

# Human Security as a policy framework: Critics and Challenges

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## Abstract

Starting with the emergence of a human centered approach to security from the intersection of trends in security, development and human rights, this paper analyses the human security framework proposed by the Commission on Human Security (CHS), and tries to present and respond to the critics to human security. The main argument is that human security provides a suitable framework for international cooperation. Human security joins the main agenda items of security, human rights and development. Therefore taking up the proposal of the Commission on Human Security (CHS) the paper argues that in order to be effective a human security approach should be integrated: from those dealing with human rights and humanitarian concerns, those with security and those with development. Indeed human security has already proved its utility as a tool for policy analysis. The challenge is now to adopt human security as a policy framework where the security, human rights and development agendas are integrated. As the paper will show the problem has not been the objective of human security but the distortion of the human security agenda and goals for foreign and security policy priorities. Human security provides a suitable framework for international cooperation.

## 1. Introduction

Human security is commonly understood as prioritizing the security of people, especially their welfare, safety and well-being, instead of that of states. Proponents of human security argue that poverty, population displacement, hunger, disease, environmental degradation and social exclusion, for example, all bear directly on human and hence global security. These kill far more people than war, genocide and terrorism combined. Therefore the recognition that development, peace and security and human rights are interlinked and mutually reinforcing is considered as being encapsulated in the concept of human security. The definitional scope of human security remains a subject of debate between the so-called narrow and broad approaches to human security as if the two were separable. Each approach emphasizes a different «leg» of human security: the broad one (freedom from want) the development agenda, the narrow one (freedom from fear) the human rights agenda.

The concept of human security has achieved great preeminence and acceptance in the post-Cold War period. Over the last decade the central messages of human security as a general policy reference have been gradually mainstreamed in international relations. The *2005 World Summit Outcome* adopted by all United Nations heads of state on the UN endorsed for the first time the concept of *Human Security* and one of its main components the *Responsi-*

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*bility to Protect*. The acceptance of «the right of people to live in freedom and dignity, free from poverty and despair»<sup>2</sup> and of the responsibility of the state and the international community «to protect populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity»<sup>3</sup> evidences the centrality of human security on the international agenda. There have been many publications, official reports and international commissions that have developed and promoted the concept.<sup>4</sup> Among them the independent International Commission on Human Security co-chaired by Professor Amartya Sen and the former UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Sadako Ogata, proposes human security as a new framework to address the conditions and threats people face in the world today.<sup>5</sup>

Based on the report of the Commission on Human Security (CHS), in our opinion the most comprehensive study on human security, the aim of this paper is first of all to clarify what human security means, its differences with regard to human development and to human rights and what a human security approach should be. Instead of insisting in the broad-versus-narrow debate and analyzing the different definitions, something which has been already done,<sup>6</sup> this paper would like to show that human security provides indeed a suitable framework for international cooperation.<sup>7</sup> A framework that proposes multisectoral, integrated solutions to interconnected and interdependent problems. Making human security the framework for international cooperation could be the response to the current international discussion on how to integrate the security and development

agendas and to the related calls for greater coherence, effectiveness and efficiency of the international cooperation system.

This paper will analyse the human security framework proposed by the CHS and will try to present and respond to the critics to human security. We will argue that human security is better understood as a general framework where different approaches are possible.<sup>8</sup> Human security joins the main agenda items of security, human rights and development. The human security is a broad and comprehensive framework in the sense that it integrates these agenda. Therefore taking up the proposal of the Commission on Human Security (CHS) we argue that in order to be effective a human security approach should be integrated: from those dealing with human rights and humanitarian concerns, those with security and those with development. Indeed human security has already proved its utility as a tool for policy analysis. The challenge is now to adopt human security as a policy framework where the security, human rights and development agendas are integrated. As the paper will show the problem has not been the objective of human security but the distortion of the human security agenda and goals for foreign and security policy priorities. In order to understand why human security provides a broad and comprehensive framework for international cooperation, the emergence of a human centered approach to security from the intersection of trends in security, development and human rights will be first introduced.

<sup>2</sup> General Assembly (2005), «2005 World Summit Outcome 2005», A/60/150. 15 September, par. 143.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* par. 138.

<sup>4</sup> See as an example, Edson, S., *Human Security: An extended and annotated international bibliography*, Common Security Forum, Cambridge: Center for history and Economics, King's College, University of Cambridge, June 1 available at [www.humansecurity-chs.org/activities/meetings/first/bibliography.pdf](http://www.humansecurity-chs.org/activities/meetings/first/bibliography.pdf) and the *Bibliography prepared by the Harvard Program on Humanitarian Policy and Conflict Research* (2001) at [www.gdrc.org/sustdev/husec/Bibliography.pdf](http://www.gdrc.org/sustdev/husec/Bibliography.pdf). There has also been a proliferation of governments, practitioners and academic networks, university centers, courses, programmes, activities and research initiatives that draw directly on ideas of human security. Look for example at <http://www.humansecuritygateway.info/>

<sup>5</sup> The Commission presented its report in May 2003 to the UN Secretary General. See, Commission on Human Security, (2003), *Human Security*

*Now: Protecting and empowering people*. Report of the Commission on Human Security. New York: United Nations.

<sup>6</sup> *Security Dialogue* (Vol, 35, No. 3, September 2004, pp. 345-387) contains a special section with a review of the Human Security concept by 21 of the leading scholars in the field.

<sup>7</sup> Human security has gained increasing attention as a framework for understanding the broader factors that contribute to peace and security. See, in this regard the national reports elaborated by Social Watch at <http://www.socialwatch.org/>.

<sup>8</sup> A close look to the foreign policies of Canada, which champions the narrow approach, and Japan, which champions the broad approach, shows that various and very different policy approaches are possible in the broader framework of human security. See, Bosold, D., and Werthes, S. (2005), «Human Security in Practice: Japanese and Canadian experiences» in *Internationale Politik und Gesellschaft*, no. 1 pp. 84-101.

## 2. The New Security Context: The emergence of a Human-Centered Approach to Security

Security is a subjective «feeling», and therefore relational and relative. If security is something that can only be felt, it must be security from something —a threat of one sort or dimension. To feel or not secure is a question of perception. Security is therefore an elusive concept. In the words of Ramesh Thakur «the concept of security is politically powerful, weakly conceptualised and intensely contested».<sup>9</sup> Security analysts have sought to find answers to questions such as: security for whom? security for which values?, security from what threats?, and security by what means?<sup>10</sup> The answers to these questions have been changing before the end of the Cold War, raising a distinction between «traditional» and «new security» thinking.

Traditionally security, understood as the absence of fear from threats to core values, has been seen as the priority obligation of state governments. They have taken the view that there is no alternative but to seek their own protection in what was described as a self-help world.<sup>11</sup> During the Cold War security mainly meant state security, which was largely defined in military terms. The purpose of a security policy was to defend the territorial integrity and political sovereignty of the state and «presumably —though rarely articulated— was concern for the security of individual citizens»<sup>12</sup>. The main area of interest of both academics and statesmen used to be, still is for some, the military capabilities that their own states should develop to deal with the threats that face them.

Already in the 1970s, but more evidently in the 1980s, with the rise of the economic and environmental agendas, the tradi-

tional approach to security was challenged. It was questioned for being unidirectional and state-centric and not taking in consideration the evolution of international society and the changes in world politics. The questioning grew first out of dissatisfaction in academic circles with the narrow definition of security<sup>13</sup> but soon found echo in political discourse in particular through the impact of bodies like the Brandt (1981), Palme (1982) and Brundtland Commissions (1988) which spoke of interdependent, shared and common security. Particularly in Europe, the CSCE Helsinki process in 1973 took a broad and comprehensive view of security reflected in the three baskets of the Helsinki Final Act related to politico-military aspects of security (basket I), co-operation in a number of fields including economics, science and technology (basket II) and co-operation in humanitarian and other fields —a formula covering human rights issues (basket III).

Yet it is with end of the Cold War and the intensification of global connectedness associated with the process of globalization and the rise of concerns with identity issues and transnational crime during the 1990s that a broader understanding of security and of what constitute threats to security openly emerges. The wider security agenda claims security status for issues and referent objects in the economic, environmental, and societal sectors as well as the military-political ones that define traditional security. Security becomes a multidimensional concept covering military, political, economic, environmental, and societal elements.<sup>14</sup> Security also moves away from the state to the individual on the one hand and the global agency on the other. This led to the classical distinction between internal and external security becoming blurred. In an «Agenda for Peace» the UN Secretary General Boutros Ghali acknowledges the complexity of the

<sup>9</sup> Thakur, R. (2006), *The United Nations and Human Security: Incoherent Concept or Policy Template?*, open lecture on the premises of Altes Rathaus Bonn Markt, Bonn International Centre of Conversion (BICC) and the Bonner Freundeskreis Vereinte Nationen, 9 March at [http://www.bicc.de/events/vortraege\\_2006/thakur.pdf](http://www.bicc.de/events/vortraege_2006/thakur.pdf), p. 3.

<sup>10</sup> Baldwin, D. (1997), «The Concept of Security,» *Review of International Studies*, vol. 23, p. 13.

<sup>11</sup> Baylis, J. (2001), «International and Global Security in the post cold war era» in Baylis, J., and Smith, S., *The Globalization of World Politics*, Oxford:Oxford University Press, pp. 254-256.

<sup>12</sup> Carey, R. (2000), «The Contemporary nature of Security» in Salmon, T.C., *Issues in International Relations*, London and New York: Routledge, p. 56.

<sup>13</sup> Buzan, B. (1983), *Peoples, States and Fear*, Brighton:Wheatsheaf; Ullman, R. (1983), «Redefining Security», *International Security*, Vol. 8, no. 1, pp. 129-153; Jahn, E. Lemaitre, P. and Waever, O. (1987), *Concepts of Security. Problems of Research on Non-Military Aspects*, Copenhagen Papers no. 1. Copenhagen: Centre for Peace and Conflict Research; Nye, J.S. and Lynn-Jones, S.M. (1988), «International Security Studies», *International Security*, Vol.12, no. 4, pp. 5-27.

<sup>14</sup> Buzan B., Waever O., and de Wilde J. (1998), *Security. A New Framework For Analysis*, Boulder/London: Lynne Rienner.

concept of security involving new risks for stability produced by the communications revolution (ecological damage, disruption of family and community life, greater intrusion into the lives and rights of individuals) and the continuing devastating problems of unchecked population growth; crushing debt burdens; barriers to trade, drugs and the growing disparity between rich and poor; poverty, disease, famine, oppression and despair abound being both sources and consequences of conflict. Also «social peace is challenged on the one hand by new assertions of discrimination and exclusion and, on the other, by acts of terrorism seeking to undermine evolution and change through democratic means».<sup>15</sup>

There is a growing recognition in the 1990s that the process of globalization has created new vulnerabilities to old threats and that new dimensions of globalization have emerged creating «a wholly new (security) context in which conventional institutional remedies fare poorly».<sup>16</sup> Among the new factors acknowledged as the most perilous are the so-called «new risks»: illegal drug trafficking, international organized crime and terrorism. Contrary to other global challenges (the communications revolution, water shortages, access to energy resources, financial flows, environmental concerns) «they call directly into question the very authority of the state, and are therefore potentially, if not openly, subversive».<sup>17</sup> In the wake of these challenges the UN Secretary General's noted in his Millennium Report that a «new understanding of the concept of security is evolving,» one that emphasises the need for a «more human-centred approach to security».<sup>18</sup>

The need of a more human-centred approach to security was driven in the beginning of the 1990s by a parallel debate over development and trends in international law and relations which

were giving precedence to the protection of human rights over the sovereignty and integrity of states and challenging traditional conceptions of sovereignty. With the end of the Cold War, as a response to violent conflicts involving gross violations of human rights that threatened to generate wider instability or unacceptable human suffering, the requirements of security have come to embrace the protection of communities and individuals from internal violence. In a series of resolutions adopted since 1991, the Security Council, bearing in mind its primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, as set out in Article 24 of the UN Charter, clearly recognised that massive and systematic breaches of human rights law and international humanitarian law constitute threats to international peace and security and therefore demand its attention and action.<sup>19</sup> This development opened the way to see state sovereignty as a matter of responsibility, not just power.<sup>20</sup> The importance of human rights as a legitimate factor in international relations was not new. Human rights instruments have multiplied since the 1948 Declaration. What was new is the impressive evolution of international standards governing human rights, and some expectation of implementation both by the organized international community and through the initiative of civil society organizations and concerned governments (such as the ban landmines campaign).

With regard to the debate over development, by the end of the 1970s it was clear that the idea that overall economic growth as measured by increases in the national income (GDP) would automatically bring benefits for the poorer classes had not worked. There was an increasing dissatisfaction with improvements in the circumstances of the most impoverished nations and the plight of the poorest all nations, together with the recognition that income does not always predict other

<sup>15</sup> UN Secretary General (1992), *An Agenda for Peace: preventive diplomacy, peacemaking and peacekeeping*, Report of the Secretary General pursuant to the statement adopted by the Summit Meeting of the Security Council on 31 January 1992, A/47/277-S/24111, 17 June, par. 11-13.

<sup>16</sup> UN Secretary General, *We the Peoples. The Role of the United Nations in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, Millenium Report of the Secretary General, New York: United Nations. p. 41.

<sup>17</sup> Politi, A. (1997), *European Security: the new transnational risks*, Paris: European Union Institute for Security Studies, p. 2.

<sup>18</sup> UN Secretary General, *We the Peoples. The Role of the United Nations in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, op. cit. p. 43

<sup>19</sup> UN Secretary General, *Report of the Secretary General on the protection of civilians in armed conflict*, S/1999/1257 and Ramsbotham O. and Woodhouse, T. (1996), *Humanitarian Intervention in Contemporary Conflict*, Cambridge: Polity Press, pp. 70-85

<sup>20</sup> See, Annan, K.A, «Peacekeeping, military intervention, and national sovereignty in internal armed conflict» in J. Moore (ed.) (1998), *Hard Choices*, Rowman and Littlefield: Lanham, Md, p.57 and ID. (1999), «Two concepts of sovereignty», *The Economist*, 18 September.

components of well-being.<sup>21</sup> These concerns were captured by Muhabub ul Haq and his team in the first United Nations Development Program (UNDP) 1994, *Human Development Report*.<sup>22</sup> The Report noticed that in the end of the Cold War we were «rediscovering that people should be at the centre of development». The central message of the HDR was that while growth in national production is necessary to meet all essential human objectives, what is important is to study how this growth translates or fails to translate into human development in various societies. Development is thus about expanding the choices people have to lead lives that they value. There are other options as well including long life, knowledge, political freedom, personal security, community participation and guaranteed human rights. Fundamental to enlarging these choices is building human capabilities —the range of things that people can do or be in life.<sup>23</sup>

The HDR Report materialised the intersection between security and development introducing the concept of human security. It argued that, «the concept of security has for too long has been interpreted narrowly: as security of territory from external aggression, or as protection of national interests in foreign policy or as global security from the threats of nuclear holocaust... Forgotten were the legitimate concerns of ordinary people who sought security in their daily lives.»<sup>24</sup> Therefore, it followed, the search

for human security lies in development not in arms. The Report sought to deal with the concerns of human security through a new paradigm of sustainable human development<sup>25</sup>, a new form of development co-operation and a restructured system of global institutions. The UNDP's main goal was to turn human security in the organising concept of the 1995 Copenhagen UN Conference on Social Development.<sup>26</sup> While the new concept was not adopted as the basis for the world social summit, human security as proposed by the UNDP began to be used and recognised as a framework for analysis, explanation and policy generation. However the central revisionist message of the UNDP was put off the agenda.

The strength and appeal of human security is not only in its new elements but in the growing inability of traditional concepts of security to generate adequate responses to the new security context. Interdependent and trans-national problems need cooperative and holistic models of behaviour which emphasize the importance of conflict prevention as opposed to defensive pre-emptive attitudes defined in terms of national security. Security is not only determined by political and military factors but relates the maintenance of peace to the respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms and includes also cooperation on social, economic, and ecological issues. Closely connected to the latter

<sup>21</sup> The dominant understanding after II World War had seen development as synonymous with economic growth within the context of a free market international economy. Since the early 1970s there have been numerous efforts to stimulate debate about development and to highlight its contested nature. However between 1945 and 1990 there was an explosive widening of the gap between rich and poor. See, Thomas, C., «Poverty, Development and Hunger» in Baylis, J., and Smith, S. (2003), *The Globalization of World Politics*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 651-656.

<sup>22</sup> Mahbub ul Haq, led the team of the selected team of scholars, development practitioners and members of the Human Development Report Office of UNDP that produce the *Human Development Report* with Inge Kaul from 1990 through 1994; and with Sakiko Fukuda-Parr in 1995. He played a key role in the construction of the Human Development Index (HDI) and was subsequently the moving force behind the more recent Humane Governance Index (HGI).

<sup>23</sup> Mahbub ul Haq definition is linked to Amartya Sen's theory of capabilities and its vision that the expansion of freedom is the primary end and the principal means of development. Sen, A. (1995), *Inequality Re-examined*, Russell Sage Foundation/Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA, 1ed 1992. and Sen, A. (1999), *Development as Freedom*, Alfred A. Knopf, New York.

<sup>24</sup> UNDP (1995, «Chapter 2: New Dimensions of Human Security» *Human Development Report 1994: NewDimensions of Human Security*, New York: UNDP, p. 22

<sup>25</sup> In the mainstream debate the focus has shifted from growth to sustainable development. The concept was championed in the 1987 by the Brundtland Commission and supported in the 1990s by a series of UN global conferences. The central idea is that the pursuit of development by the present generations should not be at the expense of future generations. With the United Nations Conference on the Environment and Development (UNCED) the Rio Summit in 1992, the idea that the environment and development were inextricably linked was taken further. See, Thomas, C., «Poverty, Development and Hunger» pp. 649-661.

<sup>26</sup> It also proposed that the summit approve a world social charter, create a global human security fund by capturing the future peace dividend, approve a 20/20 compact for human priority concerns, recommend global taxes for resource mobilisation and establish an Economic Security Council. See, UNDP (1995), «An agenda for the social summit» in *Human Development Report 1994*, New York: UNDP, p. 3.

is the recognition of new security referents, the region, and new security actors other than the state.<sup>27</sup>

The need of a human centred approach to security was recognised by all by all United Nations heads of state at the turn of the century. The Millennium Declaration considered *freedom from fear and freedom from want* as one of the fundamental values to be essential to international relations in the twenty-first century.<sup>28</sup> However shortly afterwards, the unilateral military response of the United States to the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 on New York and Washington DC and the deep divisions over its —led war in Iraq in 2003 eroded the initial unity and with it the opportunity to find a consensus on how to address the new security threats.

Nevertheless the concept of human security was taken up in recent reports to promote UN reform as a way to avoid security and development concerns being swept away by the post 9/11 focus on the war on terror. UN Secretary General commissioned High Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change, *A More Secure World: Our Shared Responsibility*,<sup>29</sup> and the Secretary General's own report, *In Larger Freedom*,<sup>30</sup> central premise was that in an increasingly interconnected world, progress in the areas of development, security and human rights must go hand in hand. Although new risks and threats could need short-term coercive responses, the main emphasis should be put on underlying the

causes of insecurity. There will be no development without security and no security without development. And both development and security also depend on respect for human rights and the rule of law. This means putting human security in the centre. This recognition has been encapsulated in the concept of human security endorsed by the *2005 World Summit Outcome* as «the right of people to live in freedom and dignity, free from poverty and despair».<sup>31</sup> It opens a window of opportunity for international action

### 1. The Commission on Human Security Conceptual Framework

Based on the UNDP approach, the conceptual framework of human security has been further elaborated by the Commission on Human Security (CHS) 2003 report, *Human Security Now*.<sup>32</sup> As mentioned above, the concept of human security was initially articulated in *the UN Development Programme's 1994, Human Development Report*.<sup>33</sup> The UNDP *Report* emphasized its concern with human beings:

«In final analysis, human security is a child who did not die, a disease that did not spread, a job that was not cut, an ethnic tension that did not explode in violence, a dissident who was not silenced. Human security is not a concern with weapons —it is a concern with human life and dignity.»<sup>34</sup>

<sup>27</sup> From our point of view the «new security» context is better grasp by the theoretical approach «New and critical security and regionalism». This approach challenges the traditional framing of security studies considering not only the region but also the individual as security referents, and underlines the role of non-state actors. It combines new and critical views of security with a new regionalist perspective. See, Hentz, J. J. and Boas, M. (ed.) (2003), *New and Critical Security and Regionalism*, Aldershot: Ashgate.

<sup>28</sup> «Men and women have the right to live their lives and raise their children in dignity, free from hunger and from the fear of violence, oppression or injustice». UN General Assembly (2000), *United Nations Millennium Declaration*, A/RES/ 55/2, 18 September, par. 9.

<sup>29</sup> Kofi Annan speaking to the General Assembly in September 2003 called attention to the deep divisions among Member States on the nature of security threats faced in the world today, and the differences of opinion around the use of force as a last resort to address those threats. He recognized that the opportunity for collective security to flourish after the end of the Cold War was definitely eroded with divisions over the United States —led war in Iraq in 2003. He commissioned the High Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change to assess current threats to international peace and security, to evaluate how well existing UN institutions

have addressed these challenges, and what changes need to be made to strengthen the UN so that it can continue to provide collective security in the Twenty-first century. The report of the High Level Panel, *A more secure world: our shared responsibility*, was released in December 2005.

<sup>30</sup> United Nations Secretary-General, (2005). *In Larger Freedom: Towards Development, nSecurity, and Human Rights for All*. Report of the UN Secretary- General to the General Assembly, A/59/2005, p. 5.

<sup>31</sup> UN General Assembly (2005), «2005 World Summit Outcome 2005», *op. cit.*

<sup>32</sup> In response to the new security challenges, at the United Nations Millennium Summit, the UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan called upon the world community to advance the twin goals of «freedom from want» and «freedom from fear». As a contribution to this effort, the Commission on Human Security (CHS) was established with the initiative of the Government of Japan. Chaired by Amartya Sen and Sadako Ogata, the Commission presented its report in May 2003 to the UN Secretary General.

<sup>33</sup> Closely associated with the concept from the beginning was the development economist, Mahbub ul Haq. Haq's approach is outlined in his paper, «New Imperatives of Human Security» (1994).

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

For the UNDP human security has four main characteristics: it is *people-centred*, it is of *universal* concern; its components are *interdependent* and it is easier to ensure through early *prevention*. The report recognises that human security is more easily identified but its absence that its presence. In order to have a more explicit definition, it proposes human security as meaning and including two main aspects: first, safety from such chronic threats as hunger, disease and repression and second, the protection from sudden and hurtful disruptions in the patterns of daily life.<sup>35</sup> In other words, it means «*freedom from fear and freedom from want*», which lay at the hearth of the United Nations mission. The 1994 report concedes that the definition is broad «integrative and all-encompassing», because this is simply a reflection of all the threats to human security. Related to the main categories of threats, the UNDP proposes seven interconnected components of human security: economic security (freedom from poverty), food security (access to food), health security (access to health care and protection from diseases), environmental security (protection from the danger of environmental pollution), personal security (physical protection against torture, war, criminal attacks, domestic violence, ...), community security (survival of traditional cultures and ethnic groups), political security (civil and political rights, freedom from political oppression).

The CHS puts forward a still dynamic but more precise definition of human security. The CHS defines human security as the protection of «the vital core of all human lives in ways that enhance human freedoms and human fulfilment.» Human security means:

- Protecting fundamental freedoms - freedoms that are the essence of life.
- Protecting people from critical (severe) and pervasive (widespread) threats and situations.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.* p. 23.

<sup>36</sup> Commission on Human Security, (2003), *Human Security Now: Protecting and empowering people*, op. cit, p. 4. The ICHS builds on Sabine Alkire's working definition of human security as written in her draft paper, «Conceptual Framework for the Commission on Human Security.» Alkire, S. (2002), «Conceptual Framework for Human Security», *Commission for Human Security*, February, p. 1, at <http://www.humansecuritychs.org/activities/outreach/frame.pdf>

<sup>37</sup> The implications of specifying capabilities as a coherent space in which to identify the elements and threshold of the «vital core» are several. First the capability approach solidifies human security's central focus on human beings. Second, the capability approach raises the question of

- Using processes that build on people's strengths and aspirations.
- Creating political, social, environmental, economic, military and cultural systems that, when combined, give people the building blocks for survival, livelihood and dignity.<sup>36</sup>

The «vital core» is a non-technical term for the concerns that lie behind human security. Following Amartya Sen's argument it may be defined in the space of capabilities, the freedom people have to do and to be.<sup>37</sup> Elements of the vital core are fundamental human rights which all persons and institutions are obliged to respect or provide, even if the obligations are not perfectly specifiable. The rights and freedoms in the vital core pertain to survival, to livelihood, and to basic dignity.<sup>38</sup> The Commission acknowledges that what people consider to be «vital» —what they consider to be «of the essence of life» and «crucially important»— varies across individuals and societies. The task of prioritizing among rights and capabilities, each of which is argued by some to be fundamental, is a value judgement and a difficult one, which may be best undertaken by appropriate institutions. Yet the judgment is necessary if human security is to be realistic and effective. So there is a foreseeable tension between (i) the need for participatory engagement and scrutiny of this «core» by many, especially by those whose security is endangered, and (ii) the need for international agencies, NGOs, and public institutions, among others, clearly to define a «vital core» and to create procedures and institutions that prepare to protect it effectively. The imperfect but operational response to this tension is to maintain a self-consciously vague, wide working definition of human security, and to articulate *procedures* for operationalizing this definition in concrete situations by constrained institutions, for particular populations.<sup>39</sup>

what people value. Third, the capability approach offers a basis not only for human security but also for «human flourishing» in general. Fourth, the capability approach has clear and significant relationships to human development and human rights literatures. See, Alkire, S. (2003), «*A Conceptual Framework for Human Security*», *CRISE Working Paper n. 2*, Center for Research on Inequality, Human Security and Ethnicity (CRISE), Queen Elizabeth House: University of Oxford, p. 27.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 3-4.

<sup>39</sup> Commission on Human Security, (2003), *Human Security Now: Protecting and empowering people*, op. cit, p. 3.

Human security joins the main agenda items of security, human rights and development. It is a broad and comprehensive framework in the sense that it integrates these agenda. Human security is concerned with violent conflict and with deprivation. It includes the security against economic privatization, an acceptable quality of life and a guarantee of fundamental human rights. It recognizes the links between environmental degradation, population growth, ethnic conflicts, and migration. As the UN Secretary General Kofi Annan pointed out:

«Human security in its broadest sense embraces far more than the absence of violent conflict. It encompasses human rights, good governance, access to education and health care and ensuring that each individual has opportunities and choices to fulfill his or her own potential. Every step in this direction is also a step towards reducing poverty, achieving economic growth and preventing conflict. Freedom from want, freedom from fear and the freedom of future generations to inherit a healthy natural environment —these are the interrelated building blocks of human, and therefore national, security.»<sup>40</sup>

Human security thus broadens the focus from the security of borders to the lives of people and communities inside and across those borders. The idea is for people to be protected regardless of race, religion, gender or political opinion. Gender is a vital component of the human security agenda. Through the utilisation of a human security perspective, it is possible to generate policies that are at once sensitive to the insecurities of vulnerable women as well as integrating these concerns into a wider narrative of human threats.<sup>41</sup> Unlike traditional approaches that vest the state with full responsibility for state security, the process of human security involves a much broader spectrum of actors and institutions especially people themselves. Therefore human security does not seek to supplant state security, but rather to complement it.<sup>42</sup>

Human security shares a common vision with human development and human rights. Their common goal is human freedom.

Human development and human rights are mutually reinforcing, helping to secure the well-being and dignity of all people, building self-respect and the respect of others. The CHS stressed the relationship between human security and human development and human rights but also delimited its scope. Unlike human development human security focuses on the vital core of the individual, rather than on anything and everything that can cause harm. While human rights indicate the path as to how could human security be promoted, human security helps in identifying the rights at stake in a particular situation.

Human Security shares the «conceptual space» of *human development*, which is likewise people-centred and multidimensional and is defined in the space of human choices and freedoms. Human security provides an enabling environment for human development. It is a condition, a prerequisite, to enlarge people's choices. On the other hand human security is only possible when it is based on sustained development. The relation between both concepts is very close but the «security» one emphasizes the protection while the «development» one the achievement. Human development has a broader, holistic scope: enlarging all people's choices and freedoms. In contrast human security has a delimited scope. It concentrates in the most critical people's choices. The first one thinks more in terms of positive freedoms, the other in negative freedoms.<sup>43</sup> While human security looks at «risk» human development looks at «choices». Therefore a human security approach identifies and prepares for recessions, conflicts, emergencies, and the darker events of society. As human security seeks to protect the physical safety and integrity of individuals and communities, it tends to have a short-term focus on protecting human welfare and/or alleviating the consequences of conflict or socially unsound investments. Therefore as well as longer term human and institutional development, human security activities may at times have a much shorter time horizon, and include emergency relief work and peacekeeping. It

<sup>40</sup> Annan, K., «Secretary-General Salutes International Workshop on Human Security in Mongolia.» Two-Day Session in Ulaanbaatar, May 8-10, 2000. Press Release SG/SM/7382.

<<http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2000/20000508.sgsm7382.doc.html>> 08/27/01 in The Global Development Research Centre, *Human Security Definitions* at <http://www.gdrc.org/sustdev/husec/Definitions.pdf>

<sup>41</sup> Hudson, H. (2005), «Doing security as through Humans Matter: A feminist perspective on gender and the politics of Human security», *Security Dialogue*, vol. 36, n. 2, pp. 155-174.

<sup>42</sup> See «Box 1.2 .Human Security and State Security», Commission on Human Security, *op. cit.*, p. 5.

<sup>43</sup> The second Human Development Report picked up the classical distinction between positive and negative freedoms. See, UNDP (1992), *Human Development Report 1991*, New York: UNDP, pp. 51-52.



requires sustained attention to processes of development and to emergency relief activities, as well as to the outcomes. Development activities tend to address root causes over the medium and long term.

The relation between human security and human rights can be summarized in the table below:

**Table 1**

Relation between Human Security (HS) and Human Development (HD)

	Human Development	Human security
<b>Shared conceptual space «content»</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People-Centred</li> <li>• Multidimensional</li> <li>• Long term objective of human fulfilment</li> <li>• Address chronic poverty</li> </ul>	
<b>Different Scope</b>	Fulfilment of all capabilities	Provision of a sub-set of basic capabilities (vital core)
<b>Different Aim</b>	To enlarge people's choices and freedoms	To protect people's safety and well-being
<b>Different time horizon</b>	Over time, medium and long term towards durable change (institution building, capacity-building)	Short-time (emergency relief work, peacekeeping) but also long term human and institutional development

Human Security and *human rights* are likewise deeply interconnected. Both are concerned to identify a rudimentary set of universal concerns that span poverty and violence. Human security helps in identifying the rights at stake in a particular situation, while human rights indicate the path as to how could human security be promoted. Fundamental human rights are arguably an appropriate working set for the «vital core» of human lives. Alkire clarifies that human security may not necessarily prioritise all human rights equally, and in practice different institutions that respect or promote human security will legitimately prioritize and

address only certain rights and freedoms. Still, to the extent that human security concerns at least some rights, institutions are clearly obligated to provide it.<sup>44</sup> The relation between human security and human rights can be summarized in the table below:

**Table 2**

Relation between Human Rights and Human Security

	Human Rights	Human security
<b>Interconnected motivation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Universal and fundamental human rights</li> </ul>	
<b>Interconnected motivation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Violence and poverty</li> <li>• Identification and promotion of central facets of human lives</li> </ul>	
<b>Different obligations</b>	Basic framework of universal human rights	Cross-section of human rights
<b>Different approach</b>	Indivisibility of human rights, equal priority of all human rights	Open-ended prioritisation of human rights

Human security strategies are proactive; they stress conflict prevention and peacebuilding rather than humanitarian response. To achieve human security, the Commission puts forward two key strategies: *protection* and *empowerment*. Protection refers to the norms, processes and institutions required to shield people from critical and pervasive threats. It implies a «top-down» approach. States have the primary responsibility to implement such a protective structure. However, international and regional organizations, civil society and non-governmental actors, and the private sector also play a pivotal role in shielding people from menaces. To protect people «requires concerted efforts to develop national and international norms, processes and institutions, which must address insecurities in ways that are systematic not makeshift, comprehensive not compartmentalized, preventive not reactive».<sup>45</sup> Empowerment strategies enable people to de

<sup>44</sup> Sabine Alkire in her «Conceptual Framework for the Commission on Human Security» clarifies the distinction between human security and the human development and human rights agendas. Alkire, S. (2003), «A Conceptual Framework for Human Security», *op. cit.* p.35-40. *Ibid.* pp. 37-40

<sup>45</sup> Commission on Human Security, *Human Security Now*, *op. cit.* 11

velop their resilience to difficult conditions. It implies a bottom up approach. Empowerment aims at developing the capabilities of individuals and communities to make informed choices and to act on their own behalf. As the Report underlines «fostering that ability differentiates human security from state security, from humanitarian work and even from much development work». <sup>46</sup> The primary question of every human security activity should not be: What can we do? It should be: How does this activity build on the efforts and capabilities of those directly affected? Protection and empowerment are thus mutually reinforcing. People protected can exercise many choices. And people empowered can avoid some risks and demand improvements in the system of protection.

All in all what the Commission on Human Security proposes is a new framework, a human security framework to address the conditions and threats people face in the world. By placing people, at the center, the human security approach call for enhancing and redirecting policies and institutions. The CHS argument is that «with human security the objective, there must be a stronger and more integrated response from communities and states around the globe». <sup>47</sup> Adopting a human security framework will mean that efforts to solve the problems generated by violent conflict and by economic and social deprivation must be addressed in one integrated perspective. <sup>48</sup> The response cannot be effective if it comes fragmented —*from those dealing with rights, those with security, those with humanitarian concerns and those with development*. This requires a fundamental rethinking of current institutional arrangements and policies. <sup>49</sup>

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.* p. 10.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.* p. 2.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.* p.130.

<sup>49</sup> Ogata, S., «A New Concept of Human Security», *International Herald Tribune*. May 8, 2003

<sup>50</sup> The Network includes Austria, Canada, Chile, Costa Rica, Greece, Ireland, Jordan, Mali, the Netherlands, Norway, Switzerland, Slovenia, Thailand and South Africa as an observer. The Network has a unique inter-regional and multiple agenda perspective with strong links to civil society and academia. The Network emerged from the landmines campaign and was formally launched at a Ministerial meeting in Norway in 1999. See <http://www.humansecuritynetwork.org/network-e.php>.

<sup>51</sup> See, Jensen, F. (2006), «The Practice of Human Security Theory . A case study of US and EU policy in the middle East and North Africa»,

## 2. Critics to Human security

Over the last decade the central messages of human security as a general policy reference have achieved greater acceptance. The UN through the work of the UNDP and the support of the UN Secretary General Kofi Annan has promoted the concept. Several States have integrated the concept of human security in their foreign policy agenda. This is especially the case for Japan, Canada and Norway. The two latter launched the «Human Security Network», a group of like-minded countries from all regions of the world that maintains dialogue on questions pertaining to human security. <sup>50</sup> Other policy makers from different countries are considering similar moves. Even if the term «human security» may not explicitly appear in the formulation of foreign policies, its underlying idea, has gained influence in the formulation of the foreign policy of the European Union and, even, of the United States. <sup>51</sup> Also the agenda of international and regional organisations show a human security focus (OSCE, OECD, World Bank, OSCE, AU, OAS, and ASEAN). <sup>52</sup> The human security agenda is also filtering the G8 forum. <sup>53</sup>

Although the concept of human security has been gradually mainstreamed in international relations its utility as a policy tool and its operationalization has been questioned. Human Security has been first of all questioned because there is no common agreed definition of it. The concept has been generally questioned because of its broadness, vagueness and limited utility for policy analysis. <sup>54</sup> To some human security is attractive, but analytically weak since it introduces too many variables that are not necessarily linked together. To others human security has become

*Revue de la Sécurité Humaine/ Human Security Journal*, Issue 2, June, pp. 35-46.

<sup>52</sup> A look to the website and documents from these organizations shows that the human security agenda has been incorporated.

<sup>53</sup> See for example the *Chair's summary. G8 Documents* (St. Petersburg, 2006), St.Petersburg, 17 July 2006 at [http://en.civilg8.ru/g8\\_doc/2076.php](http://en.civilg8.ru/g8_doc/2076.php)

<sup>54</sup> The *Human Security Report* reproduces the two main critics to the broad approach pointing out that first a concept «that lumps together threats as diverse as genocide and affronts to personal dignity may be useful for advocacy, but it has limited utility for policy analysis». Therefore «it is no accident that the broad conception of human security articulated by the UN Development Programme in its much-cited 1994 *Human Development Report* has rarely been used to guide research programs.» P. VIII

a neat device to appropriate development aid for the purposes of foreign policy.<sup>55</sup> In relation to the war on terrorism the human security agenda has been transformed into a northern political and security agenda. Human security has also been denounced as a relation of governance, which prioritizes the security of homeland populations instead of the well-being of people living in ineffective states.<sup>56</sup> It has also been criticized because it has had too little emphasis on empowerment in particular on women's empowerment. Finally the operationalization of human security has been fragmented and its objectives diffused.

### *The quest of a definition*

First of all the definitional scope of Human Security remains a subject of debate between the narrow (freedom from fear, championed by Canada) and the broad (freedom from want, championed by Japan), as if the two were separable. A September 2004 issue of *Security Dialogue*, centered on the definitions of the term, its advantages and weak points, showed that scholars and policy makers fall into three categories: those for whom human security represents an attractive idea but one that lacks analytical rigor; those who, while accepting the term, insist on limiting it to a narrowly conceived definition; and those for whom a broad definition of the human security concept is an essential tool for understanding contemporary crises.<sup>57</sup> There is consensus among its advocates that it means a shift of attention from a state centered to a people-centered approach to security, which requires a rethinking of state sovereignty. Today's safety threats are interconnected and therefore require concerted efforts to develop national and international norms, processes and institutions that address insecurities in ways that are systematic,

comprehensive and preventive. All proponents of human security agree that its primary goal is the protection of individuals. But consensus breaks down over what threats individuals should be protected from. Depending on what one considers as constituting «people's rights and safety» the scope of the definition is either narrow or broad.

An argument in favor of finding an agreement on a definition is that it might be a handicap given that definitions do count when consensus is sought for cooperation.<sup>58</sup> Definitions of human security cover a wide range from understanding human security only as safety from violent threats to include in the definition the social, psychological, political, and economic factors that promote and protect human well being.<sup>59</sup> But most definitions recognise a vital core of «people's rights and safety». The CHS definition is the most widely used in most of the writings/ debates on human security. The Commission definition is wide enough to embrace the diverse concerns of different countries and narrow enough to have technical credibility as an analytical framework. It also recognizes that much of the energy needed to address human security concerns is politically as well as rationally determined.

Even accepting the value of the argument in favor of a consensual definition, the truth is that human security is more a question of approach than of definition. Despite major differences in interests and perspectives, all member countries of the United Nations endorsed the twin goals of human security in the Millennium Summit. The Millennium Declaration recognised *freedom from fear and freedom from want* as one of the fundamental values to be essential to international relations in the twenty-first century.<sup>60</sup> As mentioned before, all United Nations heads of state 2005 World Summit on the UN reform endorsed the term *Human Security* as «the right of people to live in freedom and

<sup>55</sup> Maxwell, S. (2006), «Is «human security» a neat way of framing a poverty focused aid programme, or a clever device for the EU to appropriate development aid for the purposes of foreign policy? Friday October 27, ODI Comments.

<sup>56</sup> See, Duffield, M. (2005), «Human Security: Linking Development and Security in an Age of Terror», Paper prepared for the GDI panel «New Interfaces between Security and Development» 11<sup>th</sup> General Conference of the EADI, Bonn, 21-24 September at [http://eadi.org/gc2005/confweb/papersps/Mark\\_Duffield.pdf](http://eadi.org/gc2005/confweb/papersps/Mark_Duffield.pdf)

<sup>57</sup> Taylor, O. (2004), «Human Security - Conflict, Critique and Consensus: Colloquium Remarks and a Proposal for a Threshold-Based Definition» in *Security Dialogue*, Vol. 35, No. 3, pp. 373-387.

<sup>58</sup> Tadjbakhsh, S. (2005), *Human Security: The Seven Challenges of Operationalizing the Concept*, paper presented as part of the UNESCO discussion «Human Security: 60 Minutes to Convince», Paris, 13 September at [http://www.peacecenter.sciences-po.fr/pdf/unesco\\_13-09-05.pdf](http://www.peacecenter.sciences-po.fr/pdf/unesco_13-09-05.pdf).

<sup>59</sup> Arie, J., and Leaning, S., (200), *Human Security: A Framework for Assessment In Conflict and Transition*, CERTI Crisis and Transition Tool Kit, p. 12.

<sup>60</sup> «Men and women have the right to live their lives and raise their children in dignity, free from hunger and from the fear of violence, oppression or injustice.» *United Nations Millennium Declaration*, UNGA, Res 55/2, par. 9.

dignity, free from poverty and despair».<sup>61</sup> Indeed the recognition that development, peace and security and human rights are interlinked and mutually reinforcing is encapsulated in the concept of human security.<sup>62</sup> Although it can be argued that this expression has become common place and it is devoid of real meaning the fact is that it shows an emerging consensus on a general «broad» understanding of human security.

### *Human security as a tool for policy analysis*

The *Human Security Report* reproduces the main critic to the CHS approach pointing out that a concept «that lumps together threats as diverse as genocide and affronts to personal dignity may be useful for advocacy, but it has limited utility for policy analysis.»<sup>63</sup> Critics lament that prioritizing everything is equivalent to prioritizing nothing, and therefore leads to inaction. They argue that a human security definition, which includes so many components, ranging from the physical to the psychological, without a clearly established hierarchy, presents difficulties for policy makers forced to choose between competing goals and to concentrate their resources on specific solutions to immediate problems. However as Shahrbanoou Tadjbakhsh rightly points out «the fallacy is in assuming that viable policies are to be made by top «political actors», who sift through competing demands in order to choose one or two suitable targets for attention and resources; their decisions ignore that reality may in fact be many-faceted, involving a host of interconnected factors. Policy-making should not be a vertical process but a networked, flexible and horizontal coalition of approaches corresponding to a complex paradigm.»<sup>64</sup>

Indeed to try to «hierarchize» and prioritize among human security goals is the wrong approach to human security. It is not

only that the concept is based on the postulate that all threats are interdependent and should be address in a comprehensive way. But also that human security takes its shape from the human being: the vital core to be secured. The concept of human security is human-focused rather than threat- focused. This means that instead of prioritization among competing goals policy makers should focus on the identification of thresholds of survival, livelihood and dignity. A threshold-based approach to human security requires choosing policies on the basis of their concrete effects on people's welfare and dignity. Yet the thresholds, of what is vital and what is not, are open to ongoing discussion. Security, at whatever level, will always remain in part a subjective feeling, a question of perception, and thresholds of tolerance will be different in different cultures, at different times, and in different places. This means that operationalization of human security «will *always* require specification».<sup>65</sup>

Despite criticisms and challenges, the application of the human security framework as a policy analysis tool has increasingly been gaining currency within policy circles since 1994. Since the Human Development Report 1994, some 42 NHDRs National Human Development Reports have dealt directly or indirectly with human security. There are more than 500 other NHDRs which have been prepared since 1990, some of which will have touched on elements of human security. Human security has been a main theme in a dozen or so National Human Development Reports (NHDRs) predominantly in countries which have either just emerged from conflict, or are still grappling with lingering but still major elements of national (and in some cases, regional) insecurity. A recent study looking at evidence from UNDP's National Human Development Reports, proves the strengths of the human security approach to provide contextualised multi-dimensional analysis of inter-connected factors.<sup>66</sup>

<sup>61</sup> «We stress the right of people to live in freedom and dignity, free from poverty and despair. We recognize that all individuals, in particular vulnerable people, are entitled to freedom from fear and freedom from want, with an equal opportunity to enjoy all their rights and fully develop their human potential.» UN General Assembly (2005), «2005 World Summit Outcome 2005», *op. cit.* par. 143.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.* Par. 9 and 72-73

<sup>63</sup> Mack, A., (2005), What is Human Security? In *Human Security Report*, p.viii. The report defines human security narrowly as «the complex of interrelated threats associated with civil war, genocide and the displacement of populations».

<sup>64</sup> Tadjbakhsh, S. (2005), *Human Security: Concepts and Implications, with an Application to Post-Intervention Challenges in Afghanistan*, Paris, Les Etudes du CERI, n° 117-118, September, p.p. 8.

<sup>65</sup> Alkire, S. (2003), «A Conceptual Framework for Human Security», *op. cit.* p. 36.

<sup>66</sup> See, Jolly, R. and Ray, D.B., (2006), *National Human Development Reports and the Human Security Framework: A review of Analysis and Experience*, Institute of Development Studies, Sussex. Produced for: The Human Development Report Office (UNDP), New York, NY, USA at [http://hdr.undp.org/docs/network/hdr\\_net/NHDRs\\_and\\_the\\_Human\\_Security\\_Framework\\_Final\\_Draft.doc](http://hdr.undp.org/docs/network/hdr_net/NHDRs_and_the_Human_Security_Framework_Final_Draft.doc)

*The prioritisation of «Northern» state security concerns over Southern «Human» security*

Whereas the goal of human security should be the protection and empowerment of people and communities, the same cannot be said for initiatives undertaken in the name of human security in the post-9/11 world. In the context of the «war on terrorism», there has been a distortion of the human security agenda and goals. While human security represents the linkage of development and security, the critics argue that the balance has inclined against development. Human security has been denounced as a pretext for Northern intervention in Southern affairs, or as a «securitisation» of themes more properly treated as development issues for the sake of drawing attention and resources.<sup>67</sup> This incarnation of security pressures to rearrange development criteria in relation to supporting intervention, reconstructing crisis states and, in order to stem terrorist recruitment, protecting livelihoods and promoting opportunity within strategic areas of instability. For its critics the war on terrorism has reversed the progress made during the 1990s in promoting a universalistic human rights agenda and refocusing aid on poverty reduction.<sup>68</sup>

In this context actions that promote the «human security» of other populations have been justified instrumentally, because investments in «their» security are beneficial to «our» security. This agenda is legitimate, but is not part of, the human security agenda. For example the Barcelona Report of the Study Group on Europe's Security Capabilities argues that «to be secure, in today's

world, Europeans need to make a contribution to global security... They need to be able to address the real security needs of people in situations of severe insecurity in order to make the world safer for Europeans.»<sup>69</sup> The United States Department of Homeland Security also poses a significant challenge to proponents of human security. The Department's work is based on the «... capability to anticipate, pre-empt and deter threats to the homeland whenever possible, and the ability to respond quickly when such threats do materialize.»<sup>70</sup> This is a national security agenda, which prioritises homeland livelihood systems and infrastructures. The publication of the UK Department for International Development's report entitled *Fighting Poverty to Build a Safer World* also illustrates this distortion. The message is the same: it is in the interest of governments to ensure that the impacts of poverty are mitigated, because failing to do so would ultimately destabilise the world.<sup>71</sup> A real human security approach would aim to give people agency over their economic conditions, thereby enabling them to mitigate the impacts of economic insecurity in their lives. Much of the focus is however not on enhancing the agency of the vulnerable to determine their participation in the global economy on their own terms, but rather to ensure that their basic needs are met so the vulnerable do not feel disenfranchised and opt to employ violent expressions of their discontent.

The phrase «human security» has also been denounced for justifying the introduction of draconian and excessively harsh foreign and domestic policies and to brand the exercise of unprovoked force as a measure of achieving human security.<sup>72</sup> The

<sup>67</sup> See, Duffield, M. (2005), «*Human Security: Linking Development and Security in an Age of Terror*», Paper prepared for the GDI panel «New Interfaces between Security and Development» 11<sup>th</sup> General Conference of the EADI, Bonn, 21-24 September at [http://eadi.org/gc2005/confweb/papersps/Mark\\_Duffield.pdf](http://eadi.org/gc2005/confweb/papersps/Mark_Duffield.pdf)

<sup>68</sup> See, Christian Aid (2004), *The Politics of Poverty: Aid in the New Cold War*, London: Christian Aid; Cosgrave, J., (2004), *The Impact of the War on Terror on Aid Flows*, London: Action Aid; British Overseas NGOs for Development (BOND) (2003), «Global Security and Development», BOND Discussion Paper, London: BOND.

<sup>69</sup> Kaldor, M. (con) (2004), *A Human Security Doctrine for Europe*. The Barcelona Report of the Study Group on Europe's Security Capabilities, Barcelona 15 September. The Report was presented to the EU High Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy. The starting point for this report is the European Security Strategy (ESS) agreed by the European Council in December 2003. The ESS makes Europe's responsibility for global security the centrepiece of a European security strategy. Whilst

recognising that «security is the first condition for development», and that «poverty and disease cause untold suffering and give rise to pressing security concerns» the strategy's main focus is on strengthening EU capabilities for crisis management and intervention. It misses the opportunity to broaden the EU's conceptualisation of security to one based on the broader concept of human security. See, European Union (2003), *A Secure Europe in a Better World: European Security Strategy*, Brussels: EU. And in this regard Churruga, C., «Criticizing the EU security Strategy: The EU as a Regional Security Provider», *Revista Electrónica de Estudios Internacionales*, Número 9 (2005), 20pp. [http://www.reei.org/reei%2010/C.Churruga\(reei10\).pdf](http://www.reei.org/reei%2010/C.Churruga(reei10).pdf),

<sup>70</sup> Department of Homeland Security, «Threats & Protection», [http://www.dhs.gov/dhspublic/theme\\_home6.jsp](http://www.dhs.gov/dhspublic/theme_home6.jsp)

<sup>71</sup> Department for International Development (DFID) (2005), *Fighting Poverty to Build a Safer World: A Strategy for Security and Development*, London: DFID, March, p. 8.

<sup>72</sup> Cosgrave, J., (2004), *op. cit.*

reversal of human rights is also matched by the shrinking of the «humanitarian space».<sup>73</sup> The US-led interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq have presented critical challenges to the humanitarian community. There is a feeling of disarray by the political pressures and manipulations to which humanitarian agencies, UN and NGO alike, have been subjected. The view of analysts is that in ways never before experienced, humanitarian action has become functional to the security agendas that dominate the foreign policy concerns of the US and its allies. The findings of six case studies (Afghanistan, Burundi, Colombia, Liberia, northern Uganda and Sudan) which highlight the crisis of humanitarianism in the post 9/11 world show that action aimed at alleviating the suffering on the world's most vulnerable has been for the most part incorporated into a northern political and security agenda.<sup>74</sup> In such circumstances the so-called coherence agenda and the call for the integration of political, humanitarian, and other responses has emerged as a standard template and it is advanced at humanitarianism's peril.<sup>75</sup> In these environments, independent and neutral humanitarian space is the first casualty of the pervasive «with-us-or-against-us» polarization.

These findings also points to a disconnection between the *security perceptions* of affected communities and those of aid agencies. It clearly shows that understanding local perceptions of security is key both for the effectiveness of humanitarian action and the security of aid workers. Moreover it brings out the policy potential that the human security framework has to address substantively perceptions of fear and vulnerability. International agendas often do not coincide with local perceptions of fear and insecurity, focussing instead on the interests of dominant states and institutional agendas. In total contrast, a human security agenda derives its policy concerns from individual concerns.

<sup>73</sup> Rony Brauman, one of the founding fathers of MsF, distinguishes three perspectives of the humanitarian space: respecting the Geneva Conventions in a conflict situation guarantees minimal standards for the protection for all, combatants and non-combatants; a physical, geographical space that is protected from fighting; the action space for humanitarian organizations. Brauman, R., *L'action humanitaire*, Paris, Flammarion, 2000.

<sup>74</sup> See, Feinstein International Centre (2006), *Humanitarian Agenda 2015: Principles, Power and Perceptions*, Tufts University, Boston: Feinstein International Centre.

<sup>75</sup> The findings of a report on integrated missions show that Eide E. B., Kaspersen, A.T., Kent, R. and Hippel von K. (2005), *Report on Integrated Missions: Practical Perspectives and Recommendations*, Independent Study

### *Human security and the Responsibility to Protect*

The concept of human security has been determinant in the redefining of sovereignty as responsibility. After the failures of Rwanda, Kosovo, Bosnia and Somalia the Government of Canada established an Independent International Commission (ICISS) with the mandate to build a broader understanding of the problem of reconciling intervention for human protection purposes and sovereignty; more specifically, to try to develop a global political consensus on how to move from polemics—and often paralysis—towards action within the international system, particularly through the United Nations. In December 2001, the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty presented its report «The Responsibility to Protect», redefining sovereignty as responsibility- shifting the perspective from what sovereignty endows to what it obliges the state to do.<sup>76</sup> The report notes «sovereign states have a responsibility to protect their own citizens from avoidable catastrophe—from mass murder and rape, from starvation— but that when they are unwilling or unable to do so, that responsibility must be borne by the broader community of states».<sup>77</sup>

This report represented a major shift in international thinking that many thought that would never be accepted. However the principle of the responsibility to protect was endorsed at the World Summit in 2005, albeit hedged by the qualifications, notably the requirement that the right to intervene could only be exercised after approval by the Security Council.<sup>78</sup> Unfortunately it is also another example where concepts of human security have been selectively and narrowly applied to suit another agenda. The «War on Terror» has used the right to human security of threatened populations as the necessary rationale for attacking

for the Expanded UN ECHA Core Group, May. Donini, A. (2004), «An Elusive Quest: Integration in the Response to the Afghan Crisis», *Ethics – International Affairs* 18, no. 2, pp. 21-27.

<sup>76</sup> International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (2001), *The Responsibility to Protect: Report of the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty*, Ottawa: International Development Research Centre.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.* p.VIII

<sup>78</sup> General Assembly (2005), «2005 World Summit Outcome 2005», *op.cit.*, par.138.

the enemy. The high number of civilian casualties in Afghanistan and Iraq has largely come as a direct result of retaliation by the Coalition forces for terrorist attacks.<sup>79</sup> While the authors state «We have no difficulty in principle with focused military action being taken against international terrorists and those who harbour them», they do qualify this by noting that «military power should always be exercised in a principled way, and the principles of right intention, last resort, proportional means and reasonable prospects outlined in our report are, on the face of it, all applicable to such action.»<sup>80</sup> Yet the «responsibility to protect» also called R2P does not presuppose neither a «right to intervene» nor to do it militarily.

R2P is a responsibility that extends to prevention before the worst has happened; reaction when prevention has failed and the worst is happening; and rebuilding —after the worst is over, to ensure that it doesn't happen again.<sup>81</sup> The emphasis is in prevention not in intervention. However situations like Darfur make think about the real commitment of the international community to human security. As Gareth Evans one of the co-chairs of the ICSS states «It is a man made disaster of catastrophic dimensions of which the international community knows all too much, yet a solution for which it continues to do desperately little to provide ... This is a case, unquestionably, for the application of the responsibility to protect principle».<sup>82</sup> Before a military intervention there are a range of strong economic measures which could be taken. But so far the Security Council has been largely unwilling to implement its own resolutions.

### Human Security and Women Empowerment

The human security framework is based in two complementary key strategies: protection and empowerment. It involves fos-

tering the empowerment of the people and their participation. Discussions around human security put too little emphasis on empowerment and on the agency approach, of the role of individuals as agents of change.<sup>83</sup> In particular one missing element in human security discussions has been an understanding of the fundamental differences and inequalities between women's and men's security. According to feminist studies on human security a gender-based approach is needed to overcome gender silences, including women as a category of identity within security discourse and integrating gender as a unity of analysis.<sup>84</sup> The concept of «women security» as a part and as a whole within «human security» aims on the one hand to integrate gender within the human security discourse in order to achieve a broader and more comprehensive security. On the other hand, it aims to distinguish gender issues, emphasizing the fact that although both women and men are affected by organized by organized violence in times of armed conflicts, it occurs in different ways.

Hence, feminist critical approaches on human security highlight the dangers of masking differences under the rubric of the term «human» and to address women's invisibility. Some of the feminist's key questions addressed to human security are: Whose security is emphasized and how? How do ordinary women define human security as compared with prevailing meanings? What forces in a nation or community create, reinforce and maintain gendered conditions of human insecurity? Furthermore, feminist critiques also point key issues missing within human security discussions such as violence against women, gender inequality in control over resources, gender inequality in power and decision-making, women's human rights and women and men as actors, not victims. In particular violence against women is a worldwide form of violation of human rights. It not only causes enormous both physical and psychological harm to the women themselves,

<sup>79</sup> See, Millar, K. (2006), «A Human Security Analysis of the War in Iraq», *Revue de la Sécurité Humaine/ Human Security Journal*, Issue 2, June, pp. 47-62 and Tadjbakhsh, S. (2005), *Human Security: Concepts and Implications, with an Application to Post-Intervention Challenges in Afghanistan*, *op. cit.*

<sup>80</sup> International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (2001), *The Responsibility to Protect: op.it. p.ix.*

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.* p.13.

<sup>82</sup> Keynote Address by Gareth Evans to International Crisis Group/Save Darfur Coalition/European Policy Centre Conference, *Towards a Comprehensive Settlement for Darfur*, Brussels, 22 January 2007

<sup>83</sup> Tadjbakhsh, S. (2005), *Human Security: The Seven Challenges of Operationalizing the Concept*, paper presented as part of the UNESCO discussion «Human Security: 60 Minutes to Convince», Paris, 13 September at [http://www.peacecenter.sciences-po.fr/pdf/unesco\\_13-09-05.pdf](http://www.peacecenter.sciences-po.fr/pdf/unesco_13-09-05.pdf).

<sup>84</sup> Hudson, H. (2005), «Doing security as through Humans Matter: A feminist perspective on gender and the politics of Human security», *Security Dialogue*, vol. 36, n.2, pp. 155-174, Jun. 2005 and Mckay, S. (2004), «Women, Human Security and Peace-building: A Feminist Analysis», *Conflict and Human Security: A Search for New Approaches of Peace-Building*, IPSHU, English Research Report Series n. 19.

but also disrupt their families and environment as a whole. In this sense, this kind of violence disables women to fulfilling their potential, restricts economic growth and undermines development. Only by addressing discrimination, promoting women's equality and empowerment, ensuring that women's human rights are fulfilled, these kinds of violence can be eliminated.<sup>85</sup>

In 2000, the Security Council adopted its landmark resolution 1325 on women, peace, and security.<sup>86</sup> Resolution 1325 and the three subsequent presidential statements on women, peace and security (S/PRST/2001/31, S/PRST/2002/32, S/PRST/2004/40 and S/PRST/2005/52) provide a solid framework for action. These documents call for concrete steps to be taken by the United Nations system, Member States and civil society actors in the areas of conflict prevention and early warning; peacemaking and peace building; peacekeeping operations; humanitarian response; post-conflict reconstruction and rehabilitation; disarmament, demobilization and reintegration. They stress the importance of women's equal participation and full involvement in all efforts to maintain and promote peace and security. In particular resolution 1325 underscores the responsibility to protect women and girls from human rights abuses, including gender-based violence; and emphasizes the vital importance of mainstreaming gender perspectives in all aspects of conflict prevention, resolution, and reconstruction.

#### 4. The Challenge of Human Security as a Policy Framework

In a world of interconnected threats and challenges the cause of human security can only be advanced by integrated responses and sustained global cooperation among States. The interna-

tional recognition UN 2005 World Summit Outcome that development, peace and security and human rights are interlinked and mutually reinforcing and the acceptance of the term human security as «the right of people to live in freedom and dignity, free from poverty and despair» and the corresponding responsibility to protect populations in danger provides an opportunity for common action. The further energy behind human security arises from an awareness that not only have threats increased; the opportunities to counter the threats have also increased. It is or should be very clear that in a world of growing interdependence and transnational issues, reverting to unilateralism and a narrow interpretation of state security cannot be the answer. In this context the United Nations stands as the best and only option available to preserve international peace and stability as well as to protect people, regardless of race, religion, gender or political opinion. The issue is how to make the United Nations and other regional security organizations more effective in preventing and controlling threats and protecting people, and how to complement state security with human security at the community, national and international levels

Previous attempts from different institutions and actors to promote human security have emphasized different angles of human security: development, protection, prevention. There have been important sectoral advances in the promotion of human security through UN human security initiatives and human security programs introduced by some countries like Canada<sup>87</sup> and Japan.<sup>88</sup> However in general the operationalization of human security has been fragmented and its objectives diffused. Adopting a human security framework will mean that efforts to solve the problems generated by violent conflict and by economic and social deprivation must be addressed in one integrated perspective.<sup>89</sup>

<sup>85</sup> Ending violence against women: from words to action. Study of the Secretary-General, October, 9<sup>th</sup>, 2006. p. 1, in <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/vaw/launch/english/v.a.w-exeE-use.pdf>.

<sup>86</sup> Security Council (2000), «Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security'», *S/Res/1325(2000)*, 31 October.

<sup>87</sup> Examples of successful well-defined and limited-focus initiatives promoted by Canada and the Human Security Network are the Mine Ban Convention, the International Criminal Court, as well as the recent international focus on child soldiers, small arms and the role of non-state actors in conflict. In summary the Canadian approach to human security defines one view of the discussion in the international arena about the

priority to attach to issues of population protection in war and complex emergencies See Canada's Human Security Programme (HSP) at <http://www.humansecurity.gc.ca/>.

<sup>88</sup> The Japanese approach acknowledges acute insecurity crises but offers a strategy aimed at economic development and conflict prevention See for example Japan's Human Security Programme at <http://www.jica.go.jp/english/about/policy/reform/human/index.html>.

<sup>89</sup> Commission on Human Security, *Human Security Now*, op. cit. p.130.



The first challenge to the objective of human security is to overcome the existing compartmentalization of policies and programmes along institutional divisions of work along security, development and assistance lines. Within the United Nations, the economic and security agendas are fragmented, with the Security Council charged of issues of peace and security and the General Assembly covering a wide range of economic social and cultural issues, among many others. The major resources and operational strength on development matters are housed in the international financial institutions. This means that the responsibility for the different and inseparable parts of human security depend of separate parts of the United Nations and related bodies. The management and coordination activities of the UN in particular in the areas of development, humanitarian assistance and development, where under the scrutiny on the High-Level Panel on System Wide Coherence. Its report «Delivering as One» released in November 2006 showed that there are over 20 UN agencies competing for limited resources without a clear collaborative framework.<sup>90</sup> The central message of the report is the need to overcome the UN fragmentation and to be able to deliver as one The One Country Programme, to which eight countries have volunteered, is based on the principal of country ownership. However the implementation of the report's recommendations would be difficult unless there is a concerted effort by key governments of both developed and developing countries to generate the collective political will and commitment to see them through.

The fragmentation of UN agencies and initiatives is also a main challenge for woman empowerment. While previous reviews of the level of implementation have revealed progress achieved in a number of areas, the Secretary General fourth report on the implementation of SCR 1325 clearly showed that much stronger and coordinated efforts are needed and that the United Nations system as a whole is still not delivering services in a coordinated and effective way. There is duplication and the overlapping of activities or fragmented efforts. Not only must actions and strategies of individual entities be coordinated, but policies, program-

ming, delivery approaches and evaluation systems should also be coherent and harmonized. Thus, the persisting challenge is the lack of coherence in the focus and format for gender mainstreaming policies and activities different levels of attention given to gender equality and inadequate use of intersectoral synergies to obtain maximum impact of efforts carried out by United Nations entities in individual areas of action. Indeed the Action Plan for the implementation of SCR 1325 was acknowledged as been not «established as an integrated UN system-wide strategy, but rather as a compilation of activities planed by UN entities»<sup>91</sup>.

There is a recognized «gaping whole» in the UN system's institutional machinery when it comes to meeting the challenge of helping countries with the transition from war to lasting peace effectively.<sup>92</sup> While performance is improving, the success rate in long-term stabilization is still too low, and many countries relapse into conflict after an initial period of stabilization. This conclusion can in part be ascribed to a lack of strategic, coordinated and sustained international efforts. Although there is a general assumption that integration is the way of the future, a recent study on Integrated Missions found little specific agreement about what comprises an integrated mission in practice. A variety of practices have emerged based on different actors» and different missions» own interpretations of the concept, some more successful than others. Integration raises three dilemmas with direct connection to human security. First the *humanitarian* dilemma which reflects a tension between the *partiality* involved in supporting a political transition process and the *impartiality* needed to protect humanitarian space. Second the *human rights* dilemma, which relates to the tension that arises when the UN feels compelled to promote peace by working with those who may have unsatisfactory human rights records, while still retaining the role of an «outside critic» of the same process. Third the *local ownership* dilemma relates to the need to root peace processes in the host country's society and political structures without reinforcing the very structures that led to conflict in the first place. In order to have integrated responses the Study Team concluded in favour of an

<sup>90</sup> High Level Panel on United Nations System-wide Coherence (2006), «Delivering As One», Report of the High Level Panel on United Nations System-wide Coherence in the areas of development, humanitarian assistance and the environment, A/61/583, 20 November.

<sup>91</sup> Security Council, «Report of the Secretary-General on Women, Peace and Security», S/2006/770, 26 October, parr. 38. See as well, High

Level Panel on United Nations System-wide Coherence (2006), «Delivering As One» *op. cit.* para.40-51.

<sup>92</sup> Un Secretary General, *In Larger Freedom...I*, *op.cit.*, paragraph 114.

approach to integration that is built on mutual respect for, and a shared understanding of, the various functions and roles that the United Nations have to play in the context of complex, multifunctional operations and its relations with other actors.<sup>93</sup>

One positive step for overcoming fragmentation and assuring an integrated approach to human security is the establishment of the Peace building Commission. It provides the opportunity first to apply human security analyses and then to implement integrated strategies. This could contribute to mark a real advance in international action for peace and security. It will help make human security not state security the centre of the peace and security agenda of the Security Council.<sup>94</sup> The heightened sense of insecurity engendered by the so-called «war on terror» has led to a focus on «failed states» as a security threat to the Western world—and world peace in general.<sup>95</sup> However there is uncertainty about the scope and definition of failing or failed states. What are the criteria of a fragile, weak, failing or failed state and who defines the taxonomical boundaries? If the concept of «state failure», is going to be used it should be as the basis for investigations into human security—that is, a state's ability or willingness to function in a manner conducive to the welfare of the majority of its citizens.<sup>96</sup> The question for researchers and policymakers is not which states are failed states, but rather for whom is the state failing, and how. As Boas and Jennings explain the concept of state failure is only useful in the context of human security, as it enables a fuller description of the realities and coping strategies in the state, taking into account agency, interests and incentives on the part of various local, national and regional actors.<sup>97</sup>

Another challenge is to make human security the centre of the development agenda. Human security requires a new paradigm of development cooperation and a restructured system of global institutions. Indeed addressing all major threats to human security has become the overarching imperative of international cooperation. If security has always been viewed as a prerequisite of development but the role that development can play in promoting security has not been systematically researched. Yet enough is known to initiate reforms that will make security and development policies more coherent. As a policy review document of King's College commissioned by the Swedish government puts forward, human security could become a new approach to development cooperation that aims to channel new energy and resources towards poverty reduction while addressing soft and hard security threats in an integrated fashion. A human security framework would avoid the diffusion of objectives that characterizes prior attempts to promote the human security agenda. First, the proposed framework would concentrate on genuine threats to human survival assessed on the basis of the probability, variance, and predictability of adverse events and the extent of damage they are likely to cause to lives and livelihoods. Second, it would emphasize the allocation of responsibilities to duty bearers. Third, it would use risk management and cost-benefit techniques to assess policy options and rank programs and projects.<sup>98</sup>

In our view a human security framework will combine poverty reduction measures and soft and hard security concerns in an

<sup>93</sup> Eide E. B., Kaspersen, A.T., Kent, R. and Hippel von K. (2005), *Report on Integrated Missions: Practical Perspectives and Recommendations*, Independent Study for the Expanded UN ECHA Core Group, May, pp. 4-5.

<sup>94</sup> The shift to the human security approach and its corresponding responsibility to protect people is recalled in the context of failed states. As the CHS argues «The state remains the fundamental purveyor of security. Yet it often fails to fulfil its security obligations—and at times has even become a source of threat to its own people. That is why attention must now shift from the security of the state to the security of the people—to human security. Commission on Human Security (2003), *op. cit.* p. 2

<sup>95</sup> See, High Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change (2005), *A more secure world: our shared responsibility*, *op.cit*; European Union (2003), *A Secure Europe in a Better World: op.cit and USAID (2005), Fragile States Strategy*, Washington, DC: USAID.

<sup>96</sup> Woodward S. L., (2005). «Fragile States: Exploring the Concept», *Comment*, November, Madrid: FRIDE, p. 1

<sup>97</sup> Boas and Jening argue that the assumptions underlying the dominant terminology of «failing» or «failed states» privilege a misguided and unhelpful analysis, with detrimental results for research and policy responses. When we employ the term «state failure», we assume that all states are essentially alike and are supposed to function in the same way. Contemporary states are the result of unique historical processes, and, while some states may fail to provide an environment of human security, they may be efficient providers of regime security. Boas, M. and Jennings K.M.,(2006) «Insecurity and Development: The «rethoric of the Failed State», *The European Journal of Development Research*, pp.

<sup>98</sup> Picciotto, R., Olonisakin F., and Clarke, M. (2005) *Global development and human security : towards a policy agenda*, a policy review commissioned by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Sweden / Stockholm : EGDI Secretariat, Ministry for Foreign Affairs. *Global Development Studies* No. 3

integrated fashion, while taking into account the cross-cutting issues of gender equality, sustainable development and human rights. In this sense human security has become both a new agenda for global action and *new measure of human well-being*. It is a useful tool in development and relief operations.

To conclude the challenge within the academic community is twofold. First, as an interdisciplinary concept human security has to forge a dialogue between international relations, security, human rights, humanitarian action and development specialists. Second a comprehensive, pluralistic approach to the establishment of a human security framework creates tangible difficulties given current compartmentalization of disciplines within academia. In this context interdisciplinary programmes like the European Master's Degree in International Humanitarian Action<sup>99</sup> provide an excellent platform to advance the framework of human security.

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<sup>99</sup> The NOHA Joint European Masters Course in International Humanitarian Action is a multidisciplinary postgraduate programme delivered by the seven NOHA Network members (Université Catholique de Louvain, Belgium, Université d'Aix-Marseille III, France, Ruhr-Universität Bochum, Germany, University College of Dublin, Ireland, Universidad de Deusto, Spain, University of Uppsala, Sweden, and University of Gröningen, The Netherlands) with the collaboration and support from the European Union and the backing of non-governmental (NGOs) inter-governmental organisations (IGOs), and other actors of the humanitarian relief community. See, <http://www.nohanet.org>

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