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# The evolving dialectic between state-centric and human-centric security

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## Abstract

This paper makes three main arguments. First, a critique of both the traditional state-centric approach to security and the more recently articulated human-centric approach suggests that each is necessary but not sufficient to address the contemporary security agenda. Second, there is however conceptual and empirical evidence that shows there is an evolving dialectic between these two approaches which is producing new thinking about security. The dialectic is between two referent objects, the state and people, between internal and external threats to these referent objects and between the various military and non-military means for enhancing the security of each. The dialectic also involves causal and constitutive connections between these elements. The final argument is that this evolving dialectic suffers from a number of problems, not least of which is the difficulty of achieving a balance between the two approaches on any given security issue. Nonetheless, in principle a dialectic between the state-centric and human-centric approaches offers a promising way of addressing the contemporary security agenda of state, trans-state and intra-state security issues and the connections between them.



# The evolving dialectic between state-centric and human-centric security

PAULINE KERR<sup>1</sup>

Scholars and practitioners for over a decade have increasingly used the term 'human security' to convey a new human-centric rather than the traditional state-centric understanding of security. Notwithstanding its growing application—particularly in UN policy statements, states' foreign policies, scholarly journals and teaching curriculum—the idea of human security continues to be highly contentious.<sup>2</sup> Equally contentious however is the value of the traditional state-centric conceptualisation of security to address the contemporary security agenda. From the disciplinary perspective of international relations (IR) and security studies (SS) the discussions about these different approaches to security have produced many justifications for their respective position.<sup>3</sup> But what is not examined in any depth is whether or not all this activity is having any impact on how 'security' more generally is conceptualised. Another way of asking the question is whether or not there is any interaction between

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<sup>2</sup> Roland Paris, 'Human security: Paradigm shift or hot air?', *International Security* 26(2) Fall 2001, pp. 87–102.

<sup>3</sup> See for example, Barry Buzan, 'Human security: What it means and what it entails', paper presented at the 14th Asia-Pacific Roundtable, Kuala Lumpur, 3–7 June 2000, pp. 1–15; Yuen Foong Khong, 'Human security: A shotgun approach to alleviating human misery?', *Global Governance* 7(3) 2001, pp. 231–6; William T. Tow, Ramesh Thakur and In-Taek Hyun (eds), *Asia's emerging regional order: Reconciling traditional and human security* (Tokyo: United Nations University Press, 2000); Andrew Mack, 'Human security in the new millennium', *Work In Progress* 16(3) 2002, pp. 4–6; Majid Tehranian (ed.), *Worlds apart: Human security and global governance* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, in association with the Toda Institute for Global Peace and Policy Research, 1999); Theodore Moran, 'International economics and national security', *Foreign Affairs* 69(5) 1990/91, pp. 74–90; Brad Roberts, 'Human rights and international security', *Washington Quarterly* 13(2) 1990, pp. 65–75. Also see websites such as the Commission for Human Security <[www.humansecuritynetwork.org](http://www.humansecuritynetwork.org)>; the Canadian Consortium for Human Security <[www.humansecuritybulletin.info](http://www.humansecuritybulletin.info)>; and the Harvard Program on Humanitarian Policy and Conflict Research <[www.hsph.harvard.edu/hpcr/cpi/cpi.htm](http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/hpcr/cpi/cpi.htm)>.

the two paradigms that is producing new thinking, perhaps a new thesis, about security.

It is argued here that there is a security dialectic<sup>4</sup> evolving between elements of the state-centric and human-centric approaches. The dialectic is between two referent objects, the state and people, between internal and external threats to these referent objects and between the various means for enhancing the security of each. The dialectic also involves causal and constitutive connections between these elements. Over time it is possible that a new synthesis in the form of a middle path or ‘via media’<sup>5</sup> may develop between the state-centric and human-centric approaches. The conceptual evidence for this argument can be found in several recent scholarly works. There is also empirical evidence that some agents of security—various global institutions, states and non-state actors—consider security in similar dialectical terms. The second point made in the paper is that there are problems with this approach. These are discussed in some detail. Nonetheless, in principle, a security dialectic between the paradigms and a possible new synthesis or via media does offer a way of addressing the growing number of issues that comprise the contemporary security agenda. The challenge is to establish the balance between the parts, to find both conceptually and in practice, the best via media in any given security situation.

Establishing that there is a security dialectic is significant for several reasons. From a disciplinary perspective it shows that many scholars and even more actors develop security concepts and practices that take account of the different dimensions of security: that is, both state and human security, the external and internal security dimensions of security, issues of order and justice, and questions of ‘what is’ and ‘what ought-to-be’. This

<sup>4</sup> ‘Dialectic’ in this context refers to the ‘mildest use [that] seems only to imply that in any complex system of things, people, or thoughts, opposing forces or tendencies are at work, so that processes are likely to oscillate first one way and then another between extremes.’ However, it does not rule out the possibility that, in a Marxist sense, ‘dialectic means evolution by means of contradictions’ and that a new thesis evolves. *Oxford English Dictionary Online* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), <dictionary.oed.com>.

<sup>5</sup> The idea of a ‘via media’ or ‘broad middle road’ between different traditions of thought is a well-recognised argument made by the English School scholar, Martin Wight. See Martin Wight, pp. 17–18 below, for further elaboration on the idea.



contrasts with the view that concepts and practices of security can be understood from one particular perspective, or one theory such as realism.<sup>6</sup> The main significance however is that formulating concepts and practice on the basis of a dialectic between different elements of security is, under the present circumstances, the most likely way of enhancing the security of people. We live in a world where dangerous inter-state, intra-state and transnational security issues relentlessly continue. The end of the Cold War did not bring peace. It is a world where the state, despite challenges, remains the dominant actor, where state-centric security remains dominant and indeed relevant, where sovereignty is both a minus and a plus. It is also a world where there are growing normative and utilitarian imperatives to provide better security for people. Understanding the growing inter-connectedness between these issues, between the security of states and people, in terms of a security dialectic holds more promise than any single paradigmatic approach, despite the difficulties.

The analysis here is in three parts. It starts by reviewing the state-centric and human-centric approaches to the idea of security in the IR/SS literature and the criticisms that each makes of the other. The conclusion drawn from this analysis is that each critique reveals serious shortcomings with the two positions and that an ideal-type approach to security would involve important elements of both. The second part examines recent work by several scholars that demonstrates an evolving approach to security that seeks to establish the connections and dialectics between the state-centric and human-centric approaches. The paper then examines the evidence for arguing that some important agents of security—some global institutions, states and non-state actors—are establishing a similar approach. To some extent these conceptual and empirical developments satisfy the ideal-type suggested by the earlier critique. The third section analyses the strengths and weaknesses of the security dialectic approach arguing that in its present form insufficient attention is given to a proper balance between the state and

<sup>6</sup> The development of a security dialectic would seem to support the argument made by Peter J. Katzenstein and Nobuo Okawara that 'analytical eclecticism, not parsimony' provides a better understanding of Japanese and Asian-Pacific security affairs. See Peter J. Katzenstein and Nobuo Okawara, 'Japan, Asia-Pacific security, and the case for analytical eclecticism', *International Security* 26(3) 2001/02, pp. 153–85.

human-centric approaches. The issue of balance is also a problem in practice with many security agents adopting a security dialectic that is still tipped towards the state-centric approach. The paper concludes that, notwithstanding these conceptual and empirical shortcomings, security dialectics and possible via medias offer promising ways for advancing the concept and practice of security. Further research should explore this concluding proposition.

**STATE-CENTRIC AND HUMAN-CENTRIC APPROACHES TO SECURITY:  
BOTH NECESSARY, BUT NOT SUFFICIENT**

Within the discipline of international relations and its sub-discipline security studies, discussions about 'security' are often conducted within a conceptual framework that refers to the 'referent object' of security, 'threats' to that referent object/s, and the 'means' by which the referent object attempts to prevent and protect itself from threats. For traditionalists the referent object is the state, the main threat is other states that have the capability and intention to use force to achieve their goals. The means for countering such threats is military deterrence, and if necessary the use of force if attack seems imminent or actually takes place. According to traditionalist scholars, the meaning of security has changed little over time and they remain unimpressed by yet another argument, this time about human security, for changing their view.<sup>7</sup>

The state-centric critique of the human-centric perspective has several dimensions. According to many traditional scholars there are inadequate grounds for making human security the referent object of security. Barry Buzan, for example, is unconvinced that the focus on state security as the referent object should be replaced or even supplemented by human security.<sup>8</sup> Buzan argues that the referent object of human security cannot readily be either the individual or all people everywhere—humankind.

<sup>7</sup> There is a vast literature that supports the traditional view of security. See for example, reviews by Sean M. Lynn-Jones, 'International security studies', *International Studies Notes* 16(3) 1992, pp. 53–64; Stephen M. Walt, 'The renaissance of security studies', *International Studies Quarterly* 35(2) 1991, pp. 211–39; and Patrick Morgan, 'Safeguarding security studies', *Arms Control* 13(3) 1992, pp. 464–79.

<sup>8</sup> Buzan, 'Human security: What it means'. Buzan claims he is one of the few scholars to address human security from the perspective of international security.

Focus on the individual brings up the problem of agency since, in practice, individual security is an attempt to bypass the state and the state is a necessary, though not sufficient, condition for each person's security. Moreover, Buzan argues that if human security is really about individual security then this is nothing new and it is already the focus of human rights law. If humankind is the referent of human security then it is 'too big and too vague to have popular appeal'.<sup>9</sup> If human security is about the middle level—or societal security—then it concerns collectivities of people that are collected together because they share a common identity of some form. Usually such collectivities are manifested as nations and religions which, Buzan argues, 'is a short route back to the "national security" perspective from which human security advocates are presumably trying to escape'.<sup>10</sup> For these reasons Buzan rejects the idea of human security as a useful component of international security.

Buzan's argument reveals a particular line of thinking about what can legitimately constitute a security referent object, given 'what is' the nature of states and international relations and therefore the focus of the discipline. From this view both the context and the nature of relations between states is different to that which occurs inside the state. The international context is not founded on notions of social justice that usually operate at the domestic level but rather on anarchy and power politics and therefore on protecting national interests. Neither the international system nor the society of states assumes that order can be implemented, that justice or moral/ethical codes or any 'ought-to-be' norm will have a profound influence, as is most often the case within states. Apart from operating in a different context, international security has a different objective, the external security of states, and a different threat, the military power of states and finally a different means, the threat and or use of force. The nature of the state, the use of force and power inside the state is not the subject of relations between states or within the scope of the discipline. Hence for traditionalists, such as Buzan, trying to make people within states the object of security is conceptually and empirically flawed.

<sup>9</sup> Buzan, 'Human security: What it means', p. 8.

<sup>10</sup> Buzan, 'Human security: What it means', p. 10.

Whereas Buzan mounts an argument against the conceptual and empirical validity of including human security within the practice and discipline of international relations, another well known IR/SS scholar, Yuen Foong Khong, criticises the idea of securitising the individual human being because it fails to provide practical guidance, either for setting priorities or for alleviating human insecurity.<sup>11</sup> His view is that ‘in making all individuals a priority none actually benefits’.<sup>12</sup> Criteria to distinguish between different types of security fears that individuals experience are needed for prioritising action. Furthermore, it is not clear, Khong argues, that securitising the individual will actually alleviate ‘the plight of the repressed’.<sup>13</sup> He is sceptical that outside special areas, for example NATO’s sphere of interest, securitisation will lead to any significant improvement and hence the idea generates false hopes for the victims and the international community. Khong is also sceptical that ‘taking human security seriously’ will have a positive impact on international peace and security.<sup>14</sup> ‘Putting people first’ he says suffers from the same lack of criteria for distinguishing between different types of people and is therefore ‘too universalistic’ to provide policy guidance for improving international security. Khong’s state-centric bias is further revealed by his advice that it is better for people if they ‘cast their lot with their government—and their state—if they want a way out of their privation’.<sup>15</sup>

Other sceptics, who are not necessarily advocates of state-centric security approaches, also have doubts about the analytical value of the idea. Roland Paris argues that human security is more useful as a rallying cry for non-governmental organisations (NGOs), international agencies and some interested states and as a campaign slogan for political coalitions to fight for various causes, for example, the land mines convention and the establishment of the International Criminal Court. However, as Paris points out,

<sup>11</sup> Khong, ‘Human security: A shotgun approach’, pp. 231–6.

<sup>12</sup> Khong, ‘Human security: A shotgun approach’, p. 233.

<sup>13</sup> Khong, ‘Human security: A shotgun approach’, p. 233.

<sup>14</sup> Khong, ‘Human security: A shotgun approach’, p. 234.

<sup>15</sup> Khong, ‘Human security: A shotgun approach’, p. 235.

wholism, inclusiveness and collective action are not substitutes for an analytical framework that guides research and practice.<sup>16</sup>

Indeed, critics of the human-centric approach to security are often leaders of developing countries. They claim that the idea is merely another attempt by the West to impose its liberal values, which emphasise political rather than social and economic rights and which aim to undermine the principle of sovereignty and elevate humanitarian intervention.<sup>17</sup> Although not necessarily expressed in the terms of the discipline, these arguments against the idea of human security are based on political leaders' strong attachment to external and internal sovereignty as the basis for inter-state security and intra-state security and, although not made explicit, regime survival. Political elites and those IR scholars who reject human security agree, for different reasons, that establishing international and domestic stability has more to do with establishing order than with applying universal norms.

### **The human-centric approach and critique of the traditional approach**

The arguments for a human-centric approach to security in the IR/SS literature can in part be located within 'critical security' studies, or the school of thought that challenges some or all of the traditional views about the meaning of security. Critical security scholars embrace a much broader understanding of security, which Keith Krause and others describe as having 'three axes'.<sup>18</sup> The first axis (the horizontal push) attempts to broaden the traditionalist's narrow definition of security to include what is perceived as other types of threats to the state: such as economic, environmental, and unregulated population movements threats. The second, and related, axis (the vertical push) goes beyond the state-centric

<sup>16</sup> Paris, 'Human security: Paradigm shift'.

<sup>17</sup> For descriptions of these arguments see Amitav Acharya, 'Human security: East versus West', IDSS Working Paper No. 17 (Singapore: Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies, September 2001), pp. 1–18; Mack, 'Human security in the new millennium'.

<sup>18</sup> Keith Krause, 'Theorizing security, state formation and the "Third World" in the post-Cold War world', *Review of International Studies* 24(1) 1998, pp. 125–36, at p. 126; Sverre Lodgaard, 'Human security: Concept and operationalisation', paper presented at the Expert Seminar on Human Rights and Peace, Palais Wilson, Geneva, 8–9 December 2000, pp. 1–25; Jessica Tuchman Mathews, 'Redefining security', *Foreign Affairs* 68(2) 1989, pp. 162–7; Caroline Thomas, *In search of security: The Third World in international relations* (Brighton: Wheatsheaf, 1987).

focus above to deepen the concept of security to include other types of referents: at one end individual security (often called human security), at the other end, global security, and in between, regional and societal security. A third axis, still within the state-centric mold (and which concerns the means to enhance state security) endorses cooperation among security actors through common, cooperative, collective and comprehensive security approaches. This interpretation of the traditional approach is a useful descriptive account of the differences between the two perspectives.

However, the most strident critique of the traditional approach is that it fails to recognise the normative human-centric dimensions of security. The liberal scholar Richard Falk places the idea of human security within 'visionary interpretations of human destiny' which can be traced from earliest times to the present.<sup>19</sup> Modernity, Falk argues, 'situate[s] part of this visionary impetus within the secularised imagination of individuals and groups seeking to discover an autonomous pathway to a better, more secure and fulfilling, future for human societies'.<sup>20</sup> Recent manifestations of this endeavour within the discipline include the various liberal world order studies, for example the mid-1960s World Order Models Project (WOMP), which Falk says were a reaction to the dominant realist world view and Machiavellianism.<sup>21</sup>

The normative dimension of human security not only includes visionary interpretations of human destiny it also prescribes some empirical features for that vision. Ramesh Thakur, another well respected IR security scholar, argues the shift 'from the state to the individual' enhances the 'quality of life' of people. Human security has a negative and positive or a 'double connotation':

<sup>19</sup> Writing about the intellectual history of the quest for human security, Falk makes the point that the endeavour is part of the human condition, that 'visionary interpretations of human destiny have always been an integral part of societal identity ... This endeavor, in part, reflected the break between science and religion that was at the core of the European Enlightenment project'. Richard Falk, 'Pursuing the quest for human security', in Tehranian, ed., *Worlds apart*, pp. 1–22, at p. 1.

<sup>20</sup> Falk, 'Pursuing the quest for human security', p. 1.

<sup>21</sup> Falk lists other challenges to the realist picture: for example, Pugwash, Independent World Commissions, Global Conferences, Global Campaigns, and Law Making Treaties.

Negatively it refers to freedom from—from want, hunger, attack, torture, imprisonment without a free and fair trial, discrimination on spurious grounds and so on. Positively, it means freedom to—the capacity and opportunity that allows each human being to enjoy life to the fullest without imposing constraints upon others engaged in the same pursuit. Putting the two together, human security refers to the quality of life of the people of a society or polity. Anything that degrades their quality of life—demographic pressures, diminished access to or stocks of resources, etc—is a security concern. Conversely, anything that can upgrade their quality of life—economic growth, improved access to resources, social and political empowerment etc—is an enhancement of human security.<sup>22</sup>

These critical security and strongly normative arguments in the IR/SS literature inform much, but not all, of the current human-centric critique of the traditional state-centric approach. Two of the best known critiques, derived from the development and humanitarian literatures, include these strong normative arguments and, most often, utilitarian and consequential arguments.

### **The ‘development critique’ of the traditional approach**

The United Nations Development Programme’s (UNDP) *Human development report 1994*<sup>23</sup> is often regarded as a major challenge to traditional views of security. Indeed, the report provides a definition of human security that is the one most commonly used not only by development scholars and practitioners, but also by IR/SS scholars. Human security means ‘first, safety from such chronic threats as hunger, disease and repression. And, second, it means protection from sudden and hurtful disruptions in the patterns of daily life—whether in homes, in jobs or in communities’.<sup>24</sup> The threats to human security can be categorised, according to the report, under seven headings: economic security, food security, health security, environmental security, personal security, community security and political security.

<sup>22</sup> Ramesh Thakur, ‘Human security regimes’, in Tow, Thakur and Hyun, eds, *Asia’s emerging regional order*, p. 231.

<sup>23</sup> UNDP, *Human development report 1994* (New York: United Nations Development Programme, 1994), <[hdr.undp.org/reports/view\\_reports.cfm?year=1994](http://hdr.undp.org/reports/view_reports.cfm?year=1994)>.

<sup>24</sup> UNDP, *Human development report 1994*, p. 23.

Many advocates ardently defend this very broad definition of security.<sup>25</sup> From an IR perspective, or more precisely from a critical security studies position, its most important features are that it corrects the state-centric view of security and adds the much needed normative dimension. Introducing 'human' elements of security, such as 'hunger' and 'hurtful disruptions in the patterns of daily life', extends the dominant security discourse well beyond the traditional, and by comparison, narrow view that security has several essential components: the protection of the state and national security; the primacy (or high-politics) of inter-relations between states; and the problem of physical threats or the use of military force by states against each other. Whereas this traditional concept stresses that the state is the referent object of security and that physical violence from outside sources is the main threat, the development concept of security stresses that human beings are the referent object and threats are often non-military and arise from many sources from within the state.

From the development perspective, presenting the problems associated with human development in terms of human security is justified in normative, utilitarian and consequential terms. The first is that poverty and inequality in developing countries requires urgent attention.<sup>26</sup> According to Michel Camdessus, Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), 'poverty is the ultimate systemic threat facing humanity'.<sup>27</sup> In the post-Cold War period, reduced levels of aid from developing countries exacerbate poverty.<sup>28</sup> Second, poverty and inequality are among the 'root causes' of conflict within states. War within states is more common than war between states and as a result civilian deaths are higher than combatant mortalities; more women and children are dying from war.<sup>29</sup> Clearly, from

<sup>25</sup> See for example, Dewi Fortuna Anwar, 'Human security: An intractable problem in Asia', in Muthiah Alagappa, ed., *Asian security order: Instrumental and normative features* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), pp. 536–67.

<sup>26</sup> Caroline Thomas, *Global governance, development and human security: The challenge of poverty and inequality* (London: Pluto Press, 2000), p. 3.

<sup>27</sup> Cited in Thomas, *Global governance*, p. 3.

<sup>28</sup> Rubens Ricardo, Cham Prasidh and Maria Livancos Attaui, 'World's poorest nations are marginalised', *Financial Times* 9 May 2001.

<sup>29</sup> See the Centre for Systemic Peace website for statistical evidence of this development <[www.cidcm.umd.edu/inscr/peace.htm](http://www.cidcm.umd.edu/inscr/peace.htm)>.



the development perspective, relief from the injustices of economic and social poverty is at the centre of the need to reconceptualise security. Moreover, the imperative to protect people from the harms of underdevelopment within states is necessary for the survival of all people. A senior development official in the United Nations, Mahbub ul-Haq, emphasises the new moral and international repercussions of not acting. 'Human security', he points out, 'is a powerful revolutionary idea that forces a new morality on all of us through a perception of common threats to our very survival'. From ul-Haq's perspective, '[t]he consequences of poverty, disease, drugs, pollution do not stop at borders'.<sup>30</sup>

In effect the development view challenges the state-centric approach to security in several ways: by downplaying the prospects of inter-state in the post-Cold War era; elevating the many injustices of underdevelopment; assuming that these injustices have moral and practical imperatives for all humans and states wherever they are; and by stressing the interconnectedness between poverty and conflict within the state for internal and external security. Furthermore, securitising the human development agenda in this way also has utilitarian effects, not least of which is to move attention and resources away from the state-centric agenda.

### **The 'humanitarian critique' of the traditional approach**

The second major critique of the traditional approach to security is based on normative and legal arguments supportive of humanitarian principles. From this perspective, for example, the traditional approach to security ignores the security of people, in a variety of dire situations. In particular it fails to directly support humanitarian international law that seeks to prevent and protect people suffering harms perpetrated by the state. At the centre of this body of law is the concept of human rights and the three generations of rights law: (a) civil and political rights; (b) economic, social and cultural rights; and (c) collective rights. These rights have been formalised, for example, in the 1945 United Nations Charter, the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the 1993 Vienna Declarations,<sup>31</sup>

<sup>30</sup> Mahbub ul-Haq, 'Global governance for human security', in Tehranian, ed., *Worlds apart*, p. 83.

<sup>31</sup> Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, International Human Rights Instruments, <193.194.138.190/html/intlinst.htm>.

and the 1948 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide.<sup>32</sup> These various conventions are binding on states and legitimise international scrutiny of the interaction between the state and people.

This humanitarian focus is the quintessential normative element of the human-centric approach. The close connection between human security and human rights is a corrective to the state-centric focus and a reinforcement of the normative elements of security. According to some human security advocates, establishing the link between human security and human rights can enrich both.<sup>33</sup> Placing human security in the human rights context attaches to it the 'notion of correlative rights'.<sup>34</sup> In addition, if human security is seen to be as important as national security then human rights cannot 'so easily be neglected in the name of security'. Human security considerations might also help to resolve conflicting human rights.<sup>35</sup>

For some, however, making connections between human security and human rights is a fundamental flaw. Many critics in the developing world, who may nonetheless support some aspects of the human development dimensions of human security, object to the inclusion of human rights if it means that state rights, or the right to external and internal sovereignty, becomes conditional upon Western formulations of human rights, in particular political and civil rights. This objection seems to have increased since the 1999 statement by the UN Secretary General (see below) confirming that genocide and extensive abuses of human rights are reasons for overruling sovereignty and for justifying military intervention.

The humanitarian critique also highlights the failure of state-centric approaches to consider other areas of international law which legislate against the principle of physical harm to people in a variety of other

<sup>32</sup> Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, <[www.unhcr.ch/html/menu3/b/p\\_genoci.htm](http://www.unhcr.ch/html/menu3/b/p_genoci.htm)>.

<sup>33</sup> Ellen Seidensticker, 'Human security, human rights, and human development', Commission of Human Security, 5 February 2002, <[www.humansecurityhs.org/activities/outreach/0206harvard.pdf](http://www.humansecurityhs.org/activities/outreach/0206harvard.pdf)>, accessed 20 July 2002.

<sup>34</sup> Seidensticker, 'Human security'.

<sup>35</sup> Seidensticker, 'Human security'.

situations. Examples of such international law include: (a) international humanitarian law (IHL) which in wartime protects people who are no longer participants in the hostilities;<sup>36</sup> (b) the establishment of three international tribunals—one of which is permanent—to ‘try persons accused of violations of international law, including humanitarian law’;<sup>37</sup> (c) the UN resolutions that establish standards for the protection of civilians during internal conflict;<sup>38</sup> (d) a UN *aide memoire* for ‘consideration of issues pertaining to the protection of civilians during the Security Council’s deliberations of peacekeeping mandates’;<sup>39</sup> and (e) the UN resolutions against terrorism.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>36</sup> The four Geneva Conventions of 1949 and their two Additional Protocols of 1977 are the principle instruments of humanitarian law. In addition there is a body of universal customary rules, reflecting the treaty-based norms, that is binding on all states regardless of ratification. According to Jakob Kellenberger, President of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), ‘this customary law offers or, rather should offer, a measure of security in situations where the treaties do not formally apply or where the rules are less developed, especially in non-international conflicts’. See Jakob Kellenberger, ‘International humanitarian law at the beginning of the 21st century’, statement to the 26th Round Table in San Remo, 5–7 September 2002.

<sup>37</sup> The two tribunals for Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia, and the International Criminal Court (ICC) are mechanisms not only for punishing crimes against humanity but also, it is hoped, for preventing such events by deterrence. The UN Security Council voted unanimously on 12 July 2002 that the ICC be established. See Kellenberger, ‘International humanitarian law at the beginning of the 21st century’.

<sup>38</sup> UN Security Council Presidential Statement (S/PRST/2002/6), 15 March 2002, <ods-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N02/288/93/IMG/N0228893.pdf?OpenElement>, accessed 21 October 2002.

<sup>39</sup> These are decided on a case-by-case basis but also suggest that such considerations should go beyond peacekeeping. The *aide memoire* states that ‘most frequently civilians are caught in circumstances of dire need where a peacekeeping operation has not been established. Such situations may require the urgent attention by the Council’. The *aide memoire* for Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict sets out around a dozen areas for consideration: for example, access to vulnerable populations; separation of civilians and armed elements; justice and reconciliation; security, law and order; disarmament, demobilisation, reintegration and rehabilitation, small arms and mine action; effects on women and children; and so on. UN Security Council Presidential Statement (S/PRST/2002/6).

<sup>40</sup> Among the many recent and past resolutions passed by the General Assembly, are A/RES/54/164 and A/RES/48/122. The latter expresses that the General Assembly is ‘seriously concerned at the gross violations of human rights perpetrated by terrorist groups’. This resolution makes it clear that both states and people that commit terrorist acts against both states and people are condemned. The resolution ‘unequivocally condemns all acts, methods and practices of terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, wherever and by whomever committed, as activities aimed at the destruction of

In addition to the critique of the traditional approach from normative, utilitarian and consequential viewpoints, the human-centric approach has several advantages for conceptualising security. In contrast to traditional approaches it offers insights into the cause of violence within the states, such as civil war. It provides an important focus on the nexus between the different dimensions of human security (for example, the nexus between the harms of underdevelopment and political violence). It sets formal and informal benchmarks for practical prosecution of offenders of human security and it can act as a deterrent. It also acts as a political organising umbrella. As an organising concept it can collect many of the threats to humans under one name even if it cannot necessarily say why these particular threats were singled out as especially important for human security. Another effect of human security is that it provides political glue among its many different actors. The increasing number of non-state actors, each of which believes their particular issue is the most urgent to resolve and each of which competes for state and private funding and intellectual resources, are glued together by an open-ended concept whose vision of what 'ought-to-be' is one that no one could reject.

### **The 'in-camp critique' of the human-centric approach**

Advocates of the human-centric approach would have little disagreement with the above critique of the state-centric approach. Nonetheless, there are differences within the camp. There is scepticism about the prospects of setting practical agendas when the scope of the human security agenda is as vast and wide-ranging as that set out in the *Human development report 1994*, and when there appears to be no conceptually binding link between all the different aspects of human security. There is also the concern that it is difficult to prioritise issues without some agreed criteria, adding to the problems of practice.

These concerns about the practical feasibility of researching and formulating practical agendas for human security have led some scholars

human rights, fundamental freedoms and democracy, threatening the territorial integrity and security of States, destabilizing legitimately constituted Governments, undermining pluralistic civil society and having adverse consequences on the economic and social development of States'. See 'Human rights and terrorism', A/RES/48/122, <[www.un.org/documents/ga/res/48/a48r122.htm](http://www.un.org/documents/ga/res/48/a48r122.htm)>. For the full range of Security Council and General Assembly resolutions, see <[www.un.org/terrorism/sc.htm](http://www.un.org/terrorism/sc.htm)>.

towards narrower understandings of the concept, in terms of threats and means. For example, Andrew Mack, Chair of Human Security at the University of British Columbia, is head of the Human Security Report Project that maps the incidence, causes, consequences and policy responses to global violence—criminal as well as political.<sup>41</sup> For Mack this narrower focus on political and criminal violence is justified because for the purposes of analysis, poverty and violence, for example, must be treated independently. As he explains, '[a]ny definition that has the consequences of conflating dependent and independent variables makes causal analysis virtually impossible'.<sup>42</sup> A similar concern about the scope of the concept apparently led to the recent decision by the Commission of Human Security (see below) to divide their research agenda into two related parts: conflict and human security, and development and human security.<sup>43</sup>

There is also a division within the human-centric camp over ends and means.<sup>44</sup> Many advocates take a strong normative position and argue that human security is the only end, that state security is a means, never an end. Others take a more flexible position arguing that ends and means are not necessarily at odds with each other. While the end is human security, in some instances pursuing state security can also be an end that benefits both the state and people.

In reviewing the various critiques made by each approach to security, several points seem clear. From the state-centric perspective the main problems with human-centric approaches are that, from a disciplinary perspective they conflict with the dominant boundaries of the discipline of

<sup>41</sup> The first report is due to be published in late 2003. See the Canadian Consortium on Human Security website <[www.humansecurity.info](http://www.humansecurity.info)>.

<sup>42</sup> Andrew Mack, 'The human security report project', draft copy sent to author June 2002. Also see <[www.humansecurity.info](http://www.humansecurity.info)>.

<sup>43</sup> See the Commission on Human Security (CHS) website, <[www.humansecurity-chs.org](http://www.humansecurity-chs.org)>. The CHS is an independent body, founded by the UN, with a grant provided by the Japanese government.

<sup>44</sup> See the exchange between Alex J. Bellamy and Matt McDonald, "'The utility of human security': Which humans? What security? A reply to Thomas & Tow", *Security Dialogue* 33(3) 2002, pp. 373–7; and Nicholas Thomas and William T. Tow, 'Gaining security by trashing the state? A reply to Bellamy & McDonald', *Security Dialogue* 33(3) 2002, pp. 379–82. For the original article that started the exchange see Nicholas Thomas and William T. Tow, 'The utility of human security: Sovereignty and humanitarian intervention', *Security Dialogue* 33(2) 2002, pp. 177–92.

IR/SS, which focus on the external security relations between states and on establishing international order. Conceptually, bringing in other definitions of security, such as human security, will make the concept meaningless. The broad definitions of human security provide little direction for research and policy decisions. In practice focusing on the internal security issues will have the effect of undermining the principle of sovereignty which is critical for maintaining international order.

From the human-centric perspective security concerns people and it incorporates a state's internal issues when people are suffering serious harms, for example from underdevelopment and neglect of humanitarian principles, and when the state does not act to correct these problems. The security of people is a normative issue in its own right but it also has practical consequences for internal and international order. Hence, internal and external security issues are interrelated.

The various critiques suggest that an ideal-type approach to conceptualising and practicing security would in principle comprise several propositions: people and the state are referent objects; threats have internal and external dimensions and involve organised political violence often associated with underdevelopment factors; the means for enhancing security involve a range of measures that deal with the various threats mentioned; and finally, many of these issues are connected and interact with each other, perhaps in a dialectic.

#### **AN EVOLVING SECURITY DIALECTIC?**

The critiques above have helped to further clarify the differences between the traditional and human security positions. Many scholars would doubt that more than this had been achieved.<sup>45</sup> However, I suggest three hypotheses indicate that something more is happening. First, the discussions are also encouraging some scholars to compare the two approaches, to consider the advantages and disadvantages, the virtues and flaws and the strengths and weaknesses of each perspective. As a result it is now possible to find scholarship that appears to recognise some of the ideal-type propositions mentioned above. Second, some of this scholarship not

<sup>45</sup> See the earlier discussion about the criticisms of human security.

only appreciates that there are different dimensions of security but also that there is a dialectic between them. Third, there is a nascent attempt to develop, often unreflectively, a middle path or *via media* between the state-centric and human-centric approaches.

The idea that there is considerable interaction between different approaches to international relations has a precedent within the discipline. Martin Wight, a scholar from the English School, argues that the writers of international theory follow three traditions: realists are those 'who emphasise and concentrate upon the element of international anarchy, the Rationalists those who emphasise and concentrate on the elements of international discourses, and Revolutionists are those who emphasise and concentrate upon the element of the society of states or intellectual society.'<sup>46</sup> He is emphatic that the traditions 'are streams, with eddies and cross-currents, sometimes interlacing and never for long confined to their own river bed ... They influence and cross-fertilise one another and they change although without, I think, losing their inner identity'.<sup>47</sup> Wight's metaphor is indicative of a dialectic which is continued in his claim that the great writers of international theory 'straddle the frontiers dividing two of the traditions, and most of these writers transcend their own systems'.<sup>48</sup> Wight also considers the idea of a *via media*, arguing that it is the rationalist tradition which is 'the broad middle road'.<sup>49</sup> A. Clare Cutler neatly sums up Wight's apparent emphasis on movement between traditions and a middle way, or *via media*, in her statement that he has an 'inability to embrace any one single formulation'.<sup>50</sup>

<sup>46</sup> Martin Wight, *International theory: The three traditions*, eds Gabriele Wight and Brian Porter (Leicester and London: Leicester University Press, 1991), pp. 7–8.

<sup>47</sup> Wight, *International theory*, p. 260.

<sup>48</sup> Wight, *International theory*, p. 259.

<sup>49</sup> Wight, *International theory*, p. 14.

<sup>50</sup> A. Claire Cutler, 'The "Grotian tradition" in international relations', *Review of International Studies* 17(1) 1991, pp. 41–65, at p. 52.

Although Wight's focus is at the international level he is mindful that individuals are at the core of international security.<sup>51</sup> That said, he seems to assume, erroneously in some circumstances, that not only is international society the best way to preserve state security but that states will protect their citizens not just from the external harm of military force but also from internal harms of physical violence.<sup>52</sup> With these qualifications we can draw from Wight the idea that international relations theory involves interaction, or a dialectic, as well as a middle way, or via media, between different traditions.

Wight's view that writers often 'straddle the frontiers dividing two of the traditions, and most of these writers transcend their own systems' is reflected in the writings of several IR/SS scholars over the last three to four years.<sup>53</sup> These scholars, just as Cutler remarked of Wight, show an 'inability to embrace any one single formulation'.<sup>54</sup> Four academic works by well-known scholars, Sverre Lodgaard, William Tow and Nicholas Thomas, Dewi Fortuna Anwar and Astri Suhrke, demonstrate, I suggest, that there are security dialectics between the state-centric and human-centric approaches and, to a much lesser extent, via medias. In making this argument the ideal-type propositions that evolved from an examination of earlier critiques will be adopted as the basis for analysis.

**A security dialectic between states and people as referent objects (proposition one)**

Interestingly all the works either explicitly or implicitly confirmed this proposition. Lodgaard argues that 'as the dust of the conceptual debate in the early 1990s settles' it is now clear that the concepts of state security

<sup>51</sup> Martin Wight, 'Western values in international relations', in Herbert Butterfield and Martin Wight, eds, *Diplomatic investigations: Essays in the theory of international politics* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1966), pp. 89–131, at p. 101.

<sup>52</sup> Hedley Bull also seems to assume that the state will protect its people within. He is unconvinced that individuals should be entitled to address their insecurity through claims for human rights. He argues that 'carried to its logical extreme, the doctrine of human rights and duties under international law is subversive of the whole principle that mankind should be organised as society of states'. Hedley Bull, *The anarchical society: A study of order in world politics* (London: Macmillan, 1977), p. 152.

<sup>53</sup> Wight, *International theory*, p. 259.

<sup>54</sup> Cutler, 'The "Grotian tradition"', p. 52.



and human security will be 'the concepts that security policies will be organised around for a long time ahead'.<sup>55</sup> Hence Lodgaard proposes a reconceptualisation of the idea of security as a 'dual concept of state security and human security'.<sup>56</sup> Security involves both. Security of states, or national security, concerns defence of 'territorial integrity of the state and freedom to determine one's own form of government'.<sup>57</sup> Security of states, at the global level, is possible but not always probable, through collective security, sometimes through collective defence. Security of the people involves a widening of the idea of security, from the exclusive reserve of security of the state, to the security of people. Furthermore, he argues, the objective of human security is the safety and survival of people, or in other words freedom from fear of physical violence.<sup>58</sup>

Thomas and Tow<sup>59</sup> imply rather than assert that the state and people are referent objects. The authors claim, that their objective is 'assessing how the *evolution* of human security might proceed in ways that co-exist with more traditional approaches, rather than advocating the former outlook's complete revision', implies dual referents.<sup>60</sup> However, Thomas and Tow are primarily focused on analysing how internal threats arising from under-development can spill-over borders and destabilise relations between states. Hence, they embrace the human-centric approach primarily as a means for preventing internal issues arising that undermine the state-centric approach to security. Nonetheless, the human-centric approach is present in the

<sup>55</sup> Lodgaard refers to the empirical developments that have led to support for the view expressed in the 1995 Report on the Commission for Global Governance which makes a distinction between the security of states and people[s]. This followed collective security interventions on behalf of the UN, for example in Iraq (1991) and Somalia (1992–93) where the costs to humans, that is civilians, caused by the state and in the absence of the state respectively, indicated that security had widened qualitatively, or in terms of the referent object. Lodgaard, 'Human security: Concept and operationalisation', pp. 1–2.

<sup>56</sup> Lodgaard, 'Human security: Concept and operationalisation', p. 6.

<sup>57</sup> Lodgaard, 'Human security: Concept and operationalisation', p. 1.

<sup>58</sup> Lodgaard, 'Human security: Concept and operationalisation', p. 6.

<sup>59</sup> Thomas and Tow, 'The utility of human security', p. 189.

<sup>60</sup> Thomas and Tow, 'The utility of human security', p. 179, emphasis in original.

analysis of causes and in the effects of spill-over conflict on the security of people in other states.

Anwar's argument that 'human rights are regarded as universal values that must be protected universally' and that 'at the same time ... the existence of states is critical for the protection of human security' indicates that both people and the state are important referent objects.<sup>61</sup> She is explicit that 'state security and human security must not be seen as antagonistic. Instead they should be regarded as a continuum—each reinforcing the other'.<sup>62</sup> Her key argument is that '[t]here can be no real security for the state if its people are not secure'.<sup>63</sup>

Suhrke provides a different way of examining the relationship between the state and human-centric approaches.<sup>64</sup> Her theoretical focus suggests a constitutive relationship between the norm of human security and national interests and it therefore assumes connections and dialectics between the state and people referent objects. Like Thomas and Tow, she shows that state-centric approaches, or neorealist interests, can be behind a state's endorsement of human-centric approaches.<sup>65</sup> However, Suhrke's main point is that this neorealist perspective cannot answer why the idea of human security, rather than state security, is selected by these countries 'as a guarantor of human rights and humanitarian benefits'.<sup>66</sup> For Suhrke, the introduction and now centrality of human security in Canadian and Norwegian foreign policy, shows that 'norms shape the interests of states in at least two ways: by influencing the definition of interests, and by influencing their order of priority'.<sup>67</sup> Humanitarian ideas, such as human security, have 'become the principal normative reference for states and

<sup>61</sup> Anwar, 'Human security: An intractable problem', p. 564.

<sup>62</sup> Anwar, 'Human security: An intractable problem', p. 565.

<sup>63</sup> Anwar, 'Human security: An intractable problem', p. 565.

<sup>64</sup> Astri Suhrke, 'Human security and the interests of states', *Security Dialogue* 30(3) 1999, pp. 265–76, at p. 268.

<sup>65</sup> Suhrke suggests the Norwegian–Canadian endorsement of human security 'can to some extent be explained in this perspective'. Suhrke, 'Human security and the interests of states', p. 268.

<sup>66</sup> Suhrke, 'Human security and the interests of states', p. 265.

<sup>67</sup> Suhrke, 'Human security and the interests of states', p. 265.

organisations to clarify their international obligations, or against which to hold others responsible'.<sup>68</sup> Hence, if states foreign policy is partly constituted through reference to the norm of human security then it is also possible to argue that there is a security dialectic between the referent objects of state and people.

**Threats and means: A dialectic between threats located inside and outside the state and between threats of violence and non-violent factors (proposition two)**

**The mixture of means: Force, humanitarian principles and development (proposition three)**

The second proposition, that security threats are located inside and outside the state and comprise both violent and non-violent factors, applies to all the works being examined. Likewise the third proposition, that the means for enhancing security are mixed. For Lodgaard, the threats to people mostly concern physical violence.<sup>69</sup> He justifies his limitation to fear of physical violence and the obvious fact that it 'corresponds to the core of state security'.<sup>70</sup> Without such limits, he argues, 'the concept becomes all-inclusive and therefore empty of content ... [and] the issues and their solutions do not necessarily benefit from being securitised'.<sup>71</sup> He nonetheless adds flexibility under certain conditions, saying that '[t]hreats and means vary with time and space and there is not uniformity in their inclusion in or exclusion from the security paradigm'.<sup>72</sup> With regard to means, Lodgaard suggests a mixture of force and other non-violent measures. The three core elements on the policy agenda of human security are: (a) preventive actions (eliminating factors that compromise freedom from fear); (b) addressing the means of violence (small arms and light

<sup>68</sup> Suhrke, 'Human security and the interests of states', p. 269.

<sup>69</sup> Lodgaard, 'Human security: Concept and operationalisation', p. 6.

<sup>70</sup> Both of them centre on material means, usually referred to as military force in the context of state security, physical violence in the case of human security. Lodgaard, 'Human security: Concept and operationalisation', p. 9.

<sup>71</sup> Lodgaard, 'Human security: Concept and operationalisation', p. 6.

<sup>72</sup> Lodgaard, 'Human security: Concept and operationalisation', p. 6.

weapons); and (c) joint efforts by government and non-government actors, especially during peace operations.<sup>73</sup>

The particular threats that Thomas and Tow examine are 'transnational threats' but specifically those that arise from problems of underdevelopment and which threaten both people within and in other states and which undermine international peace and stability. As mentioned above, the main focus is on threats to the state-to-state relations from human insecurities. The main means for addressing what amounts to multiple threats to people and state, is the state. In their view 'in order for human security to be advanced, at least in the short term, it must be embodied by states that overwhelmingly remain the predominant agents of international relations in our time'.<sup>74</sup> However the authors caution that the state can be 'a critical determinant of human security or human insecurity'.<sup>75</sup> Thus the means for addressing transnational threats to people and states also involves international intervention involving other states but also non-state actors from international civil society. International intervention consists of peacekeeping, involving the use of force, and peacebuilding involving non-state actors. As they say, 'in this context, human security politics dovetails with more traditional (state-centric) responses to crises'.<sup>76</sup>

For Anwar there are threats to both people and the state. The *Human development report 1994*, she argues shows that 'to focus only on the security of the state, particularly on the military threat to state security is to miss the whole range of threats that make human existence unbearable'.<sup>77</sup> At the same time she recognises that the state, especially Asian states during the post-colonial period, confronts 'external enemies' and transnational threats. Anwar is most concerned about human security as an 'intractable problem' in Asia and her suggested means involve establishing democracy

<sup>73</sup> Lodgaard, 'Human security: Concept and operationalisation', pp. 15–24.

<sup>74</sup> Thomas and Tow, 'Gaining security by trashing the state?', p. 381.

<sup>75</sup> Thomas and Tow, 'Gaining security by trashing the state?', p. 380.

<sup>76</sup> Thomas and Tow, 'The utility of human security', p. 183.

<sup>77</sup> Anwar, 'Human security: An intractable problem', p. 564.

to address internal political violence and greater involvement by regional institutions with transnational issues.<sup>78</sup>

**A security dialectic between internal and external security (proposition four)**

All the works examined confirm the proposition that internal and external security issues are interrelated and there are dialectics between them. For Lodgaard, human, state and international security are interconnected and states' legitimacy increasingly depends on adherence to international law and attention to domestic conflicts, since most have external consequences.<sup>79</sup> Thomas and Tow emphasise that 'security politics as a whole should be seen as a mix of domestic and international issues'.<sup>80</sup> Anwar argues that human security 'links the various domains of security' in ways that show it is 'no longer possible to draw a rigid line between internal and external matters'.<sup>81</sup>

In sum the scholarly works discussed above demonstrate, in my view, that some scholars are adopting a conceptualisation of security that is similar to the ideal-type proposition that was constructed from the two security critiques of the state-centric and human-centric approaches. There are dual referent objects, the state and people, and dialectics between them. Interestingly then, there is a widening of referent objects in comparison to traditional approaches but a narrowing in comparison to some non-traditional and human-centric approaches that do not limit referents. If there are dual referent objects it follows that there is also a widening of means to enhance the security. The use of force is a critical means for countering external military threats and violent internal threats to people, either from communal groups or the state. Non-military means are equally important in situations where physical violence is caused by the conditions associated with underdevelopment. Interestingly although there are dual referent

<sup>78</sup> Suhrke's argument about interests and norms is not focused on issues of threats and means and therefore will not be discussed.

<sup>79</sup> Lodgaard, 'Human security: Concept and operationalisation', p. 3.

<sup>80</sup> Thomas and Tow, 'The utility of human security', p. 183.

<sup>81</sup> Anwar, 'Human security: An intractable problem', p. 565.

objects, the nature of threats in the works discussed is usually limited to political violence to people or the state. This political violence, as Tow and Thomas suggest, is often in a causal dialectic with problems of under-development. Internal violence, as Tow and Thomas also suggest, has destabilising transnational effects. These interconnections demonstrate a security dialectic between the referent objects, internal and external threats, and the means for enhancing security.

#### THE AGENTS OF SECURITY

The discussion above is largely a conceptual elaboration. The question it raises is, to what extent are the ideal-type propositions regarding security dialectics and referent objects, threats and means applicable to the practices of security agents, such as global institutions, states and non-state actors?

Several global institutions and states endorse the proposition that the state and people are referent objects. The UN, particularly its current Secretary General, Kofi Annan,<sup>82</sup> is one of the strongest advocates of human-centric approaches. In several speeches and major policy statements, Annan appears to link the various levels of global, state and people security and argues for ‘Two concepts of sovereignty’—state and human sovereignty. ‘Two concepts of sovereignty’ was the title of Annan’s speech to the General Assembly on 18 September 1999, in which he attempted to redress the balance favouring state security, particularly when states fail to uphold human security. He argues that:

States are now widely understood to be instruments at the service of their peoples, and not vice versa. At the same time individual sovereignty—by which I mean the fundamental freedom of each individual, enshrined in the charter of the UN and subsequent treaties—has been enhanced by a renewed

<sup>82</sup> Annan’s predecessor Boutros Boutros-Ghali had advocated change to the way that state sovereignty was conceptualised: ‘The foundation stone of this work is and must remain the State. Respect for its fundamental sovereignty and integrity is crucial to any common international progress. The time for absolute and exclusive sovereignty, however, has passed; its theory never matched by reality’. *An agenda for peace: Preventive diplomacy, peacemaking and peacekeeping*, Report of the Secretary General Pursuant to the Statement Adopted by the Summit Meeting of the Security Council on 31 January 1992, reprinted in Adam Roberts and Benedict Kingsbury, eds, *United Nations, divided world: The UN’s role in international relations*, new expanded edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), pp. 468–98, at p. 474.

and spreading consciousness of individual rights ... Nothing in the UN charter precludes a recognition that there are rights beyond borders ... Humanity, after all is indivisible ... In the context of many of the challenges facing humanity today, the collective interest is the national interest.<sup>83</sup>

A year later when the Secretary General presented the UN's Millennium Report, which significantly he titled 'We the peoples', he again advised member states of the General Assembly to redress the balance and to 'think of security less in terms of merely defending territory, and more in terms of protecting people'.<sup>84</sup> In the text of the report, Annan argued that 'a new concept of security is evolving ... [which has] come to embrace protection of communities and individuals from internal violence'.<sup>85</sup> Protection may involve 'armed action'. It is this possibility that the Secretary General states, is 'a real dilemma', since 'both the defence of humanitarian and the defence of sovereignty are principles that must be supported' and there is nothing that tells us 'which principle should prevail when they are in conflict'. Nonetheless, Annan is sure that 'no legal principle—not even sovereignty—can ever shield crimes against humanity' and hence under these conditions he makes human security the primary referent object.

Notwithstanding Annan's attempts to elevate human-centric conceptualisations of security, in practice the UN is made up of sovereign states all endorsing state-centric approaches. Indeed, James Gow argues that UN actions are driven by concerns about international order. For Gow, when 'an internal matter affects other states in the international community then neither the UNSC, on behalf of the system as a whole, nor the relevant affected states can afford to have their own vested interest in a viable, stable order undermined, whether this is in terms of material or ideational interests'.<sup>86</sup>

<sup>83</sup> *The Economist* 18 September 1999, pp. 49–50.

<sup>84</sup> 'We the peoples: The role of the United Nations in the 21st century', <[www.un.org/millennium/sg/report/state.htm](http://www.un.org/millennium/sg/report/state.htm)>, p. 4.

<sup>85</sup> <[www.un.org/millennium/sg/report/ch3.htm](http://www.un.org/millennium/sg/report/ch3.htm)>.

<sup>86</sup> James Gow, 'A revolution in international affairs?', *Security Dialogue* 31(3) 2000, pp. 293–306, at p. 296.

The UN's support for both the security of the state and people is also similar to the approach adopted by two other major global institutions, the World Bank and the IMF. The World Bank President, James Wolfensohn, while still supporting the state, argues that prevention of conflict between and within states depends on alleviating the conditions of underdevelopment, especially poverty. An indication of the Bank's concern about conflict and poverty was that the President for the first time addressed the UN Security Council on 10 January 2000 and emphasised that 'to prevent violent conflict we need a comprehensive, equitable and inclusive approach to development'.<sup>87</sup> The IMF approaches security mainly in economic terms<sup>88</sup> by addressing the connections between low growth, poverty and violence, but also considers the states responsibility to support human rights as critical elements towards that end.<sup>89</sup>

Like the UN, an increasing number of countries are making human-centric approaches part of their traditional state-centric foreign policies. Perhaps the best known position is Canada's which was developed and widely presented by the former Foreign Minister, Lloyd Axworthy. The most comprehensive official account, *Freedom from fear: Canada's foreign policy for human security* was published by Canada's Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade in 2000.<sup>90</sup> Here it is argued that 'the

<sup>87</sup> 'Wolfensohn calls for "war on AIDS"', News release no 2000/172/S, <web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/NEWS/0,,contentMDK:20016179~menuPK:34463~pagePK:34370~piPK:34424~theSitePK:4607,00.html>, accessed 28 February 2001.

<sup>88</sup> The First Deputy Managing Director of the IMF, Anne Kruger, claims that 'supporting globalisation is one of the best investments we can make to improve today's security environment'. The IMF's security focus is on the 'cycle of violence, low growth and poverty'. See 'Assistance to post-conflict countries and the HIPC framework', paper prepared jointly by the staffs on the World Bank and IMF, 20 April 2001, pp. 1–29, <www.imf.org/external/np/speeches/2002/092602a.htm>, accessed 14 October 2002.

<sup>89</sup> The IMF claims that 'all of the IMF's activities contribute directly or indirectly to reducing poverty and fostering human rights'. However, states that 'display egregious disrespect for human rights find that the international community is unwilling to provide the financial resources necessary to make their adjustment programs viable. In such cases, the IMF would be unable to assist the countries'. See Sergio Pereira Leite, 'Human rights and the IMF', *Finance and Development* 38(4) 2001, <http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/fandd/2001/12/leite.htm>, accessed 14 October 2002.

<sup>90</sup> *Freedom from fear: Canada's foreign policy for human security* (Ottawa: Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, 2000), <pubx.dfait-maeci.gc.ca/00\_Global/Pubs\_Cat2.nsf/189d2b90aa3c50cb88256a4900709038/56153893ff8dfda285256bc700653b9f?OpenDocument>.



concept of peace and security—national, regional and global—makes sense only if it derived from individual security ... This is what we mean by human security'.<sup>91</sup> From the Canadian perspective, national and human security are 'complementary'.<sup>92</sup> But when states are not 'guarantors of human security ... when [they] are internally repressive or too weak to govern effectively, people suffer. In the face of massive state-sponsored murder, the calculated brutalization of people and appalling violations of human rights, the humanitarian imperative to act cannot be ignored and can, in some cases, outweigh concerns about sovereignty'.<sup>93</sup> Like the UN, Canada makes human security the primary referent under certain conditions.

There is growing interest in human-centric approaches among many other states. Norway,<sup>94</sup> Japan,<sup>95</sup> and states in the OECD<sup>96</sup> all incorporate, albeit it in different ways, various elements. In addition at least some 13 countries have become members of the Human Security Network.<sup>97</sup> The chair for 2002–03, Austria, has set an agenda during this period on human rights education and addressing the plight of children in armed conflicts.<sup>98</sup>

Even though over the last decade more and more governments have become committed to the idea of human security in its various formulations there is little evidence that these states put less emphasis on their own traditional state-centric approaches, either conceptually or in practice.

<sup>91</sup> *Freedom from fear*, p. 1.

<sup>92</sup> *Freedom from fear*, p. 3.

<sup>93</sup> *Freedom from fear*, p. 3.

<sup>94</sup> Suhrke, 'Human security and the interests of states'.

<sup>95</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, *Diplomatic bluebook 2000: Toward the 21st century: Foreign policy for a better future* (Tokyo: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 2000), <[www.mofa.go.jp/policy/other/bluebook/2000/II-3-a.html](http://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/other/bluebook/2000/II-3-a.html)>.

<sup>96</sup> 'Helping prevent violent conflict: Orientations for external partners', <[www.oecd.org/dac/htm/g-con.htm](http://www.oecd.org/dac/htm/g-con.htm)>, p. 2.

<sup>97</sup> As of June 2001, the members of the Human Security Network include Austria, Canada, Chile, Greece, Ireland, Jordan, Mali, the Netherlands, Norway, Slovenia, South Africa (observer), Switzerland and Thailand. See *Human Security Network News Bulletin* 1(1) 2001, <[www.hsph.harvard.edu/hpcr/hsn/news\\_bulletin\\_v1\\_i1.pdf](http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/hpcr/hsn/news_bulletin_v1_i1.pdf)>.

<sup>98</sup> See *Human Security Network News Bulletin*, p. 2.

Apparently many policy makers in these states are uncertain about what is actually meant by human security and exactly what guidance it provides for practical approaches and setting priorities. Harvard academic, Gary King points out that when he and a colleague were preparing a study on human security they 'conducted informal and off-the-record interviews with politicians and officials responsible for the foreign policy in several countries that describe their policy as in some way based on human security'.<sup>99</sup> And as King discovered, '[v]irtually every person we spoke with was concerned that there existed no widely accepted or coherent definition of human security and that there were considerable conceptual problems in relating human security, human development, and the development focus on poverty together in the articulation of their foreign policy'.<sup>100</sup>

Apart from some confusion about the meaning of human security the most obvious point is that countries endorsing human security continue to endorse traditional state-centric approaches to security, especially in defence policy. Canada, which appears to have the strongest commitment and the most developed human security policy of all countries, did not under its most ardent proponent, Lloyd Axworthy, 'reflect or even acknowledge the new doctrines of human security and peace-building' in its defence policies.<sup>101</sup> While the level of combat capability required for the pursuit of human security beyond Canada's borders is a matter of debate, according to Project Ploughshares, the current multipurpose combat capable air, land and maritime force structure is not necessarily equipped to conduct 'the

<sup>99</sup> Gary King and Christopher Murray, 'Rethinking human security', 4 May 2000, <gking.harvard.edu/files/hs.pdf>.

<sup>100</sup> King and Murray, 'Rethinking human security'.

<sup>101</sup> Project Ploughshares, 'Human security and military procurement: A Project Ploughshares' brief to the House of Commons Standing Committee on National Defence and Veteran Affairs', Ploughshares Working Paper 99-1 (Ontario: Project Ploughshares, Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies, Conrad Grebel College, 27 May 1999), p. 1, <www.ploughshares.ca/content/WORKING%20PAPERS/wp991.html>, accessed 28 March 2001. According to the Canadian Chief of Land Staff, in 1999 Canadian Forces had been deployed on 65 missions over the last decade compared to some 25 missions over the previous 40 years. See D.Net Newsroom, 'Lgen W. Leach, "CF perspectives on human security"', 5 November 1999, <www.dnd.ca/site/newsroom/view\_news\_e.asp?id=457>, accessed 8 March 2001.

imperatives of human security articulated and advanced by DFAIT'.<sup>102</sup> Military capital spending during 1999–2000 to 2001–02 remains steady whereas non-military spending has fallen.<sup>103</sup> Again according to the Plowshares Project, '[i]ronically precisely when peace-building and human security concerns have been most forcefully articulated in Canada as key to advancing international peace and security, funding for development and for non-military approaches to human security has been in precipitous decline'.<sup>104</sup> Moreover, according to the North-South Institute,<sup>105</sup> notwithstanding Canada's leadership in eliminating landmines it continues to use the command-detonated Claymore antipersonnel mine and, notwithstanding strict controls on small arms, it continues to 'export military goods to countries where armed conflict persists or whose governments have been cited for human rights violations'.<sup>106</sup> Equally telling is that from the perspective of the Canadian Chief of Land Staff, LtGen W. Leach, peace has not broken out in the post-Cold War period, indeed, 'for the military, nothing has disappeared but the list has just got longer!'.<sup>107</sup>

Japan's endorsement of human security now coincides with the Japanese Self Defence Force (JSDF) playing unprecedented operations on foreign soil under the auspices of UN Peacekeeping Operations (UNPKOs).<sup>108</sup> The JSDF participated in UNPKOs in Cambodia, the Golan Heights, Mozambique, East Timor and most recently, under recent anti-terrorist

<sup>102</sup> Project Plowshares, 'Human security and military procurement', p. 5.

<sup>103</sup> The average is C\$1.99 billion, which represents the average of 19.1 per cent of the total military budget. See Project Plowshares, 'Human security and military procurement', p. 5.

<sup>104</sup> Project Plowshares, 'Human security and military procurement', p. 2. According to Project Plowshares, 'in the 1990s, development spending has been cut by fully one-third. It is down now [1999] to roughly 0.3% of GNP despite a formal commitment to a target of 0.7% of GNP'.

<sup>105</sup> The North-South Institute is an independent, charitable organisation in Canada that provides research and information on foreign policy issues. It was founded in 1976.

<sup>106</sup> North-South Institute media release, 'Human security policy poses difficult choices, says new report', 21 August 2000, <[www.nsi-ins.ca/ensi/news\\_views/news22.html](http://www.nsi-ins.ca/ensi/news_views/news22.html)>, accessed 8 March 2001.

<sup>107</sup> See D.Net Newsroom, 'Lgen W. Leach, "CF perspectives on human security"'.

<sup>108</sup> In 1992 Japan passed the Law Concerning Cooperation for United Nations Peacekeeping Operations and Other Operations (the International Peace Cooperation Law) which allowed it to participate in three main forms of international peace cooperation: UN peacekeeping operations, international humanitarian relief operations, and international election monitoring activities.

legislation, the Japanese Maritime Self Defence Force was deployed in the Indian Ocean to support the US-led war on terrorism in Afghanistan.<sup>109</sup> Like Canada there appears to be no clear rationale provided by the JSDF that military capability spending takes account of Japan's human security policy. Japan's defence budget around the time that it introduced a policy of human security was US\$37.66 billion and three years later, by 2002, it had risen to US\$40.4 billion.<sup>110</sup> There was no clear reference by the JSDF that planning for human security roles was partly the reason. Indeed, the state-centric nature of security could be increasing in Japan. According to at least two strategic analysts, Japan's combat capability with regard to naval acquisitions is expanding so rapidly, along with those of China, Taiwan and South Korea, that these 'programs have overtones of arms racing which were not present in acquisitions prior to the economic downturn in 1997–98'.<sup>111</sup>

Apart from global institutions and states, other important agents of security are non-state actors (NSAs). Most humanitarian NSAs have critical views about the state-centric approach and, in their view, its neglect of human security. Nonetheless, NSAs and donor states are increasingly forming partnerships and becoming mutually dependent in many human security crises, especially when humanitarian intervention requires the use of force. NSAs and states that are concerned with human security issues are also increasingly coming together over some of the conceptual issues regarding the contentious issues of sovereignty and humanitarian

<sup>109</sup> Beth Greener-Barcham, PhD candidate, Department of International Relations, The Australian National University, provided helpful ideas about Japan's contemporary security position. Discussions 30 October 2002.

<sup>110</sup> International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The military balance 2000–2001* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, October 2000), pp. 167–218; and International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The military balance 2001–2002* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, October 2001), pp. 161–213. Unlike Canada, Japan's aid budget from 1990 to 2000 increased by almost 50 per cent, though in 2001 it began to decrease. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 'Fact sheet: Japan's development policies', <[www.mofa.go.jp/policy/economy/summit/2002/policy-f.html](http://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/economy/summit/2002/policy-f.html)>, accessed 11 November 2002.

<sup>111</sup> W.S.G. Bateman, 'Strategic and political aspects of the law of the sea in East Asia', PhD dissertation (Canberra: Australian Defence Force Academy, University of New South Wales, 2001), p. 85; and Desmond Ball, 'September 11: Political and security impact and changes in the strategic balance of the Asia-Pacific Region – An emerging arms race?', paper prepared for the 16th Asia-Pacific Roundtable, organised by ISIS Malaysia on behalf of ASEAN-ISIS, Kuala Lumpur, 2–6 June 2002, pp. 30–1.

intervention for human protection, as shown by the *Responsibility to protect* report.<sup>112</sup> In many of these endeavours NSAs are implicitly taking a position on security that involves seeking human-centric approaches by working with states to establish better states, which among other things adhere to internationally agreed norms of behaviour.

Reviewing the security approaches taken in the four scholarly works and by several security agents confirms that there are attempts to understand and practice security as a dialectic between the state-centric and human-centric paradigms. It is more difficult to argue from this analysis however that there is a synthesis or via media developing. However, Lodgaard's 'dual concept' is suggestive.

### **STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF SECURITY DIALECTICS**

The argument that security is beginning to involve a dialectic between the state-centric and human-centric approaches is still evolving and requires further conceptualising and empirical research. Its strength is that it grapples with the serious problem that the earlier critiques revealed, that the state-centric and human-centric approaches are each necessary but not sufficient to address the many dangerous issues on the contemporary security agenda. Recognising the value of both approaches and the security dialectic between referent objects, threats and means involves stepping across disciplinary boundaries. This will be considered a weakness by some IR scholars, such as Buzan.

Showing that there are dialectics between the elements will also be considered a weakness from a strong or purely normative perspective. From this viewpoint, people suffering the injustices of severe underdevelopment

<sup>112</sup> Two of the stated basic core principles of the report are that: 'State sovereignty implies responsibility, and the primary responsibility for the protection of its people lies with the state itself ... When a population is suffering serious harm, as a result of internal war, insurgency, repression or state failure, and the state in question is unwilling or unable to halt or avert it, the principle of non-intervention yields to the international responsibility to protect'. While these principles clearly challenge the common understanding of state sovereignty the objective is nonetheless to 'strengthen, not weaken the sovereignty of states, and to improve the capacity of the international community to react decisively when states are either unable or unwilling to protect their own people'. International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS), *The responsibility to protect* (Ottawa: International Development Research Centre, December 2001), p. 75.

and abuse of humanitarian principles, is morally wrong regardless of the consequences for external or internal order.

The human-centric approach adopted in the works examined is based on a weaker normative and more pragmatic stance than the one above. For example, Thomas and Tow describe a causal dialectic between internal problems and external order, arguing that it is necessary to prevent and address serious problems of underdevelopment inside states because this can lead to transnational threats to state-to-state relations, which in turn affects the security of people within that state and others. All the other works emphasise causal and constitutive connections and dialectics. This is not going to be acceptable to the strong normative position above and hence a weakness of security dialectics is its inability to accommodate this position.

On the other hand, the weaker normative and more pragmatic position is likely to be politically more acceptable to security agents. Having two referent objects helps to overcome some of the political-cultural resistance to the concept of human security which is seen as a replacement to the state referent object which is being imposed by the West on developing countries.

At the same time, because people are the other referent object, it puts conditions on the state-centric approach, for example on the right of sovereignty. An illustration of this can be seen in the *Responsibility to protect* report.<sup>113</sup> In effect the report takes sovereignty and people to be equally important, but reconceptualises sovereignty as a responsibility not an unequivocal right.

An empirical weakness of security dialectics is that even those states that put it into practice are at this stage still tipped towards the state-centric approach. Many other states hardly consider security dialectics as an approach or if they do it is focused on the development rather than the humanitarian agenda.

The final problem is that the security dialectics proposed in the earlier ideal-type and in the works examined fail to grapple with the issue of

<sup>113</sup> ICISS, *The responsibility to protect*.

balance, or establish what could be and should be a proper via media between the state and human-centric approaches.

### **Advancing the ideal-type security dialectic**

Clearly more conceptual and empirical research is needed to advance the earlier ideal-type security dialectic. On the issue of balance a useful starting point for discussion is Robert Jackson's argument.<sup>114</sup> Jackson points to the interconnectedness of security: 'In Kantian terms [it is not possible] to separate national security and human security, or international security and human security'.<sup>115</sup> Indeed, '[i]f human insecurity were tolerated in some states it would threaten the entire edifice of security because of the interconnectedness of the parts that form the whole'.<sup>116</sup> On the other hand, Jackson argues that making an international response to gross violations of human security a 'requirement', rather than a 'discretionary right'<sup>117</sup> would be 'nothing less than a normative revolution in world politics: away from national and international security and toward human security'.<sup>118</sup> It would, he argues, destroy the normative standing of sovereignty that makes possible the pluralistic society of states which in turn allows for international security. Making 'sovereignty universally conditional on respect for human rights' is problematic because this 'prospect of justifying the use of force to protect civilians in foreign countries raises fundamental normative issues which human security advocates and activists fail to consider'.<sup>119</sup> For Jackson, 'anyone who takes up Kant's theory in order to promote the doctrine of human security would be led astray by it'. Because, he argues, '[i]f Kant's doctrine of human security were instituted it would reverse the historic trend to limit

<sup>114</sup> Robert Jackson, *The global covenant: Human conduct in a world of states* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

<sup>115</sup> Jackson, *The global covenant*, p. 201.

<sup>116</sup> Jackson, *The global covenant*, p. 200.

<sup>117</sup> Jackson argues that it is this issue which is raised by the proposal from the Commission for Global Governance, to the effect that Article 2 of the UN Charter should be respected except for 'cases that constitute a violation of the security of people so gross and extreme that it requires an international response on humanitarian grounds', p. 212.

<sup>118</sup> Jackson, *The global covenant*, pp. 212–13.

<sup>119</sup> Jackson, *The global covenant*, pp. 212–13.

the right of war. That would be nothing less than a revolutionary change'.<sup>120</sup> Jackson's discussion raises some of the conceptual issues that need to be considered when trying to find a balance between the norms of sovereignty and human security.

Jackson's argument provides a point of entry for conceptually advancing the ideal-type security dialectic. There are also empirical issues that need to be researched: for example, (a) the conditions and context under which states pursue security dialectics; (b) how in practice there can be greater coordination between the state-centric and human-centric actors, for example, between government departments such as defence, foreign affairs and trade, international aid, and non-state actors on the one hand and on the other, the recipient actors, which may or may not involve state actors in the first instance; (c) an examination of how financial resources can be more equitably distributed among these actors; and (d) how to construct a defence force structure that can support both state-centric and human-centric approaches.

### CONCLUSION

We live in a world where the idea of security is changing. Terrorism is one of the major causes for this change in recent times. Counter-terrorism approaches should involve a particular formulation of the security dialectic between the state and human-centric approaches. In reality the 'war on terrorism' is too skewed towards the state-centric position and needs to be more balanced towards the human-centric approach.

In thinking more generally about changing notions of security in today's world we need to remind ourselves, as mentioned at the beginning of this paper, that the state, despite challenges, remains the dominant actor, state-centric security remains dominant and indeed relevant, and sovereignty is both a minus and a plus. It is also a world where there are growing normative and utilitarian imperatives to provide better security for people, and where there is greater interconnectedness between many of these issues. Security dialectics, and perhaps in the future via media approaches, can do that better than any single approach, though not without some problems.

<sup>120</sup> Jackson, *The global covenant*, pp. 212–13.



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