HUMAN SECURITY = WOMEN'S SECURITY?
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PUTTING HUMAN SECURITY AT THE TOP OF THE AGENDA

Introduction

Debates on human security and its value in light of continuing and deepening threats to the survival and dignity of millions of people have gained impetus globally. Articles, commentaries and research papers reflect various understandings and attributes of human security. But what are some of the key issues in the debates on human security and how have these evolved over time? Moreover, what is the significance of human security for women and for feminist discourse? These questions relate directly to how we understand security, how best to achieve it and whose security matters. The recognition that unilateral action cannot solve problems such as the deteriorating ecosystem, ongoing conflicts and violence, resource wars, hunger and famine, the HIV/AIDS pandemic, increasing inequalities and the mutual vulnerabilities of states in an interdependent global economic system usually underpins such debates.

Various meanings are ascribed to security by its national and trans-national advocates. Terms such as "extended security", "comprehensive security", "preventive security", "state security" and "human security" are gaining even more prominence in the wake of 9/11 and the 'war on terrorism'. Three features of the debates on human security illustrate how varied the objectives of human security can be. As an instrument of national strategic priorities, human security has been seen as a way of reducing the human costs of violent conflict; secondly as a strategy to enable governments to address basic human needs and offset the inequities of globalisation; and thirdly as a framework for providing social security to people living in deprivation because of sudden and severe economic crises and chronic poverty (see for instance Acharya 2001). Contemporary discourse on human security also focuses attention on its distinctiveness when compared to human rights, human development and state security.

It is important to note that debates on human security predate the end of the cold war. Several independent commissions such as the *Brandt Commission*, the *Brundtland Commission*, the *Commission on Global Governance*, the *South Commission* as well the 1994 *Human Development Report* of UNDP and the *Common Security Forum* promoted the need to shift the emphasis from a national state centric perspective to focus on people. Amidst growing concerns related to the security of peoples everywhere, the UN Secretary-General reinforced this emphasis and called on the world community to advance the twin goals of "freedom from want" and "freedom from fear". In response to this call and as a contribution to the development of a new human-centred approach, the *Commission on Human Security* (CHS) was established in 2001.

Set up as an independent global initiative sponsored largely by the Government of Japan it carried out its investigations in close collaboration with the UN system and other international actors. Co-chaired by Mrs. Sadako Ogata, former UN High Commissioner for Refugees and Professor Amartya Sen, the Commission also benefited from the participation of ten distinguished Commissioners from around the world.[1] The Commission concluded its work in June 2003. Two broad areas of research and related consultative processes informed the Commission's deliberations.[2] One area dealt with human insecurities resulting from conflict and violence, and the other with the links between human security and development. Since I was invited to share the findings of the Report of the CHS[3] to the conference I will use these findings to address the question of the significance of human security for women and for feminist discourse.

Why is human security necessary?

The state continues to be the primary guardian of security. But as security challenges have become more complex and various new non state actors have come to play a role, there is a shift in emphasis. Furthermore processes of political liberalization and democratization opened new opportunities but also new fault lines, such as political and economic instabilities and conflicts within states. Human security is a response to the challenges in today's world. Policies, institutions and civil society actors must respond to these insecurities in stronger and more integrated ways. Essentially human security is about both preventing violent conflict and reducing deprivations. More than 800,000 people a year lose their lives to violence. About 2.8 billion suffer from poverty, ill health, illiteracy and other maladies.

Furthermore, conflict and deprivation are interconnected. Deprivation does have many causal links to violence, although they have to be carefully examined (Sen 2002). Conversely, wars kill people, destroy trust among them, increase poverty and crime and slow economy. Addressing such insecurities effectively demands an integrated approach. This is why the focus must broaden from the security of states to the security of people – to human security. Human security, according to the CHS, means protecting vital freedoms. It means protecting people from critical and pervasive threats and situations, building on their own strengths and aspirations. It also means creating systems that give people the building blocks of survival, dignity and livelihood.

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[1] The Commissioners were Sadako Ogata and Amartya Sen (co-chairs) and Lakhdar Brahimi, Lincoln Chen, Bronislaw Geremek, Frene Ginwala, Sonia Picado, Surin Pitsuwan, Donna Shalala, Peter Sutherland, Albert Tevoedjre and Carl Tham.
[2] Consultations, outreach and collaborative arrangements were important to the work of the CHS. The Commission held five general meetings. Workshops took place in Japan, Sweden, Thailand, Costa Rica, Turkmenistan, Rwanda and Benin. Public hearings on human security were convened at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg and the Africa Institute of South Africa organised an Africa-wide civil society consultative meeting in Pretoria. The Commission also participated in numerous international forums and events to deepen its understanding of human security and promote related discussion.
[3] The 168-page report entitled Human Security Now consists of eight chapters and a section on 'outreach'. The first chapter explores the concept of human security. Subsequent chapters deal with aspects of people's 'vital freedoms' – including protection from violent conflict, economic security, health, and knowledge and skills. They also contain policy conclusions. The section on 'outreach' recounts significant statements and insights from meetings and hearings on human security. Chapter eight proposes ways to advance the security of people, including the promotion of a global alliance.

Human security complements state security, advances human rights
Human security can complement state security, further human development and enhance human rights. It complements state security by being people-centered and addressing insecurities that have not been considered as state security threats. In doing this it provides an opportunity for feminists to interrogate the masculinity of the state and the manner in which patriarchy is embedded in state organs. Including women in the discourse on state security can reveal the significance of women's experience and of women themselves as actors in accommodation with and resistance to structures of dominance. Examining the politics of state action provides another prism through which feminists can deepen their understanding of state craft and functions. States have a role in configuring and reconfiguring individual and collective identities and histories and determining forms of nationalism that in turn affect public policies. Shifting the emphasis to the security of people can act as a countervailing force against the disciplining dynamics, power and role of states, and indeed protect and advance human rights.

Human security broadens human development
By looking at "downside risks", it broadens human development. Human security pays attention to downside risks that occur as a result of sudden economic downturns and financial crises and focusing on "growth with equity". Respecting and promoting human rights is at the core of protecting human security. Understandably, the notion of security in today's world is being interrogated in all its various forms. In part, this is because of the increasing recognition that complex problems arising from non military threats and vulnerabilities need to be included in global security debates. And also because threats to and violations against people emerge from within national boundaries. Furthermore in some instances, governments are both arbiters of security and violators of people's rights. Two approaches seem to characterise the debates. One related to human insecurity that focuses on violent conflict and links human rights and humanitarian law to the need for international intervention.[4] The other is related to human insecurity arising from mal development, increasing inequalities and issues related to economic global governance (Sen 1999).

Human security advances gender justice
Debates on human security bring to the fore issues that feminist scholars have grappled with over time (see for example Peterson/ Sisson Runyan 1993: 115-116; Steinstra 1994). Among these issues are concerns related to how the mainstream discourse on security separates women's experiences of violence within the household (at a micro level) from that of institutionally based violence. Or put another way, the violation of women's bodies through direct physical violence is usually de-linked from violations of their social, economic and civil rights. Human security focuses attention on violence experienced at a physical level as well as the violence that is contained in systems of domination and structures that produce inequalities. Precisely because states and state security systems are gendered, women's experiences and analysis are not often captured in the dominant discourse. It is therefore important to debate whether our understanding of human security offers a way to enable women to move from the margins to the centre. For example, when issues related to armed conflict are discussed women are typically seen as victims

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[4] See for instance the "Responsibility to Protect", a Commission that was led by Loyd Axworthy, Canadian Foreign Minister and supported by Norway among other countries.

and as passive beneficiaries of state or patriarchal benevolence rather than as having agency. Given this tendency, can human security offer a way of consolidating and advancing on the gains the women's and human rights movements made during various world conferences convened by the United Nations? It can be argued that while women have been visible in mobilising and proposing changes affecting security at the global level it is particularly at the national and regional levels that systems of inequality remain intact.

Given the significance of a gendered perspective in these debates can human security as defined by the Sen & Ogata Commission move women from being the subjects of discussion to agents of 'transformative' change? The answer must be in the affirmative because in its understanding of human security the CHS links the micro with the macro, the need for individual freedoms with the need for systemic change. It does this by recognising that women as individuals are entitled to fundamental freedoms and women as a social category are located within state systems that are gendered and underpinned by patriarchy and asymmetrical power relations.

But this is not enough because states differ across spatial, historical, socio political and cultural trajectories. In addition the size and complexities of modern states and inter state systems create rifts between the individual, households and community. Often such rifts serve to subordinate the concerns and interests of women in public policy choices through exclusionary processes. Yet, can a comprehensive and integrated view of human security provide the space for a discourse that enables women to participate in changing both the terms of the debate as well as making the process more inclusive? When human security is understood as connecting different types of freedoms - freedom from want, freedom from fear and freedom to take action on one's own behalf it can be used as a tool to prevent the continued exclusion of women and women's experiences.

Recognising that rights denied and multiple deprivations are outcomes of both state and non state actions, the CHS highlighted two general strategies: protection and empowerment. Protection shields people from dangers. It requires concerted effort to develop norms, processes and institutions that systematically address insecurities. Empowerment enables people to develop their potential and become full participants in decision-making. Education, information, public discussion, and supportive democratic environment are necessary for empowerment. Protection and empowerment are mutually reinforcing, and both are required in most situations. As argued by Sen and Ogata: "Human security is concerned with safeguarding and expanding people's vital freedoms. It requires both shielding people from acute threats and empowering people to take charge of their own lives"(Sadako/ Sen 2003: 2-13). In the sections that follow some of the issues highlighted in the CHS Report as the basis for a human security agenda are identified and discussed.[5]

-design norms and measures to respond in situations of conflict
Unarguably, civilians are the main casualties in contemporary conflicts. Both norms and mechanisms to protect civilians should be strengthened at national, regional and global levels. This requires comprehensive and integrated strategies, linking political,

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[5] These form the basis of the issues and recommendations of the Commission on Human Security' s Report.

military, humanitarian and development aspects. The Commission proposed placing human security formally on the agenda of security organisations at all levels. There are critical gaps in how human rights are upheld, in respect for citizenship and humanitarian law. These gaps need to be closed as well as attention given to ending the impunity of perpetrators of human rights violations. Equally urgent is meeting the life-saving needs of people through humanitarian assistance. Special attention should be given to including women in decision making on what protection and empowerment means in conflict situations. In addition disarming people and fighting crime through preventing the proliferation of weapons and illegal trade in resources and people has to be a priority.

-reduce the proliferation of weapons and military spending
Putting human security at the top of the agenda means addressing the proliferation of weapons that threatens the security of people. Four permanent members of the UN Security Council—the United States, the Russian Federation, France, and the United Kingdom—are responsible for 78 percent of global exports of conventional weapons. Germany, the remaining major contributor, is responsible for an additional 5 percent. About two-thirds of these exports go to developing countries. This trade in arms foments violent conflicts. It also tends to have terrible indirect effects on society, the polity and the economy.

When it comes to small arms, the world holds an estimated 640 million durable and relatively inexpensive small arms. Rough estimates indicate that these weapons kill around 500,000 people each year, making them de facto weapons of mass destruction. And they are used to displace, intimidate or coerce millions more. Reducing the spread of illicit small arms requires urgent and concerted attention as demonstrated by the work of more than 500 groups in almost 100 countries that have brought the dangers of small arms to the attention of states and the United Nations.

Increasing types and numbers of weapons of mass destruction – nuclear, chemical and biological – are endangering people in both developing and developed countries. Efforts must be redoubled to strengthen the nuclear non-proliferation regime, as well as to supervise and promote the implementation of other treaties and agreements. Such efforts to halt arms proliferation must enter the mainstream public policy debate.

The CHS Report also stresses the need to empower citizens to scrutinize state security priorities, by considering among other things military spending in relation to spending on other human security priorities. States should increase the transparency of their reporting, especially on military expenditures and weapon systems. An internationally accepted common reporting framework would make these reports comparable and enable civil society to engage with changing structures of military security.

-respond to concerns related to migration
Among the many issues addressed in the CHS Report are concerns related to migration. For the majority of people, migration is an opportunity to improve their livelihood. For others, migrating is the only option to protect themselves, such as those forced to flee because of conflicts or serious human rights violations. Many are also forced to leave their homes to escape chronic deprivations or sudden downturns. Yet there is no agreed international framework to provide protection or to regulate migration, except for refugees. Such an international migration framework could be

designed to strike a careful balance between the security and development needs of countries, and the human security of people on the move. Equally important is to ensure the protection of refugees and internally displaced persons, and identify ways to end their plight.

- rebuild conflict-torn states
The responsibility to protect people in conflict should be matched by a responsibility to rebuild and promote sustainable development processes in post conflict situations. A new framework and a funding strategy are necessary to rebuild conflict-torn states - one that focuses on the protection and empowerment of people. Such a framework should emphasize the linkages among the many issues affecting people, such as ensuring people's safety through strengthening civilian police and demobilizing combatants; meeting immediate needs of displaced people; launching reconstruction and development; promoting reconciliation and coexistence; and advancing effective governance.

- prioritise policies to reduce poverty and promote equitable trade arrangements
Significant in the CHS analysis was the recognition that extreme poverty remains pervasive. Attention must therefore be paid to the proper functioning of markets as well as development of non-market institutions as key to poverty eradication. Efficient and equitable trade arrangements, economic growth reaching the extreme poor and a fair distribution of benefits are essential. Together with addressing chronic poverty, human security focuses on sudden economic downturns, natural disasters and the social impacts of crises. To make people secure when crisis hits or to enable them to move out of poverty, we need social arrangements to meet their basic needs and ensure an economic and social minimum.

In addition three-quarters of the world's people are not protected by social security or do not have secure work. Efforts to ensure sustainable livelihoods and work based security for all need to be strengthened. Access to land, credit, education, and housing, especially for poor women, is critical. An equitable distribution of resources is key to livelihood security and can enhance people's own capacity and ingenuity. Social protection measures and safety nets can advance a social and economic minimum. States, supported by the international system, need to establish early warning and prevention measures for natural disasters and economic or financial crises.

The freedoms to enjoy basic income, basic health, basic education, shelter, physical safety, access to clean water, and clear air – what might be called a social minimum – are essential to human security. When people's livelihoods and freedoms are deeply compromised human security contracts. Together with chronic poverty, three kinds of crises – economic (including financial, debt, and terms of trade crises), natural disasters, and conflict – impose the greatest threat to human security. By deliberately addressing these "downside risks", the CHS report gives serious attention to the importance of protecting and empowering people in times of crises and highlights the added value of "downturns with security" in pursuing human development and its emphasis on "growth with equity".

In adopting a human security approach several elements are required, including: (1) the proper and equitable functioning of markets as well as the development of non market institutions; (2) efficient and equitable trade arrangements, pro-poor economic

growth and a fair distribution of benefits; (3) support for sustainable livelihoods and decent work; (4) access to education, land, credit and housing, especially for women; (5) provision of social protection and safety nets for all situations; and (6) establishment by states, with the support of the international system, of early warning, preventive and rescue measures. These objectives require a re-appraisal of policy priorities and resource allocations.

- health security is human security
Fundamental to people's security is health. Despite the progress in healthcare, 22 million people died of preventable diseases in 2001. HIV/AIDS is becoming the greatest health catastrophe. In their urgency, depth and impact, global infectious diseases, poverty-related threats and health deprivations arising from violence are particularly significant. Putting human security at the top of the agenda means that all health actors should promote health services as public goods. It is essential to mobilise social action and invest in supportive social arrangements, including the access to information, to remove the root causes of ill-health, to provide early warning systems and to mitigate health impacts once a crisis occurs. Providing access to life-saving drugs is critical for people in developing economies. An equitable intellectual property rights regime needs to be developed to balance incentives for research and development with ensuring people's access to affordable life-saving drugs. A global network of partnerships for health, promoting, for example, a global surveillance and control system for infectious diseases is a way of addressing these concerns.

- education and information for human security
Basic education and public information that provide knowledge, life skills and respect for diversity are particularly important for human security. The Commission urges the international community to actively help promote the attainment of universal primary education, with a particular emphasis on girls' education. Schools should not create physical insecurities, but protect students from violence including sexual violence. Education should foster respect for diversity and promote the multiplicity of our identities by employing a balanced curriculum and method of instruction. Public media are important as they can provide information on life skills and political issues, and give people voice in public debate. Not only should education and the media provide information and skills that will improve work opportunities and family health, but they should also enable people to actively exercise their rights and fulfil their responsibility.

Moreover, basic education and public information can play a significant role in building knowledge, strengthening skills, and advocating mutual respect; all of which are fundamental to human security. By giving people the freedom to exercise their choices and realise their potential, education is pivotal to achieving human security. In addition, schools can also act as delivery points for other human security interventions, such as school feeding, immunization, landmine awareness, and HIV/AIDS prevention programmes. Complimented by a free and diverse information media, knowledge and education can bring people together and enable groups to identify common problems and develop shared solutions. The perpetuation of discrimination through education (gender, ethnic groups, religions, etc.) requires that a determined effort be made to improve the training of teachers and the contents of their teaching. Education and information should do more than convey knowledge. Education should aim at clarifying the need for a global human identity while at the same time respecting the freedom of individuals to have diverse identities and

affiliations. It must also equip individuals with the necessary skills to exercise their rights and responsibilities and realise their potential.

Conclusion

Whether the loss of human security is a slow silent process - or an abrupt, loud emergency, policy choices are required. Such choices must place concerns affecting people on the security agenda. A shift in focus from external aggressions to internal tensions, from the security of borders to that of people inside them and across them is important. A gender perspective on human security recognises that threats are not only political and military, but also social, economic and environmental.[6] That is why a concentration on the role of and implications for individuals and communities as well as national states within the global system is important. Human Security recognizes that an individual's personal protection comes not just from the safeguarding of the state as a political unit, but also from access to individual welfare and quality of life.

Relevant to the discourse on human security and gender justice is Sen's (2002) emphasis on the need to see the challenges of global equity and human security in a somewhat different way from the standard practice. He states that while the debates on global distribution often centre on the question as to whether 'the poor are getting poorer while the rich get richer', attention must also focus on the fairness of the distribution of benefits. For even when the poor gain a little (rather than losing), the distribution of opportunities and benefits could be very iniquitous. The real issue according to Sen is whether the enormous benefits potentially generated by globalisation are being equitably shared. Using an analogy, in showing the injustice to women of existing family arrangements, he states that it does not have to be shown that women would be better off if they lived outside families, but rather that the benefits and chores in family living are unfairly distributed between men and women in established family arrangements. Global equity, he asserts, relates to this type of distributional question. Feminist scholars may, however, ask whether such inequity and unequal arrangements are a outcomes of how societies are structured and patriarchy embedded. Furthermore are established family and other institutional arrangements underpinned by such inequalities as a necessary aspect of maintaining power and gender asymmetries.

In conclusion, the theme of this conference, human security equals women's security? No sustainable security without a gender perspective is an extremely important and vital contribution to the discourse. Firstly, it places value on the deconstruction of experiential knowledge by incorporating feminist reflections, analyses and activities within the broader framework of the human security discourse. Thus making visible the intersections among personal and institutional forms of power, the interplay between the private and public and making questionable how we understand autonomous and countervailing centres of power. It also highlights the complex connections between the micro and macro and the gender hierarchies that exist in state and non state institutions.

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[6] Tadjbakhsh, Shahrbanou (2002) discusses this in a background paper on A review of National Human Development Reports and the Implications for Human Security, mimeograph version, New York.

Secondly, even as we discuss the significance of a gender perspective in human security, the politics and construction of knowledge is thrown up for debate. A gender perspective exposes how dominant frameworks undermine the significance of people's experiences. It enables us to rethink the fundamental relationships of knowledge, power, individual and community. Alongside this rethinking is the need to critique how and why existing processes of knowledge production are shaped within frameworks that automatically exclude women and people who challenge the *status quo*. The institutional, political and socio economic contexts illuminate the complex challenges we face in placing human security at the top of the agenda. Negotiating spaces, to anchor policy interventions within a critical feminist discourse is a part of these challenges.

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