



HUMAN SECURITY IN A GLOBAL AGE

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Abstract

Human Security has been part of academic and policy discourses since it was first promoted by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in its 1994 Human Development Report. It means protecting fundamental freedoms. It means protecting people from critical (severe) and pervasive (widespread) threats and situations. It means using processes that build on people's strengths and aspirations. It means creating political, social, environmental, economic, military, and cultural systems that together give people the building blocks of survival. This paper examines the origins of the concept of human security, debates surrounding its definition and scope, some of the threats to human security in the world today, and international efforts to promote human security. It proceeds in five parts. The section, 'What is human security?', traces the origin and evolution of the concept, examines competing definitions offered by scholars and policy-makers, draws attention to the three distinct conceptions of human security that shape current debates, and takes a look at the usefulness of the concept of human security. The section that follows offers a brief overview of some contributions to the human security literature. The next section reviews debates and controversies about human security, especially over the analytic and policy relevance of the notion, and the broad and narrow meaning of the concept ('freedom from fear' versus 'freedom from want'). The fourth section examines some of the threats to human security today. While the concept of human security encompasses a wide range of threats, due to lack of space, this section will focus on the trends in armed conflicts as well as the interrelationship between conflict and other violence threats to human security, such as poverty, disease, and environmental degradation. The final section analyzes the international community's efforts to promote human security and concludes by identifying the major challenges to promoting the notion of human security today.

Keywords: Human, Freedom, Security, People, State, Development, Threat, Globalization

Introduction

In the globalizing world of today, the concept of security has evolved from the traditional state-based context to cover a whole range of economic, social and technological factors. The end of the Cold War and the decolonization process resulted in new state building among diverse groups of people. Advancement in communication and information technology accelerated economic growth and brought new opportunities. While interdependence benefited people in general, it also made them vulnerable to developments outside their immediate circles. In parts of the world undergoing decolonization and decentralization, diverse groups – ethnic, religious and indigenous – began fighting over contested rights and resources. The international community was short of effective tools to deal with the diverse claims of people and states.

At the 2000 UN Millennium Summit, Secretary-General Kofi Annan stressed that people should be assured of their “freedom from want” as well as their “freedom from fear”. He emphasized the importance of responding to social and economic needs of the people as well as political and military threats that had dominated the security fields. At the time, Prime Minister Obuchi of Japan, during his visit to Southeast Asia, had also advocated the need to protect people threatened by survival and announced his commitment to promote human security. His understanding of “human security” was fundamentally developmental, to protect people from “threats to human lives, livelihoods and dignity”.

The Japanese government announced its readiness to establish the UN Trust Fund for Human Security, and promoted the establishment of the Commission on Human Security. The Commission was mandated to develop the concept of human security as an operational tool for policy formulation and implementation. The Commission took a broad view of human security, focused on the security of people living under critical and pervasive threats, victims of conflicts, refugees and displaced persons, people living in abject poverty, hunger and disease. After two years of research, field visits and public hearings, the report of the Commission, Human Security Now was published. The Commission proposed a framework of action that promotes the protection and empowerment of people. Rather than viewing people as

passive recipients of care and assistance led by the state, the Commission regards people as the primary initiators to determine their own fate. By empowering people through education, social mobilization and participation in public life, they themselves are better able to cope with misery and threats surrounding them. It is a “bottom up” approach that regards people as active initiators as well as operators.

The main role of the state on the other hand is protection of its people. Through improving law and order, strengthening judicial institution and ensuring access to basic human needs, the state on its part has to ensure people fair and effective management of public life (Adio 2020: 232-233). The state also holds responsibility over relations with foreign states, ensuring proper and beneficial economic and political relations. The debates and decisions at the Commission caused wide repercussions in policy making and academic circles. The UN Trust Fund for Human Security was established at the United Nations and operated under an advisory board with a unit in the United Nations Secretariat. It was designed to promote multi-sector aid projects in line with the principles of human security. Primarily funded by Japan, the Fund has provided community development projects in Afghanistan, refugee integration in Zambia and early post-conflict community reconstruction projects in the Congo, among others. The promotion of projects through the Human Security Trust Fund attests to the significance of the concept of human security as the operational tool to protect people and elevate human lives and dignity. The projects are primarily implemented by UN agencies together with local ministries and agencies, and embody the essential ingredients of human security principles. Bilateral development agencies, notably, the Japan International Cooperation Agency, adopted “human security” as its fundamental policy principle. Lastly, the adoption of the resolution (A/Res/66/290) on Human Security by the General Assembly in September 2012 stands as a major breakthrough. It attests to the growing recognition by member states of the relevance of “human security” on key policy discussions at the United Nations. It also provides concrete steps for the United Nations and Member States to act on threats and issues that threaten the security of member states and the people.

This paper on Human Security is further demonstration of the impact of this concept in stimulating thinkers, decision-makers and practitioners. The sections show some of the many ways in which human security has become

an important framework for shaping how states behave and how people can enjoy not just security but also dignity. The paper tells us how far we have already travelled in adjusting ideas of security for a global era, but also reminds us that there are many areas of policy which still require us to adjust our thinking, for example in arms control, in fighting terrorists or in making sure people do not go hungry. We should see it not only as an important reference of what the concept of human security has achieved but as an agenda for change going forward.

Human security represents a powerful, but controversial, attempt by sections of the academic and policy community to redefine and broaden the meaning of security. Traditionally, security meant protection of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of states from external military threats (Aghi 2018: 112). This was the essence of the concept of national security, which dominated security analysis and policy-making during the Cold War period. In the 1970s and 1980s, academic literature on security, responding to the Middle East oil crisis and the growing awareness of worldwide environmental degradation began to think of security in broader, non-military terms. Yet, the state remained the object of security, or the entity that is to be protected. The concept of human security challenges the state-centric notion of security by focusing on the individual as the main referent object of security.

Human security is about security for the people, rather than of states or governments. As such, it has generated much debate. Critics wonder whether such an approach would widen the boundaries of security studies too much, and whether ‘securitizing’ the individual is the best way to address the challenges facing the international community from the forces of globalization (Badaru 2019: 67). On the other side, advocates of human security find the concept to be an important step forward in highlighting the dangers to human safety and survival posed by poverty, disease, environmental stress, human rights abuses, as well as armed conflict. These disagreements notwithstanding, the concept of human security captures a growing realization that, in an era of rapid globalization, security must encompass a broader range of concerns and challenges than simply defending the state from external military attack.

There is little doubt that human security studies are attracting growing attention in the wider International Relations and social science literatures. The expanding UN agenda of human security concerns (among them war-affected children, racial discrimination, women’s rights, refugees), coupled

with former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan's personal interest in and commitment to human security activism, catapulted these questions to the forefront of the scholarly and policy research agenda in the 1990s (MacFarlane and Khong 2006). This agenda accompanied the long-standing human security concerns of students and practitioners of international development – an agenda that has generally tended to focus on the ways that globalization dynamics have damaged the prospects for human development and the provision of basic human needs.

Despite the growing investment of research and interest in human security, to date, there is no real consensus on what can or should constitute the focus of what are still loosely termed human security studies. There continues to be considerable methodological, definitional and conceptual disquiet about the real meaning of human security, and about the implications of the human security paradigm for the study or the practice of International Relations. This should come as no surprise, given the nature of the academic enterprise and the different disciplinary and methodological backgrounds informing the work of scholars engaged in human security research. (Even so, the evident inability of scholars to advance beyond theoretical debates over definitions towards practical policy recommendations understandably frustrates practitioners in the policy community). There is also a great unevenness in the depth (and breadth) of research on particular themes. Some issues, such as anti-personnel landmines or small arms, are well ploughed; the literature on these subjects is rich not only in analysis of particular problems and causes, but also in implications for public policy. Other problems, such as gender-directed violence, are only just beginning to receive the sort of attention they deserve as evils in their own right and as sources and symptoms of human insecurity.

What is Human Security?

The origin of the concept of human security can be traced to the publication of the *Human Development Report* of 1994, issued by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP 1994). The Report defined the scope of human security to include seven areas:

- ❖ Economic Security—an assured basic income for individuals, usually from productive and remunerative work, or, in the last resort, from some publicly financed safety net.

- ❖ Food Security – ensuring that all people at all times have both physical and economic access to basic food.
- ❖ Health Security – guaranteeing a minimum protection from diseases and unhealthy lifestyles.
- ❖ Environmental Security - protecting people from the short- and long-term ravages of nature, man-made threats in nature, and deterioration of the natural environment.
- ❖ Personal Security - protecting people from physical violence, whether from the state or external states, from violent individuals and sub-state factors, from domestic abuse, and from predatory adults.
- ❖ Community Security - protecting people from the loss of traditional relationships and values, and from sectarian and ethnic violence.
- ❖ Political Security - ensuring that people live in a society that honours their basic human rights and ensuring the freedom of individuals and groups from government attempts to exercise control over ideas and information.

Unlike many other efforts to redefine security where political scientists played a major role, human security was the handiwork of a group of development economists, such as the late Pakistani economist Mahabub ul Haq, who conceptualized the UNDP's *Human Development Report*. They were increasingly dissatisfied with the orthodox notion of development, which viewed it as a function of economic growth. Instead, they proposed a concept of human development which focuses on building human capabilities to confront and overcome poverty, illiteracy, diseases, discrimination, restrictions on political freedom, and the threat of violent conflict: 'Individual freedoms and rights matter a great deal, but people are restricted in what they can do with that freedom if they are poor, ill, illiterate, discriminated against, threatened by violent conflict or denied a political voice...' (UNDP 2005: 18—19).

Closely related to the attempt to create a broader paradigm for development was the growing concern about the negative impact of defense spending on development, or the so-called 'guns versus butter' dilemma. As a global study headed by Inga Thorsson of Sweden concluded, 'the arms race and development are in a competitive relationship' (Roche 1986: 8). Drawing upon this study, a UN- sponsored International Conference on the Relationship between Disarmament and Development in 1986 in Paris

sought ‘to enlarge world understanding that human security demands more resources for development and fewer for arms’.

The move towards human security was also advanced by the work of several international commissions. They offered a broader view of security which looked beyond the Cold War emphasis on East—West military competition. Foremost among them was the Report of the Palme Commission of 1982, which proposed the doctrine of ‘common security’. The Report stressed that: ‘In the Third World countries, as in all our countries, security requires economic progress as well as freedom from military fear’ (Palme Commission 1982: xii). In 1987, the Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development (also known as the Brundtland Commission) highlighted the linkage between environmental degradation and conflict: ‘The real sources of insecurity encompass unsustainable development, and its effects can become intertwined with traditional forms of conflict in a manner that can extend and deepen the latter’ (Brundtland *et al.* 1987: 230). Along with attempts to broaden the notion of security to include non-military threats, there was also a growing emphasis on the individual as the central object of security. The Palme Commission’s notion of common security became the conceptual basis of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE). The CSCE made East-West security cooperation conditional upon the improvement of the human rights situation in the former Soviet bloc. The North-South Roundtable on the ‘Economics of Peace’, held in Costa Rica in 1990, called for a shift from ‘an almost exclusive concern with military security... to a broader concern for overall security of individuals from social violence, economic distress and environmental degradation’ (Jolly and Ray 2016: 3).

In the post-Cold War era, the importance given to people’s security has grown in salience. One reason for this is the rising incidence of civil wars and intra-state conflicts involving huge loss of life, ethnic cleansing, displacement of people within and across borders, and disease outbreaks. Traditional national security approaches have not been sufficiently sensitive towards conflicts that arise over cultural, ethnic, and religious differences, as happened in Eastern Europe, Africa, and Central Asia in the post-Cold War era (Tow and Trood 2010, Ekpeyong 2018: 211). Another reason is the spread of democratization and the post-Cold War emphasis on human rights and humanitarian intervention. The latter involves the principle that the international community is justified in intervening in the internal affairs of

states accused of gross violation of human rights. This has led to the realization that while the concept of national security has not been rendered irrelevant, it no longer sufficiently accounts for the kinds of danger that threaten the societies, states, and the international community. The notion of human security has also been brought to the fore by the crises induced by accelerating globalization. For example, the widespread poverty, unemployment, and social dislocation caused by the Asian financial crisis 1997 underscored the vulnerability of people to the effects of economic globalization (Acharya 2014, Olabisi 2017).

There are arguably three distinct conceptions of human security that shape current debates. The first is what might be termed the natural rights/rule of law conception of human security, anchored in the fundamental liberal assumption of basic individual rights to ‘life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness’, and of the international community’s obligation to protect and promote these rights (Alston 2002, Lauren 2008, Morsink 2008, Agbor 2016). A second view of human security is humanitarian. This is the view of human security that, for example, informs international efforts to deepen and strengthen international law, particularly regarding genocide and war crimes, and to abolish weapons that are especially harmful to civilians and non-combatants (Boutros-Ghali 1992, Moore 1996, UN 1995, 1999, UNDP 1997). This view lies at the heart of humanitarian interventions directed at improving the basic living conditions of refugees, and anyone uprooted by conflict from their homes and communities. On those rare occasions when military force has been used ostensibly to avert genocide or ethnic cleansing, it has also been justified usually on rather specific humanitarian grounds such as the need to restore basic human rights and dignity. These two views of human security, which focus on basic human rights and their deprivation, stand in sharp contrast to a broader view, which suggests that human security should be widely constructed to include economic, environmental, social and other forms of harm to the overall livelihood and well-being of individuals. There is a strong social justice component in this broader conception of human security, as well as a wider consideration of threats (real and potential) to the survival and health of individuals. According to this third view, perhaps the most controversial of the three conceptions of human security, the state of the global economy, the forces of globalization, and the health of the environment, including the world’s atmosphere and oceans, are all legitimate subjects of concern in terms of how they affect the

‘security’ of the individual (UNDP 1994, Nef 2012, Olayiwola and Abel 2015). The ‘broadeners’ have attracted sharp criticism. Yuen Foong Khong (2001) warns that making everything a priority renders nothing a priority – raising false hopes in the policy realm and obscuring real trade-offs between rival human security objectives. Similarly, Andrew Mack (2001, 2005) makes the sound methodological point that overly broad definitions of human security can block investigation of the very phenomena that need to be understood. Examining the relationship between poverty and violence, for example, requires us to treat them as separate variables. A definition that conflates dependent and independent variables will confound analysis of causal connections between them.

As a practical matter, many human security initiatives, such as the international campaign to ban trafficking in small and light weapons, generally, fall between the narrower and the broader definitions of human security. But, there is a lively debate among scholars and practitioners as to what legitimately should be the scope of efforts to promote and advance human security at the international level, and as to whether we should define human security in more restrictive or broader terms (Khong 2001, Paris 2001, Hampson et al. 2012, MacFarlane and Khong 2016, Obot 2017).

How should human security be defined? One way is to define it negatively, i.e. as the absence of threats to various core human values, including the most basic human value, the physical safety of the individual. Alkire (2012: 2) offers a more positive definition of human security: ‘The objective of human security is to safeguard the vital core of all human lives from critical pervasive threats, and to do so without impeding long-term human flourishing’. The definition offered by the Report of the Commission on Human Security (2003: 2) is even more expansive: ‘to protect the vital core of all human freedoms and human fulfilment’. What is this vital core? Does it represent all human freedoms? And should personal fulfilment be placed alongside freedom as a basic right and public responsibility.

discourse is inevitably incomplete and underdefined, and thus has multiple potentials. How it becomes actualized, and how it further evolves, depends on its users and contexts of use. In clarifying a concept and discourse we must ask for what tasks they are being used or useful: their roles and with respect to whom; for example, in defining a research programme or in indicating and motivating a policy orientation. In particular, much usage of the human security concept, and the very choice of the label ‘human

security’, can be understood as ‘boundary work’ (Star and Griesemer 2019, Yesufu 2019: 143) that aims to span between conventionally separated intellectual and political spheres. Adding to understanding a human security approach can often generate fresh case-specific understandings and insights, through the holistic methodology of looking at specific people’s lives and vulnerabilities with an eye for interconnections and intersections.

When Hurricane Katrina struck New Orleans, the victims were especially poorer Afro-Americans, poorer people in general since they lived on worse land, and people over sixty. This last group suffered more than 60 per cent of the 1800 deaths. Leichenko and O’Brien (2018) recount how economic change had made the city more vulnerable. Its old industries had declined. Strong lobbies had ensured that many new channels had been cut from the Mississippi river to the sea, which allowed new paths for storm surges from the ocean to reach the city. Privatization and corporatization of municipal and social services meant that coordination was weak and could not cope with emergency demands. Patients in private health care facilities were immediately evacuated after the hurricane, while those in public care were left waiting for five days.

Similarly, in the reconstruction phase, for-profit facilities were rebuilt much faster than not-for-profit schools and public housing. By using a human security approach, looking at the particular situation and multiple vulnerabilities of particular groups/types of people, and thus as in storytelling and scenarios becoming aware of and ‘emphasizing the dynamic interactions between processes, responses, and outcomes (Leichenko & O’Brien) ... elicit new insights and research questions beyond those associated with separate framings and discourses’ (2018: 33). Likewise, reviews of the many national and regional Human Development Reports that have taken a human security approach find that they have produced novel insights and suggestions (Jolly and Ray 2016, Bukarambe 2017, Gomez et al. 2018). The studies look into sources of objective and felt insecurity, without a priori restrictions according to disciplinary habits or an intellectual template fixed by a donor organization. Amongst such HDRs, several deserve wide attention, including the reports for Chile (1998), Afghanistan (2004), Costa Rica (2005), the Arab Region (UNDP 2009), Benin (2011), Africa (2012), and not least the earlier Latvia report (UNDP 2003).

Extending these insights, O’Brien (2016, 2019) suggests that the debate on global environmental change has been stuck in an inappropriate problem-

frame. First, it is dominated by natural science questions and not sufficiently framed in terms of human significance. It is likely then to get stuck in science wars which are inherently endless, since more knowledge often produces more uncertainty not less; whereas we should be thinking about which humans face known dangers and which ones also face the nastier sides of the inevitable uncertainties (Gasper 2021). Second, like conventional security studies, the debate continues to operate with a now partly obsolete national framing of issues, so that policy debate is dominated by again inherently endless disputes over the respective rights and blame that should accrue to nations. She proposes that more fruitful and more pertinent may be to frame discussion in terms of human security: to recognize that many poor persons face high and rising insecurity, and to consider how to respond to this.

Wider attention to contributory factors increases our awareness of vulnerability and fragility, but also of opportunities and resilience. In policy design, a human security perspective raises issues of system re-design to reduce chances of crises, not only palliative responses when crises have hit (Lodgaard 2014), and has served ‘as a focal point around which an integrated approach to global governance is emerging’ (Betts and Eagleton-Pierce 2015: 7). It increases thinking about prioritization within sectors (as in the MDGs programme) and, if we use broad concepts of human security, also between sectors. Seeking system re-design and intersectoral rebalancing are campaigns for change over the longer term, but may bring eventual large-scale benefits.

Besides human security thinking’s promotion of analytical integration, it offers ‘boundary work’ services in other respects. Consideration of the sources of and threats to human security helps to bring together the different organizational worlds of humanitarian relief, socio-economic development, human rights, conflict resolution and national security (Uvin 2014). Human security discourse also synthesizes ideas from the predecessor ‘human discourses’ of human needs, human rights and human development (Tobiloba and Gasper 2017). Its better grounds human rights and human development work in attention to the nature of being and well-being; focuses them on high priorities; highlights interdependence more than does human rights language, and increases attention to dangers, vulnerability and fragility; and it connects to human subjectivity, which increases its explanatory force and motivating potential.

Human security analysis recognizes emotions, identifies surprising conjunctures and can give a sense of real lives and persons. The language of ‘security’ itself touches emotions, which is both a source of strength and of danger (Gasper and Truong 2020). While the ‘human security’ label aims to reorient security discourse, it carries risks of being taken over by the psychic insecurities and fears of the rich and the military instincts of those with large arsenals and the habit of using them. However, those fears and habits exist already and have long had ways of expressing themselves without requiring ‘human security’ language in order to do so. The difference made by such a language may be in the opposite direction, gradually helping to promote interpersonal and global sensitivity and solidarity.

Human security thinking looks at diverse, situation specific, interacting threats and how they affect the lives of ordinary people, especially the most vulnerable. It promotes the ability to imagine how others live and feel, and the perception of an intensively interconnected shared world in which humanity forms a ‘community of fate’. It thus favours the changes that are needed for global sustainability in respect of how people perceive shared vulnerabilities, shared interests and shared humanity (The Earth Charter; Gasper 2021). A narrow concept of human security does not block such changes, but is less conducive than the broader versions. Human security thinking has to operate at various levels, just as we see in thinking about say ‘well-being’ or ‘equity’. Research and policy programmes in particular geographical, historical and organizational contexts will each make their own particular definitions. Some of those will be narrow, others broad. At the same time, a broad conceptual perspective is necessary since it can inspire and guide the diverse particular endeavours.

Setting the Boundaries of Human Security

Underlying much of the human security literature is a common belief that human security is critical to international security, and that international order cannot rest solely on the sovereignty and viability of states – that order depends as well on individuals and their own sense of security. This is clearly a departure from traditional liberal internationalism, which sees international order as resting on institutional arrangements which, in varying degrees, help secure the integrity of the liberal, democratic state by reducing threats in the state’s external environment. Placing the individual as the key point of reference, the human security paradigm assumes that the safety of

the individual is the key to global security; by implication, when the safety of individuals is threatened, so too in a fundamental sense is international security. In this view, global challenges have to be assessed in terms of how they affect the safety of people, and not just of states. Proponents of the enlarged or maximalist conception of human security also argue that these threats arise not only from military sources; non-military causes such as worsening environmental conditions and economic inequalities can, in some instances, exacerbate conflict processes (UNDP 1994, Paris 2001, Nef 2012).

Not surprisingly, problems of definition and boundary-setting have dominated much of the recent literature in human security research. To some degree, these uncertainties simply reflect the state of the art; these are, after all, relatively new approaches. But it is also fair to say, as do King and Murray (2012), that these definitional and conceptual arguments echo turmoil experienced since the Cold War in schools of both development and national security – two important sources of human security scholars and scholarship. King and Murray responded with a bold answer of their own, what they call ‘a simple, rigorous, and measurable definition of human security’. They define human security as ‘the number of years of future life spent outside the state of “generalized poverty”’. Generalized poverty, in this definition, occurs when the individual falls below a specified threshold ‘in any key domain of human well-being’. Operating the definition therefore requires choosing domains of well-being, constructing practical indicators, and specifying threshold values for each. King and Murray find their domains mainly in the UNDP’s Human Development Index (per capita income, health, education), and add ‘political freedom’ and ‘democracy’ (for example, by applying Freedom House measures of voting and legislative conduct). Human security in this scheme is thus expressed as a probability – the expected number of years of life spent outside ‘generalized poverty’, whether for an individual or aggregated across an entire population. Leaving aside other questions of domain choice and threshold selection, the King–Murray equation (they frame it mathematically) raises provocative issues of methodology and policy. Mack (2015), on the other hand, measures human security in terms of the costs of war on human suffering. The Liu Institute’s Report on Human Security documents in vivid detail the impact that war – measured in terms of civilian casualties – has had on different countries and regions of the world.

Some of the recent literature has attempted to define human security by integrating its disparate dimensions. Hazem Ghobarah (2011) explored long-term health effects of civil wars with a cross-national analysis of World Health Organization (WHO) statistics on death and disability. The immediate harms done to health by specific wars are familiar; in contrast, Ghobarah tracked the delayed after-effects and their mechanisms: rising crime rates, property destruction, economic disruption, diversion of health-care resources and so on. In *Madness in the Multitude* (2012) Fen Hampson and others situated human security approaches in the long history of liberal democratic theory, but concentrated on the distinguishing features of human security as a global public good. Among other advantages, the lens of public goods analysis focuses attention on certain recurring issues in the human security discourse – namely problems of under-provision, collective governance and operational delivery.

Much of the human security literature uses the language of ‘threats’ to characterize a wide – and, it would seem, always growing – list of challenges to human security. To group all of these problems – from pandemic diseases to human-induced environmental catastrophes, to population displacements to terrorism, to the proliferation of nuclear or small arms – on the same long list, as if the costs (immediate as well as long-term) and probabilities (present and future) of each were the same, is needless to say a doubtful project. There is clearly a need to disaggregate (and carefully specify) the costs and probabilities associated with each of these distinct problem areas. Changing rates of infection and mortality rates only tell us the direct, human costs of diseases like AIDS, for instance; as some scholars now argue, there are profound, longer term social, economic and potential political consequences of these diseases as well. Once these costs are identified, it will be important to consider their longer-term implications for public policy and for preventive and mitigation strategies, especially if long-term social and economic costs are significant and widespread.

Mortality rates or poverty ‘thresholds’ are only one benchmark of human security. Although some ‘threats’ have major human security costs attached to them (the terrorist detonation of a nuclear bomb in a city, for example), the actual probability associated with these events may be quite low (Mueller 2016), especially when compared to the array of human security risks that most people confront in their daily lives. Nor do probabilities remain constant; on the contrary, some can rise suddenly, and others will fall.

Resources and policy attention need to be re-allocated to those human security risks that are increasing, but only after undertaking a serious comparative assessment of relative risks (importantly including an identification of which population groups face the most risk).

The report on Global Risks 2007, which was presented at the World Economic Forum (2007: 4) in Davos, Switzerland, argues that ‘there has been a major improvement in the understanding of the interdependencies between global risks, the importance of taking an integrated risk management approach to major global challenges and the necessity of attempting to deal with root causes of global risks rather than reacting to the consequences’. The report documents 23 core global risks which include energy supply disruptions, climate change, natural catastrophes, international terrorism, interstate and civil wars, pandemics and infectious diseases, and the breakdown of critical information infrastructures. The report measures the probabilities and costs associated with these risks on the basis of qualitative and quantitative data. In assessing severity, two indices – ‘destruction of assets/economic damage and, where applicable, human lives lost’ – were considered. It also offers a number of institutional recommendations on how businesses and governments can best mobilize resources and attention in order to ‘engage in the forward action needed to begin managing global risks rather than coping with them’. The relationships between political and economic variables, and their impact on conflict processes and so-called ‘state failure’, have also been examined in risk-assessment frameworks. The ‘failed state index’ developed by Fund for Peace and Foreign Policy (2006) magazine finds that some 60 countries in the world are dysfunctional because the government does not effectively control its territory, provide basic services to its citizens, or the country is experiencing some kind of internal unrest.

There is also currently a great deal of work on organized violence and its causes (Duffield 2011, Cleves et al. 2012, Collier 2017, Stewart and Brown 2017). Three explanations dominate this literature: 1. those that stress the importance of group-based inequalities as a source of conflict, i.e. conflicts are based on ‘creed’; 2. those that focus on private gains, i.e. conflicts are driven by ‘greed’; 3. explanations which stress the failed social contract thesis, i.e. conflicts are really about ‘needs’. Those who have looked at these explanations closely find that it is not absolute poverty, but relative poverty that matters most. That is to say, poor countries where some groups are,

relatively speaking, much better off than others due to caste or creed are much more predisposed to experience violent conflict. The policy implication of this research is that development strategies must be tied not simply to alleviating poverty in the poorest countries, but also to addressing the horizontal inequalities that divide those societies through, for example, redistribution of land, privatization schemes, credit allocation preferences, educational quotas, employment policies that stress balanced employment, and public sector infrastructure investment that advantages the disadvantaged (Stewart and Brown 2017).

Research also shows that economic development is critical to sustaining the peace in states that have just ended a civil war (Paris 2014). Economic development is necessary to restore a state's human capital and infrastructure, raise the opportunity costs of conflict, and get buy-in from the local populace by raising their standard of living. The subjective aspects of risk are another potentially promising research venue. We now know that most people tend to discount risks they consider controllable, while exaggerating risks they think are uncontrollable. (This may explain why some people have a fear of flying.)

People also tend to discount – and usually quite heavily – future risks even though the probabilities associated with them are high, as against imminent risks that are relatively low. This is all to say that there is a substantial literature in psychology on the cognitive biases that come into play as individuals confront the ordinary risks of daily life (Tversky et al. 2012, Tversky and Kahneman 2020). However, there has been little direct application of this research to human security concerns. Do individuals in different societies perceive common human security threats through similar or different cognitive frames of reference? Are there significant cross-cultural barriers that stand in the way of coordinated policy responses to shared human security risks? To what extent are perceptions about different kinds of risks to human security at variance with more 'objective' assessments of those risks? Are there cultural taboos that stand in the way of efforts to reduce certain kinds of human security risks (family violence, violence against women, infanticide), and what kinds of strategies are appropriate to changing social attitudes? Are some social institutions better able to manage certain kinds of risks? And are there lessons to be learned about ways to reduce risk exposure for the most vulnerable groups in society? (For a fascinating discussion about how Americans, for example,

came to see technology itself as a ‘threat’ see Douglas and Wildavsky 2012.) These are some questions that warrant further study.

The literature continues to display the tension between still new human security concerns and still standing institutions and categories that continue to shape academic and political assumptions. There is an extensive consensus that prevailing institutions – state, interstate, nonstate – are performing inadequately. There is noisy disagreement on explanations and remedies. Hampson et al. (2012) explored adaptations by international financial institutions (IFIs) to the human security agenda, and find them partial and unreliable: constrained by bureaucratic divisions or inertia, and by conflicts among their own (state) donors, IFIs ‘have tended to adopt those elements among the different conceptions of human security that are most compatible with existing organizational mandates’.

Again, in the development discourse, there has been an early and fundamental dispute about the place of the state in the human security universe. Griffin (2006) had concluded by the mid-2000s that it was essential ‘to construct new, post-Cold War structures for global governance and cooperation among peoples,’ and to ‘shift the emphasis from national sovereignty and state security to individual rights and human security’. In an instant and spirited counter-argument, Bienefeld (2007) held that states themselves are a precondition to successful global governance – and to the achievement by any society of democracy, human security and sustainable development: ‘Therefore we cannot abandon the sovereign state and strive for global governance. Instead, we must seek to protect the sovereign state in order to use it to fashion a system of global governance.’ Former Canadian foreign minister Lloyd Axworthy (2001) found it possible to resolve this polarity in the imagery of interdependence-driven coalition building among states, NGOs, intergovernmental organizations, businesses and others. The Landmines Convention and the Rome Statute demonstrated the possibilities of diplomacy to advance human security (McRae and Hubert 2011). But even Axworthy himself acknowledged the current operational inadequacies of governance in some critical human security activities – dramatically in the realm of coercive international intervention, where norms remain inchoate or contradictory and institutions weak.

Several authors have applied human security analysis to the governance of refugee problems. Adelman (2011) has detected a shift in emphasis at UNHCR, away from legal asylum issues and towards human security

protection of refugees and refugee operations (including protection of internally displaced people). But he does not diagnose this as a radical departure: ‘It was built into the possibilities of the UNHCR from the beginning.’ Again, on refugees, Schmeidl (2012) found confirming evidence that refugee flows themselves can constitute a menace to human security – but especially when states encourage the transformation of refugee populations into ‘refugee warrior communities’. Her assessment of the Afghan refugee experience in South Asia leads to the conclusion that ‘the way local, regional and international actors responded to the refugee crisis seems to have contributed equally, or more to the security dilemma, than the migration itself’.

Running through the human security literature is a recognition – not always explicit – of the difficulty in grounding these subjects in cohesive theory or methodology. Indeed, conventional realist frameworks of International Relations theory prove quite inhospitable to human security approaches – one reason, no doubt, why the treatment of human security in the prominent journals of security studies has so far seemed brief and dismissive (Mack 2011). Systematic attempts to develop theory and methodology helpful to understanding human security ultimately appear to involve the abandonment, if not outright repudiation, of the various realist schools of International Relations theorizing. Some scholars have turned instead to feminist critiques to address human security questions, and more generally to constructivism. For Newman (2011), ‘constructivist international relations theory is not a single unified movement’. Still, ‘the underlying argument is that behavior, interests, and relationships are socially constructed, and can therefore change. Values and ideas can have an impact upon international relations; norms, systems, and relationships can change.’ Constructivism thus helps explain phenomena to which realism (neo or not) is blind or indifferent. Moreover, constructivism shares fundamental assumptions with human security approaches – the assumption, for example, that threats are constructed, not inevitable, and that they can be altered or mitigated.

The acknowledgement by states that certain forms of economic and political organization facilitate domestic peace and stability, and that domestic conditions affect the international system, are characteristically constructivist insights. As Newman (2011) observes, ‘there are methodological confusions about constructivism’, especially as it is

associated with feminism and other metatheoretical challenges to mainstream realist and neoliberal theory. Nonetheless, tenets of constructivism easily resonate in feminist theory-building – especially in the affirmation that social, political and economic relations are constructed and changeable. Hyndman (2001) has formulated this approach as ‘a feminist geopolitics’. This is ‘not an alternative theory of geopolitics,’ she says, but ‘an approach to global issues with feminist politics in mind.’ It is also explicitly about political action, ‘the possibility of “doing something”’: of normative engagement and action within a given context’. As meta-theory, it draws expressly from the broader scholarship of ‘critical geopolitics’ – ‘less a theory of how space and politics intersect than a taking apart of normalized categories and narratives of geopolitics’. Both as methodology and advocacy, Hyndman’s feminist geopolitics addresses familiar human security issues: shifting scales, from household to substate to global; breaking down dichotomies, as between public and personal, national and international; and acknowledging mobility, whether of refugees or fugitives from human rights law. Throughout, there is in feminist analysis a sharp and careful attention to unequal and violent relationships in families, communities or transnational systems – the kinds of relationships that often define human insecurity.

Taken together, constructivist and feminist analyses offer promising methodologies for examining exactly the phenomena that concern human security scholars. By reorienting the research focus to life as it is lived by the most insecure in any society (women, the poor, minorities, aboriginal communities), these methodologies can advance research and make for more productive human security policy.

Debates about Human Security

A number of key debates and/or unresolved issues are reflected in the scholarly and the policy-oriented human security literature. One of the burgeoning areas of research, especially among students of international development, involves the relationship between globalization (in its various meanings) and human security – or insecurity. There is more or less general agreement that the forces of economic globalization are transforming international politics and recasting relationships between states and peoples with important implications for human security: globalization is not only intensifying trade and economic connections, but also accelerating the pace

of economic and social change. Further, it is not just goods and capital that are exchanged across borders, but ideas, information and people. On one side of this argument, enthusiasts of globalization argue that the breakdown of national barriers to trade and the spread of global markets are processes that help to raise world incomes and contribute to the spread of wealth. Although there are clear winners and losers in the globalizing economy, the old divisions between the advanced ‘Northern’ economies and ‘peripheral’ South are breaking down and making way for an increasingly complex architecture of economic power (Held et al. 2009: 4). On the other side, globalization’s critics argue that although some countries in the South have gained from globalization, many have not, and income inequalities between the world’s richest and poorest countries are widening. They suggest that trade and investment flows are intensifying between those countries that can compete in the global economy while leaving behind those that cannot. As income gaps and deep-seated social and economic inequalities widen, so the argument runs, so do the prospects for violence and civil strife. The latter point is argued most convincingly in the World Bank’s report, *Global Economic Prospects 2007*. This reports that globalization, which is contributing to the rapid growth in average incomes over the next 25 years, with developing countries playing a central role, will be accompanied by growing income inequality and potentially severe environmental pressures. The greatest danger is that some regions, notably sub-Saharan Africa, will be left behind. There is also a growing risk of rising income inequalities within countries – a factor that some scholars argue contributes to the likelihood of civil unrest, especially in the world’s poorest countries (Stewart and Brown 2017). Marshall (2017) and his colleagues at the University of Maryland offer a similar conclusion in their own research. According to Marshall, the most troubling regional sub-systems in the Globalization Era are the regions constituted by the sub-Saharan African countries and the predominantly Muslim countries, which stretch from Morocco and Senegal in the west to Malaysia and Indonesia in the east. The Lorenz curves for these two regions are roughly equivalent; income inequality among African countries is only slightly greater than income inequality among Muslim countries.

It is also apparent that ‘although the general magnitude of armed conflict in both regions has diminished substantially since the end of the Cold War, the overall decrease in warfare in Africa has fallen more slowly than the general

global trend'. Muslim countries, however, 'are the sole region [sic] where there has been an increase in armed conflict in recent years, possibly levelling, or even reversing, the general downward [global] trend'. Globalization raises new dangers to human security as patterns of world trade, production and finance morph into new relationships which, if left unregulated, can further impoverish the world's poor – with dire social and political consequences (Kay 2007, O'Neill 2007, Willett 2011). Nowhere is this more evident than in the area of public health. There is growing recognition that declining levels of health and epidemic diseases such as AIDS, which are ravaging many developing countries, are partially rooted in the workings of the global economy, and in externally imposed structural adjustment policies that have directly contributed to a deterioration in public health delivery and in overall living standards (Leon and Walt 2011). Much work remains to be done on the positive and negative consequences of globalization for human security, and on how globalization affects the capacity of various international, national and subnational actors and institutions to provide for human security.

There also needs to be a better appreciation of the distribution of gains and costs resulting from specific globalization processes, and whether, to quote Caroline Thomas, there is a requirement for 'different development strategies from those currently favoured by global governance institutions', i.e. 'strategies that have redistribution at their core' (2011: 174). Macro-oriented studies of the globalization–human security nexus should be complemented by case studies of specific countries or globalization processes (e.g. Ball 2011, Muggah 2011, Hendrickson and Ball 2012). This will advance understanding of how best to address the consequences of various globalization processes for human security and help identify response strategies and institutional arrangements best suited to particular development contexts. Value trade-offs among the separate dimensions of human security are also receiving greater attention. Normative concerns typically surface when the imperative of human security is invoked in cases of humanitarian intervention (ICISS 2001, Holzgrefe and Keohane 2013). There is obviously a continuing debate on whether force should be used in support of particular human security objectives. At one level, the dispute is about the proper hierarchy of humanitarian goals and international norms of state sovereignty and non-intervention. But it is also a debate about whether or when it is right to use violence against individuals – especially

noncombatants who find themselves in harm's way – when force is exercised for human security purposes. Where human security concepts challenge traditional notions of what constitutes a 'just war' or a just cause, and test our sense of what are tolerable degrees of 'collateral damage' – this is fertile terrain for ethicists and others concerned with the deeper ramifications of evolving human security norms. These debates underscore the tensions between diverse conceptions and priorities in the human security agenda. But exploring these tensions within explicit ethical and normative frames of reference can itself yield new knowledge and understanding – if not always agreement. Not only will such analysis render explicit the kinds of value trade-offs involved, but it may also help societies to make more ethically informed choices as they respond to the human security threats they face. The concept of human security also poses an interesting challenge to traditional notions of democratization, civil society development and peacebuilding.

Some scholars, citing familiar post-colonial history, hold that liberal democracy and economic liberalization by themselves will not suffice to ensure human security – especially not the security of vulnerable communities. The argument is that historical patterns of human settlement and lingering colonial legacies have too often marginalized large numbers of peoples from social, economic and political development processes. As Swatuk and Vale report, the people of the South African homelands and townships still suffer the insecurities of poverty and pains of incorporation into the political economy of South Africa. The power of 'vested interests and established social relations in support of neocolonial political economies', along with 'fissures of identity' reflected in 'race, class, state, nation, and tribe' pose a major if not insurmountable barrier to the advancement of human security – not just in South Africa but throughout the whole region (Swatuk and Vale 2009: 384).

There are clearly different understandings of human security particular to different social, political and economic contexts – details that raise important questions about the limitations of traditional liberal assumptions about democratization and political development. Increasingly, scholars and practitioners are beginning to ask difficult but essential questions about the proper sequence and priorities to be adopted in peacebuilding and democratic development, and how to ensure that these processes are informed by indigenous perspectives of what human security requires in

their own lives. Negotiated political transitions (from communist dictatorship or from apartheid, from oppressive military or from one-man rule) impose a sharp focus on the significance of these issues. Given the predominant role of Western governments and publics and Western-oriented intergovernmental and nongovernmental organizations in the peacemaking and peacebuilding field – and the reality that colonial legacies are seldom erased easily in developing countries – there is considerable potential for a collision between opposed human security values and priorities.

The literature also reveals telling differences in national and regional perspectives – different assessments of the subject, and different judgements on policy and political performance. Khong (2011) (with others) has speculated that the human security agenda grew out of the particulars of Canada's own history and circumstances – if not as a 'fireproof house', at least as relatively safe from the world's troubles and decently governed: In a world consisting primarily of Canadas, human security might command a consensus; and the kind of intrusiveness associated with implementing such an agenda might be acceptable . . . However, too many individuals in the twenty-first century reside in makeshift shelters and thatched homes. What difference will it make to their lives for us to insist that they have become the referents of security? Not very much. Asian perspectives command considerable attention in the literature on human security (e.g. Tow et al. 2010). More than one observer has remarked on the policy divergence between Canada and Japan on human security. Acharya (2011) has outlined a more expansive (but less intrusive) view of human security that goes beyond conventional issues of violence to matters of politics, culture, dignity and freedom – a definition expressed most comprehensively, of course, by the late Mahbub ul Haq at UNDP. Furtado (2000) looked to specific Asian states and reports on their particular responses to financial shock. Applying yet another perspective, Cocklin and Keen (2010) have described threats to human security (or well-being) characteristic of urbanization on South Pacific islands. These examples suggest how human security takes on different attributes in micro-level examinations.

Geisler and de Sousa (2011) have raised an awkward case of human security endeavours working disastrously at cross-purposes in Africa. They examine so-called 'ecological expropriation', namely the creation of millions of refugees by the closure of lands for purposes of environmental protection and repair. 'Human security and environmental security, often reinforcing,

can be at odds', they note. Human security can no doubt be enhanced by environmental protection – or imperilled by it. The 1994 UN Human Development Report identified drug trafficking, migration, terrorism and weapons of mass destruction (WMD) as major threats to human security. In the case of terrorism, it pointed out – rather presciently it would seem – that although the observable number of terrorism incidents was dropping in the early 1990s, the number of casualties remained high, and the focus of terrorist activity was increasingly global rather than regional in orientation (1994: 36).

Although there is a sizeable and growing literature on these threats, much of it has a decidedly 'national security' outlook. The specific linkages of these threats to human security – or how a human security approach to these threats would differ from existing measures and approaches – remain unexplored. Interestingly, these threats were largely omitted from the mandate of the Independent Commission on Human Security (2003), which chose to focus on a narrower set of issues. These include the ways internal conflicts threaten the physical security of non-combatants; human insecurities stemming from preventable diseases, injury or chronic ill health; insecurities flowing from a lack of basic literacy, access to education and innumeracy; and the insecurities of poverty and economic, social and gender inequalities. There is growing evidence that transnational organized crime (especially in narcotics, human trafficking, and counterfeiting) transnational terrorism and transnational migration flows all have destabilizing consequences for sending and/or recipient countries – and they are on the rise (Helsinki Process on Globalization and Democracy 2005). Further, the risk that WMD may be used in terrorist attacks or interstate wars also appears to be increasing as more states and nonstate actors learn how to make or acquire these weapons (Kemp 2011: 78). It is still an open question whether there is a distinctive value added in a human security approach to these problems – which traditionally have been the purview of more conventional national security studies. One promising example of how human security concepts can shed new light on the problems of nuclear proliferation is found in the work of Itty Abraham (1999). He argues that traditional, interstate nuclear deterrence models ill-suit South Asia. Because 'domestic populations of nuclear weapons states are the principal victims of nuclearization,' he says, 'international pressures must be replaced by domestic groups acting internationally' (Abraham 1999: 10). His intriguing

argument, that ‘domestic legal and moral constraints are the most appropriate means for controlling the anti-democratic and militaristic tendencies of the nuclear complex’, contains more than a residual echo of the work of John Mueller (1989, 2014, 2015) and Richard Price (2017) on how social and political norms can change and be changed.

It is quintessential to note that debates over human security fall into two categories. First, believers and sceptics of the concept disagree over whether human security is a new or necessary notion and what are the costs and benefits of adopting it as an intellectual tool or a policy framework. Second, there have been debates over the scope of the concept, mainly among the believers themselves.

For critics of human security, the concept is too broad to be analytically meaningful or useful as a tool of policy making. Roland Paris has argued: ‘Existing definitions of human security tend to be extraordinarily expansive and vague, encompassing everything from physical security to psychological well-being, which provides policy-makers with little guidance in the prioritization of competing policy goals and academics little sense of what, exactly, is to be studied’ (Paris 2011:88). Another criticism is that such a concept might cause more harm than good: ‘Speaking loudly about human security but carrying a Band-Aid only gives false hopes to both the victims of oppression and the international community’ (Khong 2011: 3). The definition of human security is seen to be too moralistic compared to the traditional understanding of security, and hence unattainable and unrealistic (Tow and Trood 2020: 14). A third and perhaps most powerful criticism of human security is that it neglects the role of the state as a provider of security. Buzan argues that states are a ‘necessary condition for individual security because without the state it is not clear what other agency is to act on behalf of individuals’ (Buzan 2011: 589). This criticism has been echoed by others, especially scholars with a realist orientation.

Advocates of human security have never totally discounted the importance of the state as a guarantor of human security. As the Report of the Commission on Human Security (UN Commission on Human Security 2003) acknowledges, ‘Human security complements state security’. Nor do they claim that human and traditional security concerns are always antithetical. Weak states are often incapable of protecting the safety and dignity of their citizens. But whether traditional state security and human security conflict with each other depends very much on the nature of the

regime that presides over the state. In many countries, human security as security for the people can and does get threatened by the actions of their own governments. Hence, while the ‘state remains the fundamental purveyor of security . . . it often fails to fulfill its security obligations—and at times has even become a source of threat to its own people’ (Mack 2014: 366). At the very least, from a human security perspective, the state cannot be regarded as the sole source of protection for the individuals (Mack 2014: 366).

Table 1.1: Two Conceptions of Human Security

	Freedom from Want	Freedom from Fear
Original Proponents	Development Economists, Mahabub ul Haq, Amartya Sen	Western Governments (Canada, Norway)
Main Stimulus	Dissatisfaction Over Growth-Oriented Models; Guns versus Butter Concerns	End of the Cold War; Rise of Complex Emergencies, Ethnic Strife, State Failure, Humanitarian Intervention
Type of Threats Addressed	Non-Military and Traditional Security Concerns: Poverty, Environmental Degradation and Disease, etc.	Armed Conflicts, Violence Against Individuals
Main Policy Goal	Promoting Human Development Defined as ‘Building Human Capabilities - the Range of Things that People can do, and What they can Be....The Most Basic Capabilities for Human Development are Leading a Long and Healthy Life, Being Educated and Having Adequate Resources for a Decent Standard of Living... (and) Social and Political Participation in Society’. These Capabilities are Undermined by Poverty, Disease	Protecting People in Conflict Zones; Reducing the Human Costs of Conflict Through a Ban on Landmines and Child Soldiers; Protecting Human Rights; Developing Peace-Building Mechanisms

and ill-Health, illiteracy,
Discrimination, Threat of
Violent Conflict, and Denial of
Political and Civil Liberties.
(UNDP 2005: 18-19)

Another major debate about human security has occurred over the scope of the concept: whether it should be primarily about ‘freedom from fear’ or ‘freedom from want’. The former view, initially articulated by the former Canadian External Affairs Minister, Lloyd Axworthy, focuses on reducing the human costs of violent conflicts through measures such as a ban on landmines, using women and children in armed conflict, child soldiers, child labour, and small arms proliferation, the formation of an International Criminal Court, and promulgating human rights and international humanitarian law (Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (Canada) 1999; *The Ottawa Citizen*, 28 May 1998: A18). From this perspective, the UN Charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and the Geneva Conventions are the ‘core elements’ of the doctrine of human security. The latter view, advocated by Japan (Director-General of the Foreign Ministry of Japan 2000) is closer to the original UNDP formulation. It stresses the ability of individuals and societies to be free from a broad range of non-military threats, such as poverty, disease, and environmental degradation (see Table 1.1).

But the disparities between the two conceptions of human security can be overstated, since both regard the individual as the referent object of security, and both acknowledge the role of globalization and the changing nature of armed conflict in creating new threats to human security. Moreover, both perspectives stress safety from violence as a key objective of human security, and both call for a rethinking of state sovereignty as a necessary part of promoting human security (Hubert 2014: 351). There is considerable overlap between the two conceptions: ‘[D]evelopment . . . [is] a necessary condition for [human] security, just as security is a necessary condition for [human] development’ (University of British Columbia, Human Security Center (hereafter *Human Security Report*) 2005: 155). Seeking freedom from fear without addressing freedom from want would amount to addressing symptoms without the cause. As the following section shows, while the deaths caused by armed conflicts have declined, other challenges

to the safety and well-being of the individual have remained, and in some cases escalated.

Dimensions of Human Security

A pioneering Report released by the Human Security Center at the University of British Columbia (2005) points to several significant trends in armed conflicts around the world. What explains the downward trend in armed conflicts around the world? The Report lists several factors: growing democratization (the underlying assumption here being that democracies tend to be better at peaceful resolution of conflicts); rising economic interdependence (which increases the costs of conflict); the declining economic utility of war owing to the fact that resources can be more easily bought in the international market-place than acquired through force; the growth in the number of international institutions that can mediate in conflicts; the impact of international norms against violence, such as human sacrifice, witch-burning, slavery, duelling, war crimes, and genocide; the end of colonialism; and the end of the Cold War. A specific reason identified by the Report is the dramatic increase in the UN's role in areas such as preventive diplomacy and peacemaking activities, post-conflict peacebuilding, the willingness of the UN Security Council to use military action to enforce peace agreements, the deterrent effects of war crime trials by the International Criminal Court (ICC) and other tribunals, and the greater resort to reconciliation and addressing the root causes of conflict. The 80 per cent decline in the deadliest civil conflicts since the early 1990s, argued the Report, is due to the dramatic growth of international efforts at preventive diplomacy, peacemaking, and peacebuilding (Human Security Report 2005: Part V).

Yet, the picture is not entirely positive. The decline in armed conflicts reported by the *Human Security Report* is from 1991 onwards. The number of armed conflicts had actually increased between 1960 and 1990-1, especially intra-state conflicts (which jumped from twelve in 1960 to 59 in 2001) (Hurton 2017: 435). And there are still 141 active armed conflicts during the 1989—2015 period (some of them started before 1989). As Hurton and Adedigba (2019: 122-123) show, armed conflicts are now on the same level as during the 1970s, and markedly higher than during the 1950s and early 1960s. And there are some horrific costs associated with these conflicts. For example, deaths directly or indirectly attributed to the conflict

in the Democratic Republic of the Congo since 1998 have surpassed casualties sustained by Britain in the First World War and Second World War combined. The conflict in Sudan's Darfur region has displaced nearly 2 million people. (UNDP 2005: 12). In Iraq, a team of American and Iraqi epidemiologists estimates that Iraq's mortality rate has more than doubled since the US invasion: from 5.5 deaths per 1,000 people in the year before the invasion to 13.3 deaths per 1,000 people per year in the post-invasion period. In all, some 655,000 more people have died in Iraq since the invasion in March 2003 than would have died if the invasion had not occurred (Brown 2016: A12).

The share of civilian casualties in armed conflict has increased since the Second World War. Civilians accounted for 10 per cent of the victims during the First World War and 50 per cent of the victims during the Second World War. They constitute between 80 and 85 per cent of the victims of more recent wars. Many of these victims are children, women, the sick, and the elderly (Gendering Human Security 2011: 18). Although death tolls from organized campaigns against civilians have declined in recent years, the number of such campaigns increased by 60 per cent between 1989 and 2015 (University of British Columbia, Human Security Center 2016: 3). International terrorist incidents and the number of fatalities increased worldwide between 2002 and 2015. Most of the increases were associated with the war in Iraq, where the number of fatalities grew from about 1,700 in 2004 to approximately 6,400 in 2015 (National Counterterrorism Center 2015). Excluding Iraq, however, terrorist action killed fewer people worldwide in 2005—1,500 as opposed to 4,000 in 2014 (National Counterterrorism Center 2015).

Furthermore, some of the most serious issues of human security in armed conflicts still need to be overcome, such as child soldiers and landmines. According to one study, 75 per cent of the armed conflicts today involve child soldiers (Human Security Report 2015: 35). Landmines and unexploded ordnance cause between 15,000 and 20,000 new casualties each year (United States Campaign to Ban Land Mines, date accessed 3 February 2019). Despite the justified optimism generated by the Ottawa Treaty, there remain 80 million live mines undetected—someone steps on a landmine every 28 minutes—and 80 per cent of those killed or injured by landmines are civilians (Koehler 2020). The decline in armed conflicts around the world is not necessarily irreversible. Some of the factors contributing to the

decline of conflicts, such as democratization and the peace operations role of the UN, can suffer setbacks due to lack of support from major powers and the international community. And there remain serious possible threats to international peace and security which can cause widespread casualties, such as a conflict in the Korean peninsula and war between China and Taiwan. Battle deaths are not itself an adequate indicator of threats to human security posed by armed conflict. Many armed conflicts have indirect consequences on human life and well-being. Wars are a major source of economic disruption, disease, and ecological destruction, which in turn undermine human development and thus create a vicious cycle of conflict and underdevelopment. As the *Human Development Report* (UNDP 2015: 12) puts it: ‘Conflict undermines nutrition and public health, destroys education systems, devastates livelihoods and retards prospects for economic growth’ It found that out of the 52 countries that are reversing or stagnating in their attempts to reduce child mortality, 30 have experienced conflict since 1990. A British government *White Paper* on International Development notes: ‘Violent conflict reverses economic growth, causes hunger, destroys roads, schools and clinics, and forces people to flee across borders ... Women and girls are particularly vulnerable because they suffer sexual violence and exploitation. And violent conflict and insecurity can spill over into neighbouring countries and provide cover for terrorists or organized criminal groups (Department for International Development 2016: 45). Wars also damage the environment, as happened with the US use of Agent Orange defoliant during the Vietnam War or Saddam Hussein’s burning of Kuwaiti oil wells in the 1990-1991 Gulf War, leading to massive air and land pollution. Similar links can be made between conflict and the outbreak of disease: ‘[W]ar-exacerbated disease and malnutrition kill far more people than missile, bombs and bullets’ (Human Security Report 2015:7). Disease accounts for most of the 3.9 million people who have died in the conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo (UNDP 2015: 45). Just as wars and violent conflict have indirect consequences in causing economic disruption, ecological damage, and disease, levels of poverty and environmental degradation contribute to conflict and hence must be taken into consideration in human security research. One study shows that a country at US\$250 GDP per capita has an average 15 per cent risk of experiencing a civil war in the next five years, while at a GDP per capita of \$5,000, the risk of civil war is less than 1 per cent (Humphreys and Varshney

2014: 9; Department for International Development 2016: 8). While no direct link can be established between poverty and terrorism, terrorists often ‘exploit poverty and exclusion in order to tap into popular discontent—taking advantage of fragile states such as Somalia, or undemocratic regimes such as in Afghanistan in the 1990s, to plan violence’ (UNDP 2015:47).

Environmental degradation which is often linked to poverty is another source of conflict (Homer-Dixon 2019, 2020). Analysts have identified competition for scarce resources as a source of possible conflict between Israel and its Arab neighbours, India and Pakistan, Turkey and Syria, Egypt and Ethiopia (Rice 2016: 78). The world’s poorer countries, where families often see the need for more children to compensate for a high infant mortality rate and to raise their income potential, account for a significant proportion of the growth in the world’s population, which has doubled between 1950 and 2008 (Rice 2016:80). Population growth, in turn, contributes to resource scarcity and environmental stress, often resulting in conflict. For example, South Asia, one of the poorest and most heavily populated regions of the globe, faces intensified competition and the possibility of conflict over scarce water resources. Examples include the Indo-Pakistan dispute over the Wular Barrage, the Indo-Bangladesh water dispute over the Farakka Barrage, and the Indo-Nepal dispute over the Mahakali River Treaty (Power and Interest News Report 2016). The potential for political upheaval or war as a consequence of environmental problems is evident in a host of poor regions around the world, including North Africa, the sub-Saharan Sahel region of Africa (including Ethiopia, Sudan, Somalia, Mali, Niger, and Chad), the island nations of the western Pacific Ocean, the Ganges River basin (principally north-eastern India and Bangladesh), and some parts of Central and South America (Petzold-Bradley, Carius, and Vincze 2021). Darfur illustrates the linkage between poverty, environmental degradation, and conflict. Traditional inter-communal conflict in Darfur over scarcity of resources and land deteriorated as a result of desertification and a shortage of rainfall. In the 1970s and 1980s, droughts in northern parts of Darfur sent its nomadic population to migrate southwards in search of water and herding grounds, and brought them into conflict with the local tribes (Environmental Degradation and Conflict in Darfur 2014).

Natural disasters can also affect the course of conflicts by either exacerbating or mitigating them. The December 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami changed the course of two separatist conflicts: Aceh in Indonesia and Tamil separatism

in Sri Lanka. In Aceh, where the government announced a ceasefire to permit relief work, improved prospects for reconciliation followed. In contrast, the conflict in Sri Lanka, where relief supplies did not reach rebel-held territory, saw an escalation of violence.

From the foregoing discussion, we can establish a conceptual link between the broader and narrower understandings of human security (see Figures 1.1 and 1.2).

Figure 1.1 Conflict and Underdevelopment: The Vicious Interaction

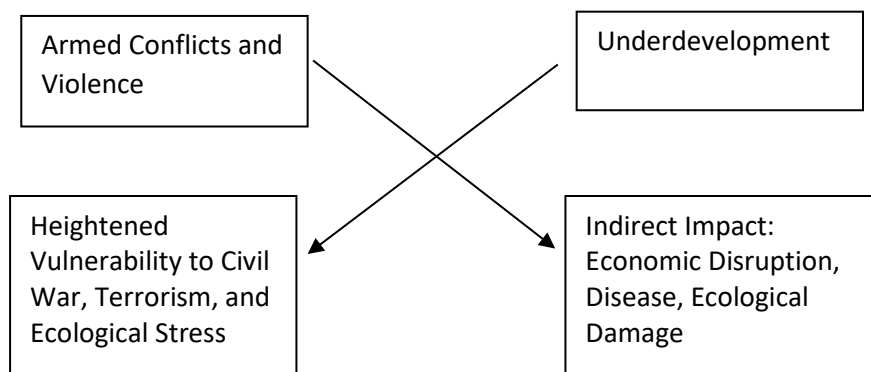
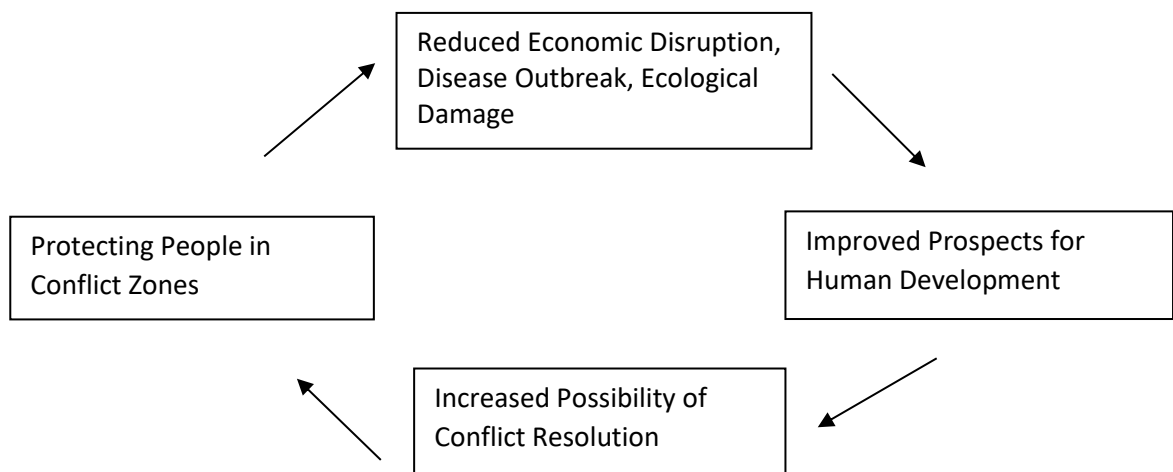


Figure 1.2 Protection and Development: The Virtuous Interaction



What is the nexus between women and human security? Indeed, the relationship between gender and human security has multiple dimensions. The United Nations Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality notes five aspects: (1) violence against women and girls; (2) gender inequalities in control over resources; (3) gender inequalities in power and decision-making; (4) women’s human rights; and (5) women (and men) as

actors, not victims (United Nations Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality 2009: 1). Recent conflicts have shown women as victims of rape, torture, and sexual slavery. For example, between 250,000 and 500,000 women were raped during the 1994 genocide in Rwanda. Such atrocities against women are now recognized as a crime against humanity (Rehn and Sirleaf 2020: 9).

War-affected areas often see a sharp increase in domestic violence directed at women and a growth in the number of women trafficked to become forced labourers or sex workers. Women and children comprise 73 per cent of an average population, but account for 80 per cent of the refugees in the world today, and perhaps a larger percentage as internally displaced persons (Falola 2019: 362). Another important aspect of the gender dimension of human security is the role of women as actors in conflicts. This involves considering the participation of women in combat. In the Eritrean war of independence, women made up 25-30 per cent of combatants. A similar proportion of women are fighting with the Tamil Tigers. Women play an even larger role in support functions, such as logistics, staff, and intelligence services in a conflict. It has been noted that women become targets of rape and sexual violence because they serve as a social and cultural symbol. Hence violence against them may be undertaken as a deliberate strategy by parties to a conflict with a view to undermine the social fabric of their opponents. Similarly, securing women's participation in combat may be motivated by a desire among the parties to a conflict to increase the legitimacy of their cause. It signifies 'a broad social consensus and solidarity, both to their own population and to the outside world' (Gendering Human Security 2011: 18).

In recent years, there has been a growing awareness of the need to secure the greater participation of women in international peace operations. The UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations noted in a 2000 report that: 'Women's presence [in peacekeeping missions] improves access and support for local women; it makes male peacekeepers more reflective and responsible; and it broadens the repertoire of skills and styles available within the mission, often with the effect of reducing conflict and confrontation. Gender mainstreaming is not just fair, it is beneficial' (cited in Rehn and Sirleaf 2012: 63).

In 2000, the UN Security Council passed a resolution (Security Council Resolution 1325) mandating a review of the impact of armed conflict on

women and the role of women in peace operations and conflict resolution. The review was released in 2002, entitled *Women, Peace and Security* (UN 2002). In his introduction to the report, UN Secretary General Kofi Annan noted that ‘women still form a minority of those who participate in peace and security negotiations, and receive less attention than men in post-conflict agreements, disarmament and reconstruction’ (UN 2002: ix). There is still a long way to go before the international community can fully realize the benefits of greater participation by women in UN peace operations and conflict resolution activities.

Promoting Human Security

Because of the broad and contested nature of the idea of human security, it is difficult to evaluate policies undertaken by the international community that can be specifically regarded as human security measures. But the most important multilateral actions include the International Criminal Court (ICC) and the Anti-Personnel Land Mines Treaty. The ICC was established on 1 July 2002 with its headquarters in The Hague, the Netherlands, although its proceedings may take place anywhere. It is a permanent institution with ‘the power to exercise its jurisdiction over persons for the most serious crimes of international concern’ (Rome Statute, Article 1). These crimes include genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes, and the crime of aggression, although the Court would not exercise its jurisdiction over the crime of aggression until such time as the state parties agree on a definition of the crime and set out the conditions under which it may be prosecuted. The ICC is a ‘court of last resort’. It is ‘complementary to national criminal jurisdictions’, meaning that it can only exercise its jurisdiction when national courts are unwilling or unable to investigate or prosecute such crimes (Rome Statute, Article 1). The Court can only prosecute crimes that were committed on or after 1 July 2002, the date its founding treaty entered into force. Since its establishment, the ICC has been involved in the prosecution of some high-profile war criminals in the former Yugoslavia, Liberia, and Congo, including the former President of Yugoslavia, Slobodan Milosevic (whose trial ended without a verdict after he was found dead in his cell in March 2006), and former Liberian President Charles Taylor.

The Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production, and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction, signed in Ottawa on 3-4 December 1997, bans the development, production, acquisition,

stockpiling, transfer, and use of anti-personnel mines (Ottawa Treaty, Article 1, General Obligations 1997). It also obliges signatories to destroy existing stockpiles. Among the countries which have yet to sign the treaty are the People's Republic of China, the Russian Federation, and the United States. The surge in UN peacekeeping and peacebuilding operations has contributed to the decline in conflict and enhanced prospects for human security. The number of UN peacekeeping operations increased three-fold between the first forty years of the UN's founding and the twenty years since - from 13 to 47 missions (Adetoro 2019). A UN peacebuilding Commission was inaugurated in 2006. Its goal is to assist in post-conflict recovery and reconstruction, including institution-building and sustainable development, in countries emerging from conflict. The UN has also been centre-stage in promoting the idea of humanitarian intervention, a central policy element of human security (see International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty 2011). The concept of humanitarian intervention was endorsed by the report of the UN Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change, *A More Secure World* (2014: 66, 106), the subsequent report by the Secretary – General, entitled *In Larger Freedom* (UN March 2015), and finally by the UN Summit in September 2015.

UN Specialized Agencies play a crucial role in promoting human security. For example, the UN Development Programme and the World Health Organization (WHO) have been at the forefront of fighting poverty and disease respectively. Other UN agencies such as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), and United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) have played a central role in getting particular issues, such as refugees and the rights of children and women, on to the agenda for discussion, and in providing a platform for advocacy and action (MacFarlane and Khong 2016).

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) contribute to human security in a number of ways: as a source of information and early warning about conflicts, providing a channel for relief operations, often being the first to do so in areas of conflict or natural disaster, and supporting government or UN-sponsored peacebuilding and rehabilitation missions. NGOs also play a central role in promoting sustainable development. A leading NGO with a human security mission is the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). Established in Geneva, it has a unique authority based on the

international humanitarian law of the Geneva Conventions to protect the lives and dignity of victims of war and internal violence, including the war-wounded, prisoners, refugees, civilians, and other noncombatants, and to provide them with assistance. Other NGOs include Medicine Sans Frontieres), (emergency medical assistance), Save the Children (protection of children), and Amnesty International (human rights).

Yet, whether viewed as freedom from fear or freedom from want, the concept of human security has not replaced national security. The *Human Development Report* of 2005 estimates that the rich nations of the world provide \$10 to the military budget for every \$1 they spend on aid. Moreover, the current global spending on HIV/AIDS, ‘a disease that claims 3 million lives a year, represents three days’ worth of military spending’ (UNDP 2015: 8).

Why the continued importance of national/state security over human security? For developing countries, state sovereignty and territorial integrity take precedence over security of the individual. Many countries in the developing world are artificial nation states, whose boundaries were drawn arbitrarily by the colonial powers without regard for the actual ethnic composition or historical linkages between peoples. State responses to ethnic separatist movements (now conflated with terrorism), which are partly rooted in people’s rejection of colonial-imposed boundaries, have been accompanied by the most egregious violations of human security by governments. Moreover, many Third World states, as well as China, remain under authoritarian rule. Human security is stymied by the lack of political space for alternatives to state ideologies and restrictions on civil liberties imposed by authoritarian regimes to ensure their own survival, rather than providing security for their citizens.

In the developed as well as developing world, one of the most powerful challenges to human security has come from the war on terror led by the United States in response to the 9/11 attacks. These have revived the traditional emphasis of states on national security (Suhrke 2014: 365). Although terrorists target innocent civilians and thus threaten human security, governments have used the war on terror to impose restrictions on, and commit violations of, civil liberties. The US decision to put Saddam Hussein on trial in an Iraqi court rather than the ICC illustrates the continued US defiance of a key policy instrument of human security, even though it focuses on the more on Western oriented conception of ‘freedom from fear’.

The US questioning of the applicability of the Geneva Conventions, the abandoning of its commitments on the issue of torture in the context of war in Iraq, and Russia's flouting of a wide range of its international commitments (including the laws of war, CSCE (Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe) and OCSE (Organization for Security and Cooperation) Conference on security and cooperation in Europe commitments, as well as international and regional conventions on torture) in the context of its war in Chechnya have further undermined the agenda of human security.

Conclusion

It is more than two and half decades since the United Nations Development Programme included the phrase 'human security' in its *1994 Human Development Report*, triggering a long and sometimes fractious debate about this 'new' vision of security, which sought to challenge classic formulations based on state sovereignty, the defence of territory and elite decision-making. The popularity of Human Security during the 1990s led to the establishment of the Human Security Network, to which states such as Canada, Japan and Norway (among others) have since contributed significantly. The UNDP's efforts also aimed to persuade states to begin seeing security more broadly in contrast to the traditional military/state-centric views expressed by traditionalist approaches. Despite this, however, and as this paper has shown, the concept remains underdeveloped and contentious, and even its strongest supporters have failed to achieve a consensus as regards its meaning. The UNDP's formulation was the broadest in the sense that it encompassed myriad threats to the human individual. The broad vision not only involves the physical protection of people during times of violent conflict, but also the empowerment of individuals in post-conflict scenarios where reconstruction and the stabilisation of society are of central concern.

However, other elements such as economic security, access to health and education, social protection, other features of development and even the protection of human rights all form the basis of the freedom from want perspective. It was this all-encompassing vision that led many academics as well as states to claim that the UNDP's concept was of limited value, since it was near impossible for policy-makers to prioritise its wide range of choices. The overly expansive nature of the UN's view also led to states such

as Canada losing their initial enthusiasm and moving towards a more restrictive definition based largely on the protection of human life during times of conflict – also referred to as the freedom from fear perspective. States such as Japan and Canada have come under pressure as a result of their close ally's pursuit of the War on Terror, and this has led to them having to identify with elements of Human Security which do not alienate their close relationship with the US.

More than perhaps any other formulation, which sought to reframe security after the end of the Cold War for an age of globalisation, human security provokes strong reactions. At issue are claims that it represents a new paradigm of security, or at least a radical way of addressing problems associated with conflict, crisis and severe deprivation. Yet for many people, particularly those charged with making policies in these areas, the idea of human security is still hazy. Its overarching policy implications are unclear, and practical examples of its application are relatively few. Far from threatening to overturn established practices, it still competes with traditional approaches, not least the embrace by powerful western states of the 'War on Terror'. Because it sits in the interstices of human rights, human development and security discourses, it sometimes appears marginal to more mainstream debates on these topics, and implementation requires the crossing of policy and disciplinary boundaries.

As Keith Krause notes, human security did not arise originally from the security establishment, but from development, nor was it part of the new wave of security thinking after the Cold War. It has been specifically removed from a number of key policy tracts, including the 2005 Copenhagen Declaration of Social Development, and it has been shelved by Canada's ministry of foreign affairs, a once enthusiastic proponent of the concept (Krause 2019). This suggests that there is something difficult and problematic about human security as a label and as a policy idea.

And yet, as countless journal articles and policy documents prove, as well as UN debates and the creation of international academic and political institutions to promote human security, it exercises an appeal across a wide range of political, geographic, institutional and cultural contexts. It has not evaporated, as those who dismissed it as hot air might have expected (Paris 2014). There have been setbacks, but also many advances. The concept has become embedded in various tracts of UN discourse. It grounded numerous international advocacy campaigns. It was the core of an EU strategic review.

Numerous governments continue to use it as a policy framework. It is widely used in the development community. And it is used as both a framing concept for a strain of academic research sitting at the intersection of development and security policy, as well as a theoretical framework for critical security studies.

Needless to say, the concept of human security reflects a number of developments that have incrementally challenged the traditional view of security as the protection of states from military attack. What initially began as a rejection of orthodox notions of economic growth in favour of a broader notion of human development has been reinforced by new security threats such as genocides in the Balkans and Africa, the Asian financial meltdown of 1997, and the threat of global pandemics. The concept of human security represents an ongoing effort to put the individual at the centre of national and global security concerns while expanding our understanding of the range of challenges that can threaten individual safety and well-being to encompass both armed conflict as well as social, economic, and ecological forces. To be sure, human security has a long way to go before being universally accepted as a conceptual framework or as a policy tool for national governments and the international community. The linkages between armed conflict, poverty, disease, and environmental stress are poorly understood and need clarification and elaboration. Nonetheless, there can be little doubt that threats to human security, whether understood as freedom from fear or freedom from want, are real world challenges which cannot be wished away or dismissed because of a lack of agreement over the concept and meaning of human security. Notwithstanding debates about the utility and scope of human security, there is increasing acceptance that the traditional notion of security, focusing on state sovereignty, would no longer suffice and that the international community must develop new responses to ensure the protection of people from transnational dangers in an era of globalization. The challenge for the international community is to find ways of promoting human security as a means of addressing a growing range of complex transnational dangers which have a much more destructive impact on the lives of people than conventional military threats to states.

For all their inconsistencies and uncertainties, human security studies are growing demonstrably stronger and more abundant. In fact, the diversity of disciplinary foundations accounts for some of the strength in human security scholarship. There is a kind of evolutionary advantage in drawing from a

wide variety of intellectual method and tradition. That same variety goes some way towards explaining a profusion of research activities that can sometimes look like incoherence. Some scholars are still busy trying to define the boundaries of human security, organizing a discipline, arranging typologies. Meanwhile, others are exploring human security issues on the ground – and beginning a serious scholarly contribution to the design and execution of human security policy.

In all of this, policy-makers and scholars are bound to find each other at odds from time to time. Practitioners, hard-pressed to prevent the crises not already exploding on CNN, and to cope with crises under way, show understandable impatience with scholarship that renders any problem more complicated – or worse, that does not evidently address any recognizable problem at all. Policy-makers would do well to remind themselves that scholars honour their own obligations and professional standards; they are neither desk officers at the beck and call of foreign ministries nor cheering spectators at the policy sidelines. Equally, scholars ambitious to affect policy are wise to understand the constraints of politics and resources that act on policy in every phase. They should also respect the dictatorship of deadlines that practitioners face – and the low tolerance among practitioners for elegant definitional argument. When a theory collides with reality, busy practitioners may want to know why; they will show no detectable excitement when a theory collides with another theory. In the best sort of dialogue – frank, timely, open-minded – academic and policy communities can collaborate to their lasting and shared advantage. More to the point, together they may advance the progress of human security.

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