

Human Security

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Abstract

In this chapter, students will learn about recent academic and policy research on human security. It first summarizes the various definitions and conceptions of human security informing current academic research and thinking. It then offers a brief overview of some recent contributions to the human security literature. The final section identifies some of the key debates and issues now at the centre of human security research.

Introduction

There is little doubt that human security studies have attracted growing attention in the wider International Relations and social science literatures. The expanding UN agenda of human security concerns (among them: war-affected children, racial discrimination, women's rights, human trafficking, transnational crime, and refugees), coupled with former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan's personal commitment to human security activism, catapulted these questions to the forefront of the scholarly and policy research agenda in the 1990s (see MacFarlane and Khong 2006). This agenda accompanied the longstanding human security concerns of students and practitioners of international development – an agenda that has generally tended to focus on

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the ways that globalization dynamics have damaged the prospects for human development and the provision of basic human needs.

In second decade of the twentieth century there has been renewed focus on human security in the context of the so-called Arab Spring. On 17 March 2011, UN Security Council resolution 1973 demanded an immediate ceasefire in Libya, including an end to attacks against civilians, which it said might constitute ‘crimes against humanity’, imposed a ban on all flights in the country’s airspace – a no-fly zone – and tightened sanctions on the Qaddafi regime and its supporters. Additionally, the Council authorized member states, ‘acting nationally or through regional organizations or arrangements, to take all necessary measures to protect civilians under threat of attack in the country, including Benghazi, while excluding a foreign occupation force of any form on any part of Libyan territory’.

The rationale for the imposition of a no-fly-zone (NFZ) over Libya was ostensibly to avert a blood bath by Qaddafi’s forces, specifically in the cities of Benghazi and Tobruk. Champions of the responsibility to protect (R2P) doctrine applauded the NFZ as an invocation of key R2P principles (see Chapter 32, this volume). In this case, they had a relatively easy target – a ruthless, bloody dictator who had shown repeatedly that he was prepared to murder his own citizens to stay in power. In the eyes of some, however, the West was hypocritical for not intervening in Bahrain, Syria, or Yemen where there were similar outbreaks of protest and bloody repression by autocratic leaders in 2011. Nor was this apparent double standard lost on the streets of Syria and Yemen where many lives have been lost in continuing struggles to throw off autocratic rule.

This chapter reviews some of the ideas which facilitated these events, specifically recent academic and policy research on human security. It first summarizes the various definitions and conceptions of human security informing current academic research and thinking. It then offers a brief overview of some recent contributions to the human security literature. The final section identifies some of the key debates and issues now at the centre of human security research.

Understanding the scope of human security

Despite the major investment of research and interest in human security in the past two decades there is no real consensus on what can or should constitute the focus of what are still loosely termed human security studies (Kaldor 2007a, Reveron and Mahoney-Norris 2009, Matthew *et al.* 2009, Kent 2005, Hampson *et al.* 2002). There continues to be considerable methodological, definitional and conceptual disquiet about the real meaning of human security, and about its implications for the study or the practice of international relations. This should come as no surprise, given the nature of the academic enterprise and the different disciplinary and methodological backgrounds informing the work of scholars engaged in human security

research. (Even so, the evident inability of scholars to advance beyond theoretical debates over definitions toward practical policy recommendations understandably frustrates practitioners in the policy community.)

There is also a great unevenness in the depth (and breadth) of research on particular themes. Some issues, such as anti-personnel landmines or small arms, are well ploughed; the literature on these subjects is rich not only in analysis of particular problems and causes, but also in implications for public policy. Other problems, such as gender-directed violence, have received the sort of attention they deserve as evils in their own right and as sources and symptoms of human insecurity.

There are arguably three distinct conceptions of human security that shape current debates. The first is what might be termed the natural rights/rule of law conception of human security, anchored in the fundamental liberal assumption of basic individual rights to 'life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness', and of the international obligation of states to protect and promote these rights (Claude and Weston 2006, Morsink 1998, Lauren 1998, Alston 1992). A second view of human security is humanitarian. This is this view of human security that, for example, informs international efforts to deepen and strengthen international law, particularly regarding genocide and war crimes, and to abolish weapons that are especially harmful to civilians and non-combatants (Kaldor 2007a, Beebe and Kaldor 2010, Power 2003, Boutros-Ghali 1992, Moore 1996). This view lies at the heart of humanitarian interventions directed at improving the basic living conditions of refugees, and anyone uprooted by conflict from their homes and communities. On those rare occasions when military force has been used ostensibly to avert genocide or ethnic cleansing, it has also been justified usually on rather specific humanitarian grounds such as the need to restore basic human rights and dignity.

These two views of human security, which focus on basic human rights and their deprivation, stand in sharp contrast to a broader view, which suggests that human security should be widely constructed to include economic, environmental, social, and other forms of harm to the overall livelihood and wellbeing of individuals. There is a strong social justice component in this broader conception of human security, as well as a wider consideration of threats (real and potential) to the survival and health of individuals. According to this third and probably most controversial perspective, the state of the global economy, the forces of globalization, and the health of the environment, including the world's atmosphere and oceans, are all legitimate subjects of concern in terms of how they affect the 'security' of the individual (Battersby and Siracusa 2009, Friman and Reich 2007, Kent 2005, Matthew *et al.* 2009, UN 1995, 1999, UNDP 1994, 1997, Nef 2002).

These 'broadeners' have attracted sharp criticism. Yuen Foong Khong (2001) warns that making everything a priority renders nothing a priority – raising false hopes in the policy realm and obscuring real trade-offs between rival human security objectives. Similarly, Andrew Mack (2001, 2005) makes the sound methodological point that overly broad definitions of human security can block investigation of the very phenomena that need to be

understood. Examining the relationship between poverty and violence, for example, requires us to treat them as separate variables. A definition that conflates dependent and independent variables will confound analysis of causal connections between them.

As a practical matter, many human security initiatives, such as the international campaign to ban trafficking in small and light weapons, generally, fall between the narrower and the broader definitions of human security. But, there is a lively debate among scholars and practitioners as to what legitimately should be the scope of efforts to promote and advance human security at the international level, and as to whether we should define human security in more restrictive or broader terms (Hampson *et al.* 2002, Paris 2001, Khong 2001, MacFarlane and Khong 2006).

How should human security be defined? One way is to define it negatively, i.e. as the absence of threats to various core human values, including the most basic human value, the physical safety of the individual. Alkire (2002: 2) offers a more positive definition of human security: 'The objective of human security is to safeguard the vital core of all human lives from critical pervasive threats, and to do so without impeding long-term human flourishing'.

The definition offered by the Report of the Commission on Human Security (2003: 2) is even more expansive: 'to protect the vital core of all human freedoms and human fulfilment'. What is this vital core? Does it represent all human freedoms? And should personal fulfilment be placed alongside freedom as a basic right and public responsibility? The same paragraph goes on to embrace almost every desirable condition of a happy life in its description of human security:

'Human security means protecting fundamental freedoms . . . 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'.

Underlying much of the human security literature is a common belief that it is critical to international security, and that international order cannot rest solely on the sovereignty and viability of states – that order depends as well on individuals and their own sense of security. This is clearly a departure from traditional liberal internationalism, which sees international order as resting on institutional arrangements which, in varying degrees, help secure the integrity of the liberal, democratic state by reducing threats in the state's external environment (see Chapter 3 this volume). Placing the individual as the key point of reference, the human security paradigm assumes that the safety of the individual is the key to global security; by implication, when the

safety of individuals is threatened so too in a fundamental sense is international security. In this view, global challenges have to be assessed in terms of how they affect the safety of people, and not just of states. Proponents of the enlarged or maximalist conception of human security also argue that these threats arise not only from military sources; non-military causes, such as worsening environmental conditions and economic inequalities can, in some instances, exacerbate conflict processes (Mathew *et al.* 2009, UNDP 1994, Nef 2002, Paris 2001).

Setting the boundaries of human security

Not surprisingly, problems of definition and boundary-setting have dominated much of the literature in human security research. To some degree, these uncertainties simply reflect the state of the art; these are, after all, relatively new approaches. But it is also fair to say that these definitional and conceptual arguments echo turmoil experienced since the Cold War in schools of both development and national security – two important sources of human security scholars and scholarship (King and Murray 2001/2).

King and Murray define human security as ‘the number of years of future life spent outside the state of “generalized poverty”’ (2001/2). Generalized poverty, in this definition, occurs when the individual falls below a specified threshold ‘in any key domain of human well-being’. Operating the definition therefore requires choosing domains of wellbeing, constructing practical indicators, and specifying threshold values for each. King and Murray find their domains mainly in the UNDP’s Human Development Index (per-capita income, health, education), and add ‘political freedom’ and ‘democracy’ (for example, by applying Freedom House measures of voting and legislative conduct).

Human security in this scheme is thus expressed as a probability – the expected number of years of life spent outside ‘generalized poverty’, whether for an individual or aggregated across an entire population. Leaving aside other questions of domain choice and threshold selection, the King–Murray equation (they frame it mathematically) raises provocative issues for methodology and policy. Mack (2005), on the other hand, measures human security in terms of the costs of war on human suffering. The Liu Institute’s Report on Human Security documents in vivid detail the impact that war – measured in terms of civilian casualties – has had on different countries and regions of the world.

Some of the literature has attempted to define human security by integrating its disparate dimensions. Hazem Ghobarah (with Huth and Russett 2001) explored long-term health effects of civil wars with a cross-national analysis of World Health Organization (WHO) statistics on death and disability. The immediate harms done to health by specific wars are familiar; in contrast, Russett and his colleagues tracked the delayed after-effects and their mechanisms: rising crime rates; property destruction, economic disruption, diversion of health-care resources, and the like.

In *Madness in the Multitude* (2002) Fen Hampson and others situated human security approaches in the long history of liberal democratic theory, but concentrated on the distinguishing features of human security as a global public good. Among other advantages, the lens of public goods analysis focuses attention on some recurring issues in the human security discourse – namely, problems of under-provision, collective governance, and operational delivery.

The 1994 UN Human Development Report identified *inter alia* drug and human trafficking, transnational crime, migration, and terrorism as major threats to human security – issues that were highlighted more recently in the World Bank's 2011 *Development Report*. Interestingly, these threats were largely omitted from the mandate of the Independent Commission on Human Security (2003), which chose to focus on a narrower set of issues, i.e., the ways internal conflicts threaten the physical security of non-combatants; human insecurities stemming from preventable diseases, injury, or chronic ill health; insecurities flowing from a lack of basic literacy, access to education, and innumeracy; and the insecurities of poverty and economic, social and gender inequalities.

The Human Security Gateway, a useful online source, provides a wealth of information on the current state of human security studies (Human Security Report Project, 2011). Topics now covered range from the impact of conflict on human rights, children and armed conflict, the role of paramilitary and non-state armed groups, the relationship between climate change and armed conflict, conflict resolution and prevention, natural resources and armed conflict, to name but a few. As the Zurich-based Center for Security Policy notes:

Two decades after it was introduced in political debate, the concept of human security still remains a controversial matter. On the one hand, it has met with great resonance in many countries and in international organisations such as the UN. New issues were introduced to the security policy agenda, such as the ban on anti-personnel mines, efforts to curb the misuse of small arms and light weapons, or security sector reform (SSR). On the other hand, numerous questions remain unanswered. The definitory arguments between the proponents of a broad approach ('freedom from want') and the advocates of a narrow interpretation ('freedom from fear') remain unresolved. There is no general agreement on the role of the state, which can both ensure and threaten the safety of its citizens. It is in this context that one must view the occasional charge that the concept of human security is founded on an interventionist logic and attempts to undermine state sovereignty based on a 'responsibility to protect'.

(CSS 2011)

Ongoing debates and unresolved issues

A number of key debates and/or unresolved issues are reflected in the scholarly and the policy-oriented human security literature. One of the burgeoning areas of research, especially among students of international development, involves the relationship between globalization (in its various meanings) and human security – or insecurity (Battersby and Siracusa 2009, Reveron and Mahoney-Norris 2011). There is widespread agreement that the forces of globalization are intensifying economic connections and the pace of social change and thus transforming international politics and recasting relationships between states and peoples with important implications for human security. Further, it is not just goods and capital that are exchanged across borders, but ideas, information, and people.

On one side of this argument, globalization enthusiasts argue that the breakdown of national barriers to trade and the spread of global markets are processes that help to raise world incomes and contribute to the spread of wealth. Although there are clear winners and losers in the globalizing economy, the old divisions between the advanced Northern economies and ‘peripheral’ South are breaking down and making way for an increasingly complex architecture of economic power (Held *et al.* 1999: 4). On the other side, globalization’s critics argue that although some countries in the South have gained from globalization, many have not and income inequalities between the world’s richest and poorest countries are widening.

Globalization also presents new dangers to human security, particularly in the area of public health where the spread of diseases like AIDS, which ravage many developing countries, are partially rooted in the workings of the global economy, and in externally imposed structural adjustment policies that have directly contributed to deterioration in public health delivery and in overall living standards (Leon and Walt 2001).

Much work remains to be done on the positive and negative consequences of globalization for human security, and on how globalization affects the capacity of various international, national and sub-national actors and institutions to provide for human security.

Human security and ‘failed’ states

The relationship between conflict and development processes in affecting human security in the struggling states and societies of the South is also the focus of recent studies and discussion in key policy circles. The World Bank’s 2011 *Development Report* argues that insecurity is the ‘primary development challenge of our time’. This is because ‘[o]ne-and-a-half billion people live in areas affected by fragility, conflict, or large-scale, organized criminal violence, and no low-income fragile or conflict-affected country has yet to achieve a single United Nations Millennium Development Goal (UN MDG)’. These

so-called 'new threats' include 'organized crime and trafficking, civil unrest due to global economic shocks', and 'terrorism' (World Bank 2011: 5). The populations most affected by such 'insecurities' are to be found in sub-Saharan Africa, Central Asia, and parts of Southeast Asia (Burma, Cambodia) and North Korea (Fund for Peace 2011).

Of special interest to scholars and practitioners is the relationship between so-called 'failed' or 'fragile' states and human security. Typically, the poorest, most conflict-wracked 'states' like Somalia, where there is an absence of effective governance and government institutions, have been classified as failed states where large swathes of the local population live in abject poverty compounded by violence and other threats to their existence such as drought and famine. However, state failure should not be construed too narrowly or simply in terms of countries that are in total collapse like Somalia (Gertz and Chandy 2011). There are many other countries in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia, like Pakistan, Cameroon, or Djibouti, which are classified as 'middle income' by the World Bank but which nonetheless contain a large and growing sector of people who are desperately poor. In many of these countries, state institutions also have a tenuous hold on their territory and maintaining local law and order. The number of these so-called middle-income failed or fragile states (MIFFs) is growing. They may require development assistance and other kinds of support to maintain stability and alleviate local poverty, but they may not be eligible for the kinds of assistance that poorer and more stable countries, such as Tanzania, currently receive.

The dilemmas of humanitarian intervention

Normative concerns typically surface when the imperative of human security is invoked in cases of humanitarian intervention (Kaldor 2007a, Beebe and Kaldor 2010, Holzgrefe and Keohane 2003, ICISS 2001, Power 2003, Chapter 32 this volume). There is obviously a continuing debate on whether force should be used in support of particular human security objectives, one that has only intensified with the NATO bombing of Libya in a barely disguised attempt to unseat Qaddafi. At one level, the dispute is about the proper hierarchy of humanitarian goals and international norms of state sovereignty and non-intervention. But it is also a debate about whether or when it is right to do violence against individuals – especially non-combatants who find themselves in harm's way – when force is exercised for human security purposes. Where human security concepts challenge traditional notions of what constitutes a 'just war' or a just cause, and test our sense of what are tolerable degrees of 'collateral damage' – is fertile terrain for ethicists and others concerned with the deeper ramifications of evolving human security norms.

Cultural differences figure prominently in different regional perceptions on human rights and evolving humanitarian intervention norms (Claude and Weston 2006, Mayer 2006). In the Arab world, attitudes towards intervention

have been shaped by the US-led invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan. As Kodmani (2012) argues, 'Arab states (just like many other countries of the South) consider that only the UN Security Council is entitled to decide on intervention and must do so under strict conditions and that if the members of the council fail to come to an agreement, humanitarian intervention should simply not take place, whatever the human cost of not intervening'. Furthermore, she states, 'humanitarian intervention is seen as being applied selectively: Arab states and publics claim that the West only invokes human rights violations in the cases of small states or unfriendly regimes, just as the West chooses to punish "rogue states" in order to bring them in line with its strategy. Whether it is out of nationalism, a desire to keep society under control, or a fear of disintegration of the state, the Arab world remains averse to recognizing the diversity of most societies of the region and granting specific rights to their minorities' (Kodmani 2012: 243).

These debates underscore the tensions between diverse conceptions and priorities in the human security agenda. Exploring these tensions within explicit ethical and normative frames of reference can itself yield new knowledge and understanding – if not always agreement. Not only will such analysis render explicit the kinds of value trade-offs involved, but it might also help societies make more ethically informed choices as they respond to the human security threats they face.

The concept of human security also poses an interesting challenge to traditional notions of democratization, civil society development, and peacebuilding. Some scholars, citing familiar post-colonial history, hold that liberal democracy and economic liberalization by themselves will not suffice to ensure human security – especially not the security of vulnerable communities. The argument is that historical patterns of human settlement and lingering colonial legacies have too often marginalized large numbers of peoples from social, economic, and political development processes. As Swatuk and Vale report, the people of the South African homelands and townships still suffer the insecurity of poverty and pains of incorporation into the political economy of South Africa. The power of 'vested interests and established social relations in support of neocolonial political economies', along with 'fissures of identity' reflected in 'race, class, state, nation, and tribe' pose a major if not insurmountable barrier to the advancement of human security – not just in South Africa but the whole region (Swatuk and Vale 1999: 384).

There are clearly different understandings of human security particular to different social, political, and economic contexts – details that raise important questions about the limitations of traditional liberal assumptions about democratization and political development. Increasingly, scholars and the practitioners are beginning to ask difficult but essential questions about the proper sequence and priorities to be adopted in peacebuilding and democratic development, and how to ensure that these processes are informed by indigenous perspectives of what human security requires in their own lives.

Negotiated political transitions (from communist dictatorship, or from apartheid, from oppressive military or one-man rule, or in the aftermath of Western-led interventions in Kosovo, Iraq and Afghanistan) impose a sharp focus on the significance of these issues. Given the predominant role of Western governments and publics and Western-oriented intergovernmental and nongovernmental organizations in the peacemaking and peacebuilding field – and the reality that colonial legacies are seldom erased easily in developing countries – there is considerable potential for a collision between opposed human security values and priorities.

The literature also reveals telling differences in national and regional perspectives – different assessments of the subject, and different judgments on policy and political performance. Khong (2001) (with others) has speculated that the human security agenda grew out of the particulars of Canada's own history and circumstances – if not as a 'fireproof house', at least as relatively safe from the world's troubles and decently governed.

In a world consisting primarily of Canadas, human security might command a consensus; and the kind of intrusiveness associated with implementing such an agenda might be acceptable. . . . However, too many individuals in the twenty-first century reside in makeshift shelters and thatched homes. What difference will it make to their lives for us to insist that they have become the referents of security? Not very much.

Asian perspectives get considerable attention in the literature on human security (e.g. Tow *et al.* 2000). More than one observer has remarked on the policy divergence between Canada and Japan on human security. Acharya (2001) has outlined a more expansive (but less intrusive) view of human security that goes beyond conventional issues of violence to matters of politics, culture, dignity and freedom – a definition expressed most comprehensively, of course, by the late Mahbub ul Haq at UNDP. Furtado (2000) looked to specific Asian states and reports on their particular responses to the 1997 financial shocks. Applying yet another perspective, Cocklin and Keen (2000) have described threats to human security (or wellbeing) characteristic of urbanization on South Pacific islands. These examples suggest how human security takes on different attributes in micro-level examinations.

Geisler and de Sousa (2001) have raised an awkward case of human security endeavours working disastrously at cross-purposes in Africa. They examine so-called 'ecological expropriation', the creation of millions of refugees by the closure of lands for purposes of environmental protection and repair. 'Human security and environmental security, often reinforcing, can be at odds', they note. Human security can no doubt be enhanced by environmental protection – or imperilled by it.

Human security risk assessment

Much of the human security literature uses the language of ‘threats’ to characterize a wide – and, it would seem, always growing – list of challenges. To group all of these problems – from pandemic diseases to human-induced environmental catastrophes, from population displacements to terrorism, to the proliferation of nuclear or small arms – on the same long list, as if the costs (immediate as well as long-term) and probabilities (present and future) of each were the same, is unhelpful. They should be disaggregated and the costs and probabilities associated with each of these distinct problem areas specified. Changing rates of infection and mortality rates only tell us the direct, human costs of diseases such as AIDS, for instance; as some scholars now argue, there are profound, longer-term social, economic, and potential political consequences of these diseases as well. Once these costs are identified, it will be important to consider their longer-term implications for public policy and for preventive and mitigation strategies, especially if long-term social and economic costs are significant and widespread.

Mortality rates or poverty ‘thresholds’ are only one benchmark of human security. Although some ‘threats’ have major human security costs attached to them (the terrorist detonation of a nuclear bomb in a city, for example), the actual probability associated with these events may be quite low (Mueller 2006a, 2006b), especially when compared to the array of human security risks that most people confront in their daily lives. Nor do probabilities remain constant; on the contrary, some can rise suddenly, and others will fall. Resources and policy attention need to be re-allocated to those human security risks that are increasing, but only after undertaking a serious comparative assessment of relative risks (importantly including an identification of which population groups face the most risk).

The report on *Global Risks* (2007: 4) argues that ‘there has been a major improvement in the understanding of the interdependencies between global risks, the importance of taking an integrated risk management approach to major global challenges and the necessity of attempting to deal with root causes of global risks rather than reacting to the consequences’. The report documents 23 core global risks which include energy supply disruptions, climate change, natural catastrophes, international terrorism, interstate and civil wars, pandemics and infectious diseases, and the breakdown of critical information infrastructures. The report measures the probabilities and costs associated with these risks on the basis of qualitative and quantitative data. In assessing severity, two indices – ‘destruction of assets/economic damage and, where applicable, human lives lost’ – were considered. It also offers a number of institutional recommendations on how businesses and governments can best mobilize resources and attention in order to ‘engage in the forward action needed to begin managing global risks rather than coping with them’.

The relationships between political and economic variables, and their impact on conflict processes and so-called ‘state failure’, have also been

examined in risk-assessment frameworks. The 'failed state index' developed by the Fund For Peace and *Foreign Policy* (2011) magazine, finds that nearly 60 countries in the world are dysfunctional because the government does not effectively control its territory, provide basic services to its citizens, or the country is experiencing some kind of internal unrest.

There is also now a great deal of work on organized violence and its causes (Collier 2007, Sambanis, *et al.* 2002, Stewart and Brown 2007, Duffield 2001). Three explanations dominate this literature:

- 1 those that stress the importance of group-based inequalities as a source of conflict, i.e. conflicts are based on 'creed';
- 2 those that focus on private gains – i.e. conflicts are driven by 'greed';
- 3 explanations which stress the failed social contract thesis, i.e. conflicts are really about 'needs'.

Those who have looked at these explanations closely find that it is not *absolute* poverty, but *relative* poverty that matters most. In other words, poor countries where some groups are, relatively speaking, much better off than others because of caste or creed are much more predisposed to experience violent conflict.

The policy implication of this research is that development strategies must be tied not simply to alleviating poverty in the poorest countries, but also to addressing the horizontal inequalities that divide those societies through, for example, redistribution of land, privatization schemes, credit allocation preferences, educational quotas, employment policies that stress balanced employment, and public sector infrastructure investment that advantages the disadvantaged (Stewart and Brown 2007). Research also shows that economic development is critical to sustaining the peace in states that have just ended a civil war (Paris 2004). Economic development is necessary to restore a state's human capital and infrastructure, raise the opportunity costs of conflict, and get buy-in from the local populace by raising their standard of living.

The subjective aspects of risk are another potentially promising research venue. We now know that most people tend to discount risks that they consider controllable, while exaggerating risks they think are uncontrollable. (This might explain why some people have a fear of flying.) People also tend to discount – and usually quite heavily – future risks (even though the probabilities associated with them are high), as against imminent risks that are relatively low. This is all to say there is a substantial literature in psychology on the cognitive biases that come into play as individuals confront the ordinary risks of daily life (Tversky and Kahneman 2000, Tversky, Slovic and Kahneman 1982). But there has been little direct application of this research to human security concerns. Do individuals in different societies perceive common human security threats through similar or different cognitive frames of reference? Are there significant cross-cultural barriers that stand in the way of coordinated policy responses to shared human security risks? To what extent are perceptions about different kinds of risks to human security at variance

with more ‘objective’ assessments of those risks? Are there cultural taboos that stand in the way of efforts to reduce certain kinds of human security risks (family violence, violence against women, infanticide, etc.), and what kinds of strategies are appropriate to changing social attitudes? Are some social institutions better able to manage certain kinds of risks? And are there lessons to be learned about ways to reduce risk exposure for the most vulnerable groups in society? These are some questions that warrant further study.

Governance and human security

Tension remains between still-new human security concerns and still-standing institutions and categories that continue to shape academic and political assumptions. There is an extensive consensus that prevailing institutions – state, interstate, nonstate – are performing inadequately (Thomas 2001, Reveron and Mahoney-Norris 2011, Friman and Reich 2007). But there is noisy disagreement over explanations and remedies.

Hampson *et al.* (2002) explored adaptations by international financial institutions (IFIs) to the human security agenda, and found them partial and unreliable: constrained by bureaucratic divisions or inertia, and by conflicts among their own (state) donors, IFIs ‘have tended to adopt those elements among the different conceptions of human security that are most compatible with *existing* organizational mandates’.

Again, in the development discourse, there has been an early and fundamental dispute about the place of the state in the human security universe. Griffin (1995) had concluded by the mid-1990s that it was essential ‘to construct new, post-cold war structures for global governance and cooperation among peoples’, and to ‘shift the emphasis from national sovereignty and state security to individual rights and human security’. In response, Bienefeld (1995) held that states themselves are a precondition to successful global governance – and to the achievement by any society of democracy, human security and sustainable development: ‘Therefore we cannot abandon the sovereign state and strive for global governance. Instead, we must seek to protect the sovereign state in order to use it to fashion a system of global governance’.

Former Canadian foreign minister Lloyd Axworthy (2001) found it possible to resolve this polarity in the imagery of interdependence-driven coalition-building among states, NGOs, intergovernmental organizations, businesses and others. The Landmines Convention and the Rome Statute demonstrated the possibilities of diplomacy to advance human security (McRae and Hubert 2001). But even Axworthy acknowledged the present operational inadequacies of governance in some critical human security activities – which is perhaps most dramatic in the realm of coercive intervention, where norms remain inchoate or contradictory and institutions weak.

Several authors have applied human security analysis to the governance of refugee problems. Adelman (2001) detected a shift in emphasis at UNHCR,

away from legal asylum issues and toward the protection of refugees and refugee operations (including protection of internally displaced people). But he does not diagnose this as a radical departure: 'It was built into the possibilities of the UNHCR from the beginning'. Again on refugees, Schmeidl (2002) found confirming evidence that refugee flows themselves can constitute a menace to human security – but especially when states encourage the transformation of refugee populations into 'refugee warrior communities'. Her assessment of the Afghan refugee experience in South Asia leads to the conclusion that 'the way local, regional and international actors responded to the refugee crisis seems to have contributed equally, or more to the security dilemma, than the migration itself'.

The Internal Displacement Monitoring Center (2011) finds that since 1998 'the number of internally displaced persons (IDP) has steadily risen from around 17 million to 27.5 million in 2010'. Although displacement 'continues to rise in the Americas, Asia, Europe and the Middle East', there has been 'a steady decline in IDP numbers in Africa, dating back from 2004'. Arguably, this positive development is because 'the African continent remains at the forefront of policy development in support of IDP rights. In 2009, the African Union adopted the Kampala Convention – the first ever instrument for the protection and assistance of IDPs to bind countries across a whole continent'. When the Convention is ratified by 15 African Union members it will go into effect. Globally the causes of much of this displacement are continuing patterns of armed violence and criminality which have forced peoples and communities from their homes. This trend is also accompanied by an increasing pattern of urban displacement, which poses its own unique challenge for international humanitarian and development responders.

Towards a theory of human security

Running through the human security literature is a recognition – not always explicit – of the difficulty in grounding these subjects in cohesive theory or methodology. Indeed, conventional realist frameworks of International Relations theory prove quite inhospitable to human security approaches – one reason, no doubt, why the treatment of human security in the prominent journals of security studies has so far seemed brief and dismissive (Mack 2001). Systematic attempts to develop theory and methodology helpful to understanding humans' security ultimately appear to involve the abandonment, if not outright repudiation, of the various realist schools of International Relations theorizing (see Chapter 2, this volume). Some scholars have turned instead to feminist critiques to address human security questions, and more generally to constructivism (see Chapters 5 and 8, this volume).

Constructivism shares fundamental assumptions with human security approaches – the assumption, for example, that threats are constructed, not inevitable, and that they can be altered or mitigated. Furthermore, the acknowledgement by states that certain forms of economic and political

organization facilitate domestic peace and stability, and that domestic conditions affect the international system, are characteristically constructivist insights (see Neuman 2001).

Similarly, some feminist approaches explicitly call for political action and focus on familiar human security issues: shifting scales, from household to substate to global; breaking down dichotomies, as between public and personal, national and international; and acknowledging mobility, whether of refugees or fugitives from human rights law (e.g. Hyndman 2001). Throughout, there is in feminist analysis a sharp and careful attention to unequal and violent relationships in families, communities, or transnational systems – the kinds of relationships that often define human insecurity.

Taken together, constructivist and feminist analyses offer promising methodologies for examining exactly the phenomena that concern human security scholars. By reorienting the research focus to life as it is lived by the most insecure in any society (women, the poor, minorities, aboriginal communities), these methodologies can advance research and make for more productive human security policy.

Conclusion

For all their inconsistencies and uncertainties, human security studies are growing demonstrably stronger and more abundant. In fact, the diversity of disciplinary foundations accounts for some of the strength in human security scholarship: there is a kind of evolutionary advantage in drawing from a wide variety of intellectual methods and traditions. That same variety goes some way to explain a profusion of research activities that can sometimes look like incoherence.

Some scholars are still busy trying to define the boundaries of human security, organizing a discipline, arranging typologies. Meanwhile, others are exploring human security issues on the ground – and beginning a serious scholarly contribution to the design and execution of human security policy.

In all of this, policy-makers and scholars are bound to find each other at odds from time to time. Practitioners, hard-pressed to prevent the crises not already exploding on CNN and the internet, and to cope with crises underway, show understandable impatience with scholarship that renders any problem more complicated – or worse, that does not evidently address any recognizable problem at all. Policy-makers (some of them scholars *manqués* themselves) would do well to remind themselves that scholars honour their own obligations and professional standards; they are neither desk officers at the call of foreign ministries nor cheering spectators at the policy sidelines. Equally, scholars ambitious to affect policy are wise to understand the constraints of politics and resources that act on policy in every phase. They should also respect the dictatorship of deadlines that practitioners face – and the low tolerance among practitioners for elegant definitional argument. When a theory collides with reality, busy practitioners might want to know why; they will show

no detectable excitement when a theory collides with another theory. In the best sort of dialogue – frank, timely, and open-minded – academic and policy communities can collaborate to their lasting and shared advantage. More to the point, together they might advance the progress of human security.

Further reading

Mary Kaldor, *Human Security* (Polity, 2007). A broad-ranging discussion of human security by one of its principal European intellectual champions that is written in an accessible and provocative style.

Fen Osler Hampson *et al.*, *Madness in the Multitude* (Oxford University Press, 2002). Provides an overview of the history and evolution of different conceptions of human security and key policy initiatives.

International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS), *The Responsibility to Protect* (Ottawa: International Development Research Centre, 2001). A key policy document that discusses the challenges of humanitarian intervention and offers major recommendations to strengthen the capacity and will of international institutions to intervene when there are major violations of human rights.

Neil S. MacFarlane and Yuen Foon Khong, *Human Security and the UN: A Critical History* (Indiana University Press, 2006). Discusses the history and evolution of the contribution of the United Nations to human security.

Jorge Nef, *Human Security and Mutual Vulnerability* (Ottawa: International Development Research Centre, 2002). One of the earliest and most definitive discussions of the meaning of human security and its importance in international development.

Samantha Power, *'A Problem from Hell': America and the Age of Genocide* (Harper Perennial, 2003). A Pulitzer prize-winning discussion of the moral dilemmas associated with humanitarian intervention by one of President Obama's key policy advisers.

Derek S. Reveron and Kathleen A. Mahoney-Norris, *Human Security in a Borderless World* (Westview Press, 2011). A useful, up-to-date text on the broader conception and approaches to the study of human security that is a good introduction to the subject for students.

Report of the Commission on Human Security, *Human Security Now: Protecting and Empowering People* (UN, 2003). A key report of an international commission that discusses the different aspects of human security and the ways to address different human security challenges.