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What Might Human Security Thinking Contribute Towards Arab Region Social Development and Positive Peace?

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Abstract

This paper explores claims that the human security approach can contribute to social development analysis, with special reference to the Arab region and understandings of and responses to conflict. It considers ideas in a series of United Nations documents, including the 1994 global Human Development Report (HDR) that articulated a human security perspective, through the 2009 Arab HDR that applied and extended the perspective, to the 2022 UNDP Special Report on Human Security and the 2022 global HDR 'Uncertain Times, Unsettled Lives'. It asks whether elements of human security thinking add something distinctive to other current international development policy languages, including the SDGs, human development, risk, vulnerability and resilience, citizenship, and social contract. To do this it undertakes an inventory of human security thinking, under four headings: a) human security as concept and objective; b) elements of an analytical framework for understanding (non-)fulfilment of that objective; c) elements of a policy orientation for pursuing the objective; d) particular research and planning tools. It reviews a series of UN-system documents, including also the Arab HDR 2022, and associated literature. The study suggests that human security thinking adds to agendas of social development and peace an umbrella framework for connecting and motivating narrower streams of work, such as on risk, resilience, and social contracts; and also the following: modification of the prioritising language of 'security' by a focus on basic needs; a stronger integrating cross-sector focus; greater attention to perceptions and feelings concerning security and insecurity, dignity and indignity, and to the conflict potential of felt indignity; and greater attention to human solidarity, intra-nationally and globally, with emphases on common (shared) security and shared human identity. It proposes that human security thinking can strengthen the diagnostic and motivational content of social development analysis and orient it better towards promoting positive peace.

Keywords – human security; positive peace; social policy; subjective insecurity; solidarity

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1. Introduction

In 2021 UNESCWA, the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, published a report on The Attainment of SDGs in Conflict-affected Countries in the Arab Region. The report proposes that "The human security approach enables a more robust assessment … by integrating safety from the threats of hunger, poverty, disease, and environmental degradation into the analysis ... to deepen the understanding of the full array of insecurities that can both propel conflict and undercut prospects for sustainable development" (UNESCWA, 2021: 27). Much earlier, the 2009 Arab Human Development Report which made human security language prominent in the region had declared: "in the long run, the government that pursues state security without investing in human security is the government that achieves neither" (UNDP, 2009: vi). Something similar has been argued at regional and global scales. This paper explores the emergence and character of these sorts of claim and of the human security approach, with special reference, but not limited, to the Arab region.

The predominant understanding of 'security' in the past century has been associated with a concern for 'negative peace', the absence and avoidance of armed conflict (Shields, 2017). In contrast, in the past generation human security thinking, both in policy discourses and academic research, has tried to reorient and integrate earlier security thinking of multiple types, to focus on the security of persons by studying (all major) threats to (all) basic human needs and giving attention to fears, perceptions and perception biases (e.g., CHS, 2003; Tripp et al., 2013). It looks at the intersectional situation and priority vulnerabilities of particular groups and types of people. This discourse of 'human security' has supported conceptual and practical reorientation towards a person-centred approach and 'positive peace' (see e.g., Beebe and Kaldor, 2011; GPPAC, 2013; Roff, 2016). It can help to strengthen the diagnostic and motivational content of social development analysis, orienting it towards promoting positive peace, a stable and just peace.

Jawad argues similarly that social protection analysis needs to consider how "its operationalisation in policy terms appears to be narrower than its professed goals" (Jawad, 2019: 1), and that social policy should consider the political mobilisation that establishes principles for entitlement and social regulation. Such mobilisation needs to be informed and stimulated by an intellectual and ethical vision and a unifying language. Here human security thinking is one candidate.

The present paper analyses work on human security in United Nations milieux, through to two recent global reports from UNDP (2022a, 2022b). The field of human security thinking spans a range of domains and of versions within each. We will speak of four domains: 1) human security as a normative concept and goal, 2) an analytical framework to serve that objective, 3) a corresponding policy orientation linking peace, development and human rights, the pillars of the United Nations, and 4) research and planning tools and approaches to support operationalisation. The analytical framework and policy orientation both consider the interconnections between the trio of peace, development, and human rights. These three have often been broadly referred to also under the labels 'freedom from fear', 'freedom from want', and 'freedom to live with dignity'; and the trio and their interconnection can be seen as the UN's "foundational ideas" since the 1940s and as the "human security frame" (UNDP, 2022a: 25). The label 'human security' arrived later, in the 1980s-1990s. The frame complements the perspective and agenda of 'positive peace', by reconceptualising security, just as the idea of 'positive peace' had reconceptualised peace (Roff, 2016). Human security contributes towards positive peace.

A series of huge challenges and eras of transition lie between broad policy philosophies of human security and positive peace, and on the other hand the socio-political-economic realities of the present-day Arab region. We can consider though use of various insights and possible phases of

advance. In a perhaps somewhat comparable case, after decades of internal conflict the Colombian government declared in 2022 a policy philosophy of 'Total Peace' and 'Seguridad Humana'.

The 2009 AHDR was aware of rocky, fractured societal terrains: "In most Arab countries, the public has become restive in the grip of authority fashioned in a bygone age…. At the same time, public confidence in the nascent institutions of civil society has not yet solidified into complete trust. Rather, the tendency of many Arabs is to place their trust in institutions rooted in primordial loyalties, notably kinship, clanism, and religion" (UNDP, 2009: 225). Further, "Distressingly, Arab regional organisations have been remarkably weak, showing themselves to be incapable of playing a decisive role in crisis management and conflict resolution." (ibid.: 206). Nevertheless, policy research organisations for the region have done valuable work and we can draw from this.

Section 2 presents an outline of UN human security thinking as introduced in the 1994 global Human Development Report (HDR) and how it was applied and extended in the Arab HDR 2009, and some subsequent related work on and in the Arab region, especially the Arab HDR 2022. It then considers the two major 2022 UNDP global reports on human insecurity (2022a, 2022b). These reports remain at a very generalised level but represent significant advances in intellectual and moral imagination compared to many of the reports of the previous decade, and a return to the level of ambition expressed in the 1994 global HDR and 2009 Arab HDR.

Section 3 maps the four domains in human security thinking, leading to section 4 on what such thinking can contribute to agendas of social development and peace. In brief such thinking offers, from a starting point of an integrated view of persons in society who have (structural) vulnerabilities, capacities and potentials, an umbrella framework for connecting and motivating more specific and narrower streams of work, such as on risk, resilience, and social contracts, and for promoting greater attention to the 'human' as fundamentally involving perceptions, feelings and subjectivities and to human solidarity, including on a global scale. Over time, the person-centred human security approach, centred on persons as objectives and in analysis, has contained increasing emphasis on perceived security and felt insecurities. It has extended beyond a focus only on externally determined requirements and vulnerabilities, as may predominate in leading frameworks used currently in relevant UN work – notably, the frameworks of: Risk and Vulnerability; Resilience; the SDGs (Bouché, 2021). The dimensions of feelings and perceptions, present already in the 2009 AHDR, have become more emphatic in the recent UNDP reports on human (in)security and can fundamentally enrich our understanding. Section 5 concludes.

While 'human security' emerged and continues to function as a United Nations language, that inter-states context of use implies also constraints that have led to it being sometimes sidelined, including in UN work on the Arab Region. However, the language continues in use and to grow in many organisations and milieux, suggesting that it plays valuable roles. Sections 3 and especially 4 explore what these are.

2. The emergence and evolution of human security thinking

2.1. Entry of human security thinking: the 1994 global HDR and its influence

The UNDP Human Development Report Office was launched in 1989. Its head, the Pakistani economist and former Minister, Mahbub ul Haq, aimed to humanise discussion of socio-economic development by consistently applying principles that people are both the primary ends and the central means of development (e.g., Haq, 1999). Working during the next several years in the UN apex in New York, Haq came to see the need to qualify this 'human development' concept and place it in broader context. First, he wanted to retain a language of prioritisation for the attainment and

assurance of basic needs for all. Second, in a world of recurrent conflicts and frequent major unsettling shifts, he wanted a framework for looking at risks and forces of disruption and destruction as they affect the lives of ordinary people, especially the poorest; and for highlighting the combination and interaction of shocks with deprivations and vulnerabilities. Third, he wished to influence and humanise 'security' discussions and practice – the conventionally foregrounded, heavily funded arenas of state security and (potential) armed conflict – to consider their connections to the non-assurance of basic needs and the violation of basic rights. So, in the Human Development Report of 1994, he and colleagues presented a partner conception to 'human development': 'human security'.

They drew here on ideas and language that had been curated in the North-South Roundtable of the Society of International Development, whose foremost intellectual leader was Haq. Its 1990 workshop in Costa Rica on peace, security and disarmament was called 'The Economics of Peace' (Jolly 2007, 2023). According to Jolly, who chaired the meeting, "it could better have been entitled Human Security in the Post Cold War World" (Jolly 2007: 54).

While human development thinking has centred on capability, the ability to fulfil well-reasoned values, human security analysis looks also at vulnerability, at exposure to risks and misfortune, and at ability to prepare for, cope with and recover from threat and harm. Similarly, while human rights concern requisites for human dignity, human security thinking complements such analysis through attention to felt indignities and to the environing risks, exposures and interconnections that can threaten rights fulfilment and conduce to harm to individuals. Estrada-Tanck (2016), exploring the situations of 'Persons Confronting Structural Vulnerability', shows how human security thinking enriches human rights practice.

The 1994 global HDR provided a sketch to underline how people's (in)security involves far more than military security. It gave a checklist of seven headings, which may overlap but also often conveniently match existing government portfolios: (People's) Economic security; (People's) Food security; (People's) Health security; Environmental security; 'Personal security', including security against violence and robbery; Community security; and Political security. This checklist gave an introductory 'handrail' for considering relevant areas. The Arab HDR 2009 largely followed it but also modified and extended it in order to give its own picture of key issues in the region.

Just as important as such a standardised checklist was the advice to pay attention to what people, rightly or wrongly, perceive, think and fear. "The [1994] report … introduced the important notion of subjective security – what makes people feel safe – referring to 'human security as people see it'" (Inglehart and Norris, 2012: 74). Sometimes this will point us to issues and intersections overlooked or misunderstood by official categories and standard lists; sometimes to misunderstandings by lay people, for example a neglect of real risks or exaggeration of actual threats – misunderstandings that yet can generate real sufferings and/or conflicts. Larsen et al. argue: "as a broad concept, human security enables us to encompass every potential risk (or threats) that might be mentioned or perceived by participants"; and "will allow us to focus on individuals' and local communities' perceptions. … [including] local cultural dimensions and risk perception/social construction" (2021: 8).

Over time, human security thinking has thus ramified beyond what was sketched in 1994. In regard to assuring basic needs, it has been one strand contributing to advocacy for social protection schemes, as in the Social Protection Floor Initiative of UN agencies (WHO/ILO, 2010). In addition, in the face of global challenges like environmental change and pandemics, its stresses on our interconnectedness and shared 'community of fate' increasingly resonate, as do its emphases on

felt insecurities[1]. Many Regional or National Human Development Reports have applied and enriched the perspective (e.g., UNDP, 2004, 2010; see surveys by Jolly and Basu Ray, 2007, and Gómez et al., 2013). The Arab HDR of 2009 was one of this series.

2.2. The Arab HDR 2009: 'Challenges to Human Security in the Arab Countries'

The 2009 Arab Human Development Report was prepared for UNDP by a team of independent-minded and outspoken scholars from the Arab region. They declared themselves motivated by a picture that "too many Arabs live out an existential nightmare of insecurity that numbs hope, shrivels initiative and drains the public sphere of the motivation for co-operative and peaceful change" (UNDP, 2009: 18).[2] They provided their own articulation of human security ideas, defining the concept as "the liberation of human beings from those intense, extensive, prolonged, and comprehensive threats to which their lives and freedom are vulnerable" (ibid.: 2, 23): prevention of the negative. They also emphasised contributions to the positive, part of a vision of positive peace: "human security—the kind of material and moral foundation that secures lives, livelihoods and an acceptable quality of life for the majority" (ibid.: 1).

The report used the HDR 1994 sector checklist to structure its coverage. Notably, its Chapter 7, "Approaching health through human security – a road not taken", emphasised health as a social policy 'sector' that illustrates, first, a logic of common (i.e., shared) human security: no social group can have reliable health security when it lives surrounded and intermingled with those who do not have it; and, second, the interconnectedness of 'sectors': without health security everything else is fragile and without addressing related matters health cannot be adequately promoted.[3] The chapter lamented that "Health care systems in the [MENA] region [were] let down by [a] narrow biomedical model based on hospital and curative care, and focused on the treatment of diseases" rather than of people (ibid.: 14). Matching Jawad (2019)'s concern that social protection in MENA has been approached too narrowly, the Report noted that "Arab health systems do not recognise the role of such factors as the quality and coverage of education, women's empowerment, and social and economic justice" (UNDP, 2009: 14). "In most Arab countries, the public health system needs to be made more proactive, preventive and people-centered. … [It] must engage with non-health sectors in promoting and financing public health through appropriate inter-sectoral mechanisms," for example in the form of "programmes for healthy cities, neighbourhoods or villages[,] based on public participation" (ibid.: 201-202). A human security perspective can facilitate this required cross-sectoral fresh look.

Two chapters diverged from the 1994 HDR's checklist: Ch.3 on the state and Ch.8 on foreign occupation and military intervention as causes of insecurity. Chapter 3 argued that "the [Arab] state [was often] a threat to human security, instead of its chief support" (ibid.: 4). Rule of law, essential for existential security, was patchy; and while a conception of shared citizenship should provide a format for "the management of ethnic, cultural and linguistic diversity" (ibid.: 5), such a conception had grown only weakly within Arab countries. The Report proposed that "the concept of human security provides a framework for re-centring the Arab social contract and development policy on those vital yet neglected priorities that most affect the wellbeing of Arab citizens" (UNDP, 2009: 189).

[1] "…community of fate – those with whom we perceive our interests as bound and with whom we are willing to act in solidarity" (Levi, 2020).
[2] Robert Worth's acclaimed *A Rage for Order* analysed the subsequent 'Arab Spring' eruptions, as being driven by protestors' desires for "a place they could call their own, a state that shielded its inhabitants from humiliation and despair" (Worth, 2017: 234). He noted humiliations felt by young people in countries dominated by patronage, bureaucracy, and corruption: no jobs, no status, no prospects, no open channels for advancement, all now in an era with Internet access to new information sources (e.g., Al Jazeera) and communication networks. Many recent immigrants to the cities have felt despised and marginalized by urban elites ('a stranger in my own country', 'exiled at home', p.204) and found counter-systems of meaning and felt dignity in political Islam.
[3] The first point has still only partly penetrated. During the COVID-19 pandemic, "Host governments in the Arab States region did not initially include refugees in their national COVID-19 plans. Among the notable exceptions was Jordan ... A similar positive measure was the granting of access to free healthcare to migrant workers in Gulf countries during the pandemic" (UNDP-RBAS 2022: 11).

Subsequent UN work on MENA has, however, largely avoided the integrating concept of human security. Disingenuous use of human security-related language (in particular, of 'the responsibility to protect'), as a pretext for intervention and regime-change by the Western powers who blunderingly supported uprisings in Libya in 2011, had made it suspect. Ironically, the 2009 report's Ch.8 had warned how "Occupation and military intervention are … responsible for creating conditions of systemic insecurity in the region" (ibid.: 15). They displace huge numbers of people, generating enormous humanitarian challenges and tensions; and they feed an unending cycle of violent resistance, suppression, militarisation, and authoritarianism. The report advised local and external powers to instead orient their actions "with the interests, rights and security of the peoples who live in [the Arab] countries in mind." (Ibid.: 206.)

This appeal to principles of common security and positive peace was well-received in parts of MENA civil society and in some UN organisations but fell largely on deaf ears in ruling circles, both in the region and outside. Warnings were ignored that "the combination of the deep socio-economic divisions across the [MENA] region and the gathering impact of environmental constraints mean that in the absence of human security-orientated political change, there will be severe instability" (Oxford Research Group, 2011; cited by Rogers, 2021: 189). Military responses, interventions and occupations intensified, with dire results.

Later, notwithstanding continuing use of human security language in UN publications supported by the Trust Fund for Human Security (e.g., UNESCWA, 2021), UN and related organisations have largely used policy languages considered to fulfil similar roles but to be less contentious – the SDGs and sustainability; risk, vulnerability and resilience; and citizenship and social contract (Bouché, 2019, 2021); as seen for example in the 2014 global HDR on vulnerability (UNDP, 2014) and in reports on Helping Build Resilient Societies (UNSDG, 2021) and Inclusive Citizenship (Abdellatif et al., 2019). These themes together certainly cover much of a human security agenda but, as we will see, not all.

2.3. The Arab HDR 2022 – "Expanding Opportunities for an Inclusive and Resilient Recovery in the Post-Covid Era"

The Arab Human Development Report 2022 (UNDP-RBAS, 2022) was originally conceived as an updated conspectus comparable to its 2009 predecessor on human security. Understandably it became substantially focused on COVID impact and recovery. Even so, it retained much of the original conception and hoped that "its framework can increase understanding of shocks and crises beyond COVID-19" (p.2). It employs numerous human security related themes, such as on the likelihood of shocks that can bring "cascading effects across governance, economy and society" (p.iv) and on the possibilities of convergence and interaction of diverse shocks: "In the period 2006–2010, for example, in advance of the Arab uprisings and converging with the last major global financial crisis, the region experienced one of its worst drought cycles in almost a thousand years" (p.100).

In contrast though to the 2009 Arab HDR, this 2022 successor avoided the language of 'human security' and even of 'insecurity'.[4] There was virtually no attention to felt insecurity, other than two passing mentions in regard to refugees and migrant workers (pp. 29, 95). Instead (low) 'trust' was the approved route for alluding to feelings. Yet the parallel 2022 global HDR reported that, for example, in Iraq "more than two-thirds of adult men suffer from anxiety and emotional instability" (UNDP, 2022b: 88). In later sections we consider this gap further.

[4] 'Human security' is never mentioned in the executive summary, except in one reference item's title, and only four times in the full text (as opposed to references) of the 180-page report; 'positive peace' is completely absent. Similarly, 'insecurity' appears only twice in the executive summary, both times as 'water insecurity', and only a dozen times in the full report, referring to food insecurity, earnings insecurity, and so on.

Lacking the broad motivating and integrating vision of HDR 1994 and AHDR 2009, AHDR 2022 plodded through a series of topics and sectors, relying on general-purpose policy-speak. It soft-pedalled on environment, speaking of "a balance between expanding choices and well-being and addressing planetary pressures" (p.4); in contrast, human security discourse has typically been more robust here (e.g., Redclift & Grasso, eds. 2013; Vivekananda, 2022). Elsewhere, the Report sometimes showed greater radical spirit. It criticized "social contract[s] based on asymmetric power dynamics [that drive] exclusionary processes that shape the policy space and human development outcomes" (p.42); and it called for "A new social contract [that] can lay the foundation not only for more trusted state–society relations but also for lasting peace. By focusing [Covid-19] recovery effort on enhancing trust, inclusion and social cohesion, countries in the region can take strides towards peacebuilding and conflict prevention", including by "processes that enable national dialogues and strengthen conflict analysis and prevention capacities." (p.15).

While the issues referred to in the Report are, in considerable part, global issues, it relied on the nation-state language of social contract. In contrast, the UN Secretary-General's 2021 global survey, Our Common Agenda, argued how we need more than that, notably frameworks for greater transnational solidarity. It offered modest specific suggestions, such as "for the United Nations to issue a Strategic Foresight and Global Risk Report on a regular basis" (UN, 2021: 4). Further suggestions were made in the two 2022 global-level UN reports on human insecurity that we look at next. One of them noted:

> [UN Secretary-General] Guterres recognised that enhanced social contracts are not enough and argued for a "new global deal," reflecting that sovereign states need to come together in some way to address challenges related to our global interconnectedness. In *Our Common Agenda*, the Secretary-General [addressed] how to manage globalization in a world governed by nation-states. It is urgent to pursue this agenda, and, as argued next, the human security frame can support this effort … (UNDP, 2022a: 28).

In sum, the AHDR 2022 was weak on a fuller picture of 'human', such as outlined in HDR 1994 and AHDR 2009, of people as affective beings and as part of a shared world not only of separate nations.

2.4. The two 2022 UNDP global reports on human insecurity

Two significant global UNDP reports from 2022 indicate a revival in the UN system's attention to and thinking on human security. The Special Report (SR) on Human Security was presented as a prelude and partner to the more extensive global Human Development Report 2021/22 that appeared seven months later. Both endorsed, first, a deepening of the analytical framework for human security employed in UN circles, through serious attention to 'subjective' dimensions; and second, a broadening and enlivening of the policy framework, by connection to themes of solidarity and (in effect) 'community of fate'. Third, more than for example the Arab HDR 2022 which often presents conflict and economic, environmental and epidemiological disruptions as exogenous shocks that disturb the path of human development (see, e.g., its Conceptual Framework; UNDP-RBAS, 2022: 21), the global reports stress that "the patterns of development that we have been pursuing [themselves] inflict many of the drivers of insecurity we are confronting" (UNDP, 2022a: 14). In the 2022 SR these steps plus the other now standard themes—risk, vulnerability, resilience, sustainability, social contract, and so on—are explicitly encompassed and reconnected under the umbrella theme of 'human security'.

The Special Report documented relatively high and increasing levels of measured insecurity, both 'objective' insecurity (e.g., health threats, violence) and felt insecurity, in most countries. Concerning violence, it reported a "development-with-insecurity trend, where violent conflicts [can]

increase in parallel with progress in human development" (UNDP, 2022a: 79). It gave particular emphasis to felt insecurity and its impacts; for example: "conflict is not only a threat to physical safety but may also raise barriers to trust, solidarity, agency and empowerment, key principles needed to face the new generation of human security threats" (ibid.: 90). To study felt insecurity the report presented and used an Index of Perceived Human Insecurity and highlighted the correlation between its scores and low levels of trust.

The 2023/24 Human Development Report has then linked feelings of insecurity to feelings of limited agency.

> "… our ability to decide what we value and how we can and do act on those values—of no less importance than the threats posed by a super typhoon, a disease outbreak or violence. Conventional metrics such as GDP or even the Human Development Index are missing something important that is being voiced loudly on the streets, at the ballot box and in the increase in support for leaders that may undermine democracy. Agency may be a way of understanding the gaps and, alongside concepts of insecurity, is an area ripe for innovative measurement. Indeed, across all regions human security and agency gaps go hand-in hand (figure O.7). … the share of people reporting having very high control over their lives is low and relatively equal for the bottom 50 percent of the population but rises with income for deciles 6 and above." (UNDP 2024: 20)

Its figure 0.7 notes that the proportion of people in each insecurity category who feel an acute agency gap is twice as high in the Arab States as in the rest of the world.

The 2022 Special Report's policy agenda added a principle of solidarity to the two major headings for advancing human security, namely, protection for people and people's empowerment, that were foregrounded by the Commission on Human Security (CHS, 2003). This addition followed and generalised the analysis in Our Common Agenda, the 2021 report from UN Secretary-General Guterres, which reflected on the contrast between levels of intra-national solidarity (relatively high) and inter-national (especially inter-continental) solidarity (very low) seen during the COVID-19 pandemic. The SR did not go far in analysis of solidarity (Gasper and Gómez, 2023) and could have drawn much more from earlier work. It did though start to reflect on issues of identity and how processes of self-identification can contribute to or undermine attempts at solidarity.

The global Human Development Report 2021/22, entitled "Uncertain Times, Unsettled Lives", then extended lines of analysis embarked on in the Special Report. It gave special attention to, first, the increased and increasing societal polarisation, driven by growing felt insecurity that is stimulated by real economic insecurity but also by the market-driven and politically manipulated social media world.[5] Second, although support for people's economic security "is a foundation of the social contract between government and citizens" (UNDP, 2022b: 63), "growing economic insecurity has stayed under the policy radar in many countries … [and] is not adequately reflected in standard national statistics" (ibid.: 62). The report's chapters 4 and 6 discussed required strengthening of social protection systems.

HDR 2021/22's policy agenda is in effect a human security agenda. It argues for a grounding in human rights, which provides a universal person-centered framework and can motivate core human security concerns (freedoms from want, fear, and indignity).[6] Then it proposes three 'I's: investments, insurance, and innovations. First, investments that provide protection. Second, beyond standard social protection schemes, more systemic insurance measures "to enhance human security" (ibid.: 182), including regulation of banks, rules on deferred debt repayment in crises, and access to basic services. Third, diverse institutional and technical innovations, including in

[5] On industrial-scale Internet manipulation by various actors see, e.g., Snyder (2018), Rhodes (2021).
[6] See, e.g., UNDP (2022b) Box 6.3.

governance processes and extending opportunities for broad participation and public deliberation. Lastly, the policy agenda stresses solidarity, that "requires recognising and incorporating the diversity of individuals, groups, perspectives and lived experiences that coexist" (UNDP, 2022b: 193).

The following sections try to specify the resources that these recent UNDP reports employ from human security thinking, and where more can be drawn out.[7] We will see a broadening and deepening provided by the reports' emphases now on subjectivities – perceptions and feelings – and on solidarity, transnational as well as intranational.

3. The scope and structure of human security thinking

We can speak of four domains in human security thinking: 1) human security as a normative concept and goal, 2) an analytical framework to serve that objective, 3) a corresponding policy orientation linking peace, development and human rights, and 4) policy planning tools and approaches to support operationalisation and application (see: Gómez and Gasper 2022; UNDP 2022a). There are alternative detailed versions in each domain. This section outlines the range and lays the basis for Section 4's assessment of what is added as compared to policy languages such as risk and vulnerability, resilience, and the SDGs.

3.1. Concept / objective

We saw two connected definitions in the 2009 Arab HDR. One concerned the role played by human security, which was seen as: "the kind of material and moral foundation that secures lives, livelihoods and an acceptable quality of life for the majority" (UNDP, 2009: 1). The other definition was more about the concept's content as an objective, about what is to be secured: "the liberation of human beings from those intense, extensive, prolonged, and comprehensive threats to which their lives and freedom are vulnerable" (p.23). Further, whereas 'human development' concerns advancing in terms of reasoned aspirations, 'human security' concerns avoiding the zone of "desperation" (p.20).

The AHDR's choice of the term 'desperation' reflected that: "Security [is] a visceral concept. Security is not just a prioritising, claiming concept. The way that humans have evolved, the way our consciousnesses are structured, means that some events and things disturb us or destabilise us. Combined with 'human,' 'security' conveys a visceral, lived feel, connecting to people's fears and feelings or to an observer's fears and feelings about others' lives." (Gasper, 2013: 330).

The AHDR added that specific content "varies from one context to another" (UNDP, 2009: 19). "Environmental pollutants were considered the most serious threat by Kuwaitis, whereas Lebanese participants felt that assaults on persons and private property were the leading threats, followed by hunger. By contrast, the overwhelming majority of Palestinians regarded foreign occupation as the greatest threat to their safety, while Moroccans thought that poverty and unemployment caused the greatest insecurity." (ibid.: 26).

[7] The 2023/24 Human Development Report consolidates this revival of a human security framework: "To break the [global] gridlock, the Report is an invitation to reimagine cooperation by pursuing three ideas that it encourages the world to fight for. ... [The second idea:] we must enable people to pursue their legitimate and natural human security ambitions without protectionism. It has now been 30 years since the 1994 Human Development Report introduced the notion of human security. It focuses on what gives people agency to shape their lives free from fear, want and living without dignity." (UNDP 2024: v)

Two basic refinements must be underlined. First, to distinguish means and ends. Some authors in effect define human security as resilience;[8] but we might better treat resilience as a means towards the end of human security. Second, to recognise both 'subjective' and 'objective' versions: specification by ordinary people or by scientists or policymakers. Attention to both versions is essential, including because they frequently diverge.

A concept operates in a context of use, as part of a discourse containing connected concepts. Discussing 'Birth of a Discourse', Amartya Sen (2013) proposed four essential elements of a human security discourse: first, a focus on individual persons' lives, rather than on state security; second, examination of these lives holistically, in full context and not as restricted by any single discipline, in order to consider the full impact of social arrangements; third, a priority focus on the (non-) fulfilment of basic needs; and fourth, attention to threats of all sorts that can prevent such fulfilment and even generate downward shifts and spirals.[9] The third element, in combination with the first, forms the core human security concept that we just mentioned, the norm: the securing of lives, livelihoods and an acceptable quality of life. Using terms from O'Brien and Leichenko (2007), those two elements belong to the 'equity-dimension' of the discourse, while the second and fourth elements belong to the 'connectivity-dimension'. The following subsections specify the discourse further.

3.2. Analytical perspective/frame

The analytical frame includes and extends the concept, aiming to provide tools of thinking for understanding and/or promoting attainment of the objective. Naturally there are then various versions in the literature. However, reflecting the first, second and third core elements noted above by Sen, all versions aspire to a people-centred, socially and environmentally situated, approach in description and explanation. The fourth core element mentioned above brings attention to risks, threats and shocks, forces of disruption and destruction. It involves trying to understand how threats arise, interact, and can affect differently situated persons and groups; with attention to intersectionality, linkages (including between human rights, peace, and development), nexuses and tipping/snapping points, structural violence (Schnabel, 2014), structural vulnerability (Estrada-Tanck, 2016), and theorising disasters and crises. This is a different emphasis from being "on track" and "getting back on track", phrases much used in Human Development Reports, that suggest an expectation of steady ascent.[10] Human (in)security framing brings more expectation of a need for continuous readjustment to crises, including crises generated not only by external 'shocks' but also by endogenous dynamics in global systems (Gómez and Gasper, 2022).

The interconnectedness of people and of threats are standard themes now in work on 'risk-informed development' (e.g., UNDP/ODI, 2019) and resilience (e.g., UNSDG, 2020).[11] Bouché, a long-term senior UN policy analyst for West Asia, stressed the "Need to rethink social protection programs in light of the multiple and overlapping risks, threats, vulnerabilities (including lifecycle-related, climate, technology related…) facing people and communities", for example by using indexes of multi-dimensional poverty and vulnerability (Bouché 2021: 16)[12].

Less considered in such literatures, and also going beyond Sen's inventory, are the following further core elements (see CHS 2003, UNGA 2012, and especially UNDP 2022a, 2022b). Fifth, reflecting the

[8] See, e.g., the Global Environmental Change and Human Security research project for the International Science Council and International Social Science Council, 1999-2009.
[9] I have resequenced Sen's third and fourth elements, to fit the logic of sequence here.
[10] For example, "on track" occurs seven times in the 2022 Arab HDR, including in the title of its closing chapter.
[11] E.g., UNDP/ODI (2019: 9) stresses the increasing prevalence of threats that are "interconnected, they cross national borders, they have both transitional and transformative impacts and they are occurring simultaneously"; but current practice "often look[s] only at one threat at a time (usually a natural hazard), rather than acknowledging multiple, concurrent threats or emerging global threats".
[12] See Bouché & Silva (2022) on risk- and resilience-sensitive multi-dimensional poverty indexes, that include more than the standard chronic poverty deprivations. Inclusion of vulnerability measures greatly increases estimates of numbers in need, as has long been argued in human security theory.

origins of the term 'security', the concept has 'subjective' as well as 'objective' versions[13]; and these perceptions regarding possible threats and their effects are diverse. Sixth, the perceptions are associated with fears and other emotions. The perceptions and felt insecurities affect much else, so that they too, not only externally specified risks and lacks, are important foci for research and policy. This may be underdeveloped in work on 'risk-informed development' and even on resilience (e.g., Brown, 2016).[14] Further, analysis of determinants of human (in)security characteristically includes interest in, seventh, a wide range of potential providers and means for security (see, e.g., Drèze and Sen, 1989; CHS, 2003; UNDP, 2022a), including, not least, attention to popular empowerment and resilience in addition to protection by others (CHS, 2003) and to, eighth, levels of solidarity and the degrees of recognition of interdependence, shared interests and even shared fate, and the roles for many types of public goods (UNDP 2022a).

We further discuss each of these foci in analysis later. Together they bring us to human security as a policy orientation-cum-philosophy.

3.3. As a policy orientation

Characteristic elements of the policy orientation in leading UN works on human security have been partly mentioned already. They include the foundational insight quoted earlier, that: "in the long run, the government that pursues state security without investing in human security is the government that achieves neither" (UNDP, 2009: vi)".[15] Beyond that: emphases on empowerment (and thus on resilience) as well as on protection; within protection, principles of prevention, precaution and insurance, especially for the most vulnerable, and principles also of solidarity, common security, and the complementarity of peace, development and human rights (CHS, 2003; UNGA, 2012; UNDP, 2022a).

Werthes and Debiel (2006: 8), reviewing foreign policy agendas across many countries, found that this package of policy-relevant ideas had provided "an idiom that plays important roles in motivating and directing attention, and in problem recognition, diagnosis, evaluation and response". Conversely, the Covid-19 pandemic showed how lack of prevention and precaution can cause millions of deaths and disrupt billions of lives; and comparison between countries shows that much of this lack was avoidable (see e.g., Tsou et al. 2022; Gasper et al. 2020).

The theme of common security requires further elucidation. It contains a number of strands. First, we noted the logic of shared interests, in regard to infectious diseases. The rich cannot live securely if the poor are diseased. In the 2022 HDR, the discussion of infectious diseases established the case for "healthcare systems [as] among the most promising spaces for advancing the new generation of human security strategies, combining protection, empowerment and solidarity" (p.119), notably through universalism in healthcare. Second, this public health argument extends into a more general stance that expects benefits for all from respect for each. Just as reaping the benefits of biodiversity requires "maintenance of the most vulnerable life forms in the complex eco-system, [so] human civilization cannot develop in its rich diversity, without a special care for its most vulnerable members" (Mushakoji et al., 2001). Third, an expectation that, whereas "Studies pertaining to state security generally assume that the 'default mode' in human life and among state entities is one of struggle and conflict, … [instead], given the common interests human beings share, they [can]

[13] Wolfers (1962) argued that, matching its etymology, the concept 'security' began as subjective, in classical Rome. "The word 'secure' entered the English language in the 16th century. It is derived from Latin securus, meaning freedom from anxiety: se (without) + cura (care, anxiety)" (Wikipedia, entry on 'Security'; 5 May 2023, citing Online Etymology Dictionary: "Origin and meaning of secure", www.etymonline.com, 2017-12-17.)
[14] Bouché (2021: 19) calls for "Multi-stakeholder (including civil society, communities and other actors) engagement in SP [social protection] design, implementation and monitoring". This might imply space for considering diverse perceptions and fears, but it is not explicit or prominent.
[15] Ndawana and Nganje (2023) warn that a militarized state is neither an instrument of popular empowerment nor a reliable promotor of human security. Fortunately, not all states are militarized, and states are not the only means of promotion.

gravitate naturally toward mutual cooperation" (UNDP, 2009: 19). Well-structured interactions can promote greater mutual understanding, acceptance, cooperation, and indeed solidarity.

Fourth, the principle that any attempts to secure oneself that make one's neighbour feel less secure are likely to be self-defeating; a theme stated eloquently by Nusseibeh (2008). Here the shared interests arise not out of non-human mechanisms but out of the nature of human reflections and reactions. Fifth, a partner of the previous point: attempts to secure oneself that treat one's neighbour without respect, without dignity, are likely to create conflict. The 2009 Arab HDR included a contribution by Mohamed el Baradei, the Egyptian Director-General of the International Atomic Energy Authority, on how such linkages apply internationally as well as intra-nationally:

> "A third driver of insecurity is the sense of injustice that results from the imbalance between the 'haves' and 'have nots'—the sharp contrasts in wealth and power that we see between the North and the South. This sense of injustice is magnified by the perception that the sanctity of human life is not equally valued—that society grieves the loss of life in the developed world far more than it grieves the greater loss of life in places like Darfur or Iraq…" (UNDP, 2009: 21).

For similar reasons, Paul Rogers' *Losing Control*, a classic overview of our divided insecure world-system, now in its 4th edition, reached the conclusion that "security should instead focus on human security" (2021: 252).

Finally, the metaphor of 'social contract' has been peripheral in human security thinking. It does not figure in for example the report of the Commission on Human Security (CHS, 2003) or the recent Special Report (UNDP, 2022a), although as we saw the 2009 AHDR proposed that "the [human security] concept … provides a framework for re-centring the Arab social contract" (UNDP, 2009: 189). The idea's role deserves further examination, but one should beware of taking the metaphor literally and should remember too that different people and groups may want and assume different social contracts.

3.4. Tools for investigating and responding to experiences of insecurity

A variety of tools can be and are used in human security research: – risk indicators and indexes (e.g., the Global Data Lab's Disaster Risk Index); perception surveys and comparisons of 'objective' and 'subjective' measures; numerous other human security indicators and indexes (e.g., JICA, 2020), plus use of related indexes (e.g.: Assa and Medeb, 2021); crisis risk dashboards and hotspots identification (e.g., the RBAS Tension Monitoring System and the Arab States Regional Crisis Risk Dashboard; Bouché, 2021); scenarios analyses (e.g., Gasper, 2013b); and diverse checklists and advice manuals (e.g.: Human Security Unit, 2016; Schnabel & Pedrazzini, 2014; Gómez & Gasper, 2013). The Arab world figures prominently on the risk and stress dashboards (UNDP, 2021).

The individual tools are largely found also in related approaches like risk and disaster management, resilience promotion, multi-dimensional poverty research, and so on. A human security approach brings such tools together within a conceptual and motivational package that connects and directs them and allows flexible exploration of lived experiences of insecurity. What is experienced as insecurity is context-dependent, arising via intersections of many factors, so that it varies across persons, classes, localities, and times; it is often surprising, for threats and perceptions are partly idiosyncratic and need case-specific investigation; and it is partly culturally and personally subjective, but with objective consequences.

4. What can human security thinking contribute to social development and positive peace?

Which elements and features of human security thinking add something both distinctive and important? What, if anything, is missing in current routine international development policy languages (Bouché, 2019) of sustainability and the SDGs, human development, risk, vulnerability and resilience, citizenship and social contract?

Human security thinking is an extension of human development analysis (see Haq, 1999; Sen, 2013), which had highlighted persons as the principal ends and principal means for development; and an extension of basic needs theory, which highlights people's vulnerabilities and basic requirements, including psychological and emotional requirements (Gasper, 2011). Using thus a fuller picture of people and 'human', it gives attention both to security as assurance of basic material needs and to security as felt or missed, and leads us more readily to consider issues of identity, identities and felt identifications than do the previously cited languages. Its picture of people as interconnected, as members of collectivities and the human species as well as being individuals, provides more support for themes of 'common [i.e., shared] human security', including common security at regional and global levels.

This section emphasises then the following possibly distinctive contributions from human security thinking, which help to explain the framework's durability:

1. Modification of the prioritising language of 'security' by focus on basic needs
2. Stronger integrating cross-sector focus
3. Investigation of subjectivities
4. Promoting solidarity and global loyalties.

These highlighted contributions correspond to the domains of concept, analytical framework, and policy orientation, rather than the domain of specific tools. Tools are mainly shared with sister approaches, although various procedures, indexes, etc. specific to human security analysis have also been developed.

Subsection 4.1. addresses the first two suggested contributions, argues how human security thinking can complement the SDGs, and highlights its cross-sector approach. The themes of subjectivities and of solidarity, emphasised in the two 2022 global UNDP reports on human (in)security, especially the 2022 Special Report, are discussed in 4.2 and 4.3 respectively.

4.1. Rethinking 'security' through a person-focused and cross-sector approach allows complementing the SDGs and brings new insights

A focus on security of people aims to humanise and reorient 'security' discussions and practice. One cannot presume that state security guarantees human security; indeed, militarism characteristically produces human insecurity (Mushakoji et al., 2001).[16] By making us consider whose security and security of what, the human (in)security concept demystifies the notion of security and supports prioritisation of assurance of basic needs for all. It adds too a visceral quality that matches the nature of experiences of insecurity and of deprivation of basic needs.

[16] Cousin (2021) records, for example, how security forces' violence in Egypt can promote local support for armed opposition groups. The *Pathways for Peace* study observed that: "Often, the transition moment that led to sustainable peace was based on a shift away from security-led responses and toward broader approaches that mobilized a range of sectors in support of institutional reforms." (UN-WB, 2018: xxiv).

It might be argued that prioritisation of basic needs is now institutionalised in the SDGs. However, the SDGs are limited in several respects (Gasper et al., 2020). They are all stated as priorities, without guidance on how to prioritise when necessary; they do not address perceptions; and they do not highlight possible threats and shocks. The document presenting the SDGs (*Transforming Our World*; United Nations, 2015) hardly uses terms like 'threat', 'hazard', 'downturn', 'downside', 'crisis', 'risk' and 'security'; some of them not at all. It uses 'vulnerable', but generally only as partner for 'the poor'; and it uses 'resilient', but largely regarding ecosystems and infrastructure rather than people (Gasper et al., 2020). Writing on the Arab region, UNDP analyst Bouché described therefore how "the international community has been exploring how risk-informed, resilience-based approaches to development planning and programming can effectively support the achievement of the SDGs (through sustaining progress/avoiding reversals), particularly so in fragile and crisis-affected contexts" (Bouché, 2019: 3). However, as used in practice, the SDGs can be too silo-ised and so need complementing by a more flexible, integrating perspective (UNDP 2022a: 31-32).

Risk analyses have become more aware, in principle, of compound interconnected risk, convergence of diverse shocks, cascades and tipping points; but if conducted in 'sector' terms rather than with a person-focus they fall short. The 2022 UNDP Special Report warns: "[fragmented] security approaches [give] responses [that are] likely de-equalising, likely reactive, likely late and likely ineffective in the long term" (UNDP, 2022a: 141). UNESCWA's 2021 study *The Attainment of SDGs in Conflict-affected Countries in the Arab Region* pleads for "Efforts to break down operational and policy silos between humanitarian, development, peacebuilding, and disaster risk reduction communities…" and advocates that "The human security framework provides a valuable conceptual link between the peacebuilding, humanitarian and development pillars …" (pp. 6-7). Manuals such as Schirch (2013), Schnabel (ed., 2014) and Schnabel and Pedrazzini eds. (2014) extend this conceptual link into operational approaches.

Vivekananda (2022: 9) notes that a human security framework indicates how existing quantitative studies "are very likely underestimating the scale and scope of climate-fragility risks", for example, due to not following through the cross-sectoral connections in people's lives, as well as because of other biases such as exclusive insistence on large data sets. "Research has … so far focused on assessing relatively direct effects and types of risks, that are ultimately easier to verify, than indirect, cascading risks, which are far more significant… …the knock-on consequences and the international reverberations of climate-fragility risks remain under-researched and insufficiently understood" (Vivekananda 2022: 9). Further: "Most climate vulnerability assessments do not take into account conflict drivers or dynamics, while most conflict and fragility assessments do not include climate risks." (p.12).

A fresh look requires attention not only to multiple sectors, but to their intersections and interconnections that constitute people's lives, each with its specific profile of threats and risks, challenges and opportunities. Human security analyses can support finer-tuned investigation of what affects particular population groups and consequently also those whom they influence. Tadjbakhsh et al. (2015) illustrated this for the communities around the border between Afghanistan and three Central Asian states, along the frequently flooding Amu Darya River. The states' national-security based approaches to border issues, preoccupied with forcible prevention and suppression of terrorism, extremism and illegal trafficking, paid little attention to border communities' needs for jobs, environmental protection, and health and education services, including to counter drug-addiction and provide alternatives to the drugs economy. Instead, strict border controls severely hindered movement of people and goods in the region, leaving these regions backward, hopeless, divided, weak in sharing information and ideas, and more prone to aggressive forms of religiosity. The controls incentivised trafficking and corruption and in effect produced a workforce for illegal activities. Tadjbakhsh et al. argue (2015: 6) that "When border communities are protected, provided

for and empowered, they can become positive agents for stability and cooperation; if they remain isolated and neglected, they can succumb to the vulnerabilities related to their situation and in turn contribute to border insecurity."

4.2. Exploring subjectivities: the dimensions of feelings and perceptions

In terms of official statistics for the Arab States in the decade before the 'Arab Spring', there was steady progress regarding poverty reduction, health and education, and other social indicators; yet, as manifested later during the uprisings, there was widespread discontent. Depression was felt by many at the lack of control in their lives (Cousin, 2021), with latent anger at "a state that [did not shield] its inhabitants from humiliation and despair" (Worth, 2017: 234). Sometimes important too are fears by relatively privileged groups that specific less-privileged groups are rising; declines in relative status can be felt as a major threat, perhaps one unrecognised by other people. The influential *Pathways for Peace* study noted likewise that "perceptions of fairness in service delivery matter as much as—perhaps more than—the quality of services delivered" (UN-WB, 2018: xxiii), and that such perceptions can diverge far from reality. More generally, ignoring people's own perceptions of (in)security may be felt as violating their felt terms of agreement with the collectivity.

Yet much work on human development and social development has ignored those perceptions. The 2022 Arab HDR, for example, while discussing the UNDP Special Report on human security published at the start of that year, made no mention of its Index of Perceived Human Insecurity (IPHI). Weakness in attention to fears and perceptions weakens discussions of trust, social cohesion, social contracts, and resilience.[17] In contrast, studying perceived insecurity reveals unexpected worlds of everyday insecurity, and can counter the danger that judgements on what constitutes human security become monopolised by decision-makers who lack concern about some groups (Mushakoji et al., 2001).

The IPHI index was not a first step. Longstanding studies in diverse countries have considered feelings of insecurity and how they compare to 'objective' measures. Ge and He (2021), for example, review coverage in the Chinese Social Sciences Comprehensive Survey since at least 2008 of levels of felt insecurity about one's personal situation and about the national situation, and discuss the frequent important discrepancies between various measures, notably the 'subjective' and 'objective' measures. Within literature explicitly on human security, authors such as Jennifer Leaning have for over 25 years investigated felt insecurities (e.g., Leaning and Arie, 2000); Ronald Inglehart and Pippa Norris (2012) have connected to findings from the World Values Survey; and several National Human Development Reports have explored felt insecurities quantitatively and qualitatively (e.g., UNDP, 2003, 2011, 2012). These studies noted many major differences between locally perceived levels of security and official measurements, as did a series of Latin American reports on 'citizen security' (Gasper and Gómez, 2015). The 2022 Special Report underlined also a related, huge and under-considered, objective problem: "The mental health crisis is a human security emergency. … Roughly 10 percent of the global population suffers from mental disorders" (p.124). The 2021/22 HDR discussed this further; some MENA countries are mentioned as having especially high incidences.

Another prominent finding in studies in the Arab region has concerned feelings of not being safe from the state bodies that are supposed to promote security; "shortfalls in [governance] often combine to turn the [Arab] state into a threat to human security, instead of its chief support" (UNDP, 2009: 4). Similarly, women in Hamber et al. (2005)'s studies made statements like: "For me the word security in Arabic is not to be afraid. First, not to be afraid to be hungry, to move, to think, and to be

[17] The UNDP-RBAS study *Resilience Programming in The Syria Crisis Response* (2020) did touch on perceptions of corruption, (un)fairness, and government (in)effectiveness; but it did not extend to using terms such as 'subjective', 'emotion', 'existential', or 'insecurity'.

misjudged"; and "[Security is] … not being afraid, and that can be of physical violence but also feeling you have the right to do the things you want to do and say…".

A distinctive feature of human security research is, thus, systematic attention to subjective insecurity and comparison with 'objective' measures. Investigation shows both that some fears are exaggerated and that some problems are overlooked by the 'objective' measures. This focus is vital for identifying overlooked values and for understanding behaviour, morale, mental barriers and felt (in)dignity. Inglehart and Norris wrote: "we predict that subjective perceptions of human security are important drivers of human behaviour, affecting psychological feelings of well-being and happiness, as well as social and political values, with important societal consequences" (2012: 93). They offered a heuristic model in which people's perceptions of security are influenced by 1. global- and national-level risks, 2. neighbourhood/community-level risks, 3. person-specific risks, 4. mediated representations of these risks, and 5. the degree of social protection available; and where these perceptions then influence a) social tolerance and trust, b) degrees of religiosity and secularisation, and c) political orientations and values.

The relationships between observed and felt insecurity and religiosity have formed one significant research area, with implications for conflict and much else. Inglehart, founder-director of the World Values Survey, argued in a series of studies that "what drives religious values… concerns levels of societal vulnerability, insecurity, and risk" (Norris and Inglehart, 2011: 269).[18] Norris and he found also strong correlations between rising religious beliefs and practice and feelings of insecurity, and between the declared importance of security and of religion; and strong links between high inequality and high religiosity (p.266). Their analysis centred around the concept of existential security, "the feeling that survival can be taken for granted" (p.245). They hoped that in the long term greater objective human security through development and reduced inequality would bring greater existential security, less felt insecurity, and reduced conflict over religious values. Other human security authors explore the sister notion of 'ontological (in)security': "What is critical to security is the maintenance of a social order, which has enough pattern and regularity to it to inspire in the self a degree of confidence in the future. This is precisely what we mean by psycho-social security, sometimes called ontological security." (Mushakoji et al., 2001). Mushakoji's other work (e.g., 2011) elaborated the importance of each identity community feeling secure.

Lastly, distinctively stressed in human security discourse is 'the freedom to live in dignity'. For two long-term peace-building practitioners, Lucy Nusseibeh and Jon Rudy of GPPAC, the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict, this is the key emphasis. Without a feeling of freedom to live in dignity, spirals of violence are inevitable.[19]

Treatment of realities like misperceptions, existential insecurity, emotional insecurity, and felt (in)dignity add essential dimensions in analysis and practice. In sum, as expressed by the then UNDP Director in Colombia, "The [human security] concept has soul. It is found relevant by practitioners." (Ruiz Hiebra, 2021).

4.3. Studying – and fostering? – solidarity, intra- and inter-nationally

Some of the policy principles in human security thinking, such as protection and empowerment, can be strong in other available policy languages too, such as human rights and resilience. Solidarity is perhaps a different case.[20]

[18] See also, e.g., Zhirkov and Inglehart (2019).
[19] Presentations at EADI Conference, The Hague, panel RT 121 on Human Security and Conflict Prevention, 8 July 2021.
[20] Solidarity, supporting others, may differ from social cohesion. Although the latter can be seen as one core objective of social protection, together with welfare (Jawad, 2020), one can have cohesion without equity.

The 2022 UNDP Special Report stresses solidarity as a policy principle for advancing human security. (See also UNDP 2024, especially Chapter 5.) The ways in which human security discourse steers attention and fosters perceptions and emotions arguably conduce to advancing solidarity. Analysis of structures of interconnection and feedback may feed awareness of shared vulnerability, even of living in a shared 'community of fate', and of consequent needs for 'common security': that my security requires respect for your security. Such arguments apply within states, between states, and also for dealing with people who are in-between states.

Within states, the classic conception of social policy has been based on social solidarity, with reference to pooling of risks and resources and to people's different needs at different life-cycle stages. All people are liable to suffer adversities, especially in certain life-stages. To act though on calls for social justice, such as made in for example UNESCWA's (2019b) report on social exclusion, may need something like a human security frame, to build the perceptual and emotional bases for sympathetic action. The same applies for responding to the problems of international migrants and refugees within the Arab Region, people in-between states, as highlighted in the final chapter of the AHDR 2022. Writing on refugees in Jordan, Kool (2022: 206) notes how: "International actors seek to prevent aid dependency by promoting the right to work [for refugees], whereas governments [in countries like Jordan, are often opposed to this for they] want to avoid being seen as contributing to competition over resources and seek to protect national identity." Insecurity regarding national identity, and a primary mental framing of the world as divided into nations, not as a web of people, contribute to policies of exclusion rather than inclusion. The nation-centric analytical framing "fails to account for the capabilities and assets that refugees bring with them … and lacks [sufficient] recognition of the ability of refugees to contribute to the economy" (Kool, 2022: 206).

Between states, increased solidarity across borders requires steps of mental re-framing, emotional opening, and recognition of shared interests that are often neglected when felt insecurities bring retreat into strongly nationalist mental frames. The 2009 Arab HDR argued similarly how the reliance on actual and threatened use of force in inter-state relations had proved counterproductive:

> "For international actors, approaching development in the Arab countries from the perspective of human security, in its true sense, could underpin an important policy shift: it could lead those actors to respond to regional issues not from the narrow perspective of their own strategic concerns, an approach which has largely failed to ensure stable ties with Arab countries, but with the interests, rights and security of the peoples who live in those countries in mind. This new approach would offer an altogether more sustainable basis for productive partnership with the Arab region." (Ibid.: 206.)

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (*Transforming Our World*, United Nations, 2015), the Secretary-General's more recent *Our Common Agenda* (UNSG, 2021), and the Special Report on human security (UNDP, 2022a) have taken some steps here. They did not though yet connect sufficiently with the literatures and long-established practice communities on solidarity and positive peace (Gasper and Gómez, 2023). We need regional and global languages for a "new global deal"; MENA actors alone, for example, cannot solve all MENA's problems. Here human security thinking may provide parts of the framework, based on reassertion of foundational UN thinking on the interdependence of peace, human rights and development, and the need to act on a principle of global common security.

5. Concluding reflections

The paper has suggested that current policy languages used in regard to social development and peace in the Middle East – including of risk and vulnerability, resilience and sustainability, SDGs, citizenship and social contract – while each valuable, are insufficient, and that human security thinking contributes a relevant complement as a unifying intellectual and normative vision (Section 4). In terms of analytical frame, it adds an essential demystification of state 'security', a necessary cross-sectoral perspective, a bridging between attention to collective systems and to persons' situations, viewed as wholes, and an openness to exploring human subjectivities and insecurities (4.1, 4.2). Felt insecurities demand investigation because they affect so much else, not least conflict, and are so often out of line with figures for objective security and material progress. By providing a mental frame for broad and inter-linking attention, a human security perspective can facilitate a cross-sectoral fresh look at, for example, health policies, armed conflict, migration, and climate impact. It can help to bring together practitioners from different sectors (e.g., state security and social security) who might not otherwise cross paths. In terms of vision and values, it strengthens a focus on the norm of dignity for persons and on the conflict potential of felt indignity; and adds emphases on common (shared) security, solidarity, and shared human identity (subsections 3.3, 4.3; CHS, 2003; UNDP, 2009; UNDP, 2022a). Overall, it has value as a motivated and motivating package that can connect and give purpose to several narrower streams of work, as illustrated for example in the 2009 Arab Human Development Report and the 2022 UNDP Special Report on Human Security. "A human security lens can integrate policy goals and agendas, taking into consideration issues ranging from concerns with social cohesion … to people's embeddedness in nature." (UNDP 2024: 153).

The paper suggested that fulfilling this potential will be promoted by ordering ideas concerning human security, in terms of four domains: first, the concept of human security as an objective of the assurance of basic human needs of survival, safety, and a decent and dignified life; second, an analytical framework of ideas about what affects (non-)achievement of the objective; third, a policy orientation consisting of ideas about principles and systems that can promote it; and fourth, relevant research and policy tools. The distinctiveness of the approach lies in the first, second and third domains more than in the fourth, where it can draw on many other relevant approaches, including indeed resilience studies, risk and vulnerability assessment, Max-Neef's Human-Scale Development (e.g., Guillen-Royo 2016), and much more.

However, the areas in which human security thinking contributes – including cross-sector analysis and comparisons, solidarity, attention to subjectivities, and respect for dignity – are those where big organisations, not least governmental and especially inter-governmental organisations, are often chronically inhibited. So, for example, while a human security perspective calls for learning from holistic real cases, often such cases appear to be considered too politically sensitive or professionally demanding. The Arab Human Development Report 2022, as an example, proceeded only in terms of abstracted snippets. While human security discourse was created in order to give more integration and explanatory depth to governmental and international organisations' work, its thrusts towards integration and exploring subjectivities may sometimes go against the systems and willingness of politicians and bureaucracies. So it must continue to be also advocated, cultivated, applied and disseminated by civil society analysts, social movements and independent researchers.

Some people find the emphases in human security thinking downbeat and depressing. 'Resilience' and 'agency' are considered more uplifting. The 2023-2024 Human Development Report extols 'agency' as follows:

> "…agency—the unique, limitless capacity for people to form and reform goals, commitments and values; to make reasoned choices that may or may not advance their own wellbeing; and, ultimately, to lead lives with purpose, which may be greater than their individual selves. … Freedom blossoms into fuller meanings, going beyond the necessary and important 'froms'—freedom from fear, from want, from deprivation—to the aspirational and important 'ofs'—freedom of self, thought and action, including helpful collective action." (UNDP 2024: 24).

As is very evident in the Arab region, however, and as stressed too by the 2023-24 HDR, such aspirations require a rooting in human security and a partnership with a human security perspective. Agency requires sufficient security.

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