Good for Others, Good for Us
Reflections on Human Security as Public Diplomacy*

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In recent times a new conceptualisation of security, 'human security', has made its way both into the academy and in the policy world. As some aspects of it suggest, human security as a rhetorical instrument may bear a great significance for certain states, embracing it as a way of gaining alternative visibility through giving a boost to morality in international politics. In this case, human security could be seen as part of a strategy of public diplomacy. This paper is aimed at discussing the concept of human security from the appeal that it may have in international policy making arenas as suitable label. Some of the champions of the concept will be examined (Canada, Norway and Japan), and their approach to human security will be situated in a broad public diplomacy framework.

It is commonplace to date the international appearance of human security to the release of the 1994 *Human Development Report* by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), which describes human security as «first, safety from such chronic threats as hunger, disease and repression. And second [...] protection from sudden and hurtful disruptions in the patterns of daily life — whether in homes, in jobs or in communities» (UNDP, 1994: 23). The introduction of human security stresses the failure of previous conceptualisations to end human suffering and reconsiders the referent object to be protected (from the state to the individual) and the nature of the threats faced (from military to non-military).

As presented in the Human Development Report, human security encompasses freedom from fear (violence and the threat of violence, specifically arising from armed conflicts) and freedom from want (unsatisfied human needs and capabilities). Whereas states like Norway and Canada have integrated a freedom from fear human security approach into their foreign policies — including in the agenda issues such as landmines, the International Criminal Court, women and children in armed conflict or international humanitarian law— others, like Japan, focus on the freedom from want understanding by working on education, housing or unemployment.

Defining human security has been a monumental task, with several proposals available and little agreement on them. As we will see below, the definitional problem of human security was to be addressed by the Commission on Human Security (CHS), established in 2001 and co-chaired by Nobel Laureate Amartya Sen and former UN High Commissioner for Refugees Sadako Ogata. Expectations about their work were high, maybe too high in the light of the broad definition that they provided in the 2003 report *Human Security Now*: human security entails «protecting the vital core of all human lives in ways that enhance human fulfilment» (Commission on Human Security, 2003: 8). Although some human security advocates of a "thick" understanding have applauded the inclusiveness of the definition, it will not win over critics of its alleged lack of policy applicability and excessively openness of such a broad definition (Buzan, 2004; Krause, 2004; Macfarlane, 2004; Mack, 2004; Paris, 2004, 2001).

In the most general terms, and regardless of definitional divergences, human security is people-centred: it turns security towards the individual and social life. It adopts a multifaceted approach to people's security that is sensitive to the interconnectivity of threats.

Championing Human Security: Canada, Norway and Japan

Whereas the openness of the concept of human security is a source of academic criticism and debate, it is this very definitional flexibility that makes it easier for states to adopt. If humanitarian assistance and development aid are the focus of a given foreign agenda, then human security can be embraced; if humanitarian intervention and peacekeeping are endorsed, then human security can be embraced; if peace mediation or facilitation is a field of expertise and interest, then human security can be embraced; in short, human security is an umbrella for a wide range of diverse initiatives and «is still what states make of it» (Bosold and Werthes, 2005: 99).

When asking for states embracing human security in their foreign policy, Canada is probably the first name that comes to mind. This is not surprising, considering Canadians' relatively long flirtation with the concept. In mid-1990s, the newly formulated human security approach of the UNDP report faced the challenge of becoming a seductive idea for states, not to mention academics and civil society practitioners. Addressing the UN General Assembly in September 1996, Canada's Foreign Minister Lloyd Axworthy presented an overview of the global challenges and called for innovation, multilateralism and cooperation. More importantly, Axworthy introduced before international delegates a novel understanding of security resulting from the changing global environment:

> In the aftermath of the Cold War, we have re-examined and redefined the dimensions of international security to

> embrace the concept of *sustainable human security.* There has been a recognition that human rights and fundamental freedoms, the right to live in dignity, with adequate food, shelter, health and education services, and under the rule of law and good governance, are as important to global peace as disarmament measures. We are now realizing that security cannot be limited to the state's domain, but must incorporate civil society.[32]

Axworhty's formulation of human security was further presented in an article published in *International Journal* one year later, where he underlined the broader nature of human security, which not only includes the absence of military threats but also freedom from economic privation, an acceptable quality of life and a guarantee for human rights (1997). This thick depiction of human security including both freedom from fear and freedom from want would not correspond, however, with the main policy lines of Canada, which would follow the 'freedom from fear' path.

Milestones in the Canadian approach to human security are the process of negotiation and coalition building that led to the signing of the Mine Ban Treaty in December 1997, a successful example of international partnership between a colourful coalition of civil society groups and certain states, and the 1998 adoption of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. Also remarkable was *The Responsibility to Protect*, the report of the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS) launched by Canada. The report, presented to the UN in December 2001 and endorsed at the September 2005 UN World Summit, provides a new doctrine, asserting that the international community has the duty to intervene where gross human rights violations are taking place. In order words, the long-rooted principle of sovereignty does not confer impunity and international military intervention should be carried out for the protection of civilians from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity.

After the successful signing of the Landmine Treaty and the collaboration of diverse states and civil society groups, a new partnership between Canada and Norway was created to take action on human security issues, a new illustration of their historical record of cooperation and mutual understanding. The 'human security axis' between Ottawa and Oslo was formally launched during a ministerial meeting in Norway in May 1998, in which Canadian Foreign Affairs Minister Lloyd Axworthy and his Norwegian counterpart, Knut Vollebæk, signed the Lysøen Declaration. By means of such a declaration, both states agreed to establish a framework for consultation and co-operation on a human security agenda. Ministerial meetings were to be held at least once a year to discuss the issues on the partnership agenda, which originally was made up of nine areas—landmines, International Criminal Court, human rights, international humanitarian law, women and children in armed conflict, small arms proliferation, child soldiers, child labour, and arctic and northern cooperation—all of which were consistent with a freedom from fear understanding of human security. In the years to come the Lysøen Declaration would give rise to the creation of a Human Security Network, where up to twelve middle and small states, along with some international NGOs, would join Norway and Canada in promoting human security.

A non-member of the Human Security Network but a strong promoter of human security is Japan, which has instead worked much more closely with the UN. The first allusion to human security in Japanese official documentation was made in an address by Prime Minister Tomiichi Murayama to the UN General Assembly in 1995. On that occasion Muruyama linked human security to human rights and protection from poverty, ignorance, oppression and violence.

The following developments, especially the Asian financial crisis, positioned human security within Japan's foreign policy. In his opening remarks to a regional conference on the Asian crisis and the challenges to human

32 Emphasis added.

security in Tokyo in 1998, Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi defined human security as «the key which comprehensively covers all the menaces that threaten the survival, daily life and dignity of human beings and strengthens the efforts to confront those threats» (MOFA website, A). According to Obuchi, co-ordinated action beyond national borders and between state and non-state actors was necessary to overcome the sources of threats affecting human groups. Equally important is his appreciation of Japan's contribution to human security, defined in terms of assistance to vulnerable groups most harmed by economic difficulties.

Obuchi's commitment to make the «21st century a human-centred century» (MOFA website, A) has had continuity in the subsequent Japanese cabinets, promoters of a freedom from want approach in many international fora and initiatives. Hence, Obuchi's successor as head of the state, Yoshiro Mori, made an appeal to the international community at the United Nations Millennium Summit to adopt a human-centred perspective. Mori's mandate also gave shape to the Commission on Human Security, whose first session was welcomed by Junichiro Koizumi, Japanese Prime Minister from April 2001 to September 2006. The Commission concluded its activities in May 2003, and its work culminated in the report entitled *Human Security Now*. The report outlines several areas of importance, such as protecting civilians in violent conflict, protecting and empowering people in post-conflict situations and people on the move. It stresses the need to link the diverse initiatives and efforts towards advancing the security of people, pointing out the value of human security as catalytic concept. In order to disseminate the human security concept within the UN system and manage the United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security (UNTFHS) the Human Security Unit was established in September 2004 within the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (Shusterman, 2006).

In March 1999 the UNTFHS was created by the United Nations and the government of Japan, the latter making an initial contribution of 500 million yen (some $4.63 million). In less than three years, the Japanese government would make five additional contributions to the Fund, amounting to 22.3 billion yen (approximately, $198.29 million) (MOFA website, B). In 2005 more than 20 UN agencies' projects were funded by the UNTFHS, covering matters such as poverty alleviation, women's empowerment, reconstruction, and drug abuse in areas like Afghanistan, Sri Lanka, Uganda, Sudan and Central America, to mention a few (MOFA website, C). The assigned task to the Human Security Unit of promoting human security awareness within the UN agencies and UN Secretariat Departments and Offices is certainly of great importance, especially considering that the fund was underused by 2003, when only 70 per cent of the available funds had been spent (Fukushima, 2004: 22).

Moreover, Japan's commitment to human security may also be seen in a sequence of several initiatives, most notably its considerable official development aid in line with the Millennium Development Goals, along with the post of ambassador for Human Rights, created in 2005.

What can move states to adopt a human security agenda? In their proposal for a human security for the European Union, Glasius and Kaldor (2005) outlined three reasons for the EU to adopt a human security strategy, based on morality—universal principles of humanity—, legality—international human rights obligations— and enlightened self-interest—the insecurity of other countries affects the security of Europeans. These reasons are not exclusive to EU members and could be applied to the triad of states discussed so far. Not surprisingly, legality and humanity have often been underlined in the speeches and official statements by heads of states and foreign affairs ministers from Japan, Norway and Canada. Although Glasius and Kaldor cogently defend moral and legal arguments as the highest justifications, they concede that the self-interest case cannot be discarded and may be an appealing argument. The self-interest justification could be further elaborated as the acknowledgment of the interconnectivity of global (in)securities and the need for a pragmatic and combined response, as Glasius and Kaldor do, and

also a more rhetorical reasoning based on willingness to improve the internationally projected image of an actor (state, international or supranational organisation) by means of attaching it to worldwide recognised positive values. It is in the latter understanding where the categorisation of human security as an attractive label falls, providing its champions with a valuable presentation because it is anchored in principles of universal acceptance. In this manner, human security has a good chance of being embraced by states wishing to improve their position in the global arena, that is, states that need to embrace new and useful ideas. The implementation of a human security discourse falls into a broad self-interested strategy of international promotion of a determined actor aimed to retain or gain power. Put differently, human security may be a part of the public diplomacy of a given actor.

Human security as Public Diplomacy

In general, 'public diplomacy' refers to the part of the foreign policies of one state aimed at promoting a positive image and influencing other state audiences. The term was coined by Edmund A. Gullion in the mid-1960s and, as presented by the Edward R. Murrow Center of Public Diplomacy at Tufts University at its website,

> [it] deals with the influence of public attitudes on the formation and execution of foreign policies. It encompasses dimensions of international relations beyond traditional diplomacy; the cultivation by governments of public opinion in other countries; the interaction of private groups and interests in one country with those of another; the reporting of foreign affairs and its impact on policy; communication between those whose job is communication, as between diplomats and foreign correspondents; and the processes of inter-cultural communications.

Shortly after it was sketched out by Gullion, the term was adopted by the US government to describe its foreign programs to influence international audiences, and since then public diplomacy has been adopted by big, middle and small powers, along with international organisations (Noya, 2006).

Despite apparent similarities, public diplomacy differs from propaganda, public affairs and marketing (Noya, 2006). Unlike propaganda, a short-term artifice, public diplomacy has mainly long-term effects and certainly should not be a tall story. The impulse to equate public affairs with public diplomacy is also misguided: whereas the former deals principally with the media, is reactive and has a high degree of immediacy, the latter wants to reach the destination society and change attitudes, is pro-active and has continuity (Kiehl, 2003). Public diplomacy goes further than marketing or the mere dissemination of information about the country's assets, trying to convince with arguments and keep dialogue open (Noya, 2006).

Considering power relations, public diplomacy can be seen as a means to maintain and promote a country's soft power (Batora, 2006); where major powers desire to keep their global influence and make use of public diplomacy to achieve such a goal, small and medium-size states lacking hard power rely on public diplomacy to position themselves in the international realm. Hard power, on the one hand implies coercion, which relies on military force. Soft power, on the other hand, deals with attraction, in which credibility is essential (Nye, 2004). But public diplomacy is more needed by small and medium-size powers than big powers since the former depend upon foreign audiences to maintain their national independence and gain international influence (Henrikson, 2006).

Bearing in mind the previous depiction of human security as self-interested conceptual framing and comparing it with public diplomacy, one seems to be a carbon copy of the other. Human security, however, is not antecedent of public diplomacy but rather a piece of a specific model of public diplomacy; a model that tends to project outwards an image of a state engaged in ending human suffering, built on concrete solid practices that act as buffers against criticism. In this regard, middle powers are in a better position that great powers, for which certain actions

(i.e. promoting humanitarian intervention) may cause suspicion if not opposition in the international community. Middle powers' credentials make it possible to position themselves in a coherent manner, while the same commitment to an idea or initiative by a big power may be seen as hypocritical and dishonest. Under the lens of public diplomacy, human security is a harmless concept with significant potential to promote a positive image of a given country if there is coherence between rhetoric and practice.

As a result of limited resources, middle powers championing human security mostly use 'niche diplomacy' as their foreign policy (Batora, 2006; Behringer, 2005; Henrikson, 2006; Leonard *et al.*, 2002; Noya, 2006). The concept of niche diplomacy was coined by Australian Foreign Minister Gareth Evans in the early 1990s, as «concentrating resources in specific areas best able to generate returns worth having, rather than trying to cover the field» (Henrikson, 1999). Niche diplomacy is a means of specialised diplomacy, with special attention to one or more geographical and thematic areas. The niche thematic areas of these states correspond to a greater or lesser extent to human security, either in its thin or thick version.

Norway offers the example of niche diplomacy *par excellence*. After the end of the Cold War and the subsequent changes that undermined previous strategic interests, Norway was in search of a position on the international board. Taking into account Norway's small population, geographical location, limited linguistic projection and scarce international symbolism, a renewed and powerful public diplomacy did not seem unreasonable. Upon Norway's request and after surveying the country's opinion leaders, the British think tank the Foreign Policy Centre suggested a public diplomacy strategy which could be based upon four narratives of Norwegian identity: 1) humanitarian superpower; 2) living with nature; 3) equality, and; 4) internationalism and the spirit of adventure. It was suggested to highlight the two first stories, promoting a combined "peaceful nature" narrative of the country (Leonard and Small, 2003). Norwegian niche diplomacy has focused on the thematic area of peace: Norway's involvement in peace processes in countries such as Sri Lanka, Sudan or Guatemala, longstanding contribution to international peacekeeping forces, active participation in United Nations and a generous aid budget, combined with the awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize, have made Norway a leading peace broker. As Leonard *et al.* recall,

> Norway's prime goal in securing this international visibility around the issue of peace and conflict prevention is twofold. Firstly, it does allow Norway to gain a general profile it might not already have which is beneficial to the country in broad terms. More specifically though, Norway's reputation in conflict resolution ensures that it is regarded as relevant in multilateral forums, and by other important international players, and this affords it influence on this issue (2002:170).

Norway's peace efforts, its multilateralism and compliance with international human rights law demands that it take a leading positions in the conceptual debate—or at least be well-informed. Human needs, human development, good governance.... or human security, new concepts have been born and flourished, and some have already died or are in steady decline. If Norway is to maintain the 'peace dividend', the country cannot turn its back on the most appealing concepts, which even in the event of limited policy applicability may bring profits in terms of public diplomacy.

Human security is one of those newcomers, accused of uselessness in policy terms in light of its inability to make causal relations and in trying to find its place in the academic and political world. Despite its instability, it has been embraced by countries like Norway. This is not surprising, taking into account the Norwegian model of public diplomacy and the 'image-appeal' of the concept, which is fully compatible with and ready to be absorbed without substantial trouble, at least at the rhetoric level. In its 'thin version' as freedom from fear, human

security may easily refer to past, current and future Norwegian international actions as a peace superpower.

An analogous analysis also applies to the Japanese case, which presents, however, a different example of public diplomacy. As the world's second largest-economy, Japan has an interest in playing an active role in global security, a role that it lost in the aftermath of World War II. In the international domain, Japan longs for a permanent seat on the UN Security Council with veto power, citing Japan's hefty contribution to the UN annual budget (about 20%) and its support for and involvement in a wide range of UN initiatives. Japan's method of implementing human security, working closely with the UN, fits into a broader utilitarian framework for fulfilling its international agenda. Japanese foreign policy regarding countries with a shameful human rights record, such as Burma, may, however erode Japan's credibility as a convinced defender of human security. The credibility gap broadens when Japan's human security agenda is compared to its domestic human rights policies: «Despite apparently extensive policy changes in the 1990s, few, if any, concessions have been made to human rights policy where issues of national sovereignty are concerned» (Neary, 2003: 284). Furthermore, the desire of successive Japanese cabinets to change its national constitution to allow the establishment of a national army is fed by arguments based on the international role that Japan is acquiring, as a development and aid provider. Such a constitutional change, advocates argue, will help Japan to improve its international humanitarian profile as a prominent human security supporter. Paradoxically enough, human security may help to re-establish Japan's national army, the embodiment of national security.

As illustrated by these two cases, the international image and reputation of a country matters when it comes to positioning and transactions. Public diplomacy is aimed at improving that public asset (image) and, in doing so, increasing at a final stage the possibilities for achieving influence to be translated into more material goals, such as vis-à-vis dialogue with superpowers or investments. Without neglecting the bona fide positive actions taken by the states under the human security umbrella, a critical approach to such adoption reveals that those very same states are aware of the attractiveness of the concept as part of their public diplomacies. Human security, in this sense, not only talks about alleviation of human suffering but also about benefits for the states involved in promoting it; national interest is not a minor element in the adoption of a human security agenda. In the literary words of R. Kagan, public diplomacy is from Mars and belongs to politics and strategy, which has recovered the importance that it had had during the Cold War (Noya, 2006). When considering the official adoption of human security by a given state as part of its plan of action, it is not enough to take for granted that it (at least partially) acts out of self-interest; an inquiry into the nature of this self-interest is needed, making the connections and desired outcomes as explicit as possible. Only in doing so is it possible to engage in an honest discussion about state practices and human security

Final Remarks

It has been suggested that human security may be part of the public diplomacy of states such as Norway, Japan or Canada. Beyond the rectitude of their intentions, these states benefit from committing themselves to human security by means of gaining a reputation of a «good international citizen». In turn, this reputation reinforces their soft power, giving them greater chances to promote their interests globally. As Huysmans (1999:16) reminds us, alternative discourses should not be disregarded of their usages. Like other concepts challenging respective paradigms, human security, a concept with great potential, is not immune to the risks of being absorbed by the dynamics of the same paradigm that it came to question. If human security is here to stay, then great awareness of the human security usage is needed.

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