Civilizing Process or Civilizing Mission?
Toward a Post-Western Understanding of Human Security [(1)]

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I. Introduction

The twentieth anniversary of the publication of the United Nations Development Program *Human Development Report* in 1994 which introduced the concept of 'human security' to an international audience gives us an opportunity to reflect on its relevance to arguably a more unstable and insecure world. Its recent adoption by the United Nations General Assembly in September 2012 (UN General Assembly, 2012) and its institutionalization through the United Nations system through the Trust Fund for Human Security, suggests that Human Security[(2)] has become part of the global mainstream, a central plank of the post-Cold War 'liberal peace'(Richmond, 2005). The mainstreaming of Human Security, however, has come at a cost. Human Security has lost its

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(2) 'Human Security' in upper case here refers to conventional, secular approaches to human security as articulated by international organizations such as the United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security; United Nations appointed commissions such as the Commission on Human Security; International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty; regional organizations such as the European Union and North Atlantic Treaty Organization; and individual states such as Canada, Japan and Thailand.

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critical edge. It is argued that it has failed to contest the hegemony of the 'national security paradigm' which continues to provide the dominant framework for ascertaining and dealing with security threats. Indeed, as the authors of the Commission for Human Security Report (2003) make clear, Human Security *complements* rather than challenges national security.

Where Human Security has made considerable inroads in providing an alternative to national security by qualifying state sovereignty has been in the formerly colonized world, particularly in post-conflict societies or transitional democracies, where fragile state structures, deep social cleavages, ethno-religious militancy and pervasive socio-economic problems stemming from underdevelopment have posed challenges to the state's very survival. In some cases, such as Afghanistan, Somalia, Southern Sudan, the Central African Republic, parts of the Democratic Republic of Congo and, most infamously, Rwanda, state structures have collapsed entirely leaving vulnerable populations at the mercy of external assistance. The proclivity of state elites to use violence against their own populations with impunity when faced with challenges to their own authority, such as in Libya and Syria has furthermore outraged conceptions of 'civilized behaviour' leading to demands for intervention. The recent intervention against the so-called Islamic State (IS) in Syria and Iraq is a case in point. Although not a fully functioning 'state' in a Westphalian sense, IS has— by unleashing a reign of terror against religious minorities (and Western aid workers)— 'necessitated' intervention by the international community. Human Security, as a key concept associated with liberal peacebuilding, has facilitated the intervention of the 'international community' in the internal affairs of 'post-conflict societies' and governance of many areas of the 'developing world.' For some, this development is to be welcomed as part of a "civilizing process" which seeks to minimize violent harm and the unnecessary suffering of others. The "civilizing process" refers to the process whereby modern Europeans came to regard themselves as more 'civilized' than their ancestors and more 'developed' than other peoples (Elias, 2000; Linklater, 2011, this issue). "Standards of civilization" (Gong, 1984) were a pre-condition for entry into

'international society' in the mid-nineteenth to early twentieth century and the "expansion of international society" (Bull and Watson, 1984) after the Second World War was predicated on the acceptance of 'western' notions of state sovereignty, rights and self-restraint as *universal* standards of civilization. Viewed from the perspective of many of those in the Global South, therefore, Human Security appears as merely the latest instalment of the 'civilizing missions' of the nineteenth century which served as a pretext for their colonization.

However, does not the ideal of human security[3]—a world free from fear and want— remains a universal aspiration for 'humanity'? Humanity, it is argued, cannot be assumed *a priori* but must be understood from *within* different cultural traditions. It is here that the role of religion and identity, as exemplified by the Arab Uprisings, plays an important role in permitting the articulation of different conceptions of human security in vernacular terms and re-embedding individuals deracinated by the pernicious effects of neo-liberal globalization and subject to repression by 'secular' authoritarian rule into 'cultural' communities. This article seeks to further contribute to the development of a 'critical human security' perspective (Shani and Pasha, 2007; Newman, 2010) by arguing that the project of human security can only be furthered in a multicultural world through a sustained engagement with the post-secular (Habermas, 2008). In my understanding a 'post-secular' conception of human security should seek to recognize the multiple religio-cultural contexts in which human dignity is embedded. For Jürgen Habermas, the term 'post-secular' refers to societies where the continued existence of religious communities in an increasingly secularized environment necessitates, on the one hand, the inclusion of religious-based world-views into the public sphere, and, on the other, the translation of religious-based claims into secular terms in order to guarantee the neutrality of the public sphere. My own view is that translation is that the 'translation' of

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(3) Human security in lower case opens up the possibility of conceptualizing 'security' from multiple culturally informed perspectives of which the cosmopolitan liberal tradition is merely one.

faith-based claims would result in their *secularization* and that therefore an attempt should be made to understand faith-based claims in their own terms.

It will, furthermore, be suggested that such a 'post-secular conception' of human security is more suited to an increasingly 'post-western' world where the rise of the BRICS and the resurgence of political Islam in particular constitute a powerful challenge to the main institutions and values of an 'international society' dominated by the West. Thirty years ago, Bull and Watson (1984, p. 433) noted that 'the most striking feature of international society…is the extent to which the states of Asia and Africa have embraced such basic elements of European international society as the sovereign state, the rules of international law, the procedures and conventions of diplomacy and IR'. Although the main values of international society, and the discipline of International Relations (IR), continue to be articulated in almost exclusively Eurocentric terms, the 'revolt against the West' particularly after 9/11 has created space for the return of religion and identity to IR. While a truly "post-western" theory of IR still awaits elucidation, the 'secular' values of international society and ontology of IR has been increasingly challenged by the global religious resurgence and a growing interest in the cognitive claims of 'non-western' cultural traditions (Shani, 2008b). This makes a "post-western" approach to Human Security not only possible but imperative if it is to claim to be universal.

I. Human Security: The Contemporary Civilizing Mission?[(4)]

The notion of Human Security is premised on the assumption that the individual human being is the only irreducible focus for discourse on security. Consequently, the claims of all other referents, including the nation-state, derive from the *sovereignty* of the individual (MacFarlane and Khong, 2006, p. 2). While most advocates of Human Security agree that its primary goal should be the *protection* of individual human lives, they differ as to what the individual should be protected from. Conventionally a distinction is made between 'narrow'

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(4) This section draws on Shani (2011, 2013b).

and 'broad' definitions. The first approach conceives of Human Security negatively, in terms of the absence of threats to the *physical* security or safety of individuals. This 'narrow' definition is exemplified in the *Human Security Report* which defines human security as the protection of individuals from "violent threats" (Human Security Report, 2005, 2011). Furthermore, the narrow approach also informs the concept of the Responsibility to Protect (R to P) which was adopted by the General Assembly after the World Summit in 2005 and formed the pretext for United Nations Security Council (UNSC) resolutions 1970 and 1971 which authorized the creation of a 'no-fly zone' over Libya in 2011. According to paragraph 138 of the World Summit Outcome resolution, each "individual State has the responsibility to protect its populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity" through "the *prevention* of such crimes" (emphasis mine). Where states, such as Libya in 2011 or presumably contemporary Syria, fail in their responsibility to protect the population under its legal authority, then, under paragraph 139, the 'international community' must assume that responsibility and must be prepared to "take collective action in a timely and decisive manner, through the Security Council, in accordance with the Charter" (United Nations General Assembly, 2005).

The second approach goes beyond a narrow focus on the responsibility of states to protect their citizens and posits a 'broader' conception of human security which takes into account "freedom from want, freedom from fear and freedom to take action on one's own behalf" (Commission on Human Security, 2003). A broader approach to Human Security, one more in keeping with the spirit of the UNDP Report, emerged from the Commission on Human Security (CHS) which was headed by Nobel Prize winning economist Amartya Sen and former UNCHR Head (and ICU professor) Sadako Ogata. The Final Report stated that the objective of Human Security was to protect "the vital core of all human lives in ways that enhance human freedoms and human fulfillment" (Commission on Human Security 2003, 4). However, protection is seen as an insufficient condition to achieve Human Security: it should seek also to "to *empower* [people] to act on their own behalf" (Commission on Human Security

2003 – italics mine). This approach to Human Security appears to have influenced the recent resolution adopted by the United Nations General Assembly (A/66/290) in September 2012 which sought to arrive at a "common understanding of human security". The Resolution adopted defined Human Security as the "right of people to live in freedom and dignity, free from poverty and despair". "All individuals", it continued, "are entitled to freedom from fear and freedom from want, with an equal opportunity to enjoy all their rights and fully develop their human potential" (UN General Assembly, 2012).

The antinomy between the 'narrow' and 'broad' approaches masks the discursive continuities between the two approaches which are reflected in the practices of international institutions committed to Human Security. Indeed, it could be argued that the fundamental difference between the two approaches is merely that what advocates of the 'narrow' approach assume to be a social fact—the atomized individual—proponents of the narrow approach consider a *project*: the creation of unencumbered individuals out of the culturally differentiated great mass of humanity. The 'project' of Human Security, in other words, entails not only the protection of, but also *the construction of rational, autonomous and self-interested individuals out of the great culturally differentiated mass of humanity*. As such, there are unmistakable continuities with the 'civilizing mission' of nineteenth century Imperialism which sought to actively impose a '*cultural conversion of non-Western states to a Western civilizational standard*' (Hobson, 2012, p. 27, emphasis in the original). The agents of the contemporary 'civilizing mission', however, are no longer European empires, private companies such as the East India Company or missionaries, but an 'international community' centred on the United Nations system dominated by powerful Western states (most of which were colonial Empires) working in tandem with multinational corporations and selected international non-governmental organizations to institutionalize liberal peacebuilding in 'fragile' post-colonial states.

II. Critical Human Security[(5)]

The most persistent criticism of the concept of Human Security is that, in the words of Roland Paris, it tends "to be extraordinarily expansive and vague, encompassing everything from physical security to psychological well-being, which provides policymakers with little guidance in the prioritization of competing policy goals and academics little sense of what, exactly, is to be studied" (Paris, 2001, p. 88). For political realists in particular, this broadening and deepening of the concept of security is pernicious in that it distracts states from their primary role in protecting the "national interest" from external threats. However, from a *critical* perspective it could be argued that the very ambiguity of the concept of Human Security makes it susceptible to incorporation into the very paradigm it is seeking to replace: the national security paradigm. Critical perspectives challenge the positivist assumptions of conventional approaches to security which they consider to be "problem-solving" theories designed to promote the smooth functioning of the international state-system (Cox, 1981). The national security paradigm is premised on the assumption that the state is simultaneously the main instrument of protection for the national community *and* the sole referent object of security discourse. As a sovereign entity, the state gets to decide on what constitutes the national interest and the means to pursue it. Human Security was initially proposed as an *alternative* to the national security paradigm yet it has failed to contest its hegemony within the theory and practice of international relations. Most of the issues it has raised have been incorporated as non-traditional security threats and the power of nation-states has remained undiminished. This can be seen in the UN General Assembly resolution (A/66/290) which categorically states that "Human Security does not replace State security" and that it is based instead on the principle of "national ownership". On the one hand, Human Security is seen as a "peoples-centred approach" marking a significant departure in security studies since it makes the individual and not the sovereign nation-state as the primary referent object of

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(5) The following section appears in Shani (2013).

security. Yet on the other hand, the concept of Human Security *reinforces* the doctrine of national security by re-empowering the state through capacity-building so it can protect its populations from a plethora of existential threats, from militant transnational Islamic-based terrorism to contagious diseases such as Ebola. As MacFarlane and Khong (2006, p. 265) point out, Human Security is "not about transcending or marginalizing the state" but "about ensuring that states protect their people." This gives rise to the concern, that Human Security may be sufficiently malleable to allow itself to be used to legitimize greater state control over society in the *name of protection* (Shani, 2007). Human Security, in short, has been "co-opted and incorporated into statist discourses" (Booth, 2005, p. 266).

Critically reworked, however, human security has the potential to contest the hegemony of the discourse on national security. Critical perspectives not only challenge the positivist assumptions of conventional approaches to security, but are also concerned with the possibilities for liberation that are immanent within existing political and social relations (Cox 1981, p. 128). In Booth's words they engage in "immanent critique: the rejection of utopian blueprints in favour of the discovery of latent potentials on which to build political and social "progress". The objective of critical theory is the "emancipation" of individuals from "structural oppression suffered on account of gender, class or race" (Booth, 2005, p. 263).

Recently, Edward Newman has argued that a critical approach to Human Security should adopt the approach pioneered by the 'Welsh School' of Critical Security Studies (CSS) and focus on the emancipation of individuals (Newman, 2010). CSS, as famously defined by Ken Booth, is an issue-area study, developed within the academic discipline of international politics, concerned with the pursuit of critical knowledge about security in world politics. Central to the CSS approach is the re-conceptualization of "security as emancipation". Whilst "security" means "the absence of threats", Booth defined emancipation as the "freeing of people (as individuals and groups) from the physical and human constraints which stop them carrying out what they would freely choose

to do". CSS theorists follow Booth in viewing war, poverty, poor education and political oppression as constraints on "security". Emancipation, they argue, "not power or order, produces true security" (Booth, 1991, p. 319). Re-conceptualising security as emancipation, however, as Mustapha Kamal Pasha and I had previously argued, risks leading to a greater "securitization" of security; the generic attempt to simply expand the menu of security studies without recognizing the insurmountable difficulty of conceptual translation and transmission (Shani and Pasha, 2007). Adopting the idiom of the Copenhagen School, we suggested that critical human security should focus instead on *de-securitisation* yet the excessive concentration of Copenhagen School theorists on the ways in which political issues become 'de/securitised' from above seem obscures the very real contributions which people make to the *de-securitisation* of their own lives (see Aradau, 2004; Balzacq, 2010; Buzan, Wæver, de Wilde, 1998; Huysmans, 2006; Wæver, 1995). They do so, however, not as *individuals* but as part of collective communities with distinct but fluid *cultures*.

In common with the conventional discourses on Human Security they are endeavouring to critique, both 'Copenhagen' and 'Welsh' theorists reproduce the modernist conception of the individual as "bare life" (Agamben, 1998).[6] Metaphorically denuded of the protective layering of culture through which individuals find meaning, dignity and 'identity, the abstract individual of conventional Human Security discourse becomes a 'docile body' (Foucault, 1991) to be subjected, used, transformed and empowered by the market. Culture here is not assumed as a 'primordial attachment,' an unchanging ethnic property of territorially-defined groups but is understood in a 'thin sense' as a framework through which individuals attain meaning and identity as part of a community. Culture is, in short, what gives us a *bios*: a life with dignity, endowed with meaning which can consequently be considered "worthy" of sacrifice (Agamben,

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(6) For Agamben, 'bare life' corresponds to the ancient Greek term *zoe*, which expresses the simple fact of living: *bare life is life which can be killed but not yet sacrificed*. This differed from the term *bios* which denoted a qualified life: a life with dignity, endowed with meaning which was consequently considered 'worthy' of sacrifice' (Agamben, 1998).

1998). Cultural difference does not stem from mutually irreconcilable core values which inevitably give rise to conflict as some prominent scholars have claimed (c.f. Huntington 1993, 1996), but must be accepted and understood *in its own terms*. Attempts to negate difference by assimilating 'otherness' to a universal 'self' are not only counterproductive but, it is argued, a fundamental source of insecurity. Universalistic conceptions of Human Security can themselves, therefore, be seen as a type of human *insecurity*.

III. De-Secularizing Human Security

The approach taken in this paper does not seek to reject Human Security as merely the latest technique of neo-colonial governmentality (Foucault, 2007) but seeks to reconceptualize it by taking into account cultural *difference* (Pasha, 2013). In keeping with a broadly-defined critical approach which seeks not only to question assumptions but seeks possibilities for liberation that are immanent within existing political and social relations (Cox, 1981), it is argued that Human Security, if critically reworked, can pose a powerful *immanent* challenge to the hegemony of the national security paradigm by using the language of *security* to further the goals of emancipation from fear and want. In order to do so, however, Human Security will need to become *post-secular*. A "post-secular" conception of human security should, it is argued, permit the articulation of plural claims from a multiplicity of different religio-cultural traditions without prioritizing any one 'tradition' as having a monopoly over the definition of what it is to be 'human' and what it is to be 'secure'. Consequently, it contests the ontological underpinnings of both conventional understandings of Human Security and poses a sterner challenge to the hegemony of the national security paradigm.

In modern industrialized societies, a post-secular approach would aim at bringing in the voices of those who have remained marginalized by secular political discourse, particularly those of religious minorities. The aim of such approach, however, would not be to forcibly *translate* political claims emanating from a faith-based perspective into secular claims as Jürgen Habermas (2008) has suggested, but to try and understand faith-based claims in *their own terms*.

To understand, however, is not to accept. Claims which seek to *exclude* others on the grounds of ethnicity, religion, gender and sexual orientation are themselves sources of human insecurity in that they violate the 'vital core' of being. The advantage of a post-secular approach is that it acknowledges that secularism itself can be exclusionary and thus a source of insecurity for faith-based communities. In the post-colonial world, however, the influence of colonial categories of religion has cast a shadow on what constitutes the 'sacred' and 'profane'.

In the post-colonial world, the concept of 'religion' remains an important *marker of difference*. Religion was an imported cultural category imposed upon indigenous societies by the colonizing power as part of a regime of colonial governmentality (Chatterjee, 1993). For Tomoko Masuzawa, the rise of the modern social sciences allowed a distinction to be made between the modern, secular West and a mystical East depicted by Orientalist scholarship and historians of religion. Consequently, "every region of the non-modern non-West was presumed to be thoroughly in the grip of religion, as all aspects of life were supposedly determined and dictated by an archaic metaphysics of the magical and the supernatural" (Masuzawa, 2005, p. 16).

Following Derrida (1998), it is argued that the Judeo-Christian conception of *religio* is based on a specific cultural tradition that is fundamentally unintelligible to other cultural traditions, yet at the same time it continues to profoundly influence non-western identities through the associated practices of (neo-)colonial governmentality. In particular, modern scientific techniques of classification and enumeration transformed the political landscape of the colonized world and continue to shape its politics today, transforming previously 'fuzzy' and overlapping religious, cultural and political identities into 'enumerated' religious communities through the Census. As Bernard Cohn points out, "what was entailed in the construction of census operations was the creation of social categories" by which colonial societies were ordered for administrative purposes (Cohn, 1996, p. 8). The Census *objectified* religious, social and cultural difference. In the case of colonial South Asia, the categories

of caste and religion became homogenous and mutually exclusive despite the 'fuzziness' of caste and religious boundaries (Kaviraj, 2010). The result is that, for many in the post-colonial world, the concept of 'religion' continues to define subjectivity even though it is alien to the cultural traditions of pre-colonial societies. Religion ceased to be, to borrow Nandy's terminology, a 'faith' and became an 'ideology': a 'subnational, national or cross-national identifier of populations contesting for or protecting non-religious, usually political or socio-economic interests' (Nandy, 1998, p. 322).

IV. Towards a Post-Western Understanding of Human Security?

In my understanding, a 'post-western' conception of human security should permit the articulation of plural claims from a multiplicity of different religio-cultural traditions without prioritizing any one 'tradition' as having a monopoly over what is human security. Secular notions of Human Security, define security in terms of 'freedom from fear and want' and bring into being a universal community of humanity based on birth or our capacity to think which is thought to distinguish us from other sentient beings. However, the genealogy of modern conceptions of human rights and security lie in the Judeo-Christian tradition. The book of Genesis states, 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness' (Gen. 1: 26-7). Consequently, Christians affirm that all human beings have a 'natural right' to be treated equally since we are all created in the image of God (*Imago Dei*).[7] Although it could be argued that the end result is the same- equal entitlements to freedom from fear and want- individuals, in the Christian tradition, cannot be the ultimate source of agency and autonomy. Roman Catholicism in particular considers *Imago Dei* to be foundational and grounds its post-Vatican II defence of human rights in the concept.

Similarly, Islam holds that security resides not in individual autonomy and rationality but in our equal submission to the divine will of *Allah*. Those who submit form the *umma*, the universal community of believers. Muslims hold the

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(7) Indeed, in the Christian tradition it is precisely God's love (*agape*) which *constitutes* the subject.

Qu'ran to be the ultimate source of truth and relations between Muslims are regulated by *Shar'ia* Law. Space, however, is allocated in Islamic law for *itjihad*, independent judicial reasoning, and interpretation of the *Quran*. However, all Muslims, irrespective of sect[8], share five fundamental duties: first, all are expected to profess the *Shahada*, their faith that there is no God but Allah and that Mohammed is his Prophet; second Muslims should profess their faith through the *Salat*, a formal ritual prayer uttered five times a day; third, all Muslims are expected to observe the *Sawm* and fast during the holy month of *Ramadan*; fourth, all Muslims must give alms to the poor (*Zakat*) and; finally, all Muslims are expected to undertake the *Hajj*, a pilgrimage to Mecca. Faith, and therefore ontological security, comes from observance of these five 'pillars' of Islam (*arkān al-Islām*).

Indic religio-cultural traditions, however, have a different cosmology from the Abrahamic religions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam and lack a central revealed text such as the *Qu'ran*, *Torah* or Bible. In South Asia, the collection of local faiths subsumed under the term 'Hinduism' have as their central concern the concept of *dharma*. Dharma governs all legitimate world ends (*purushartha*), prescribing different rights and duties for different 'castes.'[9] Ontological security resides in following one's *karma*, the application of *dharma* to individual action. *Karma* in turn determines the cycle of birth, death and rebirth (*samsara*). Brahmans and other 'twice-born' castes have more 'security' than

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(8) A distinction is commonly made in Islam between the orthodox *Sunni* and *Shi'a* Islam. The schism has its origins in the right of succession after the Prophet Muhammad's death. The *Shi'a* support the claims of the Prophet's cousin and son-in-law, Ali, to have succeeded him rather than his eventual successor, Abu Bakr. Doctrinally, both *Sunni* and *Shi'a* rely upon different *Hadith* (textual traditions) but agree upon the centrality of the *Qu'ran* as the revealed text.

(9) The term 'caste' is used to describe the Sanskrit term *varna*, which refers to an endogamous hereditary social group defined by notions of 'purity' and 'pollution' that have their origins in the 'Hindu' sacred texts, the *Vedas*. Society is divided into four *varna*: the *Brahmans* (priestly castes), *Kshatriyas* (warriors), *Vaishyas* (famers) and *Shudras* (slaves). See Dirks (2001) for a discussion of the colonial construction of the 'caste' from Brahmanical accounts and Orientalist scholarship.

those of other castes as they are nearer to achieving *moksha* (liberation from suffering). There is, therefore, in Hinduism, a 'hierarchy of protection' (Brekke, 2013). In Buddhism as in Hinduism, *dharma* is seen as the provider of protection, and thus, ontological security rests with following one's *karma*. However, *nirvana* (liberation from suffering) is possible through individual meditation or as part of a community, *sangha*. In Sikhism, *dharam* (a variant of *dharma*) guides action and liberation can be achieved through the recitation of the 'true name' (*Satnaam*). However, the *communal* aspect of religious identity is emphasized through the wearing of the five external symbols of faith making a distinction between the 'religious' community (*Khalsa*) and 'nation' (*qaum*) difficult (Shani, 2008a). Gender equality is particularly emphasized in Sikhism whereas Buddhism extends the principle of equality to all sentient beings while questioning the uniqueness of individual identity through the doctrine of *anatman* (no self).

Although this discussion was necessarily brief and drawn almost exclusively from the traditions with which I am most familiar, it serves to 'provincialize' (Chakrabarty, 2000) secular conceptions of Human Security, and in so doing, illustrate the main point of this paper; that non-western religio-cultural traditions have different notions of human security which cannot be encompassed within a single universal conception of Human Security.

Conclusion: Pluralizing Human Security

In conclusion, this paper argues that cultural identity remains an important component of human security in our post-global age. Culture, here, refers not to a set of all-engulfing, totalizing 'primordial attachments' (Geertz, 1963) but to that which permits the individual to enjoy a life endowed with meaning and dignity as part of a 'community' or collectivity. Consequently, any attempt to enhance human security globally must allow faith-based groups to live in accordance with their beliefs without being forced to assimilate to the seemingly 'secular' values of the state and 'international community'. The project of 'critical human security' can only be furthered, not by a commitment to 'security

as emancipation' (Booth 1991; Newman, 2010) but by engaging with cultural traditions that offer alternative understandings of the 'human' and 'security' than those of secular, liberal modernity.

For the project of 'human security' to be advanced globally, it will need to be based upon multiple culturally-grounded conceptions of the 'human', freedom and security rather than *a priori* assumptions of a single, universalizable 'secular' human nature which subsumes cultural difference in its totalizing desire for emancipation from 'fear' and 'want'. For human security to aspire to 'universality', it needs to be both 'post-western' *and* 'post-secular'. In so doing, it may well contribute to a 'global civilizing process' capable of transcending – if not dismantling— the pernicious binaries between the 'civilized' and 'barbaric,' 'secular' and 'religious', 'developed' and 'developing' and the 'West' and the 'rest' which have "blocked the expansion of an international society consisting of moral equals" (Linklater, forthcoming, this volume).

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Civilizing Process or Civilizing Mission?
Toward a Post-Western Understanding of Human Security

<Summary>

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This paper seeks to critically interrogate the view that the emergence of 'human security' can be seen as a manifestation of what Norbert Elias aptly termed the 'civilizing process'. Despite its recent adoption by the United Nations General Assembly in September 2012 and its institutionalization through the United Nations system, Human Security may be viewed –not only in its 'narrow' but also its 'broad' guises—as the latest instantiation of the 'civilizing mission' facilitating the continued intervention of the western-dominated 'international community' in previously colonized areas of the world. Critically reworked, however, human security has the potential to constitute a powerful 'global ethic' by distancing itself from its western 'secular' origins and recognizing the multiple religio-cultural contexts in which human dignity is embedded.