

# Human Security – Conflict, Critique and Consensus: Colloquium Remarks and a Proposal for a Threshold-Based Definition<sup>1</sup>

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The aim of the colloquium in this issue of *Security Dialogue* was to both summarize and advance the rich but scattered literature on human security. The result is a microcosm of the ten-year academic debate, told through the condensed perspectives of many of the people who shaped it. This article first summarizes the 21 thoughtful and innovative commentaries, and identifies three principle themes: the theoretical broad-versus-narrow debate, human security's practical utility, and the fundamental critique and defense of the concept. Then, it is proposed that a threshold-based conceptualization, one rooted in the original UNDP definition, offers a conciliatory way forward to what is often characterized as a fractured debate. It is suggested that limiting threat inclusion by severity, rather than by cause, bridges the divide between the broad and narrow proponents, addresses the many critiques of the concept, and provides a clear policy agenda operating on various scales.

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**W**HEN ASKED CRITICALLY about the level of uncertainty, debate, conjecture, and outright skepticism regarding the concept of human security, former Canadian foreign minister Lloyd Axworthy responded assertively: 'The world had no idea what sovereignty and the security infrastructure would look like immediately following the signing of the treaty of Westphalia. Norms evolved through decades of debate, thought, action, conflict and compromise' (Axworthy, 2001b). This is worth considering as we address the state and future of the concept of human security – knee-jerk dismissals are clearly premature.

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To many, there is little doubt that (in and of itself) the traditional state-based security paradigm is failing in its primary objective – to protect people. Millions a year are killed by communicable disease, civil war, environmental disasters, and famine, none of which fall under the mandate of current security thinking. This critique crosses ideological, disciplinary, religious, moral, and political divides. The issues are immensely complex, and the theoretical, practical, and political solutions are far from obvious. The resulting dialogue is understandably confused.

The debate in this issue of *Security Dialogue* represents this complexity – broad versus narrow definitions, theoretical versus practical applications, and fundamental critiques. But it is also emblematic of the common understandings shared by the proponents – and, in many cases, the critics – of human security on what it entails and its main objectives. As was the case with traditional security, consensus will only emerge through long-term theoretical debate and policy experimentation.

In this brief colloquium summary, I will address the main issues and positions framed in the debate. I will then propose a threshold-based conceptualization of human security, one that attempts to bridge the broad-versus-narrow and analytically-useful-versus-conceptually-accurate divides. This will hopefully add a conciliatory element to what has for a decade been an unnecessarily fractious debate.

## One Concept, Twenty-One Voices, Three Themes

There is risk in asking a diverse group of academics to comment on a concept that has no clear theoretical grounding, scant political precedent, no consensus-commanding definition, and a highly uncertain future. The result might well have been 21 interpretations of 21 very different notions of human security – the whole much less than the sum of its parts. Instead, these authors, all of whom have written on the concept in the past,<sup>2</sup> have quite elegantly summarized what is a divergent and complex debate. With little editorial guidance, three issues central to the human security debate clearly emerged: the theory, the practice, and the critique.

<sup>2</sup> All contributing authors have published academic articles on human security. For a partial list, see Acharya (2001), Alkire (2001), Alkire (2003), Axworthy (1997), Axworthy (2001a), Bajpai (2000), Buzan (2002), Evans (forthcoming), Grayson (2001), Hampson & Hay (2002), Krause (1998), Krause (2000), Leaning & Arie (2000), Liotta (2002), MacFarlane & Foong-Khong (forthcoming), Mack (2002), Mack (forthcoming), McRae & Hubert (2001), Newman & Richmond (2001), Paris (2001), Suhrke (1999), Thakur, Newman & United Nations University (2000), Thomas (2000), Thomas & Wilkin (1999), Thomas & Tow (2002), Tow, Thakur & Hyun (2000), Uvin (2001).

*On The Theory of Human Security – Broad vs. Narrow*

Central to the debate over human security, at least among proponents, has been the dichotomous broad-versus-narrow conceptualization. This division figures prominently in the colloquium, and many of the authors often cited on either end of the debate have reaffirmed their perceived places on this spectrum of definitions.<sup>3</sup>

Arguing as they have in the past for a *narrow* focus, Krause,<sup>4</sup> Mack, and Macfarlane cite pragmatism, conceptual clarity, and analytic rigor as reasons to focus human security on violent threats. Krause labels the broad conception a potential laundry list of 'bad things that can happen' and points to the perils of including the lowest common denominator of individual vulnerability and well-being under the rubric of security – securitizing education, he states, can have few benefits. Mack stresses, as he did in the proposal for the *Human Security Report* (Mack, forthcoming), that 'any definition that conflates dependent and independent variables renders causal analysis virtually impossible'. MacFarlane believes that the merit of any definition should be judged on its 'value added' conceptual and policy consequences, and that because of this, analytic clarity and significant normative results are on the side of the narrow focus.

All three argue forcefully for the inclusion of violence into traditional security thinking and point to the normative success of violence-based human security initiatives. Mack in particular rails against realism's failure to recognize the state as a possible internal aggressor, as well as its inherent analytic inability to explain the 95% of all warfare that is now within, rather than between, states.

Advocating the *broad* conceptualization, Leaning, Alkire, Thakur, Axworthy, Bajpai, Hampson, and Winslow & Eriksen all suggest that human security means something more than safety from violent threats. They each counter the pragmatic rationale of the narrow proponents not only by citing the substantive importance of a wider range of issues (such as poverty, disease, and environmental disasters), but also by arguing that in shifting the referent of security, these issues *necessarily* fall under the human security umbrella. To them, the subsequent analytic and normative difficulties are unfortunate but unavoidable consequences of broadening the security paradigm beyond threats to the state.

For example, Leaning and Alkire widen the definition quite far. The former includes the social, psychological, political, and economic aspects of vulnerability, and the latter represents the position of the Commission on Human

<sup>3</sup> While serving a useful descriptive purpose, I am not convinced that this conceptualization accurately represents the varying understandings of human security, and it most likely overstates the nature and degree of separation between proponents.

<sup>4</sup> Unless otherwise indicated with separate citations, all references to the positions and statements of authors are from the special section on human security in this issue of *Security Dialogue*.

Security (2002), including all critical and pervasive threats to the vital core 'consistent with long term flourishing'.

Axworthy suggests that both policymakers and academics must dramatically recalibrate in order to address the much broader range of harms now falling under the security rubric.

Thakur and Bajpai add limiting criteria to their broad definitions. Thakur restricts included threats to those that present a crisis scenario. At some point, he argues, floods, famine, and massive refugee flows warrant the security label and require the subsequent exceptional policy response.<sup>5</sup> Bajpai's Human Security Audit (Bajpai, 2000), although broad in scope, only includes threats with 'identifiable human agents'.<sup>6</sup>

Winslow & Eriksen move beyond the broad-versus-narrow categorization, looking instead to the social and cultural contexts in which people experience insecurity and how this is dealt with through social institutions. Instead of looking at the issues themselves, they look at the cultural response and the social collaboration used to mitigate harm. Similarly, Hampson points out that vulnerability is both broad in nature and structurally dependent, and that if we are to mitigate human insecurity, we must address not only the threats, but also society's ability to counter them.<sup>7</sup>

Overall, a wide range of conceptualizations were put forward. However, as Hubert quite correctly points out, although the debate may at first appear polarized (narrow vs. broad), there is in fact significant convergence among proponents. The differences, clearly seen in this colloquium, are not of substance but of packaging. Proponents are not debating the merits of various threats, but of attributing the appropriate policy responses. How human security should be used in the policy world is the second theme that emerged from the debate.

### *On The Practice of Human Security – Policy Utility*

The unease between the theory and the normative practice of human security is reflected in the colloquium. In many ways, the dialogue can be shaped as a chicken-and-egg dilemma. Are policy norms built on lucid theoretical grounding, or do we act first and adjust theory later through 'real world' lessons learned? This is something that proponents must discuss – if only out of a recognition that two very different exercises are under way. Human security as an analytic and theoretical tool, and human security as a policy

<sup>5</sup> This is a critical point to which I will return in the second part of this article.

<sup>6</sup> This strikes me as somewhat strange considering the subject of his case study is India, a component of which includes a public opinion survey of perceived insecurity. I would be surprised if environmental conditions did not figure prominently on this survey.

<sup>7</sup> Both Hampson and Winslow & Eriksen hint at Amartya Sen's 'Capacities Approach' to human security (see Sen, 1990; Sen, 1992).

mandate are not necessarily incompatible, but if they were to become so, the success and effectiveness of both would be undermined. Put another way, the theoretical success of political realism has come largely from its tandem manifestation in the policy world. In this sense, the theory and policy of human security are surely better together than apart.

First and foremost, proponents of policy-based human security conceptions are not concerned with the lack of definitional (theoretical) clarity. To many, human security has a utility only if it can be harnessed to address policy problems – something that it has done quite successfully.<sup>8</sup> Uvin for example, sees the concept as a conceptual bridge between the self-contained but clearly ‘overlapping’ professional fields of humanitarian relief, development assistance, human rights advocacy, and conflict resolution. It is the intersect in their mandates that he calls human security. Increasingly, he argues, lack of interdisciplinarity not only leads to redundancy, but is actually counterproductive to finding integrated solutions to real-world problems.

Hampson adds that by refocusing our attention on the issues affecting the most people, human security gives political voice to the otherwise politically marginalized. Similarly, this approach forces us to address the broader context of vulnerability. While this will often mean a focus on political institutions, it will also lead to a heightened awareness of the indirect social, ecological, and economic ‘menaces to human security’.

Acharya sees human security as a rational response to the ‘globalizing’ of international policy. Governments at various scales must take on a wider mandate than simply economic growth, political stability, and invasion by foreign armies. Human security, he suggests, is the underlying rationale for this new mandate.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, several authors address human security as a framework in which to re-evaluate our understanding and norms of sovereignty. Newman points out that human security reverses our common understanding of how to link the citizen to the state. Traditional security sees state legitimacy looking outward to the international system for power, recognition, and independence. Human security forces the state to look inward to the ‘people from where it draws its legitimacy’. Evans cites the prominence of human security in Asian regional institutions not only as a sign of its vitality, but also as a litmus test for the international climate in which sovereignty might be readdressed.<sup>9</sup> Hubert suggests that any conceptualization of human security must have a response to genocide, the

<sup>8</sup> The International Convention to Ban Landmines, the International Criminal Court, small arms, and child soldiers are often attributed to the human security agenda.

<sup>9</sup> Many Asian countries that initially adopted the neo-Westphalian security order, Evans (forthcoming) points out, have discovered through economic, social, and political crises that the state is not the only factor in governance. This is a positive sign for proponents of humanitarian intervention.

necessary consequence of which is a rethinking of sovereignty. Mack questions the sanity of clinging to principles of sovereignty in the face of 'legitimate' genocidal regimes.<sup>10</sup>

What remains unclear, in spite of the concept's moderate political success, is whether human security could actually challenge the traditional security paradigm as a single foreign policy guiding concept or whether it will simply remain a hit-and-miss tool of activism. Poignantly, Suhrke suggests that neither may be possible in the current global climate. She points to the recent lackluster role human security has played in the foreign policies of even its middle-power champions Canada and Norway as evidence that there is little hope for human security in the current 'with us or against us' rhetoric of international affairs. This reminds us that the very premise of human security is highly controversial and fiercely contested in much of the policy and academic world. Acknowledging this, a fundamental critique and defense of the concept itself emerged as the third theme of the colloquium.

### *Critique and Defense*

The third major theme to emerge from the colloquium was thus a debate over the concept itself.<sup>11</sup> Critique was strongest from skeptics of the concept as a whole, notably Buzan and Paris, and moderate from narrow proponents, Krause, Mack, and MacFarlane. Providing the defense were Thakur and Mack, the latter with a fiery attack on the normative and theoretical failures of realism.

Critiques come in two forms: theoretically based and policy oriented. The theoretical critique is quite simple: shifting the referent to the individual proliferates the concept without adding analytic value – the more harms that are labeled 'security threats', the harder it is to study the relations between them. As Mack puts it, bad things must be studied separately. Paris adds that researchers should stick to 'clearly defined topics and empirical questions'.

The second line of critique addresses the potentially unmanageable policy consequences of human security. Here, the first charge is that labeling all potential harms to the individual *security threats* makes prioritizing political

<sup>10</sup> Although some potential implications of human security on norms of sovereignty were raised by these four authors, no contributors went into great detail. This is partly because we wanted to focus the special section on the theory of human security, rather than the politics. However, we recognize that these are in many ways inseparable and that sovereignty is at the center of any implementation of human security policy.

<sup>11</sup> Paris rightfully points out that the debate on human security has largely been among proponents, and consequently has taken the validity of the concept for granted. If the broader academic and policy communities were brought in, he suggests, the resulting debate may be quite different. This point is well taken. However, given our format, we wanted a dialogue between people who have already thought and written about the concept. If more critics had written or spoken publicly on human security, they would have been included. I also believe that there is a sense of vulnerability and insecurity in the literature that is keenly, if not overly, aware of the common critiques.

action impossible. Krause, Buzan, MacFarlane, and Mack rightly point out that 'security' is the label given to the highest priority issues – again, making everything a security threat in effect prioritizes nothing.<sup>12</sup>

A second policy critique points to the consequences of securitizing development and humanitarian assistance. Krause asks whether making education a security issue facilitates more effective action, or instead leads to militaristic solutions for problems of social welfare.

Third, the consequence of linking suffering in other countries to our own national security was raised. Human suffering warrants our assistance in its own right, Krause states, and should not be conflated with 'our' physical protection. As Hampson points out, this is a particularly tempting correlation to advocate. Many critics, however, most notably from the humanitarian relief community, warn that the policy consequences of such a connection are potentially devastating. Making this connection could mean, for example, that poverty alleviation in likely 'terrorist breeding grounds' would be prioritized over aid to our ideological allies. Moreover, it could also further the militarization of humanitarian assistance that we have seen in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Other critiques raised the claim that 'security' is inextricably linked to violence (Paris), and Thomas points to the Marxist perspective that human security is simply a repackaging of a liberal humanitarian order. The latter critique, of course, was at the center of the International Commission for Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS, 2002) debate and, as Mack points out, extends far beyond the bounds of traditional Marxist theory to the very real apprehensions of developing nations, many of which have learned *realpolitik* from the Western nations now advocating human security.

Strong rebuttals to some of these critiques are offered by Thakur and Mack, primarily in the guise of attacks against realism. The principle that absolute faith in the state is the only weapon against the 'mean enemies of the international jungle', says Thakur, is antiquated and grossly out of step with the reality of the globalized threats we face. The astonishing number of preventable deaths from internal conflict, famine, disease, and environmental disasters cannot be addressed by the state alone, and to entrust such an analytic and political framework with this task is negligent. In addition, the militaristic focus of 'national security' is used to divert massive funds to an industrial complex that is not capable of addressing nonviolent harms.

Mack adds that because Realism was developed to explain international and not internal wars, it is consequently not equipped to explain the willful attack, incompetence, or lack of resources that may result in a state harming rather than protecting its own citizens. He notes that protection beyond a

<sup>12</sup> A recurring theme throughout the colloquium was how to prioritize threats to the security level. This will be addressed in the second part of this essay.

balance of power among states is not new; indeed, it is embedded in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the UN Charter, and the Geneva Conventions. Mack poignantly asks why states must be the only protectors of individuals, particularly in cases where they are the very cause of their citizens' insecurity.

As a proponent of both the analytic and policy utility of human security, let me add a brief response to the main critiques.

On analytic utility: Both Mack and Paris argue that including a broad list of socioeconomic conditions under the human security label conflates independent and dependent variables, making causal analysis impossible. Measuring human security as a unified concept is indeed plagued with analyses capturing the same phenomenon on both sides of the equation. However, neither the narrow conception of human security nor the traditional conception of security are immune from such critique; both are susceptible to the similar problem of endogeneity. For example, for the narrow conception, violence can be both cause and consequence of human insecurity, and for traditional security, espionage can be both a cause and consequence of state insecurity. In order to study these phenomena, analysts must isolate and study components of the broader concept.

This is where the empirical validity in the study of human security lies. Better understanding of the causes and correlates of various human security threats will invariably shed light on the concept as a whole, addressing another key critique of the concept – its ambiguity. Any threat (war, poverty, violence, disease, etc.) can be studied as a dependant variable against a host of other independent human security threats. In this sense, by bringing the wide range of issues, data sets and knowledge of threats together, we facilitate the very type of interdisciplinary analysis needed to decipher the complex relations that make up our human insecurity.

On policy utility: Too much is made of the implications of 'securitizing everything'. Although this is contested among proponents, I do not believe that anyone ever intended to raise every possible issue to the highest policy priority. Shifting the focus away from the state, as Mack points out, was simply a means of dealing with harms that may not threaten the state as an identity but do threaten the lives of its citizens. Deciding which harms we include is up for debate, and I will suggest a method in the next section. Second, nobody is suggesting that *securitizing* necessarily means *militarizing*. In fact, it is the very assumption that security is solely a militaristic endeavor that human security attempts to challenge. Of course, in some cases, such as those that meet the ICISS criteria, military action might be needed to protect human security. Generally, however, it is the resources and prescience attributed to the military that is wanted, not the guns.

## The Consolation of Security: Proposal for a Threshold-Based Definition

The central question emerging from the colloquium comes in the form of a paradox: the closer the concept gets to its original conceptualization, focusing on all threats to the individual, the more difficult both human security policy and theory become. While some argue that including all possible threats can be workable, most attempt to narrow the concept by choosing which threats or threat categories should be included.<sup>13</sup> Narrow proponents have sacrificed nonviolent threats for policy utility, and broad proponents have sacrificed some analytic rigor and policy clarity for inclusiveness. Can human security be both analytically useful and policy relevant? I believe that there is a way to overcome this paradox with little sacrifice on either side of the human security divide. A threshold-based conceptualization, one that limits threats by their severity rather than their cause, allows all possible harms to be considered, but selectively limits those that at any time are prioritized with the 'security' label.

### *Back to the UNDP Roots*

Four aspects of the original Mahbub ul Haq United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 1994) articulation of human security point to a threshold- or severity-based solution to the aforementioned paradox.<sup>14</sup>

First, the UNDP articulated human security as 'safety from chronic threats such as hunger, disease and repression', along with 'protection from sudden and hurtful disruption in the patterns of daily life' (UNDP, 1994: 23). The point was not to securitize everything, but to shift attention away from Cold War threats to what was actually killing people.

Second, the potential confusion between human security and 'human development' was clearly addressed. Implying a qualitative difference between the two, human security was said to be a necessary but not sufficient precondition for human development. If human security could cover the most urgent threats, development would then address societal well-being.

Third, in recognition of the need for conceptual order, threats were grouped into seven categories. This classification provided disciplinary subsets of what is a clearly interdisciplinary concept. These divisions allow issues to be studied on their own and, moreover, for their interconnections

<sup>13</sup> This includes both the broad and narrow conceptualizations, and is indeed one of the reasons I feel the categorization is flawed. Many broad proponents actually include quite a narrow list of harms, simply with a focus on more development-oriented, rather than violence-based concerns.

<sup>14</sup> Although often interpreted as vague and unworkable, I feel that the UNDP definition is actually much clearer than has been reported and that it has been unjustly dismissed as unworkable.

to be analyzed. Again, as Mack points out, 'in order to examine interconnections . . . each must be treated separately for the purpose of analysis'. The UNDP articulation actually facilitates this analysis and also allows for the movement of analytic focus from individual harm, to human security subgroup, to overarching concept.

Finally, though this is rarely acknowledged, the original articulation makes a differentiation between *global* and *national* human security threats. In other words, it was recognized that various scales of threat require various scales of response. As I will argue below, this implies that the threshold of human security is a political concept, one with multiple policy meanings.

### *The Threshold Definition – What Is and Is Not a Security Threat?*

A principle critique of traditional security is that it inappropriately limits what are and are not legitimate threats. However, by artificially choosing which of the UNDP categories are and are not relevant, most human security proponents are guilty of the same reductionism. Threats should be included not because they fall into a particular category, such as violence, but because of their actual severity. In this conception, human security is not defined by an arbitrary list (either broad or narrow), but by the threats actually affecting people.

With this in mind, I propose a hybrid definition, one that requires sacrifice on the part of both broad and narrow proponents. Instead of being pre-chosen, threats would be included on the basis of their actual severity. All would be considered, but only those that surpass a threshold of severity would be labeled threats to human security. Such a threshold-based definition has two parts, discussed below.<sup>15</sup>

First, human security must recognize that there is no difference between deaths from floods, communicable disease, or war, as all preventable harms could potentially become threats to human security. However, people can be harmed by such a vast array of threats that complete coverage is conceptually, practically, and analytically unfeasible. In addition, varying harms require dramatically different policy responses. The definition must be selective, without limiting any harms that affect large numbers of people.

With this in mind, the first part is derived from the Commission on Human Security (2002): 'human security is the protection of the vital core of all human lives from critical and pervasive threats'. The advantage of this wording is that it remains true to the broad nature of human security, while clearly separating it from more general concepts of human well-being and development. Making the referent object 'all human lives' puts the focus

<sup>15</sup> Other articulations of this definition have appeared in Owen (2003), Owen (2004), and Owen & Slaymaker (forthcoming).

on the individual while at the same time indicating a universalism in the mandate. As the highest level of human insecurity is likely to occur in the developing world, this is particularly important. Reference to 'critical and pervasive threats' establishes severity, immediacy, and scope. As there is an unlimited number of possible threats, only the most serious, those that take or seriously threaten lives, are included. The definition sets the parameters and lets the conditions on the ground determine what is and is not included. Out of an infinite list of possible threats, some will surpass a threshold and become human security concerns,<sup>16</sup> while others will be dealt with through existing mechanisms.

The second part of the definition addresses the issue of conceptual clarity. A definition must be able to separate and categorize all possible threats for meaningful analytic study. Categories are therefore established under which all human security threats are ordered. These categories are not threats themselves, but are rather conceptual groupings, providing a degree of disciplinary alignment to what is an overarching concept. Therefore, *human security is the protection of the vital core of all human lives from critical and pervasive environmental, economic, food, health, personal and political threats.*<sup>17</sup>

Regardless of the exact wording used, the idea of a threshold-based conceptualization of human security requires a degree of sacrifice from both narrow and broad proponents. Narrow proponents have to recognize that violence falls into only one of the six human security categories, personal security. The *Human Security Report* or the Canadian government's position, for example, focus solely on the personal security category, not on the concept as a whole.

At the other end of the spectrum, broad proponents have to recognize that, while important, not all development concerns should be labeled threats to human security. Under a threshold definition, issues such as education, for example, would most likely not be considered threats to human security. Certain environmental, health, economic, and human rights abuses would, however, cross the threshold and become human security threats. Just as the legal system, whether national or international, is the appropriate mechanism for addressing *most* human rights abuses, international environmental organizations and treaties are the appropriate institutions to deal with *most* environmental problems. Some, however, surpass a threshold and become human security concerns. When they do, we must have both a monitoring system that can identify them and a security infrastructure that can effectively mitigate the threat.

<sup>16</sup> This threshold echoes the contrast with human development highlighted in the 1994 UNDP report, and a similar crisis-based approach is articulated by Thakur, Newman & United Nations University (2000).

<sup>17</sup> It should be noted that 'community security', included in UNDP's conception of human security, was omitted from my definition. This was done because I feel it conflicts with the first part of the definition, limiting human security to critical and pervasive threats to the vital core. I do not feel that integrity of culture, while undeniably important, fits within this conception.

### *What Defines the Threshold?*

If we accept that certain conditions surpass a threshold of severity and become not simply human rights violations, environmental problems, or isolated violent acts, but also threats to human security, then we must have a very clear idea about what these threats are and where they exist. This, by nature, requires us to define the threshold. Clearly, where the bar is set will have a significant impact on national and international policy.

Although one could come up with quantitative criteria for the threshold (number of deaths, monetary costs, etc.), perhaps this line is best seen as political. Much as there is no set list for what is and is not a traditional security threat, human security threats would be decided by international organizations, national governments, and NGO's. Just as with traditional security, what is a threat to the world community is different from what is a threat to a nation or region. The line is therefore set by political priority, capability, and will. The first opportunity and primary responsibility for ensuring human security should fall on national governments. However, if threats crossing the human security threshold are caused by governments or if governments are unable to protect against them, the international community should act. The ICISS report (2002) clearly laid out the criteria for intervention; the conditions for assistance come much earlier.

In this sense, the threshold-based conceptualization forces the policy community to articulate the appropriate responses to varying threats. The ICISS report has been a major step forward in this regard, but it is not yet universally accepted. Also, it sets the threshold very high, only including harms that require military pressure. Many human security threats may best be countered with a 'carrot' rather than a 'stick' response by the international community. This must come much earlier than any possible military response.

The idea of human security as a threshold is not new. Indeed, I believe that this was the original intention of the 1994 UNDP report. In many ways, such an approach addresses the majority of human security critiques, both those from narrow proponents against the broad articulation and those against the concept as a whole. By recognizing that the point of human security is to bring the resources and prescience of the security infrastructure to a new set of issues, it limits the issues that are raised to this top-priority level. For analytic clarity, it delineates these threats in disciplinary categories. It is naïve to believe that any one definition of human security will become the norm, as there are already so many. However, the idea of human security as a threshold beyond which a wide range of issues become something similar, something requiring the unified policy response granted to security threats, can be applied to any of the existing conceptualizations.

## Conclusion

Overall, this colloquium confirms Hubert's assessment that the debate over human security is more convergent than is generally acknowledged. Indeed, for skeptics of the concept, a divide-and-conquer strategy has proven beneficial. Proponents should solidify around a consensus-commanding definition, one that incorporates the broad mandate set by the UNDP, but that is tempered by policy realities. This could take the form of a threshold-based conceptualization.

Some argue that a universal definition is not necessary, and that human security can in fact thrive on its ambiguity, manifesting for various purposes in various contexts. Human security, like sustainable and human development, would be understood via the successes and failures of its varying advocates. I am skeptical of such a *laissez-faire* approach. The very purpose of human security is to reevaluate current security theory and policy – to rally the world's thinkers, leaders, and resources to the issues actually affecting people, rather than to those the military establishment deems important. Proponents are mistaken if they believe this will be accomplished with a vaguely defined amorphous concept. Advocates of the narrow conceptualization are aware of this reality and think we should cut our losses and focus on one harm, violence. This will, however, do little to protect the millions who will die this year alone from nonviolent preventable human security threats.

Contributors to the special section have provided hope that, at the very least, human security will not go the way of past broadening security concepts. The very fact that a substantial group of countries, policymakers, and academics are questioning the underlying premises of the security philosophy and infrastructure is remarkable. However, collaboration and conciliatory research is required. After ten years of debate, policy implementation, and critique, human security must be clearly articulated.

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