Human Security: Reconciling Critical Aspirations with Political 'Realities'

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This article explores the concept of 'human security': the idea that the referent object and beneficiary of security should be individuals. It demonstrates that the concept has had some success as a normative reference point for human-centred policy movements internationally, and it reflects a broader shift towards human agency and human centred conceptions of security. As a theoretical concept, therefore, the idea contributes to a multi-disciplinary reconceptualization of security that draws upon theoretical debates in political science and criminology. However, attempts to operationalize it have exposed fundamental problems in the new security discourse more broadly, generating critiques in political science and criminology which share common foundations but which are rarely engaged in an integrated manner. This article explores whether critical or radical security ideas like human security *can be reconciled with political 'realities', or whether this undermines their intellectual* integrity. In addressing this debate from an international relations perspective, the article also engages with criminological scholarship on security in order to identify and strengthen links across the disciplines.

Keywords

Introduction

The study of security – across a range of disciplines – is now defined and problematized by questions of scope, subject matter and coherence. What should the referent object of security be? What threats should define the study and the policies of security? Which actors should be entrusted to respond to security threats? At what cost – in terms of personal liberty and limits to consumption – should security be achieved? How should security be studied and what forms the basis of reliable knowledge in this area? It can be no surprise that security has been described as an "essentially contested" subject, defying consensus on its basic parameters and perhaps even its meaning (Buzan and Hansen 2009: 10). These questions are raised and addressed in criminology, political science, sociology and international relations, amongst others, but generally without much engagement across the disciplines.

The concept of 'human security' has made a significant contribution to debates around these questions, and thus to the evolving study and practices of security. At its core is the idea that the referent object and beneficiary of security should be individuals, a normative proposition that challenges conventional assumptions about security in a number of ways. Human security securitizes everyday issues and challenges, such as deprivation, environmental degradation, disease and human rights abuse. It blurs the distinction between domestic and international security. It is also inherently trans-disciplinary since it sees any threat to the vital integrity of individuals as a security challenge, whatever the source. The study of human security is a part of a broader movement within a number of academic fields which critiques how and why some issues are defined as 'security challenges', the consequences of this 'securitization', the tension between the governance of security and other public goods, and the societal context of (in)security. The evolution of the human security concept and the debates that have defined this evolution therefore provide an excellent opportunity to demonstrate the common – but generally underexplored – interests shared across disciplinary boundaries, and in particular international relations and criminology.

The concept of human security has had some success as a normative reference point for human-centred policy movements – such as the campaign to reduce the impact of armed conflict upon civilians – and a number of states and inter-governmental organizations have adopted human security as a policy orientation. It has also been embraced by many civil society actors. To some degree, human security reflects a broader shift towards human agency and human centred conceptions of security seen in academic and policy debates. As a theoretical concept, therefore, human security contributes to a broad multi-disciplinary reconceptualization of security.

However, the conceptual traction of human security has been limited, and attempts to operationalize it have exposed fundamental problems in the new security discourse more broadly which are at the heart of debates in criminology and political science. Whilst some criminology scholars have engaged with human security (Wood and Shearing 2007: 63-96; Mythen and Walklate 2006a; Zedner 2009: 39-44) scholars in politics and international studies have yet to take up the trans-disciplinary themes, despite this shared agenda. Most importantly, there is a fundamental paradox at the heart of human security in terms of its policy operationalization that is relevant to criminology and political science. Human security, taken to its logical conclusion, holds 'critical' implications for the way politics and economics are organized: it challenges the values and institutions which currently exist as

they relate to human welfare, and it focuses upon underlying sources of insecurity. Yet the ontological starting point of most human security analysis and its policy orientation assume the inevitability and legitimacy of these institutions. Over the last twenty years human security has become quite enfeebled in its policy application, and it arguably no longer poses difficult questions for the holders of power. In policy circles, human security is generally used to ameliorate the manifestations and symptoms of insecurity and deprivation. It is not used as a device to expose and address the structural conditions and the institutions that give rise to this insecurity. That is, human security is promoted and operationalized within the existing political, legal and normative constraints of the 'real world'. For many academic observers this has undermined whatever credibility the concept of human security ever had; it has therefore "lost its way" (Turner, et al. 2011) or even "collapsed" (Richmond 2011: 43) as an intellectual project. As a result, critical security studies – particular those approaches which are influenced by the Foucauldian tradition – have become increasingly hostile to human security, whilst the gap between 'critical' security studies and policy-oriented human security has become wider than ever.

Human security represents a way of engaging with policy and security processes that many other forms of security analysis – dissociated from practical political engagement – often eschew. Human security therefore provides a framework for praxis for security research which merits reinvestment – yet this must be done in a way that captures the critical origins of the concept, and that is the key challenge. This raises a number of difficult questions that will be explored in this paper in a manner that draws together both international studies and criminology. Can 'progressive' ideas change the institutions and structures of power that generate insecurity? Alternatively, can human security policy interventions have a meaningful and positive impact upon individual lives without changing the structural sources of deprivation? If a policy oriented 'problem-solving' approach is necessary to achieve policy engagement in the interests of 'progressive' security practices, does this remove the transformational potential of non-traditional security ideas? Can critical or radical aspirations be reconciled with political 'realities', or does this undermine human security as an intellectual project? In presenting security as a positive value and reinforcing the securitization of everyday life, does human security in turn reinforce hegemonic and interventionist security agendas?

This paper explores human security policy initiatives in a number of settings in order to consider if human security can ever be truly 'critical' whilst also being policy relevant. In addressing this debate from an international relations perspective, the article also engages

with criminological scholarship on security in order to identify and strengthen links across the disciplines. Drawing upon the theoretical contributions to security studies made by criminology – in particular the debate around security governance (Johnston and Shearing 2003; Wood and Shearing 2007) – the paper will take up the critique of human security as a form of international security governance. The paper argues that human security can be rescued from its predicament if scholars engage with the concept critically, as an approach that can meaningfully engage with and have an impact upon policy. This will be relevant not only to those interested in international development and politics, but also scholars from a range of disciplines – in particular criminology – interested in security and praxis. In this sense, human security has the potential for truly trans-disciplinary engagement around the concept and practice of security – even amongst scholars who are wary of that practice.

Human security: from international relations to criminology

Zedner (2009: 4) observes that human security "brings about a convergence between international relations and criminology", but the implications of this have not been fully explored. Human security can be situated within three broad and overlapping movements that have evolved in recent decades and have made an impact in particular upon political science and international studies, but also more recently upon criminology. Firstly, the international security agenda has widened beyond the military sector, to include a range of economic, social and environmental challenges (Buzan, et al., 1998). Secondly, in academic security studies there has been a shift away from the state as the object of security, in a process of deepening which has embraced other referents and values. Thirdly, and relatedly, there has arguably been a shift from state-centric to human-focussed security thinking, although the extent of this is contested. Within this evolving context the concept of human security centres the principle that security policy and security analysis, if they are to be effective and legitimate, must focus on the individual – and communities – as the referent and primary beneficiary. Human security is thus normative; it suggests that there is an ethical responsibility to re-orient security around the individual in line with internationally recognised human rights. Much human security scholarship is therefore underpinned by a cosmopolitan worldview. Some human security scholarship also seeks to present explanatory arguments concerning the nature of security, deprivation and conflict, by focussing on the individual level. In addition, most scholars and practitioners working on human security

emphasise its policy relevance; they believe that the concept of human security can and should result in policy changes that improve the welfare of people.

Whilst human security has been taken up most actively within international studies, the broader debates around the concept are very much relevant to criminological discussions of security, and these discussions make a valuable contribution to human security debates. The focus on humans is a part of a movement in criminology to critically question how security is defined and operationalized in society, and in whose interests. Criminologists thus explore the pervasive scope of security in contemporary society and how this conditions the nature of governance, the relationship between the state and individuals, the provision of security by commercial actors rather than as a public good, and the tension between individual liberty and public security (Zedner 2009; De Lint and Virta 2004; Wood and Dupont 2006). Some criminologists have also engaged in critical debates about the dynamics of securitization (McClanahan and Brisman 2015; Aradau and Van Munster 2009; Loader 2002) and the implications of the 'war on terror' for how Western societies understand security and insecurity in the public and private spheres (Mythen and Walklate 2008; Zedner 2009).

In contrast to much of the scholarship on security within international relations, these criminological debates give particular attention to how security is defined and administered within liberal societies at the 'everyday' level (Crawford and Hutchinson 2015; Goold, Loader and Thumala 2013). This explores the interests that are served by the practice of security, the social costs of security, the governance of security, and the agencies – such as the police – which play a role in upholding and enforcing public security. Whilst the liberal state is theoretically oriented around individual needs and rights – albeit moderated by a social contract which balances these rights against public goods – criminologists have exposed the manner in which the governance of security does not necessarily serve human security (Johnston and Shearing 2003) and all too often acts as a vehicle for social control. In this way, criminology demonstrates how human security is not only relevant to deprived and conflict-affected populations in the developing world – the primary focus of human security from an international relations perspective – but also Western democratic societies. A further area that criminological security studies has pioneered that has huge implications for human security – but which has not been substantively explored by human security scholars elsewhere – relates to the privatization of security and the provision of security as a commodity, rather than as a public good for all (Shearing and Stenning 1983; Loader 1997; Goold, Loader and Thumala 2010; Los 2002; Zedner 2006).

The human security idea reconceptualises security – at least in theory – in a number of crucial ways. As a starting point, it challenges traditional conceptions of international security that focus upon the state and the problem of international anarchy. Scholars of human security argue that for many – or perhaps most – people in the world the greatest threats to security come from hunger, disease, environmental degradation, internal conflicts, or criminal violence. And for others, a greater threat may come from their own government, rather than from an 'external' enemy. This is very much in line with security debates in criminology which raise questions about the state as a 'partisan' actor (Loader and Walker 2006: 172-173) and the deprivation which results from this in line with class, race and gender. From this perspective, security is an exclusive commodity rather than a public good (Crawford 2006). Human security thus seeks to challenge attitudes and institutions that privilege so-called 'high politics' above individual (everyday) experiences of deprivation and insecurity. According to this, traditional approaches to international security – defined by states, territorial integrity and defence against external threats – do not necessarily correlate with human security, and an over-emphasis upon state security can be to the detriment of human welfare. Further, the citizens of states that are deemed 'secure' according to the traditional concept of security can at the same time be perilously insecure in their everyday lives. From a criminological perspective, this invokes debates not only about the obvious insecurity of people in deprived and conflict-affected societies, but also the insecurity of some communities in so-called developed, Western societies, which are disadvantaged and often victimized disproportionately based upon demographic vulnerabilities (something almost completely neglected by scholars of human security writing from an international relations background).

Human security, in theory, also raises important implications for the evolution of state sovereignty. Traditionally, state sovereignty and sovereign legitimacy are viewed – at least in International Relations – as an extension of a government's control of territory, state independence and recognition by other states. Citizens do not play a direct role in this equation. The concept of human security challenges this so that the state – and state sovereignty – should ideally serve and support the people from which it draws its legitimacy. The international legitimacy of state sovereignty should therefore rest not only on the control of territory, but also upon fulfilling certain standards of human rights and welfare for citizens.

A further characteristic of the human security approach is that it seeks to securitise issues as it deepens the security agenda, and from this perspective securitization is generally a positive process in that it seeks to raise the urgency of neglected challenges and bring about

new forms of protection for people and groups. An extremely wide range of issues – including poverty and malnutrition, disease, environmental degradation and climate change – are thus securitised. The objective is to encourage security providers – and specifically state agencies – to invest the attention and resources necessary to address these non-traditional security challenges. Clearly some scholars are wary of this sort of securitization. It moves challenges from the realm of normal politics to the realm of exceptional or emergency politics, "justifying actions outside the normal bounds of political procedure" which can have implications for civil liberties, displace other public goods, and bring other pernicious consequences (Buzan, et al. 1998: 23-24). Securitization can therefore represent a failure of normal politics. Yet, as Floyd (2011) has observed, sometimes it is morally permissible to suspend normal politics if this allows security providers to effectively and responsibly address egregious deprivation. The objective, therefore, should be a "robust conception of the human good of security" (Loader and Walker 2006: 166) which holds the potential excesses of security to account in a democratic society.

While all approaches to human security agree that the referent of security policy and analysis should be the individual, they disagree about which threats the individual should be protected from, and what means should be employed to achieve this protection. There have been a number of strands – or usages – of human security scholarship and policy analysis (Newman 2001; 2010). Human security has been used as an umbrella concept for approaching a range of 'non-traditional' security issues – such as HIV/AIDS, inhumane weapons such as anti-personnel landmines, child soldiers, and trafficking in human beings – with the simple objective of attracting greater policy attention and resources for tackling them. The focus on crime and victimization as a human security focus – for example in connection with human trafficking and forced labour – offers an interesting although undeveloped connection between international relations and criminology. Human security has also been used to focus on the human consequences of armed conflict and the dangers posed to civilians by repressive governments and situations of state failure (Mack 2004; MacFarlane and Khong 2006). From this perspective conventional security analysis is inadequate for explaining – much less for remedying – the realities of armed conflict and its impact at the human level.

In contrast, a broader usage of the human security concept considers all threats to human welfare but has a particular focus upon underdevelopment, poverty and deprivation. The 1994 UN Development Programme Human Development Report is representative of this approach: here, human security means "safety from such chronic threats as hunger, disease

and repression" and "protection from sudden and hurtful disruptions in the patterns of daily life – whether in homes, in jobs or in communities" (UNDP 1994: 23). This broad development-oriented approach to human security has found support in policy circles, in particular the Japanese sponsored Commission on Human Security (2003: 4) which defined human security as the protection of "the vital core of all human lives in ways that enhance human freedoms and human fulfilment". The broad approach to human security sacrifices analytical precision in favour of general normative persuasion: it focuses on the issues – such as extreme poverty, preventable disease, and the consequences of pollution – which undermine the life chances of the largest numbers of people.

A number of scholars have also sought to understand human security from a theoretical perspective and integrate human security into security studies (Thomas 2002; Shani, et al. 2007; Grayson, 2008; Newman 2010). From this perspective human security is used to explore theoretical debates concerning the nature of security threats, referents, and responses to insecurity. Within this approach an important focus is upon the gendered aspects of security and insecurity (Tripp et al. 2013; Roberts 2008; Truong, et al. 2007), with reference to gender relations and masculine institutions of power. There is a strong link here to criminological scholarship on the gendered nature of insecurity (Hoyle 2007). As this paper demonstrates, however, the value of human security from a theoretical security studies perspective is hotly contested. Whether human security can be meaningfully and legitimately operationalized in policy programmes is therefore the test of human security as a new security concept.

Human security as policy

Human security has made a notable impact in international policy circles since the 1990s, although the significance of this contested. It has been promoted as a broad normative orientation by groups of states, such as the Human Security Network and the 'Friends of Human Security'. The Commission on Human Security, sponsored by the government of Japan, promoted a broad, development-focussed model of human security which has formed the basis for UN human security activities. Human security has also formed a loose policy framework for a number of regional organizations such as the African Union, ASEAN, and the European Union. In this sense human security rests upon a broader movement to give greater attention to people-centred challenges relating, for example, to poverty, underdevelopment, human trafficking, and human rights violations.

It remains debateable whether individual needs and rights command greater respect more broadly in international politics in recent decades. Certainly, some observers have suggested that interest in human security reflects a greater attention to human needs and human welfare in international politics (see, for example, Evans 2008; Arbour 2008; Teitel 2011). This may be illustrated by initiatives such as the Ottawa Treaty banning anti-personnel mines, the Millennium Development Goals and the Sustainable Development Goals, the Rome Treaty creating the International Criminal Court, the Arms Trade Treaty, and increased attention to the prevention of atrocities and the protection of civilians in situations of armed conflict, including the unanimous adoption by UN member states of the Responsibility to Protect in 2005. The adoption of the human security concept in the same 2005 landmark UN summit meeting and the follow-up activities on human security also reflect this momentum. However, it is difficult to evaluate the value and impact of human security as a general normative movement in this broad sense, and challenges have been directed at the assumption of human progress (Pogge 2010). Human security has been operationalized in the implementation of project assistance, in particular in relation to development programmes and post-conflict peacebuilding and reconstruction (see below), and this may provide better evidence of its added value.

In policy terms, human security – as a normative idea – has evolved since the 1990s from being a fairly radical challenge to state-centric realism to a rather conservative idea that largely runs in parallel with, but secondary to, conventional security thinking. A comparison between the UN Development Programme work in the 1990s and the manner in which human security is employed twenty years later illustrates this. The following discussion will therefore sketch the evolution of human security in a number of policy settings in order to illustrate how the concept has been deployed and the controversies this has raised.

For a UN document, the 1994 human development report (HDR) was pioneering. The HDR suggested that "For most people, a feeling of insecurity arises more from worries about daily life than from the dread of a cataclysmic world event. Will they and their families have enough to eat? Will they lose their jobs? Will their streets and neighbourhoods be safe from crime? Will they be tortured by a repressive state? Will they become a victim of violence because of their gender? Will their religion or ethnic origin target them for persecution?" (UNDP 1994: 22). In dealing with 'personal security' the report lists seven types of threat, and notably the first one reads "Threats from the state (physical torture)", and also includes "Threats directed against women (rape, domestic violence)" (UNDP 1994: 30).

The 1994 HDR report made a significant impact upon international policy discussions relating to security and development, at least in a discursive sense, and a number of countries embraced the concept. Many international organizations have internalized the concept of human security and some have actively sought to integrate it into their programmes. The UNDP has been a normative leader in this regard, and it has also sought to implement human security projects at the field level in conflict-prone and developing societies, directed at enhancing the everyday welfare of individuals and communities. The UN High Commissioner for Refugees has also actively embraced the concept (UNHCR 1997; UNHCR 2000: 285-86; UNHCR 2006: 64-66; UNHCR 2012: 7).

Some of the UN's work in the area of human security has been facilitated by the United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security (UNTFHS), which was established by the UN, under Japanese sponsorship, in 1999. The objective of the fund is to finance activities which translate the human security concept into practical action, in particular those at the field level, to provide "concrete and sustainable benefits to vulnerable people and communities threatened in their survival, livelihood and dignity" (UNTFHS 2012). As of the beginning of 2014 the UNTFHS had funded 214 projects in over 85 countries with a total over $415 million disbursed since its foundation (UNTFHS communication to author 2014).

With the support of the UNTFHS, many UN agencies have implemented field programmes and activities aimed at promoting the health and welfare of communities, and this provides further illustration of how human security has been translated into policy. These agencies include UN Development Programme, Food and Agricultural Programme, UN Children's Fund, UN High commissioner for Refugees, World Food Programme, UN Population Fund, World Health Organization, UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, UN Development Fund for Women, UN Relief and Works Agency, UN Human Settlements Programme, International Atomic Energy Agency, UN Industrial Development Organization, UN Mine Action Services, International Labour Organization, UN Volunteers, Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, International Organization for Migration, UN Office on Drugs and Crime, and some UN peacekeeping missions, including the UN Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (Human Security Unit 2009). As a requirement of this funding these organizations must conceptualize their activities with reference to human security and demonstrate how the concept brings added value.

The reports of the programmes undertaken with the use of UNTFHS resources also provide a good indication of the sort of concrete activities undertaken in the name of human

security: programmes to improve pastoral livelihoods and food security, supporting access to basic healthcare for vulnerable communities, increasing access to primary education, strengthening resilience in communities which are vulnerable to natural disasters, supporting school feeding programmes, promoting HIV/AIDS awareness and reducing risk, increasing access to sexual and reproductive health services, facilitating the rehabilitation of war victims, promoting girls' education and development, assisting rural communities in agricultural and livestock development, development refugee impacted communities, managing water and energy services for poverty eradication, assistance in micro and small-scale enterprise development for displaced communities, programmes for reducing maternal morbidity and mortality, programmes to promote the use of insecticide treated bed-nets and household management of malaria by mothers, protecting and reintegrating internally displaced persons, supporting centres which address violence against women, supporting skills training and community service facilities for the reintegration of ex-combatants and former rebels, supporting drug demand reduction, support for former poppy farmers, prevention of trafficking in children and women at the community level, promoting community reconciliation through poverty reduction in post-conflict societies, rebuilding after natural disasters, and removing the threat of cluster bombs and promoting post-demining rehabilitation, amongst others (UNTFHS 2014). The activities carried out through the funding of the UNTFHS have undoubtedly improved the lives of many communities, although it is debateable whether many of the activities have benefitted by being described as 'human security' since they involve activities that are undertaken widely as a part of development or humanitarian assistance without the 'human security' label.

The landmark 2005 World Summit Outcome provided a milestone for the human security agenda in policy terms, although not one that necessarily strengthened its impact or intellectual traction. It endorsed the concept of human security with reference to the right of people to live in freedom and dignity, free from poverty and despair, and free from fear and want (UN 2005: para.143). Following the World Summit the key General Assembly resolution was 66/290 of October 2012, and this was operationalized in a report of the Secretary-General (UN Secretary General 2013). However, this reincarnation was arguably in a form which betrayed the radical origins of the concept. Indeed, if the 1994 vision of human security pointed to a potential tension between human security and the state (and the conventional security agenda), twenty years later that tension has disappeared from the UN human security agenda. Resolution 66/290 and the UN Secretary-General's follow-up activities have a number of key characteristics. Firstly, they focus upon the development side

of the human security agenda, explicitly excluding the threat of direct violence and the possible role of intervention for human protection purposes. So, according to this resolution, "the notion of human security is distinct from the responsibility to protect and its implementation", and it "does not entail the threat or the use of force or coercive measures." Secondly, this conception of human security does not acknowledge that states may sometimes be the enemy of human security. It suggests that "governments retain the primary role and responsibility for ensuring the survival, livelihood and dignity of their citizens", and reaffirms "full respect for the sovereignty of States, territorial integrity and non-interference in matters that are essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of States". Yet it is often governments which are unable or unwilling to protect the basic security needs of individuals and communities, and the UN's failure to acknowledge this, while unsurprising, exposes the fundamental weakness of the intergovernmental approach to human security.

Thirdly, the operationalization of the human security concept has failed to explore or deepen understanding of the underlying or structural conditions which give rise to insecurity; the emphasis has been rather upon addressing the manifestations of insecurity. The report claims that "human security initiatives promote solutions that identify the root causes underlying current and emergent threats" (Secretary General: A/68/685 para.11). However, nothing in the UN human security discourse or in its activities demonstrates that the root causes of insecurity and deprivation are being explored or addressed. If they are, it is in the most superficial way – for example, considering poverty or unemployment as underlying sources of personal insecurity, without considering the reasons for this poverty.

The Secretary-General's report states that human security is underpinned by empowerment strategies. It emphasises the need for comprehensive solutions and suggests that "human security provides practitioners and policymakers with a deeper understanding of the local context, including of the root causes of insecurities and their linkages" (paragraph 65). The emphasis upon addressing insecurity at the local level and through local ownership seems laudable, but it is also problematic. Many of the fundamental root causes which explain extreme deprivation do not necessarily relate to local issues, but rather to broader forces inherent in the nature of international economics and the state system. 'Local' manifestations of insecurity have structural causes rooted in international institutions. In some ways the 'local' emphasis in the UN's human security approach obscures broader structural reasons for insecurity and deprivation, such as the international terms of trade, international power inequalities, the arms trade, neo-liberal globalization, the debt system,

environmental degradation, the intellectual property regime, state sovereignty, the military power of powerful states, and corrupt and abusive governance, amongst others.

So, human security has been reinvigorated at the UN, but at the same time it has been institutionalized within the conventional, state-centric parameters of international society. In this sense the UN's human security activities and programmes, although often well-intentioned, at best address the manifestations of deprivation and insecurity, and generally not its underlying root causes. It therefore remains doubtful whether human security has brought forth a genuine reconceptualization of security at the UN. Western European political establishments and civil society have also actively engaged with the human security concept – in particular with reference to overseas development policy, aid and peace operations – and it appears to reflect the supranational and liberal tendencies of the region. Whilst some observers (Martin and Owen 2010) see this as an important orientation for the EU, others (Matlary 2008) doubt whether human security has been truly internalized into the organisation and its members.

Security studies critiques

For a number of reasons, theoretical security studies have not been kind to human security as it has evolved as a policy-oriented concept (Bosold 2011; Hynek and Chandler 2011). Beyond promoting a human-centred approach to security, the concept has generally not been used to engage with the key theoretical security studies debates that have defined the field, including securitization. Indeed, human security advocates have often been oblivious to the potential hazards of securitizing issues such as underdevelopment, migration and human trafficking. It has also been seen as blind to the gender dimensions of security and insecurity (Marhia 2013). Moreover, by focussing upon abstract individuals as the referent object, human security ignores the cultural and societal context (Shani 2011). Whilst some scholars (Newman 2010) have attempted to argue that a critical approach to human security policy is possible, many more security studies scholars are quite hostile to the concept. Human security has therefore generally been seen as insufficiently 'critical', and thus failing to explore the underlying reasons for insecurity and injustice, and seeking to improve human welfare within existing institutions rather than questioning the effectiveness or legitimacy of these institutions.

In exploring the emancipatory potential of human security it is interesting to draw upon Robert Cox's (1981) famous distinction between 'critical' and 'problem-solving' social

science, which has made a major impact upon security studies. The problem-solving approach takes prevailing policy parameters and institutions as the given and inevitable framework for action in the 'real world'. Problem-solving analysis is regarded as replicating and reinforcing predominant worldviews, and so, even when it seeks to produce positive change, it endorses existing structures of power. In contrast, 'critical' approaches question how institutions emerge and the interests they represent and serve, and do not accept existing policy parameters as a given or necessarily legitimate. Critical approaches therefore challenge the structural conditions which give rise to security and insecurity, and, according to some scholars, they have emancipation at their core.

In its pure form, human security is in itself fundamentally 'critical', but this is not how many human security arguments have been developed. Clearly, policy approaches to addressing human security in the context of the UN and national policy establishments would also not be described as critical in line with this definition, but rather – at best – as problem-solving attempts to improve human welfare within the political, legal and practical parameters of the 'real world'.

The policy orientation of human security – and its adoption as a policy framework by some governments – has therefore made some critical security scholars particularly suspicious of the concept. According to this, even though the concept is reflected in policy discourse, it has made little impact upon policy outcomes (Chandler 2008a). Although human security is used as a policy framework for programme implementation, the extent to which states – even those which have publicly endorsed the concept – have substantially changed their foreign or domestic policies is questionable (Christie 2010). The principal reason for this is, in policy terms, because human security looks to state actors as security providers – even though they are tied to the structures of deprivation and insecurity (Bellamy and McDonald 2002). From this perspective state elites cannot be truly committed to promoting a human security agenda because the state is embedded in the structural conditions from which insecurities arise. Insofar as human security is largely a policy movement, mainstream academic analysis in this area is therefore bound to reproduce and legitimise existing institutions of power, and is therefore not a meaningful reconceptualization of security. It reflects, defends and works within the existing norms and institutions and seeks to address human security within this 'reality'.

For this reason, the manner in which human security has been adopted in various national and international policy circles – including the UN – is troubling for some critical scholars (Booth 2007: 324; Grayson 2008: 394). According to this, human security is, in

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theory and practice, not a radical, emancipatory paradigm shift; it has been willingly co-opted by states but has little positive impact upon policy. Rather, human security reinforces and reproduces existing security attitudes and policies. Seeing human security described in the UN Secretary-General's report (General Assembly 2010) as a "tool for governments" does lead one to wonder if the concept of human security should still be seen – as it once was – as a radical alternative to orthodox models of security. If human security is to be a meaningful challenge to orthodox security ideas and practices, it must essentially be critical in outlook. The manner in which human security has now been internalized within the policy discourse suggests that this is not possible.

According to this critical line of reasoning, human security can never overcome its central paradox: it apparently questions the conditions that produce human insecurity, yet most human security scholarship and policy seem to endorse these structures and norms. In particular, in practice the human security idea appears to rely upon the state for the operationalization of human security policy, thus exposing a contradiction. It takes prevailing social and power relationships and the institutions into which they are organized as the given framework for action. The UN, for example, clearly sees state sovereignty and governments as the essential framework for promoting human security. It calls for 'people-centred' approaches to security and wellbeing without contesting the structural factors that result in deprivation and insecurity. For critical social scientists this tension undermines the credibility of the human security concept as a means of emancipating vulnerable people and addressing deprivation.

A further aspect of the critical challenge to human security arises from its apparent liberal orientation, raising further themes common to critical security studies and criminology. According to this critique, human security promotes a neo-liberal agenda, assuming that deprived people in the developing world are helpless victims, and therefore human security provides the normative rationale for liberal intervention aimed at 'saving' disadvantaged populations and also homogenizing the world around certain values. This is seen in the increased focus upon human security in peacekeeping, peacebuilding and conflict prevention activities. This, according to Richmond, demonstrates the extent to which human security has been captured by the conservative wing of liberalism and now "deployed as a cover for social engineering, institutionalisation and statebuilding in order to provide a veneer of legitimacy for interventionary projects" which are ultimately aimed at international stability and state institutions rather than individual welfare (Richmond 2011: 43; also Begby and Burgess 2009). The emancipatory vision of human security is lost. Human security

operates "as if its subjects are helpless and incapacitated would-be liberals" (Richmond 2011: 44). Some of these ideas are reflected in the critical criminology scholarship on security, and in particular the idea of security being a predominant theme in governance (Zedner 2009; Valverde 2011; Crawford 2006; Mythen and Walklate 2006a; Mythen and Walklate 2006b).

From this perspective human security is part of the post-Cold War liberal internationalist agenda, based upon the assumption of universally valid liberal norms. To draw upon the criminological debates on security, human security – at least in the policy world – might therefore be seen as an exercise in international security governance, and an illustration of the creeping securitization of everyday life that can have pernicious effects upon liberty and the distribution of resources. This suggests that governance – at all levels – is increasingly justified by the claims of security (Zedner 2009: 143; Valverde 2001; Simon 2007) and this brings many costs in terms of public trust. It is also firmly situated within the development-security nexus, seen from a critical perspective as an agenda which demonises weak or problematic states as a potential threat to the interests of industrialized, powerful states. This approach tends to externalize, demonize and contain problems in the developing, 'other', world. According to Chandler (2008a.: 435) the exaggeration of 'new' post-Cold War security threats and their interconnectedness – especially those emanating from poor countries – is firmly a part of this agenda and one which the human security concept has reinforced. Instability, conflict, and state weakness in the developing world are therefore increasingly seen as a threat to international security and Western interests. Intervention and military humanitarianism in the interests of stabilising conflict-prone societies is the prevailing response to this. However, the critical challenge to human security goes much further in arguing that when states deploy the human security motif it is as a pretext for hegemonic forms of intervention and control (Shani 2007: 7). In a related manner, human security has become controversial in some policy circles, and is now seen by some states as a form of Western hegemony and liberal cultural imperialism (Mgbeoji 2006).

The securitization of underdevelopment and state weakness results in a lack of sensitivity towards, and understanding of, problems elsewhere in the world, and a failure to appreciate that these problems are in some ways a consequence of pathologies inherent in the international system. It can also lead to peacebuilding policies which are not effective. According to some analysts, it also forms a part of a broader agenda to coercively reform 'developing' countries. The promotion of human security – along with liberal peace-building and state-building – is a key part of the normative pretext for this. In peacebuilding "its application has helped to prioritise state-building and security sector reform, while side-lining

local agency and democratic control" (Turner, et al. 2011: 93). The ultimate objective of the securitization of underdevelopment and weak states through human security is containing instability and system failures in the developing world in the interests of international security. According to this human security is a part of a broader agenda directed at stabilizing an international order which serves powerful, industrial interests in the global north. McCormack (2011: 104) goes further by arguing that the war on terror fits into the framework established by human security: "the purported links between poverty and terrorism and the global threats emerging from the poorest and weakest nations have always been an integral part of the human security agenda".

A further aspect of the critical challenge to human security – which reflects another interest common to international relations and criminology – is its interpretation through Foucauldian analysis, an approach which focuses upon the subjugation of bodies and control of populations as a process of governance. From this perspective human security is an extension of broader socio-political regimes of power and control which have penetrated ever deeper into society, in this case in the interests of global capitalism and stability (Doucet and de Larrinaga 2001; Jabri 2007; Duffield 2007; Pupavac 2005).

Naturally, the human security concept is also subject to broader critiques that have been generated towards the concept of security and securitization as a negative, pernicious force in whose name rights are trampled upon (Neocleous 2011). Criminologists (Zedner 2009: 48) have joined political scientists (Buzan 2004: 370) in specifically challenging human security for its role in this broader securitization. For Chandler (2011: 124) "In the absence of traditional enemies, human security approaches fill the gap with the securitisation of every issue from health, to the economy, to the environment." Richmond (2011: 48) interprets the role of human security in peace-building and state-building activities in the same vein; ultimately the concept operates as a liberal but essentially oppressive form of bio-power. In this sense, conventional international norms such as state sovereignty and non-intervention are challenged but not in a universal manner; rather, the human security concept and the development-security nexus are used as a pretext for intervention into weak, underdeveloped states. In turn, this reinforces global power inequalities since the decisions about which societies are 'failing' – and thus dangerous – and where intervention occurs are a reflection of power (McCormack 2011: 108-9; Rogers 2002; Duffield 2007; Douzinas 2007; Jabri 2007). This critique certainly seems to fit into Johnston's (2006: 34-35) vision of 'transnational security governance', in which market solutions are promoted in developing countries in the interests of 'security'. According to some of the critical perspectives, the

progressive essence of human security – if it ever existed – has been lost, leaving something devoid of transformational potential (Bosold 2011: 29). Clearly, many of these critical perspectives are not merely suggesting that the human security idea, as a policy orientation, is ineffective or insignificant, but rather that it is pernicious and oppressive.

Can human security ever be truly critical whilst also policy relevant?

From a critical perspective, as Chandler (2008a) observes, it is important to consider why human security has become mainstreamed – at least rhetorically – in policy circles since the 1990s. For him, the reason is simple: it is because human security serves existing state interests. For some analysts, this flaw undermines the value of human security. Turner, Cooper and Pugh (2011: 83) write that; "human security cannot be rescued because it has been institutionalised and co-opted to work in the interests of global capitalism, militarism and neoliberal governance". The critical security studies engagement with human security is now so condemnatory that there seems little ground for dialogue.

Clearly the human security concept does not exist in a vacuum, devoid of existing political structures and institutions. Any evaluation of it must take this as a starting point. With this in mind, this conclusion will consider first if policy approaches to human security – for example, those undertaken through the UNTFHS – can be meaningful at the human level, even if they do not address the structural sources of insecurity. Secondly, given that human security is associated so closely with policy, is a critical academic approach to human security possible?

The UN's revival of the human security idea – reflected in General Assembly Resolution 66/290 and the Secretary-General's reports – is conservative, and far removed from the radicalism of the 1994 Human Development Report that made human security so significant. Clearly the recent incarnation of human security does not address the structural causes of insecurity and deprivation, or challenge or change existing institutions of power. It is not emancipatory, and it is debateable whether it is empowering. From the UN perspective, human security has brought "tangible improvements in the daily lives of people" (Secretary-General, A/68/685, para.7). As the survey of human security programmes and initiatives earlier demonstrates, the lives of many people are improved in the 'name' of human security. At best, therefore, human security can be applauded at a project level.

But within an inhospitable power political environment, a shift towards the needs of individuals and communities might be something to be welcomed, even when it does not

challenge or change the institutions which generate and perpetuate that insecurity. When human security has been adopted by policy actors, it has arguably been applied to some positive effect – such as in the campaigns to prohibit anti-personnel landmines and promote an international responsibility to protect. To reject this outright because it reflects a 'problem-solving' approach to address insecurity is morally questionable.

In policy circles, the human security movement may be guilty of exaggerating its impact or endorsing rhetoric that is difficulty to judge. The operationalization of human security arguably also fails to address the structural and underlying causes of deprivation and insecurity. However, the claim that human security is a conscious attempt to repress or control communities in the developing world does not stand up to scrutiny. Human security simply does not have that much impact; it is hardly the "dominant framework of international regulation" that Chandler (2008b: 465) seeks to expose. If the critical challenge was valid, then the empirical outcomes of intervention would be very much different. If human security was a hegemonic tool for neo-imperial control, we would expect to see powerful states embrace it far more actively. Societies which host human security or peacebuilding programmes are demonstrably not transformed into neo-liberal experiments. Liberal internationalism is not hegemonic in terms of transforming these societies. Human security is not particularly effective, it has not transformed international politics or the institutions relevant to security – it therefore has not overcome its central paradox – but it is not a neo-liberal or bio-political conspiracy aimed at controlling peripheral populations.

According to the critical challenge to human security, there is no meaningful prospect for academics to seek to bring about changes in policy which enhance the life chances of individuals and communities – or even, that to do so is to reinforce and therefore to be complicit in existing structures of power. If this is true, then what is the value of 'critical security studies'? There is ample evidence that positive change can occur within existing institutions. Action in support of positive changes in the lives of deprived individuals and communities is not inevitably compromised or perverted by a statist policy framework.

Securitization can bring hazards, but that is not a sustainable argument against securitization when the objective is to prevent or address egregious human deprivation or insecurity. The response to the pernicious consequences of securitization should be a demand for legitimate, accountable and proportionate securitization which prioritizes the "human good of security" as a public good (Loeader and Walker 2006: 166).

Is it possible to reconcile critical aspirations with political realities? From a critical perspective, to attempt to do so inevitably undermines the value of human security. But to

stick to the pure form of human security makes policy impact unlikely because it makes policy engagement difficult. How can policy-engaged yet critical scholars reclaim human security?

Instead of giving up on human security – and indeed the state as a provider of security – a critical academic approach can be pursued that engages with policy but which promotes a greater consideration of the structural dimensions of deprivation and insecurity. Human security must be used to interrogate and problematize the values and institutions which currently exist as they relate to human welfare, and more thoroughly question the interests that are served by these institutions. For example, the grassroots activities supported by the UNTFHS need to be seen in the context of the pathologies inherent in the structure of the international system which give rise to these types of challenges. These activities address food insecurity, lack of access to basic healthcare and primary education, vulnerability to natural disasters, lack of access to sexual and reproductive health services, deprivation and victimization in forcibly displaced populations, lack of access to life-saving medicines, human trafficking, and the threat of cluster bombs and unexploded ordinance. This does result in meaningful improvements in the lives of individuals and communities which receive such support, in the name of human security. However, the prevalence of these challenges can only be understood – and addressed – in their social, political and economic contexts. These deprivations are the consequence of severe underdevelopment rooted in the international terms of trade, the integration of developing societies in neo-liberal norms of globalization, and unrealistic poor country debts. The failure of the 'international community' to address situations of armed conflict or uphold an effective asylum and refugee system, the failure to prevent the free flow of weapons into conflict-prone regions, and a pharmaceutical market which makes it impossible for poor communities to afford life-saving medicines are also structural conditions that are ignored by the operationalization of human security.

As long as there is insufficient or insincere commitment to underdevelopment – and the international causes of this – then human security programmes will continue to be superficial and merely ameliorative. But there is space to engage with human security in a way that raises these broader structural issues with policy stakeholders and that is where a critical approach can make its contribution, as a device to interrogate state practice. Security debates in criminology offer new insights that are relevant to human security. In particular, the much greater attention to the governance of security (Zedner 2009: 143-174) in terms of societal actors – such as the police, the judiciary and civil society actors – and to the privatization of security brings implications for human security that can be engaged with as a cross-

disciplinary project. This brings with it a welcome focus upon human security as an issue within liberal Western societies and not only underdeveloped regions of the world. In addition, whilst scholars with a background in international relations tend to approach the 'state' as a monolithic entity, criminology offers a far more nuanced analysis of the state which is relevant to security and insecurity.

More specifically, an ethical framework is needed to judge if human security interventions are morally compromised. A human security intervention is flawed if it is merely managing human misery or containing the consequences of this, or if it serves to directly legitimize or perpetuate the broader structures which give rise to this insecurity. In these circumstances it would be flawed even if it ameliorated the suffering of some individuals and communities, because it plays a role in perpetuating the broader sources of deprivation which undermine the personal security of far larger numbers of people. A human security intervention would be illegitimate if it diverts attention or resources away from addressing the underlying sources of deprivation. A human security intervention would also be problematic if its operationalization involves concessions to the political authorities which are responsible for the broader situation of deprivation, since this would directly or indirectly endorse those authorities. Human security interventions, in the context of wider structural inequities, are morally acceptable when they are not operationalized through illegitimate authorities, provided they have a demonstrable positive impact, and they are undertaken in a way that does not obstruct other efforts to address the structural sources of insecurity and injustice. Above all, we should not pre-judge or dismiss the value of humanitarian action or agency through a 'critical' lens, even when the political structure is inhospitable to progress.

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