# **Rethinking Human Security**

Moufida Goucha and John Crowley



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This edition first published 2008 © 2008 UNESCO

Blackwell Publishing was acquired by John Wiley & Sons in February 2007. Blackwell's publishing program has been merged with Wiley's global Scientific, Technical and Medical business to form Wiley-Blackwell.

Registered Office

John Wiley & Sons Ltd, The Atrium, Southern Gate, Chichester, West Sussex, PO19 8SQ, United Kingdom

Editorial Offices

350 Main Street, Malden, MA 02148-5020, USA 9600 Garsington Road, Oxford, OX4 2DQ, UK The Atrium, Southern Gate, Chichester, West Sussex, PO19 8SQ, UK

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data applied for

ISBN 978-1-4051-9263-7

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

Set in 10 on 12 points, Times by Macmillan India Printed in Singapore by C.O.S. Printers Pte Ltd

# International Social Science Journal

# **Rethinking Human Security**

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### **Abstracts**

### Human security and human rights interaction

Wolfgang Benedek

This contribution analyses the interaction of human rights and human security. First, the author explains the emergence and conceptualisation of human security. By taking into account the actions on both research and policy levels and the human security initiatives by international organisations, such as UNESCO, by governments, NGOs and academia, the contribution sheds light on the potential of a multilayered and multiplayer approach to human security. In a second step the author identifies the interrelation and interdependence of human security and human rights. The results of this more theoretical part are then empirically tested in a case study on the interaction of human security and human rights, with a particular focus on the implementation of a human security approach to the right of education. Further, the contribution identifies human security-related best practices. The conclusion argues that, in light of the interdependence of human rights and human security a more holistic and integrative approach is necessary. Their international dimension needs to be complemented by a local focus on human security and human rights. An important step towards this goal is the integration, by states, of human security in national human rights learning curricula.

## Conceptualising the environmental dimension of human security in the UN

Hans Günter Brauch

Peace and security are goals of the UN Charter. In 2005, Kofi Annan addressed three pillars of human security: freedom from want, freedom from fear and freedom to live in dignity. This chapter examines two conceptual discussions on human and environmental security in the social sciences and in the UN system, and considers conceptual linkages for a people-centred environmental security concept and the environmental dimension of human security. It assesses the environmental challenges for human security posed by climate change, desertification, water, and natural hazards. It concludes that natural hazards pose manifold threats, challenges, vulnerabilities and risks for human, environmental. national and international security. Addressing environmental dangers to security requires a combination of strategic instruments and policies to reduce the vulnerability to hazards and the risks for affected societal groups. This requires a dual strategy for dealing with the short-term situational impact of extreme weather events and natural hazards and long-term structural impacts of global environmental change.

#### The ethical challenges of human security in the age of globalisation

#### J. Peter Burgess

The moral innovation of human security is also its terrible Achilles' heel. In a world of globalisation, where the values of the global view are imposed upon most people with the force of necessity, the concerns of individuals resist global action. At the very moment when individual concerns are put on the agenda, the possibility for achieving anything local is nearly erased by individual weakness in a world of massive collective interests. What can the particular interests of individuality make claim to in such a strong environment of universality? The aim of

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this chapter is to discuss the ethical dimensions of the concept of human security in a principled discussion of ethics and international relations. It starts with the evolution of the concept of human security, its use in international policy and its philosophical history. It ends with a discussion of the paradoxes of different philosophical positions with respect to the concept.

#### Building the agenda of human security: policy and practice within the Human Security Network

Keith Krause

The Human Security Network (HSN) represented an innovative attempt at flexible multilateralism, working with a small group of like-minded states. This article traces its origins and evolution, in particular, in the campaign to ban anti-personnel land mines) and examines the process of developing and implementing policy-in and beyond the HSN. The HSN struggled to develop a coherent and focused human security agenda and distinguished itself somewhat from other international efforts to define human security. In several different areas (like small arms, the "responsibility to protect" and the civilian protection agenda) the HSN can be shown to have been at the genesis of several concrete initiatives. It has been somewhat less successful at institutionalising its interactions, and in embedding a vision of human security in the foreign policies of participating states. Finally, the article explains how a full appreciation of the impact of the HSN requires examining not just its formal diplomatic and political efforts (which have had limited results), but its broader contribution (along with many other actors) to the setting of the human security agenda worldwide.

#### Gender aspects of human security

Ghada Moussa

The chapter deals with the gender dimensions in human security through focusing on the relationship between gender and human security, first manifested in international declarations and conventions, and subsequently evolving in world women conferences. It aims at analysing the various gender aspects in its relation to different human security dimensions. Gender equality is influenced and affected by many social institutions: the state, the market, the family (kinship) and the community. Human security also takes gender aspects. The author focuses on the dimensions in human security that influence gender equality. These are violence as a threat to human security and negative influences in achieving gender equality, the needs approach, poverty alleviation and considering women as among the most vulnerable groups in the society. Raising the capabilities of women is essential in achieving gender equality, thus security and participation is needed to guarantee equality and to realise gender equality.

#### Basic elements of a policy framework for human security

Paul Oquist

The species *Homo sapiens sapiens* is the unit of analysis and action for human security defined as risk reduction and expansion and realisation of potential. In this chapter the history of our existence is explored, as well as the conditions for human existence, prior extinctions and current threats of extinction, including the human impact on the environment and the continued high levels of violence in human relations in an era of nuclear weapons. Many of the very same factors that contributed to our success as a species, especially our transformative capabilities, are now contributing to the destruction of life. The values, ethics and morality of existence and extinction are examined as a foundation for a culturally, historically and ethically based integrated, holistic human security policy framework. Successes and failures in international human security policy are analysed, as well as the advantages of the proposed framework, for which concepts, levels of application and tentative policy areas are outlined. The objectives are to support the humanisation of economics and politics, as well as pointing out which values are dysfunctional for survival, to contribute to the equilibriums that maintains human existence and life on Earth, as well as to discontinue policies and Abstracts

practices that lead to mass extinctions, including our own.

## The uncertain future of human security in the UN

Taylor Owen

Since its original articulation in the 1994 Human Development Report, the concept of human security has been widely used to understand and address post-Cold War threats to international peace and security. However, a review of policy documents using the concept in the United Nations (UN) system finds that human security is at risk of disappearing from the organisational landscape. I argue that this is a result of three

interrelated problems with the way human security has been used-the failure to distinguish clearly between the concept and practice of human development and of human security, a lack of differentiation between human rights and human security and a lack of attention to the perils of conceptual overstretch. Two possible solutions are discussed. First, a narrow definition of human security as freedom from organised violence is reviewed and critiqued. Second, a threshold-based conceptualisation of threats to human security is defined and used to address the three problems with the use of human security in the UN system. The chapter concludes that the narrow definition of human security is unnecessarily restrictive, leaving out too many relevant threats, and that the UN system is uniquely positioned to actualise a broad threshold-based conceptualisation.

## **Rethinking human security**

#### Pierre Sané

Since the early 1990s the concept of human security has been the focus of many debates in the UN system, in international and regional organisations and governments of different regions, as well as in the academic and intellectual fields. Indeed, with the end of the Cold War, the world became aware of the multiplication of nonmilitary threats to security, be it at the international, regional, national or local levels. A great deal of theoretical and practical effort has been made to identify the most suitable modalities to deal with these threats given the compounded impact of intra-state conflicts, degradation of the environment, worsening of extreme poverty, spreading of pandemics and political exploitation of cultural and ethnic differences, particularly on the most vulnerable populations.

Needless to say, human security, given its multidimensional approach in tackling various threat and risks, is still a controversial and debated concept both in the UN and the academic world. But against that background, it is essential not to forget that the most important starting point for understanding human security is simply its focus on the human being, for human security is a concept that puts at centre stage the protection and dignity of the individual human person. Thus, the emphasis on human rights is essential to a conceptual differentiation between the notion of global security and human security.

The difference between these two concepts could lie in three areas. First, the difference is between a focus on human need (comprehensive security) rather than human rights (human security). Second, while comprehensive security tries to answer to the question "which threats to security?" the central question of human security is "whose security?" Third, while the political element of comprehensive security focuses on order and stability, human security is closely linked to justice and emancipation.

While supporters of human security defend its focus on individuals, some critics can complain about the broadness and vagueness of the concept. A debate over the exact definition and scope of human security still persists, as the concept can be, and has been, understood in a variety of ways. There is still thus a lot to be done in understanding and refining the notion of human security in all its perspectives and, beyond this, in disseminating it in the various regions of the world where it could be useful for the relevant actors.

The present work addresses major issues – in their interlinkages with human security – such as the human rights and human security nexus, gender aspects of human security, ethical challenges related to human security, environmental dimension of human security, the human security agenda developed by the Human Security Network, the ontological approach to human security, or the ongoing debates on this matter in the UN. The variety of these topics illustrates the wide scope of human security itself and could lead, it is hoped, to refreshing thoughts on this concept.

Rethinking human security finds its origin in a high-level working meeting held at UNESCO headquarters on 12-13 December 2005. This gathering was attended by 15 international experts, by representatives of the member states belonging to the Human Security Network, by representatives of various intergovernmental regional organisations (Organization of American States (OAS), League of Arab States (LAS), Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe), by the UN University and by UNESCO member states. The main objectives of the meeting were to review existing international human security initiatives and their follow-up, as well as to debate and share different points of view on the outline of a major UNESCO publication on 6 Introduction

human security, focusing on the Organisation's specific interdisciplinary contribution to human security, which has been published earlier this year (UNESCO 2008).

Indeed, over the past six years UNESCO has strived to foster research and action with a view to promoting human security, on the basis of the First international meeting of directors of peace research and training institutions convened by UNESCO in November 2000, on the theme "What agenda for human security in the twenty-first century?" In their final recommendations, the participants pointed out that human security can be considered

[a] paradigm in the making, for ensuring both a better knowledge of the rapidly evolving large-scale risks and threats that can have a major impact on individuals and populations, and a strengthened mobilisation of the wide array of actors actually involved in participative policy formulation in the various fields it encompasses today.

#### As such it is an adequate framework for

- accelerating the transition from past restrictive notions of security tending to identify it solely with defence issues, to a much more comprehensive, multidimensional concept based on the respect of all human rights and democratic principles
- contributing to sustainable development and especially to the eradication of extreme poverty, which is a denial of all human rights
- reinforcing the prevention at the root of different forms of violence, discrimination, conflict and internal strife that are taking a heavy toll on mainly civilian populations in all regions of the world without exception
- providing a unifying theme for multilateral action to the benefit of the populations most affected by partial and interrelated insecurities (UNESCO 2001, p.113)

In 2001 human security was embedded into UNESCO's Medium-term strategy for 2002–2007, under strategic objective 5, "Improving human security by better management of the

environment and social change". This strategic objective is closely linked to the Organisation's contribution to the eradication of poverty, in particular extreme poverty, to the promotion of human rights, to the implementation of the United Nations Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace, as well as to the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World (2001–2010) for which UNESCO is lead agency.

With a view to opening new perspectives for focused research, adequate training and the preparation of pilot projects, and to further consolidate public policy and public awareness on human security issues, UNESCO activities have been aimed so far at emphasising three important elements needed to translate the concept of human security into action:

- developing a solid ethical foundation based on shared values that lead to the commitment to protect human dignity, which lies at the very core of human security.
- buttressing that ethical dimension by putting existing and new normative instruments at the service of human security, in particular by ensuring the full implementation of the instruments relating to the protection of human rights
- reinforcing the educational and training component by better articulating and clarifying all the ongoing efforts that focus on issues such as education for peace and sustainable development, training in human rights and enlarging the democratic agenda to human security issues.

In the chapters in this monograph – for which I would like to express my deepest gratitude to their authors, each focusing on a specific dimension of human security – it is our hope that we will move towards a better integration and mainstreaming of human security, keeping in mind the needs of the most vulnerable populations and responding to both a conceptual and a practical imperative.

### Human security and human rights interaction

### Wolfgang Benedek

#### Introduction

This chapter analyses the interaction of human rights and human security, based on a study that includes analysis and recommendations on the interaction of human security and human rights.1 Part I focuses on the development of the concept of human security and addresses the institutionalisation of human security and the impact of human security in selected international forums. Part II analyses the interrelated-

ness and interdependence of human security and human rights. Part III contains a case study investigating the potential of a human security approach to selected human rights in the fields of culture and education, and in particular human rights education. Part IV addresses best practices with human security backgrounds. Finally, the conclusion (Part V) draws attention to the main arguments raised and future developments to be considered.

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the security of the individual on the same level as the security of the state" (Oberleitner 2005a, p.197). Thus, human security is conducive to a post-Westphalian conception of states that requires a new approach to notions central to international law, such as state sovereignty, peace and threats. By going beyond the traditional concept of the nation-state whose problems stop at state borders, the concept of human security aims at enfranchising the global citizen.

This enfranchisement is the core content of

human security and its connecting point to the concept of human development, which, in turn, is in a triangular relationship with human rights and human security (Tadjbakhsh and Chenoy 2007, p. 51). Yet the concept of human security still fluctuates between a political agenda, a new research category and an all too universalistic, theoretical concept without a clear definition. As far as human

security per se is concerned, international lawyers agree to disagree. The ideas that underpin human security, however, have numerous historical forebears. Among them is US President Franklin Roosevelt, who included "freedom from want" and "freedom from fear" among his four fundamental freedoms (Benedek 2005, p.26). The coalescence of conceptual equivocality and the lack of definitional clarity make it necessary to develop a coherent and cogent conceptualisation of human security.

### The concept of human security

Human security is a new paradigm for the development of the international legal order (Benedek 2004, p.176). It can be seen as a notion or a construct that brings into focus, and provides answers for, the question of "how we can place 8 Wolfgang Benedek

#### Conceptualising a catchphrase

Although numerous reports from 1982 onwards laid the groundwork for the conceptual development of human security, it was the 1994 UNDP Human development report that created and shaped human security. Subsequent reports are discussed in Brauch and Owens in this volume. However, more than a decade after the Human development report introduced the concept of human security, the Human development report 2005 noted that there was still no consensus as to whether the threats that individual needs protection from are primarily violent, or whether it means something more than safety from violent threats. Arguably, "the two concepts are complementary rather than contradictory" (Human Security Centre 2005, p.viii). An integration of non-violent threats into the purview of human security can be very farreaching, as exemplified by the Japanese approach, which includes development concerns (Bosold and Werthes 2005, pp.84-101). A UNESCO study (UNESCO 2005, pp.93-94) identifies as threats to human security a wide range of vulnerabilities. Some of these have been outlined by the present UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Louise Arbour (2005).

Faced with this multitude of possible threats, authors have identified three approaches to human security. The first, a rights-based approach anchored in rule of law and treaty-based solutions to human security, believes that new human rights norms and convergent national standards can be developed by international institutions. The second, humanitarian conception of human security, according to which the "safety of peoples" is the paramount objective, links human security to preventive and post-conflict peace-building. The third, sustainable human development, view draws on the 1994 UNDP Human development report's distinction of seven main threats.

The international debate (see Burgess and Owen 2004, pp.345–387) on conceptualising human security in international law is instructive. Conceptualisations developed by international scholars include human security as a "new organising principle of international relations" and the natural step (Oberleitner 2005a, p.198) towards an individual-centred approach in international law. This approach is based, on

the one hand, on the conviction that states are responsible for the individual and, on the other hand, that individuals are responsible for violating international human rights and humanitarian law.

This trend is shown by institutions such as the International Criminal Court and the two International Criminal Tribunals in The Hague and Arusha (Benedek 2005, p.31). Despite debate, some international lawyers and states, still doubt the usefulness of the concept of human security while, nevertheless, acknowledging its integrative role (Oberleitner 2005, p.187). Although human security has experienced many conceptualisations it should be asked whether the "Canadian approach" to human security is really so different from the "Japanese approach"? Is there really one human security vis-à-vis conflicts, and a different one vis-à-vis development; one human security focusing on civil and political rights, and a different one focusing on economic, social and cultural rights? Is there one human security that emphasises first generation rights, and another one that emphasises second (and third) generation rights? The answer is clear: just as with human rights, human security is indivisible. While freedom from fear and freedom from want aptly describe aspects of human security. the concept remains undivided. States should not choose to concentrate on certain aspects of human security while ignoring others.

#### **Defining human security**

A broad variety of ideas has been expressed as to possible ways of expressing of human security. Taking into account the different definitions offered by Annan (1998), Axworthy (1997), Oberleitner (2005a) and Sen (2000), further study towards a common understanding of human security seems indispensable. In order to shorten the process of defining human security and thus enabling the international community to start focusing on discussing the de facto or de jure implications in international law of human security-related concerns and human security-oriented measures, attention should be drawn to a holistic definition proposed by Taylor Owen. After lamenting that human security "has no clear theoretical grounding" (Owen 2004, p.374), Owen proposed

a "threshold definition" (2004, p.382), encompassing aspects mentioned by the Commission on Human Security 2002 report and the threats to human security pointed out by the 1994 UNDP *Human development report*: "human security is the protection of the vital core of all human lives from critical and pervasive environmental, economic, food, health, personal and political threats" (UNDP 1994, p.383).

Since threats to life, health and safety are, essentially, threats to human dignity, this definition can further be simplified. A succinct definition of human security is useful and necessary, and, while running the danger of semantically closing the door on the manifold concepts embraced by the concept of human security, can better focus the academic (and practical) debate on the essential aspects of human security. Thus human security, in this study, is understood to mean the security of people against threats to human dignity.

### Revisiting security: the impact of the evolving understanding of security on human security

The important enrichment of the notion of security in international law by an individual dimension has been instrumental in paving the conceptual way forward for human security. States have started accepting responsibility for the global citizen. Before the evolution of human security, national security was often founded in an absolute reading of national sovereignty and equated with the security of the regime in power, protected by the military (UNESCO 2000, p.101). The international community's commitment to provide for peace not only between but also within states, and by a new interpretation of sovereignty, has put an end to this.

The new concept of security is widely accepted, especially as the UN Charter links the concept of peace with that of security (Oberleitner 2002, p.8). Insecurity is no longer attributed primarily to outside aggression (UNESCO 1997, p.147). Fundamental concepts of international law such as territorial integrity and humanitarian interventions (Axworthy 2004, p.348) have been re-evaluated. The narrow

state-centred approach to security has ignored the position of the individual in international law and jeopardised human security (Møller 2002, pp.48–49). Faced with different conceptions of threats to security there is an acute need to develop an individual-centred approach.

### The impact of human security on international law

From repositioning the individual as an actor, and not just a factor, in international law to influencing UN reform, the emerging concept of human security has had a noticeable impact on international law. While the relevance of human security for the UN reform is still debated, critics have voiced concerns over the wooliness of human security literature (Mack 2004, p.366) and have expressed doubts as to its usefulness (Oberleitner 2005a, p.187). These points need to be addressed, as does the impact of human security on selected international issues of concern.

## The concept of human security and UN reform

Human security is closely linked with UN institutional reform. New institutions such as an enlarged Security Council with a membership that is more representative of the international community, are more likely to take human securityrelated considerations into account (Benedek 2005, p.32; Kettemann 2007, pp.98-101; Ramcharan 2002, p.21). These include reforms suggested in 2003 by UN Secretary-General Annan (2004) and introduced a new security consensus to answer the new threats to security that surface internationally. Furthermore, at numerous points the High-level Panel emphasises the dichotomy between "state security" and "human security", (Annan 2004, p.165), such as when states are asked to determine whether the threat to "state or human security [is] ... sufficiently clear and serious, to justify prima facie the use of military force" (Annan 2004, p.207).

In the 2005 report entitled *In larger freedom:* towards development, security and human rights for all (Annan 2005); see Brauch and Owen in this volume, Kofi Annan took up many of the issues and recommendations formulated in 2004. While underscoring many of the ideas associated with human security in parts of his report, Kofi Annan

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expressly mentions "human security" only once (Annan 2005, p.133). This can be taken as an indication of the existing reservations from a few states about the use of the concept in the UN (Benedek 2006a). They seem to be afraid that, through the concept of human security, the concept of humanitarian intervention could be introduced into the UN through the back door. However, this concern is unjustified.

The UN World Summit, held at the 60th anniversary of the UN in September 2005, was marked primarily by a plenary meeting of the heads of states and governments of UN members from 14–16 September. The 2005 World summit outcome document that was accepted consensually by the states present is probably the most important step yet, on the UN level, towards institutionalising human security by finding common ground for a definition of the concept. The paragraph on human security reads in full (UN 2005, 143):

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. To this end, we commit ourselves to discussing and defining the notion of human security in the General Assembly.

In 2008 the General Assembly took its commitment seriously and organised a thematic debate on human security in May.

#### Between wooliness and usefulness: the relevance of human security in international law

The UN's commitment to human security notwithstanding, critics have voiced doubts about human security as being a concept that is too universalistic to be meaningfully reflected in practice. Critique on the concept of human security concentrates mainly on two aspects: the individual-oriented approach, and the difficulty of prioritising political action, as discussed by Brauch in this volume. Other authors (Takur 2004, p.348) point out that states alone cannot counter the globalised threats of today. While some (Acharya 2004, p.355) see human security as an answer to the globalisation of international

policy, others (Hampson 2004, p.350) praise it as a tool that gives a voice to marginalised groups. There is therefore a need to scientifically evaluate the potential of human security by identifying the international law basis of human security and the legal implications of the concept.

#### The normative influence of human security on international law

Despite the non-binding nature of these reports, declarations and outcome documents, human security has had a considerable impact on international law. Some authors have underlined that human security poses a manifold challenge to international law and the law and practice of international organisations (Oberleitner 2005a, p.197). Others stress that the human security concept sets out to "strengthen the rule of law in international relations" (Benedek 2005, p.34) and to support the development of public international law and multilateral diplomacy.

Introducing human security as a structural principle in international normative processes has already resulted in procedural changes in drafting international norms. Human security stands for an involvement of individuals in developing new international normative instruments. This will lead to a better reflection of the "balance between the concepts of state sovereignty and concern for the individual" (Oberleitner 2002, p.26). The human security approach to international law is "holistic instead of sectoral", "participative instead of exclusive" and "preventive instead of reactive" (Benedek 2005, p.35, translation by the author).

Through enhanced civil society and non-governmental organisation (NGO) participation, as well as a renewed focus on the individual as a bearer of rights (and obligations) – and, accordingly, an actor in international law – the creation of numerous human rights treaties has been influenced by non-state actors (see, for example, Alston 2005). A wide range of treaties that have been particularly influenced by the new role of the individual in light of human security considerations are listed by Oberleitner (2002, p.26, 2005a, p.195) and Benedek (2005, p.34).

Furthermore, human security has engendered "normative changes in the international legal order" (Oberleitner 2005a, p.185). These include a stronger focus on the legitimacy of