the basis of the foundation of the United Nations in 1945: Freedom from fear and freedom from want.

But the two were constantly used separately and became distinct pillars of universal human rights (so-called generations). During the cold war, Western countries were adamant about being

associated with political and civil rights (freedom from fear), while Soviet block and post-colonial developing states with second generation, economic and development rights (freedom from want). With the end of the Cold War, the UNDP *Human Development Report* sought to reconcile these, coining a broad human security definition that would simultaneously encompass both freedom from fear and freedom from war.

This paradigm shift in international security also responded to the evolution of geopolitical realities. During the Cold War, Security was understood in relation to the security of the state, in terms of preserving its territorial integrity and political sovereignty from military threats. In the 1980's, security was broadened to include not only the military and territorial security of a state, but also non-traditional treats such as economic and environmental degradation. In the 1990s, transnational actors – private companies, international organizations, NGOs and non-state entities – become actors in international relations. All this led to an evolution that led to interest in welfare beyond warfare, and to an understanding of increased inter-dependency of nations and individuals.

The advent of human security in the 1990s can also be seen as the triumph of the South in putting development concerns into global security discussions. Mahbub Ul Haq's 1994 Human Development Report can be seen as a continuation of protests against the inefficiency and amorality of existing security arrangements, which responded to the East/West arms confrontation but marginalized the development concerns of the rest of the world. This grievance had already been highlighted in a number of reports of independent high level commissions throughout decades: The North South Report of the Commission chaired by Willy Brandt in 1980, for example, argued that the hunger and economic crisis had led to the breakdown of peace as much as military aggression. The 1982 report of the Commission chaired by Olaf Palme called *Common Security: A Blueprint for Survival* also argued that hunger and poverty were immediate challenges for survival more than wars and military aggression. In 1990, the South Commission, chaired by Jules Nyerere, argued that insecurity stemmed from poverty, de-institutionalization, environmental degradation and deficit of democracy.

The recognition of development concerns, non-military and security, and equity in international relations instead of arms build

up have been behind most of the demands of the NAM and the G77. In this sense, the genesis of human security is in the demands of the developing countries. And yet, as the next section will show, the concept was adopted by northern countries and rejected in the south.

## **2) Chronology of Milestones for the Concept at the International Level**

- In 1992, Boutros-Boutros Ghali's *Agenda for Peace* made the first explicit reference of human security within the UN as part of international responsibilities towards preventative diplomacy, peacemaking, peacekeeping and post-conflict recovery.
- In 1994, the UNDP Human Development Report became the seminal text to stress the need for human security as part of the Peace dividend at the end of the cold war. Broadly defining it as 'freedom from fear' and 'freedom from want'. The 1994 HDR further characterised human security as "safety from chronic threats such as hunger, disease, and repression as well as protection from sudden and harmful disruptions in the patterns of daily life – whether in homes, in jobs or in communities".
- At the 1995 Copenhagen Summit, the concept of human security was met with scepticism from the G77 for fear it would lead to violations of state sovereignty
- In the late 1990s, human security was adopted by Secretary-General Kofi Annan as part of the new UN mandate in the 1999 *Millennium Declaration* and his call at the 2000 UN Millennium Summit.
- In 1996, Canada, led by Foreign Minister Lloyd Axworthy, adopted the Freedom from Fear approach as the principle of its foreign policy tool. Its main ambition was first to cast Canada as a middle power peacekeeping force in international relations, and second as a response to the pressures exercised by a broad coalition of NGOs that, in formal partnership with the government, successfully lobbied for the adoption of the treaty banning landmines and for the creation of the ICC.
- In 1998, the Japanese government led by Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi, endorsed the more comprehensive definition of human security based on 'Asian values' and greater focus on 'freedom from want'. The main motivation of Japan was to create

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international support for its checkbook diplomacy, to support countries coming out of the Asian crisis, and to gain a permanent seat in the UN by creating the largest trust fund in the history of the UN to fund human security projects.

- In 1999, Canada supported the creation of a Human Security Network, consisting of 13 'like-minded' countries -- Austria, Canada, Chile, Costa Rica, Greece, Ireland, Jordan, Mali, the Netherlands, Norway, Switzerland, Slovenia, and Thailand, with South Africa as an observer. Throughout their years, their collective efforts has led to notable successes but in the form of ad-hoc campaigns which led to the signing of the Ottawa Convention to ban anti-personal landmines (1997) and the creation of the International Criminal Court.
- In 2003, the Canadian supported International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS), chaired by Gareth Evans and Mohammad Sahnoun argued for the international community to adopt the norm of "Responsibility to Protect" in situations of gross violations of human rights. It redefined the meaning of sovereignty to include dual responsibility -- externally to respect the sovereignty of other states and internally to respect the dignity and basic rights of all people within the state.
- In 2003, the Japanese supported independent Commission on Human Security (CHS) established under the chairmanship of Sadako Ogata, former UN High Commissioner for Refugees, and Nobel economist Amartya Sen, produced its report *Human Security Now* with the aim to operationalize a developmental approach. It argued for human security as a public good, and the necessity for states and the international community to come together to protect, provide and empower people in vulnerable situations.
- In 2004, the UN Secretary General's *High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change* proposed in its report *A More Secure World: Our Shared Responsibility* the need to respond to the new threats of the 21<sup>st</sup> century by acknowledging the broadened nature and interrelatedness of security challenges.
- In 2004, the European Union adopted a Human Security Doctrine for Europe which concentrated on the role of the EU in curbing conflicts outside its borders. The doctrine was draw in

the context of trying to promote the peace-building role of the EU, especially in order to curb migration within the union.

- In 2005, in his proposal for UN reforms within his report *In Larger Freedom*, Kofi Annan, albeit not making specific reference to the term human security, used its three components, ‘freedom from fear’, ‘freedom from want’ and ‘freedom to live in dignity’ as the main thematic principles of the report.
- In Paragraph 145 of the Outcome Document of the 2005 World Summit by the General Assembly, it was agreed that there will be a debate at the UN to further define human security.
- In 2006, the Friends of Human Security was created at the United Nations, which brought together 34 Member States from both the south and the north, co-chaired by Japan and Mexico.
- In the summer of 2008, the General Assembly organized a debate at which a number of countries, both from the south and the north, presented their general views of the concept.
- In the meantime, UNESCO, which, since the late 1990s had sought to put it on its broad agenda for peace, began looking at the particularities of human security through a series of regional consultations in East Asia, Central Asia, Latin America, Europe, etc.
- Through a Japanese Trust Fund at the UN, more than 175 human security projects have been funded worldwide by UN organizations.
- The ASEAN started discussing the adoption of Human Security Agenda as part of its principle of flexible engagement. The Arab League established a Human Security Unit in 2007 with a specific task of defining and operationalizing a human security definition that is best suited to the realities of the Middle East and the Islamic world, and the context of internal reforms and external violations.

### **3) What has been Achieved Politically?**

1. First, the advent of human security on the international scene means a victory for the argument that the lives and dignity of people matters more if not as much as the security of international and regional stems and national states.
2. Second, it has allowed for a multi-dimensional understanding of the interconnection between threats, not only across borders,

but also across sectors. For example, when people suffer from economic insecurity, their health also suffers. Food insecurities come not only from the shortage of food but also from environmental problems, from problems of access and quality, etc. This understanding has been important to examine, and respond to, the consequences of massive economic crisis for example in people's every day lives, and not only on the institutions of the market or state security.

3. Third, the concept has allowed for a recognition of the root causes of conflicts in terms of grievances of groups and people, based on injustice and inequalities, and not only on political leadership interested in political gains.
4. Fourth, development concerns and every day lives of people have become as important as defence and military requirements of states. Hence, in essence human security is an argument for more development expenditures and less defence ones. At the same time, it has become increasingly accepted that the best security strategy is one that provides development.
5. Fifth, multilateralism has been enforced through this concept. It is now recognized that threats cannot be dealt with only at the national level because of their potential to bleed into other regions. This has led to some fears of interventions, but in essence, multi-actor does not mean bypassing sovereignty but taking collective responsibility and comprehensive solutions towards the well being of people. Thus it is an argument for a responsibility to protect, provide and empower people by those capable of doing this. That responsibility first falls on the states themselves.
6. Finally, the concept has led to the recognition that people can be agents of change themselves. This does not have a political connotation (that people can change their political leadership or regimes), but that they should be equal partners in identifying and addressing their development and dignity concerns.

#### **4) What are its Main Political Challenges?**

At the same time, a limited understanding or political misuse of human security has led to a number of problems. Human security has travelled far away from the ethical concept that Mahbul Ul Haq

had in mind which would reconcile the demands of the north and south.

**1) A Further Division of North/South Discourses?**

The fact that there are two definitions means that the divide between east and west, north and south, continues in international relations. Western countries, such as Canada and those in the EU, are adopting the freedom from fear agenda, the same way that they were rallying behind political rights within the human rights framework. Developing countries under the lead of Japan are rallying behind the freedom from want agenda, just as they were insisting on the right to development before. That the norm of human security became divided in two different approaches is a manifestation of the fact that the East-West conflict of the Cold War period has now become superseded by a North-South divide, that is not only based on power, but also on ideologies and values.

**2) The Hypocrisy of Enlightened Self-Interest?**

The fact that a number of countries have adopted human security as a foreign policy tool and no state has adopted it formally as a domestic policy principle means that the concept has become entangled in national interests in the guise of ethical concerns for people in “other” states. Human Security shifted from a descriptive and universal concept, concerned with global justice and equity in the writings of Mahbub Ul Haq, to a prescriptive tool in international relations, “for others” and “by others” in foreign policy and aid policy.

Human security as foreign policy has become an opportunity for middle-power states to gain greater independence vis-à-vis international institutions, greater influence in the United Nations, and increased credibility on the international stage, particularly (in the case of Canada and Japan) vis-à-vis the United States. Canada and Japan, the two states that most vocally adopted the concept as their foreign policy tools, did so to highlight their already existing comparative advantage on the international scene: Canada for its commitments to peacekeeping and peace-building, and coalition building around global policy causes such as the International Criminal Court and the campaign against landmines, and Japan to flag its ODA policies, initially geared towards the post-crisis Asia and increasingly towards Africa.

The EU doctrine on Human Security for example talks about “black holes”, regions in other parts of the world, including the “other” Europe, which were generating many of the sources of insecurity that impact directly on the security of the citizens of the European Union, and, by extension, to the “national,” traditional security of Europe. Human security in this approach is therefore conceived as a means to achieve state security “at home.” As the EU doctrine argued, Europe would then have a moral duty as well as an “enlightened self-interest” to intervene “intelligently” using civil-military special forces to render support to military and police control and to the rebuilding of political institutions.

The problem with this “enlightened self-interest” approach is many for the developing world: The discourse is said to build on the demonization of relations between a so-called “secure” area and the “other”. The moral argument, not for ethical reason by itself, but weighed against self-interest, project for example Europe as a “normative power” that relies on noble liberal values, which are presume to be needed and cherished by the “other”. The notion reminisces then of the “mission civilizatrice” discourses whereas some Northern countries, as Blair hinted in his speech in August 2006, have the moral responsibility to engage in a “war on values”. The moral argument, not for ethical reasons by themselves, but weighed against self-interest, project Europe as a “normative power” that relies on noble liberal values, which are presume to be needed and cherished by the “other”. At the same time, however, by neglecting to take the responsibility for causing many of the insecurities that lay on the periphery, this discourse on values is seen as condescending at the very least.

Ethical concerns are often used as an instrument to conceal other national interests, be they strategic, economic, or geo-strategic, under the cover of a foreign policy “with a human face”. For countries engaged in the new humanitarian wars and regime changes, the use of the human security terminology meant that these states were not acting out of traditional national concerns, but for the concern for the people of the region. For countries of the South, subject to interventions, however, ethical concerns were seen as being manipulated as a moral ground for chiding the human rights records of weak and incapacitated states, for selective intervention, for regime changes, democracy imposition through

military means, for state destruction and substitution, at the same time as failing to address ills such as the asymmetrical use of force.

Human security as a foreign policy tool ultimately revolved along a presumption that it was suited for people in “other” countries, but not good enough to be promoted as a domestic strategy towards achieving societies where everyone feels protected, secure, and empowered enough to take destiny in their own hands. The EU for example, fails to talk about the pockets of poverty within its own countries, urban riots, the crisis of multi culturalism and damning immigration policies.

### **3) An Excuse for Liberalism and Human Rights?**

One of the most controversial positions within the human security debate is the question of dignity, or human rights, as the basis of a perception of Western cultural norms of individualistic ethos of liberal democracies.

The focus on individuals has led to the criticism that the concept is a liberal agenda that promotes individualism, which does not fit the collective responsibility of Asian and Islamic countries. For many G77 countries, human security is an ethno-centric paradigm that emphasizes subjective aspects and individualist values while reinforcing the economic and military power of the north.

The South argues that human security is and could be used as a tool in the active campaign of Western countries to spread or rather impose their liberal democratic values and human rights on other countries. In this debate, reminiscent of those around Human Rights leading up to the Vienna Conference of 1993, East Asian governments defend what they called the “Asian approach to human rights” by arguing that the application of human rights standards must be adapted to regional particularities and that socio-economic rights take precedence over civil-political rights.

This debate was further evident in the five grievances that the Non-Alignment Movement (NAM) claimed against the draft of the UN Outcome Document in 2005, which had proposed “the universality, indivisibility, and interdependence of all human rights and fundamental freedoms and that all human rights must be treated in a fair and equal manner, on the same footing, and with the same emphasis.” First, the divergence was based on the need to correlate the first and second generation rights: The NAM wanted

to see that "... all human rights, in particular the Right to Development, are universal, inalienable, indivisible, interdependent and interrelated." Thus, if the West stressed on the "universality," or the universal application of rights and freedoms, a position pressed by the United States, the NAM, on the other hand, insisted on their "indivisibility and interdependence."

Second, the NAM strongly objected to the use of human rights as a corrective and intrusive tool for interfering of the international community in national affairs, especially based on selectivity. The dispute revolved around the use of sanctions for the enforcement of human rights standards. The NAM for example argued that "no State should use or encourage the use of United Nations sanctions as well as unilateral economic, political, or any other measure to coerce another State in order to subordinate the exercise of its sovereign rights." Many developing states, following the example of Cuba, objected to all sanctions, arguing that these exhibited double standards, selectivity, and were often aimed at ousting governments which did not please the interests of certain superpowers. Sanctions also had grave consequences on civil population. For the NAM, human rights issues had to be addressed "within the global context through a constructive, dialogue-based approach, in a fair and equal manner, with objectivity, respect for national sovereignty and territorial integrity, non-interference in the internal affairs of States, impartiality, non-selectivity and transparency as the guiding principles, taking into account the political, historical, social, religious and cultural characteristics of each countries."

Third, is the assumptions that "the freedom to live in dignity" content of human security would inevitably lead to heightened interest in democratization in the advent of the post-Cold War triumph of liberal peace. This was specifically related to the problem of the imposition of "Democracy", especially in its western form, as a precondition for development, as well as the only model of governance for post-conflict state building. The non-Western world disputed the imposition of western style democracies, based on individual freedoms, separation of powers, formal institutions and elections. The NAM for example, in response to the proposals of the UN Summit document, reiterated that "while all democracies share common features there is no one model of democracy." Many developing countries feared that

advancing democracy would become a condition of development assistance. Democracy as the main conditionality or precondition for development was disputed by many, including in South East Asia and Central Asia that saw in the Chinese and Russian models the possibility of achieving development in non-democracies.

Finally, while recognizing that the promotion of democracy is important at the national level, the NAM countries, echoing the position of the G77 and China, increasingly expressed the need for the democratisation of the system of international governance, such as in the IMF and the World Bank, in order to increase the participation of developing countries in international decision-making. Mahbub Ul Haq, in his original conception of human security, had also insisted on the democratization of the World Bank and the IMF.

The debate around human security as a western notion was therefore not a simple contestation of Asian values based on societal concerns over liberal individual-based values. It was entangled in grievances over conditionalities and democracy imposition.

#### **4) An Excuse for Interventions?**

The narrow conceptualization has come to be associated with the idea of “responsibility to protect” and the role of the international community in humanitarian interventions in countries where the states, weak or predator, cannot or does not protect individuals. According to the norm of Responsibility to Protect, which came out of the Canadian narrow approach of human security and promoted by the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty in 2001, under certain well-defined circumstances, interventions could be legitimized.

For developing countries, such an approach to human security has led to fears of interventions, on behalf of people, in domestic affairs which bypasses sovereignty. The supremacy of sovereignty, however, had already been dented in 1993 when by Francis M. Deng had articulated the idea of “sovereignty as responsibility”, consequently adopted by Kofi Annan in his qualification of duality: sovereignty not only protects a state from unwarranted outside interference but also obligated the state to respect the basic rights and interests of its members.

Even though internationally sovereignty is being redefined to mean responsibility towards a state's own citizens, developing countries argue that their states are often under pressure from conditionalities and competition from transnational actors and market forces, weakening their capacity to provide and protect their people. Interventions not only create more harm in the long term, they also are used as excuses for regime changes of states deemed not abiding enough to the global liberal agenda. In such circumstances, developing countries are questioning and rejecting discourses such as Human Security for excessive moralism, for double standards, for selectivity and bias, when interventions are made, case by case, based on the strategic interests of great powers. The discourse is also rejected by many developing countries for failing to look into structural causes of conflicts, which are often political, and for being interventionist when it comes to the policies and practices of states in the South, but essentially laissez-faire and status quo regarding the role of the market and global governance arrangements.

For developing countries, the evocation of interventions, increasingly of the military type, in the name of human security fed into the condescending Northern discourse on the "Southern threats." By pointing the finger on so-called failed states—always belonging to the "South"—such discourse hid the fact the North was partly responsible for this fragility on the one hand (through cooption of some regimes, trade barriers, aid conditionalities that weaken the states, selling of arms, etc), and the fact that these very states which call for intervention might themselves threaten the security of their population or some parts of it at home. When threats are said to emanate from the "other", inequalities in North-South relations, including arms transfers, pollution inducing industrialization, and lopsided trade regimes, are hardly brought into the relevant discourses. Since interventions can never be attempted against powerful states, international action in the name of human security risks turning into a prerogative of the strong against the weak. Ultimately, the responsibility to protect discourse remains controversial not only on moral and political grounds, but also from the perspective of international law.

For the NAM, principles not open to negotiation include the principles of respect for the sovereignty, territorial integrity and non-interference in the internal affairs of States. In the lead up to

the 2005 Summit, the NAM position strongly rebutted the notion of “responsibility to protect” that was incorporated in the draft outcome document as highly controversial and undefined, susceptible to wide range of subjective interpretations and subsequent misuse by vested interests at the global and regional levels.

In response to the draft Outcome Document for the 2005 UN Summit for example, the Egyptian position claimed that, “The international community could have such responsibility only to protect people under occupation from the occupying power...” The Iranian delegation similarly argued that “While we support the necessity of concerted action by the international community, in accordance with the UN Charter, in cases of heinous crimes of genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity, my delegation would not be able to go along with the vague notion of “responsibility to protect”. To the Indonesia position, although there were moral and political justifications for international interventions in the name of responsibility to protect, it was legally wrong. It was also a proposition that posed all kinds of dangers and temptations, because it was the developing nations that were certain to be in violation under terms that were determined by the developed nations.

Human security, in this respect, has become a stick against which developing countries are judged but western countries do not abide by its principles themselves. If the death of civilians during September 11th could have opened a window into an examination of root causes of terrorism, and dealing with them through development and political approaches, on the contrary, the world has witnessed a fortification of a realist reaction in international relations, regime changes and violations of humanitarian law in the name of national security.

It must however be reiterated that the responsibility to protect norm stems from the narrow definition of human security which solely emphasises on fears stemming from violence and human rights violations. In its essence and in its broad conception, the human security framework is not interventionist on the one hand, and also requires action around development responsibilities on the other. The intervention discussion is an example of misuse of the human security narrow definition by certain countries that

take advantage of the absence of southern countries in the definition debates.

### **5) A New Conditionality on Aid?**

Mahbub Ul Haq had wanted to see a world that instituted a “new partnership between the North and the South based on justice not on charity; on an equitable sharing of global market opportunities, not on aid; on two-way compacts, not one-way transfers: on mutual cooperation, not on unilateral conditionality or confrontation” (Ul Haq, 1998:5). In this position, the question of development assistance seemed to be settled: More fair trade by industrialized countries and less aid, especially those based on conditionalities, for developing countries.

Yet, the development approach within the broad definition of human security has not been able to mobilize as much support beyond the projects funded by the Japanese Trust Fund especially in post-conflict countries. The freedom from want approach requires for rich countries to assume all their responsibilities, including to devote 0.7 percent of their Gross National Product to Official Development Assistance (ODA). Yet, ODA is increasingly becoming both sparse and tied to conditionalities around the world.

Even though it is now recognized that development and security are linked, the fact is that since September 11, aid has become increasingly instrumentalized, and given to countries which abide by the war on terror agenda. The tug of war between the two approaches of human security based on the narrow or the broad definition is symptomatic within international politics of what has been labelled as the Grand Bargain: That the North “provides” development assistance to an underdeveloped South, while the South would provide traditional “security” in exchange, by refraining from developing weapons, by curbing conflicts, etc. Since the end of the Cold War, however, the Grand Bargain has become increasingly scrutinized.

From the Southern position, the Grand Bargain proved insufficient after the Cold War. Development assistance was no longer deemed sufficient in the age of globalization, where lopsided or unequal development between the North and South became increasingly associated with structural issues such as unequal trade regimes and long standing debt. In leading up to the UN Summit of 2005, for example, the NAM and the G77 made

proposals for the international community to look at the structural inequality underlying international relations biases, including the implementation of Doha rounds, democratization of the Bretton Woods Institutions, etc.

Furthermore, the revision of the Grand Bargain was seen from the necessity to revise the causes and responsibilities for insecurity. If the North argued increasingly for lack of good governance, of rampant corruption and of failed states, the South became increasingly vocal about the sale of weapons, especially of the small arms variety, from the North, and the military conditionalities to join the war against terror in exchange for development assistance, what would lead, and inevitably did, to defence budget build up both in the South and in the North.

The Southern response on aid, as reflected in the documents of G77 and China, reflects a fundamental difference between those receiving aid and the imperatives outlined in the global aid architecture. The objections can be summarized in two positions: First over the quantity and quality of aid, where ODA is said to be insufficient, especially in light of mounting debt, and based increasingly on conditionalities, both on questions of good governance, and on military support. Second, the grievance is over double standards: That only developing countries should report on their achievements of the MDGs, and not industrialized states, which also signed the Millennium Declaration, and that more fair trade and democratic global governance is needed to allow developing countries breathing space and autonomy over national economic planning.

### **Part III: What are the Future Challenges Globally and Regionally?**

It must be stressed, however, that the above negative externalities that seem to have been associated with the concept of human security do not reflect the essence of the concept at all, especially as envisaged originally by Mahbub Ul Haq. These negative challenges are an indication instead of the lopsided nature of international relations today, where some countries, mostly of the liberal tradition, become entrepreneurs and authorities of norms and alienate others from the debate table. There is nothing

inherently controversial in a noble essence of human security. If it is politically manipulated, it is not only because of the power that some countries have in international relations and international organizations, but also because of the powerlessness that others have in claiming their right. After all, which state can truly argue that it does not stand by alleviating the security of its citizens in their every day lives? It is therefore imperative for non-Western countries to enter the global debate and claim their own definitions, actions, responsibilities, instead of adopting a denial, reactive or defensive position. Returning to the essence of human security, as it had been argued by Mahbub Ul Haq, is a necessity.

### **Is Human Security Universal or Relative?**

In this vein, a debate is currently raging on the universality versus relativity of Human Security within scholarly discussions and in many international organizations. Is it a concept that is mostly relevant to the problems of crisis and extreme underdevelopment, hence, a problem of “the South” where conflicts tend to happen most often and where indicators of poverty and underdevelopment seem to be relatively more acute than in industrialized countries of the North? Or is it a concept that can be as much applied to pockets of exclusion within western societies and to everyone?

For Mahbub Ul Haq, Human Security was a call for “a new partnership between North and South”, one which “will demand a new ethics of mutual responsibility and mutual respect” (1995). Yet, September 11, a Western consensus on the problem of “failed states”, the norm of “Responsibility to Protect”, conditional aid, and tying of development to security concerns of the North that followed the decade after Haq’s demise, all seem to have dismantled the desired partnership between the North and the South. Human security now seems to have become a “good” that western countries *seem* to “provide”, while countries of the south *seem* to lack. But this perception of asymmetry is wrong.

For Mahbub Ul Haq, Human Security was originally conceived in regards to people’s daily concerns – no matter where they lived geographically, and that meant also for people within industrialized nations. As the UNDP report said, “Human security is relevant to people everywhere, in rich nations and in poor. The threats to their security may differ – hunger and disease in poor

nations and drugs and crime in rich nations – but these threats are real and growing”. In this interpretation, there is no division between secure/developed and insecure/underdeveloped nations but secure/developed and insecure/underdeveloped people. Therefore, the concept is as much pertinent to be applied to the question of the Parisian suburbs, as it is to that of the Sudanese famine.

Human security is ultimately not meant to be the problem of the developing world of the South which the North could solve through interventions, financial assistance, or protection. Embracing the universality of the concept would have meant domestic human security strategies and policies, even in Western societies threatened as they are by urban violence, job insecurities, health epidemics, privatization of social delivery, militarization of societies, etc.

The concept is therefore decidedly universal and not only a “problem” of developing countries or so-called failed states. Universal as this concept is, it is not to be denied that populations in industrialized societies, in transition states, in the Islamic world, in countries prone to conflict, in cases of underdevelopment, all have different needs, aspirations and understandings of the notion of “security”. To be truly universal, the concept cannot be the prerogative of a number of industrialized, western states only.

In international relations, however, it has become customary for some states to name and shame violations of human security in other countries while denying their own problems. In reaction, the recipients of criticism become defensive and sometimes offensive. With the current global financial crisis hitting powerful economies, and with the rise of alternative powers such as China, India and Russia in international relations, a more realistic balance can be achieved in recognizing that human security is indeed universal.

### **The State is Needed, but with what Responsibilities?**

Considering human security as the fundamental and inviolable right of all individuals -- regardless of state citizenship – automatically impacts upon the question of responsibility, paving the way for an obligation incumbent upon on a wide-range of actors above within and beyond the state. However, this by no means implies a destabilization of international relations. The human security approach does not bypass the state. The sovereign state remains the

fundamental organizing unit and actor in international relations, even though its responsibilities may be altered. The state continues to play a fundamental role and cannot deny its responsibilities.

Whilst accepting that the state is the primary provider of human security, a human security approach identifies three provisos to this role. First, in contrast to the realist paradigm which believes in the powerful, capable and mighty state, it considers the just, rights-based state to be the most effective and legitimate provider of human security. Second, sovereignty is redefined in terms of responsibility, and is, therefore, conditional upon the state's willingness and ability to provide human security. Third, a human security approach recognizes that even where the state is able to provide human security, it is not the sole provider. The ideal human security approach envisages the state as part of a dynamic and seamless policy network with non-state actors, including NGOs and civil society, international and regional organizations, as well as individuals and their communities. From a human security perspective, non-state actors do not compete, but complement the state in their common objective of promoting human security.

### **Can Human Security be a Global Public Good?**

A convincing way to operationalize human security within such a framework is by conceptualizing it as a global public good. At the international level, if HS is not considered a global public good, there can be no expectation from international organizations (namely the United Nations) towards upholding human security. A collective, cooperative and multidimensional response can meet the challenge of today's interconnected, transnational and/ or global threats. While the nature of today's challenges has become increasingly complex and diverse, so to have the instruments to respond to them. In this context, distinction should be made between *foundational* prevention (to address deep-seated causes of human security through long-term strategy for equitable, culturally sensitive, and representative development) and *crisis* prevention.

The key question is whether this enhanced responsibility can be translated into effective institutional capacity and political will. While the language and objectives of human security are increasingly establishing themselves within the lexicon of the United Nations, institutional changes to promote HS remain

negligible. Human security is an inter-disciplinary problem, and as such, requires an inter-disciplinary solution, which seems rather beyond the scope of present day international organizations and government bureaucracies with their multiplicity of mandates for the various issues such as security, development, financial management, human rights, children, or women. Coordination is often hampered by ‘turf’ protection and lack of knowledge of how inter- (and not multi-) disciplinary approaches should be designed and implemented.

The limited progress by UN agencies in integrating a human security approach is also a reflection of political sensibilities and political will or the lack thereof of member states. The entire debate around the responsibility to protect is only a diffusion of the real responsibility to provide and to prevent. The correct understanding of the broad human security definition does not advocate the use of military force for humanitarian interventions. Instead, it argues for a responsible engagement of the international community. The focus of a broader human security engagement should be on prevention rather than dealing with crises that are already underway. It would mean long-term engagement, which takes place away from the spotlight and media headlines. And it would unleash global justice as the best tool for reconciliation.

### **For the “South”: A Nemesis from the North or an Appropriate Paradigm?**

Although the post 9/11 period can be seen as the triumph of western alliances bent on military interventions in the South, and the hand wriggling at the Security Council by the more powerful industrialized states, it is also a new era which has opened up to a more assertive politic of contestation by the South. While a rift seems to have been created between the US and the EU, with differences in terms of approaches to terrorism, proliferation and human rights, by 2007 the North/South divide is alive and well, despite predictions that it had disappeared with the end of the Cold War.

Coalitions in the South continue to make headway, revamped today with three modern era additions: First, is the entry of China, which, if not part of G77, often joins voices with them in international politics. China graduated from shy multilateralism, to

increasingly become active, first based on its economic interest in resources, and then on its strategic ones in regions such as Central Asia and Africa. In February 2007, China, together with Russia, cast a veto against the US proposal for Myanmar, something it had not done since 1972. Second has been the economic growth of India, South Africa and Brazil, which has allowed these countries to get their voices heard both in for a such as the WTO and for lobbying for permanent seats at the UN Security Council. Third has been the rise of regional groupings, such as the ASEAN and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, with considerable economic power and military capabilities which allows them to propose or reject norms on the international scene. These changes will undoubtedly introduce new possibilities for revisiting the Human Security debate as a reconciliation, and not a rift, of the North/South debate.

Developing countries, especially the G77 group, express criticisms against the human security paradigm, fearing it as a tool for the West to impose its values and order and for big powers to justify their interventions abroad. Yet, the advent of human security should be seen, instead, as the triumph of the South to put development concerns into global security discussions. It can be seen as a continuation of the historical concerns and interests of the South within international relations and organizations.

Despite the fears, human security is exactly the paradigm needed for the South today, and it would be best divorced from the notion of 'responsibility to protect' as the prerogative of northern states bent on military interventions. A human security approach for the South would allow it to shed international light on the concerns of underdevelopment and individual dignity at a time when state-based interests are increasingly being used in the global war against terrorism.

Rallying around a human security agenda would be an alternative to four positions:

- First to promote multilateralism and networking among like-minded countries to combat unilateral actions by states such as the US,
- Second, to define new threats such as poverty, diseases, lack of education, uncontrolled population movements, global warming, small arms, etc. on the global agenda as alternatives to the current over-focus on terrorism, WMDs and threats

emanating from so-called 'rogue states'. After all, people are more threatened by so-called 'soft' threats in their everyday lives than 'hard' threats such as being attacked by terrorists or with weapons of mass destruction.

- Third, to draw attention to the responsibility of northern countries in curbing dangerous practices, such as arms trade, pollution inducing industrialization, etc, which make the north as dangerous if not as the south.
- Fourth, at a time when the global security discourses are becoming more realist, and political agendas, driven by the War Against Terrorism and WMDs, mean that resources are being diverted from development priorities to geo-strategic and national interests in wars over oil, the South should take up this opportunity to challenge priorities.

### **Is Human Development a Better Term for Developing Countries?**

Although some may argue that the term of "human development" is better suited for the challenges of the South, it is necessary to remind them that the two concepts are not interchangeable. Human Development is about well being, about widening people's choices. At the policy level, it means adopting economic growth policies but ensuring equity in distribution. Human security, by contrast, means the conditions enabling people to exercise these choices safely and freely, and to be relatively confident that the opportunities they have today will not be lost tomorrow.

Human Security refers to the assurance that the process and outcome of development is risk-free. It seeks to draw attention not just to levels of achievement, but to secure gains made by deliberately focusing on "downside risks", such as conflicts, wars, economic fluctuations, natural disasters, extreme impoverishment, environmental pollution, ill health, and other menaces.

Policy wise, it requires public policies that "insure" the growth process, so that if there are crisis in development, as we are witnessing today, there is basic social security so that the poor do not become even poorer. Even though the word security features in "human security", it does not mean that an automatic link should be made with national security and defence imperatives. Instead, the idea of social and economic security and welfare should be what

resonates in those terms. We should be reminded that interest in human security increased with the Asia crisis of 1997, which started as a financial crisis but led to a major crisis of development that affected people in their daily lives. If the economic growth process is not ensured, we can witness further cycles of de-development every time a crisis hits.

### **Implications for West Asia**

Before rejecting the concept as a western notion, dangerous for interventions in matters of national security and sovereignty, it is imperative that West Asian countries become familiar with this debate and decide for themselves, individually as well as collectively as part of regional and thematic bloc of countries, whether or not to engage with the concept, and better yet, how to propose their own alternative notions that challenge existing definitions. West Asian countries need to therefore to make informed decisions about adopting, rejecting or proposing alternatives to a concept that is being currently used in international relations and international organizations.

We still have a long way to go before there is agreement on one precise definition. This by itself is an opportunity for non-Western countries. Human security is more effective as a broad flexible framework rather than being codified in rigorous terms. It can serve as a means to evaluate threats, foresee crises, analyze the cause of discord and propose solutions entailing a redistribution of responsibilities.

It is therefore necessary to continue the debates in West Asia in order to:

- 1) Propose alternative definitions that take into considerations realities of the West Asia region, as well as values such as Islam.
- 2) Forge a regional dialogue with West Asian countries to identify collectively threats to human security and opportunities for collaboration.
- 3) Determine how and whether the three basic concepts of human security (freedom of want, freedom of fear, and life of dignity) reconcile or not with Islamic values and with collective responsibilities.

- 4) Identify how south cooperation can be beneficial for dealing with common threats as well as common responsibilities in the region.

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