Mary Kaldor, Mary Martin and Sabine Selchow

Human Security:
A European Strategic Narrative

Human Security refers to the security of individuals and communities, expressed as both 'freedom from fear' and 'freedom from want'. Intolerable threats to Human Security range from genocide and slavery through natural disasters, such as hurricanes or floods, to massive violations of the rights to food, health and housing.

The adoption of a Human Security concept, first proposed by the Barcelona Report of the Study Group on European Security Capabilities,[1] would represent a qualitative change in the conduct of European Union foreign and security policy. It would be particularly apposite as the EU seeks to improve its effectiveness and visibility as a collective global actor, and to articulate a distinctive European Way of Security.[2] Terms do matter and Human Security is not simply a 'leitmotif' for EU security policies,[3] or an analytical label that categorises the EU's international role in the way that concepts such as normative power[4] or civilian power[5] have done. Rather it provides an ongoing and dynamic organising frame for security action, something which is currently absent from European foreign-policy texts and practices. For this reason, Human Security can be seen in terms of a pro-active strategic narrative which has the potential to further EU foreign-policy integration.

The language of Human Security is important because it deals with the concept as a cognitive framework for how policy-makers and the European public view and articulate issues of external security. This is necessary in order to help us to know what we mean when we talk about the ideas, values, interests and goals of EU external relations. Recent debates about the semantics of the 'Global War on Terrorism' or whether what is going on in Sudan should be called genocide, reveal an acute political sensitivity towards policy terms and labels. In a Europe of 27 member states, concepts can help us to reach common understandings and expressions of issues. Besides, the practice of Human Security deals with how this doctrinal concept translates into action, and whether it is useful in guiding the actions of policy-makers, planners and experts in the field.

Mary Kaldor, Mary Martin and Sabine Selchow are the Convenor, Coordinator and Assistant, respectively, of the Human Security Study Group. All three authors are at the Centre for the Study of Global Governance, London School of Economics, where Professor Kaldor acts as director.

1 'A Human Security Doctrine for Europe: the Barcelona Report of the Study Group on Europe's Security Capabilities', presented to EU High Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy Javier Solana, Barcelona, 15 September 2004, http://www.lse.ac.uk/Depts/global/2securitypub.htm
2 See 'A European Way of Security: the Madrid Report of the Human Security Study Group', www.lse.ac.uk/depts/global/studygroup/studygroup.htm
3 Sascha Werthes and David Bosold, 'Caught between pretension and substantiveness: ambiguities of Human Security as a political leitmotif', in Tobias Debiel and Sascha Werthes (eds), *Human Security on foreign policy agendas, changes, concepts and cases* (Duisburg: Eigenverlag, 2006).

4 Ian Manners, 'Normative power Europe: a contradiction in terms?', Copenhagen Peace Research Institute, Working Paper 38/2000.
5 Francois Duchene, 'Europe's role in world peace', in R. Mayne (ed.), *Europe tomorrow: 16 Europeans look ahead* (Fontana, 1972).

FRIEDRICH
EBERT
STIFTUNG

1.   The lexicon of Human Security

Developments in European foreign and security policy have helped catalyse an emerging European discourse, but the lexicon of terms used – ranging from crisis management to conflict prevention and civil–military cooperation – is a muddled affair that obscures rather than clarifies the nature of European foreign policy.

Human Security, as a term, can be understood to encompass the concepts of conflict prevention, crisis management and civil–military coordination, but it takes them further. It draws on the debates generated by these concepts, as well as other terms used more broadly in current global discourse, such as 'responsibility to protect', 'effective multilateralism' and 'human development'.

Insecurity is closely related to crisis. Human Security can be treated as the crisis end of terms such as human rights and human development. It has to do with human need at moments of extreme vulnerability, not only in wars but in the face of natural and technological disasters as well. Security is often viewed as the absence of physical violence, while development is viewed as material development, improved living standards. These distinctions pervade much of the literature about Human Security as a policy concept, but they are misleading. Many conceptual boundaries, such as those between political, civil, economic or military, have to be redrawn in an era of globalisation because they are defined largely in terms of a nation-state frame. Human insecurity, even in conflict, is not just about the impact of military violence; it is also about the consequences of human rights violations and violent crime, and also the material consequences of conflict.

Human Security is part of human development and human rights, but it is at the sharp end of both. It is also about feeling safe on the streets or being able to influence political decision-making. Human Security policies are concerned with crisis management, but they go beyond crisis management since they offer a perspective on crises. Human Security is about how we respond to an urgent physical or material threat to individuals and communities. From a Human Security perspective, the aim is not just political stability; it also encompasses notions of justice and sustainability. Stability tends to entail the absence of overt conflict or, in economic terms, halting a downward spiral of GDP or the value of a currency. In recent years, the international community seems to have learned how to stabilise conflicts; how to reach and sustain peace agreements and how to stabilise economies.[6] But it has not yet learned how to address the security of individuals and communities and deal with crime, human rights violations and joblessness. The parlance of crisis management, especially on the civil side, within the European Union does, of course, emphasise some of these 'vulnerabilities' – for example,

the critical focus on strengthening the 'rule of law'. The language of Human Security would further entrench this kind of thinking and would help to underline the need to address these 'vulnerabilities' so as to reduce the risk of renewed crisis.

Human Security capabilities, such as crisis management, require civil–military coordination. But it is more than just a matter of coordination – or of 'integration' or 'synergies' to borrow from current parlance – Human Security is about *how* and *why* civil and military capabilities are combined, rather than a reflex action to use them as part of a standard conflict toolkit. In a Human Security operation, the job of the military is to protect and preserve rather than to fight an enemy. Thus Human Security is not just about developing a culture of civil–military cooperation; it is about an entirely new way of functioning in crises that is best described by the new language of Human Security.

2.   The praxis of Human Security

Human Security can be regarded as a paradigm shift from traditional national security approaches. A common criticism of the concept of Human Security is that it is too idealistic. But it can be argued that this paradigm shift is already under way and, moreover, is more realistic than traditional national security approaches since it represents the only possible approach to the kinds of insecurities that human beings face in the contemporary global era. How we develop the concept of Human Security and imbue it with relevant meaning is, in fact, part of the process of implementing a paradigm shift.

The advantage of the term 'Human Security' is that it can be used to combine many of the concepts and ideas that have been developed in the ESDP. It can encompass conflict prevention, crisis management and civil–military cooperation, and indeed it draws from the assumptions inherent in these concepts. But it also offers a way to act and a set of principles for crisis management, conflict prevention and civil–military cooperation.

i)   The primacy of human rights

The first principle of a Human Security approach is to ensure respect for human rights; to secure the safety, dignity and welfare of individuals and the communities in which they live. This is the main challenge rather than military victory or the temporary suppression of violence. This means that both civilian and military initiatives have to put the protection of civilians before the defeat of an enemy. Protection refers to both physical and material protection; that is, economic and social, as well as civil and political rights.

ii)   Legitimate political authority

A legitimate authority is trusted by the population and is responsible for law and order and respect for human rights. This principle means that any outside intervention must strive to create a legitimate political authority provided by a state, an international body or a local authority (a town or region). It must provide

---

6   'Final Report of the Commission on Human Security', 1 May 2003, http://www.humansecurity-chs.org/finalreport/index.html (consulted: 11 January 2007)

the conditions for a political process through which such an authority can be built and it must assist the promotion of law and justice, as well as the authority's ability to guarantee material well-being. And it must itself be viewed as legitimate, both locally and within the international community.

iii) A bottom-up approach

Intensive consultation with local people is required, not just to 'win hearts and minds' and to gain better understanding – although both are important – but also to enable vulnerable communities themselves to create the conditions for peace and stability. This means involving civil society, women and young people, and not just political leaders or those who wield guns. Outsiders cannot deliver human security; they can only help.

iv) Effective multilateralism

This is related to legitimacy and means a commitment to work within the framework of international law, alongside other international and regional agencies, individual states and non-state actors. This is what distinguishes a Human Security approach from neo-imperialism. It also means a better division of tasks and greater coherence, solving problems through rules and cooperation and creating common rules and norms.

v) Integrated regional approach

There is a tendency to focus on particular countries when dealing with a crisis. Yet insecurity spills over borders through refugees, transnational criminal networks, and so on. Regional dialogues and action in neighbouring countries need to be systematically integrated into policies for crisis.

vi) Clear and transparent strategic direction

When the European Union intervenes externally, it must do so with clear legal authorisation, transparent mandates and a coherent overall strategy. Where European security units are deployed there needs to be a close linkage between policy-makers and those on the ground, with the former having ultimate control over operations. All EU external engagements should be led by civilians.

3. Human Security is value added

What would Human Security principles add to what is being done already? Essentially they amount to a shared strategic narrative with several consequences:

a) *Coherence*. It is very difficult to achieve coherence through institutional measures. Turf-fighting and bureaucratic competition are inevitable in any large organisation; additional coordination mechanisms can often just add to the layers of competition. What is really needed is conceptual coherence – to be clear about shared goals and principles – to encourage notions of public service and commitment.

b) *Effectiveness*. The principles of Human Security provide a focus for external mandates. They offer a framework for standardising doctrines and rules of engagement. Essentially, the principles, adapted to each situation, could be expressed on a card carried by personnel deployed to crisis regions. They could also be used as a checklist for those involved in planning and evaluating operations and provide a reference point for the EU's intervention.

c) *Visibility*. At present, public awareness of the EU's role is very limited. An understandable policy concept could help to increase the public impact of EU missions. A Human Security approach would address both the internal and the external legitimacy of intervention, underpinning it with a set of norms and values, and offering both EU citizens and those in target countries with clear principles and justifications for security policy.

Why should the European Union adopt a Human Security approach and lexicon? Concern about wars, human rights, the environment or poverty are part of the identity of Europeans. Human Security is about upholding these norms in crisis situations. It could serve as a 'symbolic signpost' in the development of the EU's strategic culture, reconciling the Union's normative and value-driven tradition with a quest for effectiveness. Finally, a Human Security approach might be the only way to close what can be described as the security gap. Conventional military approaches do not seem to be working in places such as Iraq, Afghanistan or Lebanon. Millions of people in large parts of the world live in situations of deep insecurity – in Africa, the Middle East, the Balkans, Central Asia and the Caucasus. The challenge of global insecurity calls for a new language and practice of security that is embodied in what we call Human Security.