

Human Security, Human Rights, and Human Development

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February 5, 2002

Sabina Alkire presented a working definition of human security as written in her draft paper, “Conceptual Framework for the Commission on Human Security.” She concluded by elaborating on possible linkages between human security, human rights, and human development – the central focus of this seminar. This note is not a summary of the discussion, but rather my effort to extract and organize ideas that might be useful for the Commission’s work.

Human Rights

Perhaps the most important conclusion of the exchange was the fundamental nature of human rights. Human security, a relatively new concept, has not yet developed the degree of independent priority that has been achieved by human rights. Thus, “hitching” human security concerns onto human rights vocabulary can enrich both. Human security does not have the same claim to correlative duties as human rights. Whereas the thrust of human rights is always on correlative duties, human security has not necessarily been coupled to obligations. Thus, the human rights framework is more basic, more fundamental. If we place human security in the human rights context, the notion of correlative duties can be attached. Seen in this light, the question for the Commission is how to moor human security onto the grander vehicle of human rights.

While placing human security in the context of human rights can strengthen correlative duties, it was suggested that human security can strengthen human rights as follows:

- Human security can reduce “excessive” state discretion in the realization of rights. National security arguments are often used to justify suppression of human rights. The incorporation of the traditional notion of state security into human rights law frequently qualifies rights to allow for state discretion. If human security assumes importance alongside national security, these “considerations” would change; that is, human rights could not so easily be neglected in the name of security.
- A similar pattern can be seen in the area of economic, cultural, and social rights, which are often subjected to “progressive realization” in terms of duties and obligations. Because the only restraint is that there must be no discrimination between who can realize these rights, states have tremendous discretion on the pace at which to address social and economic rights. Human security may reduce the discretion given over to nation-states in this domain by eliminating the “way out” that progressive realization has left open.
- Human security may also help resolve conflicts between different human rights, i.e. the need to suppress some human rights in order to protect others. One could look at human security for insight on how to resolve conflicting human rights.

- As suggested by a Tokyo University professor of law, human security can help resolve tensions between different human rights. Particularly problematic has been the balance between first and second-generation rights. Human security may give a fresh approach to balancing civil-political and socio-economic rights.

Human Development

Sustainability and self-reliance, not just ameliorating an temporary situation, must be central features of interventions to promote human security. In this context, for example, provision of food in famine relief would not qualify because if the food were withdrawn, deaths will occur. Recognizing that there are not cast iron guarantees of the elements of human security, self-reliance and sustainability raise a number of questions about agency:

- Do people have the capability--to secure food, for example?
- How secure is that capability?
- Where does the security come from? Does the individual control it? Who has correlative duties?
- If it is provided by others, did they do it because it out of duty or discretion?

Another aspect of human security and human development was not discussed, that is, human security protection against downside risks.

Human Security as a Paradigm

Identifying the distinctiveness of human security is not easy. Beyond its association with military security, the rhetoric of security also invokes the concept of social security, especially as it developed in Western Europe. While social security lacks the connotation that we want because it is codified in the national context, it does have codified duties and obligations. If we use the term "security," we should note that social security brings to mind what people are owed by the state. In this sense it relates to economic and social rights. Also, there have been debate and protests since WWII in Europe as to what this regulation should be – it is grounds for contestation. But, the motivation of social security – which is the prevention of want – is part of human security. So too is the notion of not being attacked, on which the appeal to national security relies. These relationships are not compatible, not hostile.

One approach to promoting human security is to encourage the incorporation of human security elements into the related fields of human rights, human development, and national security. There has already been much movement in this direction, and encouraging these trends might accelerate acceptance of the human security paradigm.

Promoting a fundamental paradigmatic shift, however, has important tactical advantages. For example, we called human development *human* in order to assert that development should not be captured by economic growth as reflected by the GNP. In some ways, this can be seen as a confrontational exercise. We want human security to prevail, not just to bridge current approaches. Rather, we might consider historical arrogance – the weight of tradition and thought patterns. Current institutions (such as the UN Security Council) have captured some of these but neglected others. A distinct concept of human security is valuable in affirming some desired values and programs and giving visibility to dropped issues.

**Seminar on human security, human rights, and human rights
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