

## **The Idea of Human Security<sup>1</sup>**

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### **ABSTRACT**

How has such a diversely used and fiercely contested concept as ‘human security’ retained and redirected so much attention? The paper looks at the emerging concept, as variously articulated and used in UNDP, Japan, Canada, Norway, and elsewhere, with reference to various roles that such a concept plays in establishing a discursive field: 1) to provide a shared language, to highlight and proclaim a new focus in investigation; 2) to guide evaluations; 3) to guide positive analysis; 4) to focus attention in policy design; and 5) to motivate action. It looks at how the concept is used differently, according to the context of the analyst and the case which is analysed; and it identifies and critically reviews some major criticisms of the concept, notably the attack by MacFarlane and Khong on the broad UN version.

**Keywords:** human security; security discourse; interconnection; tipping points; disaster prevention

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## **Prelude: The surprising spread of ‘human security’ discourse**

Although the language of ‘human security’ that became prominent in the 1990s encountered sustained criticism from many sides, it has continued to spread and gain momentum. It became a leading theme for example in a series of UN reports in the early 2000s. It was eventually removed from IPCC drafts in 2003. It was removed too at a late stage from the UN Secretary-General’s 2005 report ‘In Larger Freedom - Towards Security, Development and Human Rights for All’. Yet it continues to spread elsewhere. One encounters it frequently now in discussions of environment, migration, socioeconomic rights, culture, gender and more, not only of physical security. Why? Werthes and Debiel propose that: ‘human security provides a powerful “political leitmotif” for particular states and multilateral actors by fulfilling selected functions in the process of agenda-setting, decision-making and implementation’ (2006:8). I suggest that in order to understand human security discourse and its spread this specification of actors and functions should be broadened. The relevant actors include more than states and multilateral agencies. What was primarily a UN language is now far more. Like the sister idea of human rights, human security may be becoming a global language that plays important roles in motivating and directing attention, and in problem recognition, diagnosis, evaluation and response.

### **1 - The concept of ‘security’, in a human context**

The concept of ‘human security’ redirects attention in discussions of security: from the national-/state- level to human beings as the potential victims; beyond physical violence as the only relevant threat/vector; and beyond physical harm as the only relevant damage. Scores of specific proposed definitions exist.<sup>2</sup> ‘Human security’ is discussed at different scales and with reference to threats of varying scope. Moving from broad to narrow: first, it can be treated as the security of the human species, or second, as the security of human individuals. Third, it may focus on severe, priority threats to individuals, as judged perhaps by mortality impacts, or by the degree of felt disquiet (which must be an important variable in explanatory analysis even if not always so in normative analysis). Fourth, the severe priority threats may be limited to ‘freedom from want’ and ‘freedom from fear’, or fifthly, to only the latter. More narrowly still, sixthly, some authors wish to consider only threats to individuals

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<sup>2</sup> See e.g. <http://www.gdrc.org/sustdev/husec/Definitions.pdf>, or the report of the Commission on Human Security (CHS, 2003).

that are brought through violence, or by organised intentional violence, or, the narrowest conception yet (MacFarlane and Khong 2006: 245-7), only the threats to physical survival brought about through organised intentional violence.

In an earlier study (Gasper 2005) I organised a range of definitions in an analytical table, which Figure 1 now extends. The shaded cells show diverse possible definitions. Picciotto et al. (2006, 2007) for example cover both ‘freedom from fear’ and ‘freedom from want’, using as weighting criterion the impact on human survival chances, and thus looking not only at direct deaths from armed violence.

FIGURE 1: ALTERNATIVE DEFINITIONS OF HUMAN SECURITY (See Shaded Cells)

	I	II	III	IV	V
	VALUED CAPABILITIES EXPANSION (e.g. <i>HDR 1990</i> )	HD IN TERMS OF UNDP'S LONGER LIST OF GOODS (e.g. <i>HDR 1996</i> )	BASIC NEEDS ONLY (in terms of types and level)	LIFE-PRESERVATION against structural, not only physical, violence	PERSONAL PHYSICAL SECURITY ONLY (& civil rights)
HUMAN SECURITY (HS) IN TERMS OF LEVEL (snapshot or trend)	Sen's Capability Approach in minimal form	Human Development Reports' focus (includes physical security)	Caroline Thomas	Picciotto et al.?	Canadian & Norwegian government definitions of HS <sup>3</sup>
HS IN TERMS OF STABILITY			Talk of 'downturn with stability' <sup>4</sup>		
HS IN TERMS OF BOTH LEVEL AND STABILITY		Haq's maximal definition of HS; Japan govt.'s definition	Alkire's & Ogata-Sen's definition	Picciotto plus	

Before considering further these alternative formulations of human security, we should reflect on the concept of security and the significance of the term ‘human’.

<sup>3</sup> The Canadian government and its Human Security Network partners sometimes add ‘freedom from want’ content to their ‘freedom from fear’ centred interpretation of human security (MacFarlane & Khong: 227). A Human Security Network of medium powers was formed in 1999 by Canada, Norway, and ten or eleven others. Its acronym HSN is also the abbreviation for the title of the rather nt Ogata-Sen report *Human Security Now* (CHS, 2003) which was funded by the Japanese government and is part of the UN stream of work. Japan is not part of the Human Security Network. Mack (2005)'s *Human Security Report 2005* considers only physical violence, but all its effects.

<sup>4</sup> ‘Downturn with stability’, a phrase used by Sen, does not fit every downturn that affects everyone, for then where would be the stability? Rather it fits a downturn that maintains stability of basic needs fulfilment for everyone.

*Objective/subjective.* The ‘security’ concept began as a subjective concept, from classical Rome, suggested Wolfers (1962). A subjective security concept must cover the range of whatever are felt as threats (Hough 2005). So too must an objective security concept insofar as feelings typically correspond to real possibilities, even if they are often misinformed about probabilities. We must still distinguish objective security and subjectively felt security given this poor correlation of magnitudes, one of the core ‘paradoxes’ of security. Latvia’s Human Development Report on human security noted that Latvian is one language that employs distinct terms for the two concepts. The priority threats felt subjectively by Latvians are easily understood but not automatically predictable: inability to pay for major medical care and old age; and fear of physical abuse at home and abuse by officials, such as police (UNDP 2003).

*Means/ends.* Besides distinguishing between safety and feeling safe, two further categories are important. One concerns the means that are intended to achieve safety or feeling safe. The experience of not feeling safe from the armed forces that are supposed to promote security and felt safety—a second classic paradox of security—led women in Hamber et al.’s studies to make statements like these: ‘For me the word security in Arabic is not to be afraid. First, not to be afraid to be hungry, to move, to think, and to be misjudged’; ‘[Security is]...not being afraid, and that can be of physical violence but also feeling you have the right to do the things you want to do and say...’; and even to a positing of ‘security’ as a man’s word and ‘safety’ as a woman’s word. The Bangladesh Human Development Report on human security found similarly that poor people felt less secure thanks to the police.

The other necessary additional category concerns *being able* to be safe. The Global Environmental Change and Human Security project (GECHS) treats human security as the capacity of individuals and communities to respond to threats to social, human and environmental rights (O’Brien 2007). This formulation leaves people with the responsibility to use that capacity, gives recognition to communities and gives them space to prioritise threats.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Hans van Ginkel adds: "Human existence was, and will always be, threatened by hazards of natural and man-made origin. Thus human security can be defined better as 'knowing risks' rather than 'eliminating risks'." (January 2005, reported at: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/science/nature/4162799.stm>)

*Claiming priority.* The ‘security’ concept is used in claims for high priority status. Security claims are claims of existential threat (Buzan et al. 1998), meant to justify priority response, including overriding of other claims or rights. Attempts to limit such prioritisation to one type of threat (such as threats of physical damage from physical violence) and/or one type of referent/target (such as the state) are artificial. The root and usages of the term ‘security’ also validate no such restriction; according to Rothschild (1995), for centuries the term applied only to individuals. More recently, following on suggestions by for example Juan Somavia and others in the South American Peace Commission in the 1980s, Lincoln Chen and Ken Booth at the start of the 1990s, and a generation earlier by Johan Galtung, Kenneth Boulding and others in peace research (Bilgin 2003), the UNDP’s 1993 and 1994 Human Development Reports established a broad meaning for human security, in terms of the range of types of threat. Some formulations go so far as to discuss human security in terms of all threats to internationally ratified human rights, though this can weaken the prioritising thrust and has to be balanced by the next idea, that of basic thresholds.

*Justifying priority:- understanding the human referent for security; normative thresholds*

One must not merely claim priority but have a plausible basis of justification for it. Some of the debate on human security considers at length the concept of ‘security’, and not enough the content of ‘human’, as if that has no relevance to the issue of justification. To mention the individual as one referent for the concept of security is not enough. Attention is required to the nature of the referent, not merely to its identity. Central to being human is that we are embodied persons (Collet), but not only that. Being human has various specific requirements. From these specific needs come socially-specific notions of a series of *normative thresholds*, across a range of needs. A normative threshold is a minimum level required for normative acceptability. So, ‘human security’ issues in the area of health, for example, do not include all health issues, only those up to a minimum normatively set threshold, even though that is to some degree historically, and often societally, specific. (See e.g. Owen 2004, 2005; Gasper 2005.) Lack of the threshold distinction leads to a concern to exclude whole issue areas like health from the remit of ‘security’, mistakenly believing that this is necessary in order to allow meaningful priority to anything (see e.g. MacFarlane & Khong 2006).

*Justifying priority:- interconnection, nexuses and tipping points*

A second typical aspect in justifying priority is to identify a major causal connection from fulfilment or non-fulfilment of the highlighted factor, through to a qualitatively different set

of other things that have clear normative importance. This is the notion of a *nexus*, a major connection, at least in some situations, between different ‘spheres’—for example between environment and peace or war—and thus from one thing to many others.

The discourse of insecurity often proposes a particular type of connection: that of a *causal threshold, flashpoint or tipping point*, a stress level beyond which dramatic escalation of negative effects occurs, bringing even collapse. For example, beyond certain levels and combinations of stress factors, drastically increased damage happens to human health, including life expectancy; some combinations lead to premature death.<sup>6</sup> Violent death scenarios, let alone violent deaths intentionally promoted by others, are only one type of premature death scenario. Suicides by heavily indebted farmers have become frequent in parts of India. Arguably, whole societies too can go over a stress tipping-point.

Structural limits are central to human security analysis. Beyond the limits, things snap. The ‘weak sustainability’ hope in environmental economics is inapplicable outside certain bounds; less environmental capital cannot always be substituted for by having more of another type: human, social, or human-built physical capital. Destabilization of the Earth’s regenerative and climate cycles cannot be compensated for by more of other capital types (Duraiappah and Abraham 2005).

To review, “security issues” concern risks of being or falling below minimum normative thresholds. Security means ‘holding on’ or ‘holding firm’, to core values. Especially serious are cases with significant possibilities of collapse; yet while a famine where a social system has collapsed is a prime example of lack of human security, chronic capacity-sapping malnutrition is an example too. Normative thresholds, not causal thresholds, are central to definitions of security, but the two types of threshold are connected; for when a normative threshold is breached a person may erupt, against others or herself, or collapse.

*Justifying priority:– issues of responsibility and intentionality*

Should we consider as human security issues all those matters that involve threats to basic values, or only those which are intentionally caused and which are not the victim’s own responsibility (thus excluding for example smoking-related disease)? Matters which are

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<sup>6</sup> Paz Buttedahl’s conception of human security highlights similarly ‘the conditions required to guarantee societal equilibrium’ (Royal Society of Canada, 2006).

victims' own responsibility are already excluded by our focus on *capability* to be safe. MacFarlane & Khong's definition—threats to our physical survival persons caused by organized violence—goes further and excludes unintentional damage. Their definition is still a human security conception, since it concerns threats to persons, individuals; but is very narrow. It excludes climate change from the purview of human security discussions, not only because the threats are not (all) of physical violence but because there is no conscious perpetrator of harm. This principle is supposedly in order to give “analytical traction” (p.250). We return to their choice later, and suggest that it confuses short-term policy convenience with analytical power.

### *Security as a visceral concept*

Security is not just a prioritising, claiming concept. The way that humans have evolved, the way our consciousnesses are structured, some events and things disturb us, destabilise us. Combined with 'human', 'security' conveys a visceral, lived feel, connecting to people's fears and feelings or to an observer's fears and feelings about others' lives. 'Human security' thus evokes a sense of real lives and persons. Like 'rights', it touches something deep in our awareness. Part of that may concern the human priority to avoiding losses more than making gains. Losses mean losses of meaning and identity, not merely of things.

### *Human security as an integrative concept*

A final general point: 'human security' captures what some simpler concepts cover, but goes further. Like basic needs analysis it adds substance to the language of 'development', a language to talk about significant change that did not yet tell us anything about the contents of that significance. It subsumes what basic needs analysis has conveyed (Gasper 2005) and adds more, for example by the stronger link to feelings. It helps to give a sense of direction and priority within rights language, which is about the form of a priority claim but not necessarily about its content or rationale, and which otherwise can bring an absolutization of the convenience and property of the powerful (Gasper 2007a).

## **2 - Components of the 'human security' discourse(s)**

The human security concept concerns the assurance for individuals (and societies, and the species) of normatively basic threshold levels in priority areas. The previous section argued that the concept connects a series of ideas: objectively and subjectively felt security;

normative priorities for what it is to be human, including a sense of meaning and identification; causal nexuses, tipping-points, and awareness of possibilities of collapse. Extending that analysis, we will see that there is a discourse of ‘human security’, not just a single concept; in fact, if we highlight different inclusions and emphases we can distinguish a family of discourses.

In an earlier paper I have examined ‘human security’—in particular the UNDP human security approach—as a discourse, that employs the concept and label but goes further (Gasper 2005).<sup>7</sup> Elements of the discourse were specified as follows. The first four elements are shared with UNDP’s sister discourse of human development:

- A heightened normative focus on individuals’ lives
- More specifically, a focus on reasoned freedoms, the ability of persons and groups of persons to achieve outcomes that they have reason to value
- ‘Joined-up thinking’ (Gasper & Truong 2005) that looks at the interconnections between conventionally separated spheres (different polities; polity-economy-society-ecosystems), not least at the nexus between freedoms from want and indignity and freedom from fear. Correspondingly it tries to build policy coherence across conventionally separated spheres.
- A global span normatively as well as for explanatory purposes; covering all persons, world-wide, as in human rights discourse.<sup>8</sup>

Human security discourse adds at least the following elements:

- A focus on basic needs
- More specifically, an insistence on basic rights for all. This strengthens the focus on individuals, compared to in the human needs and human development traditions, notes O’Brien (2007).
- A concern for stability as well as average levels of important freedoms.

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<sup>7</sup> Pettman (2005) gives a parallel effort, quite different in scope and approach, but complementary. He in effect probes the interpretations of ‘human’.

<sup>8</sup> I have called this ‘joined-up feeling’ (Gasper and Truong 2005, Gasper 2007a). In recent work Sen calls it ‘globally unrestricted coverage’ (Sen 2007).

These additional elements contribute to give a stronger motivational basis than in the original Human Development Approach. It helps to mobilise attention and concern and to sustain the global normative commitment, the ‘joined-up feeling’.

This is a complex package notion of ‘human security’. It was too complex for MacFarlane and Khong, the international relations professors who were commissioned to discuss the notion for the UN Intellectual History Project. They miss the basic needs point about minimum required levels, which differentiates human security work from the pure human development approach.<sup>9</sup> Likewise, they suggest wrongly that the Commission on Human Security’s report (CHS 2003) was concerned only with stability, not primarily with levels.<sup>10</sup>

Let us examine more fully the various elements and how they fit together. The first heading below relates especially to what O’Brien (2007) calls the equity dimension in human security thinking. The next two headings relate to what she calls its connectivity dimensions.

#### *Humanism – I: integrating the international ‘human’ discourses*

By bringing together explicitly the themes of human freedoms/capabilities, needs, and rights, human security work synthesises ideas from the preceding ‘human discourses’ of human development, human needs, and human rights (Gasper 2007a). As Richard Jolly highlights, human rights language gave an independent value status to prioritised individual freedoms, and a universal scope of consideration. It implied obligations on states to meet these priorities, and implied legitimate recourse by persons without those rights, to hold states accountable (Jolly et al. 2004: 187). To supplement this, ‘the human development approach introduces the idea of scarcity of resources, the need to establish priorities, and sequencing of achievement in the promotion of human rights’ (Jolly et al. 2004: 177). Human security language combines the human rights insistence on the importance of each individual, with a human development insistence on priority sequencing given the scarcity of resources.

The heightened normative focus on individuals’ lives gives human security thinking a radical thrust. Picciotto, for example, sometimes adopts a life-years denominator rather than the

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<sup>9</sup> ‘Human development, for example, is a sensible concept in its own right. Conflating it with security produces conceptual confusion. ... the rebranding of development as security’ (MacFarlane & Kheong, p.17).

<sup>10</sup> ‘[we make] an examination of the report of the Commission on Human Security, which made a strong case for viewing human security as the protection of individuals from the vulnerabilities associated with sudden economic downturns’ (p.16).

Human Development Index as primary performance measure. We should not trade-off extra years of life for people who live only forty years, against an increase in average per capita income. Instead we should take as a priority human right a life span of, say, three score years and ten, the natural span that is relatively easily attainable and only with much greater difficulty extendable. It is the life span that has been attained and assured at relatively low per capita income in countries like China, Costa Rica, Cuba, Jamaica, Kerala and Sri Lanka.

*Humanism – II: a holistic perspective at the level of the individual*

We find in human security work an anthropological type concern for understanding how individual persons live, a concern that provides microfoundations for explanatory macrotheory. People seek security, of various sorts: bodily, material, psychological and existential (including via family, friends, esteem, systems of meanings). All of this is long familiar, as well as regularly forgotten. One recent locus of such understanding has been the basic needs school in conflict studies from the 1970s on (John Burton et al.). Human security thinking has given it a more capacious home. For some authors, recognition of this holistic individual-level perspective gives a broader UNDP or Human Security Network perspective on human security decisive advantages over a narrower Canadian-Norwegian perspective, let alone the MacFarlane-Khong variant.

*Trans- or supra-disciplinary explanatory synthesis: a (selective)holistic approach at the level of larger systems*

At supra-individual levels, human security thinking stresses the interaction of economic, political, social, cultural, epidemiological, military and other systems that have conventionally been treated separately in research and policy. This ‘joined-up thinking’ is holistic in spirit but not totalising in scope; the particular interconnections to be stressed will be selected according to their importance case-by-case.

Several interviewees in the UN Intellectual History Project express this holistic spirit:

‘the basic premise of the [UN] charter, that you really can’t have peace unless the rights of nations great and small are equally respected. ... [and] the basic premise of the Declaration of Human Rights, that you can’t have peace within a country unless the rights of all, great or small, are equally respected’ (Virendra Dayal, quoted by Weiss et al. 2005: 151).

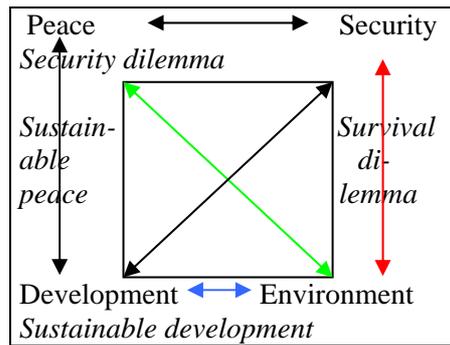
‘all the conflicts that [some rich governments] are giving rise to in an interdependent world precisely by ignoring the human rights and the democratic principles that they supposedly espouse’ (Lourdes Arizpe, quoted by Weiss et al., 2005: 415).

Robert Cox spoke of a perception of ‘what you could call “deep ecology”’: the sense of the interdependence of humanity with nature and the constraints on the survival within nature’. He feared that while such a perception is needed for progressive change, it may emerge too slowly (cited by Weiss, et al., 2005: 424).

Juan Somavia, who ran the 1995 Copenhagen summit on social development that took steps down the broader human security path, noted how ‘the constitution of the ILO...already in 1919, says that peace is linked to social justice’, and quoted Pope Paul VI’s declaration in 1969 at an ILO conference that ‘Development is the new dimension of peace’ (both cited by Weiss et al., 2005: 299). Outweighing such ideas though: ‘The whole system has pushed, pushed, in educational terms, towards specialization, when the reality of the world has been pushing more and more towards integration’ (Somavia, cited on p.429). Educational narrowing blinds us to interconnection and itself helps to generate new threats. As Zygmunt Bauman describes, extreme intellectual specialisation, ‘close-focusing’ of the types done so successfully in science and technology, leads to waves of unforeseen effects when we act on the resulting powerful but narrow knowledge. It has led us into Ulrich Beck’s ‘Risk Society’, where every ‘advance’ creates new messes, and ‘the line beyond which the risks become totally unmanageable and damages irreparable may be crossed at any moment’ (Bauman 1994: 29).

Figure 2 identifies more specifically the interconnections which are meant to justify and be revealed by ‘joined-up thinking’. Brauch presents four traditional foci, which imply six types of possible major bilateral interconnection. Though Brauch uses ‘security’ to mean security against violence (or even only inter-state violence), and his table presents the interconnections in terms of binary relations, each side of each binary relation is linked to all the other foci. The human security research programme posits that in at least some important cases the interconnections are major and ramifying, and require us to move beyond traditional problem-framings.

Figure 2: The Conceptual Quartet and Six Linkages (from Brauch 2005)



This holistic spirit has a grand sweep, but are the declared linkages adequately established? The linkage from carbon-based economic growth to global climate change is more than sufficiently demonstrated. For economic performance and conflict, Paul Collier et al.'s 2003 study for the World Bank showed a strong correlation of violent conflict with both poverty and low growth.

By analyzing 52 major civil wars between 1960 and 1999 it found that the common thread was often a poor and declining economy combined with a heavy dependence on exports of natural resources such as diamonds, gold or oil. "Some countries are more prone to civil wars than others but distant history and ethnic tensions are rarely the best explanations," Paul Collier, lead author of the report, said in a statement. "Instead look at a nation's recent past and, most important, its economic conditions." ([World Bank Press Review: Headlines for Thursday, May 15, 2003](#))

Linkages to poor and declining economic conditions in low-income countries from aspects of international economic policy and other policies of rich countries have become increasingly obvious.

- Rich countries have restricted Southern trade access to their markets, notably in agriculture, and yet expected no consequences: no emigrants, no conflicts, no spillover of stress or suffering. Duffield and others have demonstrated, in contrast, how 'the new local wars that have come to dominate the global geography of violence are the natural consequence of formal rules that make the criminal economy of illegal trafficking in drugs, weapons and people far more attractive to poor and marginalised countries than legal economic pursuits' (Picciotto 2005: 3).

- Rich countries have energetically exported arms, and imagined these will not be used. ‘Most weapon-exporting countries provide export credit guarantees for weapons purchases by developing countries’ (Picciotto, 2005: 6).
- Rich countries imposed bone-crunching economic structural adjustment on low income countries, and expected no wider consequences. Picciotto reports how an income shock of -5% raises chances of civil war by 50% (Picciotto et al., 2006: 13); Rwanda faced an income decline of 40% in the early 1990s as IMF-imposed adjustment was piled on top of the effects of slump in the world coffee market. The economic impacts of civil wars are themselves so immense (e.g. ‘In Rwanda, Bosnia and Lebanon GDP fell to 46%, 27% and 24% of the pre-conflict peaks’, *ibid.*, p.6) as to thereby greatly raise the chances of perpetuation of the war.
- As a latest aspect of policy incoherence, international policies on governance have blocked aid to states that are adjudged to not already have good governance, and thereby undermined international security policy, in the judgement of Picciotto and many others.

### **3 - Roles**

The idea of ‘human security’ plays various roles: (1) it provides a shared language, that highlights and proclaims a new perspective in investigation; (2) it guides evaluations, through its emphasis on certain priority performance criteria; (3) it guides positive analyses, through its emphases on which outcomes are important to explain and which determinants are legitimate to include; (4) it similarly focuses attention in policy design, by directing attention to a particular range of outcomes as being important to influence and a particular range of means as being relevant to consider;<sup>11</sup> and (5) it motivates action in certain directions, through the types of value which it highlights and the range of types of experience to which it leads us to attend.

In earlier papers about human security thinking in or linked to the UN system I have tried to elucidate these roles.<sup>12</sup> The first column of Figure 3 below summarises the arguments, drawing also on the earlier sections of this paper. Behind the familiar features—a focus on individuals not only on generalized categories such as national income or averages, and a

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<sup>11</sup> See Gasper (2007b) on how focus throughout the stages of policy analysis and design can be on the impacts on the basic entitlements, capabilities and functionings of individuals.

<sup>12</sup> Gasper (2005, 2007a, 2007b), Gasper & Truong (2005).

wider scope both of the areas considered under ‘security’ and of attention to contributory factors—lie the deeper commitments: the motivating concern of ‘joined-up feeling’, partnered by the holistic vision of wide-ranging attention to human experience and interconnections therein.

A human security research program in the universities of Marburg and Duisburg in Germany, including work by Debiel, Werthes, Bosold, et al., complements this UN-centred research through its investigations of the ‘Human Security Network’ of Canada, Norway, et al., and of the work of Japan and the European Union.<sup>13</sup> The German work too is organised by a perspective on what are the roles of a human security intellectual framework. It specifies three roles: 1. Explanation and orientation, 2. Coordination and action-related decision guidance, and 3. Motivation and mobilisation. These closely correspond to the last three roles I proposed. Figure 3 compares the Marburg-Duisburg work and my picture of components and roles, and gives illustrations and extensions for both specifications.

Three aspects deserve underlining. They roughly fit the three areas highlighted by the German work. In explanation, the human security approach provides fresh situation-specific understandings and unexpected insights, by applying a non-conventional boundary-crossing perspective in ways tailor-made to specific cases. In policy design, it emphasises system re-design to reduce the chances of crises rather than palliative measures when crises have hit. In motivation and mobilisation, the approach finds listeners more readily amongst some types of audiences than others.

#### *Unexpected insights and situation-specific understandings*

Richard Jolly and Deepayan BasuRay (2007) have taken the national Human Development Reports focused on human security, to test what if any are the perspective’s contributions. The mandate to look broadly at sources of insecurity, but to be selective according to the particular concerns, constellations and connections extant in a particular country, generates

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<sup>13</sup> Coming from a state security / International Relations background, and with a focus on the Human Security Network countries, Werthes and Bosold may underplay the Basic Needs and Human Rights aspects in the UN-Japan line of human security discourse, and mistakenly separate them from physical security -- as if physical security is not part of basic needs, and as if one does not fear want (lack of basic necessities). (See Werthes & Bosold 2006, p.25; Bosold & Werthes 2005: 86.) Atanassova does not do this, for the Japanese agenda which she describes covers freedom from fear also. Gropas too does not miss the focus on human rights in human security discourse, because she looks at UNDP, the Ogata-Sen report and the European Union. Admittedly, the EU’s 2003 Security Strategy does not take a full-blooded human security perspective, but it does highlight five diverse threats to persons and stresses the necessity of multilateral peaceful response (Gropas, p.64).

unexpected and practical diagnoses and proposals. The analyses are restricted neither by arbitrary *a priori* disciplinary habits in regard to scope, nor by fixed prescriptions or proscriptions from a global centre about what should be included or excluded. Excellent further examples along these lines are found in work that uses a human security approach to consider environmental and climate change (such as by Jon Barnett and Karen O'Brien).

*Focusing policy design on foundational prevention rather than crisis management*

Lodgaard (2000) argued that:

In the human security paradigm, a distinction may be drawn between *foundational* prevention and *crisis* prevention. [Ginkel & Newman (2000).] Foundational prevention is premised on the belief that prevention cannot begin early enough. It tries to address deep-seated causes of human insecurity. “Inequality, deprivation, social exclusion, and denial of access to political power are a recipe for a breakdown of social norms and order. Not having a fair chance in life...being deprived of hope... are the most incendiary root causes of violence and conflict”. [Ginkel & Newman (2000).] To remove such causes requires a long-term strategy for equitable, culturally sensitive, and representative development. ... [Paragraph 51]

Preventive action is vastly more cost-effective than belated interventions to try to solve crises once they have exploded, for example trying to supply emergency relief and build peace when a war has erupted (see e.g. Gasper 1999). Lodgaard warned however that ‘textbook logic advocates preventive action while political logic suggests that action would have to wait till a crisis emerges’ (paragraph 81); and that ‘it is doubtful whether textbook logic and political logic can be reconciled unless the United Nations gets its own independent source(s) of finance’ (paragraph 82).

Figure 3: The Components and Roles of the Idea and Discourse of Human Security

ISSUE AREAS	GASPER 2005 (& 2007a, 2007b)	WERTHES-BOSOLD 2005-6-7
<b>Roles of an idea / discourse</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To provide a shared language, for shared and mutually supportive investigation</li> <li>2. To guide evaluations</li> <li>3. To guide positive analysis</li> <li>4. To focus attention in policy design</li> <li>5. To motivate</li> </ol>	<p>Multiple roles of an intellectual framework: (Werthes &amp; Debiel: 12)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Explanation and orientation</li> <li>2. Coordination and action-related decision guidance</li> <li>3. Motivation and mobilisation</li> </ol>

1 – To provide a shared language	Besides a concept, ‘human security’ is also: - A discourse, whose elements are asterisked below - * <i>A striking and evocative label</i>	Within this shared language people can flexibly respond to their own situation and own priorities. Yet it also provides, in overlap areas, a frame ‘for concerted policy projects, <i>par excellence</i> illustrated in the [Human Security Network]’ (Werthes & Bosold 2006: 23).
2 – Provides a focus for looking at effects; this guides evaluations and analysis (to determine; what is security?)	A normative focus on individuals’ lives, viz: * Focus on individuals’ reasoned freedoms * <i>A concern for stability as well as levels</i> (italics indicate extensions beyond Human Development Approach)	(a) From state focus to individual focus; this is the first of <i>Werthes &amp; Bosold’s four elements of a proposed shared core</i> , 2006: 25; also Bosold & Werthes 2005: 99). Such rhetoric provides one instrument for holding its users accountable (Werthes & Bosold 2006)
2* - Human focus	* JUF: ‘Joined-up feeling’, for all individuals – this is the spirit of human rights (HRs) discourse	(b) ‘People should have the opportunity to live decently and without threats to their survival’
[Humanity]	Edson: ‘human security is about protecting the common good’ (2001: 84)	
Who decides what is security and what is a threat?	Not necessarily only the state (though that is one major actor). Can be individuals, groups, ...	
3 – Provides a principle for considering causes: it guides analysis	* JUT: ‘Joined-up thinking’	Greatly expanded scope of analytical attention
4 – Provides a focus for policy response	Prioritising (which is inherent in the ‘security’ label): * <i>A focus on basic needs</i> * <i>Basic rights for all.</i>  At the same time, Joined-up thinking → broad policy response, and: awareness of impossibility of full knowledge of relevant factors → a deliberative, learning style in policy (Truong 2005).	Policy style: (1) the large normative frame can influence other policy too (Werthes & Bosold 2006: 23); promote coherence; (2) impossibility of unilateral control [their point c; 2006:25] → ‘Safety threats must be addressed through multilateral processes... and by taking into account the patterns of interdependence that characterize the globalized world in which we are living’ [point d; Bosold & Werthes 2005: 89, 99]. Gropas supports the point on basic rights.
Whose responsibility to respond?	Not necessarily only the state, which may lack the capacity	
5 - Motivation	<i>Focus on basic needs and rights, including through an evocative label and concern for stability → stronger motivational basis, mobilizing attention and concern: sustaining Joined-up Feeling</i>	Werthes & Bosold (2006: 32): the focus on individuals appeals to a broader range of actors, not to states alone.
What relation to discourses of development?	Goes further than discourses of human development, in the areas indicated above in italics	
What relation to discourses of need?	Relies on a notion of need, as reasoned fundamental priority	
What relation to discourses of human rights?	<i>Basic rights for all</i>	No attention? (And nearly all the human rights literature does not refer to human security.)

Thus in reaction to the record of political and analytical convenience being placed above policy coherence, the human security concept now serves ‘as a focal point around which an integrated approach to global governance is emerging’ (Betts & Eagleton-Pierce 2005: 7). Let us see: emerging from whom?

*Roles for, and in relation to, whom?*

Human security discourse appears to be used by, firstly, various international organisations. Many general purpose international organisations, notably in the UN system, are seeking to integrate and make sense of their endeavours (and existence), justify and prioritise their activities. This includes, not least, the UN system apex. In addition, some special purpose international organisations seek to identify key interconnections that decisively affect their area of responsibility and to identify those connections which show its importance.<sup>14</sup>

Secondly, some types of government have been attracted to the human security language: notably the foreign ministries of countries, especially medium- and small-powers, who are seeking a distinctive identity for their foreign policy, a purposefulness, meaningfulness and moral tone, and a niche for distinctive value-addition. Frerks and Goldewijk see here a paradox: that perhaps the leading users of human security discourse have been states, whom the discourse itself downgrades. But this usage is by a relatively small number of states, and in the international arena not the domestic arena. Further, since human security is a super-integrative framework that draws attention to a great range of possible interconnections, it is not surprising that a relatively high proportion of observed users should be states.

Thirdly, we see a range of uses by social movements and civil society actors. The approach appeals to some progressive social movements trying to influence national and global policy, directly or via influencing national and global society. It appeals to some feminists, and to a considerable variety of academics and intellectuals—in international relations, development studies, global social policy, public health, peace studies, etc.—seeking a policy-relevant intellectual framework for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Who has not adopted a human security language and framework? Perhaps, relatively speaking, the big powers—compared say to their degree of use of human rights discourse—but attention to global public goods might be changing this. Perhaps also private corporations, again in comparison to the take-up of human rights language, but this too may be changing. In research circles, human rights studies does not seem much aware of the sister framework, while mainstream security studies has often resisted it, as we will see in later sections of the paper. Arguably, the framework has also been less taken up by national

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<sup>14</sup> MacFarlane and Khong hold that practitioners in the humanitarian relief/interventions fields use the term but that it may not make much difference (p. 323).

governments in domestic analysis, compared to human development and human rights discourses. Lee stresses that ‘most Asian governments are unlikely to adopt a human security definition that contains political constraints or economic directives’ (2004: 37-8), i.e. that is seen to imply international rights to intervene or sanction a country in light of externally adjudged violations of either civil rights or economic-social rights, or to overrule countries’ own cultures and traditions. ‘The establishment of a framework to work within is therefore preferable to a strictly set definition’ (Lee, p.38). The situation may be gradually changing. The very fear of undiluted human rights regimes makes some Asian governments prefer the more complex human security perspective. And while the sixteen national Human Development Reports that have taken human security as their theme are not directly owned by governments—HDR exercises are given a quasi-autonomous status in order to ensure independent creative work—they have had significant government consultation and involvement.<sup>15</sup>

Overall we could say that a human security perspective, like the thinking around human development, uses a global context and globally-oriented criteria of relevance. It tries to bring integration within the thinking of internationally-oriented agencies, by reference to priority criteria. In particular, it is guided by concerns with major threats and the risk of crisis. According to Bosold and Werthes, the core use then of a human security approach has been in multilateral action to address priority threats to individual humans. Perception and formulation of what are the priority threats will vary; this flexibility provides space for diverse participants (Bosold & Werthes 2005: 100). A sharper definition is not needed for a policy movement (p.101).

Werthes and Bosold check how far the talk of the Human Security Network countries is only talk. They conclude that it has some real impact. It ‘has resulted in processes and developments which bring claims/pretension and substantiveness more in accordance with each other’ (Werthes & Bosold 2006: 28). As an example: after the success of the 1990s Ottawa process to ban anti-personnel landmines, the Network moved on to try to control trade in small arms and light weapons. Admittedly this was done only with reference to illegal trade. Leading members (Austria, Switzerland, Canada, even Norway; as well as observer South Africa and non-member Japan) are all major small arms exporters, and

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<sup>15</sup> A recent example is at [http://hdr.undp.org/docs/reports/national/KEN\\_Kenya/KENYA\\_2006\\_en.pdf](http://hdr.undp.org/docs/reports/national/KEN_Kenya/KENYA_2006_en.pdf)

several have not been distinguished for membership in or implementation of international agreements. Despite that restriction of its impact, the human security rhetoric has shown a real potential for holding its users accountable for their other actions (Werthes & Bosold 2006).

#### **4 - Attacks on the very idea of ‘human security’**

Having considered elements, rationale and users of an idea of human security, this section brings together major attacks on the idea. The subsequent section considers disputes between different concepts of human security.

##### *I: Attacks by claims about definition*

Some claims assert that security is essentially a national-level and military notion. Sometimes the claim is about established usage: ‘...human security emerged in a context in which security was predominantly conceived of in national terms’, propose MacFarlane & Khong (p.233). In reality the term ‘social security’ is long and deeply entrenched, not only in the USA (contrary to p.251), and the concept of psychological security has been in use for yet longer (cf. Rothschild 1995).<sup>16</sup> MacFarlane & Khong themselves still adopt a notion of human security, though one of narrow scope, as we will see. Second, some claim that indisputable priority is a necessary condition for use of the ‘security’ label, and that to use the term ‘security’ for non-military matters greatly overvalues their importance, which should be left to be judged instead in democratic elections. But then should not military threats also be judged through elections? How threats are rated, whether in elections or by other procedures, is anyway not central; there is no reason why any prioritising mechanism will always prioritise military above non-military threats. The human security perspective, to consider key threats to persons, can be applied in many arenas. It is presumptuous for any one arena to claim proprietorial and exclusive rights.

##### *II: Attacks on value grounds - Security versus Freedom?*

This form of attack proposes that security and freedom are opposite orientations, and that security is a fearful ignoble craving, compared to the true ethical currency, freedom. The attack has weak foundations, for freedom rests on security, and, further, we wish to secure freedoms. Both freedom and security are relevant emphases in elaborating human development discourse; both are adopted by, for example, Sen.

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<sup>16</sup> The point is made by a woman interviewee in Lebanon cited by Hamber et al. (2006: 494).

*Security as against freedom??*

Nonsense: - securing freedoms; - securing basics, not securing everything

- Note Hobson's view, in Lutz in RLE p.97, that security is the precondition for moral behaviour; and – DG – for freedom.

*III: Attacks on policy grounds: Human Security discourse is part of a dangerous agenda for world government, or no government – and is un-American...*

As is common for the human discourses, mistrust comes from more than one side of the political spectrum. The G77 carry suspicions that Human Security discourse legitimates intervention by stronger powers. In contrast, a Heritage Foundation report by Carafano & Smith (2006) complains—despite having cited the UN Charter's commitment 'to employ international machinery for the promotion of the economic and social advancement of all peoples'—of how: 'Over the course of decades, the U.N. bureaucracy has come to see its role as facilitating not only peace and security, but also human rights, development, and social equity.'

...it is understandable that Americans question the U.N.'s seemingly constant pursuit of binding documents on themes that purportedly would advance security or development but in actuality would restrain U.S. power and leadership and undermine America's democratic and free-market practices....

... Slaughter, in the introduction to a 2004 Trilateral Commission report, explains that theory about the legitimate use of force is undergoing transformation. She believes the basic tension is now "state security vs. human security" or how to: 'integrate traditional understandings of state security—whereby the principal threat to a state's survival was posed by another state and the security of a state was largely synonymous with the security of its people—with an appreciation of the magnitude and importance of what Kazuo Ogura [the Japan Foundation] calls "global security issues"—terrorism, environmental degradation, international crime, infectious diseases and refugees? These issues cross borders with disdain for the divisions of national and international authority.'

This misunderstanding of the nature of security poses significant threats to the international order because it undermines the primacy of nation-state relations and sovereignty. Providing for the security and public safety of citizens is a principal attribute of national sovereignty. Indeed, nation-states that are democracies are best prepared to fill this role because their leaders are held accountable by the governed. As the U.N.'s problems in responding to crises around the world show, the nation-state, not any international organization, is the best guarantor of individual freedoms for the 21st century. Shifting the focus of security policy from the collective will of free people to provide for their common defense to one of protecting a range of individual and collective political, economic, and cultural

“rights” as defined by international bodies or non-state actors like NGOs confuses the nature of the modern state’s roles and responsibilities. (Carafano and Smith, 2006)

Similarly, MacFarlane & Khong insinuate that human security discourse can undermine the authority of the State, the only body able to do much about human security concerns.<sup>17</sup> As seen in Carafano & Smith’s paper, this suspicion is shared by critics of ‘second-generation’ human rights. Although human security discourse is clear on the primary role of the State, critics opine that talk of any limits to the role of the national State will undermine it. Sheer repetition of this claim does not increase its plausibility.

## **5 - The disputes over the range of priority threats to include under the label ‘human security’: attacks on a broader conception of ‘human security’**

MacFarlane and Khoong’s 2006 UN Intellectual History Project volume on human security constitutes a major assault on the broad human security concepts used in the UN system.<sup>18</sup> MacFarlane and Khong do not seek to restrict security language to the national level, but they attack the UN-UNDP-Japanese conception of human security which provides for inclusion of a broad range of threats. Sometimes, formally, they accept that allocation to threats of the priority status of ‘security’ language must depend on one’s values, but in general they are not content with this.

### *IV: Further claims from definition*

First, they often again presume terminological proprietorship. Thus environmental threats are simply and explicitly marginalized in their discussion: ‘the core of the debate on human security revolves around development and protection’, they stipulate (p.141). They try to reserve the term ‘protection’ exclusively for protection of life against violent attack, as if protection of health, and protection of anything else against anything else, does not constitute ‘protection’.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Twice they declare that “Even the *Human Security Now* report acknowledges that ‘the state remains the fundamental purveyor of security’” (p.233, repeated on p.257), converting the report’s position into a supposed admission of something contrary to its general thrust.

<sup>18</sup> See Jolly and Basu-Ray (2007) for another reply to the criticisms by MacFarlane and Khong.

<sup>19</sup> Similarly, on p.14 they propose a contrast between their ‘protection-based understanding’ of human security and a ‘development studies approach’ to human security.

Why would one support one terminology rather than another? The idea that security concerns freedom from fear but not freedom from want presumes that freedom from fear does not include freedom from fear of starving, of dying of disease, and so on. Further, the exclusion from the term ‘protection’ both of freedom from want and other threats is arbitrary. Proponents of the narrow conception ‘make the shift to the individual in theory, but ignore it in practice by subjectively limiting what does and does not count as a viable threat ... [It] is communicable disease, which kills 18,000,000 people a year, not violence, which kills several hundred thousand, that is the real threat to individuals’ (Owen 2005: 38). Owen here means military style violence, and we should add that: ‘It is estimated that each year 1.5 to 3 million girls and women are killed through gender-related violence’ (Hamber et al, 2006: 499). Climatic movements combined with planned neglect by colonial regimes to leave tens of millions dead in the late 19th century (Davis 2001). MacFarlane and Khong’s approach is thus better entitled a ‘security studies approach’ rather than ‘protection-based’. It reflects the proprietorial claim that the area of studies that uses that title feels toward the term ‘security’.

In addition, MacFarlane and Khong assert that a broad coverage for ‘security’ threats undermines the essential function of prioritizing; that the ‘joined-up thinking’ agenda has serious negative side-effects, diverting our attention from truly justified priorities; and that the agenda is unworkable or unnecessary. We consider these attacks next.

*V: Attacks on policy grounds – lack of prioritising power?*

MacFarlane and Khong claim that broad human security discourse renders itself vacuous by including everything. Their showcase example, stated three times, is that it has ‘extended’ to include even gender issues (MacFarlane & Khong, p.237 twice; p.241). They refer to the 1994 Human Development Report’s stress that women have specific security needs (MacFarlane & Khong, pp. 146-7). However, gender issues here are not separate from security issues but are a dimension of them; the claim of ‘extension’ is misplaced.

Does the broad human security discourse divert us from prioritisation? The work on MDGs suggests otherwise, both for prioritisation of areas and especially within areas. This operationalisation of parts of a human security perspective by Haq and his close associates (originally under the title ‘International Development Targets’ in the mid 1990s) shows strong attention to prioritising. Whether the MDGs are well-chosen priorities or the best

operationalisation of the perspective are separate questions from whether a broad human security approach undermines prioritisation or instead centres on it.

MacFarlane and Khong fail to distinguish between prioritising between areas and within areas (see e.g. their p.240). They presume for example that social security arrangements are only possible in rich countries (p.251), showing culpable if unintended ignorance of their assigned topic. Priority belongs not to a whole issue area *per se* but to basic levels of achievement therein. They recurrently misunderstand this, as in their attack on ‘redefining human development or health or environmental issues as security issues’ (p.264). Attainment and maintenance of the basic standards in these areas, but not of every matter in them, are issues of human security.

Human security discourse considers both prioritisation between areas and within areas.<sup>20</sup> The first type is especially controversial. Comparisons between different areas represent the type of textbook logic that Lodgaard reminds us runs up against political ‘logic’, the convenience of established interests. For Picciotto et al. (2006, 2007) and Jolly et al. (2004; e.g. p.244) such comparisons are central. A broad-scope human security concept is needed to generate the required types of comparison: can we better promote security through military spending or through women’s education or democracy education or... ? Jolly reports how smallpox was eradicated a generation ago at a cost equal to that of three fighter-bombers.<sup>21</sup>

While keen to prioritise between areas, human security analysis mistrusts invariable prioritizations of large areas. It prefers a case-by-case approach, beyond elementary priorities such as mass immunization and access to oral rehydration therapy. Broadness of general focus allows relevant prioritisation *in situ*, because one can then seek to identify the particular vulnerabilities that are actually prevalent, and felt as priorities, in particular cases (Jolly & BasuRay 2007). The broad approach is not a call for total analysis, but for flexible analysis

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<sup>20</sup> The distinction is essential in response to Kofi Annan’s worry: ‘One has to be able to define [HS] more narrowly than is being done presently for it to be meaningful and helpful to policymakers ... it frightens governments. They think you want them to be responsible for somebody from cradle to the grave’ (quoted in Weiss et al., 2005: 302).

<sup>21</sup> US \$300 million, in the late 1960s and 70s. Presented in a speech at the New School University, New York, 20 September 2007.

instead of focusing by *a priori* disciplinary habit or prioritising by global over-generalisations.<sup>22</sup>

MacFarlane and Khong congratulate themselves that with their own restricted focus '[t]he issue of prioritization also becomes more tractable' (p.257). That is not because their stance leads to new prioritizing insights; rather it decrees that comparisons between diverse areas will not be considered. The stance reflects not a stronger concern for prioritisation, but acceptance of the operating convenience of well-established groups, supposedly making the view more 'practical'. It reflects a different view about possible paths of influence, and lesser rather than greater attention to prioritisation.

#### VI: 'No analytical traction'

MacFarlane and Khong repeatedly assert that the broad UN approach to human security offers 'no analytical traction'. In their view an expansion of the referents of security discourse, from the 200 or so member states of the UN to over 6 billion individuals, can only be analytically tractable if one does not at the same time expand the range of threats under consideration (p.246). What MacFarlane and Khong mean by analytical tractability remains obscure; their arguments frequently turn into attempted semantic or normative stipulations.

- o '...hurricanes: they may kill us, but they are not threats to our security, *commonly understood*' (p.247; emphasis added).<sup>23</sup> On the next page the example changes from hurricanes to earthquakes, because MacFarlane and Khong wish to specify that a criterion for 'a human security threat is that the source (of insecurity) has to be another individual or individuals. This criterion rules out sharp table corners, tsunami waves, and earthquakes as security threats' (p.248). To avoid the connection that readers are likely to

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<sup>22</sup> See Barnett (2007) on misdirection through over-generalised analysis. For example, while a global econometric study might find no relation between inequality and conflict, in reality in some situations inequality may conduce to peace and in other situations to conflict, so that we need differentiation rather than a global generalisation.

<sup>23</sup> This stipulation of the meaning of 'security' fits uneasily with their explicit premise that 'in our world, the gravest security threats to individuals are acts of violence that are planned and perpetrated by leaders of organised groups' (p.253). For by their stipulation those threats would be the only security threats, not merely the gravest ones. Similarly, MacFarlane and Khong conclude their Ch.7 by a declaration that matters that could not be referred to the UN Security Council, for invocation of Chapter VII of the UN Charter (international intervention to counter threats to international peace and security) should not be discussed as 'human security'. Yet elsewhere they cannot deny that other major matters involving 'serious harm and misery' are 'a different kind of "human insecurity"' (p.259).

make between hurricanes and human-induced climate change, MacFarlane and Khong have dropped hurricanes and (inasmuch as tsunamis are caused by earthquakes) doubled-up the earthquakes example.

- Further, they remark, we can see how to potentially stop violence planned by individuals, whereas we have no way of stopping earthquakes or tsunamis (p.250). They present this as giving further “analytical traction” to their reduced version of the human security concept. But it concerns not explanatory power but possible policy relevance: a focus on variables within one’s zone of influence; and it provides no grounds for the exclusion of many other—environmental, health, etc.—concerns.

One sees two arguments of substance, not merely stipulation. First, the claim that a reduced range of analysis is simpler, which is given the imposing title: ‘theoretically more coherent’ (p.257). More complex analysis is described as referring to ‘a mishmash of causes’ (p.241). Yet elsewhere MacFarlane and Khong repeatedly insist that they are themselves concerned with the multiple causes of physical violence. Their labelling begs the question whether a broader scope of analysis is needed in order to adequately understand the behaviour in question. The broad human security approach adopts, we saw, ‘the predictive/explanatory hypotheses that a broad set of aspects not conventionally connected in theory are often importantly connected in reality: including that the economic, social, cultural, medical, political and military are not separate systems; and that neither national nor personal security will be secured by military means alone’ (Gasper 2005: 228). The pay-off, or lack of it, to this broader framing will become more evident with time. A growing number of analysts, of many backgrounds, find it fruitful. Health impact assessments of foreign policy, including international economic relations, are one important illustration.<sup>24</sup> Andrew Mack argued in his *The Human Security Report 2005* 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. 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.’<sup>25</sup> These claims are out of date. A considerable volume of research now uses the broad conception, though typically as we noted with selective focusing according to the case considered.

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<sup>24</sup> See e.g. special issue of *Bulletin of the World Health Organisation*, March 2007, 85(3).

<sup>25</sup> [[http://www.humansecurityreport.info/HSR2005\\_PDF/What\\_is\\_HS.pdf](http://www.humansecurityreport.info/HSR2005_PDF/What_is_HS.pdf)]

It is worth adding that affronts to personal dignity, for example, are increasingly understood as root causes of conflict. The UN human security perspective brings together at national and international systems level(s) a set of major interacting forces: military, economic, political, cultural, economic, epidemiological, but as we saw it is holistic also at the level of understanding and concern for individual lives (cf. Schaffer & Smith 2004). Human security thought has given such ‘micro’ insights a new home that connects them to the macro-systems level analyses.

Second, MacFarlane and Khong respond in a particular way to the non-invariability of certain types of link. If X does not always lead to Y, but only if combined with other factors in some not yet fully understood way, they see this as rendering X too weak a candidate for inclusion in their central category, ‘security’ (pp.249-50). This can misunderstand the reason for inclusion of X in the category: not because it is a more or less important or invariable causal contributor, but because it is itself a central relevant effect—such as unreliable health. On whether to include X in the explanatory analysis, as opposed to whether to include it in the central category, Hubert (2004) suggests that it will make little difference in the end whether the concept of human security is broad or narrow. The connections in Brauch’s conceptual quartet (Figure 2) or any similar sketch mean that interest in any one of the set will require deep attention to all of them. Such is the claim in broad human security theorization.<sup>26</sup>

It is good to work with a concept of human physical security, but we should call it that. Mack’s *Human Security Report* in fact restricts in terms of types of threat—limiting itself to ‘violent threats to individuals’—not in terms of types of resulting damage. But it loses the main value of a human security approach: joined-up thinking, attention to the bigger nexus. ‘In the narrow conception...the key focus is on protection of individual physical security at the time of the event and after, not on prevention. Furthermore, it is not concerned with

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<sup>26</sup> Note for example the broadening of the range of threats and pathways considered in a 2007 CNA report on the security implications of climate change: ‘Global climate change presents a serious national security threat which could impact Americans at home, impact United States military operations and heighten global tensions, according to a new study released by a blue-ribbon panel of retired admirals and generals from all branches of the armed services. The study, “*National Security and the Threat of Climate Change*,” explores ways projected climate change is a threat multiplier in already fragile regions, exacerbating conditions that lead to failed states — the breeding grounds for extremism and terrorism. The CNA Corporation brought together eleven retired three-star and four-star admirals and generals to provide advice, expertise and perspective on the impact of climate change. ... The report includes several formal findings: Projected climate change poses a serious threat to America's national security; Climate change acts as a threat multiplier for instability in some of the most volatile regions of the world; Projected climate change will add to tensions even in stable regions of the world; Climate change, national security and energy dependence are a related set of global challenges. (ECSP News, 14 June 2007, Woodrow Wilson Center; <http://securityandclimate.cna.org/>)

diverse causes emanating from the international system, such as colonialism, or arms shipments from foreign agents or countries' (MacArthur, 2007: 9). It is the narrow conception that 'lacks analytical traction' and may have limited utility for policy analysis, as opposed to for neat enumeration.

*VII: Attacks on policy grounds – lack of influence?*

In the short run, human security notions are often hard to apply in policy, because of problems concerning who cares and disagreements over who is responsible for action and who pays, precisely due to the boundary-crossing character of the issues considered (see e.g. Kazuo Ogura 2002). Mack proposes it is better then to have a narrow vivid focus (on violent threats to individuals) because that captures attention and builds up sympathy which may later spread to dealing with other types of threat (MacArthur 2007: 3); broad scope is considered not politically feasible in relation to rich country audiences. Implicit here is a short-run perspective of immediate appeal to current powerholders. Ignoring prevention and other threats than physical violence may be shortsighted rather than hardheaded; it may lead not to eventual spread of concern, MacArthur implies, but to waste and later panic and evasion. In contrast to Picciotto's work, physical security analysis without attention to the major interconnections is evasion; and concentration on military interventions and 'patch-up/botch-up' does not give a basis for building sympathy. It matches the short-run convenience of dominant interests in rich countries, who do not want to have causes of disasters traced far and fingers pointed at them.

MacFarlane and Khong's model of policy influence requires similarly that human security discourse appeal sufficiently to the entrenched battalions of national security studies: 'persuading more traditional security analysts' (p.236). To do this requires, they propose, a much reduced set of ambitions: yes to the extension of the referent for security, from state to individual, but no to any extension of attention to values besides physical survival and to threats besides organized assault. For MacFarlane and Khong only influence amongst the major powers matters much, and only influence on the United States matters very much. They advocate a modification of human security ideas to suit the palates of the ruling authorities in US-based security studies. The rest of the UN Intellectual History Project indicates instead that longrun and indirect influence is possible and important.

The recent trend at governmental and intergovernmental levels has been towards narrower versions of human security thinking. The Canadian variant was initially not restricted to physical security. Lloyd Axworthy said in 1997: ‘human security is much more than the absence of military threat. It includes security against economic privation, an acceptable quality of life, and a guarantee of fundamental human rights’ (cited by Bosold & Werthes 2005: 87). But soon, in a context of budget cutbacks in development assistance, Canada moved to focus on physical security (as codified in the 1998 Lysoen Declaration signed with Norway), as a high profile feature for its foreign policy (Bosold & Werthes 2005: 88). In contrast, Japan’s more expansive version of human security, with its emphasis on basic needs and on broader human development, fits its own non-military oriented foreign policy, its concern with national economic security, its ampler development cooperation budget, and its rejection of or at least discomfort with humanitarian intervention (Atanassova-Cornelis 2006; MacFarlane & Khong: 159). Some commentators add that Norway and Japan have the most unfriendly trade policies towards low-income countries of all rich countries, and their high human security profile helps to conceal this.

In the short run, albeit perversely, the Japanese-backed broad picture such as in the Ogata-Sen report ‘has been marginalized by the ongoing war on terror’ (Bosold & Werthes 2005: 97). The ‘narrow’ Canadian version appears to have been used at the 2005 World Summit of the United Nations, as well as by the UN Security Council in Resolution 1674 in April 2006 (MacArthur 2007: 3). Responsibility to protect, from severe threats of physical violence, is taken on, but with no mention of other types of threat. The broader version so challenges vested interests that it represents a longer run agenda, just like human rights work has been since 1948.

The restrictive Canadian perspective uses a concept of ‘workability’ as that is seen from and for a Ministry of Foreign Affairs in a medium size country that is trying to carve a niche and make a ‘splash’. Restrictiveness endangers the human security perspective of interconnection, and thereby may be less suitable as a perspective for research, mobilization, and civil society engagement – the way towards major long run ‘splashes’. Bosold & Werthes (2005: 100) suggest that the narrow focus can be better for short-run campaigns on immediate graspable goals, like the land mines ban and the International Criminal Court; whereas the broader Japanese focus is better for the longer-run, since it sees deeper causes and effects, and can appeal to wider constituencies.

It is possible that a human security discourse will achieve more long-run influence not through attempting to catch the attention and sympathy of current powerholders or incumbents of established ‘normal science’, but through other channels. As theorised in the Great Transition Initiative’s scenarios of how a shift to more sustainable societies could eventually transpire (see e.g. Raskin et al., 2002; Kates et al., 2006), young people provide the energy for social movements, which generate and transmit the pressure and ideas for change, which can be picked up at times of eventual crisis and openness to reorientation when Governments and other agencies look around and seek new responses.<sup>27</sup> Murphy (2005) describes this pattern of international policy change and diffusion, from a review of 150 years of the emergence of international institutions.

There is a rationale for using more mainstream discourses to make palatable reform arguments to existing powerholders.<sup>28</sup> Discourses that make more radical points are likely to be ignored in short run policy, but have a different rationale. We should not judge human security discourse by whether it wins a jackpot prize of being a radical discourse that will yet be accepted by existing powerholders. Operating along more than one discursive track will make sense, especially if the narrower and broader types of work find a way to share or divide the label which both have claimed.

## **6 – Review and concluding thoughts**

The opposition encountered by the broad human security discourse was our starting point, for such opposition increases its interest: why does it continue to spread despite limited powerholder patronage? To try to answer this we looked in a multi-faceted fashion at actual usage of the concept and associated patterns of thought and action. For “the meaning of a concept lies in its usage and is not something we can define analytically or philosophically according to what would be ‘best’. The meaning lies not in what people consciously think the

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<sup>27</sup> Women and women’s movements might be one important channel. Hamber et al. (2006), reacting against ‘the patriarchal perception of security as a value to be protected by statist policies and programmes’ (2006: 487), found in their research in Lebanon, Northern Ireland and South Africa that their women informants used formulations consistent with the broad UNDP approach. The project involving women in three countries ‘produced a holistic image of security, which reflected the broader human security position that security consists of a range of interrelated factors, rather than simply freedom from fear of violence or conflict’ (Hamber et al., 2006: 493).

<sup>28</sup> As for example in the Stern report on climate change’s reliance on economic cost-benefit analysis. Stern considered but rejected using a basic human needs denominator.

concept means but in how they implicitly use it in some ways and not others.” (Buzan et al., 1998: 24, cited by Bosold, 2005/6: 4.)

Through examining the concept of ‘human’ as well as that of ‘security’, we teased out a number of aspects in addition to the prioritising role of any ‘security’ concept:- the artificiality and arbitrariness of claims that security is exclusively a national-level and military notion, and of attempts to restrict ideas of human security to one type of threat or one type of harm; the idea of basic normative threshold levels, across a range of needs, typically related to ideas of danger and vulnerability around causative threshold levels or tipping-points in systems marked by ramifying interconnections; and the visceral charge of the idea of ‘human security’, as reflection of the vulnerabilities of human bodies, identities and personality.

Section 2 followed up the resultant insight that ‘human security’ is a discourse and not merely a single concept. We highlighted an equity dimension, in which ideas from human needs, human development and human rights are combined, including a priority to living a life of normal human span; and two connectivity dimensions, including a holistic perspective on real individuals’ lives and a trans- or supra-disciplinary approach to explanation at the level of larger systems. Section 3 examined roles of this discourse: in generating situation-specific and unexpected insights, and in focusing policy design on foundational prevention rather than on palliative reaction to already erupted crises; and we considered who have been the users and non-users.

Sections 4 and 5 reviewed attacks on the idea of human security, especially on the broader versions. Against the claim that broad versions are unusable for analysis and explanation, we saw that they are increasingly used, often combined with case-specific focusing, and can be dramatically insightful (see e.g. Picciotto et al., 2006). Against the claim that broad versions are bad for establishing priorities, we saw that they strongly emphasise prioritisation within sectors (as in the MDGs work) and, precisely thanks to their broad formulation, also between sectors. Against the claim that broad versions are politically impotent, we saw that while ramifying explanation tends to be unpopular with established interests, a short term orientation to immediate graspable goals is not the only relevant stance. A broader approach has potential for eventual broader and deeper support, towards longer term change.

Werthes and Debiel conclude that ‘human security’ is a flexible field concept, a political leitmotif. ‘[O]veremphasising the shortcomings of leitmotifs means to underestimate their potential, which exactly relies on its ambiguity/flexibility’ (2006: 15; sic). This formulation is similar in spirit to Alkire’s definition which was taken over by the Commission on Human Security. Thus, Japan can handle the leitmotif in a way that reflects its own history, culture and politics, with a focus on human needs and human development (Atanassova-Cornelis 2006; Werthes & Debiel 2006); whereas the EU must give a strong role to human rights in whatever human security orientation it adopts (ibid: 17). Admittedly not every flexibly interpreted version of human security will have impact in its environment. The Japanese and Canadian interpretations have led to some real movement, in different arenas, but whether the EU’s human security talk makes any difference is open to doubt (ibid.: 18).

Werthes and Debiel helpfully point us to multiple users, interpretations, and uses. But their focus on direct policy uses by current policy users understates the potential of human security discourse, which has become a motivating framework in diverse sectors and professional contexts. Like some other commentators from international relations, they may insufficiently consider the ‘human’ perspectives in ‘human security’.

We saw that human security discourse has a range of roles. Human security thinking operates then both at more general levels—as a widely used concept, an ideal and a discourse in description, explanation and policy design—and at more concrete levels, as specified in particular research programmes and policy programmes. The more general levels of thinking inspire the more concrete and specific research and policy; they motivate integration across boundaries: organisational, ideological and disciplinary. They do this in varied, unpredictable, niche-specific ways, as we see from the work in spheres such as violent conflict, AIDS and public health, climate change and migration. Concrete and precise research and policy programmes do not rest on our establishing a single narrow conception of human security, let alone one that is centred on safety from intentional physical violence. The causes and knock-on effects of damage through violence are anyway so ramifying that while violence appears attractive as topic for data collection and subsequent model-building, the associated research and policy are forced to ramify. A narrow frame provides no selfenclosed analytical coherence. We cannot afford to ignore the wider causes and effects and to treat the latter as ‘externalities’ that will be absorbed by the human and natural environments. The

world contains too much interconnection, fragility, and risk of straying into and over turning points and tipping zones.

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