

A human security agenda for the EU?

EPC Issue Paper No.48

June 2006

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Foreword

By Antonio Missiroli

The notion of ‘human security’ has come along way since it was first formulated in a ground-breaking report by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in 1994.

It has become a recurrent theme in international debates on the initiative of academics and non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and has even inspired – and at times driven – the official ‘doctrines’ of some relevant players on the global scene, including such countries as Canada, Japan, Switzerland and, more implicitly, the Nordic countries.

Finally, it has made inroads into the EU policy arena, first by influencing some of the analytical parts of the European Security Strategy (ESS) of December 2003, then through the dedicated report on ‘A Human Security Doctrine for Europe’ drawn up for High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy Javier Solana in September 2004 by a Study Group chaired by London School of Economics Professor Mary Kaldor.

For all these reasons, the European Policy Centre has decided to devote special attention to the concept and possible uses of ‘human security’ within the framework of its ‘European Security and Global Governance’ programme.

To this end, and as a preparatory step, this paper by John Kotsopoulos investigates the origins and different uses of the concept; analyses the different national doctrines it has inspired, and explores the ways in which the EU has already implicitly incorporated ‘human security’ into its thinking – although not as a doctrine proper or a fully-fledged policy. It then looks at how the concept could, in the future, be developed into a workable agenda and a set of criteria for planning and assessing EU security policy and external action at large.

At a time when the Union is becoming an increasingly-active international player, even well beyond the Euro-Atlantic area, it is appropriate to fertilise the internal European debate over its fledgling global role with principles and standards that have already been accepted by some of our partners and allies. This is particularly important given the special relationship that the EU is developing with the UN on post-conflict reconstruction and peace-building.

We intend to continue working along these lines in the months to come.

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A human security agenda for the EU?

By John Kotsopoulos

“There can be no long-term peace and global security without human security”.

Benita Ferrero-Waldner¹
Commissioner for External Relations and European Neighbourhood Policy

Introduction

Over the last ten years, ‘human security’ has become one of the re-defining principles of international relations.

The United Nations embraced it in the Millennium Development Goals; ‘middle powers’ such as Canada, Japan and Switzerland have incorporated it into their foreign policies; and it has even percolated into the language of the European Union, as illustrated by the words of External Relations Commissioner Benita Ferrero-Waldner quoted above.

This gradual ‘mainstreaming’ of ‘human security’ has stimulated foreign policy actors (e.g. states, and international and regional organisations) to reconsider the meaning of ‘security’ when used in the context of international relations. It no longer applies only to ‘state’ security, but has now been extended to cover the security needs of individuals as well.

This can be used as the basis for action to prevent injustice and to respond when those efforts fail. Broadening the meaning of ‘security’ to cover the protection of individuals gives the international community grounds for responding to issues which otherwise would have remained totally within the jurisdiction of the state.

The need to protect individuals’ security also provides the justification for action to prevent regional conflict or alleviate its effects, protect internally displaced people, alleviate hunger, support those who are victims of environmental disasters or protect whole races of people threatened with genocide.

The fact that so many of these situations occur within the borders of sovereign countries raises legal and moral questions about whether the international community has the right to intervene. It is also clear that, given the changes in the international landscape, “no state can really cope with the new realities by focusing on state control mechanisms alone”, as Anders Jägerskog has said.²

‘Human security’ is an ambitious, but often ill-defined concept. It encompasses a wide range of threats to individuals, making it extremely difficult to address such a broad agenda in practice. In addition, as large sections of the world’s population now live in a continual state of insecurity, it is legitimate to ask what more a human security agenda can achieve than previous approaches to international relations.

The 1949 UN Declaration of Human Rights, with its emphasis on universal and individual rights, set the original human security agenda. Now, nearly 60 years later, the international relations’ climate is increasingly auspicious for achieving its goals.

In October 2005, the UN, acting on the advice of its High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change (HLP)³, called on international bodies including the EU to become more involved and active in addressing human security issues.

It declared that: “The interrelated challenges of human security and peace require an integrated multilateral response of the international system, a consistent human security policy that focuses on the

responsibility of each and everyone. In short, it is a call for the globalisation of responsibility for human security.”

This has led to significant progress in some areas, in many cases as a direct result of UN initiatives. According to the *2005 Human Security Report*, which studies trends in warfare and human rights abuses, the number of armed conflicts has fallen by 40% since 1992. This decline, which is partly the result of a huge increase in UN-led activity throughout the world, is particularly significant for human security because up to 90% of war-related deaths are caused by disease and malnutrition.⁴ Yet despite these positive signs, conflicts – and the insecurity they create – continue to afflict billions of people worldwide.

In Europe, the experience of integration provides a good model of how to promote human security because, as Luc Roullet put it: “Without using the word [itself], the European project has been promoting it [security] for its own citizens since almost 50 years”.⁵ Indeed, this has been one of the EU’s main achievements – a particularly-striking success given the continent’s stormy history over the centuries.

It could also be argued that the EU has a moral and political obligation to lend its expertise and experience in multilateralism to the human security process.

This Issue Paper explores some of the most effective UN human security initiatives and some of the more mature human security programmes introduced by the foreign ministries of Canada, Japan and Switzerland. These provide examples of how a well-defined, limited-focus concept of human security could help steer the EU’s external relations policy in future.

The hiatus created by the stillborn Constitutional Treaty and the lack of innovative proposals for making progress in its absence has reinforced the need for a new EU initiative to extend and consolidate its foreign policy mechanisms. Human security touches on areas for possible multilateral cooperation where the EU is uniquely placed among international organisations to add value.

This paper provides a short history of the concept of human security and attempts to provide a more workable definition of the term for policy purposes. It examines the case for formulating an EU human security agenda, explores existing Union initiatives in this field and considers the institutional constraints the EU faces.

Finally, it argues that since the Union is already doing a great deal of fruitful work in this area, it does not need to re-invent the wheel. However, it also demonstrates how a human security agenda could benefit the EU by improving the coordination and focus of its external relations policies.

I. Background

I.1. History and uses of the concept

A brief history of 'human security' helps to explain this often ill-defined and misunderstood term.

Its antecedents lay in concepts such as 'comprehensive security' or 'societal security', which implied extending the concept of security beyond the confines of the state long before the term 'human security' came into popular usage.

The end of the Cold War and the decline of traditional state-vs-state security threats provided fresh impetus for the international community to re-evaluate the definition of 'security'. Security threats moved beyond national borders: in some cases, they became transnational (e.g. environmental degradation), in others intra-national, and sometimes, as in the case of organised crime, both trans- and intra-national. In all these cases, the common thread was the importance of protecting vulnerable individuals irrespective of their nationality.

The recent focus on human security coincided with the rise of international terrorism and the international community's increasing recognition that, as François Foinat, former Executive Director of the UN Commission on Human Security, has said: "Communities or groups feel threatened and react by building counter-threats".⁶ Internal and external security "are now inseparable",⁷ with adverse and dangerous consequences if either is threatened.

United Nations

The UN has played a key role in defining and acting on issues related to human security.

The first non-academic attempt to define human security was probably the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) initiative in 1994 to design a Human Development Index. It stated that: "Human security is not a concern with weapons – it is a concern with human life and dignity...human security is people centered".⁸ The Human Development Index listed seven threats to human security: economic, hunger, disease, environmental, personal, community and political.

The UNDP's goal in drawing up the index was to place human security on the agenda of the 1995 Copenhagen UN Conference on Social Development. Although it was not used during the Conference, analysts Gary King and Christopher Murray argue that "human security as proposed by the UNDP has continued as an organising concept in the development economics, public health and the security communities [of the UN]".⁹

In 1999, the Japanese government and the UN Secretariat launched the UN Trust Fund for Human Security (UNTFHS). Probably because the UNDP's definition of human security was so broad, the fund did not focus on a specific agenda but instead supported a disparate range of initiatives.

Following on from this, the independent (but Japanese-funded) Commission on Human Security (CHS) was established in 2001, led by Nobel laureate Amartya Sen and former UN High Commissioner for Refugees Sadako Ogata. In May 2003, the CHS presented its report *Human Security Now* to the Secretary General.¹⁰

As a next step, the UN established the Human Security Unit (HSU) within the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). The unit was tasked with playing "a pivotal role in translating the concept of human security into concrete activities and highlighting the added value of the human security approach".¹¹ The HSU continues to play a visible role in the UN's human security apparatus today.

In addition to these UN initiatives, several countries have begun to integrate variations of 'human security' into their foreign policies, in particular Canada, Japan and Switzerland. These three countries provide

especially relevant lessons because their explicit, well-established and respected programmes offer different examples of how to put a human security policy into operation. Selected elements of these programmes could be incorporated into an EU human security agenda.

Canada

Under the initial leadership of Lloyd Axworthy,¹² former Minister of Foreign Affairs, Canada has become a pacesetter in advocating a version of human security that focuses on 'freedom from fear'. It has two main objectives:

- To promote policy initiatives relating to human security at the multilateral level; for example, introducing a ban on anti-personnel landmines or establishing the International Criminal Court (ICC);
- To actively seek partnerships at the governmental and 'bottom-up' level (e.g. civil society) to promote human security issues.¹³

In 2002, the Canadian government established a Human Security Program (HSP) to implement this strategy, under the auspices of the Canadian Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT), with an annual budget of C\$10 million (€7.2 million).

Some critics argued that the programme was too modest in scope, while others felt it re-allocated money and resources which should have gone to development-related projects administered by other government agencies. Nevertheless, by 2004 the HSP had supported 568 projects and disbursed C\$44 million (€30.7 million).¹⁴ In a move which added a new dimension to traditional diplomacy, DFAIT was also given its own grant-bestowing capability.

However, Canadian (and particularly Lloyd Axworthy's) enthusiasm for human security extended beyond supporting the HSP. As a result of the government's muscular advocacy, the issue was placed on the G8's agenda at the Cologne Summit in 1999. At that meeting, G8 foreign ministers declared that they were "determined to fight the underlying causes of the multiple threats to human security, and committed the G8 to creating an environment where basic rights, the safety and the very survival of individuals are guaranteed".¹⁵

In a further move, Canada established the independent International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS) in 2000. This aimed to forge a consensus on when to apply the 'right to humanitarian intervention' and when it was legitimate to intervene in the affairs of another country.

This remains a key moral and legal challenge. The 2004 ICISS study, *Responsibility to Protect*, concluded that governments should "embrace the 'responsibility to protect' as a basis for collective action against genocide, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity".¹⁶ This call was echoed by UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, who urged UN member countries to sign up to this at the 2005 Millennium Summit.

Canada was also instrumental in establishing the Human Security Network (HSN) in 1999. Since then, this group of 13 countries has been meeting annually at foreign minister level to discuss human security issues.¹⁷ Perhaps the HSN's most notable accomplishment was its drive to make the Ottawa Mine Ban Treaty universal. In a further initiative, Canada and the EU signed a Joint Statement on Human Security at the EU-Canada Summit in Lisbon in 2000, although it is still unclear how much influence this has had on EU policy-making.

Japan

The Japanese government has developed a human security programme which is markedly different from the Canadian model because it defines the concept more broadly as the need to "protect and empower people".

Although the term itself began appearing in Japanese government statements in 1995, David Bosold and Sascha Werthes¹⁸ argue that the policy was shaped by the Asian financial crisis of 1997. A year later, the then Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi said: “Taking [the economic crisis] fully into consideration, I believe that we must deal with these difficulties with due consideration for the socially-vulnerable segments of population in the light of ‘human security’, and that we must seek new strategies for economic development which attach importance to human security with a view to enhancing the long-term development of our region”.

Japanese human security policy has had a practical outcome, with the government contributing an estimated US\$170 million to the UNTFHS by 2004. It also set up the independent Commission on Human Security (CHS) (mentioned above), as well as launching other initiatives such as numerous symposia on the topic.

However, although Japanese human security policy is deeply interlinked with the UN process, there is little cooperation with civil society and NGOs. It therefore lacks the ‘bottom-up’ component of human security which many commentators believe is an essential element of any such initiative.¹⁹

Switzerland

The Swiss government’s human security policy has been strongly shaped by the country’s historical neutrality and the physical presence (and thus influence) of many UN institutions in the country.

Its approach embraces areas such as human rights, humanitarian and migration concerns, civilian peace-building and gender issues. The government’s Department of Foreign Affairs has an explicit human security agenda, which is administered by a Human Security Division.

In 2005, this division had a budget of approximately CHF48 million (€31 million) for conflict transformation and the promotion of human rights, and earmarked around CHF10.5 million (€6.75 million) to support the ‘Geneva Centres’.²⁰

Switzerland is another founding member of the HSN, where it focuses on small arms and international humanitarian law in line with its ‘freedom from fear’ approach to human security. It has also promoted innovative approaches to the issue by, for example, encouraging the HSN to study the possibility of persuading armed non-state actors to accept a set of minimum standards.

1.2. Towards a workable definition of human security

The nuances in the approaches taken by the Canadian, Japanese and Swiss governments reflect the absence of any single universally-accepted definition of ‘human security’. While practitioners and academics agree that there is little hope of resolving this dilemma in the near future, states should not use this as an excuse for inaction.

Most current definitions of human security are descriptive rather than theoretical, in that they list threats to individuals on a case-by-case basis rather than drawing up concrete definitions of what the term should mean.²¹ Analysts have argued that this is the most practical way forward, since human security should begin by addressing potential threats ‘on the ground’ and then use this experience to develop a useful theoretical framework.²²

Protecting human security is often equated with supporting human rights and/or international development. But it is more than that. The CHS defined human security as “protecting fundamental freedoms – freedoms that are the essence of life. It means using processes that build on a people’s strengths and aspirations. It means creating political, social, environmental, economic, military and cultural systems that together give people the building blocks of survival, livelihood and dignity”.²³

Although this definition is very broad and all-encompassing, it is useful for re-framing and expanding the scope of the debate. By adopting a more holistic approach to achieving human potential, it adds value to the concept of human security and differentiates it from development policy *per se*.

However, this very broad definition has been criticised on that grounds that it reduces human security to a ‘laundry list’ of actions that should be taken to enhance security, with little policy utility or immediate impact. According to Taylor Owen, such broad definitions risk “slapping the label of human security on a wide range of issues that have no necessary link”.²⁴

The concept has also been criticised on the grounds that it provides governments with a legal pretext to justify intervention in a sovereign state’s affairs – and for sometimes being applied in an arbitrary way, allowing governments to intervene in some countries for reasons which go beyond concerns about human security. There is also a danger that human security-motivated interventions could exacerbate the original problem they were designed to solve.

The broad CHS-type definition of human security therefore creates three separate problems: double standards, an unworkably-ambitious agenda and the need for legal constraints.

Still, there are ways to simplify this debate and address some of the criticisms. Professor Keith Krause suggests differentiating between, and analysing, the “competing visions”²⁵ of human security: ‘freedom from want’ and ‘freedom from fear’. The former is broader as it concerns securing the individual’s basic needs, from health to environmental protection (e.g. the Japanese or CHS approach). The latter is more limited, as it defines the creation of human security as the removal of force and violence from individuals’ daily lives (e.g. the Canadian and Swiss approaches).

Professor Krause argues persuasively that ‘freedom from fear’ is more useful and can “give rise to a concrete agenda for political action” because it is a narrower concept. It also chimes more closely with the proposed European Human Security Doctrine (explored below) and could enable the EU to set achievable standards for its human security agenda.

Another approach with possible EU policy implications is Taylor Owen’s proposed “threshold-based definition”, which attempts to find a middle ground between the ‘freedom from fear’ and the ‘freedom from want’ approaches. Threats would be included “on the basis of their actual severity”, with only those which surpass a previously-defined threshold labelled as threats to human security.²⁶ The HSN is already exploring this idea.

This ambitious, long-term vision could pose challenges for the EU’s currently Byzantine policy-making apparatus in the external relations policy arena. Nevertheless, thresholds – or benchmarks – could provide the Union with quantifiable guidelines for future activity in this area and make it easier to assess the effectiveness of EU policies at large. This argument will be further explored in section III.3. of this paper.

II. The EU's approach

II.1. Early EU uses of human security

The EU has already accepted, *de facto*, many of the general principles of human security, even if it does not always enunciate them as such.

In December 2003, the European Council approved the European Security Strategy (ESS), which makes several references to components of what could be defined as a human security agenda – although, again, it does not refer to them as such. For example, it states that “security is a precondition of development”, and acknowledges that “in much of the developing world, poverty and disease cause untold suffering and give rise to pressing security concerns”.²⁷

Although the ESS stops short of specifically and explicitly outlining an EU human security agenda, a Study Group was convened in autumn 2003 at the behest of High Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) Javier Solana to examine the possibility of formulating an EU human security policy and draw up plans to implement the ESS itself.

The Study Group, chaired by Professor Mary Kaldor, produced its report, ‘A Human Security Doctrine for Europe’, in September 2004. This encompassed three ambitious components:

- A set of seven principles for human security, including the primacy of human rights, clear political authority, multilateralism, a ‘bottom-up’ approach, regional focus, the use of legal instruments and the appropriate use of force;
- A ‘Human Security Response Force’, composed of 15,000 individuals, of whom at least one-third must be civilians;
- A new legal framework to govern decisions to intervene and to direct operations on the ground.²⁸

The Doctrine was closely in tune with the ESS themes, addressing violence and calling for the creation of a deployable human security force. In a ground-breaking move, it distinguished between different types of military intervention, suggesting that the role of the human security force should be “somewhere between classic peacekeeping and classic military intervention”. It specified that this proposed force’s primary purpose would be to uphold human rights and support law and order. This focus on direct intervention was clearly many steps away from the less physically- and operationally-engaging Canadian, Japanese and Swiss approaches.

However, the Doctrine’s ambition may also have been its biggest weakness, for it remains largely unimplemented today. There are two main reasons for this.

Firstly, the text assumed that the EU Constitutional Treaty would enter into force and introduce some of the structural changes to the EU’s foreign policy mechanisms that the Union would need to implement a human security doctrine. For example, the Constitution proposed concentrating authority in the office of an EU Minister for Foreign Affairs, plus other steps to ensure a coherent, ‘joined-up’ approach to EU external relations.

The ‘No’ votes to the Constitution in the French and Dutch referenda in 2005 have left the Treaty in limbo and this had had a knock-on effect on the proposed Human Security Doctrine.

The Constitution’s woes and the consequent question marks over future EU expansion have also undermined what has, until now, been the Union’s most effective way of promoting human security: enlargement. If it can no longer hold out the carrot of Union membership to those in its immediate neighbourhood, it will no longer be able to include progress in this area among the conditions for starting accession negotiations.

Secondly, even without the derailment of the Constitutional Treaty, the Doctrine was extremely ambitious – perhaps too ambitious – since it underplayed the structural and political impediments to EU-wide foreign policy-making. This is particularly true for the proposed Human Security Response Force, which would need the full support of all Member States – a real challenge as they would be obliged to accept the principle that internal and external security are inseparable.

However, the Study Group and the Doctrine are not dead yet. In the two years since the Doctrine was published, the Group has published a book setting out possible European human security initiatives and it has just reconvened to provide guidance to the Finnish Presidency of the EU on human security issues.

II.2. The case for an EU human security agenda

The Human Security Doctrine makes a strong three-point case as to why the EU should be interested in a human security agenda:

- *Moral case*: This is based on ‘our common humanity’ and the argument that all human beings have a “right to live with dignity and security, and a concomitant obligation to help each other when that security is threatened”.²⁹ It maintains that Europe, as a rich power, is obliged to contribute to this common humanity. In addition, it states that because of some of the disastrous effects of its colonial legacy, Europe needs to redress the resulting long-term structural insecurity in some former colonies.
- *Legal case*: Articles 55 and 56 of the UN Charter call for the promotion of universal respect for human rights, and the EU’s Constitutional Treaty explicitly recognised the EU’s obligation to abide by these principles. While it may be difficult to reach a consensus on when it is legitimate to breach the sovereignty of a country which is failing to fulfil its human rights obligations, bodies such as the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty have sought to set legal thresholds.
- *‘Enlightened’ self-interest case*: The Doctrine argues that, as Europe cannot be secure if others around the world are not, concrete action is mutually beneficial. This approach, often termed ‘securitisation’, recasts security threats in a new light (for example, it highlights the risk that poverty could lead to radicalisation and, ultimately, terrorism), so moving them up the political agenda.³⁰ It also links insecurity abroad to possible negative repercussions at home. This argument was used by External Relations Commissioner Benita Ferrero-Waldner last summer, when she said that making globalisation work was a “practical necessity”, adding: “If we do not strengthen human security and help our partners to reform, we will eventually import instability ourselves”.³¹

As persuasive as these arguments are, there are several other possible key reasons for the EU to develop a human security agenda.

Soft power

‘Soft power’, as Professor Joseph Nye has succinctly defined it, is about non-coercive persuasion: ‘getting others to want what you want’.³² A well-executed, visible human security programme could enhance the EU’s soft power, but to do this, it would have to gain others’ goodwill and be seen in a positive light.

Human security is attractive both on its own merits, because it works for positive ends and is centred on the needs of individuals, and because it moves away from the traditional idea of state security or the use of military force.

Thus, by embracing a human security agenda, the EU could enhance its prestige and strengthen its international influence.

According to Professor Nye, soft power also “rests on the ability to set the political agenda in a way that shapes the preferences of others”.³³ In Eastern Europe, the EU’s soft power has been unprecedented.

However, further away from its borders and without the carrot of EU membership, it is likely to be less persuasive, as *International Herald Tribune* columnist John Vinocur has argued.³⁴

Nevertheless, as the world's largest donor of development aid, a consistent supporter of multilateralism, international law and norms, and a living example of a 'peace model', the EU still has the characteristics of a 'soft power'. This gives it greater authority to pursue human security projects than other powers, such as the US, whose actions, however well-meaning, are viewed with greater suspicion, pessimism and resentment.

Returning to the example of Canada, its Human Security Program enhanced – or at least allowed it to preserve – its status as a 'middle power' by giving it greater moral clout on the international scene.

However, an EU human security agenda would need to be highly visible because, as one European Commission official put it in a different context: "Visibility is synonymous with presence."³⁵ Human security programmes cannot win 'hearts and minds' if their beneficiaries do not know who is responsible for them, but human security initiatives could enhance the EU's reputation as a force for good if they were communicated through appropriate public diplomacy strategies. This would provide an opportunity both to 'sell' EU initiatives and, indirectly, compensate for the 'underselling' of so many of its past external actions.³⁶

Comprehensive security

Focusing on the EU's soft power should not rule out the use of its 'hard power', since the two are not mutually exclusive. As Sven Biscop has argued, 'comprehensive security' is "the recognition of the interdependence between all dimensions of security – political, socio-economic, cultural, ecologic, and military – hence the need to formulate integrated policies on all of them".³⁷

Although NATO is a vastly more mature 'hard security' actor, the EU has begun to address such issues successfully through its European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) and a comprehensive EU human security agenda could include both 'hard' and 'soft' approaches.

The diplomatic process

One of the functions of public diplomacy is to engage with different levels of society in third countries. Lloyd Axworthy argues that in relation to human security, "an unconventional bottom-up approach to diplomacy" is needed, contrasting with a "classic top-down, undemocratic approach".³⁸

Looked at in this way, human security could provide the EU with an opportunity to expand the 'diplomatic process' by engaging with newly-empowered foreign policy actors (such as NGOs and other parts of civil society) which are increasing engaged in human security programmes.

The Study Group's Human Security Doctrine also advocated a 'bottom-up' approach and, in a similar manner, the Canadian Human Security Program and Fund gave DFAIT and Canadian embassies abroad new channels for 'bottom-up' engagement – a departure from traditional diplomacy. In the same way, European Commission delegations in third countries could use the human security agenda as an opportunity for mould-breaking diplomatic engagement with non-traditional partners.

Public opinion

Despite the EU's well-documented constitutional and economic hiccups, recent data from its polling agency, Eurobarometer, indicate that there is overwhelming public support for the Union to become more involved in pan-European foreign and security policy.

Surveys have revealed particularly strong support for EU-level activity in emerging security areas such as terrorism, organised crime and promoting democracy.³⁹ The constantly-evolving security situation

requires increasingly-robust and larger-scale responses, so it is likely that the public would welcome more Union activity in the area of human security – particularly if the ESS were to develop a comprehensive response to security threats rather than focusing exclusively on their prevention.

Achievability

A human security policy is achievable. It is clear that the EU has the capacity to put such a programme into practice, even if it does not encompass all of the elements proposed in the Study Group's Human Security Doctrine.

With or without the Constitutional Treaty, the EU has the external action capabilities to do this. Indeed, the ESS foresees this possibility, stating: "Dealing with [the] dynamic security environment has required a paradigm shift in terms of response. Because the new threats are diffuse and complex, they defy traditional ways of operating. They call for agile and multi-faceted responses". The Human Security Doctrine for Europe also declares that greater emphasis on human security is compatible with this approach.

Bridging the 'expectations-capabilities' gap

A reasonable, measurable and quantifiable EU human security agenda could help the Union achieve a better focus for its (currently disparate) external actions. This could, in turn, help to bridge the gap between public expectations and institutional capabilities that has dogged EU foreign policy since the era of European Political Cooperation (between 1970 and 1992) and up to the present.

Of course, the potential downside is that a human security agenda would once again raise expectations about how much the EU could achieve which would be dashed if policies failed, creating an even wider gap between expectations and capabilities.

The trans-national nature of human security

By its very nature, human security – with its emphasis on the needs of the individual – transcends state boundaries, "thereby allowing a broader variety of actors to commit themselves to this specific goal", according to Tobias Debiel and Sascha Werthes.⁴⁰

Despite its flaws, the EU remains a model of successful trans-national cooperation and the human security it has achieved within its own borders – not least through the recent admission of former Warsaw Pact countries to the club – is a testament to this. As the Human Security Doctrine argues: "In a sense, the human security approach is an extension of the internal methods of integration. The EU is a political experiment that cannot be confined by territory".⁴¹

III. What makes a human security agenda?

III.1. The implicit agenda

In summary, there are many strong arguments for establishing a robust EU human security agenda. Indeed, the Union already implicitly addresses human security issues in several areas. For example, its fast-evolving European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) complements the human security agenda on conflict prevention and freeing individuals from fear.

So does the EU really need a dedicated human security doctrine or is it already doing enough?

There have been various developments in the Union's external affairs agenda within both the intergovernmental Council of Ministers and the European Commission which touch on human security issues, including crisis management, the promotion of human rights and democracy, humanitarian and development aid, and the anti-landmine campaign.

Crisis management

This is fast developing into one of the EU's most tangible contributions to human security, even if it is not explicitly broadcast as such.

Although the Union only began launching civilian crisis management missions in this area less than four years ago, these missions, organised under the auspices of the ESDP, represent a real leap forward in Member State cooperation. While the ESDP has a distinct military component, much of its activity falls within the human security principle of 'freedom from fear'.

According to Renata Dwan, Coordination Officer at the UN Peacekeeping Best Practices Unit, crisis management is one area in which, the EU can make a "distinct and unique contribution to global security, reflecting the values and principles it seeks to promote".⁴² In fact, three of the last four EU crisis-management operations have been civilian in nature.

Coordinated planning

Effective coordination between the Commission and Council means the EU is improving and is now well-placed to blend its civilian and military instruments. As a result, it is developing the ability to cover the entire cycle of prevention, crisis management, stabilisation and reconstruction.

For example, the Union is now using the Security Sector Reform (SSR) and the Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration of ex-fighters (DDR) programmes to achieve sustainable peace and stability. These initiatives are part of the EU's more 'comprehensive' approach to security.

Human rights and democracy promotion

The EU is actively promoting two areas of primary concern in any human security agenda – respect for human rights and the promotion of democracy – and has incorporated human rights clauses into its network of treaties with third countries. This policy has been most effective with EU candidate countries, where the carrot of Union membership has helped to transform the behaviour of governments.

The EU is also 'mainstreaming' human rights and gender issues in economic and social reform policies, and creating human rights education programmes. In addition, it plays a highly visible and forceful role in monitoring and assessing elections beyond its borders, and provides financial assistance to support developing democracies under its European Initiative for Human Rights and Democracy (EIDHR) programme.

Development and humanitarian aid

The EU already boasts a mature development and humanitarian aid programme, much of which bolsters its human security credentials. According to EU statistics, the European Commission provides nearly 30% of global humanitarian aid, while EU Member States are together responsible for managing 25% of all official humanitarian assistance worldwide.

The remit of the Commission's Department for Humanitarian Aid (ECHO) includes addressing human security issues related to natural and man-made disasters, emergency aid and rehabilitation and disaster preparedness, and it hands out approximately €608 million per year in humanitarian aid.

High Representative for CFSP Javier Solana has also played an energetic role in strengthening the EU's disaster-response capacity and has identified ESDP assets and structures to support civil protection and humanitarian aid efforts, even though this is not a central part of the ESDP agenda.

As he explained in Stockholm in March 2006: "As we learned in the Asian tsunami and other disasters, such as the Pakistan earthquake, military assets can play a useful role. This applies in particular in the area of strategic lift. To deal with disasters effectively, we must be able to mobilise all necessary means in a coordinated fashion."⁴³

This is yet another example of the way in which the boundary between internal and external threats is gradually being eroded.

The EU is also the world's biggest development aid donor, it has played a leading role in supporting the UN Millennium Development Goals, and EU Member States have committed themselves to increasing their aid budgets to 0.7% of Gross National Income by 2015. The statement on 'European Consensus on Development', approved by all Member States in December 2005, also vowed to strengthen the EU's approach to cross-cutting issues such as democracy, good governance, human rights, the rights of children and indigenous peoples, gender equality, environmental stability and the fight against HIV/AIDS.⁴⁴

Anti-personnel landmines

The EU has enthusiastically embraced the 1997 Mine Ban Treaty and its review process. Between 1997 and 2004, total EU (Member State and Union) support for anti-personnel landmine programmes exceeded €1 billion, which, according to the Commission, represented more than half of all worldwide financial assistance for anti-personnel landmine activity in that period.⁴⁵

The Union's successful and visible campaign to ban landmines is a commendable example of cooperation between EU institutions, Member States and the international community, and has demonstrated its "catalysing capacity"⁴⁶ in this distinctly human security-type endeavour.

EU legal network

The Human Security Doctrine made a case for a human security agenda based on international law. In fact, the EU already has a body of human security legislation which complements the international legal framework.

As well as using this international legislation to guide its activities, particularly in the fields of humanitarian and refugee law, the EU has adopted its own humanity-security-type legislation, such as measures designed to prevent trafficking in human beings and the sexual exploitation of children.

Within the EU itself, the provisions of its 'third pillar' – concerning justice, freedom and security policies – encourage Member States to develop common actions in the fields of police and judicial cooperation, criminal matters, and the fight against racism and xenophobia.

The Nice Treaty states that this “objective shall be achieved by preventing and combating crime, organised or otherwise, in particular terrorism, trafficking in persons and offences against children, illicit drug trafficking and illicit arms trafficking, corruption and fraud”.⁴⁷ As well as being laudable exercises in themselves, these activities provide the EU with important ‘exportable’ tools for solidifying human security.

The EU has also been a strong supporter of the Rome Statute and the International Criminal Court (ICC). On 11 June 2001, the Council of Ministers adopted a ‘Common Position’ on the ICC “to consolidate human rights issues and the rule of law, to preserve peace and strengthen security”.⁴⁸

Partly as a result of this, individual Member States have adopted a consistent human security approach and all 25 have ratified the Rome Statute. The EU has also been an enthusiastic ICC supporter beyond Europe’s borders, and has provided help for less developed countries to ratify and enact legislation consistent with its tenets.

III.2. Institutional constraints

Clearly, the EU is not starting from scratch. There are many human security-related initiatives already in place, even though they may be poorly-coordinated and poorly-publicised.

However, this is not the only shortcoming. The other key constraint is the EU’s complex institutional architecture. A disparate range of actors is involved in external relations: the Member States, the Council, the High Representative for CFSP, the Commission, and the European Parliament, each with their own bureaucracies, interests and ambitions.

The fact that they are dealing with such a huge range of issues which could loosely be termed ‘human security’ also makes it difficult to implement a coherent policy. Renata Dwan memorably warns that the degree of overlap and varying range of comprehension of EU mechanics amongst Member State representatives, means that the “risk of reinventing the...wheel is high in Brussels”.⁴⁹ All of this hampers human security initiatives.

III.3. Ways ahead

As senior Council official Robert Cooper has put it: “If you want to influence, you should know what you want first”⁵⁰ – and this applies to the EU’s approach towards adopting a human security agenda.

The Union is already a significant – and, in some sectors, the most significant – actor in human security-related sectors; for example, in its campaign against anti-personnel landmines and its development aid contributions.

However, these initiatives remain disjointed and illustrate the lack of a coherent human security agenda. The EU explicitly acknowledges the importance of human security: its leaders regularly use the term in speeches and agreements. However, the composition of the EU institutions, with their various foreign policy actors (Council, Commission, etc.), prohibits a more centralised approach.

The failure of the Constitutional Treaty has made things even more difficult, because it would have introduced some key changes to the EU’s external policy capabilities, including the creation of an EU Foreign Minister who could have facilitated better complementarity and coordination between the various human security initiatives.

Three questions must be addressed: 1) What is the most practical definition of human security for the EU’s purposes? 2) Where can reasonable progress be achieved and how can human security’s added value be best exploited? 3) What can a comprehensive EU effort do for the global human security agenda?

A practical definition

It is crucial to draw up a practical and limited definition of human security before designing a human security agenda. Here, 'freedom from fear' is more useful than 'freedom from want' because it provides more manageable parameters and because the EU already has experience and capacity in this area through its work on crisis management, ESDP, humanitarian aid, etc.

'Freedom from want' should not be discounted since it is already the target of much of the EU's development agenda. However, it is too general to be used as the focus for a manageable human security agenda and is also more relevant to the much broader area of human development.

While the definitions examined in section I.2. above are useful, they need to be refined to explain how a human security agenda can lead to action. A system of benchmarks or thresholds could be drawn up to measure the effectiveness and consistency of EU policies in the field. This would help to define what situations an EU 'freedom from fear' policy would address.

Benchmarks would also be useful in evaluating ESDP operations. These need not be excessively complicated, since post-operation assessment processes already exist. However, practical human security operations could be judged using the broader benchmark of whether a mission had helped the affected population to achieve a level of 'freedom from fear'.

This should include issues such as whether citizens can expect to be treated fairly after an EU mission has ended and whether ethnic communities will be able to live in sustainable peace in future. If the mission failed to meet these broader human security benchmarks, EU policy-makers would be directed to re-evaluate the mission's goals, duration and implementation to help plan future work.

Exploiting human security's added value

The EU has already incorporated a *de facto* human security agenda into its operations and actions. So where is human security's added value?

First, the Union should develop a way of linking its various operations and actions to enable it to make a more concerted, influential, European mark on international relations. This would follow Robert Cooper's maxim that the ability to influence is derived from knowing what you want first.

Second, while the EU can learn lessons from the best elements of successful human security programmes in Canada, Japan and Switzerland, it operates on a far larger scale because of its population of more than 450 million and its role as the world's largest aid donor and a global trade giant. It has the capacity to take significant steps forward.

Even a limited pooling of Member States' financial, human and military resources would enable the EU to play a more forceful, visible role in addressing global human security issues.

By paving the way for increased cooperation with other international partners, in particular the UN, a human security agenda could help the ESS to achieve its goal of 'effective multilateralism'. EU-UN cooperation is already growing in various human security-related areas, through operations such as those in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and support for countries to implement the Millennium Development Goals.

Another 'value-added' aspect of a human security agenda is that it would force the Council and Commission to address the problem of their overlapping responsibilities and improve the coordination of human security initiatives.

Human security thus has the potential to improve the Union's external actions, make them more incisive and visible, and contribute to improving operational relations between the EU institutions.

The EU's role in the global human security agenda

This paper has concentrated on what human security can do for the EU's external relations and standing. But what can the Union do to promote effective human security globally?

There is an emerging 'consensus'⁵¹ that human security is an important consideration in external relations. As a soft power, the EU can play a critical role by setting international standards in this field. Concrete EU actions like those in the Middle East, the DRC or the Southern Caucasus are as persuasive, if not more, as its declarations and doctrines.

The Union also enjoys international legitimacy that makes it a useful contributor to the human security debate, as has already been demonstrated in its influential work to promote the ICC and the Land Mines Treaty.

Still, much of EU foreign policy is based on what suits its Member States and depends on whether they have an interest in coordinating their external policies in a particular area. By its very nature, the concept of 'human security' transcends the security of the individual state and raises difficult questions about the extent to which they would be willing to interfere in the internal affairs of other sovereign states.

But results are achievable. CFSP chief Javier Solana has been promoting a 'security culture' within the Union, which has already led to some notable and (in many people's eyes) surprising successes by helping Member States to reach a consensus on many CFSP/ESDP issues.

The recommendations made in this paper, if embraced, could enhance the EU's capacity to play a constructive role on the global stage – a goal which all of its Member States should be ready and willing to support.

Endnotes

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Executive summary

'Human security' has stimulated countries and international and regional organisations to reconsider the meaning of the term when used in the context of international relations. Security no longer applies only to the state, but has now been extended to cover the security needs of individuals as well.

Broadening the definition of 'security' to cover the protection of individuals gives the international community potential grounds for responding to issues which otherwise would have remained totally within the jurisdiction of the state concerned.

Human security has already been embraced as an organisational principle by the United Nations and in some countries. Although the EU has not yet formally followed suit, it has also begun to address the concept, making more frequent references to it in foreign policy documents and in speeches.

This Issue Paper explores some of the most effective UN human security initiatives and some of the more mature human security programmes introduced by the foreign ministries of Canada, Japan and Switzerland. These provide examples of how a well-defined, limited-focus concept of human security could help steer the EU's external relations policy in future.

The Issue Paper also examines the case for formulating an EU human security agenda, exploring existing Union initiatives in this field and considering the institutional constraints the EU faces.

It argues that a human security agenda could benefit the Union by improving the coordination and focus of its external relations policies.