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Original citation:
Breslin, Shaun. (2014) Debating human security in China : towards discursive power?
Journal of Contemporary Asia . pp. 1-23. ISSN 0047-2336 (In Press)

Permanent WRAP url:
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Journal of Contemporary Asia on 20/05/2014, available online at:
http://www.tandfonline.com/10.1080/00472336.2014.907926
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DEBATING HUMAN SECURITY IN CHINA: TOWARDS DISCURSIVE POWER?

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Abstract: While the concept of Human Security is sometimes dismissed in China as an irrelevant and alien "Western" concept, it has been the subject of serious academic debate - particularly in the mid-2000s, when a series of crises led to a rethinking of the nature of security in and for China. But like other theories and concepts which have been largely developed outside China, Human Security has been "Sinicised" to reflect Chinese contexts and preferences. In the process, the emphasis on the individual human being that is normally at the heart of Human Security discourses is typically replaced by a focus on the collective humankind, and Chinese analyses are often packaged together with broader understandings of non-traditional security. This results in a Chinese version of the concept where the state remains a key referent point and actor – indeed, the state is the key guarantor of Human Security, not a threat to it. And it is this Chinese definition, so the argument goes, that Chinese practices should be judged against, and not supposed universal definitions that in reality only reflect the history and values (and interests) of Western states.

Key words: China, Human Security, global norms, universalism, security studies

2014 marked the twentieth anniversary of the publication of the UNDP Human

Development Report that introduced the search for "a new concept of Human Security"

(UNDP 1994, 3) that turned the focus of security from states to people, and saw the

solutions to insecurity in "development, not arms (UNDP 1994, 1). The basic thrust of

the Human Security (HS) agenda has often been simplified to the objective of

attaining individual "freedom from fear and want." Within this emphasis on freedom

from fear, there are implications for the nature of domestic political governance that

do not sit easily with political systems and processes in non-democratic countries. As

such, we might suspect that the HS concept might not be well suited to Chinese

understandings and discourses of security. And indeed, this is partly the case – it is

not a term that is widely used in official policy discourses, and as we shall see, there

is a strand of academic thought that sees it as another way in which the West tries to promote its human rights agendas and impose its liberal preferences on places like China under the false banner of "universalism" (Hu 2011).

But this rejectionist position does not tell the full story. While freedom from fear forms a core part of the HS agenda associated with Norwegian and Canadian approaches, preferences associated with Japanese conceptions stress the importance of freedom from want instead. This has provided a conceptual ambiguity that allows Chinese analysts to focus on socio-economic agendas rather than more "problematic" political-legal ones. Moreover, a series of crises since the late 1990s have resulted in a rethink of what constitutes the nature of security, and what constitute the major security challenges not just *to* China, but also *in* China. As part of this process, issues relating to HS have received increasing attention. To be sure, there is not an overwhelming Chinese literature on HS; by including papers primarily on Non-Traditional Security Studies (NTS) that contain sections on HS and those papers that engage in HS debates without using the specific term, just over 100 articles were identified written by Chinese scholars in China since the end of the 1990s. These written works were supplemented by three rounds of interviews with security specialists and students of international human rights issues in China.[1]

So the first, rather modest, objective of this paper is simply to introduce the reader to the range of Chinese thinking on HS and HS-related issues in a way that has not been done before; to provide access to writings that would not otherwise be easy to find even if you read Chinese (as perhaps best indicated by the rather long list of Chinese language sources in the list of references). And the emphasis here is on "range" – this paper will draw out some common themes in the literature, but there is

no single and shared understanding of what HS is, nor how (or even if) HS concerns could (or should) influence Chinese policy.

But already we come across methodological issues. That some writers don't explicitly refer to HS might suggest that they have not been influenced by HS debates but are instead pursuing different agendas. However, we have to bear in mind that HS is still a politically sensitive area, and it is sometimes easier to discuss contentious issues by avoiding the most problematic terms and concepts. Similarly, it is often easier to not directly highlight flaws in current Chinese thinking and practice and suggest alternatives than to simply draw attention to what others have done (and leave the conclusions unsaid).[2]

In addition, proponents of HS would see the conflation of HS with NTS as a serious flaw – and with good reasons (as the brief discussion of the distinction between the two in the following section make clear). But the rather frequent conflation of the two simply *is* part of some Chinese discourses. Excluding them on the grounds that they *should not* be part of the discourse would simply not be representative of the sub-field. Indeed, the sometimes rather blurred distinctions between HS and NTS point to the way in which HS is being reinterpreted and redefined in China to give it different meanings and implications that not only changes the understanding of what or who should be the human security reference point, but also how that security might be established and maintained. That Chinese thinkers bother to use the concept of HS to discuss these issues when (as we shall see) there are a range of other *nomenklatura*/approaches that they could use instead says something about how far HS has come in becoming established in international security thinking. That it can be interpreted in ways that move it away from its

supposedly distinctive concentration on the individual says something about its residual analytical fuzziness.

So the second objective of the paper is to show how these HS discussions contribute to existing understandings of the way in which concepts gain new meanings when they "travel" and are interpreted by different people in different places (see Bal, 2002). This is based on a firm conviction (perhaps even "project") that no concept or theory is simply "taken" and applied to China. Rather, as with the way that other "Western" concepts and norms such as human rights, nationalism, legitimacy and sovereignty have become part of Chinese discourses, they need to be "nationalised" - to be redefined to reflect unique and specific national circumstances (Weatherley 1999). Other countries, too, should define their own specific understanding of HS (and other concepts) based on their specific and unique histories, cultures and levels of development. The result, as one anonymous reviewer of this paper correctly pointed out, is to expand the understanding of what might constitute HS (and how it should be guaranteed) so far that the concept becomes all but pointless and redundant. And in many respects, this is the whole point of the exercise (for some at least). Rather than reject the concept as Western, such "discursive" or perhaps "definitional" power is deployed to "Sinicise" and hopefully (again, for some at least) neutralise HS as a potential way of attacking China for failing to measure up against some form of artificial, arbitrary and unfair standard.

WHAT'S IN A NAME? HUMAN SECURITY AND NON-TRADITIONAL SECURITY

Although the concepts of NTS and HS have been around for some time and have been the subject of a wealth of academic studies, it is worth spending a few words outlining the difference between them. Doing so helps understand the re-blurring of the distinction between them in some Chinese scholarship. At first sight, the boundaries also look blurred when it comes to considering the relationship between the two outside China as well, with researchers utilising both approaches often considering very similar issue areas – for example "HIV/AIDS, drugs, terrorism, small arms, inhumane weapons such as anti-personnel landmines, and trafficking in human beings" (Newman 2010, 80). But the key difference is – or at least should be – the referent point.

National Security and NTS

The emergence of NTS from the margins of security studies to becoming a major sub-discipline has its origins in the end of the Cold War and the idea that what constituted the biggest threat to international security and/or national security changed. Rather than the state or even the existence of humanity as a whole being primarily challenged by the threat of interstate war – and in particular, a thermo nuclear war – the focus turned to what might provide the new existential challenges to the state or the planet (Buzan and Hansen 2009). In reality, the challenges that were identified – terrorism, infectious diseases, environmental degradation, and so on - had been a fact of life (and death) in many parts of the world for some time. What elevated them from "development" issues to the status of "international security concerns" was that they now became issues for major Western powers as well.

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In the same year that the Human Development Report launched the HS concept, Kaplan (1994) sparked widespread debate in the US by pointing to how insecurity in the developing world resulting from population growth, the spread of diseases, criminal groups and poverty world would destabilise many political systems. This would have a knock-on effect on the stability of the international order *per se*, and through the spread of organised crime operations, migrants escaping conflict and poverty, and infectious diseases, have a long term direct impact on the USA: in the long term, so the argument goes, "their" problems become "our" problems (Diamond 2004). And of course terrorist attacks in the US in 2001, Madrid in 2004 and London in 2005 both focused attention on this threat to the individual, but through the invocation of a "War on Terror," to national security as well. As Liotta (2002, 473) argues:

> As disparate as these non-traditional issues may be – whether linked to climate change, resource scarcity, declining productivity, or transnational issues of criminality and terrorism – the developed world was now confronted with human-centered vulnerabilities that had often been present previously only in the context of non-traditional challenges for developing regions.

This understanding of NTS retains the focus on existential threats that Buzan argues is at the core of Security Studies (Buzan 1997) – even if the understanding of what's existence was at threat had become more complex and multifaceted. But the NTS agenda also goes a step further by moving into the terrain of securing economic interests. We see this manifest in the importance that state elites increasingly place on ensuring that their country can guarantee, for example, its energy security (Klare

2010). Similarly, the concept of food security no longer just refers to the desperate plight of people in danger of dying through starvation and malnutrition, but also to the ability of people (and states) to get supplies of the foods that they want to eat at acceptable and stable prices. This expanded understanding means that the search for food security is no longer just about preventing hunger, but now also about the geostrategic objectives of states that justifies, for example, securing agricultural land and/or produce overseas (that might actually undermine the food security defined in different ways of the host country) (Shepherd 2012, 197).

Perhaps a case can be made for saying that with broadly defined economic security concerns (including energy and food) there is an existential threat of sorts – it is a particular social order and the legitimacy of a specific form of capitalism that is under threat (Dalby 2009). But rather than think in these terms, such NTS concerns are more often considered as challenges to the way in which the state manages or controls national affairs, or the state's ability to deliver on behalf of its citizens rather than an existential threats as such (Caballero-Anthony 2007). Not surprisingly, given the nature of the Chinese state, these state management challenges have found particular resonance within China.

Defining Human Security (as Not Just NTS)

As hinted at in the introduction, finding a shared understanding of what exactly constitutes HS is not an easy task. On the face of it, the 1994 *Human Development Report* made a relatively clear statement by identifying seven key areas of HS; economic, food, health, environmental, personal, community and political (UNDP 1994). But this is such a broad and indistinct set of issues that the concept has been

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accused of being "slippery by design," and deliberately covering a huge range of issues to attract "a jumbled coalition of "middle power" states, development agencies, and NGOs" (Paris 2001, 88). On its tenth anniversary, a special section of *Security Dialogue* (2004) explored the extent to which the concept had developed a clear and shared intersubjective meaning that had penetrated into academic debate and concrete political action. The conclusion was somewhat mixed. While Axworthy (2004, 348), who as Canadian Foreign Minister, did much to develop and promote the HS concept in the first place, argued that HS was "establishing itself as a vital part of the international agenda," Liotta (2004, 363) argued that the concept was too vague and imprecise to be transformed from academic discourse into concrete political action.

But the importance of considering the referent points means that in many respects, identifying what HS issues might be is not as important as agreeing on what it is that should be secured. While the NTS discourse focuses on states *and* citizens, people are typically seen as constituent elements of the greater whole - the state. In HS discourse, the focus should be firmly, squarely and solely on the individual. So while under NTS understandings "the role of citizens is to support this system. The human security approach reverses this equation: the state – and state sovereignty – must serve and support the people" (Newman 2010, 79).

This project entails securing individual human beings from threats to their existence – life threatening challenges of disease, terrorism, pollution, grinding poverty and so on. But it goes further than this by involving a range of issues that more traditionally sat within the development domain (Thomas 2001). This is not just about ensuring that people have existential basic needs – that they can live their lives secure in the knowledge that they will have enough to eat to survive - but that they can live a life free from "indignity" (Gasper 2005) and can make positive life choices.

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The HS idea is akin to Berlin's (1969) conceptions of different types of freedom: it is not just about having "negative liberty" but also "positive liberty" – the state should provide an environment where individuals can flourish, develop, grow and do what they want to do. Berlin's positive liberty also contains within it the understanding that people should have the right to choose their rulers. For those who emphasise freedom from fear, the (authoritarian) state is seen as being a potential source of the fear and indignity that individuals should not have to live with, and political freedom and democracy are typically seen as essential prerequisites for the provision of full HS (King and Murray 2001-2, 13). At the very least:

> The rise of human security is usually portrayed as resulting from a growing humanism within the international system that draws on increasingly accepted norms and conventions associated with the UN Declaration of Human Rights, the Geneva Conventions, the founding of the International Criminal Court, and so on (Duffield 2006, 13).

In short, then, while NTS and HS share a concern with similar issues, the referent point means that they should be separate fields of inquiry. But as we shall see, in many Chinese discourses – indeed, we can say the majority of them – it's not just that the focus on freedom from fear is relegated to secondary importance behind freedom from want, but the distinction between HS and NTS is re-blurred and the referent point taken back from the individual to the collective.

What's in a Name? "Western" Concepts and Chinese terminologies

As with many terms that enter into Chinese from external discourses, it takes a while for a common term to become standardised as the dominant translation. HS is probably best translated into Chinese as *ren de anquan/*人的安全. This term was used relatively widely in the "first wave" of writings on HS which essentially introduced what the concept was and where it came from (see below). These pieces were not really concerned with discussing the relevance of HS for China, but explaining what this new term meant. As the discourse developed, however, and discussions began to turn to what HS might mean for and in China, this translation was often replaced by *renlei de anquan/* 人类的安全 (or sometimes just *renlei anquan/* 人类安全) which refers to the security of humanity or humankind as a whole rather than of the individual.[3] In what has become the most cited and almost the standard introduction to NTS in China, Lu Zhongwei (2003, 30) adds a further dimension by using *renquan de anquan/* 人权安全 or "human rights security" to refer to those dimensions of the Western HS debates that refer to the political security of the individual.[4]

A search on official media sites or government web-pages for *ren de anquan* generates a number of hits that do indeed refer to individuals. But the majority of these are to do with the safety of individuals (安全 means both security and safety) – for example, safety in factories, in traffic accidents, coal mines and so on. This is not unimportant; as we shall see, it forms part of a shift in emphasis in domestic political agendas towards people centred developmental concepts that help explain why HS discourses – or at least, Chinese understandings and definitions of them – have found some purchase within China in recent years. But while collectively combining to provide some sort of context to the focus on the state's duty to protect the individual, they perhaps fall short of inclusion in a discussion of HS more broadly conceived.

HS IN OFFICIAL/POLICY DISCOURSES

Writing one of the very few pieces on Chinese conceptions of HS in English in 2002, Chulong Shu (2002, 8-9) noted that:

> The Chinese government has not accepted the term "human security." Its leaders and officials have never used the phrase in their public speeches, talks, or documents. The term is almost non-existent in the Chinese official dialogue and in the Chinese news media

In the intervening years, HS has developed a slightly higher profile in official discourses, though it's fair to say that it's still not a particularly widely used concept. For example, there are two key policy areas where HS considerations link to official policy change; but they are *implicit* HS agendas where people have tried to identify a link, rather than typically being articulated as HS projects. The first is the relationship between HS and the idea of "putting people first" through a "scientific concept of development," and the second relates to the development of a "new security concept" to deal with new security challenges (Han 2004). Both will be discussed in more detail in following sections.

The concept is also now ***explicitly*** used when reporting on Chinese leaders' attendance at international conferences where HS issues have been discussed – for example, at regional summits (APEC, ASEAN+3, and so on) or at the UN. And when it comes to interaction with the global community, official Chinese discourses do not shy away from using the language of HS – though in carefully defined ways. The

most common usage is found in reaffirming China's commitment to the anti-landmines campaign and the Ottawa Convention process. Interestingly here the official Chinese texts use *ren de anquan* focussing on the individual rather than the *renlei* (人类) definition of humanity as the referent point (FMPRC 2003; Zhang 2005). The term has also similarly been used to refer to "China's firm stance in countering terrorism and safeguarding human security and world peace" (*China Daily* September 18, 2001), in response to natural disasters (FMPRC, 2008), and the understanding that "infectious diseases, climate warming, environmental pollution all undermine human security" (Wu 2010).

It has been argued that participating in international diplomatic forums entails adopting a shared language amongst "a transnational diplomatic community" (Hocking et al 2012, 25). If you can take control of "framing" the debate and establishing the terms and concepts that underpin discussions, then this might lead to "norm diffusion" to other countries/cultures (Krauss 2002). It is clearly not the case that HS has become firmly embedded in Chinese discourses in this way. But there does seem to be some evidence that the concept has become *more* part of Chinese security agendas at the margins through international interactions.

Notably, in all of these cases, the "fear" that humans need to be free from is rather narrowly defined and exogenous to the (Chinese) state. Indeed, it is the state that is charged with ridding the threat and providing security – a project that often requires inter-state collaboration.[5] The state is thus seen as the *source* of human security, not in any way a challenge to it, the referent point taken away from the individual and back to the state, and good old fashioned diplomacy seen as a means of solving insecurity. This allows Chinese officials to talk about the importance of HS

without delving into considerations of human rights, individualism, democracy and the state's potential role as a source of insecurity and fear.

ACADEMIC DISCOURSES OF (HUMAN) SECURITY IN CHINA

This brings us to the nature and significance of academic discourses on HS. Before discussing the content of these discourses in any depth, it is important to put these writings into some sort of context by making four key points. First, as noted in the introduction, while it might be tempting to try to identify a Chinese school of HS, in reality there is no single approach. Some writers seem to be trying to sterilise the concept by interpreting HS in ways that make it rather meaningless as a concept (distinct from NTS). Others are much keener on promoting HS as something to be taken more seriously in China – either in terms of issues, referent points or associated referent points (or all three).

However, the second point of context is to not exaggerate the significance of HS. While there is now more diversity and plurality in Chinese Security Studies, what Yu Tiejun refers to as rather statist and Westphalian "traditional" security concerns continues to dominate the (sub-)disciplinie (Interview, Beijing, September 12, 2011). Third, and somewhat related, traditional conceptions of security are often the starting point for considering NTS and HS issues. For example, concern with energy security is partly driven by conceptions of great power politics in general, and relations with the US in particular, that will shape China's ability to get what it needs in the future (Interview, Beijing, September 12, 2011). It is a new security concern shaped by traditional conceptions of competition and power between states. And as we shall see, suspicion that Western powers are trying to find any means possible of imposing their

power and stopping China from rising are at the heart of at least some analysis of HS in China.

Finally, while there is a growing interest in HS issues, and some writers are happy to fully engage Western HS approaches and discourses, others are rather more cautious. As a result, HS is often (though not always) considered within a broader NTS framework rather than on its own; the re-blurring of the two concepts discussed above. HS also crops up as part of the debate in discussions of comprehensive security (*zonghe anquan* (综合安全), new security (*xin anquan* (新安全), common security (*gongtong anquan/* 共同安全), co-operative security (*hezuo anquan/* 合作安全) and sustainable security (*kechixu anquan* /可持续安全) (He Zhongyi 2004; Peng 2006; Li 2008). Liu Zhijun (2006a, 24) argues that this is because NTS and other security foci allow analysts to keep the focus on the state rather than move to the non-state and/or individual level and that many Chinese analysts are simply more comfortable with this. But Liu also notes that HS remains a politically sensitive and has to be considered with some care. Hence, the tendency sometimes to discuss HS issues by using different terms and names. This is not to say that it is a wholly taboo subject, but there does seem to be some concern about stepping out of line with traditional research – particularly when human rights related issues are involved. There is particular sensitivity in China to anything that looks like external criticism of China's human rights regime, and a feeling that China is often blamed and/or scapegoated by the international community – for example, after the Copenhagen climate summit (Interviews, Beijing, September 2011). And in the minds of many, HS and human rights occupy the same sort of academic ground (Hu 2011). So it's important not to be seen to be feeding into any of these negative or critical agendas when writing about HS in China.

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Challenging Realism

This relative sensitivity might explain the "passivity" of much of what is written in China on HS. In one type of HS literature, the tendency is simply to report Western debates; to explain where they emerged from, explain the key arguments, and identify the main protagonists. To be fair, some of this is very good, providing overviews and categorisations as good at least as good as analyses in any other language.[6] But it's rather understandable that when considering an issue that is as politically sensitive as HS in China, active critique and analysis often gives way to a more non-committal reporting of what others have said instead, as Craig (2007) also found (2007) for writings on NTS. We might suggest, though, that in reporting how others are rethinking security overseas, at least some Chinese scholars are implicitly encouraging their peers to do the same.

Others are more explicit in suggesting that Western theories and approaches like constructivism, the Copenhagen School (Yuan 2009) and feminist theories (Chen 2010) as well as Western studies of NTS (Liu and Sang, 2004; Zhang 1997) have responded to changing security contexts in ways that might helpfully influence Chinese thinking. In the wake of the Asian financial crisis, a number of scholars suggested that traditional realist perspectives had been proved to be fundamentally flawed because they ignored the significance of economic security (Zha 1999), while others focussed on the role of non-state actors as the originators of HS challenges (Wang Yizhou 1998; Wang Xuejun 2004; Zhou 2004). Indeed, for Guang and Guo (2007), it's not so much realism that is the problem for studying HS but the entire field of international relations *per se*, as the focus on power politics and competition

between states simply cannot help identify where contemporary HS challenges actually come from. In these studies, the focus on HS can be thought of as a means rather than an ends; it is a tool (alongside others like economic crises and NTS more broadly) for promoting alternative ways of thinking about the world and theorising international relations.

The Emergence of HS Discourses

China still faces a number of traditional military security challenges, and the potential for some sort of armed conflict, most likely in the East and/or South China seas, remains very much alive. As such, there is no real argument in Chinese writings that the traditional should be forgotten and replaced by the new. Rather, the idea that HS should be considered alongside existing security concerns is restated in most of the literature. Some authors stress the symbiotic relationship between the two, noting how warfare can generate HS concerns such as ecological damage (Fu 1999; Zhou 2003; Li Bin 2004), how competition for scarce natural resources needs to be avoided to prevent conflict in the future (Bai 2008), and how lack of development and human insecurity can often be the spur for violence and conflict (Feng 2006). But there is a general consensus that since the end of the Cold War, and with the onset of globalisation, the idea of what the main threat is *to* and *in* China has changed from the threat of war to issues that primarily related to "human insecurity" (Hu 2000).[7]

What is meant by "globalisation" is often not clearly defined, but can roughly be thought of as a world where national borders are increasingly porous (Zhao 2004, 37), state sovereignty has been undermined (Zhang 2004) and "the boundaries between international and domestic politics are increasingly blurred" (Wang 2001,

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257). As money, commodities and even diseases can move between countries with relative speed and ease, it is simply not possible to deal with issues that affect a country – any country – through unilateral action alone (Zhao 2004).

Responding to crises.

Even though the end of the Cold War is seen as the starting point of a new security agenda or era, interest in both NTS and HS was somewhat slow in emerging in China. As with other countries, changes in thinking were largely driven by responses to key events. But while 9/11 is seen as being important for changing global agendas and interest and particularly discourses and policies in the USA, other events have been much more important in China, and have prompted spikes in interest and writing in HS (Fu 2003). According to Yu (2003, 48) Chinese scholars had been grappling with the need to abandon Cold War perspectives and develop new ways of thinking and new conceptions of security since the early 1990s. The starting point of interest in NTS that in turn gives birth to interest in HS is typically dated as the Asian financial crisis of 1997 (Chu 2002; Fu 2003; Liu 2005, 59). The crisis not only brought home the blunt reality that China's economic fortunes were inextricably linked with what happens elsewhere, but also raised questions about the nature of international relations scholarship in China and the dominance of realism already noted in this paper. More recently the global financial crisis has one more turned attention to how China's own economic security is dependent on what happens elsewhere (Xia 2009).

But while an economic crisis might have been at the heart of the emergence of Chinese thinking, economic security has largely evolved as a separate discourse and policy field ever since. Or more correctly, the discourse has split in three. On one level, when it comes to considering the technical side of economic security – for

example, calculating the extent to which China really has become dependent on exports as a source of growth – security specialists are happy to leave the field for economists to consider. On a second level, a set of writers has concentrating on the more traditional international relations dimension of China's economic security with a focus on whether the overall geostrategic environment is conducive to China as a whole getting hold of the resources (including food) that it needs to meet its developmental objectives. These works sit somewhere between national security and the "economic management" dimension of NTS outlined above. The third level considers the domestic dimension and the socio-economic sources of human insecurity within China (He 2004) and broadly speaking spans the NTS-HS divide.

The regional crisis did much to consolidate initial thinking on new economic vulnerabilities and security challenges. September 11th then drew attention to the threat of new non-state sources of political/military violence. But for China, it was the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARs)outbreak of 2003 that more than anything else highlighted the new threats to humans and humanity and quite simply changed the nature of not just academic thinking, but popular attitudes towards individual security and risk (Hu 2003; Deng and Wang, 2004). Indeed interest in HS in China peaked between 2003 and 2006 – a period which not only covers the SARS outbreak, but the 2004 Boxing Day tsunami, and the bird flu outbreak of 2006.

For Guan and Guo (2007, 104), it is important to take a step back from the crises themselves and consider the broader societal context to understand why they were so important. For the population as a whole, these new HS challenges fed into and built on existing feelings of insecurity. People were already worried about increasing inequality, environmental degradation, and individual economic uncertainties (unemployment in the short term and welfare in old age in the longer

term). To make matters worse, unequal and in many places wholly inadequate access to health care (combined with very high costs) resulted in a real concern that people would not be able to get (or afford) treatment if they were infected (Guan and Guo 2008, 199). So SARS in some ways was the spark that ignited pre-existing concerns and insecurities and resulting in China becoming a "risk society" (Li 2010; Zhang 2011).

But there were two other reasons why SARS created a form of "collective national psychological panic" (Zhang Mansheng 2003: 87). First, people simply were not sure how it was being spread, whether they were at risk and how long it would last. Indeed, initially it was not clear what was going on at all with no mention from official sources that something was going wrong until the first cases were reported in Hong Kong (Hung 2004, 25). Second, this was compounded by a widespread lack of trust in politicians as it soon became clear that a number of officials had lied about the extent of the problem. Following on from the official cover up of an explosion at a school in Fanglin in 2001, the official response to SARS was in many ways more damaging than the crisis itself. [8] Probably around 349 people died in China from SARs – which is clearly important but relatively minor compared to those who die from other diseases in China every year. But the system was seen to have failed; officials not only lied to the people but lied to each other and gave the impression of a network of insiders solely concerned with saving their own face and positions rather than saving those who were most at risk and dependent on the system for survival. The state emerged from SARS not as the solution to human insecurity, but as a key cause of it.

Putting People First.

The following year, at the fourth plenum of the 16th Central Committee, the party came up with a rather damning verdict on its own ruling capacity (Central Committee 2004). Although both "history" and the "Chinese People" had "chosen" the party to rule, its continued tenure in power could not be taken for granted. Part of the process of winning back the trust of the people was to project the promotion of a new "scientific concept of development" (*kexue fazhan guan/* 科学发展观), which was added to the party constitution at the 17th Party Congress as "a major strategic thought" (*zhongda zhanlue sixiang/* 重大战略思想) to guide economic and social development. Although more investment in science and technology is something that flows from the concept, this is not what "scientific" means here. Rather it is scientific because of the application of guiding principles to develop strategies that do not just go all out to raise GNP, but instead think about the consequences of these strategies for the people.

From around 2004, the new priority was to move away from just a strategy of growth first to "putting people first" (*yiren wei ben/* 以人为本). So, for example, policies that might lead to a higher GNP but which also lead to environmental degradation and perhaps exacerbate inequality are not scientifically derived and are not part of a people centred development agenda. And an increasing concern for how individuals faired in the pursuit of growth is part of this people centred or "harmonious" (*he xie/* 和谐) developmental agenda. So in responding to a concern that the party-state was losing touch with the people and becoming a source of insecurity, the state deliberately and explicitly established itself as focussing on the people and as the provider of security. The state in some ways captured an emerging agenda – at least an emerging concern – and tried to reinvent and/or reposition itself in response.

(Re)Definitional Power

This new emphasis on harmonious society/development (indeed, almost a new quasi-official ideology) helped restore the idea of the state as source of security for the individual (rather than the source of insecurity).[9] Subsequently HS considerations in China have often been associated with the states "putting people first agenda" – or at least, the two are thought to be similar and connected (Liu 2005, Guan and Guo 2007). Whether intentionally or not, HS as understood in China was in part redefined in keeping with the state's priorities and objectives. And as outlined in the introduction, maintaining control of definitions and discourses is an important way in which ideas and norms developed elsewhere are made "suitable" and "safe" for China.

There is an increasing confidence in China in questioning the applicability of "Western" conceptions of security and international relations for understanding contemporary China. This entails identifying the historical experiences that are thought to be at the heart of theory building, and asking whether they are constructed on philosophies, histories and experiences that make them suitable only for the Western countries that generated them. As China has a different history, and a world view built on "harmony, ethics, and benevolence" (Shambaugh 2011, 366), China should not simply "take" existing theories, but instead develop concepts and theories that are built on China's own unique experiences instead. For some this entails developing a distinct Chinese theory of international relations and the creation of theory that is both *from* and also *for* China (Qin 2007, 2009). Presumably (by implication) other countries need to develop their own individual theories from their specific histories to fit their national conditions as well – an issue we shall return to later. Others like Zhao Tingyang and Yan Xuetong seek a more radical reappraisal

and a stronger emphasis on the transferability of Chinese approaches to other settings: a "neo-Tianxiaism" which might provide the basis of a new set of global norms to challenge the existing Western hegemony (Callahan 2008; Feng 2012).

More often, though, it entails ensuring that Western ideas are modified to reflect China's experiences and Chinese contexts. So ideas like HS go through a process of Sinification to ensure that they are imbued with "Chinese characteristics (*you zhongguo tese de* – a prefix (in Chinese) or suffix (in English) first developed to explain a distinct "socialism with Chinese characteristics" but which now is added to just about any concept or approach that you can think of.

The Individual and the State

The typical argument is that while Human Rights are universal, the national conditions of each sovereign state should dictate which rights are privileged over others. So historical precedence, cultural predilections and current levels of development in China result in the predominance of collective and socio-economic rights over individual and political rights. The general principles of rights are universal, but their actual manifestation and prioritisation are specific and national in nature. And it's not just that China has an appropriate understanding and set of rights for its own conditions. Any country that tries to impose its own understanding of rights on China is actually abrogating the sovereign rights of China to develop its own national understandings and practices. At best, this emerges out of a form of cultural arrogance; at worst it is depicted as a deliberate "strategy of foreign forces to break up and westernise China" (Central Committee 2004).

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Similarly, while democracy might be the aspiration of all people, it is essential to ensure that the type of democracy that each sovereign state develops is suitable to, and built on, its own national conditions, experiences and philosophies. The essential starting point for democracy under this approach is not the individual, but national independence and sovereignty. The 1949 revolution, then, by re-creating the nation state free from external control, achieved this basic democratic right and the party's main contribution to defending democracy in China is to stop outsiders from undermining this independence and sovereignty (State Council 2005).

This is important not only as an example of how concepts are (re)defined to fit with Chinese interests (or rather, the interests of some in China), but also because it highlights the potential risk of engaging with concepts and approaches that privilege the individual. Effectively, individual interests are secondary to national "core" interests. Indeed, even though counterrevolutionary crimes were removed from the penal code in 1997, the revised Criminal Law includes specific references to crimes that: "endanger the sovereignty, territorial integrity, and security of the state; split the state; subvert the political power of the people's democratic dictatorship and overthrow the socialist system" (NPC 1997; Article 13). In the decade after the new law on endangering state security came onto the books in 1998, an average of 600 people were indicted. In 2008, the year of the Beijing Olympics, the figure jumped to 1,407 and has only dipped once below 1,000 indictments (to 974 in 2011) since then (Duihua 2013).

The supremacy of the state as the referent point is also reflected in the White Paper on Peaceful Development, issued in September 2011 – perhaps the closest thing that China has to an official position on HS (State Council 2011). While this paper refers to a number of challenges to individuals, including terrorism and separatism,

the primary goal is "to safeguard China's sovereignty, security, territorial integrity and interests of national development." China's core interests (*hexin liyi*/ 核心利益) also include upholding "China's political system established by the Constitution and overall social stability, and the basic safeguards for ensuring sustainable economic and social development."

As such, it is politic to emphasise that focussing on challenges to the individual are not intended to replace the state as referent point, but rather to suggest a rethink in how the two are (or should be) linked. This not only allows the concept to be redefined in keeping with national priorities and objectives, but also returns the referent object back to the "collective" level, and makes the search for the individual's human security secondary to the higher principle of defending sovereignty. And by explaining the reluctance to take the focus down to the individual, we get some understanding of the constraints facing Chinese academics who are trying to progress intellectual agendas that are not in tune with the state's own preference for state-level analyses.

(Re)Defining HS

While there is some suspicion that HS is just another tool that the West can use to criticise China's Human Rights regime (Peng 2006), Chinese discourses largely accept that HS is a universal goal and "freedom from fear and freedom from want are what both individuals and countries want" (Guan and Guo 2007, 99). But this does not mean that all individuals and countries should think of HS in the same way. Different countries have different levels of development that shape the way they see the world and think about security. Thus, for example, Western countries do not have

to worry about basic socio-economic rights, so they have the "luxury" to focus on political rights instead (Zhang 2004). Similarly, while the biggest threat to the security of the citizens of the US might be international terrorism, the clear and present danger for people in developing world come from poverty, underdevelopment, and environmental challenges (Li Dongyan 2004, 54; Wang Yizhou 2005; 4).

So the specific meaning of HS should be defined by each individual country on the basis of its own unique circumstances (Tang 2004; Guan and Guo 2007, 2008). After all, in the original debates over the establishment of a HS agenda, while Canada and Norway placed an emphasis on freedom from fear, Japan instead preferred an emphasis on human dignity based on lack of want and freedom from crime (Feng 2006; Gao 2006; Hu 2011). So if what HS means differs between different developed countries, it is likely to differ even more so between the developed and developing worlds. Indeed, in a country as large as China, different regions will have different HS concerns – environmental issues and unemployment dominate in the northeast while relations between multi-ethnic groups, drug abuse, and Hiv/AIDS are more important in the southwest (Wang Yizhou 2005, 6).

While it is entirely right for developed countries to have their own definitions of HS, it is entirely wrong for them to present their definitions as being universal, or to try to use them as a guide to implementing HS agendas at the global level. If they are allowed to, then Western countries will try to make HS an ideational tool of Western liberal hegemony as they have done with Human Rights and Humanitarian Intervention discourses (Liu Jianping 2005). And somewhat ironically, in imposing a preferred definition and HS agenda, Western states actually abrogate the HS of others (Hu 2011). As one of the seven pillars of HS is Cultural Security, imposing a supposedly universal position undermines the right to protect and defend indigenous

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cultures and traditions in the face of the homogenising impact of globalisation (Ding 2011).

To stop them, developing countries need to ensure that the UN (which is credited as originating interest in HS through the 1994 UNDP report), remains the sole supranational repository of HS related authority (Xu 2003; Zhao 2004; Feng 2006). In addition, developing countries should ensure that *their* HS interests, and not those of developed states, remain at the heart of HS debates when discussed at the UN (Li Dongyan 2004, 54). Indeed, the more likely it is that Western countries might dominate a debate, the more important it is for China to actively participate and exercise its discursive power (*huayuquan/* 话语权) in loudly establishing what HS means for China (Liu Jianping 2005). And it is against these Chinese criteria and not any other, that the attempt to guarantee HS should be judged.

DEFINING CHINA'S HS CHALLENGES

So based on this understanding, Chinese analyses typically start off by following the seven areas established in the original UNDP report. As we shall see, the major focus is on broadly defined socio-economic threats to HS, the spread of infectious diseases and environmental challenges (with the latter two both having socio-economic dimensions). In perhaps the most comprehensive attempt to define a specifically and distinctly Chinese understanding of HS, Guan and Guo (2008) take UNDP definitions, and imbue them with the Chinese context to arrive at the following categorisation of what HS means in and for China (see Table 1). Note that while the individual level forms an important component of this categorisation, there remains a simultaneous emphasis on "higher" levels as well (society and nation).

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Table 1. The Seven Dimensions of Human Security, With Chinese Characteristics

(1) Economic Security	(a) National level - operational stability of the economy (b) Societal level - equitable distribution; individual level - employment and income stability.
(2) Political and Societal Security	(a) National level - political and social stability and the masses confidence in the government. (b) Individual level - protection of individual rights as stipulated by the law, the provision of fundamental public services.
(3) Food Security	(a) Food supply security (making sure you have enough food). (b) Food safety (not eating contaminated food and being confident in the food supply system) for both the nation as a whole and individuals.
(4) Health Security	(a) Relative safety from infectious diseases. (b) Access to adequate medical services.
(5) Personal Security	Freedom from crime, disease, accidents, natural disasters and the threat of terrorism against people and property.
(6) Community and Cultural Security	(a) Community security - the stability and development of the community itself. (b) Cultural security - the maintenance of cultural diversity and the protection of cultural heritage. (c) Educational security - the availability of education and at adequate/appropriate level for each person. (d) social/moral security - a generally safe social moral/ethical atmosphere to allow each person to develop their potential.
(7) Ecological and environmental security	(a) Resource security - the ability to obtain sufficient energy and other natural resources. (b) Ecological security - prevent ecological destruction and its effect on people. (c) Environmental security - prevent environment destruction and its effect on people.

They also include Human trafficking security under an eighth "other" category. In other works, the pressure of population growth is also often included as a specific HS for China (Fu 1999; Wang and Cai 2004; Guan and Guo 2007). Further, the 2008 Wenchuan earthquake re-focussed attention on the HS challenge of natural disasters (Zheng 2008).

Analysing Chinese Discourses

There are a number of issues that arise from this classification, and the wider literature on HS in China. First, we have already noted that it is not just in China that HS is thought to be a fuzzy concept. But in some respects the even more blurred dividing line between HS and other forms of NTS in China makes it even fuzzier, and some Chinese commentators have complained that just about everything has been "securitised" in this way at one time or another (Liu 2006b, He Yilun 2004).

Second, while terrorism is also considered an important HS challenge (Xia 2009), it is often connected to two other "evil forces" – religious extremism and separatism (Wang Yizhou 2005, 5). This means that as the status of Taiwan is considered to be a domestic issue, it is bracketed alongside the threat of separatism in Tibet and Xinjiang/East Turkestan. So perhaps somewhat surprisingly for Western audiences, this makes the potential for conflict with Taiwan if it moves towards independence a HS issue in China (rather than a traditional military threat). Indeed, for Li Bin (2004, 45), it is China's single most important "new" security challenge.

Third, Chinese understandings mean that the provision of HS can be largely provided through an emphasis on socio-economic development. To be sure, it is important to ensure that people are free to exercise the rights that existing laws are supposed to have given them and that local officials do what they are meant to do and do not undermine trust in the state. Notwithstanding the recent record of growth, the biggest HS challenges stem from China's relative lack of development. So the primary task to promote HS is first to encourage growth that does not exacerbate inequalities and

insecurities and provides for a real developmental trajectory. Hence, the link between HS discourses and the state projects of building a Harmonious Society and the people-centred development agenda (Liu 2005, 59). This in turn means that there is a key role for the state as promoter and generator of balanced people-centred growth.

So while one of the points of developing understandings of HS was to move the focus away from the state and the collective towards the individual (even more so than NTS agendas), Chinese understandings and discourses often re-blur the distinction and restore the state as the referent point. To be sure, Guan and Guo's (2008) categorisation points to how different issues play out in different ways at different levels. For example, at the national level, economic security means avoiding crises and maintaining an overall pace of growth. For the individual, it means being confidence that they won't lose their jobs and that they will be able to buy the things that they need. Thus, there might easily by a situation where there is national economic security, but where individuals are economically insecure.

Nevertheless, they argue that there are organic links between different levels, and most analysis of HS in China see human, societal and national security as forming part of a constituent whole (Pan 2006). And the general point that HS discourses are intimately connected to conceptions of state sovereignty runs through the Chinese literature. Implicit in much of the discourse (and explicit in some of it) is the idea that state failure is usually the source of human insecurity. The extreme negative example of the relationship between sovereignty and HS is what Wang Yizhou (1998) calls the Somali phenomenon - bad state policies result in individuals losing their loyalty to the state, which undermines the government's ability to operate, resulting in total societal breakdown and massive insecurities of many different types. Conversely, effective state action can provide the solution to human insecurity (Liu, 2005), with

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the first task being to ensure state survival and the second to maintain and guarantee social stability. So just as sovereignty is seen as the basic starting point for the provision of democracy, so sovereignty becomes the essential starting point for the provision of HS (Peng 2006, 49).

Moreover, this focus on the role of the state is enhanced when the focus moves away from domestic socio-economic sources of insecurity like inequality and economic insecurity towards transnational issues. That the sources of much human insecurity are non-state actors has been widely recognised in Chinese writings (see Fu 2003; Zhou 2004;;). But even though HS issues driven by non-state actors do not respect national boundaries (Pan, 2004: 41), it is states that engage in international interaction and co-operation to try to deal with and hopefully prevent the transnational spread of HS challenges. Piracy, smuggling, infectious diseases, drug and people trafficking, and environmental degradation are all examples of problems that cannot be solved by individual states acting alone, and require instead collective solutions. Here, the evolution of HS thinking has been one of the considerations that has moved China in new directions in considering the benefits of regional and multilateral co-operation and institutionalisation.

HS and New Security

HS perspectives on SARS not only played a role in shaping a people-centred development agenda in China, but it also contributed to changes in China's international behaviour, and basic considerations of security (Han 2004). In this respect, crises have had positive consequences and "bred cooperation" (Wang Hongfang 2004) as first the Asian financial crisis and then SARs forced China into

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closer collaboration and co-operation with neighbours in both Southeast and Central Asia (Tang and Zhang 2003; Ji and Zhu 2004). Here, considerations of HS have a close connection with the development of the "new security concept" (*xin anquan guan*/ 新安全观) that was articulated in 2002 in a Foreign Ministry position paper and in a new defence White Paper (FMPRC, 2002; State Council, 2002). Whilst the threat of military conflict had not disappeared, the Asian financial crisis and 9/11 showed that there were now myriad other challenges best met by multilateral co-operation and partnership and dialogue rather than through unilateral action, which placed a primacy on the need for dialogue and co-operation (Wang 2004). Mutual trust, mutual benefit, equity and co-operation (*huxin、huli、pingdeng、xiezuo*) became the order of the day as manifest by involvement in various kinds of regional fora (Fu 2003). The need to find common solutions to the transnational spread of SARS and bird flu in 2006 only served to increase the impulse for regional collaboration (Zhang Jie 2003; Deng and Wang 2004; Liu 2006b).

Regional co-operation is seen as being important, establishing new mechanisms of transnational co-operation to deal with common challenges to HS. But it also has two other spill overs. First, despite considerable differences, it has helped to start to shape a common security identity in the region (Liu 2004; Lin and Wu 2010). This is claimed to have built not just on a shared conception of common risks and security challenges, but also on a distinctive Asia-Pacific approach to security issues. While the US approach is considered based on unilateralism and the resort to force, and the European approach on promoting integrative mechanisms, the Asia-Pacific approach is said to favour dialogue and "multi-level and diverse forms of regional interaction to solve common problems" (Xu 2003, 6-7). The second is that participation in regional and global organisations promotes the preferred national

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image of China as a responsible great power (Yu 2004, 13; Tang 2004, 22). By dealing with HS issues responsibly, China increases trust in its ambitions, which increases its ability to successfully pursue economic security objectives. HS collaboration and co-operation thus becomes an end in itself, and also a means to other ends.

CONCLUSION

Debating and defining HS in China is a task that is closely related to national foreign policy goals and objectives. However, it is important to remember that it is not just a state project. As we have seen, there are a number of scholars who have a real and deep academic interest in HS as it is defined outside China, who want to promote further study and research, and perhaps in the long run even to influence policy makers. The state's suspicion of any analysis or political action that focusses on the individual means that it is not always easy to pursue this research agenda. The intellectual space that exists for scholars to debate not just HS, but issues such as sovereignty and the right to protect can be quickly squeezed or even closed off as the political context in which research takes place changes., while there might not be a great deal of good writing on HS in China, the remarkable thing is that there is as much as there is.

In a very modest way, thinking about and responding to HS concerns and discourses has played a role in changing understandings of the nature of security in contemporary China. Most clearly, it has contributed to Chinese debates over whether existing dominant modes of theorising about IR and security are best placed to generate effective solutions to "new" threats. It has also been a factor in rethinking the

efficacy of developing a co-operative foreign policy to deal with "new" security challenges, and seems to have some relationship to the evolution of the favoured people-centred harmonious development agenda. The case for influence should not be overstated. If HS did not exist, these changes might well have emerged in any case. But HS does exist and some scholars have indeed decided to deploy HS concepts with Chinese characteristics in ways which have fed into other "new" security discourses to play at least some role in generating change.

If HS did not exist, it is also unlikely that Chinese thinkers would be working to create and define it. But given that it does exist, then it makes no sense to simply let others define it – particularly if they define it in ways that could lead to China being criticised or perhaps even penalised by the international community. So by exercising definitional or discursive power, the concept of HS has become Sinicised with a focus on the most important and imminent HS challenges. As these challenges are primarily rooted in China's relative lack of development, this places human dignity rather than "freedom from fear" as the fundamental starting point (Feng 2006; Feng, 2010). As a result, promoting socio-economic development is considered the best way of reducing human insecurity in the Chinese case - a task that falls largely to the state (Li 2010). Indeed, the frequent use of the concept of the security of humanity as a whole rather than the individual human means that the discourse of HS in China means that the state is central in many analyses.

It is too early to proclaim China a norm maker in international security studies. Indeed, while it is easy to find Chinese statements that express dissatisfaction with the norms and principles than underpin the existing global order, it is rather more difficult to find clear and coherent expressions of what a preferred Chinese world order might look like (see Breslin 2013). So rather than think of China as the source of new norms

for the time being, we can instead think of it as a veto actor trying to prevent others from establishing their norms as the basis for global politics. It does this in two ways.

First, by insisting that United Nations (where China has considerable power) remains the only site of authority when it comes to deciding if the lack of HS warrants a response from the international community (Liu 2012). In this way, even if Western countries' norms do come to dominate debates, they will not be able to transform discourse into action without Chinese acquiescence. Second, by rejecting universalism and insisting that each country has the right to redefine norms in the light of their own national conditions. Norms are thus reduced to vague aspirations; everybody wants human rights, democracy and security. But what democracy, rights and security means, how they might be attained, and whose interests should be priorities, depends on the national setting.

There is some suggestion that Chinese officials are becoming more proactive in trying to get preferred Chinese conceptions and definitions accepted by others when it comes to debates in places like the Human Rights Council (see Sceats and Breslin 2012). But in general, it is not a case of promoting a Chinese vision or a Chinese model, but rather the promotion of the idea that each country should "start from national conditions [and] take your own road" (Shen and Bai 2006). As Pan Wei (2010, 14) puts it: "The Chinese System does not boast itself as an alternative to the Western System. However, it weakens the argument for the exclusive legitimacy of the Western System." The process of redefinition and nationalisation is not about creating something; it is about dismantling something – "the end of Western global dominance which has lasted four centuries since 1600" (Pan Wei 2010, 14). It is not the creation of a norm as such but an attack on the concept of universal norms *per se*.

Perhaps the process of defining multiple national definitions can be considered to be an "anti-norm."

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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NOTES

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[1] The attempt here is to make a distinction between those academics within Chinese academia and those who write about China from the outside. Although the lines are now more blurred with Chinese scholars who have worked overseas often returning to work within China, the distinction is still worth making. Of these writings, all but a handful were written in Chinese and the author takes responsibility for any errors in translation. I am indebted to colleagues in China who provided access to a large collection of papers that would otherwise have been rather difficult to find.

[2] And discussions with colleagues in China lead me to believe that this was the case in at least some of this type of publication.

[3] The term *geren de anquan* 个人的安全 is occasionally used to refer to the specific security of the individual while at the other extreme Wang Yizhou (1998: 7) uses *renlei zhengti anquan* 人类整体安全 to refer to threats to the existence of humankind as a whole (such as nuclear war or catastrophic environmental collapse).

[4] This book was once incorrectly cited in an English language paper as being authored by Liu Zhouwei rather than Zhongwei, and has been erroneously cited as this by a number of people ever since.

[5] See, for example, the official Kunming Declaration (2005) on the need for co-operation in the Greater Mekong area, and Dai (2009) on HS issues as a source of co-operation with the United States.

[6] In my view the best and most comprehensive is Liu Zhijun (2006a). Zhu Feng (2004) is much shorter and focussed more broadly on NTS, but includes a good taxonomy of different types of thinking on security, including Western thinking on HS.

[7] In some of these analyses, there seems to be an implicit nostalgia for a bipolarity that kept the peace, with the end of bipolarity unleashing "the conditions for numerous conflicts and humanitarian disasters" (Gao 2006, 8).

[8] After an explosion at a local school killed over 40 children, Premier Zhu Rongji first claimed the explosion was the result of a suicide bomber. The true story that the schoolchildren were indeed making fireworks only emerged only emerged as a result of a concerted campaign by local families and the local press in the face of considerable official opposition.

[9] The Scientific Concept of Development was added to the CCP constitution in 2007.