Human security:
emerging concept of security in the twenty-first century

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At the start of the twenty-first century, Latin America shows significant weaknesses in coping with the consequences of the process of globalization. Instability in the region has increased, and that has a significant effect on most of the population. Even though the main traditional security issues have been overcome in the region and Latin America has not made any substantial contribution to global instability, the region is far from having policies that promote people's security—human security. Moreover, the intra-national nature of conflicts increases the vulnerabilities of millions of Latin Americans. Today, the search for a common security concept in the region is a basic challenge for the Rio Group, for the Organization of American States and its Hemispheric Security Committee and for all the region's states. Civil society organizations and academic institutions, such as FLACSO, can play an important role in this task.

We are seeing the emergence of new transnational actors and non-state actors with significant capacities for global action. This is an important change in international relations and in the primacy of the interaction between various actors. The twenty-first century also demonstrates more strongly than in previous eras the need to solve the problems of millions of human beings who are adversely affected by enormous and growing political, economic, social, health, personal and cultural insecurities. A significant part of the world's population suffers from tremendous vulnerability in an unfair system with increasing regional and global interdependence. Consequently, (in)security is global, even though its manifestations may differ from region to region and from country to country.[1]

A core concern is to progress towards the construction of a new global order capable of placing human beings at its centre and for states, which continue to be the actors with the greatest relative power, to be able to efficiently guarantee people's security and contribute to overcoming the vulnerabilities and difficulties of hundreds of millions of human beings in acceding to progress and development.

Today there are increased opportunities for cooperation in the international system and in various geographic regions. The revolution in communications, the new wave of democracies around the world and globalization itself have contributed to universalizing the values and principles stipulated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Promotion of, and respect for, this declaration requires increased partnerships and more cooperation.[2]

Approaching global politics from a human interest perspective, such as that developed by Mel Gurtov, allows one to compare value matrices. This value distinction originates from different theoretical perspectives.[3] The realist theory looks at international problems and stresses conflict, which means that cooperation between the different actors is not properly gauged. The transnational 'corporate-globalist' view stresses economic aspects and the hegemony of a capitalist model of production and

division of labour. Even though these 'rules of the game' establish overall preservation, they are seen to be a zero-sum game compared to other values. In the absence of any shared values, both realism and the corporate-globalist approach stress competitiveness as the basis for constant conflict and rivalry.

When one looks at the world with the new global humanist perspective, different values are stressed (see Table 1). The need for a more holistic approach means asking the core question: Who speaks for the planet? Based on this question, one looks for other approaches in international relations, which implies thinking about relations in the international system as a 'people issue'.[4]

This approach means that one can relate different problems to new priorities. The main priority must be peace. This is directly associated with social aspects and economic justice, political justice, human governance and common responsibility for a balanced environment.

Table 1. Alternative values in main theories

	Realism	Corporate Globalism	Global Humanism
Institutional	Negotiation Influence Mission Control	Access Hierarchy Influence Consumption	Accountability Management Equal opportunities Decentralization
Regulations	Systems of alliances Hegemony National mission Protectionism Intervention	Capitalism Global culture Egalitarian interdependence Laissez-faire Integration	Basic needs Interdependence International regimes 'One world' International rights
Structure	Maintenance of system Power blocks	Maintenance of system Liberal order	Transformation of system Global order

Source: Mel Gurtov, 1999, *Global Politics in the Human Interest*, Boulder, Colorado, Lynne Rienner, pp. 25–26.

Conditions currently exist to form an international coalition of states and civil society organizations to support and promote projects aimed at establishing greater security for people and their development as the core of international security. The United Nations is encouraging this point of view by promoting international law that seeks to guarantee peace and governance and foster positive incentives. 'An innovative international approach will be needed to address the source of insecurity, remedy the symptoms and prevent the recurrence of threats which affect the daily lives of millions of people.'[5]

The goal set by the United Nations in terms of security is a world free from fear. Achieving it entails acknowledging a new set of international circumstances, as typified by the diminished importance of interstate conflicts and increasing importance of intrastate conflicts. Secretary-General Kofi Annan's Millennium Report, entitled *We the Peoples,*[6] stresses that more than five million people died in this type of internal war in the 1990s. There were also mass migrations, refugee crises, destruction of infrastructure and environmental change. These events violate the basic human rights of millions of people and make it hard to create conditions for peace as the foundation for building a better world.

Analyses from the United Nations indicate that conflicts are more frequent in regions with poor countries, so the challenge of protecting more vulnerable populations is even greater. The above poses a global, and also regional, dilemma regarding the most suitable mechanisms for achieving stability, peace and fostering cooperation. Even though one cannot completely disallow intervention, it has shown that in most cases it is not the best option for settling conflicts. The same is true of the system of sanctions. In this framework, operations for maintaining and imposing peace must be reviewed. In the

type of conflict that emerges as the most relevant at the start of the twenty-first century, control of small arms becomes just as important as control of nuclear weapons. All of this marks a change in the perspective of the main international actors regarding situations of tension and conflict and, on a more general level, regarding security concepts.

The international system changed dramatically in less than a decade. Not only did the disappearance of the Soviet Union definitively mark this change, but there were also substantial changes that accumulated over time and are expressed with particular strength in the post-Cold War context. The number of state actors participating in the institutionalized international system has multiplied by at least four times since the United Nations was set up in 1945. We have seen the emergence of other actors with increasingly more influence on international relations—not just international agencies capable of changing their surroundings, but a series of transnational forces expressed with particular strength in multinational companies and non-government organizations. The communication explosion, technological advances and globalization itself have further accelerated the changes. This is mainly expressed in the state—the main actor—having less power.

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States ceased to enjoy monopolistic control or to have the capacity to establish and promote actions in six basic areas.

*   *Communications* are no longer controlled by the state. The Internet is the best example; radio and television are also good.

*   *Technological development* depends more on the private sector than on the state. This affects investment capabilities from genetic techniques and cloning to technological developments designed for war.

*   *Financial transactions* flow around the world and generate regional and global crises with little capacity for intervention by the state.

*   Although states reinsure *investments*, their ability to control decisions about where to invest and from where to get investments is minimal.

*   *International migration* and the ability to control the movement of people has also diminished.

*   *Trade* has increasingly opened up, and states have evident problems to establish controls and restrictions.

The above means that threat perceptions have been generated that are different than traditional ones, and mechanisms of action to cope with them seem, and in many cases actually are, antiquated. The world has more information. Links are better. Political and social events in a country or region do not leave those who perceive them on the other side of the world indifferent.[7] Economic decisions made in one part of the world have direct consequences on economic growth and sustainability in other areas. This evidences the existence of substantial changes in the basic concept of sovereignty and demonstrates the reduced capabilities of nations to cope with their main problems.[8] Hence, coordinating policies, establishing regulations and generating international regimes based on shared values are essential points in designing a new international system for the twenty-first century. Only the ability to act jointly will enable states to recover their abilities to generate, together with other actors, a legitimate order capable of building a world free from threats and fear.

The basic concept that enables security to be understood in the post-Cold War period is the concept of cooperation. This concept emerges in all reports systematizing progress and interpreting the

changes in the world. It also plays an important role in divergent views, both for preventing and for promoting peace and international security. New problems that must be incorporated into the concept go beyond military aspects; hence, elements of cooperation are essential. The development of human security concepts must be placed within this framework.[9]

During the Cold War, Latin America was perceived, or perceived itself, within a conceptual framework defined by the bipolar conflict. The main threat was the extra-continental enemy. This reasserted tendencies from the pre-Second World War period. At the start of the twenty-first century, the region's countries are immersed in a process of debating and reformulating concepts of security. A conceptual transition is taking place from a Cold War perspective that visualized an enemy expressed in strongly military actions carried out by a state, to a post-Cold War perspective in which threats are diffused, the weight of military factors has diminished and many of the threats appear not to be linked to state actors, and even not to be linked to any particular territory.

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We can say in general, however, that the end of the Cold War has led to a reappraisal of the main theoretical matrices used to evaluate international problems.[10] This will enable progress to be made towards a new paradigm that, while recognizing conflict and confrontation, places greater emphasis on working together. This change requires tremendous political will on the part of core actors and specific forms of coordination.

Development of theories about international regimes[11] and about forming global public goods[12] has acquired greater significance and importance, as have also contributions to negotiation theories[13] and practical instruments to relieve tension.[14] Theoretical exploration of this field will generate suitable knowledge to improve multilateral relations and the results arising from them; especially those results capable of changing relations in the international system, beginning with cooperative multilateralism.[15]

Human security: an emerging concept

New vulnerabilities demand holistic perspectives. The concept of security at the beginning of the century can be articulated based on relating the concepts of international security, state security and human security. The way in which that relationship is established will simultaneously meet global needs and the needs of states, people and peoples. To the extent that vulnerabilities and threats to international security increase, pressure will be put on states to take action in a context such as the one that we have defined, in which the state has less resources of real power. Hence, it is essential to foster more multilateralism— cooperative multilateralism, or correspondent multilateralism. In turn, interstate crises and conflicts affect human security and international stability. So it is essential to achieve stability in interstate relations by demilitarizing the links. Furthermore, human security demands are made on both the state and the international system. The influence of civil society organizations in promoting this level of security is essential.

Each dimension has its own logic. In international security, it is global aspects, interdependent markets and the weight of state actors, international organizations and non-state actors. Macro definitions are made at this level, and global and/or regional regimes are promoted. Stability is a public good to be encouraged.

State security is classical security and involves aspects linked primarily to sovereignty and border issues. The weight of military forces and the balance of forces, as well as concepts associated with dissuasion and defence take place at this level.

Human security addresses more local dimensions, although they involve large masses of humanity. It also addresses global issues, such as environmental matters and pandemics. These types of issues are not traditionally approached at the other two levels of security.

Building a holistic view requires emphasizing that each level must produce specific answers in at least three areas: use of force, prevention of conflicts and international cooperation. Increases in security at one level do not replace nor eliminate demands at other levels. On the contrary, insecurity at one of the three levels affects the other levels. From that point of view, human security is an emerging issue, which can give greater cohesion to interaction between international security and state security.

This outlook, which is greater than the sum of its parts, does not mean expanding the concept of security. To expand would entail militarizing different areas or 'scrutinizing' everything that is important. Rather, new perspectives imply better coordination between levels.

Four substantial elements need to be emphasized in today's security landscape:

• International security extends beyond its military components;

• International security is transnational, global and interdependent;

• International security is produced by a plurality of actors, the state is no longer the exclusive actor; and

• International security in the twenty-first century has enlarged its agenda and demands that actors work together.

Emphasis on which factor has primacy in the human security, state security and international security trio may vary depending on the scenario. In most, the weight of coordination will fall on state security, because the state continues to be the main international actor. Yet some geographical regions, such as Africa, international security and its main actors could be a larger centre of influence. For example, the response capability of the international system might predominate in the face of political crises in weak or disappearing states.

The Secretary-General's Millennium Report says that the world is progressing towards a new understanding of the concept of security. 'Once synonymous with the defence of territory from external attack, the requirements of security today have come to embrace the protection of communities and individuals from internal violence.' It adds, 'The need for a more human-centred approach to security is reinforced by the continuing dangers that weapons of mass destruction, most notably nuclear weapons, pose to humanity: their very name reveals their scope and their intended objective, if they were ever used.'[16] In rethinking and reformulating the notion of security, a more comprehensive concept that is capable of addressing the different aspects that affect and influence the life and death of human beings needs to be built.

Starting in 1994 the multilateral system began to develop a concept of human security that has been receiving increasing attention in multilateral agencies. It is being transformed into a point of reference for the main global security trends of the twenty-first century. As a matter of fact, the 1994 *Human Development Report* by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) presented its analysis on new dimensions of human security and defined them based on two main components—freedom from fear and freedom from want. The UNDP indicates that these two components form part of the origin and foundation of the United Nations. In this regard, it emphasizes that 'the world can never be at peace unless people have security in their daily lives.' The human security concept presented by the UNDP groups seven categories of threats that affect various spheres of action: economic security, food security, health security, environmental security, personal security, community security and political security.[17]

The capacity to generate preventive measures[18] is, therefore, the central point of international action and of the governing agencies of the international and regional systems.[19] In this regard, the United Nations faces the urgent challenge and necessity to establish efficient strategies in preventing long- and short-term conflicts. Moreover, the United Nations is interested in increasingly targeting preventive actions in the sphere of international security as a crucial element in progressing towards a world free from fear. 'As the United Nations has bitterly and repeatedly discovered over the last decade, no amount of good intentions can substitute for the fundamental ability to project credible force if complex peacekeeping, in particular, is to succeed.'[20]

The legitimate delegation of authority by the United Nations for use of force is considered, therefore, to be a substantial instrument. As the same report then states, however, 'force alone cannot create peace; it can only create the space in which peace may be built.'

This assertion is the basic link that allows one to reconsider the relationship between peace, the use of force and political conditions. Political will, restrictions on the use of force in dispute settlement and the development of efficient measures of dissuasion will make more space possible for politics and for building peace.

Human security is a wide-ranging concept that demonstrates the weaknesses and vulnerabilities of human beings, as well as their potential. Opportunities for growth and development are increasingly linked, yet can become sources of insecurity. Global interconnection acquires more significance and importance each day. Reducing risks implies greater coordination of national and global policies. The experiences of recent years show that it is essential to agree on the design and then on establishing and executing the international regimes that guarantee a consensual international order. It is the international regimes that can ensure protection for people. Vulnerabilities will be able to be overcome based on the action of international regimes. Coordinating policies inside international regimes will make it possible to increase opportunities for more equal development. Progress can only be made through collaboration. Cooperative global multilateralism and national democracies are the best guarantees to ensure development and protection for people.

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Human security may be analysed and understood from different variables (see Table 2). In the basic document of the international seminar on 'Human Security and Mutual Vulnerability', professor Jorge Nef[21] proposes at least five dimensions—ecology, economy, society, politics and culture. Each of these variables can be visualized at different levels. In this regard, I would like to emphasize how they are linked mainly to two crucial elements—globalization and the use of force. Examining these variables enables us to target and structure policy recommendations based on a concept, such as human security, that is still being developed and discussed.

Globalization has universalized such values as human rights, democracy and the market.[22] This 'universalization' has a strongly western flavour. Associated technological and economic processes have generated greater global interdependence with both positive and negative aspects, such as increased trade, wider dissemination of scientific knowledge and more global information. There is also greater danger to the environment, terrorism has acquired a global dimension, organized crime is worldwide, and financial crises know no borders. Generating stability and global governance without proper institutions is hard. Significant deficiencies can be observed in this area. In turn, there is increasing differentiation and multiplication of international actors and that has a bearing on the degree of importance and means of power with which each one deals with the processes and seeks to influence future courses of action. A vision of the future is essential. In this framework within the international system's current period, various different global concepts in specific areas such as security have not been honed.

Table 2. Variables implicated in human security

Variables	**Ecology** (life) Environmental capital	**Economy** (wealth) Economic capital	**Society** (support) Social capital	**Politics** (power) Political capital	**Culture** (knowledge) Cultural capital
Effects	Sustainability Disaster	Prosperity Poverty	Equality Inequality	Peace Violence	Wisdom Ignorance
Globalization	A world of associated effect, such as the 'greenhouse effect'	Dark side of globalization and competition, more inequality	Refugees Migrations Hyper-urbanization	Governance Global regimes Cooperation/ Conflict	Identities Values
Use of force	Bio-terrorism	Financial crisis Cyberterrorism Money laundering	Polarization Ungovernability Rebellion Citizen security	Landmines Child soldiers Small arms Traditional disarmament	Intolerance and religious wars Local identities clashing with national and global ones

Human security visualizes a *new global order* founded on global humanism. The core issue is to solve the population's basic needs within the framework of globalization and interdependence. This delicate balance demands, on the one hand, a tendency to unify behaviour, consumption and ideals centred on universal values and, on the other, the requirement to recognize and respect diversity and particular identities and cultures.

We have seen, however, that globalization also increases differences and does not—in and of itself—meet any needs. It also has an adverse effect on cultural practices and national and local identities. All of this is taking place in a context of economic and social polarization in various areas of the world. The result is local ungovernability, which transfers instability to the global system and regional sub-systems. A 'zero-sum' security concept asserts that there is no absolute security and that the greater security of one actor must mean a greater degree of insecurity for another. In the case of human security, we can assert that the vulnerabilities of one are manifested as vulnerabilities of all. For example, in Latin America this requires that we pay greater attention to and seek more alternatives for the Colombian conflict.

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Security: Latin American perspectives

The various regions and countries of Latin America and the Caribbean evidence a high degree of heterogeneity. Nonetheless, we are considered a region. There are substantial differences among us and, in some cases, these are on the increase. There is, however, a broad base for cooperative action based on common languages and culture and expressed in shared interests in numerous areas.

One of the substantial deficiencies of our region is not being able to speak with one voice. We find it hard to coordinate positions and foster international or even regional projects in concert. Without increased coordination, there will be no possibility of influencing the design of global rules.[23] Re-launching the Rio Group might go a long way towards this objective.

Numerous trends suggest, although with no guarantee, that Latin America can make a qualitative leap in the field of international security. These trends include:

- An important cycle of border conflicts has ended.

- Sub-regional cooperation and integration have increased and, hence, regional opportunities can be identified.

- Despite globalization, we are a marginal or rather a peripheral region where strategic issues are concerned. This opens up positive opportunities for new areas of cooperation.

- Latin America is a denuclearized region, as codified in the Treaty of Tlatelolco, free from weapons of mass destruction.

- We learned from the 1990s that international cooperation in security issues requires a design and architecture. The Cold War institutions have become obsolete.

- Although results have yet to be achieved, efforts have been made to create new security regimes and to design new public goods in that area.

- There is renewed dialogue in summit diplomacy; although the operational level is low, it has strong prospects.

- Primary progress in goodwill and cooperation in security issues takes place at the sub-regional level.

- Track II diplomacy has played an important role in the region. This type of diplomacy must be fostered and expanded.

- The more international security there is, the more democratic governance and human security will be emphasized.

In spite of the potential of these trends, there are important deficiencies that must be overcome. A primary goal is to build and develop a common concept of international security in the Americas. As a region, we need a holistic concept that is able to embrace aspects of traditional security together with new threats and incorporate levels and dimensions relative to human beings. Highlighting peace as an essential value is a constant task. Condemning terrorism and indiscriminate violence against civilians is a requirement and objective associated with the search for peace.

A common concept of Latin American security will give us:

- More cooperation, participation and interstate coordination, while at the same time reducing militarization and conflicts;

- Increased multilateralism, more capacity for partnerships and greater contact between actors dealing with the international agenda, i.e. 'cooperative multilateralism'; and

- More coordinated action by civil society organizations and greater influence of society in issues that directly affect it.

Latin America has the opportunity to build a multilateral international security regime in the region. This will be able to cope with traditional interstate dimensions of security, the emergence of new threats and contribute to opening up spaces for settling intrastate conflicts.

Designing and defining goals is very important in a multilateral international security regime. The key, crucial element, however, is political will. New conflicts, the presence of new actors and proof of new risks require a new concept of security. It must be capable of providing early warning mechanisms,

spaces for strategic political dialogue as well as informal dialogue such as 'Track II' diplomacy. Re-examining coercive diplomacy will open up more space for democratic regions to coordinate policies.

In short, the international regime will be organized around common concepts that enable threats to be targeted and concerted courses of action to be designed; in other words, these actions will be to control threats in terms of defence, open up spaces for diplomatic dialogue and reduce risks to people. This will increase levels of human security and, therefore, classical security and global security as well.

Notes

1   United Nations Development Programme, 1999, *Human Development Report 1999,* New York, Oxford University Press.
2   On globalization, see Ulrich Beck, 1998, *¿Qué es la globalización?,* Buenos Aires, Ed. Paidós; Clóvis Brigagão and Gilberto Rodrigues, 1998, *Globalização a olho N.U. O Mundo conectado,* Sao Paulo, Editora Moderna; Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye Jr., 1998, 'Power and Interdependence in the Information Age', *Foreign Affairs,* vol. 77, no. 5, Sept.-Oct., pp. 81–94; Francisco Rojas Aravena (ed.), 1998, *Gobalización, América Latina y la diplomacia de cumbers,* FLACSO-Chile.
3   Mel Gurtov, 1999, *Global Politics in the Human Interest,* Boulder, Colorado, Lynne Rienner Publishers.
4   In his Millennium Report, the Secretary-General of the UN seeks to recover the role of representative of the people for the UN and talks of '*We the peoples*'—words from the United Nations Charter. See Millennium Report by the Secretary-General of the United Nations, 2002, *'We the Peoples': The Role of the United Nations in the 21st Century.* http://www.un.org/millennium/sg/report/
5   Chairman's Summary, 1999, *A Perspective on Human Security,* Lysoen, Norway, 20 May.
6   Millennium Report, op. cit.
7   This increased with global terrorism, its impact and the fight to eliminate it.
8   Roberto Bergalli and Eligio Resta (eds), 1996, *Soberanía: un principio que se derrumba,* Buenos Aires, Ed. Paidós.
9   Ann M. Florini and P.J. Simmons, 1998, *The New Security Thinking: A Review of the North American Literature,* New York, Rockefeller Foundation; Ashton B. Carter, William J. Perry and John D. Steinbruner, 1992, *A New Concept of Cooperative Security,* Washington, DC, The Brookings Institution; Joseph J. Romm, 1993, *Defining National Security. The Nonmilitary Aspects,* New York, Council on Foreign Relations Press; Patrice M. Franco, 2000, *Toward a New Security Architecture in the Americas,* Washington, DC, Center for Strategic and International Studies.
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12 Inge Kaul, Isabelle Grunberg and Marc A. Stern, 1999, *Global Public Goods,* New York, UNDP/Oxford University Press.
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14 Michael Krepon et al., 1999, *Global Confidence Building, New Tools for Troubled Regions,* New York, St. Martin's Press.
15 Stanley Hoffmann, 1998, *World Disorders. Troubled Peace in the Post-Cold War era,* Boston, Rowman and Littlepield.
16 Millennium Report, op. cit., chapter 4, 'Freedom from Fear', p. 43. http://www.un.org/millennium/sg/report/
17 United Nations Development Programme, 1994, *Human Development Report 1994,* New York, Oxford University Press. See especially chapter II, 'New Dimensions of Human Security'.
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19 Muthiah Alagappa and Takashi Inoguchi, 1999, *International Security Management and the United Nations,* Tokyo, United Nations University Press.
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