Resilience and human security: The post-interventionist paradigm

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Abstract

In current discussions, many commentators express a fear that ‘broad’ human security approaches are being sidelined by the rise of the ‘responsibility to protect’ (R2P) and the ‘narrow’ focus on military intervention. An alternative reading is sketched out here, which suggests that debates over ‘narrow’ or ‘broad’ human security frameworks have undertheorized the discursive paradigm at the heart of human security. This paradigm is drawn out in terms of the juxtaposition of preventive human security practices of resilience, working upon the empowerment of the vulnerable, and the interventionist security practices of liberal internationalism, working upon the protection of victims. It is suggested that human security can be conceptually analysed in terms of post-intervention, as a shift away from liberal internationalist claims of Western securing or sovereign agency and towards a concern with facilitating or developing the self-securing agency – resilience – of those held to be the most vulnerable. This approach takes us beyond the focus on the technical means of intervention – whether coercive force is deployed or not – and allows us to see how international intervention, including under the R2P, increasingly operates under the paradigm of resilience and human security, thereby evading many of the problems confronted by liberal framings of intervention.

Keywords
resilience, human security, post-intervention, responsibility to protect, empowerment

Introduction

International intervention into both conflict and post-conflict zones has been radically transformed since the high-profile debates and discussions of humanitarian intervention and human rights in the 1990s. In that decade, the dominant discursive framings were those of abusers and victims – with the insertion of international interveners in the role of external saviours and external judges, with the moral duty of bringing security and the sovereign rule of law to the benighted borderlands.1 In this framework, non-Western victims were to be protected or saved by humanitarian interveners who assumed the role of sovereign protection once the post-colonial or post-conflict state was judged to lack the capacities or the will to fulfil its sovereign duties of protecting the human rights
or human security of its citizens.\(^2\) Liberal internationalism was given vocal support by sections of the academic community who argued that security discourses needed to be constructed in the universal human rights-centred language of global or cosmopolitan law, rather than in the state-based, territorialized language of international relations, where it was held that governing elites could hide behind claims of sovereign impunity. Sovereignty had to give way to intervention in order for a new world of global rights and global security to be enforced (see, for example, Archibugi, 2000; Booth, 1991; Linklater, 1998; Robertson, 1999).

Allied to the discussions of humanitarian intervention and the protection of human rights, a third ‘human-centred’ framework entered international policy discourse in the mid-1990s: that of human security. Human security frameworks appeared to be posed in less clear terms – with an emphasis on prevention and international development, under the rubric of ‘freedom from want’, providing a much broader and more encompassing framework for securing the human (Watson, 2011). From this vantage point, the narrower, more reactive and more coercive frameworks of humanitarian intervention, under the rubric of ‘freedom from fear’, could be softened through an emphasis on the less militarized aspects of international engagement. In this approach, human security appeared to try to saddle two horses at once, creating confusion or ambiguity as to whether the concept should be broadly or narrowly construed (Martin and Owen, 2010: 213–4). Nevertheless, both ‘narrow’ (more conservative) and ‘broad’ (more radical) approaches were understood as presaging a transformation in international security approaches, challenging the traditional agendas of power and placing the needs of the individual, not states, at the centre of security discourses (Kaldor, 2007; Tadjbakhsh and Chenoy, 2007).

Human security was often seen as the least conceptually interesting of the three ‘human-centred’ framings, lacking the overt political and legal content of the juxtaposition of the rights of humanitarian intervention against the rights of non-intervention or of human rights against the sovereign rights of statehood. In fact, it was held that the ambiguity of the concept meant that, rather than the contested and potentially clarifying nature of the rights discourses, human security could mean ‘all things to all men’ (see Paris, 2004; also Buzan, 2004; Mack, 2004). This article seeks to argue that, in this way, the conceptual power of human security discourses and their capacity to reshape policy frameworks has often been underestimated (Chandler, 2008). One reason for this is the fact that academic and policy discourses of human security have tended to be highly reductionist. Often, debate and discussion has focused upon whether there is a synergy or a policy conflict between a focus on the ‘softer’ or ‘broader’ security concerns of economic and social well-being – ‘freedom from want’ – and the focus on the ‘harder’ or ‘narrower’ security concerns of military intervention to protect populations from human rights abuses – ‘freedom from fear’. This reductionist view has been encouraged by the human security concept’s advocates, who have argued that both ‘broad’ and ‘narrow’ conceptions can operate in synergy as part of a holistic approach to human security (Ogata, 2003; Alkire, 2004; Thomas, 2004). This framing has been reinforced by the critics who have articulated a crude binary division between a military/security focus held to reinforce dominant power relations and a development/basic-needs focus held to be a radical challenge to dominant power relations (Roberts, 2009; see also Chandler and Hynek, 2010).

A variant of this view of the division or potential conflict between the coercive ‘narrow’ view of human security and the progressive ‘broader’ perspective is the argument that human security itself is becoming marginalized with the growing dominance of security concerns under the rubric of the responsibility to protect (R2P), with its emphasis on the military and coercive powers of Western states rather than upon the economic and social needs of populations (see, for example,
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Orford, 2011). This perspective is clearly articulated in Mary Martin and Taylor Owen’s (2010: 211) influential article in International Affairs, which argues that the term human security ‘has all but vanished’ from high-level UN reports and that security discourses are now dominated by the R2P, with its emphasis on military intervention and the conditional nature of sovereignty. They argue that this shift has denuded the radical content of human security approaches to the point where it is no longer clear whether international interventions are in the interests of the broader economic, social and political security needs of others or about serving Western security interests through projecting power abroad to ensure stability (Martin and Owen, 2010: 222).

This understanding of the division is similarly articulated in the UN Secretary-General’s 2010 report to the General Assembly on ‘Human Security’, which clearly distances human security from the concerns of the use of force, now seen to be firmly the prerogative of the R2P:

The use of force is not envisaged in the application of the human security concept. The focus of human security is on fostering Government and local capacities and strengthening the resilience of both to emerging challenges in ways that are mutually reinforcing, preventive and comprehensive.

Meanwhile the responsibility to protect, as agreed upon by Member States in paragraphs 138 to 140 of the World Summit Outcome, focuses on protecting populations from specific cases of genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. (United Nations, 2010: paras 23–4, emphases added).

In this framing, human security is distinguished from the use of force (see also Kaldor, 2011) and defined as a separate set of broader non-coercive practices defined in terms of a preventive framework of strengthening resilience at the level of both the post-conflict state and society. I have added emphases to the above quote in order to highlight the discursive distinction at work here, formulating human security in terms of the consensual and preventative development of capacities for resilience vis-à-vis an R2P understanding of coercive post hoc intervention to protect victims of human rights abuses, and it is these conceptual frameworks that this article will focus upon. I wish to challenge this discursive construction, operating to demarcate and separate human security formulations from the potential use of force under the rubric of the responsibility to protect.

In this article, I wish to stake out several claims related to the underlying conceptual framing of the division established between non-coercive intervention under the ‘freedom from want’ and the use of force under the ‘freedom from fear’, currently articulated in terms of the division between human security approaches and the R2P. These are outlined below.

First, the article claims that once the conceptual distinctions at the heart of human security discourses are drawn out, it seems clear that, rather than being undermined by concerns with the R2P, human security framings are predominant in both academic and policy security discourses. In our age of theoretical deconstruction and attraction to theorizing from (rather than to) surface appearances (constructivist approaches being dominant in the discipline, even in the heartland of the USA), it goes against the grain to analyse paradigmatic shifts in conceptual frameworks rather than focus on the strategic or technical forms of external intervention. It is therefore important here to outline the clear conceptual connections between the key terms outlined in this article. This will be undertaken in the first section of the article and returned to in the closing section.

Second, I wish to claim that the reductionist division between these approaches has focused on the distinction between social and economic concerns and military concerns at the expense of a conceptual understanding of the nature and meaning of intervention itself. I suggest that a more useful distinction would be between the paradigm of resilience and that of liberal internationalism.


The resilience paradigm clearly puts the agency of those most in need of assistance at the centre, stressing a programme of empowerment and capacity-building, whereas the liberal internationalist paradigm puts the emphasis upon the agency of external interveners, acting post hoc to protect or secure the victims of state-led or state-condoned abuses. The discursive power of human security, I suggest, stems from its articulation of the resilience paradigm and its facilitation of a shift in dominant security discourses away from the liberal internationalist framework and towards a growing emphasis on preventive intervention. Intervention that focuses on the empowerment and responsibility of agency at the local societal level, rather than upon the assertion of the right of external sovereign agency, evades the 1990s problematic of intervention – contested in the formal international legal and political sphere of law and sovereign rights – and can be usefully conceptualized as post-interventionist.

As an example of the post-interventionist approach pioneered by human security, the article focuses on the doctrine of the ‘responsibility to protect’, which is often seen as a prime example of the shift from the broad to the narrow framing of security discourses. The article challenges the narrative according to which the R2P illustrates the shift away from a ‘broad’ human security focus towards a narrow emphasis on military coercion, suggesting that even in its initial establishment the R2P already reflected a shift from an intervention/protection discourse, where the West intervened on behalf of victims, towards the ‘broader’ human security, post-interventionist, agency-based approach of work to make the vulnerable resilient. It is suggested that the conceptual gap between ‘broad’ human security discourses and the discourse of the ‘narrow’ R2P has been exaggerated, and that any gap that existed in the initial formulation of the R2P has been incrementally bridged by the shift from a focus upon intervention to the post-interventionist framings of human security.

Third, I wish to suggest that, once the reductionist focus on the technical means of intervention is put aside, the distinction turns not so much on whether intervention takes place with or without coercive force, but rather on how the international practices operate and are understood to apportion both agency and responsibility. Protectionist discourses of liberal interventionism do not have to take a military form and can equally well involve the post hoc provision of supplies and materials or humanitarian aid. The point is not the means deployed but the differential understanding of agency, both of those intervening and of those intervened upon. Military intervention can be discursively framed as empowering and capacity-building, just as economic and social provision can be framed in terms of the protection of passive victims. These points will be drawn out later in the article with regard to the R2P and the bombing of Libya.

**Resilience**

This article conceptualizes human security in terms of the resilience paradigm of post-intervention (see Chandler, 2010a; Foucault, 2008; Joerges, 2010; Walker and Cooper, 2011). The conceptual framing of post-interventionism seeks to demarcate human security frameworks from those of humanitarian intervention on the basis of the reaction to abuses and the protection of victims; in a post-interventionist/resilience paradigm, the emphasis is on prevention rather than intervention, empowerment rather than protection, and work upon the vulnerable rather than upon victims. Taking a conceptual approach that views human security as a discourse of post-intervention and of the inculcation of resilience heuristically enables an analysis of human security that does not rely on the ‘word search’ approach favoured by authors who point to the rise or decline of human security merely in terms of the use of the term in official documents and reports. Through a focus
upon the emergence of post-interventionist framings of security, it will be suggested that the
decline or retreat of human security as a policy paradigm has been misunderstood and therefore
much exaggerated.

Resilience is defined here as the capacity to positively or successfully adapt to external prob-
lems or threats. The resilient subject (at both individual and collective levels) is never conceived
as passive or as lacking agency (as in the case of 1990s understandings of victims requiring saving
interventions), but is conceived only as an active agent, capable of achieving self-transformation.
Resilience is a normative or ideal concept, and a goal rather than a final state of being, and it
therefore can only be measured or calculated as a comparative or relative quality. Some individuals
or communities may be understood as being more resilient than others, but none can be under-
stood as being fully resilient. While we are aware that our fixed understandings, derived from the
past, are a barrier to resilience, we are also aware that our thought processes and cultural and
social values continue to bound or limit our openness to the need to adapt. We can only ever be
somewhere along the continuum of resilience, and therefore ultimately are all in need of enabling
to become more resilient.

Subjects believed to lack the capacities for resilience are held to be vulnerable. Vulnerable
subjects differ from traditional liberal subjects, which could be understood to need temporary and
post hoc saving interventions (to address extreme situations of violence or the denial of rights).
The ascription of vulnerability suggests that the subject lacks the capacities for resilience. In a
medical-practice context, Polit and Beck (2004) define vulnerability in terms of ‘being incapable
of giving informed consent’ or ‘at the high risk of unintended side-effects’. This draws out the
distinction between vulnerability as an internal attribute, related to the capacity to make reasoned
choices, and vulnerability as a product of objective circumstances or susceptibilities (see Kottow,
2002). In this sense, vulnerabilities constitute our ‘unfreedoms’ or the restrictions, both material
and ideological, that prevent us from being resilient. The interpellation as vulnerable can be
applied to individuals – the ‘at risk’, ‘socially excluded’ or ‘marginal’ – as well as to communities –
the ‘poor’, ‘indigenous’ or ‘environmentally threatened’ – as much as to states themselves – the

In articulating human security in terms of resilience and post-intervention, this article devel-
ops some of the themes in recent work highlighting the links between discourses of resilience and
the shift from a state-based to a society-based understanding of security practices (Coaffee et al.,
2009; Edwards, 2009; Lentzos and Rose, 2009; Briggs, 2010; O’Malley, 2010; Bulley, 2011;
Brassett and Vaughan Williams, 2011; UK Cabinet Office, 2011). It seeks, in particular, to empha-
size the shift to the agency of the objects of the interventionist discourse rather than that of the
ostensible interveners. As Fillipa Lentzos and Nikolas Rose (2009: 243), for example, highlight:
‘A logic of resilience ... is not merely an attitude of preparedness; to be resilient is not quite to be
under protection nor merely to have systems in place to deal with contingencies.’ Discourses of
resilience do not centrally focus upon protection as provided by external actors, nor the material
attributes (military equipment, technology, welfare provisions, etc.) that can be provided through
government as a way of protecting populations or responding after an event. Resilience concerns
the inculcation of the agency of the other. For this reason, discourses of resilience do not fit well
with the liberal internationalist framings of security practices in the 1990s as reactive post hoc
interventions.

The following section of this article heuristically stakes out how human-centred approaches to
international security have shifted from the ‘protection’ paradigm of frameworks of humanitarian
intervention in the 1990s to the ‘resilience’ or post-interventionist paradigm of human security in
the 2000s. It does this through focusing on the transformation of the R2P and its subordination to the logic of human security. The article’s final section will then expand upon human security as an articulation of the post-interventionist paradigm cohered around the practices of inculcating resilience. This section will draw out the key thematics of the human security discourse: the emphasis on prevention rather than intervention; work on the vulnerable rather than victims; and the privileging of empowerment rather than protection.

**Shifting paradigms of security**

This section focuses on the R2P and, in the heuristic terms of paradigm shifts, draws out two stages: first, the shift towards a global or liberal internationalist discursive framework of intervention posed in terms of the weighing of the competing concerns of human rights and sovereignty – reflected in debates on the ‘right of intervention’ and the alleged emergence of a ‘global community’ capable of authorizing such intervention – which was dominant in the 1990s; followed by a retreat from the consequences of this liberal internationalist imaginary, to what I describe as the post-interventionist paradigm, which cohered in the 2000s and moved beyond the liberal problematic, reformulating the political subject in relation to security in terms of resilience (the need to intervene to construct securing capacity) rather than autonomy (the capacity to secure oneself). In the human security approach, the inculcation of resilience is the work of external engagement conceived in post-interventionist terms, as prevention rather than as post hoc or after-the-fact intervention. The shift from intervention to prevention is crucial because, framed in post-interventionist terms, intervention and sovereignty are no longer binary opposites: there is no longer an inside and an outside or a clash of rights. Human security approaches reflect a shift in human-centred approaches away from an interventionist approach held to challenge states and to undermine sovereignty. In this framework, intervention is reconceived as essential to the construction of securing agency or securing subjects: as an act of empowerment rather than an act of external power.

**Interventionism of the 1990s**

In the 1990s, with the collapse of the Cold War divide, many theorists and political leaders suggested that the end of the international relations problematic of anarchy and ‘war of all against all’ could be reached with the domestication of the global. States began to articulate ‘ethical’ foreign policies, eschewing the idea of national interests and articulating the values of ‘global citizenship’. In this context, the boundaries of sovereignty appeared to decline in importance and Western governments began to conceive of domestic and foreign policies in similar terms, regardless of representation or accountability (see, for example, Cooper, 2003). Security discursively shifted from a concern of states with the protection and promotion of their national interests to the interventionist discourse of human rights protection, construed as a reflection of the immanent or emerging ‘global community’. The liberal framing of the international sphere imagined the domestication of conflict under the regulatory gaze of the putative global sovereigns, acting with or without the consent of the UN Security Council, as representatives of an immanent, global or cosmopolitan legal framework (see, for example, Held, 1995; Archibugi, 2003; Kaldor, 2003; Habermas, 1999). The power to act – to intervene – of major Western powers began to be equated with a moral legitimacy to act in accordance with higher laws, articulated by advocates of the NATO war over Kosovo in terms of ‘natural law’, ‘cosmopolitan law’ or ‘global ethics’ (see *American Journal of International Law*, 1999; Krish, 2002).
However, the assertive and optimistic mood of the 1990s began to dissipate as the putative claims to global sovereignty resulted in a counter-discourse of Western responsibility. If the West was now responsible, why was it that troops were not dispatched to prevent genocide in Rwanda? Why did Western states prevaricate and delay when intervention was needed to prevent genocide in Bosnia? Why was it that global responsibility seemed to stop when it came to addressing the structural inequalities of poverty and insecurity that blighted whole swathes of the post-colonial world, especially sub-Saharan Africa? The political leaders of Western states and international institutions realized that the discourse of global ethics and Western responsibility had its limits: that the consequences of dismissing the importance of international law and sovereign statehood undermined, rather than enforced, their moral claims to global leadership. It was in the context of the rolling back of liberal interventionist claims of Western responsibility, and of the overt claims of Western powers to the mantle of global sovereignty, that the R2P concept emerged. Perhaps counter-intuitively, the R2P can be seen as a response designed to constrain or to limit claims upon the West: as a retreat from Western responsibility. With the R2P, the focus of agency began to shift away from the responsibility of ‘great powers’ to secure others to the resilience of those lacking the power to secure themselves.

From intervention to post-intervention

The conceptual roots of the R2P lie in Francis Deng’s assertion of ‘sovereignty as responsibility’ in response to superpower post-Cold War withdrawal from Africa and the need to constitute local and regional forms of conflict management as a substitute for the USA taking responsibility (see Deng et al., 1996). This conceptual framing was drawn upon when the R2P was formally conceived in 2000, in the wake of the Kosovo campaign, where Western states, under the banner of the NATO alliance, launched a humanitarian intervention without the consent of the UN Security Council. The International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS), which produced the Responsibility to Protect report in 2001, sought to deflect attention from Western responsibility and Western rights of intervention, arguing that responsibility for the protection of basic rights and security was shared but was primarily the responsibility of the domestic state concerned. Starting from the functional responsibility to protect the individual, the ICISS report steered away from the liberal discourse of intervention and protection, which pitted the universal ‘human’ rights of individuals against the particularist, conditional, sovereign rights of states.

Kofi Annan explicitly drew out the inner logic of the R2P as a reflection of the shift from the paradigm of external agency – of protection and intervention – in his preparations for the 2005 UN World Summit. Rather than being a secondary concern, prevention became the primary focus as the locus of securing agency shifted from Western actors to the fragile or failing states in need of capacity- or capability-building (Evans, 2008; Bellamy, 2009; Chandler, 2009). This reformulation as a bottom-up, more ‘empowering’ approach to human security was constructed on the basis of an agency-centred understanding of conflict and underdevelopment in the non-Western world (see, for example, North, 1990; World Bank, 1997, 2000; Ghani and Lockhart, 2008). The UN Secretary-General’s follow-up report to the World Summit illustrated this approach well in asking ‘why one society plunges into mass violence while its neighbours remain relatively stable’ (United Nations, 2009: para. 15). The answer it provided was the agent-centred one, focusing on individuals as decisionmakers and upon their immediate choice-making influences, rather than upon economic and social relations. From this starting position, the problematic becomes one of how to empower or capacity-build agents (on an individual and societal basis) to enable them to overcome their vulnerabilities and be able to act or choose differently, and therefore become more resilient:
Genocide and other crimes relating to the responsibility to protect do not just happen. They are, more often than not, the result of a deliberate and calculated political choice, and of the decisions and actions of political leaders who are all too ready to take advantage of existing social divisions and institutional failures. (United Nations, 2009: para. 21)

The understanding of mass atrocities as a product of individual choices and immediate institutional shortcomings then sets up the agenda for international preventive engagement to assist in institutional capacity-building that would inculcate resilience and make states ‘less likely to travel the path to crimes relating to the responsibility to protect’:

Experience and common sense suggest that many of the elements of what is commonly accepted as good governance – the rule of law, a competent and independent judiciary, human rights, security sector reform, a robust civil society, an independent press and a political culture that favours tolerance, dialogue and mobility over the rigidities of identity politics – tend to serve objectives relating to the responsibility to protect as well. (United Nations, 2009: para. 44)

Here, there was no liberal internationalist discourse of protecting the victims. There was no ‘quick fix’ of intervention and exit-strategies, but a much more long-term programme of prevention. This ‘broader’ and more empowering focus on prevention reflected disillusionment with the 1990s promise of Western solutions and reflected a set of much lower expectations. These lower expectations were expressed through the stress upon the lack of universality and the appreciation of differences between institutions and cultures, which constituted a barrier to any Western capacity to protect or to assume securing responsibilities (see Chandler, 2012). The best that the international community could do was merely to indirectly work to facilitate good-governance mechanisms and capacity-build individuals and state institutions, which were seen to be the ultimate solution. This framing, focusing on causes rather than consequences, reflected a broader shift in the understanding of the World Bank and other international development agencies that economic and social problems in post-conflict and post-colonial states could not be addressed merely by the provision of Western aid and resources (World Bank, 1997, 2000). The causes of insecurity were not seen to be poverty per se but rather the institutional frameworks through which broader security concerns were managed (see Sen, 1999; Commission for Africa, 2005). Agent-centred approaches, including human security ones, are based on the rejection of direct attempts to address problems through the provision of external social, economic and military resources of the sort associated with post hoc or responsive protection. It was held that the provision of resources would be inadequate as a response and could make problems worse if the underlying causes of conflict or insecurity, held to lie in the institutional frameworks, were not addressed.

Dealing with the problem of weak or failing states in the post-interventionist paradigm of human security does not rely on a liberal discourse of intervention – of the post hoc Western provision of solutions – whether in terms of eco-social provision or the provision of military force. There is a paradigmatic difference between intervention posed in terms of post hoc protection, with the assertion of external sovereign right, and the human security provision of preventive deployments of force, which do not openly challenge the rights of sovereignty or assume external responsibility for the outcomes of such an intervention. This shift was aptly demonstrated by the bombing of Libya and overthrow of Colonel Muammar Gaddafi’s regime in 2011, heralded by many international relations commentators as marking a return to the 1990s era of humanitarian intervention (Sewer, 2011; Robertson, 2011; Evans, 2011). However, the dropping of bombs over Libya clearly lacked
the ethical, political and legal framework of meaning of the 1990s. The Libya campaign did not present the ‘humanitarian’ bombing as an undermining or rolling back of state sovereignty. There was no claim of external sovereign rights or that the international interveners assumed sovereign responsibility to protect the Libyan people. The no-fly zone and its extended enforcement was posed as facilitating the agency of the Libyan people, enabling and facilitating them in the process of securing themselves. The campaign lasted substantially longer than the NATO war over Kosovo but lacked any of the meaning or clarity of objectives that would have been necessary had any direct assumption of responsibility been claimed. This ambiguity of intentions and of strategic outcomes reflected the different paradigm of understanding at play in a ‘war’ fought without the claims of securing agency and sovereign responsibility.

Post-interventionist or preventive approaches can still deploy military means, as the bombing of Libya demonstrated. However, the conceptual framework is distinct from that of liberal internationalism, and this distinctness is vital to understanding the paradigmatic shift at work here. The form or the appearance may look much the same in both paradigms of understanding – humanitarian bombs and regime change – but the conceptual content is different. Libya illustrates how the post-interventionist discourse operates in a different and distinct register, dissolving the clarity of liberal security frameworks in the language of capacity-building and good governance. Post-intervention cannot be grasped in the legal and political terms of the 1990s, where intervention was conceived of in terms of a clash of legal and political rights and clashing sovereign claims of securing agency. It was precisely this paradigmatic shift that enabled Libya to be the success that other humanitarian interventions failed to achieve. This, it is essential to note, is regardless of the final outcome. Without Western responsibility for the outcome of the intervention in Libya and without any transformative promise, Western powers were strengthened morally and politically through their actions, whereas in Bosnia, Kosovo, Afghanistan and Iraq, they were humbled and often humiliated. Libya was an intervention freed from liberal internationalist baggage, where the West could gain vicarious credit and distance itself from any consequences. Even Bosnia’s former colonial governor, Lord Ashdown (2011), argued that we should learn our lessons and not be tempted to impose our version of liberal peace. As British MP Rory Stewart astutely noted, if Libya was a success, it was because ‘it was hardly an intervention at all’ (Stewart, 2011; see also Chandler, 2011).

Resilience: The post-interventionist paradigm

The post-interventionist order is conceptually very different from that of the 1990s debates, which pitched human-centred against state-centred approaches. The post-interventionist world order no longer juxtaposes external intervention to sovereignty as if this were a zero-sum game, or articulates intervention in the language of a clash of rights or as a problem that needs a legal solution. The human security practices operating under the paradigm of resilience cannot be grasped in terms of the clash of liberal rights, in the formal spheres of law or politics. Using an entirely different register, resilience operates conceptually by reinterpreting external intervention as productive of capable and securing subjects. Inverting liberal assumptions of the foundational subject, human security does away with the liberal binary of intervention/non-intervention.

In this paradigm, the external management of, or intervention in, post-conflict or post-colonial state policymaking is understood as a process of empowerment, of capacity- and capability-building. This shift is reflected well in discussions of intervention as bridging the ‘sovereignty gap’ (Ghani.
et al., 2005) and in Stephen Krasner’s view of ‘domestic sovereignty’ being built up (or co-produced) by external actors on the basis of their giving up sovereign rights to self-government, their so-called Westphalian/Vattelian sovereignty (Krasner, 2004: 87–8; see also Chandler, 2010a). Despite the increased regulatory engagement, the discourse is one of prevention and the building of sovereignty, not of intervention and the denial of sovereignty. As illustrated in the example of Libya, where coercive intervention was discursively framed in terms of the R2P, our understanding of the international sphere – and intervention within this sphere – has shifted from the 1990s, bringing discourses of ‘freedom from fear’ very much into line with the discourses of ‘freedom from want’ articulated in the more ‘radical’ or empowering discourses of human security, often held to be critical and emancipatory.

What this illustrates is that it is the discursive framing of the ‘broader’ human security discourse, with its emphasis upon prevention, resilience and empowerment, that facilitates dominant discourses of international regulation and intervention today, up to and including coercive military actions, rather than liberal internationalist claims of interventionist rights to undermine sovereignty in the cause of global human rights victims. Human security’s articulation as an alternative or more progressive framework of security depends for its radical status upon the critique of liberal discourses of intervention posed in terms of sovereignty and rights. With the shift away from the liberal discourse of intervention, privileged in the 1990s, human security’s claims to offer an alternative to mainstream approaches – through emphasizing prevention, empowerment, and the agency of the post-conflict and post-colonial subject – lose their basis. In fact, one reason why the words ‘human security’ may have dropped from mainstream discourse is that this conceptual framing of the questions and issues at stake has already been accepted.

From its inception in the United Nations Development Programme’s Human Development Report 1994: New Dimensions of Human Security, the conceptual framework of human security has always sat uneasily with the focus on sovereignty and intervention at the centre of discussions of the legal and political standing of human rights or humanitarian reasons for intervention. This can be seen quite clearly through a consideration of the four ‘essential characteristics’ of human security flagged up as part of the radical rethinking of traditional state-based security frameworks: the first two are the fact that human security approaches are conceived as ‘universal’ and ‘interdependent’, the second two are that human security approaches focus on ‘prevention’ rather than intervention and that they are ‘people-centred’ (UNDP, 1994: 22–33). There is no discussion about the problematic of sovereignty. In fact, from the outset, human security discourses focused on people as agents, rather than as victims in need of protection, and upon intervention as a way of giving people more control over their own lives and decisions and enhancing their autonomy:

Ensuring human security does not mean taking away from people the responsibility and opportunity for mastering their lives. To the contrary, when people are insecure, they become a burden on society.

The concept of human security stresses that people should be able to take care of themselves: all people should have the opportunity to meet their most essential needs and to earn their own living. This will set them free and help ensure that they can make a full contribution to development – their own development and that of their communities, their countries and the world. Human security is a critical ingredient of participatory development (UNDP, 1994: 24).
Despite the criticisms and debates generated by academic commentators regarding the ambiguities of the concept of human security, its lack of operability, or its potential as a guide to policymaking, it could be argued that there is a great deal of conceptual clarity involved, which enables us to demarcate human security quite clearly in terms of the security discourses of resilience. First, the discourse of resilience always operates preventively, never reactively or in the post hoc manner of liberal international intervention. Second, the subject of human security practices is always the vulnerable subject in need of enabling agency to become resilient, never the passive victim in need of external securing agency for protection. Third, the inculcation of resilience is a necessity, never an option, because the starting assumption is the lack of capacity of the subject to secure itself in the future unless its securing agency is empowered.

The framework of human security is presented as a radical democratization of security, where the most important threats to human security are those that threaten the security of the most vulnerable, who therefore need the most external intervention in order to enhance their capacities for security. This framework is that of intervention to protect through empowerment rather than through external sovereign intervention. The discourse of human security inverts a traditional liberal understanding of sovereign securing power. The emphasis is no longer upon the intervening external sovereign or international actor as a securing agent: the discourse of human security, empowerment and resilience insists that the emphasis must be on a ‘bottom-up’ understanding of security. Securing agency is ‘de-liberalized’ in this discourse. This is a far cry from the social-contract framing of liberal modernity with the collective constitution of securing agency in the modern state’s monopoly over the use of force, tasking the sovereign with the post hoc duty of intervention to correct any problematic outcomes of the free interplay of market forces or of democratic contestation. Human security as a discourse of resilience works in reverse. Rather than securing power being transferred upwards from individuals in society to the
An actor-oriented, agency-based resilience framework ... reframes resilience from a systems-oriented to a people-centred perspective. It starts by considering social actors and their agency, arenas and respective agendas in the transformation of livelihoods in a resilient way. The framework proposes a normative context of entitlements, capabilities, freedoms and choices or, even more broadly, of justice, fairness and equity. An agency-based framework measures resilience in terms of how peoples’ livelihood vulnerability can be reduced or, to put it more broadly, in terms of their human security. Mechanisms for resilience-building, from this perspective, are first and foremost about empowering the most vulnerable to pursue livelihood options that strengthen what they themselves consider to be their social sources of resilience. (Bohle et al., 2009: 12, emphases added)

In this dispersal of securing power, the task of the state (or external interveners) is to focus on empowering those held to be least able to secure themselves – least capable of securing themselves and adapting to potential security threats. Under the rubric of human security, no conceptual distinction is made between the empowering practices of the domestic state and those of international interveners, as both are constructed as pursuing the same tasks of dispersing the power or agency to secure, rather than as acting as securing actors per se.

In this framing, the understanding of failed and failing states as a security threat is precisely that they are vulnerable subjects in need of external policy interventions to build resilience capabilities. The existing regimes of liberal rules of law and democracy are often held to be problematic in the post-colonial world, precisely because of the lack of capacities at both individual and societal levels. For this reason, the problematic of the inculcation of resilience has been at the centre of academic security discourses. From Nobel prize-winning development theorists such as Amartya Sen and Douglass North to leading security theorists such as Paul Collier, the problem of security has been seen to be that of the difficulty of facilitating better choice-making capabilities through intervention capable of empowering both individuals and societies (Sen, 1999; North, 1990, 2005; Collier and Hoeffler, 2004; Collier et al., 2006; see also Chandler, 2010b).

Empowerment is therefore at the centre of the problematic of resilience. In the post-interventionist framework, the West no longer has the responsibility to secure, to democratize or to develop the non-Western world. This is always the lesson learned from experiences of 1990s-style interventions and their corollary of the formalized external processes of international statebuilding, where responsibility is directly assumed by international actors. It is for these reasons that human security can easily mesh with the concerns of ‘post-liberal’ approaches to peacebuilding, where the emphasis is squarely placed upon ‘the capacity of people to decide their own future’ (Martin and Owen, 2010: 223; see also Chandler, 2010a; Richmond, 2011). The regulatory mechanisms of empowerment, prevention and capacity-building are premised upon the understanding that there can be no clash of rights between sovereignty and intervention: no inside and no outside. Responsibility once again stops at the boundaries of the sovereign state, but this is a state understood as incapable of managing its autonomy without the help of external facilitators.

**Conclusion**

Human security framings, which seek to place the agency of the non-Western subject at the centre of security practices, have become dominant in security discourses, and have even captured or reinterpreted discourses that were originally articulated in terms of the assertion of Western agency and
responsibility. This does not mean that there is necessarily any less emphasis on military intervention. It does mean, however, that even when military intervention takes place, it is discursively framed as an act of facilitating, empowering or capacity-building the vulnerable subjects on the ground. The bombing of Libya stands as a prime example of the shifting content or meaning of discourses of humanitarian intervention and the responsibility to protect. These concepts, at their inception, operated within liberal internationalist discourses, which posed intervention as the assumption of Western securing agency through the undermining of sovereignty. Today, it is clear that they have been reinserted in a post-interventionist discourse – in, for example, a human security framing of enabling or empowering the Libyan state and people as agents of their own security.

Since the 1990s, the trend has been one of a shift from Western responsibility for securing the other to enabling the other to secure itself. This shift cannot be readily understood through the academic and policy analysis that understands the R2P as undermining the radical potential of human security. Rather, it seems clear that the radical framings of human security have facilitated interventionist practices, up to and including coercive military engagement. Calls for the empowerment of the vulnerable through discourses of inculcating resilience have enabled a rearticulation of the dominant agendas and framings of Western intervention. The crisis of liberal interventionism, clear in the undermining of the authority and standing of the UN at the end of the 1990s and fears over the future of international law, seems to have been resolved through the reinsertion of Western policy concerns within the human security paradigm of resilience and post-intervention. Once this paradigm is clearly drawn out in conceptual terms, it may be possible to understand human security frameworks not as marginal and definitely not as distinct from or as alternatives to the coercive use of military force, but in fact as dominating the international agenda and rescuing the credibility of military campaigns through evading and ameliorating the problems of legal accountability, moral legitimacy and political responsibility.

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Notes

1. From the ‘New World Order’ of George Bush’s (1990) Gulf War speech to Congress to Tony Blair’s (1999) ‘Chicago Speech’ outlining the ‘Doctrine of the International Community’ in April 1999, the 1990s were marked by the concerns of liberal internationalism with the problematic of sovereignty and intervention.
2. The assertion of external sovereign power reached its highpoint in the mid-to-late 1990s with the establishment of protectorates and semi-protectorates in the Balkans and East Timor.
3. See the comprehensive survey of US international relations faculty members in Long et al. (2012).
4. The distinction between the paradigm of resilience articulated here as central to understandings of human security and 1990s liberal internationalist discourses of intervention has parallels with that established by Foucault in terms of neoliberal or biopolitical framings, which he understood as ‘inverting’ and ‘transforming’ traditional liberal doctrines (Foucault, 2008: 118) and is further explored in relation to the practices of post-liberal governance in Chandler (2010a).
5. The focus upon the conceptual frameworks of understanding, rather than the concrete forms or means of intervention, derives from Foucault’s methodological alertness to shifting rationalities of intervention (articulated most clearly in Foucault, 2008).
6. As leading medical professionals dealing with resilience and child mental health Ann Masten and Jenifer Powell (2003: 4) state: ‘Resilience refers to patterns of positive adaptation in the context of significant risk or adversity.... Technically, to call a person resilient would be improper in diagnostic terminology
because resilience is a description of a general pattern.... It might be more appropriate to say that “This person has a resilience pattern” or “This person shows the features of resilience”. It is also important to keep in mind that identifying resilience from explicit or implicit diagnostic criteria is not assumed to describe people in totality or to define their lives at all times.’

7. As Miller and Rose (2008: 215) astutely note, this ‘ethical a priori of active citizens in an active society is perhaps the most fundamental, and most generalizable, characteristic of these new rationalities of government’ (see also Dean, 2010: 196–7).

8. Agency-centred approaches, as articulated by Amartya Sen, whose work has been central to the conceptualization of both human security and human development, start from the perspective of the individual, not from social relations or social structures. This focus then enables individuals to be conceived as ‘active agents of change, rather than as passive recipients of dispensed benefits’ (Sen, 1999: xiii). Agent-centred approaches emphasize the social construction of the world and the possibilities of agential change, challenging views of fixed external structures, which confront and limit the agency of individuals (see also Wendt, 1992).

9. As Foucault states, this is not a matter of areas or spheres of intervention being altered – the 1990s debates over sovereignty and intervention have been resolved to that extent – but of how to intervene: ‘the problem is not whether there are things that you cannot touch and others that you are entitled to touch. The problem is how you touch them. The problem is the way of doing things, the problem, if you like, of governmental style’ (Foucault, 2008: 133).

10. See, for example, Foucault’s (2008: 65) discussion of the liberal problematic of intervention, or ‘liberal economy of power’.

References


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