

Workshop: Measurement of Human Security Summary of Deliberations

November 30, 2001
Harvard University JFK School of Government

About 20 participants representing six research groups convened on 30 November 2001 to review research on human security. The workshop's agenda, list of participants, and list of background papers are attached. The groups participating in the exchange were the (1) UNDP Human Development Report Office (HDRO), (2) Commission on Human Security, (3) Joint Harvard/WHO Project on Measurement, (4) Canadian network based at the University of British Columbia, (5) Harvard Program on Humanitarian Policy and Conflict Research, and (6) Global Human Development Report Study Group.

Conclusions

We derived the following general conclusions of the workshop. Details of various group presentations are summarized below.

- 1) All the groups continue to address the challenges of conceptualizing and measuring human security and seeking to relate their research work to the policy measures to reduce human insecurity. The groups displayed great diversity in their definitions and approaches, yet found commonality in their various uses of the term.
- 2) The participants agreed that the processes and values of human security may be as important as articulating a precise concept. Some saw human security as the "humanization of security"; others perceived human security as advancing a set of values related to security. Common aspects for participants were notions of "protection" and "prevention."
- 3) Some stressed the urgency of demonstrating that the concept of human security can have practical application. In the absence of such a demonstration, the credibility of the concept was deemed at risk. Key questions in this regard were the "value-added" by the concept and the "ethical base" of the term.
- 4) The creation of the Commission on Human Security was well received; judgment was withheld pending its work. Two human security networks are already in place: (1) a Canadian research network, and (2) an international network of 12 foreign ministers, last led by Chile. The second is showing some signs of exhaustion, unless clear direction and energy are restored.
- 5) Follow-up activities include a "working group" that would bring together researchers on a monthly or bimonthly basis, a Global Human Report that is likely to be published by the University of British Columbia, and an interest in human security as a future topic for the UNDP's Human Development Report.

UNDP/HDRO

The UNDP/HDRO introduced human security in its 1994 Report, returned to it in 1999 (globalization), and plans to do so again in 2001 (governance). Human security was presented as representing a new “value set,” but with definitional dilemmas. To HDRO, human development is choice but human security is the ability to exercise that choice safely and freely. Work on human security is needed because policy has not been able to keep up with the rapidly changing security environment. Illustrations were offered with regard to the policy trade-offs between access to life-saving AIDS drugs and intellectual property rights conferred by WTO/TRIPs and with regard to the prospect of higher yields in agricultural biotechnology but worries about unknown risks and hazards. A suggestion was made to build the concept of human security upwards, based on specific threats and solutions – landmines in intra-state conflict, volatility in financial globalization, biotechnology in food and health security, new wars and globalization of crime in personal security, and the increasing phenomenon of international migration, especially the trafficking of people.

Commission

Johan Cels presented information on the Commission on Human Security, calling this a “weekend of human security” – because of this workshop, a two-day conference organized by Andrew Mack on his proposed Human Security Report, and a simultaneous human security and human rights conference organized by the Commission in Costa Rica.

Sabina Alkire offered a preliminary working definition of human security, which is: “to protect the vital core of people’s lives from critical and pervasive threats in a way that is consistent with individual and communal flourishing” Most participants reacted positively to this definition. Sissela Bok distributed a list of various definitions, and Paul Evans noted that his group had collected more than 25 definitions. Sissela Bok asked about whether a common concept could be developed based on a “minimalist approach,” like her book on Common Values. Jennifer Leaning suggested that a minimum core were “protection” and “prevention.”

WHO/Harvard

Gary King and Chris Murray’s paper on measuring human security will be published in *Political Science Quarterly*. As definition depends upon indicators selected for measurement, they offered the following measurement definition: “the discounted expected years of future life outside of generalized poverty.” Generalized poverty, according to them, is defined as those living below an acceptable threshold level in any of the key domains (threats) to human security -- income, education, health, political freedom, etc. If a person fell below the threshold in any of these domains, s/he would be considered in generalized poverty. While no data or analysis have yet been conducted, the authors hope to do so, using existing data as well as new information collected in

future world health surveys planned by the WHO. These surveys, planned in all 191 countries, broken down by age and sex, would be the largest public poll in the world. Other research by Gary King are forecasting mortality, forecasting war and state failure, military conflict as a public health problem, and systematization of news reports of major world events.

Sudhir Anand commented on some methodological issues, concluding that the generalized poverty index is very, very intellectually ambitious! Bruce Russett from Yale noted that such an index would see most countries either very high (Canada, Norway) or very low (Iraq). Jennifer Leaning wondered about positive measures of security, rather than negative measures of insecurity. Sabina Alkire considered “freedom from preventable deaths” superior to generalized poverty. Sumana Raychaudhuri asked about gender-based insecurity in this approach.

Canadian Research Network: UBC

Presenting the full range of the work of the Canadian network was not feasible. Instead, Paul Evans talked about lessons from the University of British Columbia’s modular, web-based course “Human Security in an Emerging International System.” The course is multi-media, using text, audiovisuals, geographic information systems, and photo imagery. Paul reported that his group had identified over 25 definitions in many different languages. A look at these definitions shows that they range from those that are comprehensive and holistic to those that are narrow and focused. Using such a continuum, Lloyd Axworthy’s focus on humanitarian interventionism is considered biased towards the narrow side, while those interested in both conflict and development are considered broad. The course has generated huge student enthusiasm, with an interesting “generational gap” appearing – students instinctively lean towards the comprehensive approach and are unbothered by challenges to traditional notions of sovereignty. Cross-disciplinary collaboration has been inhibited at the University by differences between social and natural scientists and by a tendency to consider concrete problems as opposed to values, which limited the participation of those coming from theology and religion. Paul identified the development of a website to help teachers and global security survey data as a priority for the future.

Harvard Humanitarian Policy and Conflict

Jennifer Leaning offered a broad definition that included material aspects of human survival with psychosocial and anthropological dimensions, building upon Amartya Sen’s capabilities approach. Emphasis was placed on coping, vulnerability, and resilience in the face of crisis. Jennifer championed the importance of societal trust, which is perhaps captured by the term social capital together with psychological aspects of human security, especially fear.

Claude Brundelein considered human security a “political agenda,” not simply an academic problem. He stressed the pressing need for conceptual clarity, recognizing that human security is “circumstantial” (shaped by unique time and local conditions). In his

view, human security is not just “what,” but part of the process in the “humanization of security” and resistance against the “militarization of globalization.” He voiced considerable urgency in advancing a “pragmatic agenda,” to demonstrate the value of the concept. As a new paradigm, human needs clarity and specificity – “human” focus on individuals in society and “security” against multiple threats. Some threats like natural disasters and terrorism were easily accepted as part of a human security agenda; others like AIDS, displacement, and complex emergencies were more complicated and confused. He proposed focusing on specific country cases, like Indonesia and Afghanistan, to illuminate the issues. Priorities are information and data to develop indicators, analyses of trends and actor groups, and implementation of human security. Finally, Claude reported on the Human Security Network of 12 countries, which last met in Chile and is at risk of collapse unless there is greater clarity of future directions and some perception among the members that they derive something of concrete value from the annual meetings.

Global Violence Report

Andrew Mack will shift from Harvard to the University of British Columbia to develop a Global Human Security Report that focuses on violence (war, conflict, crime, genocide, human rights abuses). He noted that although annual deaths from violence (war 500,000, crime 750,000, suicide 1,000,000), was far more modest than preventable health deaths (which kill 17 million), violence in all of its forms is key to human security. Andrew stressed that understanding the concept of human security was not purely an issue of analytics, but also of shared political and moral values. However, focus and coherence are necessary in any individual research activity if human security is not to be discredited, in the way that “structural violence” was. Andrew argues that his proposed Human Security Report is needed because the “UN does not have a research culture,” and “security-development-governance” need to be brought together. Although there will be data constraints, the Report will try to develop a composite index, including ranking of countries. The key concern in all of this work is the prevention of violence.

Concluding remarks and follow-up

Sissela Bok, who chaired the concluding session, underscored the importance of clarifying the “value added” of human security and of the need to be explicit about underlying “ethics.” Human security suffers from the danger of sounding good to everyone, like apple pie, but what are we trying to “smuggle in” in terms of interests, agenda, and power?

No formal mechanisms of follow-up were discussed. Proposed is an informal “working group” to meet monthly to review research on commonly perceived high priority research. Informally, Sabina Alkire agreed to present the Commission’s working paper at a seminar in February that would be chaired by Amartya Sen.

Workshop on the Measurement of Human Security
November 30, 2001

Morning sessions:

9:00 – 10:30

- **Welcome - Lincoln Chen**
- **About the Commission – Johan Cels**
- **Introductory comments – concepts of human security**
Facilitation – Lincoln Chen
All participants
Lead-off commentator – Sakiko Fukuda-Parr

10:30 – 12:30

- **Presentation by Gary King**
Lead-off commentator – Sudhir Anand
- **Presentation by Paul Evans**
Lead-off commentators –Bruce Russett

Lunch 12:30 – 2:00

- **Information exchange of various human security projects**

Afternoon session:

2:00 - 4:00

- **Presentation by Claude Bruderlein and Jennifer Leaning**
Lead-off commentator – Kenji Shibuya
- **Presentation by Andrew Mack**
Lead-off commentator – Sabina Alkire

4:00 – 5:00

- **Wrap-Up**
Future directions for research
Facilitation – Sissela Bok

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List of Participants

Sudhir Anand
Oxford University

Sabina Alkire
Commission on Human Security Secretariat

Sissela Bok
Harvard University

Emmanuel Boudard
United Nations Development Programme

Claude Bruderlein
Harvard University

Lincoln Chen
Rockefeller Foundation

Johan Cels
Commission on Human Security Secretariat

Paul Evans
University of British Columbia

Sakiko Fukuda-Parr
United Nations Development Programme

Pauline Kerr
Australian National University

Gary King
Harvard University

Margaret Kowalsky
Program on Humanitarian Policy and Conflict
Research

Jennifer Leaning
Harvard University

Andrew Mack
Harvard University

Sumana Raychaudhuri
Commission on Human Security Secretariat

Bruce Russett
Yale University

Enid Schoettle
National Intelligence Council

Ellen Seidensticker
Consultant to Rockefeller University

Kenji Shibuya
World Health Organization

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Background documents

Claude Bruderlein, "People's Security as a New Measure of Global Stability."

Paul Evans, University of British Columbia course curriculum for "Human Security in the Emerging International System."

Hazem Ghobarah, Paul Huth, and Bruce Russett, "Civil Wars Kill and Maim People—Long after the Shooting Stops."

Gary King and Chris Murray, "Rethinking Human Security."

Jennifer Leaning and Sam Arie, "Human Security: A Framework for Assessment in Conflict and Transition."

Andrew Mack, "Security with a Human Face: A Project to Determine the Feasibility of Creating an Annual Human Security Report."

Human Development Report Office, "New Dimensions of Human Security," Chapter 2, Human Development Report 1994, and "Human Development in this Age of Globalization," Chapter 1, Human Development Report 1999.