

**Notes for a Presentation**

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**Human Security:**

**Putting People at the Heart of Foreign Policy**

**10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Landmines Treaty**

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## **Introduction**

On the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the conclusion of the Ottawa Treaty, this conference focuses, entirely appropriately, on the issue of anti-personnel landmines and on the progress spawned by the convention, and the way ahead.

For my part, I would like to use a wider angle lens, to discuss the context of the land-mines negotiations back in 1997, and since.

In particular, I intend like to discuss Human Security, a made-in Canada, honest-to-god, foreign policy innovation.

And success.

Although given the speed with which subsequent governments in Ottawa distanced themselves from it, you could be forgiven for not knowing that it was either Canadian or successful.

As is often the case, the human security concept has had to be validated by foreigners before we permitted ourselves to believe that it was genuinely new, and significant.

When Lloyd Axworthy was Minister of Foreign Affairs of Canada, I was the political director in the Canadian Foreign Affairs Department.

I was responsible in Ottawa for international security and global affairs.

My branch advised on and implemented 11 of Lloyd's 13 (yes, 13!) priorities.

Needless to say, we came to know each other very well.

In my judgment, Lloyd was the most accomplished Canadian foreign minister never to win a Nobel Prize.

If there had been any justice, he would have had the Nobel Prize, too, for the land-mines convention.

Without his leadership, there would have been no convention.

## **Why “Human Security”?**

In the late Nineties, we were looking for a policy term that would encapsulate the innovative security agenda we were carrying out under Lloyd’s leadership.

It was, in essence, a people-protection agenda, and included

- Promoting women’s rights generally,
- the protection of civilians in armed conflict, by mandating UN peacekeeping troops to protect civilians,
- the special case of conflict-affected children,
- the, abortive, Canadian-led intervention under UN auspices in then eastern Zaire (now the Congo) to save a million refugees on the border with Rwanda,
- the war in Sudan and our own conflict with Talisman’s investment there,
- the Kosovo war,

- a treaty on small arms and light weapons,
- the creation of the International Criminal Court,
- the Responsibility to Protect report that the Government of Canada had commissioned,
- and, last but not least, the Anti-Personnel Land Mines Treaty.

We knew that what we were doing worked in practice; but we needed to see if it would work in theory!

In fact, we needed a simple, catchy, phrase that at once encapsulated the agenda, “bounded” it and, we hoped, advanced it.

For a while we considered giving it the acronym HUMSEC, in the hope of increasing its appeal to the military!

The honour of coining the term “human security” usually goes to the late Mabul ul-Haq of the UN Development Program, although in fact it was used even earlier by the then Secretary General of the United Nations, Boutros Boutros Ghali.

In any case, we did not invent the term; we simply appropriated it.

The Government of Canada was, nonetheless, probably the first government to embrace the term, Human Security, and to use it extensively, some might say, brazenly, in acknowledging no intellectual property rights.

Former UK Prime Minister Tony Blair even tried to take credit for the idea in a speech he gave in Chicago in 1999, with his “Blair Doctrine”.

We appreciated the implicit flattery, but we were there first, and with a better concept and more evocative terminology.

Human Security means different things to different people.

The definition of the term we used, essentially the physical protection of people, was quite narrow, on purpose.

It was about protecting people from violence.

If no one was bleeding, it was not Human Security (although Lloyd Axworthy always tried to broaden the definition, the easier for Canadians to see themselves in it—e.g., climate change-driven events.)

In any case, our definition was much narrower than the more expansive meaning that was given to the term by the Ogata/Sen Commission, established by the Japanese government.

The Japanese were uncomfortable with the implications for the Japanese constitution of the military dimensions of the Canadian approach.

They were, also, concerned about Third World sensitivities with respect to military intervention even when all else failed

One other reason for their sensitivity, I have always suspected, was that they were looking for a permanent seat on the UN Security Council and did not want to risk offending anyone who might vote for them.

But the Japanese Human Security report disappeared without much trace, partly because it sought to embrace too much and ended up embracing too little.

We believed that the more encompassing economic and social definitions, essentially economic development, human well-being and personal dignity, while entirely laudable in their objectives, risked meaning all things to all people

and ended up meaning nothing to anyone, at least nothing new and “actionable” by governments.

When everything is a priority, nothing is a priority.

When people are abused and dying, it does no good to promise them a long-term response to the root causes of conflict.

They have to be saved in the here and now because for them there is no long term.



Addressing the long term and the root causes is important, and necessary, but we needed concepts that immediately, or as soon as practicable, saved people from predation.

We wanted a term that signaled a shift in the angle of vision,

A Copernican shift that would promote behavioural change and promote the protection of people, and not just of states.

We, also, wanted a concept that would eventually stand along side national security as a basic public policy purpose, and that would be accepted as a valid reason for military investment.

In the light of humanity's failures in Rwanda, Bosnia, Kosovo, the Congo and all the rest of the tragic catalogue of international neglect and indifference, we saw a pressing need for an idea to overcome inertia and galvanize action to save the innocent.

### **What Did We Mean by Human Security**

Our definition of human security:

- 1) shifted focus of protection from states to individual human beings and their communities;
- 2) complemented but did not replace national security, recognizing that the security of states was essential, albeit not sufficient, to ensure individual safety and well-being;
- 3) regarded the safety and well-being of individuals as integral to achieving international peace and security;
- 4) addressed threats from both military and non-military sources (for example, intrastate war, small arms proliferation, massive human rights violations, and even crime and drugs);
- 5) and brought innovations to diplomatic practice– for example, the direct cooperation with civil society and the incipient internet-based revolution.

Of course, the little appreciated truth of this kind of Human Security agenda is that it takes a lot of money to succeed, not least to pay for the combat-capable ground forces on whom intervention to save lives depends.

Human Security is not a pacifist doctrine.

NATO, including Canada, did not stop Slobodan Milosevic in Kosovo by dropping diplomatic notes on him.

Vaclav Havel called the war in Kosovo the first war for human security.

At its heart, what the Canadian Forces and CIDA and Foreign Affairs are doing in Afghanistan now is promoting human security—protecting ordinary people from the Taliban and other predators, including some of the institutions of their own government.

Whether our people are doing it as well as it needs to be done and whether they can succeed are other questions, for other occasions.

We never saw human security as an alternative to national security.

Nor did we think that the risk of interstate conflict was going to disappear anytime soon.

We saw national security and human security as opposite sides of the same coin.

## **Why Did Canada Promote this Idea?**

We promoted Human Security because of our values and interests, both.

We believed we were our brother's keeper and that we should do unto others as we would have them do unto us.

We, also, understood that directly or indirectly, our security is ultimately affected by the security, or insecurity, of others.

We, also, had the good fortune to have enlightened leadership and creative diplomacy.

Ideas Were Us!

(Sometimes implementation was someone else!)

We were, also, fortunate in our allies, including Americans Senator Patrick Leahy, Land Mine campaigner Bobby Mulder, and Lt. General (ret) Robert Gard.

General Gard did not know it at the time, but his writings (including that New York Times Op-Ed he mentioned this morning) were crucial in persuading people like me that anti-personnel land mines really were militarily unnecessary, and to defend the program from its critics.

The importance of a persuaded, professional Public Service committed to the soundness of a policy initiative is difficult to overstate, as savvy politicians understand and others come to regret.

### **Human Security and Light Switch Diplomacy**

As John English mentioned this morning, the origins of Human Security can be traced all the way back to the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, to the birth of the Red Cross movement, the 1864 Geneva Convention, 1868 Declaration of St. Petersburg, and the 1899 Hague Conventions on the laws and customs of war on land and sea.

It is found, latterly, in the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and their protocols of 1977, the Convention Against Torture, the Refugee Convention, the Genocide Convention and the other core human rights treaties that codified the lessons learned from World War II.

The roots of the Human Security idea in Canada go deep into Canadian diplomatic traditions, back through Prime Ministers Mulroney (the Bosnian intervention and the Convention on the Rights of the Child), Trudeau (the Helsinki Process) and Pearson (the post-war treaty system).

That continuity makes the light-switch tendencies of modern diplomatic age all the more discouraging.

From Chrétien to Martin to Harper, the policy in support of Human Security was turned on and off more than once as individual ministers embraced, it or not, and sought to make their own marks elsewhere.

Still, although some have found the words Human Security hard to utter, successive Canadian Governments never entirely abandoned the concept, although none has pursued it with the same political commitment, engagement and funding as the Chrétien government did in the late Nineties.

The Harper government is investing seriously in the military, which is a good thing.

Human Security is devoid of meaning if countries do not have the military means to intervene to help people, as we are trying to do in Afghanistan, and ought to be doing in Darfur.

But the Harper government is disinvesting in diplomacy around the world, which is a short-sighted.

Success in Afghanistan is not going to come just by force of arms, as the Canadian military would be the first to acknowledge.

Diplomacy directed at Pakistan and others engaged in Afghanistan is indispensable to short term cooperation and longer term stability

And, economic aid to Afghans is indispensable if we are to maintain their support for our efforts to preserve security.

Still, to be fair, the government continues to fund Human Security, albeit at lower levels.

We owe a lot to whoever it was at the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade who had the genius to rename the Human Security Fund after Glynn Berry, my former colleague who was killed in Afghanistan.

Not even the flintiest-hearted Treasury Board Minister or green-eyeshade wearing official, or most partisan politician, would want to be identified as the one who ends that program.

Not that getting the original funding was easy.

It took three separate Cabinet meetings to persuade the Chrétien government to allocate \$50 million over five years to the policy—at the same time that the Attorney General needed one cabinet meeting to get \$500 million, plus, for domestic security, notably prisons.



The Foreign Affairs web-site, last updated just in October, describes a considerable Human Security agenda, including appreciable albeit apparently diminishing funding, including for mine action.

Whether the current or future governments embrace Human Security whole heartedly or half-heartedly, it has become an accepted term of international diplomacy.

It can even be found in the discourse of White House officials.

Where does Human Security go from here and what can this audience do to help?

Civil society organizations, universities, think tanks and ordinary Canadians can achieve extraordinary things, as the landmine case shows.

While we cannot simply replicate the land mine model endlessly, we can apply its fundamental lessons—we can harness transformative technology and open our minds to innovations in international practice.

Not least, we can press the government to persevere with the Human Security agenda.

Innovative ideas like this one need sustenance, which means money--money for diplomacy, money for military capability, money for economic development and money for civil society operations on the ground, and for advocacy.

Government's ideologies change but they all face the same reality-- to govern is to choose, among competing priorities.

If governments do not sense that foreign policy and Human Security are priorities for Canadians, they will respond to what they think Canadians' priorities are.

That means public policy thinking is important, particularly the evidence-based policy research and advice of the kind that CIGI and other think-tanks and academics can generate.

And it, also, means attention by Canadians of all walks of life to international affairs and engagement in the public marketplace of ideas by civil society representatives on behalf of what they think is important.

## **Conclusion**

Human Security has spawned numerous successes, including

- a small arms treaty,
- the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict, especially in the mandates of UN military operations abroad
- the International Criminal Court,
- the Responsibility to Protect,
- and, last but not least, the Anti-Personnel Land Mines treaty

If, like all successful ideas, it has a thousand fathers—and in the case of Landmines treaty, especially, mothers, it has one godfather--Lloyd Axworthy.

Human Security is a Canadian idea, for which Canada is credited and lauded abroad.

Lloyd Axworthy was at the head of this far-reaching, made in Canada,  
foreign policy innovation.

But, undoubtedly more important, he was, and still remains, at its heart.

Thank You

