
4.

Conflicting Perspectives

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Learning Outcomes & Big Ideas

- Understand that human security is informed by a plurality of ideas; some of them contradict each other to various extents. Particular situations call for particular compromises.
- Acknowledge that around the world, diverse philosophical perspectives on security developed over time. Globalisation has brought them into contact with each other, which often causes conflict.
- Recognise the relationship between human security and human rights is contested; many authors argue convincingly that the latter is necessary, but not sufficient, for the former.
- Realise that while the security needs popularised by Abraham Maslow may bear universal significance across cultures, the hierarchy in which they are commonly



presented does not.

- Understand that a considerable portion of the values underlying human security are culturally contingent, question how far can this relativism be extended before it becomes unjust.
- Discern between freedom of religion and freedom from religion, when they are practised in tandem, enhance human security. When either is practiced in isolation from the other, it threatens human security.

Summary

Many conflicting perspectives in the study of human security are derived from a dichotomy of 'the West' and 'the rest', which is expressed in many ways: Western and Eastern cultures; the developed world and the developing world; the North and the South; modern and traditional values; secularisation and religiosity; egalitarian and hierarchical polities. This chapter explores the strengths and weaknesses of these dichotomies in the light of human security concerns and paradigms. It focuses on the global contributions of religion to both human security and human *insecurity*, and on the relationship between human security and human rights.

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4.1 Introduction

The chapter explores the strengths and weaknesses of some conflicting perspectives on human security, with a focus on the contributions of religion to human security and human insecurity. This focus reflects a major concern of post-9/11 conceptions of human security (see for example, Shani et al. 2007; Wellman & Lombardi 2012; Shani 2016), but it is really not that new. Islamophobic perspectives in the West can be traced back through the Rushdie affair, the oil crisis of the 1970s, the Suez crisis and post-war decolonisation, back to the crusades, and even to the first wave of Islamic expansion in the seventh century. According to Edward Said (1995), the Orient – a concept that includes the Muslim world – is fundamentally a Western creation and a tool of Western hegemony. Over the past millennium, a dualism of Orient (East) and Occident (West) has been constructed and maintained through various Western discourses – literary, political, academic, popular, and

media – in which the Orient/Muslim world is defined in terms of *complémentarité* (Laroui 1990: 155-65) with the West. Thus the Muslim world becomes, by definition, what the West is not. It is portrayed as essentially different and inferior because it is believed to be homogeneous and unchanging, in contrast to the cultural diversity and progress that characterise the modern West, or at least the modern West's conception of itself. If it is homogenous, it cannot be tolerant, because tolerance depends on (and indeed is) an acceptance of heterogeneity. If it is unchanging, it will never grasp the benefits of modernity, and the Oriental Muslim mind and conscience will always be stuck in the past.

For Said and other critics, this type of Orientalism constituted a rationale for European colonial expansion in the nineteenth century (Said 1995), and it continues to be seen as associated with attempts to maintain American hegemony in the Middle East and parts of South Asia. It also constitutes a lens through which Islam is perceived and portrayed. As such, Western representations of Islam – including academic ones – often reflect Orientalist assumptions. The main theme of these representations has been the irrationality of the Muslim world as it is defined by those representations. In the colonial period, the central stereotype of the Orient related to its sensuality, allowing Victorian Europe to imagine its alter ego, a “world of excess” which “was populated by androgynes, slave traders, lost princesses and the degenerate patriarch” (Turner 1994: 98). The sultan's harem, surrounded by belly dancers, produced exotic tales of Arabian nights and pages of case material for Freudian theorising. In the post 9/11 Western imagination, this sensuality appears not merely to have been hidden behind chadors and burqas, but to have been destroyed altogether. Yet the sense of exoticism

remains. The bearded fundamentalist, the suicide bomber and the veiled woman who collaborates in her own oppression may not be the object of Western fantasies, but they continue to bear the label of irrationality.

A vanished sensual vision of the Orient can be contrasted with perspectives that overemphasise conflict in the historical interactions between of Islam and Europe, and these were preoccupations of Brendon Tarrant who murdered fifty-one people in March 2019 in the New Zealand city of Christchurch. These mass shootings occurred during Friday prayers at two different mosques, as he live-streamed his attack and published a manifesto explaining his acts of mass murder. The killer specifically focused on the significance of historical discord between the West and the Islamic world, a point emphasised by his inscription of the dates of Western – Islamic battles on his weapons. This was an attack on human security not based on the Christian religion but on a cultural western secular ethno-nationalist worldview similar to the 2011 killings perpetrated by Norwegian killer Anders Breivik. Following the attacks, an Australian far right Senator attracted widespread condemnation (and subsequent electoral defeat) for his assertion the attacks had occurred because Muslims had migrated to New Zealand, essentially blaming them for their own murder. Globalisation contributed to the open and accepting immigration policy of New Zealand, to the killers' absorption of racist messages, and to the politician's use of this tragedy to emphasise his political platform. A distorted misuse of religious history and an associated mass killing had further fuelled a narrative of Islamophobia.

These phenomena have a long history, which needs to be appreciated in order to understand present-day human security dilemmas and the conflicting perspectives that

respond to them. However, this chapter focuses on more recent developments. The emergence of globalisation provides the context within which diverse perspectives become *conflicting* perspectives, because it is only when they come into contact with each other that they are able to disagree.

Another major theme of this chapter is the relationship between human security and human rights, which is central to a number of conflicting perspectives. Whether or not human rights should be universal or culturally located is a controversial issue with no easy answer. It has important consequences for discussions of human nature and the concept of Asian values, which has been articulated by political leaders in Singapore, Malaysia, and Taiwan. A related question concerns whether or not human rights should be norm based or criterion based. A norm-based approach assesses human rights situations in relative terms, comparing what actually happens within a given culture; a criterion-based approach is based on universal rules and standards, such as international human rights laws. Another way of asking this is to choose between valuing ends and valuing means. Do we accept relative outcomes including improvements in the human situation within a given culture, or do we always insist on doing the *right* thing according to moral and legal standards? Can apparent human rights violations be excused when they constitute an improvement on an existing situation? In order to address this question concretely, this chapter draws on ethnographic fieldnotes from a study conducted by one of the authors.

4.2 On Globalisation

We begin with a more conceptual consideration of globalisation. Roland Robertson defined globalisation as “the compression of the world and the intensification of consciousness of the world as a whole” (1992: 8). Since he wrote this in 1992, the word has entered everyday language, to the extent that expanding on this definition is unnecessary. Aspects of his theory include the concept of the *glocal* (a portmanteau of global and local), and the significance of religion.

It is not that the word ‘glocal’ was underused. Rather, it is rarely used in a judicious way. It has been used to refer to all sorts of conceptual meetings between the global and the local, and, consequently, is used to parody the sort of lazy and pretentious social science that is popularly associated with the worst excesses of postmodernism. However, Robertson (1992: 173) uses the term much more carefully:

Global capitalism both promotes and is conditioned by cultural homogeneity *and* cultural heterogeneity. The production and consolidation of difference and variety is an essential ingredient of contemporary capitalism, which is, in any case, increasingly involved with a growing variety of *micro*-markets (national-cultural, racial and ethnic; genderal; social-stratificational; and so on). At the same time micro-marketing takes place within the contexts of increasingly universal-global economic practices.... We must thus recognize directly ‘real world’ attempts to bring the global, in the sense of the macroscopic aspect of contemporary life, into conjunction with the local, in the sense of the microscopic side of life.... The very formulation, apparently in Japan, of a term such as *glocalize* (from *dochakuka*, roughly meaning ‘global localization’) is perhaps the best example of this. Glocalize is a term which was developed

in particular reference to marketing issues, as Japan became more concerned with and successful in the global economy.

Robertson then cites examples which ironically seem to have prefigured the injudicious overuse of the term 'glocal'. Examples of such 'travelling parochialism' include the American traveller who regards access to CNN as 'a global right', and the saying that 'with satellite television, you never know you left home'. However, he concludes:

... what this kind of observation seriously downplays is the increasingly complex relationship between 'the local' and 'the global.' It underestimates the extent to which 'locality' is chosen; it underplays the extent to which 'the local' media are, certainly in the USA, more and more concerned with 'global' issues ('local' reporters reporting from various parts of the world, according to 'local' interest); and it is not explicit about the shared, global homogeneity of 'going home.' All of this comes about through an inability, or unwillingness, to transcend the discourse of 'localism—globalism' (1992: 174).

This tension between the global and the local (and attempts to transcend it) is at the root of several conflicting perspectives in human security. In a world of globalisation, our local, national and ethnic identities are more important than ever. This can manifest itself in a negative form as was seen in the aftermath of the Islamic State (ISIS) intrusion into the Syrian Civil War in 2014. Millions fled both the violence of the original conflict and the imposition of religious values by an extremist minority. The role of contemporary media in a globalised world meant asylum seekers could be attracted to seek refuge in Europe where

jobs, housing, and community offered real human security in contrast to makeshift camps in a neighbouring country. Whether their ethnic identity was Christian or Yazidi, or whether they were secular or moderate Muslims appalled by the Salafi jihadist extreme vision of ISIS, their local identity prevented acceptance of the new fundamentalism of ISIS. Yet, while many who fled did gain refuge, others found themselves confronted by Europeans themselves more conscious of a localised ethno-nationalist identity that emphasised their difference from these desperate refugees.

There is a real clash between the global and the local. In Australia, people might eat McDonald's, but still think of themselves as patriotic Australians, and approve of campaigns to buy Australian. They do not usually think what the consequences of buying Australian would be if everybody else in the world followed their example and bought their own local products, leaving Australian companies unable to export. But this shows what happens when the global and the local clash with each other. Inoffensive identity might mean having one's nation's flag hanging from a flagpole in their garden, retaining an unneeded second citizenship for nostalgic reasons or having some symbol of their ethnicity on the mantelpiece or in a wardrobe (e.g. a picture of the ancestral Greek island, a tartan kilt). Sometimes, people fight wars over their ethnic and national identities – the wars in the former Yugoslavia in the 1990s are vivid examples of this, as is the ongoing struggle of the Kurds. Political parties emerge to represent particular ethnic groups within the context of a nation state, and sometimes these parties demand independence.

The second of Robertson's themes that we focus on is the significance of religion to globalisation. Religion has been given increased recognition in the broader field of

international relations (Hurd 2008; Philpott 2018) and is also important to human security, both in the sense that human security demands protection of religious freedom, and in the sense that religion is sometimes a threat to human security. Robertson (1992: 1-2) recognizes this, and discusses a number of overlaps between the sociology of religion and the study of globalisation. While acknowledging the centrality of secularization to the sociology of religion, he states:

I have become increasingly conscious of the extent to which 'religion' became during the nineteenth century, but particularly in the first quarter of the twentieth century, a categorical mode for the 'ordering' of national societies and the relations between them. In that sense 'religion' was and is an aspect of international relations (1992: 2).

Human security is widely viewed as a paradigm within the discipline of international relations (though cf. Acharya 2004). Consequently, we can observe that religion is an aspect of human security, and that religion 'orders' or 'categorizes' human experiences of security and insecurity. The fear of Islam and the experience of Islamophobia are probably the most vivid examples at present. But the significance of liberation theology to human security in Latin America and Eastern Europe in the 1970s and 1980s should not be underestimated, and nor should its lasting effects (cf. Robertson 1992: 42). Christianity is also a part of the human security paradigm. For conservative African Anglican Christians, the values of liberal Christians in Western Europe who ordain women priests, support same sex marriage and ordain gay priests threatens their sense of security, and leads to a challenge to the authority of Anglicans in the west (Brittain & McKinnon 2018). Not all those who supported the election of President Donald

Trump were Christians of the politicised religious Right, but this grouping was emboldened by this shift in the American political landscape, and the insecurity of Americans associated with anti-globalisation also speaks to this image of a Christian America.

In his discussion of Japan – the country from which the concept of the ‘glocal’ originated – Robertson observes that not only is the phenomenon of religion important to global issues and international relations, but so is the concept of religion. Japan is a sort of global laboratory of interactions between religion and society. This is because religious syncretism (the combining of different religious systems) is relatively common, because “in Japan individuals frequently adhere to more than one religious orientation”, and because of the proliferation of New Religious Movements, each one of which problematizes earlier definitions of religion (1992: 86, 88, 93-4). “At the same time”, comments Robertson, “there has been a well-developed view that since the abolition of State Shinto and the enforcement of religious freedom by the American occupiers after World War II Japanese religion has been at best an epiphenomenon of an increasingly secularized culture” (1992: 189). Freedom of religion, freedom from religion: both are essential to human security, and both can threaten human security.

4.3 Human Rights and Human Security

There are conflicting perspectives on the relationship between human rights and human security. They can essentially be classified into the following three groups:

A. “Human rights define human security” (Ramcharan 2002: 9);

B. Human security builds on human rights;

C. The fundamental tension between human rights and human security.

From a human security perspective, the first of these positions is the most modest. If human rights define human security, then human security can be evaluated according to whether or not human rights are respected in practice. There is little if any need to define human security differently from human rights, and international human rights instruments such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UN 2015) provide the legal framework for evaluating human security.

Wolfgang Benedek argues not only that “human rights can help define the concept of human security”, but also that “human rights lie at the core of human security” (2008: 13) by providing a “sound conceptual and normative foundation” for human security that ensures it is an “operational concept firmly rooted in international law” (Benedek et al. 2002: 16). More programmatically, “the best way to achieve human security is through the full and holistic realisation of all human rights” (2008: 13). The difference between the legal concept of human rights and the political concept of human security is recognized, but Benedek states that “human security concerns are increasingly translated into legal obligations through international conventions and protocols” (2008: 14).

Many will worry that Benedek’s concept of “the interrelationship of human security and human rights” (2008: 14) subsumes human security under the human rights tradition. It is unlikely this will find much favour among advocates of a human security perspective, because it makes the perspective superfluous if not redundant. But there is more to human security than respect for human rights law.

While many who hold human rights to be an extension of natural law, an essential property of all human beings by virtue of their being human, an empirical fact is that human rights are defined in legal terms. If someone claims *x* as a human right, it is not good enough to assert a vague feeling that *x* should be a human right. It is necessary to point to legal documentation, domestic and/or international. But if someone claims that the lack of *x* constitutes a lack of human security, recourse to *legal* argument is unnecessary.

In other words, the second position, that human security builds on human rights, not only gives the field of human security a *raison d'être*, but also recognises the importance of work undertaken within the legal human rights tradition, and the reality of subjective and more inclusive notions of security that are less legalistic. So Tadjbakhsh and Chenoy (2007: 10) are being realistic when they say that “security needs to be redefined as a subjective experience at the micro level in terms of people’s experience”. This is not a recipe for chaotic relativism, but a recognition that building human security on human rights is building a subjective concept onto an objective, criterion-based, legal one. This extends the first perspective – that human rights define human security, but does not negate it. Hampson et al. (2002: 15) argue that “the denial of fundamental human rights” is “the main reason for human insecurity”, but this is within the context of the “fundamental liberal assumption that individuals have a basic right to “life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness” ... that the international community has an obligation to protect and promote” (2002: 5). This perspective also conceptualizes human security as built on three ‘pillars’, which Tadjbakhsh and Chenoy summarise as “the natural rights/rule of law approach”, which includes human rights, “the

safety of people/humanitarianism approach” and “the sustainable development approach” (2007: 49-50).

The third perspective – that there is a fundamental tension between human security and human rights – can be found in the work of Caroline Thomas. The problem she identifies is the centrality of property rights to legal human rights frameworks, and this introduces a neoliberal competitive and possessive individualism into notions of human security. For Thomas, this focus on the “security of the individual”, based on an “extension of private power and activity, based around property rights and choice in the market place”, undermines a more substantive human security, which “describes a condition of existence in which basic material needs are met, and in which human dignity, including meaningful participation in the life of the community, can be realised” (2001: 161). This material concept of human security “elucidates the poverty, inequality and security link clearly” (Thomas 2001: 163). That is: “When a privileged elite defends its too large share of too few resources, the link is created between poverty, inequality and the abuse of human rights” (Smith 1997: 15). In other words, the defence of the property rights embedded in international human rights instruments causes inequality, and this creates human insecurity.¹

Ultimately, this adds up to the insight that “human security is indivisible; it cannot be pursued by or for one group at the expense of another” (Thomas 2001: 161). Outside of a neo-realist International Relations framework, it is hard to argue that human security can be pursued by one group at the expense of another and still be a meaningful concept. However, Thomas’s materialist

1. [Editor’s note] A similar argument is presented in Chapter 15 in the form of a fundamental difference between those human rights that are grantable and those that are not.

argument seems more questionable. Property rights are a part of human rights as they are defined in international law. However, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UN 2015) – which, although not enforceable in international law is still the closest thing we have to an international benchmark – also includes the right to social security (Article 22), the right to work (Article 23.1) and to “just and favourable remuneration” (Article 23.3), the right to a standard of living adequate to ensure one’s health and wellbeing (Article 25.1), and the right to education (Article 26). The problem of some human rights conflicting with human security will be discussed further in Chapter 15.

4.4 Notes from an Ethnography

There are approximately eight million Shan people, mostly in Shan State, which has been *de facto* part of Burma (Myanmar) since its independence in 1948. The guaranteed right to secede from Burma after ten years was never honoured. Neither have other human rights been respected, with the Shan people routinely being subjected by the Burmese military to forced labour, while little was spent on their health and education. Although the Shan people outnumber the Tibetans and the Palestinians, their plight is largely unknown, in contrast to the persecution of Burma’s Muslim Rohingya people by ultra-nationalist Buddhists in 2016 that attracted greater attention worldwide.

What follows is excerpted from the fieldnotes of an ethnography conducted by one of the authors of this chapter on the Thai-Burma border. Some details have been changed for reasons of confidentiality.

Today I had lunch in a Chinese Muslim vegetarian

restaurant, in a Thai village not far from the Burmese border. We had scrambled yellow tofu with rice noodles, accompanied by samosas and sweetcorn fritters. My companions included a Jewish Australian woman and three Shan people, all Buddhist. The Shan people all work for SalusWorld, a mental health NGO that works to heal psychological trauma caused by human rights abuses around the globe. They included a Shan woman who has recently started a postgraduate degree, which, given that many Shan people in Thailand do not go to school, even fewer go to university, and even fewer still are women, is quite remarkable.

Before lunch, we went to a nearby orange farm to assess the possibility of opening a school for the children of Shan refugees, many of whom work on the orange farms of the area for less than 100 baht (US\$3) a day. Although they are refugees in the sense of being outside their country through conditions not of their own making, they are not legally recognised as refugees by the Thai government or the UNHCR. Hence, they have no papers, and their children are not entitled to a state education. This is why a number of NGOs – secular and faith-based – fund and operate schools like this potential one. That said, it is possible for Shan children to enter government schools if they meet certain criteria – notably having a sufficient level of competence in the Thai language. So, the NGO schools often focus on teaching Thai language to the Shan children, as well as English, mathematics, and Shan history. If they get into the government schools, it is possible for them to get formal school and even university qualifications, Thai citizenship, and better job opportunities.

After visiting the potential school site, we visited a Shan family on another orange farm. They have a four month old daughter, and the people from SalusWorld were delivering milk because breast feeding has become impossible, and they gave advice about vaccinations that were available at a nearby clinic. The parents both work on the farm, earning 180 baht a day between them, so a sufficient supply of milk

is not something they can afford. Their main job is to spray the orange trees with pesticides. Some of the nearby orange farms use pesticides that are illegal even in Thailand; I have no way of telling if this farm is one of them, but it is certain that the pesticides would have long term negative health effects on the whole family. They had no protective clothing beyond simple scarves that they wrapped around their faces while spraying. It had been raining, and the puddles were a deep green pesticide colour.

The family have been in Thailand for six months. They escaped from Burma, and considered their living conditions to be far better than anything they had experienced previously. They were genuinely happy and relieved to be here.

Had the human security paradigm emerged in the 1930s, the perspective of my Jewish Australian companion would have merited extensive discussion. Today, her Zionism would strike many non-Jews as a threat to human security, but she would see it as necessary to the human security of her relatives and her fellow Jews. The human security of the Chinese Muslims in the village where we ate is another story. They escaped from China during the time of the Communist Revolution – some of the older generation fought for the Kuomintang. The restaurant was beside a mosque, where they were able to worship freely. The researcher's own human security was enhanced by being able to eat in accordance with his vegetarian principles.

As for the Shan people, even the worst human rights violations they experienced in Thailand were not enough to make them wish they were in Burma. The border was only a few kilometres away, but this barrier protected them from the Burmese military. The human security of the workers on the orange farms was compromised by their low wages, the health risks from the pesticides, and the precarious legal state that their lack of papers put them and their

children in. These human insecurities were real. It is not too strong to call them human rights violations. Yet their relief at being in Thailand rather than Burma was equally real. A point worth emphasising in this chapter on religion in human security is that both Thailand and Burma are majority Buddhist states, with vastly different approaches to the intersection between the principles of human security and the principles of their faith.

Yet, there are no *de minimis* violations of human rights. In other words, human rights constitute a minimum acceptable standard, not a vague set of aspirations. They are necessary to human security. It is no defence of human rights violations to say they are less bad than the violations that occur elsewhere. Human rights violations cannot be excused by culture, or *national* security needs, or even by a democratic veto. Human rights are universal and indivisible, and they are the foundation of human security. Or are they?

4.5 A Hierarchy of Needs?

The psychologist Abraham Maslow (1943) posited a hierarchy of needs, grouped into five categories. If an 'earlier' need is unsatisfied, then other needs will be treated as irrelevant. The categories are:

- A. physiological or survival needs,
- B. the need for safety,
- C. a need for love, affection, and belonging,
- D. esteem needs, and
- E. the need for self-actualization.

Maslow argued that his hierarchy of needs applied to all human beings in all cultures, and that there is a "relative

unity behind the superficial differences in specific desires from one culture to another” (p. 389).

If this is right, then his argument could be translated into human security terms as follows. Shan people seek fulfilment of their immediate primary needs, such as food and drink. When these needs are not met, they may risk their safety in order to escape from Burma and work on an orange farm in Thailand where their primary needs will be met, at least for a time (until exposure to pesticides affects their physical wellbeing). Certainly, some have fled Shan State because they were forced to labour for the Burmese military, and were therefore unable to make a living for themselves. However, even if their immediate needs are met in Shan State, then the lack of longer-term safety may become apparent, and they may take the same decision to flee.

However, there are others who risked their safety – and became political prisoners, subject to torture and risking summary execution – because of their strong feelings about the political situation in Burma. They felt that the military regime denied their human rights, and those of their compatriots. In other words, primarily due to a lack of self-actualization – not just for themselves, but for others too – they were willing to risk their safety and their physiological equilibrium.

A large number of human actions and decisions can be explained, or at least conceptualised, in Maslow’s terms. Some, apparently, cannot. The question that arises is whether or not this is culturally relative. Does Maslow’s hierarchy work better for explaining people’s felt needs, and actions to fulfil those needs, in one culture than in another? Most importantly, does it work better in the West than in the developing world? In other words, is it ethnocentric?

Hofstede (1984) argues that it was. He cites a 14-country study by Haire, Ghiselli and Porter (1966) in which managers were asked to rate the importance of a number of needs, all of which were aligned with Maslow's five categories; the only country in which the managers responded as predicted by Maslow's theory was the USA, the country Maslow was from. Hofstede (1984: 396) claims that:

Maslow's value choice ... was based on his mid-twentieth century US middle class values. First, Maslow's hierarchy reflects individualistic values, putting self-actualization and autonomy on top. Values prevalent in collectivist cultures, such as "harmony" or "family support", do not even appear in the hierarchy. Second, ... even if just the needs Maslow used in his hierarchy are considered – the needs will have to be ordered differently in different culture areas.

Hofstede classifies these culturally ordered needs in four categories, according to what the 'highest' need would be in a given culture area:

- A. self-actualization;
 - B. a combination of security and assertiveness needs;
 - C. social relationship needs; and
 - D. a combination of security and relationship needs
- (1984: 396).

While he places the USA and other Western countries in the first of these categories, he places Thailand in the fourth (1984: 393). Even the Theravada Buddhist monk – who seeks Nirvana for himself – seeks self-transcendence, not self-actualization.

4.6 The West and the Rest?

If there is a hierarchy of needs, its structure is not universal, and consequently, we would expect the different nations and culturally-defined regions of the world to define their human security needs in different ways, congruent with the ways in which their hierarchies of needs are constructed. However, this raises two important issues. First, there is the question of 'Asian values' – the argument that security and community are more valuable in an Asian context than freedom and democracy, and that this justifies policies and activities that would be considered unjustifiable in the West. Second, the fact that different nations and regions of the world have different human security *needs* does not in itself mean that they have different human security *paradigms*.

4.6.1 Asian Values

'Asian values' reflects a model of consciousness that is linked to the growing authoritarianism that characterises the second decade of the 21st century. Examination of the Asian values debate is more important than ever, with this model actively being exported to China from Singapore. Paradoxically, ideas of dominance spread from this small state to a larger one in a reversal of the normal process by which ideas are diffused (Ortman & Thompson 2016: 40). It remains controversial, and the debate surrounding it is polarized. Surain Subramaniam (2000) traces the concept back to the 1970s, and summarises the "cultural relativist" position associated with the "Singapore school" that "liberal democratic values and Asian culture are fundamentally incompatible" (2000: 20).

Asian values were earlier seen as conflicting with modernization, but in the early 1970s the concept came to connote a commitment to modernization that would avoid the fads of Western cultural and economic life. After the end of the Cold War, however, proponents of Asian values contrasted them with Western triumphalism and the threat, real or imagined, of a new Western imperialism. Those proponents interpreted Fukuyama's (1993) 'end of history' and Huntington's (1996) 'clash of civilizations' theses as intellectualizations of this new triumphalism/imperialism, and, consequently, the concept of 'Asian values' was framed in opposition to them. The emergence of China as a global power through its Belt and Road Initiative that began in 2013, and China's increasing geopolitical influence has also fuelled interest in a model that offers an alternative to Western liberal democratic worldviews.

While the concept was sometimes stated in a confrontational way – that Asian values were superior to Western values – its application was more pragmatic, based on a view that, simply put: "Asian values are superior to western liberal values *in confronting the challenges facing Singapore*" (Subramaniam 2000: 22; original emphasis). While the Singaporean argument was made in other countries, it was not always made in the same way. In an intervention that may surprise readers of *The End of History*, Fukuyama (1997: 148) points out:

Lee Kuan Yew [of Singapore] has attracted considerable attention by arguing that Confucianism supports a certain kind of political authoritarianism. Lee Teng-hui [of Taiwan] has called on his Confucian scholars to prove just the opposite – that there are, in fact, precedents for democracy in Confucian thought. Strategies like this are adopted in all cultural systems. Christianity can be and has been made to support slavery and hierarchy and authoritarianism as well

as the abolition of slavery and the promotion of democracy and equal rights.

So ultimately it is the content of allegedly Asian values that is of significance, not their basis, nor their motivation. Furthermore, the notion that 'Asian values' are applicable to the whole of Asia is at least as questionable as the notion that liberal democracy is applicable to the whole world. According to Subramaniam:

Asian values as conceived by the Singapore school are ostensibly Confucian values. However, some are also consistent with Weber's Protestant work ethic. Others defy strict categorization. The inventory of Asian values as conceived by the Singapore school consists mainly of the following: respect for authority, strong families, reverence for education, hard work, frugality, teamwork, and a balance between the individual's interests and those of society (24).

It is tempting to criticise the concept of Asian values on the grounds that 'they really mean' something else, and that they are a front for self-interested tyranny. However, the more productive criticism is a response to the actual claim of the proponents of Asian values, namely that they are appropriate to the modernization challenges facing Asian societies and economies. Amartya Sen's reading of the empirical evidence leads him to the conclusion that: "On balance, the hypothesis that there is no relation between freedom and prosperity in either direction is hard to reject" (1997: 33-4). He also argues that authoritarian government has an inflexibility that makes it unresponsive to disasters and other unforeseen circumstances, and that "the political incentives provided by democratic governance acquire great practical value" (1997: 34).

Sen argues that the concept of Asian values is an

unrealistically homogenous one, when viewed against the enormous diversity of Asian cultures. He also points out that there are Western systems of thought that place an emphasis on order and harmony, as opposed to freedom and dissent. Furthermore, Asian traditions such as Buddhism place an emphasis on individual freedom as a necessary component of the search for truth and enlightenment, and he provides an extensive description of how such an emphasis has been given political application over the centuries.

Sen (1997: 40) rejects the concept of Asian values as “not especially Asian”. Subramaniam (2000: 30-1) concludes that the “cultural relativist” position and the contrasting “universalist” one – that “the liberal democratic path has universal applicability” – are both only half right. For him:

“The debate has become a missed opportunity to:

A. examine the plurality of cultures and values in Asia,

B. seek common ground among the many Asian cultures and values, and

C. work out areas of consensus between the proponents of liberal democratic values and the proponents of Asian values” (2000: 31).

Such a search for common ground is likely to be more conducive to global human security than attempts to delineate another West versus Asia ‘clash of civilizations’. Another consideration is that the diversity of Asian critiques of Asian values demonstrates the rich and extensive range of human values further challenging the Asia versus the West dichotomy. Critics also argue Asian values marginalises the perspectives of India, the world’s largest democracy and historically a major force within Asian cultural history. Indeed, India’s founding Prime

Minister Jawaharlal Nehru advocated support for universal concepts of democracy because of its opposition to colonialism, the values of socialism as well as an understanding of a humanist liberal tradition (Varshney 2015: 923).

4.6.2 Human Security Paradigms

Hofstede (1984) claims that 'Third World social scientists' have frequently been educated in the West, and are therefore imbued with ethnocentric Western approaches which masquerade as science, and that it therefore requires exceptional personal courage and independence of thought to break from, or even problematize, these approaches. Perhaps he underestimates the contributions of thinkers from outside the Western metropolises. It is clear that without their contributions, the study of human security would be far behind where it is now.

The contributions of Muhammad Yunus and Amartya Sen are especially notable. Both have won Nobel Prizes, and have contributed to academic discourses and practices of human security. Yunus' development of microcredit has had a practical impact, and he has contributed significantly to the theory of social business (e.g. Yunus 2010); in both spheres his work has contributed to human security by improving the economic security (freedom from want) of some of the poorest people in the world. In Sen's case, not only has he contributed directly to the field of human security as an academic, but he has also contributed to United Nations discourses of human security, human rights, and development. Yet we have to ask whether or not Hofstede's claim about 'Third World social scientists' is right in the cases of Yunus and Sen: do they both have essentially Western minds in Asian bodies, or is there an

appreciable ‘Bangladeshiness’ or ‘Indianness’ to their work that needs to be appreciated?

Yunus’s impetus came from observing the lives of the rural poor in Bangladesh, and his model was not initially conceptualised as more than a local response to local circumstances. Yet, it has been applied not only in the developing world, but also to situations of poverty in the United States, continental Europe, Scotland, and Japan, among others (Yunus 2010: vii-xxiv, 160-2). Tadjbakhsh and Chenoy show that Sen’s central contributions to the social sciences were made in response to the development needs of the South Asian subcontinent:

Sen’s theoretical revolution, in the technical language of “functionings” and “capabilities”, was in tandem with the practical dictates of Mahbub ul-Haq, the Pakistani planner associated with the foundation of the UNDP Human Development Approach, who posed a simple statement that the purpose of all public policies is to increase people’s choices. In his “Development as Freedom”, Sen elaborated on why and how freedom is at the same time the main goal and the main means to achieve development (2007: 20).

Tadjbakhsh and Chenoy locate their own perspective within an experience of the developing world and its relations with the West:

... the collaboration brought together one Iranian woman who had been educated in American universities and had worked in the UN before moving to teaching, and an Indian woman steeped in the tradition of activism that, fortunately, does not escape the faith of intellectuals in India (2007: 5).

Using the language of ‘the South’ and ‘the North’ (broadly equivalent to the ‘developing’ and ‘developed’ counties of the world), Tadjbakhsh and Chenoy point to:

the collective experience ... of mistrust ... with concepts that came from international organizations, which to the South, were often seen as institutions led by powerful Northern nations. Whether it was democracy, human rights and now human security, the discourses smacked of power in the construction of the terms. (2007: 4)

This does seem like an appreciably Southern paradigm, which elucidates the 'Northernness' of some others. This is especially apparent when they discuss the notion of humanitarian intervention, a particular use of the concept of human security in international politics which has extended the just war theory to one that legitimises war when it is prosecuted for reasons, or pretexts, of human security (2007: 196ff). The lack of intervention in Rwanda in 1994, and the actual intervention in Kosovo in 1999, have both been debated extensively. The Rwandan case has been used to justify subsequent interventions in Kosovo, Iraq, and Libya, for example, although Chomsky (1999: 81) has argued that the intervention in Kosovo "greatly accelerated slaughter and dispossession." Tadjbakhsh and Chenoy observe that "incidents of selective humanitarian intervention have made much of the South, especially Civil Society, cynical of the concept to the extent of rejecting it" (2007: 198). They cite Walden Bello (2006) as an example:

... most of us, at least most of us in the global South, recoil at Washington's use of the humanitarian logic to invade Iraq. Most of us would say that even as we condemn any regime's violations of human rights, systematic violation of those rights does not constitute grounds for the violation of national sovereignty through invasion or destabilization. Getting rid of a repressive regime or a dictator is the responsibility of the citizens of a country.

This is at least suggestive of a distinctively Southern

human security paradigm. The existence of such a paradigm would be significant in that it allows its proponents to criticise the tendency of some in the South to reject human security in its entirety as a tool of Western neo-imperialism. Tadjbakhsh and Chenoy say that “the advent of human security should be seen, instead, as the triumph of the South to put development concerns into global security discussions” (2007: 35), because “a human security approach for the South would allow it to shed international light on the concerns of underdevelopment and individual dignity at a time when state-based interests are increasingly being used in the global war against terrorism” (2007: 35). And for Mahbub ul-Haq (1998: 5), human security paradigms create the potential for a “new partnership between the North and the South based on justice not on charity; on an equitable sharing of global market opportunities, not on aid; on two-way compacts, not one-way transfers; on mutual cooperation, not on unilateral conditionality or confrontation”.

4.7 Freedom of Religion, Freedom from Religion

Religious fervour can easily become grounds for human insecurity, but conflicting religious cultures do not necessarily generate such results. Akbar Ahmed (1999: 181-4) looks at a number of issues relating to the experiences of the Muslim community in the Outer Hebrides, an archipelago off the north-west coast of Scotland where people still speak the Gaelic language, which has largely died out in the rest of Scotland. What occurs is an unusual meeting of two minority ethnic cultures: British Pakistani on the one hand and the Gaels

of the Hebrides on the other. According to Ahmed, the Muslim community fitted in very well, respecting the important Hebridean custom of Sabbath observance (doing no work on Sundays), even though this is not part of the Muslim faith. This is a side of globalisation that is not always observed. Although this specific meeting of minority cultures is unusual, it is part of a pattern that is unremarkable. The lack of human insecurity experienced by the Gaels and the Muslims as a result of their interaction means that there is little to say about this aspect of globalisation. A rare example of a similarly high level of human security becoming internationally newsworthy occurred in 2016 in the British city of Leicester, and only achieved international recognition because of its association with a key component of British mass popular culture, soccer or Association Football; after the Leicester team won the English Premier league it became apparent that the racially diverse white and South Asian population of the city were harmoniously united in their support for their team (Williams & Peach 2018: 423-5). The first example would not even be discussed were it not for its surprising location and the second attracted attention because of its link to sport, but both are more representative of the experience of human security than more 'newsworthy' discussions of war, extreme poverty, or human rights violations could ever be.

It is important to establish that context before observing that some of the strongest criticisms of the human rights tradition – which has been extended in human security perspectives – has come from Islamic countries. In 1981, the Iranian representative at the United Nations argued that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) was based on a secular understanding of the Judeo-Christian tradition, and was thus incompatible with the core values

of Muslim countries, and with the foundations of those values.

As a result of such concerns, the Cairo Declaration on Human Rights in Islam was promulgated in 1990.² It was a declaration by the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) which, at the time, consisted of forty-five states (including Palestine, which is recognised as a state by the OIC). The declaration was presented in a form similar to the UDHR, but with notable differences in content. Unfortunately, these differences seem to reflect a weaker commitment to religious freedom, gender equality, and freedom of speech than the UDHR. For example:

- Islam is the religion of true unspoiled nature. It is prohibited to exercise any form of pressure on man or to exploit his poverty or ignorance in order to force him to change his religion to another religion or to atheism. (Article 10)
- Woman is equal to man *in human dignity*, and has her own rights to enjoy as well as duties to perform, and has her own civil entity and financial independence, and the right to retain her name and lineage. (Article 6a; added emphasis)
- Everyone shall have the right to express his opinion freely in such manner as would not be contrary to the principles of the Shari'ah.

2. See The Nineteenth Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers (Session of Peace, Interdependence and Development), held in Cairo, Arab Republic of Egypt, from 9-14 Muharram 1411H (31 July to 5 August 1990), The Cairo Declaration On Human Rights In Islam. <http://www.icla.up.ac.za/images/un/use-of-force/intergovernmental-organisations/oic/THE%20CAIRO%20DECLARATION%20ON%20HUMAN%20RIGHTS%20IN%20ISLAM.pdf> (accessed 9 Aug 2019)

(Article 22a)

It is unfortunate that many people have taken this as evidence of a lack of commitment to human rights within Islam *per se*. Yet the Cairo Declaration was an instrument of state actors; that is to say, it is a political document, drafted, debated and signed by those who held political power. The contributions of Muslim civil society to discussions of human rights and human security have been extensive and diverse, in keeping with the Qur'anic challenge to Muslims and Christians to "vie with one another in doing good works" (The Qur'an 5:48). Yet the contributions of Muslim civil society are often mistrusted and marginalised, which undermines the human security of Muslims worldwide. Mustapha Kamal Pasha (2007: 191) puts it as follows, in a quotation which ties together several strands of this chapter:

A [...] major problem in human security discourses belongs to its fixation on a 'hierarchy of needs' model and its latent economism pronounced in cataloguing various indices of insecurity. Alternatively, an appreciation of the inviolability of cultural identity to the sustenance of the human condition can help displace the hegemony of economism. Such appreciation need not rest on cultural relativism or essentialism, merely the indivisibility of social life forms. In the post 9/11 context, life-worlds placed under sustained political surveillance are not merely addenda to received indices of human insecurity. Rather, culturally fractured life-worlds direct inquiry towards processes and structures of power and their effects.

Importantly, the Cairo Declaration asserts human rights that are not enshrined in the UDHR, and thus, potentially at least, contributes to the *extension* of human rights and human security. For example:

- In the event of the use of force and in case of armed conflict, it is not permissible to kill non-belligerents such as old men, women and children. The wounded and the sick shall have the right to medical treatment; and prisoners of war shall have the right to be fed, sheltered and clothed. It is prohibited to mutilate or dismember dead bodies. It is required to exchange prisoners of war and to arrange visits or reunions of families separated by circumstances of war. (Article 3a)
- Everyone shall have the right to live in a clean environment... (Article 17a)
- Everyone shall have the right to live in security for himself, his religion, his dependents, his honour and his property.... A private residence is inviolable in all cases. It will not be entered without permission from its inhabitants or in any unlawful manner, nor shall it be demolished or confiscated and its dwellers evicted. (Article 18a, c)

To argue that these articles are reflective of Islam *per se* would be as unwarranted as making the same argument about the ones cited earlier. Yet, they do reflect a religious perspective on human rights and human security that is too influential to be ignored. Furthermore, freedom of religion is recognised as a human right in the UDHR, and this right “includes the right ... to manifest [one’s] religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance” (Article 18). The right to manifest one’s religion in practice does not exclude the right to manifest it in political or cultural practice; although the right to abandon one’s

religion has of course been problematic, as Abdullah Saeed and Hassan Saeed (2004) have noted. Freedom of religion is not confined to the private sphere, and to make it so would infringe on the human rights and human security of many people.

However, religion outside of the private sphere can also infringe on people's human rights and human security. For example, the right to marry is guaranteed by the UDHR and other human rights declarations, including the Cairo Declaration. Yet this right is effectively denied to gay people in the vast majority of countries around the world, and attempts to legally extend it to gay people have met with substantial opposition, primarily but not exclusively from religious quarters. Such opposition to gay rights is seen as a lack of modernity, although more complex dynamics regarding the intersection between marriage rights, Muslim cultures and LGBTIQ politics need to be considered (Rahman 2014). Homophobia and Islamophobia are both threats to human security. The denial of gay rights and the denial of religious rights are both denials of human rights, and undermine human security. Freedom of religion and freedom from religion, when they are practised in tandem, enhance human security. When either is practiced in isolation from the other, it threatens human security.

4.8 Conclusion – Paradoxes of Universality

The existence of national and ethnic particularisms seems to be universal. In his discussion of racism and nationalism, Etienne Balibar (1991: 54) observes that “the theories and strategies of nationalism are always caught up in the contradiction between universality and particularism”. At

the simplest level, states assert their right to independence on the grounds that they are merely asserting the same right that is claimed by every other state, and, simultaneously, that there is something special about them that gives them the right to be a state when this right is denied to other social, cultural, or ethnic groups, a position redolent of racism.

Yet racism would seem to create inequalities of human rights that undermine human security. The contradiction between universality and particularism is not only a problem for nationalism; it is also a problem for human rights and human security. It is ethnocentric to reject the notion that human rights are culturally determined and therefore apply differently in different cultures. Yet it is racist to condemn a group of people to a lower standard of human rights than we would accept for ourselves, merely because they belong to a different ethnic, cultural, religious, or national group. These contradictions seem irresolvable. However the tensions are not all negative. They provide opportunities for a continued dialectic, through which Universalists and Particularists can be constantly challenged to evaluate and possibly change their positions, and continually create better instruments of human rights and human security. Ultimately, the existence of conflicting perspectives in the study of human security is actually a positive dynamic that has the potential to enhance human security in different cultures and societies.

Resources and References

Student Review

Key Points

- Many conflicting perspectives in the study of human security are derived from a dichotomy of 'the West' and 'the rest', which is expressed in many ways: Western and Eastern cultures; the developed world and the developing world; the North and the South; modern and traditional values; secularisation and religiosity; egalitarian and hierarchical polities.
- The emergence of globalisation provides the context within which *diverse* perspectives become *conflicting* perspectives.
- Whether or not human rights should be universal or culturally located is a controversial issue with no easy answer. A related question concerns whether or not human rights should be norm-based or criterion-based.
- Conflicting perspectives on the relationship between human rights and human security can be classified as (i) human rights define human security, (ii) human security builds on human rights, and (iii) a fundamental tension between human rights and human security.
- The example of the Shan people shows that even the worst human rights violations they

experience in Thailand may not be enough to make them wish they were in Burma. However, human rights constitute a minimum acceptable standard, not a vague set of aspirations. They are necessary to human security. Human rights violations cannot be excused by culture, or national security needs, or democratic veto.

- The hierarchy in which Maslow's needs are presented is culturally relative. Different cultures variously regard their 'highest' need as (a) self-actualization; (b) a combination of security and assertiveness needs; (c) social relationship needs; and (d) a combination of security and relationship needs.
- There may be a distinctively Southern human security paradigm. Human security paradigms create a potential partnership between the global North and the global South.
- Some Muslim countries have argued that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) is incompatible with Islam. The Cairo Declaration on Human Rights in Islam (1990) seems to reflect a weaker commitment to religious freedom, gender equality, and freedom of speech than the UDHR, but this is not evidence of a lack of commitment to human rights within Islam. Muslim civil society has contributed extensively to discussions of human rights and human security.
- Freedom of religion is not confined to the private sphere. This would infringe on the human rights and human security of many people. However, religion outside of the private

sphere can also infringe on people's human rights and human security. Freedom of religion and freedom from religion, when they are practised in tandem, enhance human security. When either is practiced in isolation from the other, it threatens human security.

- It is ethnocentric to reject the notion that human rights are culturally determined and therefore apply differently in different cultures. Yet it is racist to condemn a group of people to a lower standard of human rights than we would accept for ourselves, merely because they belong to a different ethnic, cultural, religious, or national group. This contradiction may be irresolvable, but it provides an opportunity for Universalists and Particularists to create better instruments of human rights and human security.

Extension Activities & Further Research

1. Think about ways in which globalisation has influenced the local area in which you live. How has this influenced the identities of the people in the area? How has it influenced your own sense of identity?
2. Of the three conflicting perspectives on the relationship between human rights and human security (human rights define human security,

human security builds on human rights, and there is a fundamental tension between human rights and human security), which one makes most sense to you? Why?

3. Find out more about the Shan people of Burma and northern Thailand. Why do you think their situation is so widely unknown?
4. The example of the Cairo Declaration shows that cultural distinctiveness can be used to dilute human rights, but can also provide the inspiration to extend human rights. Drawing on cultures that you are familiar with, or that you have researched, propose one or more potential human rights that are not listed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
5. Find ways in which religious freedoms are sometimes restricted, both in your own country and elsewhere. Think of ways in which these situations could be improved.

List of Terms

See Glossary for full list of terms and definitions.

- Asian values
- civil society
- criterion-based human rights
- ethnocentric
- freedom of religion
- globalisation

- hierarchy of needs
- humanitarian intervention
- norm-based human rights
- Orientalism

Suggested Reading

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