A HUMAN SECURITY APPROACH TO PEACEMAKING IN AFRICA

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One of the transformations in approach and thinking about peace and security at the end of the Cold War is the emergence of the *human security* paradigm. It argues for a focus on the individual as the referent point for security rather than the state. Proponents of human security offer this alternative perspective to *national security*, which places the state at the core of security considerations. A people-centred and multi-disciplinary understanding of security, they argue, offers a more effective response to global vulnerabilities and in-securities. Although writings and publications arguing for this wider approach to security predate it, the *1994 Human Development Report (HDR)* published for the first time (and since then almost every year) by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) became a landmark publication on Human Security. Invariably, many observers and analysts alike have come to see the HDR of 1994 as a defining moment for a shift in perspectives on security.

The human security paradigm witnessed significant contesta-tion particularly in the first decade after the publication of that first HDR. It was challenged for its vagueness not least by academics and researchers who argued that the wider notion of security does not offer an intellectually coherent way of looking at security. As such, a wider definition of security risked losing the basic meaning of the term.[1] Critiques thus saw this as no more than a bid by normative activists to advance certain agendas.[2]

Global policy actors nonetheless embraced the ideas at the core of the human security agenda. Various national governments made human security the core of their foreign policy including Canada, Japan, Norway and Switzerland to name a few. In Africa,

even before the 1994 HDR became widely known, a number of regional organisations had begun to adopt a human security perspective through their normative instruments. The revised *Treaty of the Economic Community of West African States* (ECOWAS) adopted in 1993; the ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework adopted in 2008; and the transformation of the Southern African Development Coordination Conference (SADCC) into the Southern African Development Community (SADC) following the attainment of majority rule in South Africa in 1994 are cases in point. Other Regional Economic Communities (RECs) such as the East African Community (EAC) would later declare a people-centred agenda. The continental organisation, African Union also made a move toward a focus on the security of peoples through a stated focus on the structural prevention of conflict and the inclusion of a *Continental Early Warning System* (CEWS) as an integral part of the *African Peace and Security Architecture* (APSA).

In 2001, in an effort to develop new approaches to the security challenges affecting people across various societies, the *Commission for Human Security* was established as a joint initiative of the United Nations (UN) and the Government of Japan. The Commission comprised eminent individuals across disciplines and regions and was co-chaired by Japan's Sadako Ogata and the Nobel Prize Winner, Amartya Sen. This high-level attention contributed to sustaining the argument for a paradigm shift in the way threats to security of the people are addressed.

Twenty years after the unveiling of the human security agenda, the argument for a focus on the individual as the referent point of security can hardly be challenged. But we have seen a pushback by defenders of the state-centric notion of security. Security issues continue to be examined and addressed in the context of state security even when those responding to security challenges couch their work in the language of human security. Indeed, sovereignty bound actors appear to have co-opted the whole notion of human security within a national security agenda. Traditional conceptualisations of human security are thus subsumed within a state security framework. In higher-level interventions, an inordinate amount of attention is focused on solutions within a state security framework for responding to conflict and insecurities affecting ordinary people without a corresponding society-based solution. This tendency by state-bound actors in particular, to make state security assumptions or to gravitate toward state-based

frameworks for addressing security issues that affect people that are far removed from the radar of the state seems deeply engrained in high-level peace processes.

Yet the state finds itself in a murky new environment where it is challenged by a whole range of insecurities that are not fundamentally of a state security nature. These insecurities are often not about threats to the state, that is, its boundaries, institutions, people and values — from external sources. In a number of cases, it is the state itself, which poses a threat to its people in a variety of ways. At the same time, some of the emerging security threats target people as well as the state. Therefore one cannot see human security and state security in stark terms. Further thinking is required about what response frameworks offer the best solution to emerging threats to people and the state in Africa. This is the context in which the Mellon Foundation funded peace and conflict research project was launched in 2013. It serves as the basis for this Special Issue of the *Strategic Review for Southern Africa*.

The central focus of the Mellon funded research project is South Africa's engagement in Africa. It features a vital normative concern around peace and security in the region, and in this case, specifically *human security.* As such, the research deals with an issue that impacts human security and the search for peace in Africa — the phenomenon of violent conflict. In examining this phenomenon the project also takes into account the agenda of the continental organisation, the African Union (AU) in which South Africa is one of the leading players. However, the project gives special consideration to two issues: It moves away from the tendency (in political science approaches) to focus on powerful actors such as states, institutions and elite groupings. Rather, it seeks to include as much as possible, less powerful actors such as individuals and communities of people, affected for example, by situations of violent conflict. Secondly, the project seeks a multi-disciplinary perspective and so brings on board several disciplines including, sociology, psychology, history, and gender studies among others.

This Special Issue includes several of the papers emerging from the Mellon Peace and Conflict research while bringing in papers, commentaries and reviews that provide fresh perspectives on the nature of and approaches to peace and conflict in Africa. This volume presents an opportunity to revisit our assumptions about human

security and the extent to which they remain valid. Do we need new ways of thinking about human security in contemporary times? The articles, analyses, reports and commentaries following delve into the practical application of the human security norm in Africa by examining the extent to which peacemaking and peacebuilding efforts focus on the perspectives of individuals and communities in conflict affected societies. In doing so, the contributions focus on several questions: Are states and elite actors the dominant concern in peacemaking? Are the perspectives and experiences of peacemaking from below radically different from the experience from 'high-level' peacemaking? In what new ways should we frame threats faced by populations and states in contemporary times?

The research articles shed further light on current conflict and security terrains in Africa and offer some new perspectives on peace-making in the present security environment. *Hendricks* focuses on what has now become the more conventional form of conflict — the civil wars in Burundi and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). This piece brings to the fore, persistence of narrow state and elite-focused peacemaking even by a country such as South Africa, which has tended to promote values of human security. Drawing from experiences in the Matabeleland massacres, *Murambadoro and Wielenga* shed light on how the state is itself the source of insecurity for a segment of its population. In such a context, state actors' ideas about reconciliation are far removed from the needs of affected local communities. *Okech* illustrates how contestations against the state have assumed new methods of violence. Focusing on asymmetrical conflict in Kenya, Okech explains how, policy responses to terror attacks pitch the security of the state against human security con-cerns. *Walsh* further highlights the skewed application of ideas of people's security and state security. His article discusses the evolution of the EAC, which despite its articulation of a people-centred agenda, fails to adopt a citizens' inclusive approach to its structures and actions. *Ababu Kifle* questions state-building interventions in 'weak' states. He argues that while the building of state capacity might lead to a reduction in civil wars, it does not necessarily eliminate non-state armed conflicts. *Olonisakin* looks into a different realm for improving our understanding of conflict and peace in Africa — that of *leadership*. She explores how a different perspective of leadership might better facilitate peace and human security in Africa. In doing so, the author

presents some of the findings from exploratory research on the perspective of individuals on security and notions of peace.

Ogunnubi and Isike bring us back to the role of the state. In this regard, this article explores the soft power attributes of two hegemons — South Africa and Nigeria. It argues that South Africa has been more effective than Nigeria in using these attributes to its advantage and as such, has gained increasing recognition as Africa's hegemonic power. The analysis by *Africa* examines South Africa from within and asks why the country is moving away from the value of human security, which was a strong feature of its national outlook in the immediate post-*apartheid* period. *Adam and Moodley* offer in their comment some reflections on xenophobia in South Africa. The authors acknowledge that this trend is not unique to South Africa; Europe is experiencing its own waves of xenophobia. They outline what is distinctive about this phenomenon in South Africa as well as causal factors.

The report by *Bapah* draws attention to other dimensions of human security. It discusses the ECOWAS response to the outbreak of Ebola in the Mano River countries of West Africa: Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone. The report highlights lessons learnt for a regional organisation that had long identified disease and epidemic as a threat to security in the region and established an institution to address this challenge.

Overall, the papers in this volume underscore the continuing challenge in aligning the security concerns of African peoples with the perspectives of power elites at the helm of the state. In responding to conflict situations, the tendency for peacemakers to gravitate toward elite perspectives persists. This is despite the fact that security threats cannot be neatly separated into people and state-based concerns. As this volume demonstrates, insecure peoples do not inspire peaceful states. The acknowledgement of the mutually connected and mutually reinforcing security concerns of African peoples and their states remains a key gap in the application of human security in conflict situations in Africa.

The range of reviews being undertaken by the United Nations (UN) in 2015 is indicative of the continuing search for stable peace globally. In addition to the Sustainable Development Goals, which will build on the Millennium Development Goals, three other reviews are taking place in 2015, all of which seek to advance the search for sus-

tainable and inclusive peace and which reinforce human security ideals. These include first, the establishment by the UN Secretary-General of a High-Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations to review the state of peace operations and future needs; the UN launch of a Global Study to examine progress and challenges since the UN adopted Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security; and the establishment by the UN General Assembly and UN Security Council of an Advisory Group of Experts to review the UN Peacebuilding Architecture. The fact that conflict continues to be a central threat to the attainment of peace and security and to human security in particular, is therefore not lost on the global body. Africa remains one of the key terrains in which this threat persists. Special Issues such as this will no doubt contribute to shaping our understanding of the state of peace and security in Africa.

Bibliography

1.   See, for example, Buzan, B, Waever, O and J De Wilde (1998), Security: *A New Framework for Analysis.* Boulder, CO and London: Lynne Rienner; and Roland Paris, "Human Security: Paradigm Shift or Hot Air", *International Security*, Vol 26, No 2.
2.   Tadjbakshsh, S and A M Chenoy (2006), *Human Security: Concepts and Implications*. London: Routledge.