Human Security

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Introduction

Human security places the individual as the referent object of security rather than – although not necessarily in opposition to – constructions such as state sovereignty and "national security." It is both an academic approach and a fledgling policy movement. Human security has become a popular theme for students, scholars and – at least rhetorically – in some policy circles, but it has not yet found full acceptance within academic security studies. This essay will describe the background to the emergence of human security ideas, which can be found in the opening up of security studies at the end of the Cold War, the convergence of security and development analysis in academic and policy circles, and normative developments in international politics relating to human rights and governance. It will then present the arguments found in the human security scholarship, drawing on a range of literature and illustrating that this is not a monolithic approach. In exploring these arguments, a number of questions will be considered. In what ways does human security reorient security away from "traditional" conceptions? Is this a significant conceptual and policy challenge? What are the different models of human security, and what are the sources of these differences? Is human security in tension with "national security," and if so, can they be reconciled? Does human security have anything significant to offer the study of International Relations?

The essay will then consider the relationship between human security and nontraditional – especially critical – security studies, a topic which is important for understanding why human security has been slow to make a theoretical impact. This will focus on, and seek to explain, the lack of engagement between these approaches, and the apparent lack of interest in human security among critical security scholars. In so doing, the essay will highlight the challenges that have been aimed at human security, focusing principally on its analytical limitations and its uncritical "problem solving" approach. Possible future directions and agendas for human security will also

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be considered. It is suggested that human security scholarship must go beyond its (mostly) uncritical conceptual underpinnings if it is to make a lasting impact on security studies, and this might be envisioned as Critical Human Security Studies (CHSS). In conclusion, the essay suggests what research questions CHSS might address and how these debates might be fruitfully conducted.

The Emergence of Human Security

The concept of human security is contested – even among its supporters – although some broad observations are possible. Human security suggests that security policy and security analysis, if they are to be effective and legitimate, must focus on the individual as the referent and primary beneficiary. In broad terms human security is "freedom from want" and "freedom from fear": positive and negative rights as they relate to threats to core individual needs. Human security is normative; it argues that there is an ethical responsibility to (re)orient security around the individual in line with internationally recognized standards of human rights and governance. Much human security scholarship is therefore explicitly or implicitly underpinned by a solidarist commitment to moral obligation, and some is cosmopolitan in ethical orientation.

Some human security scholarship seeks to present explanatory arguments concerning the foundations of peace and stability within and between states. There is greater understanding that human security deprivation – such as socioeconomic deprivation and exclusion, egregious abuses of human rights, and widespread health threats such as HIV/AIDS – has an impact on peace and stability within and between states. As such, it is in the general interest to address human security needs – and build capacity for others to address theirs – in line with the interconnected nature of peace and security. Conceptually, proponents of the idea argue that it provides a more realistic picture of security, free from the theoretical constraints of conventional approaches. In addition, most scholars and practitioners working on human security emphasize the policy orientation of this approach; they believe that the concept of human security can and should result in policy changes that improve the welfare of people. The overarching argument for promoting human security claims to be both morally imperative and also practically sensible. In this interdependent era, severe

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inequality, deprivation and insecurity anywhere can have a negative impact everywhere.

The argument that politics and economics should be geared to enhancing the welfare and security of individuals is rooted in political liberalism (but not economic neoliberalism) and hardly new. Human security scholarship is in many ways a rearticulation – some might say a relabeling – of perennial debates and claims concerning the rights and needs of individuals and their relationship with their societal environment, including the state. The antecedents of the debates are rich in political and moral theory, although the contemporary human security debate has not embraced this earlier scholarship. While certain strands of liberalism have long claimed that the individual is the irreducible unit and beneficiary of "good" security policy, some scholars suggest that the particular conditions of the late twentieth century explain the need for a renewed focus on human needs (Hampson 2001).

The emergence of the concept of "Human Security" – with capital letters – reflected a renewed interest in orienting security around individuals and one which permeated new domains, in particular the world of policy. Growing interest in human security since the early 1990s can be seen within a particular historical and social context that eroded the Westphalian primacy of the sovereign state in security thinking. First, the end of the Cold War eroded the bipolar construction of international relations and the heightened sense of "security dilemma" that had provided a pretext for the extremes of the narrow national security paradigm in policy and academic circles. This new environment challenged and problematized the state-centric, power-based model of international politics that privileged "high politics" above all else. This challenge – which began before the end of the Cold War – was both empirical and normative, and gave rise to a range of nontraditional security approaches which exposed the "illegitimacy" of orthodox approaches. The concept of human security should be seen as an extension of this older tradition and in the context of a broader security discourse (Mendlovitz 1975; Independent Commission on Disarmament and Security Issues 1982; Buzan 1983; Ullman 1983; Brundtland Commission 1987). Indeed, some of these older studies and international policy landmarks – particularly the Palme Commission and the Brundtland Commission – paved the road for the emergence of human security ideas. Earlier academic discourses which problematized the conventional view of security and encouraged new thinking also included feminist and gender analysis, which argued that conditions

of security and insecurity are indivisible from masculine power structures and gendered institutions (Enloe 1989). The changing context brought an increased opportunity to address a more complex nontraditional security agenda – including civil war and state failure, environmental degradation, HIV/AIDS – at the international level, within a wider conception of peace and security.

Secondly, globalization arguably also stimulated this broadening security discourse. The deregulation and marketization of national economies, in the context of networks of international rules and standards, encouraged a broadening of the level of analysis in International Relations. It also brought social and economic insecurities to the fore and exposed the destabilizing impact of market disruptions, especially in the developing world. In this sense, Thomas links the emergence of the human security concept with "instability arising from the application of the neoliberal development vision" (2002:114).

Thirdly, normative changes have underpinned and resulted from these developments, conditioning expectations and standards of governance and human rights. The growing prominence of transnational norms is extending political discourse beyond the territorial scope of the state. There has been an internationalization of ethical standards as they increasingly impinged upon "national" laws and norms. In the context of various political, social, and technological processes, the boundary between the "national" and "international" is therefore increasingly blurred in a number of areas relating to governance and socioeconomic organization. Governance and human rights have arguably become international issues. The cumulative effect is that the human needs and rights that underpin human security are slowly becoming factored into decision-making relating to security. From the bottom up, people's awareness and expectations of rights is likewise demonstrably having an impact. Expectations and attitudes toward governance and authority – expressed in many different forms – have arguably evolved.

Some people have heralded the post-Westphalian world: a world where norms of inviolable and equal state sovereignty – never actually a reality but often respected as a norm – are breaking down; where states are no longer the sole or even the most important actors in certain areas of international politics; where states cannot be assumed to be viable or autonomous agents; where insecurity and conflict are primarily characterized by civil war, insurgency and state failure, rather than interstate war; where the distinction between "domestic" and "international" politics is

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irreversibly blurred in terms of the causes and impacts of conflict and insecurity; where the nature of, and responses to, security challenges hold implications for norms of state sovereignty and territorial integrity; and where solidarist norms related to governance and human rights are slowly – and selectively – transcending absolute norms of sovereignty and noninterference.

The changing context that has reoriented security thinking has both a positive and a negative impulse. In the positive sense, it reflects a politics of empowerment. The international discourse of democracy, information technology, the acknowledgement of the contributions of civil society to domestic and international politics, all suggest an evolving international dynamic. The Jubilee movement that has been working for debt relief, the movements that culminated in the Ottawa Convention banning landmines and in the International Criminal Court, and the opposition to the draft Multilateral Agreement on Investments presented a new range of alliances, actors, and agendas at work that has gone beyond the traditional scope of international politics and diplomacy.

In the negative sense, certain institutions or values – such as the neoliberal market – appear increasingly in tension with human security. Interest in human security is therefore a response to perceived emerging human security threats. A vocal body of opponents argue that globalization, chief among these, disempowers weaker communities, threatens indigenous economic practices, perpetuates patriarchal domination, and results in social inequality. Thus, "emancipation from oppressive power structures – be they global, national, or local in origin and scope – is necessary for human security" (Thomas and Wilkin 1999:3).

All these processes – their "newness," their impact – are contested and debatable. Nevertheless, their cumulative effect has been to open up space in the academic and policy worlds for new thinking about security and insecurity. In particular, this has resulted in challenges to the realist orthodoxy that neglected the *real* threats to people, including civil war, state failure, persecution by governments, preventable disease, and environmental degradation. The post–Cold War environment encouraged an increasingly rigorous questioning of the ways of explaining and understanding security, and the institutions and policies designed to address insecurity. This broadening debate allowed the analysis of security to go beyond military factors, and beyond the state as referent.

Different Human Security Approaches

There is no uncontested definition of, or approach to, human security; few supporters of the concept would describe it – as Hampson has (2001:12) – as a "paradigm." Like all nontraditional security approaches, human security – as a starting point – challenges orthodox neorealist conceptions of international security. International security has traditionally been conceived as military defense of sovereign territory; defending the state against, and deterring "external" military threats. The means and terminology involved with this are well known: the security dilemma, deterrence, containment, balance of power, absolute and relative gains, zero-sum and non-zero-sum games. Scholars of human security also challenge the neorealist security orthodoxy for its preoccupation with materialism, parsimony, and theoretical coherence, the "problem of anarchy" as an underlying presumption, and its emphasis on order, stability and predictability as positive values.

In challenging the neorealist orthodoxy, human security argues that for many people in the world – perhaps even most – the greatest threats to "security" come from internal conflicts, disease, hunger, environmental contamination or street crime. And for others, a greater threat may come from their own country itself, rather than from an "external" adversary. Human security thus seeks to challenge attitudes and institutions that privilege so-called "high politics" above disease, hunger or illiteracy. This is not to presume that human security is necessarily in conflict with state security; the state remains the central provider of security in ideal circumstances. Human security does, however, suggest that international security traditionally defined – territorial integrity – does not necessarily correlate with human security, and that an overemphasis on state security can be to the detriment of human welfare needs. So traditional conceptions of state security are a necessary but not sufficient condition of human welfare. The citizens of states – such as Bangladesh – that are "secure" according to the traditional concept of security can be perilously insecure to a degree that demands a reappraisal of the concept.

Human security also raises important implications for the evolution of state sovereignty. Traditionally, state sovereignty and sovereign legitimacy rest on a government's control of territory, state independence and recognition by other states. The role of citizens is to support this system. The human security approach reverses this equation: the state – and state sovereignty – must serve and support the people

from which it (in theory) draws its legitimacy. The concept of "conditional sovereignty" has therefore taken on a renewed importance through human security: the international legitimacy of state sovereignty rests not only on control of territory, but also on fulfilling certain standards of human rights and welfare for citizens. As a corollary, the sovereignty of states that are unwilling or unable to fulfill certain basic standards may be questionable.

All approaches to human security agree that the referent of security policy and analysis should be the individual, but they disagree about which threats the individual should be protected from, and what means should be employed to achieve this protection. There are essentially four different strands – or usages – of human security, the first three of which are inspired by policy concerns. The first is the broad approach which considers all threats to human integrity, including – and sometimes especially – issues of underdevelopment, poverty, and deprivation (Commission on Human Security 2003;Thakur and Newman 2004; Tadjbakhsh and Chenoy 2006). The impact of this approach is a testament to the centrality of development in the emergence of human security. The 1994 Human Development Report of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) popularized, and is representative of, this approach: "For most people today, a feeling of insecurity arises more from worries about daily life than from the dread of a cataclysmic world event. Job security, income security, health, environmental security, security from crime – these are emerging concerns of human security all over the world." Human security therefore "means, first, safety from such chronic threats as hunger, disease and repression. And second, it means protection from sudden and hurtful disruptions in the patterns of daily life – whether in homes, in jobs or in communities" (UNDP 1994:3, 23).

The UNDP model rests on a number of propositions: human security is people centered, and it is a universal concern. Although the intensity of some threats – such as unemployment, drugs, crime, pollution, human rights violations – varies across the world, they are a threat to all. Components of human security are interdependent; severe threats to human security are not confined to single communities. This approach to human security promotes sustainable development as the foundation for peace and security within and between states. Earlier human needs scholarship – for example that of John Burton – was an antecedent of this approach to human security. He applied the concept to conflict prevention and resolution, arguing that the satisfaction of basic human needs is essential to addressing the root cause of conflict

(Burton 1990). Galtung's (1969; 1985) concepts of structural violence and positive peace are also in this vein. This broad development-oriented approach to human security has found support in policy circles, in particular the Japanese sponsored Commission on Human Security. The Commission's report defines human security as the protection of:

> the vital core of all human lives in ways that enhance human freedoms and human fulfilment. Human security means protecting fundamental freedoms – freedoms that are the essence of life. It means protecting people from critical (severe) and pervasive (widespread) threats and situations. It means using processes that build on people's strengths and aspirations. It means creating political, social, environmental, economic, military and cultural systems that together give people the building blocks of survival, livelihood and dignity. (2003:4)

The broad approach to human security sacrifices analytical precision in favor of general normative persuasion: it focuses on the issues that undermine the life chances of the largest numbers of people. The reality is that by far the biggest killers in the world are extreme poverty, preventable disease, and the consequences of pollution. According to this approach, any conception of security that neglects this reality is conceptually, empirically and ethically inadequate.

The second approach to human security is narrower, and focuses 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). According to this perspective, modern conflict reflects a high level of civil war and state collapse which has resulted in a high rate of victimization and displacement of civilians, especially women and children (ICISS 2001). Much armed conflict is characterized by the deliberate targeting of civilians as a primary objective of violence, and the "importance of extreme and conspicuous atrocity" (Kaldor 2007:105). This is often explained as a function of the changing context of violent conflict; as Snow points out, "in places like Bosnia, Somalia, Liberia, and Rwanda, the armed forces never seemed to fight one another; instead, what passed for 'military action' was the more or less systematic murder and terrorizing of civilian populations" (1996:ix).

According to this approach, conventional security analysis is woefully inadequate for describing and explaining the realities of armed conflict and its impact

on humanity. The inescapable conclusion – from a human security perspective – is that action must be taken to alleviate gross human suffering, even if this sometimes encroaches on sovereign prerogatives. Thus, "humanitarian intervention" is a part of the human security debate. The International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS) – which produced the landmark report *The Responsibility to Protect* – is therefore often seen as a human security initiative. This assumes the responsibility of sovereign states to protect their own people from harm, and "the need for the larger international community to exercise that responsibility if states are unwilling or unable to do so themselves" (ICISS 2001:69). The report observes that the changing international environment has generated "new expectations for action and new standards of conduct in national and international affairs" (2001:3) and that the current debate about intervention for human protection purposes "takes place in a historical, political and legal context of evolving international standards of conduct for states and individuals, including the development of new and stronger norms and mechanisms for the protection of human rights" (2001:6). It argues that a "modern" understanding of state sovereignty is evolving in the context of these changing norms: "sovereignty implies a dual responsibility: externally – to respect the sovereignty of other states, and internally, to respect the dignity and basic rights of all the people within the state" (2001:8). Similarly, Mary Kaldor (2004) has suggested the establishment of a Human Security Response Force "to protect people, calm violence and establish a rule of law" in situations of disorder. Because Canada emphasized the protection of civilians during armed conflict as a core tenet of its human security approach – and sponsored the ICISS – this narrow definition has sometimes been identified as a "Canadian approach" to human security (Axworthy 1997).

The third approach – particularly in policy circles and among scholars interested in policy – uses human security as an umbrella concept for approaching a range of "nontraditional" security issues – such as HIV/AIDS, drugs, terrorism, the environment, small arms, inhumane weapons such as antipersonnel landmines, and trafficking in human beings – with the simple objective of attracting greater attention and resources for tackling them (Najam 2003; Leen 2004; Chen et al. 2004; Dodds and Pippard 2005; Brauch 2005; Callaway and Harrelson-Stephens 2006). In this usage there is little effort made to contribute to theory. Indeed, relabeling such challenges rarely helps to deepen understanding of the nature of these diverse

phenomena. The overriding objective is to raise the visibility of neglected causes and influence policy.

Finally, a small number of scholars – who reflect both the broad and narrow approaches to human security – are attempting to understand human security from a theoretical perspective and integrate human security into security studies (Newman 2001; Thomas 2002; Shani et al. 2007; Roberts 2008; Grayson 2008). From this perspective, human security is deployed to explore theoretical debates concerning the nature of security threats, referents, and responses to insecurity. This literature raises questions about the sources of insecurity and the nature of the institutions that provide security and the interests served by them. Within this approach, a small but important focus is on the gendered aspects of security and insecurity (Tickner 2004; Gibson and Reardon 2007; Roberts 2008). This suggests that conditions of deprivation can only be understood with reference to gender relations and masculine institutions of power. As Thomas suggests, insecurity results "directly from existing power structures that determine who enjoys the entitlement to security and who does not" (2000:4). As will be explored below, however, security studies – both conventional and "critical" – has not provided a hospitable environment for those interested in the potential theoretical contributions of human security. Moreover, scholars interested in human security have been insufficiently critical and insufficiently reflective.

There are other differences among human security approaches. This scholarship can be divided into material and nonmaterial conceptions. Material approaches focus on tangible physical threats whose impact can be measured (King and Murray 2001–2; Thakur and Newman 2004; Mack 2005). Numbers of fatalities are the starkest benchmark of impacts, and physical survival of individuals is the bottom line. Nonmaterial approaches to human security embrace such physical indicators but also embrace intangible values such as sense of well-being and human dignity (Commission on Human Security 2003). Another distinction which is slowly emerging is that existing between problem solving – which dominates human security scholarship – and critical approaches. This is an application of Robert Cox's famous distinction (Cox 1981). Problem-solving approaches take prevailing social relationships, and the institutions into which they are organized, as the given and inevitable framework for action. In contrast, critical approaches question how institutions emerged and are maintained, and do not accept existing policy parameters as a given, or necessarily legitimate. Most human security scholarship has been

problem solving, largely because of its origins in foreign policy initiatives and among scholars interested in international organizations and development. However, a critical approach to human security is emerging which seeks a deeper theoretical inquiry into questions of security and insecurity (Thomas 2000; 2006; Shani et al. 2007; Roberts 2008). As will be argued below, Critical Human Security Studies is a much needed future direction for human security.

Human security research and teaching agendas being pursued around the world seek to achieve a number of things. Taking a human security approach can bring new results and empirical insights from reassessing old problems. It can identify gaps in research and the interconnections between different types of insecurity. It can also raise new or revive old normative debates.

A defining characteristic of the human security idea is its policy relevance, its engagement with policy, and its desire to change security policy in progressive ways. The popularity of the concept since the 1990s – at least in the policy world – is partly attributable to the work of the UNDP and other United Nations agencies, including UNESCO and the UN University. A number of human security initiatives have been led by government-sponsored organizations, such as the Commission on Human Security, the Human Security Trust Fund, and the ICISS. The concept has also been adopted as an embryonic foreign policy framework. The Human Security Network is a loose grouping of 13 governments – Austria, Canada, Chile, Costa Rica, Greece, Ireland, Jordan, Mali, Norway, Slovenia, South Africa (observer), Switzerland, and Thailand – committed, at least in a declaratory sense, to a number of foreign policy principles, including people-centered development and addressing the sources of insecurity. The activist aspect is also embraced by some in the academic world: Tadjbakhsh and Chenoy proclaim that human security is ultimately about justice and dignity: "We are scholars who want to change the world" (2006:5).

A further characteristic of the human security approach is that it seeks to securitize issues as it broadens its approach to security. In addition to observing individuals as the referent object of security, human security seeks to view any critical and widespread challenge to the physical integrity of the individual as a security threat. According to the broad approach to human security, an extremely wide range of issues – including poverty and malnutrition, disease, environmental degradation, and climate change – are securitized. The objective of this is explicitly to encourage security providers – and specifically the state – to invest the attention and resources

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necessary to address these nontraditional security challenges. Of course, other nontraditional security approaches are wary of securitizing challenges as the solution and argue that this carries with it its own pathologies.

Definition Debate and the Problem of Analytical Value

Human security is normatively attractive, but analytically weak. Through a broad human security lens, anything that presents a critical threat to life and livelihood is a security threat, whatever the source. If individual security is the dependent variable, it is possible to identify and codify every physiological threat. But this would be of little use, as it would generate an unmanageable array of variables. At the same time, arbitrarily drawing lines to include and exclude certain types of threats is problematic. The academic treatment of human security has foundered on this fundamental conceptual point. If there is disagreement on what should be included as a human security threat – or if this is an arbitrary judgment – then how can human security or variations in human security be reliably measured? How, therefore, can human security be analytically useful?

The broad approach to human security – which includes social and economic afflictions – has attracted the greatest degree of criticism in this regard. Critics have argued that the broad approach is so inclusive – in considering potentially *any* threat to human safety – that as a concept it becomes meaningless. It does not allow scholars or policy makers to prioritize different types of threats, it confuses sources and consequences of insecurity, and it is too amorphous to allow analysis with any degree of precision. As Keith Krause argues:

> the broad vision of human security is ultimately nothing more than a shopping list; it involves slapping the label of human security on a wide range of issues that have no necessary link, and at a certain point, human security becomes a loose synonym for "bad things that can happen." At this point, it loses all utility to policymakers – and incidentally to analysts – since it does not allow us to see what is distinctive about the idea of "security." (2004:44)

Mack agrees that "Conflating a very broad range of disparate harms under the rubric of 'insecurity' is an exercise in re-labeling that serves no apparent analytic purpose" (2004:49). MacFarlane and Khong argue that the "conceptual overstretch" of the broad definition of human security makes it "meaningless and analytically useless"

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(2006:237, 247). Buzan (2004:370) has echoed these observations. MacFarlane and Khong (2006:17) also deny that rebranding development, the environment or health as security challenges has produced a greater flow of resources to addressing them; such a relabeling may therefore, in addition to the conceptual confusion, also produce false hopes. In the meantime, more "important" security challenges may lose the priority they deserve. Followers of human security have engaged in unresolved debates about the broad versus narrow definitions and the consequences of securitization (Thomas and Tow 2002; Bellamy and McDonald 2002; *Security Dialogue* 2004; Owen 2004). Within this debate, some have noted that attempts to limit what can be studied under the concept of "security" is inherently dubious (Grayson 2008).

There have been attempts to overcome the definitional debate. King and Murray (2001–2), for example, proposed a quantitative model of human security based on the "number of years of future life spent outside a state of generalized poverty." Roberts (2008) has suggested a quantitative measure of human insecurity in terms of "avoidable civilian deaths." Tadjbakhsh and Chenoy (2006) have argued that human security must necessarily embrace a broad range of threats because threats are intrinsically linked. Others have suggested that the definition of human security should not be preoccupied with broad and narrow models; instead, the definition should be based on a threshold. According to this, threats are regarded as *security* challenges when they reach a certain threshold of impact, whatever the source. An attempt to articulate a threshold based definition of human security is the following:

> Human security is concerned with the protection of people from critical and life-threatening dangers, regardless of whether the threats are rooted in anthropogenic activities or natural events, whether they lie within or outside states, and whether they are direct or structural.
> It is "human-centered" in that its principal focus is on people both as individuals and as communal groups. It is "security oriented" in that the focus is on freedom from fear, danger and threat. (Thakur and Newman 2004:4)

For a large number of people – in civil society, governments and international organizations – interested in promoting human security as a normative movement, the definition debate is incidental. They have a simple objective: to improve the lives of those who are perilously insecure. Conceptual coherence or purity is not essential for this task. But in the world of scholarship, the differences between a broad and narrow approach have undermined the unity of human security. Attempts to overcome this –

for example through a threshold approach – have not as yet resolved this debate. But the debate itself is an interesting space for considering competing visions of security and international politics, and the study of these. As such, what is sometimes dismissed as a fruitless and interminable debate about the definition of human security is actually a creative process.

The Relationship between Human Security and Nontraditional Security Studies

Nontraditional and critical security studies (distinct from human security scholarship) also challenges the neorealist orthodoxy as a starting point, although generally from a more sophisticated theoretical standpoint than found in the human security literature. Critical security studies can be conceived broadly to embrace a number of different nontraditional approaches which challenge conventional (military, state-centric) approaches to security studies and security policy. Alternatively, Critical Security Studies can be conceived more narrowly, to represent a particular approach to nontraditional security studies (for example, that proposed by Ken Booth). This essay uses the term critical security studies in the former, general sense, unless explicitly indicated. Critical approaches challenge most, or all, of the key features of (neo)realism: its emphasis on parsimony and coherence; its privileging of a rational, state-centric, and anarchic worldview based on the primacy of military power; its emphasis on order and predictability as positive values; and its structural view of international politics as ahistorical, recurrent, and noncontextual. Critical approaches to security studies also tend to challenge the ontology and epistemology of realism: the foundational starting point and assumptions of what the world is like, what the key features of the world are, what we should be studying, and how to generate reliable, legitimate knowledge. Critical approaches thus generally reject positivist, universalizing knowledge claims and value-free "truth"; some critical approaches go further, arguing that knowledge is always socially contingent. According to this, security is not an objective or apolitical condition; it is a constructed concept (Sheehan 2005:177–8). Smith suggests that "the concept of security is essentially contested" (2005:27). There is "no neutral place to stand to pronounce on the meaning of the concept of security, all definitions are theory-dependent, and all definitions reflect normative commitments" (2005:28). Therefore, the orthodox idea of security belonging to the state and the military is a biased construction, which can and should

be challenged. Critical approaches also challenge the material preoccupation of realism, which confines its analysis to the measurement of physical variables and ignores ideational factors. Following from this, some branches of critical security studies do not necessarily see analytical coherence as the primary objective. It goes without saying that critical approaches also challenge the "problem solving" of realist approaches: the assumption and acceptance of existing parameters and norms in addressing security challenges.

A brief summary of the principal debates within critical security studies follows, because this is relevant to the future of human security within international studies. There have been two processes or strands to nontraditional security studies. Broadening security approaches argue that threats to security should not be confined to statist, military challenges (Krause and Williams 1996; 1997; Buzan et al. 1998). They should be extended to include, for example, economic and environmental security challenges. Deepening approaches challenge the state as the referent object, and explore ontological and epistemological debates which seek to deepen understanding of security. Deepening entails understanding the values within which ideas of security are embedded. Some critical approaches – such as the collection produced by Krause and Williams, *Critical Security Studies* (1997) – are basically deconstructionist, in a tentative sense. They identify the limitations and contradictions of orthodox security studies and international relations theory and point the way to a better understanding of what security means. Others propose a more coherent – and consciously alternative – agenda.

However, beyond a common opposition to neorealism, the nontraditional and critical approaches to security often fundamentally diverge. In particular, they differ on what the referent object of security should be, whether the objective should be to securitize or desecuritize (and the implications of this), and whether the emphasis should be on normative or explanatory theory. Some nontraditional approaches retain the state as the referent object of study, and broaden their analysis of the threats to the state, to include – for example – economic, societal, environmental, and political security challenges. Barry Buzan's landmark book *People, States and Fear* (1983) suggested that the individual is the "irreducible base unit" for explorations of security but the referent of security must remain the state as it is the central actor in international politics, and the state is the main actor for addressing insecurity.

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Other critical approaches challenge the state-centricity of security analysis fundamentally, and argue that individuals or humans collectively should be the referent object of security. For Booth, "A critical theory of security seeks to denaturalize and historicize all human-made political referents, recognizing only the primordial entity of the socially embedded individual." He suggests: "The only transhistorical and permanent fixture in human society is the individual physical being, and so this must naturally be the ultimate referent in the security problematique" (2005c:268, 264).

A further distinction concerns the consequences of treating an issue as a security threat, which raises the question of negative and positive securitization. The Copenhagen School challenges the securitization process; it is wary of securitization because this process moves issues from "normal" (accountable/democratic) politics to "emergency" politics. Securitization thus mobilizes exceptional resources and political powers which are not necessarily positive or proportionate to the security challenges, and are sometimes manipulated for political purposes in order to create fear or curtail freedoms. Thus, securitization studies "aims to gain an increasingly precise understanding of who securitizes, on what issues (threats), for whom (referent objects), why, with what results, and, not least, under what conditions (that is, what explains when securitization is successful" (Buzan et al. 1998:32; see also Waever 1995). According to such an approach, securitizing an issue – for example, refugees – does not necessarily result in positive outcomes for the human rights of such people (Waever et al. 1993; Suhrke 2003; Ibrahim 2005). This approach has been successfully applied to a number of political challenges – such as conflict resolution – in order to demonstrate how securitization has exacerbated fears and anxieties and entrenched conflict, and how desecuritization can provide incentives for accommodation and cooperation.

Other critical approaches to security studies suggest the opposite: that broadening securitization will broaden "real" security (and bring resources and attention) to a wider range of problems and actors, beyond the state. In this way, the Welsh School has a more positive view of security, in common with human security approaches (Jones 1999; Booth 2005a).

Nontraditional approaches to security also differ in their normative approach. The Copenhagen School has been described as primarily descriptive and explanatory in orientation. For quite different reasons some antifoundational and deconstructionist

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postmodern readings claim that normative claims are baseless because there are no legitimate means of prescribing alternative policy frameworks. In contrast, the Welsh School is strongly normative, seeing security as a means to emancipation: "freeing people, as individuals and collectivities, from contingent and structural oppressions" (Booth 2005b:181; also Booth 1991). This approach to critical security studies has a self-consciously reflectivist epistemology, and in some ways sees security as socially – and intersubjectively – constructed and thus contingent on power relations. Booth and Jones believe that critical security theory should follow the Frankfurt School of critical social theory (Jones 1999; Booth 2005a). They emphasize the potential for change in human relations, explicitly rejecting the determinism/fatalism of realism *and* promoting alternative objectives for "security." Booth thus draws parallels between realism and postmodernism: "Political realists and poststructuralists seem to share a fatalistic view that humans are doomed to insecurity; regard the search for emancipation as both futile and dangerous; believe in a notion of the human condition; and relativize norms. Both leave power where it is in the world: deconstruction and deterrence are equally static theories" (2005c:270–1).

Human security has generally not been treated seriously within these academic security studies debates, and it has not contributed much either. The dissonance between orthodox neorealist security studies and human security is hardly a mystery. But why is critical security studies inhospitable toward human security? If critical security studies argues that "security only makes sense if individual human beings are seen as its primary referent, or subject" (McSweeney 1999:208), why has critical security studies not taken notice of human security, which has the same goal? Booth asks: "why should certain issues – human rights, economic justice and so on – be kept off the security agenda? They are, after all, crucial security questions for somebody, if not for those benefiting from statist power structures" (1997: 111). It is exactly the question asked by those interested in human security. A critical theory approach to security involves "de-essentializing and deconstructing prevailing claims about security" (Williams and Krause 1997:xiv). Human security approaches seek to do the same, albeit without the conceptual sophistication. Why, in turn, is human security literature negligent of critical security studies and preoccupied with policy relevance? Within the "increasing insecurity in security studies" (Smith 2000), what explains the differences between human security and critical security?

Explaining the Lack of Engagement between Human Security and Critical Security Studies

A number of factors explain this lack of engagement. First, the contributions of human security – such as the challenge to conventional state-centric military models of security – are already subsumed within critical security studies, and thus may be superfluous as a distinct field of study. When they do take notice of human security, analysts in the critical security studies field have tended to view it as a part of the economic security realm, and as a focus for demonstrating the link between development and conflict (Sheehan 2005:75–80; Smith 2005:54). According to this reasoning, other theoretical approaches adequately accommodate this perspective – with greater conceptual sophistication – and so there is no need to give much attention to human security. Is human security, then, merely a set of uncritical ideas that are all addressed within critical security studies, albeit without the human security label? Is human security a kind of critical security studies-lite? The conceptual underdevelopment of human security, and its failure to adequately situate itself in security studies, makes it a poor relative of critical security studies, and in turn explains its failure to make an impact. The analytical limitations discussed earlier – and the unresolved debate between narrow and broad approaches – contribute to this theoretical weakness.

Secondly, the policy orientation of human security – and its adoption as a policy framework by some governments – has made critical security scholars suspicious of human security as a hegemonic discourse. Human security tends to be pragmatic about finding solutions. It challenges the primacy of the state but is willing to concede the reality of state power and willing to work with the state to find solutions. Indeed, human security is essentially open-minded in a liberal sense regarding the state; it believes that the state, if "properly" constituted, *can* work in the interests of people. This is in contrast to certain critical approaches that are inherently and intrinsically suspicious of the state. They are in turn suspicious of human security as a state-sponsored movement; they instinctively believe that state elites are unlikely to be truly committed to promoting human welfare because the state is complicit in structural injustices from which it is unwilling or unable to extricate itself. Booth thus suggests that the concept of human security has been co-opted and incorporated into statist discourses, undermining its integrity and legitimizing the business-as-usual of

hegemony and privation; "human security has taken on the image of the velvet glove on the iron hand of hard power." It allows states to "tick the 'good international citizen' box of foreign policy, but without significantly changing their behaviour" (Booth 2007:323–4). Grayson (2008) also claims that "human security's incitement to discourse is infused with a set of power-relations predisposed towards the ontological, epistemological, and analytic status quo." It is therefore interesting that, according to Booth (2007:326), scholars writing from a realist perspective are more likely than critical academics to endorse the governmental approach to human security. Chandler (2008) is also sceptical of human security as a result of its integration into the policy mainstream. According to this critical line of reasoning, human security can never overcome its central paradox: it apparently calls for a critique of the structures and norms that produce human insecurity, yet the ontological starting point of most human security scholarship and its policy orientation reinforce these structures and norms.

In addition, when states do deploy the human security motif, there is a danger that it is to form a pretext for hegemonic and interventionist – even military – policies. The concern is that at best these are well intentioned but ethnocentric and paternalistic adventures, and at worst human security can be a pretext for outright power politics. As Shani argues, there is a concern that human security "may be sufficiently malleable to allow itself to be used to legitimize greater state control over society in the *name of protection*" (2007:7).

In a related manner, human security has become controversial in some policy circles, now seen by some states as a form of Western hegemony and liberal cultural imperialism (Mgbeoji 2006). This is illustrated by the association between human security and "humanitarian intervention," and the changing norms regarding state sovereignty and human rights. Referring to the controversial use of military force in 1999, Lloyd Axworthy, Canada's former foreign minister, suggested: "the crisis in Kosovo, and the Alliance's response to it, is a concrete expression of this human security dynamic at work" (Axworthy 1999). The former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, a high profile supporter of the human security idea, described a "developing international norm in favour of intervention to protect civilians from wholesale slaughter and suffering and violence" (Annan 1999). For these and other reasons some governments are sensitive about the human security label and even object to its use in multilateral forums. In the UN, secretariat staff members have learned to avoid the term even though they promote the key messages of human security (Newman 2005).

There have also been concerns that the policy community's use of the human security idea is distorting its true meaning and – more mischievously – being deployed as a cover for dubious political objectives. The Human Security Act passed in the Philippines in 2007, for example, is essentially an antiterror law which warrants special counterterrorism measures and – according to critics – encroaches on human rights. Less controversially, the European Union has embraced the human security concept for some of its external relations issues – including peacekeeping – an application which still raises connotations of a "liberal" vision of how the world should be organized. (Although some scholars have suggested that human security has Asian roots, see Acharya 2001; Evans 2004.)

A final implication of the policy orientation of human security is provided by Astri Surhke (2004). She suggests that academic interest in human security has followed from policy initiatives. If the policy world is losing interest in human security, will human security be able to survive independently as an academic pursuit?

Thirdly, human security scholarship has tended to be "problem solving." Human security is in itself fundamentally "critical," but this unfortunately is not how most human security arguments have been approached. They do not engage in epistemological, ontological or methodological debates; indeed, much human security work is seemingly unaware of these debates, or finds them unnecessary. Human security generally adopts a policy oriented approach which attempts to improve human welfare within the political, legal, and practical parameters of the "real world." According to this, human security seeks to generate new and persuasive policy-relevant insights while accepting the prevailing policy approaches and assumptions. It does not *fundamentally* question existing structures and institutions of power, gender, and distribution in relation to economic and political organization (although there are a few notable exceptions, see Thomas 2002; Shani et.al. 2007; Roberts 2008; Grayson 2008). Human security approaches would generally not agree with the argument that "'Security' is a socially constructed concept. It has a specific meaning only within a particular social context" (Sheehan 2005:43). Few human security proponents would accept that security is an "essentially contested concept," in the sense suggested by Gallie (1956). Human security scholarship, while promoting the individual as the referent object of security even when this is in tension with the state, is more likely to see a strong state as a necessary requirement for individual security. In so doing,

human security does not problematize epistemology or ontology, but still claims to be emancipatory.

In contrast, critical approaches question "reality" as a central part of their goal. They raise questions about existing policy assumptions and the interests they serve. Their approaches lead us to challenge existing constructions, such as state sovereignty, high politics, national interest, and even the concept of knowledge. Critical approaches question or challenge prevailing structures of power and power relations, and also prevailing discourses or ways of thinking. Poststructuralist analysis argues that objectivity is a myth; "reality" is intersubjectively constituted and constructed. Not all critical security scholars go quite as far as this, but a critical view of the prevailing order and its institutions is central to their project. Critical approaches also require that we are self-critical: our own analytical approaches, consciously or unconsciously, privilege – and thus endorse and perhaps perpetuate – certain ways of thinking at the expense of others, and this may be represented in relationships of power. Critical security studies thus explicitly makes a connection between structures of power and the way that these structures are represented in scholarship. For example, for Ken Booth, "Realist-derived security studies continues to survive and flourish because the approach is congenial for those who prosper from the intellectual hegemony of a top-down, statist, power-centric, masculinised, ethnocentric, and militarized worldview of security" (2005a:9). In contrast to the critical approach to security studies, human security is therefore considered – and as a result generally dismissed – as "uncritical" and unsophisticated by critical security scholars.

Human security scholars wish to remain policy relevant – and thus accessible to policy circles. As a result they have been reluctant to explore overtly "critical" security studies themes, either because they feel these are unnecessary, or because they fear that such theoretical pursuits will alienate them – and their message – from the policy world. Many of the actors at the heart of the human security movement – both in scholarship and the policy world – have prioritized progress in human welfare above deepening understanding of complex concepts. The report of the Commission on Human Security, and the Trust Fund for Human Security that followed the Commission, are explicit in this regard. The cochair of the Commission, Sadako Ogata, was adamant that human security is about practical impact – that is, helping deprived people – not theorizing. Critical security studies argues that a critical

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understanding – and deconstruction – of security is necessary for producing a brighter future in the long term. Most human security scholarship, while challenging prevailing notions of security, focuses on and seeks to remedy the manifestations of insecurity as a priority and is willing to act in unison with existing institutions to do so. It is therefore primarily consequentialist, and less structurally revisionist than critical security.

Finally, and following the previous point, in addition to those promoting human security from government or multilateral circles, many scholars addressing human security challenges do so not from a "theoretical" security studies background, but rather from areas that tend to be less "critical" in approach, such as UN or development studies. This is reflected in a great deal of literature which – uncritically – attaches the theme of human security to a wide range of challenges and issues such as the environment, migration, development, health and medical epidemics, and so on (for example, Anwar 2003; Schnabel 2004; Glasius and Kaldor 2005; Brauch 2005; McGrew and Poku 2006; Renner and Chafe 2006; Denoy 2006). Generally, the argument is that these issues deserve a reexamination with greater attention given to individuals, in the hope that greater resources and attention will come from securitizing these challenges.

Conclusion: Critical Human Security Studies

Should we give up on human security as a distinct or academically viable approach in security studies; is it "merely" a normative – and somewhat rhetorical, and sometimes dubious – policy movement? Or can human security offer something interesting to the study of security? The academic interest which exists in human security – albeit not within theoretical security studies – suggests that human security should not be dismissed.

Critical security studies – in not opening the door to human security or even substantively engaging with it – seems guilty of the sort of exclusionary analytical practices they claim exists in orthodox security studies. Moreover, claims that human security is analytically weak or difficult to define seem somewhat unfair from a nontraditional security studies perspective. Many of the analytical limitations of human security – such as the problem of drawing boundaries around security challenges – could equally be leveled at critical and nontraditional security studies

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more generally. Human security analysis is certainly less theoretically self-conscious and less reflective regarding these limitations, but ultimately the issues are contested in all nontraditional approaches. Nontraditional approaches should be open to a variety of perspectives; coherence need not necessarily be the benchmark for acceptance to nontraditional security studies.

Critical security studies and human security could learn more from each other through engagement; human security could develop conceptually – which it needs to do – and critical security studies could come closer to its practical aspirations. As a movement that engages with policy makers, human security provides opportunities for nontraditional security ideas to have an impact on policy, and this should be valued. There are useful lessons to be learnt from human security, as a policy-oriented intellectual agenda which has sought to encourage political leaders and practitioners – in national ministries, international organizations, and nongovernmental organizations – to orient their policies toward human needs. If critical security studies wants to help in the "real world," it should look at human security again and in particular look beyond some of the analytical weaknesses that it perceives in human security.

The growing diversity of human security approaches suggests that it would be wrong to automatically dismiss the human security idea as a hegemonic discourse that serves to reinforce iniquitous institutions and situations of insecurity. Human security is primarily "problem solving" and uncritical – apart from a few exceptions – and this alienates it from critical security studies. The uncritical approach characteristic of much of human security may be a theoretical weakness from the perspective of critical security studies, but it does bring human security closer to policy, and thus make it potentially more likely to influence policy (within a problem-solving paradigm). Critical security approaches – with the exception of outright antifoundational and some postmodernists approaches – are normative and claim to be practical (Sheehan 2005:159; Booth 2005c:260). At the same time, these same critical approaches are wary of engaging with policy analysts and practitioners because they are statist and uncritical; thus, a dialogue would inevitably amount to replicating old ways of thinking and undermine the integrity of the critical security agenda. The claim of critical security studies to be practical and policy relevant is problematic because of this reluctance to engage in problem-solving dialogue. This is a conundrum that critical security studies still needs to address. Human security, from a problem-solving perspective, is more likely to be policy relevant, to be able to engage

policy analysts and governments and influence policy. Human security can, therefore, be a conduit for promoting human-centered security thinking in the policy world. In this sense, its problem-solving approach might enable nontraditional security studies to make a positive impact on people's lives (as it is already doing). The normative strands of critical security studies – such as the "Welsh School," which claims to seek to change the world for the better – should therefore engage human security as a bridge between critical security studies and policy.

For its part, human security scholars do need to go beyond "problem solving" approaches. One way is to develop Critical Human Security Studies (CHSS), to consider if it is possible to be "critical" – and thus accepted as a genuine nontraditional security contribution – *and* policy relevant. Indeed, to survive as a credible academic focus, CHSS may be the only way forward. CHSS might embrace some of the following future directions:

- CHSS must confront some of the internal contradictions of the human security concept, in particular the analytical confusion that exists regarding the scope and nature of security, and the means of achieving security. These conceptual challenges need not be uniformly resolved – in fact the plurality of ideas has generated a welcome debate about the very substance of security and insecurity – but the terms of the debate need to be more rigorously explicated so that progress can be made in going beyond the stalled "definition debate."

- In this conceptual development, CHSS needs to make a much clearer distinction between explanatory and normative theory. There are interesting avenues for both, but at present human security work does not make an adequate differentiation between what it claims the world *is like* and what it would like the world *to be like*. At the same time, human security scholarship needs to be more explanatory in a theoretical sense – in terms of generating persuasive explanations for the nature and consequences of security institutions – and go beyond normative advocacy claims.

- CHSS must learn from other critical security studies approaches. It must interrogate and problematize the values and institutions that currently exist as they relate to human welfare in whatever issue area is being studied, and more thoroughly question the interests that are served by these institutions. This

may involve the adoption of specifically "critical" methodologies, such as discourse analysis, but also simply means going deeper in a more general critical sense. For example, current scholarship on human security focuses on "progressive" policy initiatives – such as the use of military force for human protection purposes, the movement to eliminate certain types of weapons, and the movement to strengthen international criminal justice – without sufficiently exploring the pathologies inherent in the structure of the international system that give rise to these types of challenges. Human security scholarship tends to be excessively focused on the manifestations of insecurity, whereas it needs to take a much greater interest in the underlying structural causes.

- In addition to simply "going deeper" into the layers of cause and effect, this conceptual development will also require that human security engages much more in debates about the ontology and epistemology of knowledge claims regarding the nature of security and insecurity. Only by doing this can scholarship seek to overcome the central paradox of human security alluded to earlier.

- CHSS scholarship needs to make a more theoretically sophisticated attempt to explicate the structure–agency binary as it relates to the security discourse. Human security has at its core the individual as object. Some advocates of human security also identify the individual as the key vehicle for attaining security through empowerment. Yet, much human insecurity surely results from structural factors and the distribution of power, which are essentially beyond the reach of individuals. Exploring the relationship between human agency and structure in solutions to human security challenges is a pressing next step in the human security discourse.

- Progress also needs to be made in explicating the theoretical and practical relationship between the state and the individual in the provision of security (which, again, means consciously confronting the paradox of human security). Many threats to individual security emanate from predatory and abusive states, or state weakness and failure. Yet in human security scholarship the state is generally looked upon as the main provider – or potential provider – of individual security. This conundrum needs substantial further study.

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- CHSS must relate human security arguments to broader debates in International Relations and political theory. This is something that conventional security studies has done in a rather narrow manner (most obviously in relation to neorealist theory). Human security has implications for a wide range of IR debates that will find fertile ground in scholarship and among students if they are properly engaged. The use of military force for human protection purposes in situations of civil war or state failure, economic justice, and the links between development and security are all debates into which CHSS can inject new stimuli, drawing on its solidarist and cosmopolitan credentials. Human security ideas – and policy initiatives – also provide interesting material for constructivist research agendas.

- A CHSS approach to foreign policy as it relates to human security should go beyond the preoccupation with "Human Security," with capital letters. Scholarship should also focus on policy initiatives and discourse that promote a general advocacy of – and focus on – individuals as the referent of security. In the policy world, this is where the true shift may be taking place, albeit without always using the "Human Security" label. Does this trend suggest a significant change in foreign policy? Or is there a danger of human security being "squeezed out" of the agenda in the post-9/11 world, as governments and scholars revert to more conventional models of security?

Judging by the growing number of publications, university courses, and research centers focusing on human security, there is every sign that the theme is growing in popularity. While there remains ambivalence toward the concept in the policy world and among many security studies scholars, many other academics and students believe that human security is a worthwhile theme. Whether they can persuade their better-established colleagues in critical security studies to take the concept seriously depends on how far they are willing and able to theoretically develop human security.

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