

Human Security: What Is It; Why It's Important

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INTRODUCTION

For the first time, last September's Speech from the Throne, the government's parliamentary statement about its intended priorities, explicitly endorsed Human Security as a Canadian foreign policy priority.

That was progress.

I am grateful for the opportunity to come here to The Hague to explain this priority to you and, frankly, to stimulate Dutch interest and to seek greater Dutch cooperation in advancing it.

With apologies to Socrates, therefore, I will pose, and answer, a few basic questions – as they might be asked by a curious skeptic, of which I am sure there are a few present – and not all on the Dutch side!

Nothing is really new under the sun.

But for some people here, this is at least new bottles and I would argue even some new wine.

In doing so, I intend to discuss what this whole concept means, why it makes sense now, why Canada, in particular, is pursuing it, and what the future holds for it.

HUMAN SECURITY: WHAT IS IT?

In our view, Human Security means, in its simplest characterization, putting people first – a very simple idea, with very far-reaching consequences. More particularly, Human Security means:

- a) taking the safety and security of people and their communities, rather than of states, as our starting point;
- b) treating the safety of people as integral to achieving and maintaining international peace, stability and development;
- c) Human security means recognizing that the security of states is essential, but not sufficient, to fully ensure individual safety and therefore peace; and
- d) Addressing ourselves to threats to people from both military and nonmilitary sources (e.g., intra-state war, small arms proliferation, human rights violations, crime and drugs).

WHAT IS NEW ABOUT ALL THIS

- Civil war – Westphalia
- Disease – plague
- Pollution – industrial revolution

Human security is a shift in the angle of vision: it is a new way of seeing things and of doing things.

Some enthusiasts see it as Copernican or may be Westphalian in its ambitions.

Others see it as Mr. Jourdan did in Moliere's play, "Le B. Gentilhomme", they have been speaking this prose all their lives.

In our view, it is, at least, potentially, a paradigm shift in the conduct of foreign policy.

We know that human security works in practice.

I will try to demonstrate that it works in theory, too!

A (very) brief (shorthand- historical) review will help to illustrate the point.

The nation-state, and the norm of national sovereignty and territorial integrity trace their roots all the way back to the Treaty of Westphalia; as empires gave way to states – e.g., the Ottoman empire, the power of the nation-state idea grew; it was ultimately enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations as its central organizing 'principle'.

Article 2.1 of the Charter states that 'The Organization is based on the principle of the sovereign equality of all its members'.

Article 2 speaks further of 'territorial integrity' and 'political independence' of all states.

As colonial empires disintegrated, in the Fifties and Sixties, new nation-states were born, all anxious to make sure that colonialism was and would remain a thing of the past.

The nation-state norm was in the process strengthened further.

Non-interference is the one principle of international law even a Saddam Hussein or Slobodan Milosevic knows.

Inherently human and therefore complex, some would say messy, life is more complicated and history's forces overlap and compete.

Like national sovereignty, Human Security's roots can be traced also to Europe, this time to the 19th century, and in some respects to this country.

At the same time as national sovereignty was consolidating its position, the norm of human security, which sprang from the liberalization of society and the democratization of politics and of war, was beginning to grow.

This evolution began to be reflected in various international treaties already in the 19th century, including the Hague Convention of 1899, treaties which marked the first attempts to codify the existing laws and customs of war in order to introduce humanitarian impulses into the nation-states' conduct of wars.

Statesmen such as Gladstone and Wilson brought principle increasingly into the practice of statecraft.

In light of the inhuman non-security of World War II, the impetus built towards a body of law and practices that gives increased weight to the protection of individual rights and safety.

In fact, articles 55 and 56 of the UN Charter itself imply an affirmative obligation of member states to take joint and separate action to promote 'universal respect for, and observance of, human rights and fundamental freedoms for all.'

But articles 55 and 56 come a long way after article 2 and even after articles on self-defense.

In any case, the development of a corpus of humanitarian law was carried further by the UN Declaration of Human Rights, the UN Conventions against Genocide and against Torture, the 1949 Geneva Conventions, which strengthen the protection of victims of international (Protocol I) and non-international (Protocol II) armed conflicts and their 1977 Protocols.

The process has recently taken a major step forward with the conclusion of the negotiations establishing the Statute of the International Criminal Court.

We in Canada are very glad that Ambassador Kirsch, Chairman of the Conference, is able to build on the work done by the Netherlands to bring this Court soon into being.

If anything, the need for a new norm is increasing and the pace towards its achievements is quickening.

Ten years ago, the West 'won' the Cold War.

But instead of peace and stability, we got more wars, more refugees, more expense and less order.

Most wars are internal now.

These internal wars bring a massive victimization of civilians.

In World War I, five per cent of the casualties were civilian.

In the Mozambique civil war, ninety-five per cent of the casualties were civilian.

Since 1990, 5 million dead.

In Sudan, ninety-seven per cent of the casualties have been civilian.

Times have changed in other ways, too.

There are other factors in play in the development of the Human Security norm.

Global population has doubled since 1950.

More people, most of them poor, now live in areas prone to disaster – flood plains, fault lines, on the slopes of volcanoes, or in areas susceptible to violent storms or virulent epidemics.

Climate change is probably having an impact.

The human security impulse has been intensified further by the growth in communications media.

Real-time television news and internet access have vastly increased public awareness of distant crises.

The significance of the ‘CNN factor’ is that awareness brings consciousness and consciousness trigger conscience, or should, at least among affluent states.

The emergence of civil society tracks direct the development of the human security norm and at the same time fuels it.

NGOs are no longer simply pressure groups on government or ‘consciences of society’ – they can be effective, sometimes extraordinarily effective, actors in their own right.

On no issue has this been clearer than the Ottawa process to ban anti-personnel landmines.

There are many other examples, many positive, some negative.

New techniques and new technologies also fuel the human security norm – e.g., internet communications, global media campaigns, and alliances between governments, NGOs, and INGOs (ICRC).

Human security has gained currency especially with 'civil society' in Canada and progressively with emerging civil society internationally.

Nor are NGOs the only new effective players.

Corporations also play a major role.

They increasingly recognize that their behavior in countries prone to instability or in conflict zones, can have life and death consequences.

It can also have enormous impacts on share values.

We expect that large corporations at least will find it necessary, and possible, increasingly to make a business case for social responsibility.

As they do so, they will become a force for the prevention of conflicts and the protection of people, in short, for human security.

DOES CANADA SEE HUMAN SECURITY AS AN ALTERNATIVE TO STATE OR NATIONAL SECURITY?
IS HUMAN SECURITY FOREIGN POLICY ON THE CHEAP?

The short answer to both questions is no.

We are not arguing that we are seeing the beginning of the end of the nation-state.

Even in the emerging cyber world, order requires rules, rules require authority and authority is exercised on behalf of people by states, mostly, the EU Commission notwithstanding.

Nor would we be so naïve – or just plain blind – to suggest that Human Security is exclusively about intra-state conflict.

Inter-state conflict is not, unfortunately, going to disappear anytime soon.

Consider the situation in South Asia, or the Korean Peninsula or the South China Sea or the Caucasus or the Congo or the Horn of Africa.

In any case, the legal framework the world has erected since 1945 to reduce the risk of the Third World War.

The Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and its Protocols, the International Court of Justice, and the Nuclear Non-Proliferation regime provide the framework for international order.

What we are arguing is that this framework of interstate treaties and institutions is necessary, but not sufficient to ensure others' and ultimately, our own security.

In a sense, we see National Security and Human Security as two sides of the same coin.

Human security means, mostly, building security from the bottom up.

For the Canadians in the audience, permit me a brief digression on 'soft power' and 'hard power'.

When Joe Nye coined the phrase 'soft power', he was talking about the United States, not Canada.

The power of ideas, such as the concept of human security, translates into status and influence.

Image and values are an instrument of 'soft power', in inducing other countries to want what you want.

It is relevant to American power and influence that millions of people around the world would like to live in the United States.

This is true in its own way, as well, for Canada, which has been at the top of the UN Development Program's Human Development Index for five of the last six years.

That said, 'soft power' in no way is a substitute for 'hard power'.

It is a complement to it, another instrument for building security.

Human Security does not equate to 'soft power'.

CANADA AND HUMAN SECURITY

It is no accident that Canada has, in recent years, taken a lead in defining and promoting the concept of human security.

First, our foreign policy has long been based on both interests and values.

The debate between realists and idealists is beside the point; promoting our values is a Canadian interest.

The more the world shares our values, the less dangerous it is for us.

It has been over a century since Canada faced a direct external threat to its territorial integrity or political stability.

Canada's traditional approach to security has not for a very long time been based on perimeter defense; our security is and has for years been based on forward defense and collective security.

In fact, our foreign and security policy has always addressed threats that, while geographically distant, could compromise the stability of the international system or come eventually to threaten us.

Human security is very much a part of our 'forward defense'.

A further reason why Canada is in the vanguard on human security is that human security and globalization go hand in hand.

Canada is one of the more open societies in terms of free circulation of goods, people, ideas and capital.

As a trading nation, forty-two per cent of our GDP is derived from trade.

At the same time, Canadians are more and more oriented outwards.

At a time when the world is increasingly unstable, more than 70, 000 Canadians work abroad (outside the USA); 7 million Canadians travel abroad (outside the USA).

Probably the Dutch are equally present outside of Europe.

Add to that the truly cosmopolitan multicultural nature of our society – and we must conduct a global foreign policy.

A further reason why Canada is advancing the human security concept is that it embodies long-standing Canadian values of tolerance, democracy and respect for human rights.

Canadians are moved much more by humanitarian impulse and much less by the cold-blooded calculations of national interest or rationalizations of realpolitik.

Principles are often more important than power to Canadians (because we have so much more of the former than of the latter, cynics might say).

WHERE DOES HUMAN SECURITY GO FROM HERE?

While the human security agenda will evolve over time to respond to changing needs and opportunities, our agenda presently comprises four main themes:

- 1- humanitarian action to reduce the human costs of conflict and to improve the legal and physical protection of people;
- 2- conflict resolution, from the cooperative to the coercive, to prevent or resolve conflict; this includes, for example, human rights field operations, the deployment

- of police in peace support operations as well as judges, corrections officers, etc. and deployment of all sorts of experts with municipal expertise;
- 3- public safety, to address transnational threats to the security of Canadians (e.g., international crime, drug trade and terrorism); and
 - 4- accountability to improve the capacity of public and private sector institutions (e.g., security sector reform, corruption and transparency, corporate social responsibility).

Our critics complain that we are chronic club joiners; there is some merit to the accusation.

We would likely join the EU if you Europeans could be a bit less sticky about geography!

Conrad Black wants Britain to join North America.

Membership does have its privileges and we are using them all to advance human security issues.

At the UN, we have used our Presidency to make April the 'month of human security on the Council', as the US Permanent Representative the loveable Richard Holbrooke put it, with a combination of thematic and country-specific discussions on priority human security concerns.

These include:

- concrete follow-up action on the seminar report of the Secretary General on protection-of-civilians-in-armed-conflict;
- establishing a template in the Security Council for more effective targeted and humane sanctions;
- highlighting the plight of the world's 20 million internally displaced persons;
- drawing attention to the lessons for Security Council members and the international community at large of the Carlsson report on the UN's actions in Rwanda; and
- maintaining a spotlight on the high cost to women and girls of the Taliban rule in Afghanistan.

We expect a resolution to be adopted later this week which will, inter alia, establish a 'checklist' to help Security Council members factor in protection of civilians considerations each time formal action is taken.

This afternoon in New York the UN Security council will, we expect, create a working group to review the Council's approach to sanctions and to provide a forum to promote ways of making sanctions more effective and humane.

Tomorrow will, we hope, see the Council endorse the Angola expert panel's report on violations of UN sanctions against UNITA and take the first concrete steps to stop them.

At the G-8, Canada is working on a G-8 Action Plan on Conflict Prevention for adoption at the Okinawa Summit in July of 2000.

The effort unambiguously builds on elements of Canada's human security agenda; it is likely to focus on war-affected children, on stopping small arms proliferation, on diamonds and conflict, on corporate social responsibility, among other things.

As host of the OAS General Assembly in June 2000 and the Quebec City Summit of the Americas in the summer of 2001, we are working with partners in the Americas to develop a human security approach to hemispheric priorities (e.g., small arms proliferation, drug trafficking, human rights, corruption and again corporate social responsibility).

In the Commonwealth and La Francophonie, we are working with key partner countries on key themes and issues, including democratic governance, small arms, DDR, and war-affected children.

With Ghana, we will co-host a conference later this month on war-affected children in West Africa.

We will also hold an international conference on the same subject in Winnipeg in September in preparation for the Children's Summit in 2001.

As a founding member of the Lysoen human security network, we are working in partnership with 12 countries (including Norway, the other co-founder, and the Netherlands) to disseminate the human security agenda on a regional basis.

Switzerland will host the fourth Lysoen Network Ministerial Meeting on Human Security in Lucerne next month which will address, among others, the challenge of engaging non-state actors on human security.

Many of you will by now have read secretary general Kofi Annan's seminal Report for the Millennium Summit in New York in September.

The Secretary General addresses human security themes, from preventing deadly conflicts, to pursuing arms reductions.

Last but not least as a vehicle for human security is NATO.

I will not go into the war in Kosovo, on which as chairman of the Canadian Task Force I have strong views.

There is no doubt in my mind that the conflict was a war for human security, what President Vaclav Havel called the first war for values.

CONCLUSION

I have tried to portray human security as a new foreign policy paradigm, putting people first.

I have argued that the human security concept is a positive response to rapidly changing times and that human security principles are finding concrete expression in contemporary foreign policy.

I have maintained that it is natural that Canada promote this new norm and pursue this practical agenda because our foreign policy is a particular mix of interests and values, supported by a cosmopolitan society from the four corners of the earth.

Finally, I hope I have demonstrated that Human Security is a concept that works in practice and also in theory.

And stimulated some interest in the Netherlands in this new take on foreign affairs.