

Paradigm Shift or Hot Air?

Human security is the latest in a long line of neologisms—including common security, global security, cooperative security, and comprehensive security—that encourage policymakers and scholars to think about international security as something more than the military defense of state interests and territory. Although definitions of human security vary, most formulations emphasize the welfare of ordinary people. Among the most vocal promoters of human security are the governments of Canada and Norway, which have taken the lead in establishing a “human security network” of states and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) that endorse the concept.¹ The term has also begun to appear in academic works,² and is the subject of new research projects at several major universities.³

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1. Other states in the network include Austria, Chile, Greece, Ireland, Jordan, Mali, the Netherlands, Slovenia, Switzerland, and Thailand. See “Chairman’s Summary,” Second Ministerial Meeting of the Human Security Network, Lucerne, Switzerland, May 11–12, 2000, http://www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca/foreignp/humansecurity/Chairman_summary-e.asp (accessed on February 14, 2001).

2. For example, Yuen Foong Khong, “Human Security: A Shotgun Approach to Alleviating Human Misery?” *Global Governance*, Vol. 7, No. 3 (July–September 2001); Oliver Richmond, “Human Security, the ‘Rule of Law,’ and NGOs: Potentials and Problems for Humanitarian Intervention,” *Human Rights Review*, Vol. 2, No. 4 (July–September 2001); Astri Suhrke, “Human Security and the Interests of States,” *Security Dialogue*, Vol. 30, No. 3 (September 1999), pp. 265–276; Peter Stoett, *Human and Global Security: An Exploration of Terms* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999); Caroline Thomas and Peter Wilkin, eds., *Globalization, Human Security, and the African Experience* (Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner, 1999); Jorge Nef, *Human Security and Mutual Vulnerability: The Global Political Economy of Development and Underdevelopment*, 2d ed. (Ottawa: International Development Research Centre, 1999); Majid Tehrani, ed., *Worlds Apart: Human Security and Global Governance* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1999); Heather Owens and Barbara Arneil, “The Human Security Paradigm Shift: A New Lens on Canadian Foreign Policy? Report of the University of British Columbia Symposium on Human Security,” *ibid.*, pp. 1–12; Ramesh Thakur, “The United Nations and Human Security,” *ibid.*, pp. 51–60; and Tatsuro Matsumae and L.C. Chen, eds., *Common Security in Asia: New Concept of Human Security* (Tokyo: Tokai University Press, 1995).

3. These include Harvard University’s Program on Human Security, the University of Denver’s

Some commentators argue that human security represents a new paradigm for scholars and practitioners alike. Despite these claims, however, it remains unclear whether the concept of human security can serve as a practical guide for academic research or governmental policymaking. As Daniel Deudney has written in another context, “Not all neologisms are equally plausible or useful.”⁴ Two problems, in particular, limit the usefulness of the human security concept for students and practitioners of international politics. First, the concept lacks a precise definition. Human security is like “sustainable development”—everyone is for it, but few people have a clear idea of what it means. Existing definitions of human security tend to be extraordinarily expansive and vague, encompassing everything from physical security to psychological well-being, which provides policymakers with little guidance in the prioritization of competing policy goals and academics little sense of what, exactly, is to be studied.

Second, the most ardent backers of human security appear to have an interest in keeping the term expansive and vague. The idea of human security is the glue that holds together a jumbled coalition of “middle power” states, development agencies, and NGOs—all of which seek to shift attention and resources away from conventional security issues and toward goals that have traditionally fallen under the rubric of international development. As a unifying concept for this coalition, human security is powerful precisely because it lacks precision and thereby encompasses the diverse perspectives and objectives of all the members of the coalition. The term, in short, appears to be slippery by design. Cultivated ambiguity renders human security an effective campaign slogan, but it also diminishes the concept’s usefulness as a guide for academic research or policymaking.

This is not to say that human security is merely “hot air” or empty rhetoric. The political coalition that now uses human security as a rallying cry has chalked up significant accomplishments, including the signing of an anti-personnel land mines convention and the imminent creation of an international criminal court. The alliance of some states and advocacy groups has altered the landscape of international politics since the end of the Cold War, as Richard Price and others have shown.⁵ But to say that human security has

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4. Daniel Deudney, “Environment and Security: Muddled Thinking,” *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, Vol. 47, No. 3 (April 1991), p. 23.

5. Richard Price, “Reversing the Gun Sights: Transnational Civil Society Targets Land Mines,” *International Organization*, Vol. 52, No. 3 (Summer 1998), pp. 613–644; and Craig Warkentin and Karen

served as an effective rallying cry is different from claiming that the concept offers a useful framework for analysis, as some of its proponents maintain.⁶ Campaign slogans can be consequential without being well defined. The impact of Lyndon Johnson's Great Society rhetoric, for example, was arguably significant—serving as a focal point for political supporters of his reformist social agenda—but the exact meaning of the term “great society” was obscure. Similarly, one can support the political goals of the human security coalition while recognizing that the idea of human security itself is a muddle.

This article proceeds as follows. First, I examine existing definitions of human security. Second, I explore the limits of human security as a practical guide for academic research and policymaking. Third, I examine recent efforts to narrow the definition of human security. Fourth, I consider ways in which the concept might, despite its limitations, make a contribution to the study of international relations and security.

What Is Human Security?

The first major statement concerning human security appeared in the 1994 *Human Development Report*, an annual publication of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). “The concept of security,” the report argues, “has for too long been interpreted narrowly: as security of territory from external aggression, or as protection of national interests in foreign policy or as global security from the threat of nuclear holocaust....Forgotten were the legitimate concerns of ordinary people who sought security in their daily lives.”⁷ This critique is clear and forceful, but the report's subsequent proposal for a new concept of security—*human* security—lacks precision: “Human security can be said to have two main aspects. It means, first, safety from such chronic threats as hunger, disease and repression. And second, it means protection from sudden and hurtful disruptions in the patterns of daily life—whether in homes, in jobs or in communities.”⁸ The scope of this definition is vast: Virtually any kind of unexpected or irregular discomfort could conceivably constitute a threat to one's human security. Perhaps anticipating this criticism, the authors

Mingst, “International Institutions, the State, and Global Civil Society in the Age of the World Wide Web,” *Global Governance*, Vol. 6, No. 2 (April–June 2000), pp. 237–257.

6. Laura Reed and Majid Tehranian, “Evolving Security Regimes,” in Tehranian, *Worlds Apart*, p. 35.

7. United Nations Development Programme, *Human Development Report, 1994* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 22.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 23.

of the report identify seven specific elements that comprise human security: (1) economic security (e.g., freedom from poverty); (2) food security (e.g., access to food); (3) health security (e.g., access to health care and protection from diseases); (4) environmental security (e.g., protection from such dangers as environmental pollution and depletion); (5) personal security (e.g., physical safety from such things as torture, war, criminal attacks, domestic violence, drug use, suicide, and even traffic accidents); (6) community security (e.g., survival of traditional cultures and ethnic groups as well as the physical security of these groups); and (7) political security (e.g., enjoyment of civil and political rights, and freedom from political oppression). This list is so broad that it is difficult to determine what, if anything, might be excluded from the definition of human security. Indeed the drafters of the report seem distinctly uninterested in establishing any definitional boundaries. Instead they make a point of commending the “all-encompassing” and “integrative” qualities of the human security concept, which they apparently view as among the concept’s major strengths.⁹

Today the UNDP’s 1994 definition of human security remains the most widely cited and “most authoritative” formulation of the term,¹⁰ although different members of the human security coalition have customized the definition to suit their own particular interests. According to the government of Japan, for example, the concept of human security “comprehensively covers all the measures that threaten human survival, daily life, and dignity—for example, environmental degradation, violations of human rights, transnational organized crime, illicit drugs, refugees, poverty, anti-personnel landmines and...infectious diseases such as AIDS—and strengthens efforts to confront these threats.”¹¹ Other states, such as Canada, have promoted a more restrictive definition of human security as “freedom from pervasive threats to people’s rights, safety or lives.”¹² But even this slightly narrower con-

9. *Ibid.*, p. 24.

10. John G. Cockell, “Conceptualising Peacebuilding: Human Security and Sustainable Peace,” in Michael Pugh, ed., *Regeneration of War-Torn Societies* (London: Macmillan, 2000), p. 21.

11. Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Diplomatic Bluebook*, 1999, chap. 2, sec. 3. See also “Statement by Director-General Yukio Takasu at the International Conference on Human Security in a Globalized World,” Ulan Bator, May 8, 2000. Both documents are reproduced on the Japanese foreign ministry’s web site at <http://www.mofa.go.jp> (accessed on February 14, 2001).

12. Canadian foreign ministry web site: <http://www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca/foreign/humansecurity/menu-e.asp> (accessed on February 14, 2001). See also the statement by former Canadian Foreign Minister Lloyd Axworthy, “Canada and Human Security: The Need for Leadership,” *International Journal*, Vol. 52, No. 2 (Spring 1997), pp. 183–196. Since leaving his post as foreign minister in 2000, Axworthy has continued to espouse the concept of human security; see Lloyd Axworthy, “Human Security and Global Governance: Putting People First,” *Global Governance*, Vol. 7, No. 1 (January–March 2001), pp. 19–23.

ceptualization of human security is sweeping and open-ended: Among other things, the Canadian formulation includes safety from physical threats, the achievement of an acceptable quality of life, a guarantee of fundamental human rights, the rule of law, good governance, social equity, protection of civilians in conflicts, and sustainable development.¹³ Meanwhile the human security network—which, in addition to Canada, Norway, and Japan, includes several other states and a broad assortment of international NGOs—has committed itself to the goal of “strengthening human security with a view to creating a more humane world where people can live in security and dignity, free from want and fear, and with equal opportunities to develop their human potential to the full.”¹⁴ The sentiments embodied in these statements are honorable, but they do little to clarify the meaning or boundaries of the human security concept.

Some academic writings on the subject have been similarly opaque. Many works amount to restatements or revisions of the UNDP’s laundry list of human security issues. Jorge Nef, for example, devises a fivefold classification scheme, arguing that human security comprises (1) environmental, personal, and physical security, (2) economic security, (3) social security, including “freedom from discrimination based on age, gender, ethnicity, or social status,” (4) political security, and (5) cultural security, or “the set of psychological orientations of society geared to preserving and enhancing the ability to control uncertainty and fear.”¹⁵ Laura Reed and Majid Tehranian offer their own list of human security’s ten constituent elements—including psychological security, which “hinges on establishing conditions fostering respectful, loving, and humane interpersonal relations,” and communication security, or the importance of “freedom and balance in information flows.”¹⁶ Other scholars avoid the laundry list approach, but offer equally expansive definitions. According to Caroline Thomas, human security refers to the provision of “basic material needs” and the realization of “human dignity,” including “emancipation from oppressive power structures—be they global, national, or local in origin and scope.”¹⁷ For Robert Bedeski, human security includes “the totality of knowledge, technology, institutions and activities that protect, defend and preserve the biological existence of human life; and the processes which protect and

13. Axworthy, “Canada and Human Security,” p. 184.

14. “Chairman’s Summary,” Second Ministerial Meeting of the Human Security Network.

15. Nef, *Human Security and Mutual Vulnerability*, p. 25.

16. Reed and Tehranian, “Evolving Security Regimes,” pp. 39 and 47.

17. Caroline Thomas, “Introduction,” in Thomas and Wilkin, *Globalization, Human Security, and the African Experience*, p. 3.

perfect collective peace and prosperity to enhance human freedom.”¹⁸ Again, if human security is all these things, what is it *not*?

A Guide for Research and Policymaking?

Policymakers and scholars face different, but related, problems in attempting to put these definitions of human security into practical use. For policymakers, the challenge is to move beyond all-encompassing exhortations and to focus on specific solutions to specific political issues. This is a difficult task not only because of the broad sweep and definitional elasticity of most formulations of human security but also—and perhaps even more problematically—because the proponents of human security are typically reluctant to prioritize the jumble of goals and principles that make up the concept. As noted above, part of the ethic of the human security movement is to emphasize the “inclusiveness” and “holism” of the term, which in practice seems to mean treating all interests and objectives within the movement as equally valid. Reed and Tehranian, for instance, after presenting their list of ten constituent categories of human security, conclude with this caveat: “It is important to reiterate that these overlapping categories do not represent a hierarchy of security needs from personal to national, international, and environmental rights. On the contrary, each realm impinges upon the others and is intrinsically connected to wider political and economic considerations.”¹⁹ The observation that all human and natural realms are fundamentally interrelated is a truism, and does not provide a very convincing justification for treating all needs, values, and policy objectives as equally important. Nor does it help decisionmakers in their daily task of allocating scarce resources among competing goals: After all, not everything can be a matter of national security, with all of the urgency that this term implies. To put it simply, human security “is too broad and vague a concept to be meaningful for policymakers, as it has come to entail such a wide range of different threats on one hand, while prescribing a diverse and sometimes incompatible set of policy solutions to resolve them on the other.”²⁰

For those who study, rather than practice, international politics, the task of transforming the idea of human security into a useful analytical tool for schol-

18. Robert Bedeski, “Human Security, Knowledge, and the Evolution of the Northeast Asian State,” Centre for Global Studies, University of Victoria, February 8, 2000, <http://www.globalcentres.org/docs/bedeski.html> (accessed on February 14, 2001).

19. Reed and Tehranian, “Evolving Security Regimes,” p. 53.

20. Owens and Arneil, “The Human Security Paradigm Shift,” p. 2.

arly research is also problematic. Given the hodgepodge of principles and objectives associated with the concept, it is far from clear what academics should even be studying. Human security seems capable of supporting virtually any hypothesis—along with its opposite—depending on the prejudices and interests of the particular researcher. Further, because the concept of human security encompasses both physical security and more general notions of social, economic, cultural, and psychological well-being, it is impractical to talk about certain socioeconomic factors “causing” an increase or decline in human security, given that these factors are themselves part of the definition of human security. The study of causal relationships requires a degree of analytical separation that the notion of human security lacks.²¹

To illustrate these problems, consider John Cockell’s efforts to apply the human security concept to the phenomenon of international peacebuilding operations in countries at risk of slipping into, or just emerging from, civil war.²² After embracing the open-ended UNDP definition of human security, Cockell states that “peacebuilding is a sustained process of preventing internal threats to human security from causing protracted, violent conflict.”²³ Yet because the UNDP definition of human security includes safety from violence as a central component of human security, Cockell is effectively saying that peacebuilding seeks to prevent a decline in human security from causing a decline in human security, which makes little sense. He then identifies “four basic parameters,” based on the principles of human security, for the conduct of peacebuilding operations: Peacebuilders should focus on root causes of conflicts, pay attention to the differences in local conditions from one operation to the next, seek sustainable and durable results, and mobilize local actors and resources in support of peace. Although these guidelines seem reasonable, the sprawling concept of human security could support many more—and quite different—principles for peacebuilding. Indeed Cockell himself acknowledges that his policy prescriptions are “arbitrary,” which belies the notion that human security entails a particular “orientation” toward peacebuilding, as Cockell claims.²⁴ More generally, if human security means almost anything, then it effectively means nothing.²⁵

21. Suhrke makes a similar point in “Human Security and the Interests of States,” pp. 270–271.

22. Cockell, “Conceptualising Peacebuilding.”

23. *Ibid.*, p. 21.

24. *Ibid.*, pp. 26, 21.

25. On the problem of “conceptual stretching,” see Giovanni Sartori, “Concept Misinformation in Comparative Politics,” *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 64, No. 4 (December 1970), pp. 1033–1053.

Attempts to Narrow the Concept

One possible remedy for the expansiveness and vagueness of human security is to redefine the concept in much narrower and more precise terms, so that it might offer a better guide for research and policymaking. This is the approach that Gary King and Christopher Murray have adopted in their ongoing project on human security.²⁶ King and Murray offer a definition of human security that is intended to include only “essential” elements, meaning elements that are “important enough for human beings to fight over or to put their lives or property at great risk.”²⁷ Using this standard, they identify five key indicators of well-being—poverty, health, education, political freedom, and democracy—that they intend to incorporate into an overall measure of human security for individuals and groups. Similarly, another scholar, Kanti Bajpai, proposes construction of a “human security audit” that would include measures of “direct and indirect threats to individual bodily safety and freedom,” as well as measures of different societies’ “capacity to deal with these threats, namely, the fostering of norms, institutions, and . . . representativeness in decisionmaking structures.”²⁸ Although both projects are still in the early stages of development, they represent welcome efforts at operationalizing the concept of human security with a more precise definition of the term. A clear measure or audit of human security would allow scholars to assess the factors that lead to declines or increases in the human security of particular groups or individuals.²⁹

Both of these projects, however, face problems that seem endemic to the study of human security. First, they identify certain values as more important than others without providing a clear justification for doing so. Bajpai, for instance, proposes inclusion of “bodily safety” and “personal freedom” in his human security audit, and argues that this audit would draw attention to the fact that “threats to safety and freedom are *the most important*” elements of hu-

26. Gary King and Christopher Murray, “Rethinking Human Security,” Harvard University, May 4, 2000, <http://gking.harvard.edu/files/hs.pdf> (accessed on February 14, 2001).

27. *Ibid.*, p. 8.

28. Kanti Bajpai, “Human Security: Concept and Measurement,” Kroc Institute Occasional Paper No. 19:OP:1 (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame, August 2000), http://www.nd.edu/?krocinst/ocpapers/op_19_1.PDF (accessed on February 14, 2001).

29. In addition to these projects, on January 24, 2001, the United Nations and the government of Japan announced plans to establish a Commission on Human Security, which will be cochaired by Nobel laureate Amartya Sen and former UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Sadako Ogata. See “Independent Panel on ‘Human Security’ To Be Set Up,” Agence France-Press, January 24, 2001.

man security.³⁰ He does not explain, however, why other values are not equally, or perhaps even more, important than the values he champions. What about education? Is the ability to choose one's marriage partner, which is one of Bajpai's examples of personal freedom, really more important than, say, a good education? Perhaps it is, but Bajpai does not address this issue. Similarly, King and Murray state that their formulation of human security includes only those matters that people would be willing to fight over. But they neglect to offer evidence that their five indicators are, in fact, closely related to the risk of violent conflict. In other words, they favor certain values as representative of human security without offering a clear justification for doing so. Additionally, their decision to exclude indicators of violence from their composite measure of human security creates a de facto distinction between human security and physical security, thereby purging the most familiar connotation of security—safety from violence—from their definition of human security. Under the King-Murray formulation, individuals could find themselves in the strange position of enjoying a high level of human security (low poverty, reasonable health care, good education, political freedom, and democracy), while facing a relatively high risk of becoming victims of deadly violence. One need only think of residents of certain neighborhoods in Belfast, who might not consider themselves very "secure." Thus the challenge for these scholars is not simply to narrow the definition of human security into a more analytically tractable concept, but to provide a compelling rationale for highlighting certain values.

This raises another problem. Defining the core values of human security may be difficult not only because there is so little agreement on the meaning of human security, but because the term's ambiguity serves a particular purpose: It unites a diverse and sometimes fractious coalition of states and organizations that "see an opportunity to capture some of the more substantial political interest and superior financial resources" associated with more traditional, military conceptions of security.³¹ These actors have in effect pursued a political strategy of "appropriating" the term "security," which conveys urgency, demands public attention, and commands governmental resources.³² By main-

30. *Ibid.*, p. 53 (emphasis added).

31. King and Murray, "Rethinking Human Security," p. 4. See also Mahbub ul Haq, *Reflections on Human Development*, exp. ed. (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998). On the strategic use of the term "security" as a tool for changing policy or obtaining resources, see Emma Rothschild, "What Is Security?" *Dædalus*, Vol. 124, No. 3 (Summer 1995), pp. 58–59.

32. On the urgency that is automatically associated with the concept of national security, see David E. Sanger, "Sometimes National Security Says It All," *New York Times*, Week in Review, May 7, 2000, p. 3.

taining a certain level of ambiguity in the notion of human security, moreover, the members of this coalition are able to minimize their individual differences, thereby accommodating as wide a variety of members and interests in their network as possible.³³ Given these circumstances, they are unlikely to support outside calls for greater specificity in the definition of human security, because definitional narrowing would likely highlight and aggravate differences among them, perhaps even to the point of alienating certain members and weakening the coalition as a whole.

Why, then, should scholars bother trying to transform the concept of human security into a serviceable analytical tool at all? Why embark on what could well be a quixotic quest to wrest the definition of human security away from those who have an interest in keeping it vague and expansive? Perhaps a more sensible alternative would be to employ a less politically encumbered terminology, or to think about other ways in which the concept of human security could contribute to the field of security studies.

Human Security as a Category of Research

To recapitulate my argument so far: Human security does not appear to offer a particularly useful framework of analysis for scholars or policymakers. But perhaps there are other avenues by which the idea of human security can contribute to the study of international relations and security. I would like to suggest one such possibility: Human security may serve as a *label* for a broad category of research in the field of security studies that is primarily concerned with nonmilitary threats to the safety of societies, groups, and individuals, in contrast to more traditional approaches to security studies that focus on protecting states from external threats. Much of this work is relatively new, and our understanding of how such research “fits” within the larger field of security studies is still limited. In other words, even if the concept of human secu-

33. The communiqués of the human security network, for example, describe the concept of human security more vaguely than do Canadian or Japanese government documents on the subject. Compare “Chairman’s Summary,” Second Ministerial Meeting of the Human Security Network, to the Government of Canada’s “Human Security: Safety for People in a Changing World,” Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, May 1999, and the “Statement by Director-General Yukio Takasu.” Bajpai also discusses some of these differences in “Human Security: Concept and Measurement,” as does Fen Osler Hampson, “The Axworthy Years: An Assessment,” presentation prepared for delivery to the Group of 78, National Press Club, Ottawa, October 31, 2000, <http://www.hri.ca/partners/G78/English/Peace/hampson-axworthy.htm> (accessed on February 14, 2001).

rity itself is too vague to generate specific research questions, it could still play a useful taxonomical role in the field by helping to classify different types of scholarship. Using human security in this manner would be compatible with the *spirit* of the term—particularly its emphasis on nonmilitary sources of conflict—while recognizing that there is little point in struggling to operationalize the quicksilver concept of human security itself.

Despite resistance from some scholars, such as Stephen Walt, the field of security studies has developed beyond its traditional focus on the “threat, use and control of military force” primarily by states.³⁴ Since the end of the Cold War, in particular, the subject matter of security studies has undergone both a “broadening” and a “deepening.”³⁵ By broadening, I mean the consideration of nonmilitary security threats, such as environmental scarcity and degradation, the spread of disease, overpopulation, mass refugee movements, nationalism, terrorism, and nuclear catastrophe.³⁶ By deepening, I mean that the field is now more willing to consider the security of individuals and groups, rather than focusing narrowly on external threats to states.³⁷ These efforts have been prompted in part by the contributions of “critical” theorists—including feminists, postmodernists, and constructivists—who have probed the assumptions and political implications of the term “security” itself.³⁸

Using the notions of broadening and deepening, it is possible to construct a matrix of the security studies field, as illustrated in Figure 1. The matrix con-

34. Stephen M. Walt, “The Renaissance of Security Studies,” *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 35, No. 1 (March 1991), p. 212. For a critique of Walt’s traditionalism, see Edward A. Kolodziej, “Renaissance in Security Studies? Caveat Lector!” *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 36, No. 4 (December 1992), pp. 421–438.

35. I borrow these terms from Richard Wyn Jones, *Security, Strategy, and Critical Theory* (Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner, 1999).

36. See, for example, Richard H. Ullmann, “Redefining Security,” *International Security*, Vol. 8, No. 1 (Summer 1983), pp. 129–153; Jessica Tuchman Mathews, “Redefining Security,” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 68, No. 2 (Spring 1989), pp. 162–177; and Sean M. Lynn-Jones and Steven E. Miller, eds., *Global Dangers: Changing Dimensions of International Security* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1995).

37. See, for example, Robert L. Rothstein, ed., *After the Peace: Resistance and Reconciliation* (Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner, 1999); Barbara F. Walter, “Designing Transitions from Civil War: Demobilization, Democratization, and Commitments to Peace,” *International Security*, Vol. 24, No. 1 (Summer 1999), pp. 127–155; Krishna Kumar, ed., *Rebuilding Societies after Civil War: Critical Roles for International Assistance* (Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner, 1997); and Donald L. Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985).

38. See, for example, Bill McSweeney, *Security, Identity, and Interests: A Sociology of International Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Keith Krause and Michael C. Williams, eds., *Critical Security Studies* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997); David Campbell, *Writing Security: United States Foreign Policy and the Politics of Identity* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998); and Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver, and Jaap de Wilde, *Security: A New Framework for Analysis* (Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner, 1998).

Figure 1. A Matrix of Security Studies

| | | What is the Source of the Security Threat? | |
|--------------------|------------------------------------|--|--|
| | | Military | Military, Nonmilitary, or Both |
| Security for Whom? | States | <p>Cell 1</p> <p>National security (conventional realist approach to security studies)</p> | <p>Cell 2</p> <p>Redefined security (e.g., environmental and economic security)</p> |
| | Societies, Groups, and Individuals | <p>Cell 3</p> <p>Intrastate security (e.g., civil war, ethnic conflict, and democide)</p> | <p>Cell 4</p> <p>Human security (e.g., environmental and economic threats to the survival of societies, groups, and individuals)</p> |

tains four cells, each representing a different cluster of literature in the field. I assume that a “security threat” connotes some type of menace to survival. The top half of the map includes works that focus on security threats to states; the bottom half comprises works that consider security threats to societies, groups, and individuals. The left side of the matrix shows literature that focuses on military threats, and the right side on military or nonmilitary threats, or both. These divisions produce the following fourfold typology of the field:

- Cell 1 contains works that concentrate on military threats to the security of states. Conventional realists tend to adopt this perspective, which has traditionally dominated academic security studies, particularly in the United States.³⁹ Most of the articles published in *International Security*, for example, fall into this category.

39. See, for example, Walt, “The Renaissance of Security Studies”; Richard K. Betts, “Should Strategic Studies Survive?” *World Politics*, Vol. 50, No. 1 (October 1997), pp. 7–33; Michael E. Brown, Owen R. Coté, Jr., Sean M. Lynn-Jones, and Steven E. Miller, eds., *America’s Strategic Choices*, rev. ed. (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2000); David A. Baldwin, “Security Studies and the End of the Cold War,” *World Politics*, Vol. 48, No. 1 (October 1995), pp. 117–141; and Joseph S. Nye, Jr., and

- Cell 2 contains works that address nonmilitary threats (instead of, or in addition to, military threats) to the national security of states, including environmental and economic challenges. Jessica Tuchman Mathews's much-cited 1989 article, "Redefining Security," is typical of this category. Mathews argues that foreign security policies should incorporate considerations of environmental destruction, among other things, but she still considers the state, rather than substate actors, to be the salient object of security.⁴⁰ Other examples of such work include the Palme Commission's 1982 report, *Common Security*, which argued that nuclear weapons posed a threat to the survival of all states;⁴¹ investigations into the relationship between environmental degradation and international armed conflict;⁴² and studies of foreign economic policy and international security.⁴³
- Cell 3 includes works that focus on military threats to actors other than states: namely societies, groups, and individuals. The prevalence of intrastate violence since the end of the Cold War has given rise to a large literature on intrastate conflicts, in which substate groups are the principal belligerents.⁴⁴

Sean M. Lynn-Jones, "International Security Studies: A Report of a Conference on the State of the Field," *International Security*, Vol. 12, No. 4 (Spring 1988), pp. 5–27.

40. Mathews, "Redefining Security." See also Ullmann, "Redefining Security"; and Joseph J. Romm, *Defining National Security: The Nonmilitary Aspects* (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 1993).

41. Independent Commission on Disarmament and Security Issues, *Common Security: A Blueprint for Survival* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1982).

42. See, for example, Thomas F. Homer-Dixon, *Environment, Scarcity, and Violence* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1999); and Nils Peter Gleditsch, "Armed Conflict and the Environment: A Critique of the Literature," *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 35, No. 3 (May 1998), pp. 381–400. For an excellent bibliography, see Geoffrey D. Dabelko, ed., *Environmental Change and Security Project Report*, No. 6 (Summer 2000), pp. 232–238, also available at <http://ecsp.si.edu/pdf/Report6-10.pdf> (accessed on May 5, 2001).

43. See, for example, Jean-Marc F. Blanchard, Edward D. Mansfield, and Norrin M. Ripsman, eds., *Power and the Purse: Economic Statecraft, Interdependence, and National Security* (London: Frank Cass, 2000), originally published as a special issue of *Security Studies*, Vol. 9, Nos. 1–2 (Autumn 1999–Winter 2000), pp. 1–316; C. Fred Bergsten, "America's Two-Front Economic Conflict," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 80, No. 2 (March–April 2001), pp. 16–27; Richard N. Haass, ed., *Economic Sanctions and American Diplomacy* (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 1998); and Jonathan Kirschner, "Political Economic in Security Studies after the Cold War," *Review of International Political Economy*, Vol. 5, No. 1 (Spring 1998), pp. 64–91.

44. See, for example, John Mueller, "The Banality of 'Ethnic War,'" *International Security*, Vol. 25, No. 1 (Summer 2000), pp. 42–70; Benjamin Valentino, "Final Solutions: The Causes of Mass Killing and Genocide," *Security Studies* Vol. 9, No. 3 (Spring 2000), pp. 1–59; Barbara F. Walter and Jack Snyder, eds., *Civil Wars, Insecurity, and Intervention* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999); Beverly Crawford and Ronnie D. Lipschutz, eds., *The Myth of 'Ethnic Conflict': Politics, Economics, and 'Cultural' Violence* (Berkeley: International and Area Studies, University of California, 1998); Chaim Kaufmann, "Possible and Impossible Solutions to Ethnic Civil Wars," *International Security*,

In addition, studies of “democide,” or the intentional killing by a state of its own citizens, also fall into this category.⁴⁵

- Cell 4 is concerned with military or nonmilitary threats—or both—to the security of societies, groups, and individuals. Does poverty, for example, fuel violence within societies?⁴⁶ Are certain types of domestic political institutions more conducive to domestic peace?⁴⁷ Is the degree of urbanization of a society, or access to medical care, associated with the occurrence of civil violence?⁴⁸ What other societal conditions pose a particular danger to the survival of groups and individuals? All of these questions would fall into the category of research that I label “human security.”

Vol. 20, No. 4 (Spring 1996), pp. 136–175; Donald M. Snow, *Uncivil Wars: International Security and the New Internal Conflicts* (Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner, 1996); Michael E. Brown, ed., *Ethnic Conflict and International Security* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1993); and Roy Licklider, ed., *Stopping the Killing: How Civil Wars End* (New York: New York University Press, 1993).

45. See, for example, R.J. Rummel, *Power Kills: Democracy as a Method of Non-Violence* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction, 1997); Gerald W. Scully, “Democide and Genocide as Rent-Seeking Activities,” *Public Choice*, Vol. 93, Nos. 1–2 (October 1997), pp. 77–97; and Matthew Krain, “State-Sponsored Mass Murder: The Onset and Severity of Genocides and Politicides,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 41, No. 3 (June 1997), pp. 331–360.

46. Steve Majstorovic, “Politicized Ethnicity and Economic Inequality,” *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (Spring 1995), pp. 33–53; Walker Connor, “Eco- or Ethno-Nationalism,” in Connor, *Ethnonationalism: The Quest for Understanding* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1994), pp. 145–164; Ted Robert Gurr, “Why Minorities Rebel: A Global Analysis of Communal Mobilization and Conflict since 1945,” *International Political Science Review*, Vol. 14, No. 2 (April 1993), pp. 161–201; Saul Newman, “Does Modernization Breed Ethnic Conflict?” *World Politics*, Vol. 43, No. 3 (April 1991), pp. 451–478; James B. Rule, *Theories of Civil Violence* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988); Steven Finkel and James B. Rule, “Relative Deprivation and Related Theories of Civil Violence: A Critical Review,” in Kurt Lang and Gladys Lang, eds., *Research in Social Movements, Conflicts, and Change* (Greenwich, Conn.: JAI, 1986), Vol. 9, pp. 47–69; Ted Robert Gurr, *Why Men Rebel* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1970); and William Ford and John Moore, “Additional Evidence on the Social Characteristics of Riot Cities,” *Social Science Quarterly*, Vol. 51, No. 2 (September 1970), pp. 339–348.

47. Håvard Hegre, Tanja Ellingsen, Nils Petter Gleditsch, and Scott Gales, “Towards a Democratic Civil Peace? Opportunity, Grievance, and Civil War, 1816–1992,” paper presented to the workshop Civil Conflicts, Crime, and Violence in Developing Countries, World Bank, Washington, D.C., February 1999; Matthew Krain and Marissa Edson Myers, “Democracy and Civil War: A Note on the Democratic Peace Proposition,” *International Interactions*, Vol. 23, No. 1 (June 1997), pp. 109–118; and Michael Engelhardt, “Democracies, Dictatorships, and Counterinsurgency: Does Regime Type Really Matter?” *Conflict Quarterly*, Vol. 12, No. 3 (Summer 1992), pp. 52–63.

48. These two factors, among others, are studied in Daniel C. Esty, Jack A. Goldstone, Ted Robert Gurr, Barbara Harff, Marc Levy, Geoffrey D. Dabelko, Pamela T. Surko, and Alan N. Unger, *State Failure Task Force Report: Phase II Findings* (McLean, Va.: Science Applications International Corporation, 1998). For a critique of this report, see Gary King and Langche Zeng, “Improving Forecasts of State Failure,” paper prepared for the Midwest Political Science Association meeting in Chicago, Illinois, November 13, 2000, <http://gking.harvard.edu/files/civil.pdf> (accessed on May 5, 2001).

Using the term “human security” to describe this type of scholarship has several advantages. First, the contents of cell 4 echo many of the concerns of the human security coalition, so it makes intuitive sense to use this terminology. Second, employing human security as a label for a broad category of research eliminates the problem of deriving clear hypotheses from the human security concept itself—a concept that, I have argued, offers little analytical leverage because it is so sprawling and ambiguous. Consequently, scholars working in the “human security branch” of security studies would not need to adjudicate the merit or validity of human security per se, but rather they would focus on more specific questions that could be clearly defined (and perhaps even answered). Third, and relatedly, although many scholars in this branch of security studies may be interested in normative questions as well as empirical ones, the advantage of using human security as a descriptive label for a class of research is that the label would not presuppose any particular normative agenda.⁴⁹

Fourth, mapping the field in this manner—with human security as one branch—helps to differentiate the principal nontraditional approaches to security studies from one another. With the broadening and deepening of security studies in recent years, it is no longer helpful or reasonable to define the field in dualistic terms: with the realist, state-centric, military-minded approach to security studies at the core and a disorderly bazaar of alternative approaches in the periphery. These alternative approaches actually fall into broad groupings and have become sufficiently important to merit their own classification scheme. Mapping the field in new ways can help us to understand how these approaches relate to more traditional approaches to security studies, and to one another. Finally, the very fashionability of the label “human security” could benefit scholars by drawing attention to existing works within cell 4 and opening up new areas of research in this branch of the field.

Of course, the boundaries between these four quadrants are not absolute. Environmental degradation, for example, may simultaneously pose a threat to the survival of states and substate actors, and could thus fall into either cell 2 or cell 4.⁵⁰ The permeability of these boundaries, however, is not a significant

49. Scholars may conclude, for example, that certain socioeconomic conditions are not associated with any particular threats to human survival.

50. Steven J. Del Rosso, Jr., “The Insecure State: Reflections on ‘The State’ and ‘Security’ in a Changing World,” *Dædalus*, Vol. 124, No. 2 (Spring 1995), p. 185.

problem for scholars because each quadrant represents a broad category of research—or a cluster of issues and questions, rather than a distinct causal hypothesis or theory—which would need to be more clearly specified.

Conclusion

Human security has been described as many different things: a rallying cry, a political campaign, a set of beliefs about the sources of violent conflict, a new conceptualization of security, and a guide for policymakers and academic researchers. As a rallying cry, the idea of human security has successfully united a diverse coalition of states, international agencies, and NGOs. As a political campaign, the human security coalition has accomplished a number of specific goals, such as the negotiation of the land mines convention. But as a new conceptualization of security, or a set of beliefs about the sources of conflict, human security is so vague that it verges on meaninglessness—and consequently offers little practical guidance to academics who might be interested in applying the concept, or to policymakers who must prioritize among competing policy goals. Efforts to sharpen the definition of human security are a step in the right direction, but they are likely to encounter resistance from actors who believe that the concept's strength lies in its holism and inclusiveness. Definitional expansiveness and ambiguity are powerful attributes of human security, but only in the sense that they facilitate collective action by the members of the human security coalition. The very same qualities, however, hobble the concept of human security as a useful tool of analysis. On the other hand, human security could provide a handy label for a broad category of research—a distinct branch of security studies that explores the particular conditions that affect the survival of individuals, groups, and societies—that may also help to establish this brand of research as a central component of the security studies field.