Why human? The interlinkages between security, rights and development

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Introduction
Assessments of human security, human rights and human development increasingly tend to focus on their connections, overlaps, interactions, coherence and mutual reinforcement. It has been argued that the notion of human security in this conjunction can be seen as both a catalyst for multiple shifts in paradigm and a bridging concept. The paradigm shifts that come with human security are quite a few and imply broadening and prioritisation at the same time: from state-related territorial security to the security of people; from an upward trend in human development to the protection from downward disruption; from the right to intervene in sovereign states to the state’s responsibility to protect its own citizens; and from citizens’ right to security within the boundaries of the state to the security of each and every individual human being, worldwide.

Whereas the human adjective most evidently interlinks each of the notions of security, rights and development, it is surprising that this goes fully unexplored. No study or policy document in the field of human security has systematically taken it up so far. Overall, the human connection appears as a continuum from rights to development to security that is widely taken for granted. What the human dimension would mean and how it crosses the boundaries between conventionally separated fields is unquestioned. Still, it can be found as being implicitly present in the now widely emerging language of interlinkages between rights, security and development. Some briefly ask ‘which humans’ others introduce terms such as ‘securing humanity’ and ‘securing humans’ still others critically oppose

5 Mark Duffield and Nicholas Waddell, ‘Securing Humans in a Dangerous World,’ in
Why human? The interlinkages between security, rights and development

generalising tendencies in human-related notions ‘as though humans matter’, while
masking differences and silencing specific identities⁶.

The lack of any substantial treatment of the human component in the human
security debate, or in studies on the relations between security, rights and
development, just adds force to pertinent questions about the meaning and
relevance today of signifiers such as human, humanity, human being and
humanitarian concerns. In sum, my attempt here is to take the debate on human
security beyond the current ‘state of affairs’ and to link it to the ‘state of humanity’⁷.

If it can be claimed that the human dimension intersects and overlaps what
earlier have been separated policy areas of rights, development and security, then
immediately at least three options emerge. Is the human dimension an instrument
for defining or qualifying the three areas; or is it ultimately their normative
foundation; or is it a common denominator that synchronises and coordinates the
shared policy goals and orientations? I will argue here in favour of each one of the
three options and assert that, precisely by keeping them together, the human
connection of rights, security and development might imply the potential for a
stronger policy-relevant, operational and practical orientation of the three
discourses.

There are strong arguments, however, that point in the opposite direction.
Sharp criticisms have emerged regarding the hollowing out of policy
implementation that would accompany the specific security-development nexus.
David Chandler shows how the merging or conflation of security and development
has implied the prioritisation or privileging of security over development⁸. This
has resulted, he argues, in the collapse of pre-existing policy frameworks,
particularly in the field of development, where policies were earlier linked to clear
political purposes⁹. The implication of this loss of framework is not a scaling up of
political and institutional capacity, as is often supposed, but an evasion and a
dislocation of Western responsibility for policy implementation by both
disengaging from policy-making and shifting such responsibility to non-Western
states and non-state actors. Moreover, any further advancing of the nexus
security-development, in his view, inescapably implies a revival of grand
narratives that establish themselves in the international public domain and use it

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⁶ Heidi Hudson, ‘Doing’ Security as Though Humans Matter: A Feminist Perspective on
155-174.

Quest for Humane Global Governance’, in Georg Frerks and Berma Klein Goldewijk (eds),
265-298, here p. 266.

Journal of International Relations and Development, 2007, vol. 10, no. 4, pp. 362-386,
here p. 375.

⁹ Idem, p. 364.
for ostentatious policy statements of mission and purpose. He finds such new meta-narratives in the ‘global war on terror’, but also in events such as the 2005 global campaign on the Millennium Development Goals to ‘make poverty history’, and warns against the associated danger of a disjuncture between grand policy and operational commitments\(^\text{10}\). Such a gap between rhetoric and implementation, Chandler claims, marks the limits of what can be achieved by policy-making based on the nexus security-development.

I will explore here the possibility of an alternative approach by concentrating on the human dimension of security, rights and development. Whereas Chandler and others who argue in terms of the depolitising effects of human security and human development discourses make valid points\(^\text{11}\), there might be other ways of approaching the interrelations between the discourses while sharing some of the basic concerns. Accordingly, my focus will be on the ‘human’ side of the debate. But first, what is the human dimension? What is humanity? How, for example, can a crime be ‘against humanity’? Can humanity be harmed or is harm to humanity a ‘persistent fiction’\(^\text{12}\)? Would the *humanum* be something like the global human community, despite the spectre of war crimes, pervasive conflicts, devastated cultures, the suspension of the rights of civilians, and political divides? What is it to have rights as a member of humanity? Would there be intrinsic conditions that constitute humanity and being human?

In regard of its function, this article argues that the human dimension *identifies, modifies and frames* each one and jointly all of the three notions of rights, development and security. In exploring this statement, I will develop three main proposals that imply a larger research programme and would perhaps be more suited for a full-length article. The first starts from various paradigm shifts that have come with human security. It is proposed to identify the human dimension as part of these shifting paradigms. On this basis it might be possible to further specify how the human element influences the interlinkages between security-rights-development.

The second proposal starts from the recognition that the main thrust of human security is largely based on a new normative human reasoning in the international public sphere. This can also clearly be found in human rights and human development, as well as in contemporary humanitarian discourses. It is proposed here to understand the human convergence of security-development-rights as part of the contemporary changes in the normative framework of the

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\(^{10}\) *Idem*, p. 363.


Why human? The interlinkages between security, rights and development

international community.

The third proposal starts from the need to break the impasse between rhetoric and implementation. This refers to the gap between the wide scope of discourses on security-rights-development and the concrete policy-making that is needed to find ways for achieving what these discourses stand for. The proposal here is to comprehend the human connection as part of transformative agency and discover on this basis some of the directions forward.

Against these backgrounds, I will discuss three principal themes, taken up in three subsequent sections:

- the human dimension of security, rights and development;
- the human convergence as basic normative reference;
- the human connection and transformative agency.

1. The human dimension of security-rights-development

There are two basic realities or sources from where human security emerged as prominent on the global agenda. The first is the growing importance of violent conflict, involving intrastate wars, humanitarian interventions, the war on terror, and potential new interstate conflicts related to climate change and the degradation of land and water-related ecosystems. The second is sustained poverty, comprising inequality and injustice, well-being, the collapse of state authority, and international cooperation. Facing both realities of violent conflict and persistent poverty, human security provides a lens for a deliberate focus on the downside risks and the crisis ends. This explains the paradigm shift from an upward trend in a development perspective to the protection from entering a downward spiral. Human security’s focus on downside risks has been extensively developed by the Commission on Human Security, co-chaired by Sadako Ogata and Amartya Sen. They refer to all that threatens human survival or the safety of everyday life, exposes human beings to the uncertainty of catastrophic diseases or denied citizenship, or subjects them to disruptive or persisting ecological disasters and economic downturns - in brief, all that imperils human dignity.

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the enabling capabilities to cope with them. By defining human security in this way, the concept concentrates ‘on the basics for securing humanity’, tends to ‘prioritize within the human development realm’, and appears to bridge previous concepts.17

Human security is human-centred in the sense that it relates to dignity and basic freedoms, bridging in particular the freedom from want and the freedom from fear. The human dimension, in this perspective, links to a broad, inclusive and expanded security concept. By shifting the referent of security from the state to ‘people’, those who came to be identified as subjects of security appeared not to be primarily citizens of a national state or members of a particular group, but individual human beings — whose humanity now tended to be taken more seriously. Qualifying this paradigm shift in terms of ‘people-centred’, which is quite common in human security studies, might however be confusing and limiting. It would be more adequate to argue that human security advances a human-centred approach, where individuals and communities have primacy. In this approach, security extends downwards from states to human beings and expands from there upwards to the international system, and wider, to global humanity.

The notion of community, it may be assumed, links to both civil society, as different from the state, and to global humanity, as going beyond the territorial boundaries of states and towards new forms of political belonging. By consequence, human security is seen as both a unique individual and a universal common good. With this in mind, the notion of ‘people’s security’, when used in contrast to state-related security, retains a strong national connotation and does not represent the universality that is implied in the human dimension of security.18 This universality, in the sense that the human refers to dignity and basic freedoms, is clearly present since the original formulations of human security by Mahbub ul Haq, who set the tone and influenced the coming into being of the Human Development Reports by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)19. This universal orientation can be explained by the influence of human rights on human security. Basic freedoms and human dignity refer in the human dimension of rights, security and development to their downside as well: to be free from humiliation and free to enjoy human flourishing.

Today, the generous notion of a single universal humanity is lost.20 In

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addition, the danger of collapsing the diversity of identities into the term human has set the need for a more critical approach of ‘the public myth of equal humanity’\(^\text{21}\). Moreover, the human and humanity have often been invoked to define essentialist generalisations about common human attributes, assuming some human essence, a human core. Remarkably, the Ogata-Sen Commission defines the objective of human security as ‘to protect the vital core of all human lives in ways that enhance human freedoms and human fulfilment’\(^\text{22}\). Perhaps a distinction must be made between essentialist appeals to a vital core in the sense of an intrinsic human nature and the Commission’s view on protecting the minimal and fundamental human universals from downward disruption. Even so, there is a growing consciousness today of the profoundly pluralistic character of all human life. There is also more awareness of the embedding of human existence in a greater web of ecological conditions that make the sustainability of life possible — and in which humans are implicated. The human and humanity are increasingly being understood within such larger development trajectories that are perceived from a multiplicity of cultural and religious traditions\(^\text{23}\). This requires new directions in exploring basic freedoms and dignity that could not have been anticipated in conventional human rights declarations. There is, for example, a growing recognition of the plurality of the human commons.

By shifting the referent of security to human beings, a broad array of issues necessarily came to fall under the human security concept\(^\text{24}\). This explains the wide scope of the human security agenda, encompassing issues from human trafficking and criminal trade networks to famines and droughts, large-scale migrations and global diseases. As a broad concept, human security is considered ambiguous, is highly contested and has provoked a lot of criticism ever since it was integrated in the United Nations Development Programme as a comprehensive, integrative approach. Questions have been raised which focus on the potential conceptual benefits, pointing at the wide scope of issues flagged as human security that would reduce its analytical relevance. Others have argued that there is not much that is conceptually distinctive in human security when compared to human rights and human development, or that it is basically a repackaging of concerns which are already present. In terms of policies, some have raised concerns about the vagueness of the discourse that would make it impossible to find corresponding forms of operationalisation. Others refer to the


diversity of issues that would make it unfeasible to prioritise a few among the many. Last but not least, much scepticism emerged with regard to the transformative agendas when scope and diversity would be so vast. In brief, a next paradigm shift would be needed where the current tendency changes from focusing more on the idea itself than on how to realise it.

Have concepts of security, rights and development been emptied of their traditional contents, and have recent processes of redefinition and broadening just created greater conceptual confusion and incoherence rather than a stronger sense of purpose, as Chandler argues\(^\text{25}\)? Human security, at least, can be reaffirmed as a driver of multiple paradigm shifts, offering a clear perspective, as identified above, on what the priorities should be in international policy making, basically grounded in the protection of human beings from entering a chronic or disruptive downward spiral. The deeper concern, still, is whether human security can simultaneously function as both an explicative tool for analysis and a policy tool for designing practices or ways of how to act in response to the new challenges. In this regard I will point out that human security, next to its explicative and policy meaning, has a normative significance as well that might be seen as mediating.

2. The human convergence as a basic normative reference

Both violent conflict and sustained poverty have moved centre stage and are contributing significantly to the normative framework of the international community today. Increasingly, the suggestion is gaining ground that human security policies and practices might be more effective when seen as part of a larger international normative framework that is flexible according to the emerging challenges, than as a detailed definition or policy prescription that would inevitably be narrowing and exclusive in practice\(^\text{26}\).

In this process, the human dimension has become the principal normative reference and binding force of earlier separated fields of rights, development and security. Human security, in fact, emerges from the same values that in second half the 20th century were first consolidated in human rights norms and then assimilated in human development orientations. Today, the humanisation of humanitarian law\(^\text{27}\) and the relevance of human security for human rights have both become topical developments in international law\(^\text{28}\). The same basic set of


normative references and orientations can be found in the rising profile of the debate on humanitarian interventions.  

Humanitarianism has become a particularly distinguishing feature of humanitarian intervention, which has been controversial both when it has happened (Somalia, Kosovo) and when it has failed to happen (Rwanda). After the end of the Cold War, and with the proliferation of intrastate wars, crimes against humanity, war crimes and genocide, as in Kosovo and Rwanda in the mid-1990s, the fields of international relations and international law opened up to a new humanitarian focus. The increasing role of the United Nations as the central agency in addressing the humanitarian consequences of violent conflict corresponds to this change in norm-setting. The emergence of humanitarianism stands for a fundamental transition in the international community. In the decade of the 1990s, also the international foreign policy agenda was redefined in terms of what Chandler pointedly called ‘ethical foreign policy’.

The Kosovo war is seen as the first war where the humanitarian nature of international military intervention was explicitly framed in normative language and ethical concerns. The ‘responsibility to protect’ the human rights of individuals above state sovereignty was subsequently brought up as the predominant justification. The International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS), in its 2001 report, reflects this movement in what has been noted as another major paradigm shift: the substitution of the right of humanitarian intervention in sovereign states by the (inter)national responsibility to protect. Such changing priorities, in terms of the responsibility to protect, have now become part of the 2006 Security’s Council’s unanimous adoption of Resolution 1674 on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict.

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32. See note 30.

This humanitarian focus, however, harbours lots of internal contradictions and has, in connection with humanitarian interventions, generated most relevant critical comments: ‘Over the last decade, the universal humanist core of humanitarian action has been undermined and humanitarianism has become an ambiguous concept capable of justifying the most barbaric of military actions’.

Shifting paradigms and priorities in the standard of humanity and the standard of justice are an integral part of such normative developments in international relations. Something more needs to be said, therefore, about the relation between global justice and global humanity. Whereas the standard of justice draws attention to unfairness and inequality in social and international systems, the standard of humanity is based on harm in ‘being human’ and on humanitarian support for human beings, irrespective of how the misery in which they live has emerged or is maintained, why this happens, or who is suffering. Harm in being human can be understood as violating the human condition of individual members of humanity. Humanity itself is harmed when they are treated as if they were not humans: not belonging to humanity but to a particular group or minority. In the perspective of crimes against humanity, this harm happens, for example, when individual Muslims or Jews are attacked because they are Muslim or Jewish.

When attacked for the reason of their group membership, they are primarily identified with their affiliations, not treated as fellow humans, which ‘is to fail to take their humanity seriously’ and has legitimised international prosecutions.

In the perspective of extreme insecurity, as in conditions of human emergency and severe poverty, the standard of humanity may even come before justice: in such situations humanity may have priority over justice: ‘In the case of extreme poverty, humanity renders some considerations of justice irrelevant and is certainly not dependent on it for triggering an obligation to act so as to eradicate it …’. In other words, in such situations of emergency and severe human insecurity, the moral obligation to act tends to be primarily derived from duties of humanity rather than duties of justice.


38 Idem, p. 7.
It is therefore debatable whether it can be maintained, as it often happens, that the standard of humanity presents a morally less compelling basis to act than the standard of justice. Both standards are intrinsically linked to the human discourses of security, rights and development, and include associated responsibilities. It is not justice alone that prompts one to act and assume responsibilities in favour of human security. Humanity might offer an equally forceful trigger as well as a clear basis for identifying moral, political and legal obligations.

If the standard of humanity may in certain situations have primacy over the standard of justice, then the question is when or whether humanitarian intervention, as a manifestation of the humanitarian responsibility to protect, conflicts with the standard of justice. Is it possible to protect citizens in the name of their humanity without infringing upon or transgressing the criterion of justice? Would it be legitimate to intervene in ways that are unjust and unjustifiable in order to protect the *humanum*? Could the standard of humanity be invoked for unjustified interventions?

Reinforced by the 2001 ICISS report and the 2003 report of the Ogata-Sen Commission, human security emerged in the international community as a normative concept that would have the capability of unifying global policies and agency mandates across different state and non-state actors. The appearance of global humanitarian coalitions and multi-actor approaches increased the interest in how collectives, organisations, movements, groups of citizens, individuals — in sum, global civil society as a whole — might contribute to new forms of transformative agency in response to violent conflict and sustained poverty. The question now is which policy advances and operational perspectives can be perceived in framing humanitarian issues in such a wide realm of actors. This brings up the question of who are the actors and who advances transformative agency.

### 3. The human connection and transformative agency

In the international public realm, the answer to the questions of who are the actors and what is human agency often points in the direction of the cosmopolitan citizen, who appears to act on behalf of global humanity. Notions of global citizenship in this way tend to have a universal outlook. Relying on the notion of citizenship, however, easily reproduces the logic of exclusion of non-citizens, of those who do not enjoy citizenship as a legal precondition for the enjoyment of rights. They are those who Hannah Arendt called ‘stateless people’, ‘les misérables’ in the words of the novelist Victor Hugo, or those who live ‘das

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39 *Idem.*


unwertes Leben’ as Zygmunt Baumann remarks. Today, they are the youths involved in intrastate wars, the ‘rarray-boys’ referred to as ‘lumpen’ and recruitment reservoirs, shipped from one war theatre in Sierra Leone to another in Liberia. They are the non-status refugees, dwellers of the global cities and rural areas, women and children from war-torn societies, and undocumented migrants — in brief, those treated as non-citizens. By denying or retracting their citizen status they are excluded from the political community, treated as if they were non-human. This is in flagrant violation of universal declarations of human rights that are supposed to be inherent or universally human, independent of status or identity. Those who are treated as non-citizens thus appear as being among the most persistent exceptions to the universality of human rights. It reconfirms that state sovereignty, despite all the debates, continues to determine who belongs to the global political community.

It is startling to see that most discussions about actors, agency and policy in the field of human security only tend to concentrate on the many new coalitions of states and non-state actors. Such approaches leave no space to engage and involve those who fall outside the scope of cosmopolitan conceptions of the state, the citizen and the political community. In seemingly open and democratic conceptions as non-state actors and cosmopolitan citizenship, political agency still tends to be too strongly affiliated with being a citizen, a native of a state. Facing the reality of collapsed states, intrastate conflict and sustained poverty, the narrow link between agency and citizenship can no longer be sustained. Such views need to be adjusted in terms of what is considered to be political space, agency and activity.

Closing or bridging the gap between the human and the citizen is the first condition for any relevant policy that responds to the broad human security agenda. Hannah Arendt discusses this most famously in ‘The Decline of the Nation-State and the End of the Rights of Man’, which is a chapter of her book The Origins of Totalitarianism, where she analyses the deep dilemmas that non-citizens face in rights-based conceptions. She argues that, in order to have rights, one has to be ‘other’ than the ‘nakedness of being human’. When deprived of all civil rights, there are no human rights left. Still today, this manifests the deeper crisis end and breakdown of human rights: presumably inalienable human rights are entirely alienable when it comes to non-citizens who lack any protection despite formal declarations of intention. Arendt contends that it is precisely when

45 Hannah Arendt, The Origins of Totalitarianism, see note 40, p. 299.
the human is divorced from citizenship, that is, at the very moment when the continuity between the human and the citizen is broken, that rights are lost. This is the basic contradiction of human rights: whereas they are supposed to be universal, they are at the same time dependent on the sovereignty of a state for their definition, protection, and realisation. This paradox of human rights allows Arendt to speak of the perplexities of human rights.

This polarisation of humanity needs to be readdressed. The involvement of non-citizens in the human discourses, as well as the downside risks of denied citizenship, remain outstanding questions that have not found adequate answers as yet in the area of human rights. Today, they need to be taken up from the prism of human security as well. In fact, human security, just like human rights and human development, have primarily been conceived as concepts with a universal meaning for everyone, thus shifting the primacy from the state to humans, from where they derive a great deal of their innovative character. This also recalls the original meaning of human security, crafted as a broad and integrative concept by Mahbub ul Haq. In sum, the challenge of human security, when related to transformative agency, is not that the concept is too broad, but rather that it is not inclusive enough so as to find effective ways for engaging the human agency of non-citizens and protecting their security on a global scale.

Conclusions
This article has examined how the human adjective identifies, modifies and frames the ever expanding areas of rights, development and security in new ways. First, the human component has the function to identify and describe which particular kind of security, rights and development is meant. It distinguishes and demonstrates, for example, how the contents of human security are different from international security. Second, the human element modifies the earlier contents by changing the terms of reference of each one of the three. And third, since the human dimension is attributed to all of them, it not only joins but also frames the aims and objectives in a coordinated perspective for policy-making.

In this way, the human dimension brings a stronger sense of correlation, coherence and shared purpose in response to combined and complex issues of violent conflict and persistent poverty. David Chandler has a strong point, as explained above, by calling for caution in order not to uncritically translate the nexus that exists at the level of analytic discourses, which deal with the underpinnings, into a policy nexus between the distinctive areas of security, rights and development. The basic conditions for the possibility, the adequacy and the effectiveness of such a translation, as it has been argued here, need to be grounded in common susceptibility to violence, suffering and harm, on which shared human interests are based. This basically constitutes a binding force between humans — not a political community but ‘a humanity with which individual humans identify’.

46 Crimes against humanity, war crimes and genocide, but also everyday

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46 Larry May, ‘Humanity, International Crime, and the Rights of Defendants’, see note 35,
forms of disrespect and humiliation, harm the human condition, which is the basic
ground to act in the international public domain\textsuperscript{47}, and in view of the universal
human commons. This goes far beyond any fixation on categories of interest,
political or otherwise, to ground and shape policies.

It has been remarked here that it is not justice alone that grounds and
activates transformative practices of human security. Humanity might offer an
equally powerful reason and foundation for identifying moral, legal and political
commitments. If human insecurity needs to be counteracted, if war is to be
eliminated, if poverty ought to be abolished, both standards of humanity and
justice are indispensable and, at times, reaffirming our humanity may come first.

\textsuperscript{47} Hannah Arendt, \textit{The Human Condition}, Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press,