The OSCE and human security

Gerd Oberleitner[1]

Introduction

Is the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) concerned with human security? Considering the OSCE's broad approach to security and its long-standing activities in the area of promoting individual security and human rights in the OSCE area, this may seem a strange question. Yet, until recently the OSCE's work has largely been disconnected from the emerging practice of and the global debate over the concept of human security. This article examines — in the light of the practice and theory of human security since the concept emerged in the 1994 United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP) Human Development Report — whether or not the OSCE 'does' human security, and if (and how) a 'human security approach' could benefit the organisation. The article analyzes the consequences of the emergence, development and application of human security for the OSCE and asks if the lessons which can be drawn from this 'history' of human security should motivate the OSCE to engage more seriously with the concept.

The nature of human security

The roots of what today is termed 'human security' are manifold,[2] and there are some lessons to be learned from the respective developments which span international organisations, governments and the academic community; lessons with regard to the nature and essence of human security which may be of importance for the OSCE, too. The idea of human security emerged at a particular moment in time as a post-cold war response to new transnational threats, the effects of which are ever more visible to an ever greater number of states and people in an increasingly globalised world.[3] The concept also emerged at a time when the role and place of the individual vis-à-vis the state in the international order began to be critically examined, together with the meaning of state sovereignty. Both developments continue to be of central importance in international affairs.

The term 'human security' was coined in the 1994 UNDP Human Development Report. The concept was soon taken on board by Canada, the states assembled in the Human Security Network (established in 1999) and Japan as part of their respective foreign policy agendas and, most recently, it led to the

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[1] Lecturer at the Institute of International Law and International Relations of the University of Graz, Austria. The text is a revised and expanded version of a keynote speech in the Workshop on Promoting Human Security in the OSCE Area, OSCE, Vienna, 15 May 2007.

[2] See in greater detail Gerd Oberleitner, 'Porcupines in Love: The Intricate Convergence of Human Rights and Human Security' European Human Rights Law Review 6 ('06) 589-593.

[3] See Alexandra Amouyel, 'What is Human Security?', ('06) *Human Security Journal 1*, 11.

establishment of the Friends of Human Security (a Japanese-Mexican initiative in the United Nations (UN)). It was discussed and refined in expert circles, such as the Commission on Human Security, the deliberations of which resulted in the Human Security Now report in 2003. The Canadian-sponsored International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS) devoted a chapter to human security in its report, The Responsibility to Protect. In the same year, the Commission on Human Security was turned into the Advisory Board for Human Security, tasked with providing assistance to the UN. Even before this, the UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan referred to human security, as did a number of key UN documents.[4] In the 2005 UN World Summit Outcome Document, states committed themselves to 'discussing and defining the notion of human security in the General Assembly'.[5] With the establishment of the UN Trust Fund for Human Security in 1999 and with a Human Security Unit set up in OCHA (the UN Office for Humanitarian Affairs) in 2003 human security is now very much an issue on the UN's agenda.

Different perceptions of and approaches to human security can be observed from the very beginning. The concept arose out of an (Asian) debate over development and was subsequently driven by the Asian financial crisis in the mid-1990s. In the UNDP Human Development Report 1994, the influential Pakistani scholar and politician Mahbub ul-Haq was behind much of the original coining of the idea.[6] Canada and other states took up the essence of the idea with a view towards responding to violent threats to the physical integrity of individuals, while states such as Japan continue to emphasize a holistic understanding of human security which comprises both 'freedom from fear' and 'freedom from want'. Expert papers on a human security doctrine for Europe (the 2004 Barcelona Report and the 2007 Madrid Report[7]) demonstrate a regional approach to human security. With this, and in the absence of an accepted definition of the term, there is no exclusive ownership or interpretation of the concept, which is neither 'Asian' nor 'Western'. It is a dynamic concept with no fixed meaning, as is proven by the ongoing quest for a definition, and the content and scope of human security may vary depending on the regional and situational context. One may see this as a troublesome ambiguity rendering the concept analytically unsound and operationally meaningless.[8] One may, however, equally consider this to be the strength of the concept as a flexible and dynamic way of thinking about and responding to a variety of situations of insecurity, including in the OSCE area.

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[4] E.g. *the Millennium Report 2000*, http://www.un.org/millennium/sg/report, 46; and the report *In Larger Freedom*, http://www.un.org/secureworld, which frequently uses the term.

[5] UN General Assembly resolution A/RES/60/1, paragraph 143.

[6] See Oscar Ariaz Sanchez, ,A Tribute to Mahbub ul Haq', (2000) 1 *Journal of Human Development* 1, 9-16.

[7] See http://www.lse.ac.uk/Depts/global/2securitypub.htm.

[8] See e.g. Barry Buzan, 'A Reductionist, Idealistic Notion that Adds Little Analytical Value', (2004) 35 *Security Dialogue* 3, 370; and Edward Newman, 'A Normatively Attractive but Analytically Weak Concept, (2004) 35 *Security Dialogue* 3, 358-359.

Furthermore, practice led theory in the development of human security. The concept did not emerge as a sound and comprehensive theoretical framework which seeks explanations and justifications before action can be taken. Rather, it was the other way round, as human security practice together with statements of human security promoters prove.[9] The concept was defined through action. Only with a time-lag of nearly half a decade was concern over conceptual issues, analytical clarity and theoretical depth voiced in the academic community.

Whatever practice there has been in the first decade of human security was driven by a range of middle power and smaller states in a hands-on manner to achieve concrete results. The reasons for those states to push human security as a foreign policy priority (as in the case of Canada and Japan) or at least to allow it, alongside other priorities, on these agendas, vary and call for a number of explanations — historical, ethical, political, utilitarian. The mix of domestic interest and genuine concern over human security, the way it can be used to gain 'soft power' in the international arena, the conclusiveness and honesty of the approach, and the consequences for other domestic and foreign policy areas have been discussed at some length in academic contributions.[10] The middle power and smaller states which promote human security seem little concerned with such considerations but are rather content with applying the concept as an expression of their preference for multilateralism as the best guarantor of security.

Finally, the concept has by and large been warmly embraced by civil society and non-governmental organisations (NGOs), notwithstanding conceptual discussions and differences in the development and human rights communities. NGOs now routinely invoke the concept, rely on its perceived persuasiveness and link it with their areas of work and concern. Overall, human security today occupies a prominent place in the global political discourse. This is not to say that there is general acceptance of the concept or that a large part of reference to human security is not purely rhetorical, but it is to say that it has shown a remarkably intrusive force both in theory and practice. While it may not be the paradigm shift many have hoped for, and while the number of opponents and critics is great — still greater perhaps than that of its promoters — the concept has secured a place for itself in the theory and practice of global governance.

At the same time, the debate over the definition and perception of the concept continues. Some consider human security to be a foreign policy agenda and a framework for coordination on a range of matters with which states are confronted.[11] Others perceive human security as a political leitmotif which allows congregating around a conceptual theme, coherent idea or pattern of thought and which shapes the attitudes and performance of actors and provides explanation and

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[9]   See e.g. Don Hubert, 'An Idea That Works in Practice', (2004) 35 *Security Dialogue* 3, 351-352.

[10]   E.g. Tobias Debiel and Sascha Werthes, eds., *Human Security on Foreign Policy Agendas. Changes, Concepts and Cases* (Duisburg, Institute for Development and Peace, INEF Report 80/2006).

[11]   E.g. Hubert, supra note 9.

orientation, coordination and decision guidance, and motivation and mobilisation.[12] Some emphasize the potential of the concept as a future organising principle or emerging normative framework.[13] Some see it simply as a bridge which connects challenges, an umbrella under which innovative thinking about security can unfold or a catalyst through which old concerns seem different and new solutions may be found to such concerns.[14] Notwithstanding theoretical disputes over the concept it seems indeed to be able to connect (and at the same time challenge) the fields of international relations, security, peace and conflict studies, development, international law and human rights.

'Human security' in the OSCE
What does the way in which human security has developed and presents itself today mean for the OSCE? The very term 'human security' is seldom used within the organisation. The closest the OSCE has ever come to embracing human security was the Istanbul Summit Declaration in 1999, which held that „we need the contribution of a strengthened OSCE to meet the risks and challenges facing the OSCE area, to improve human security and thereby to make a difference in the life of the individual, which is the aim of all our efforts'.[15] This position was repeated verbatim in the OSCE Strategy to Address Threats to Security and Stability in the Twenty-First Century, adopted at the Maastricht Ministerial Meeting in 2003.[16] The Chairperson's statement at the Vienna Ministerial Council in 2000 not only expressed the organisation's intention to foster human security so as to improve the quality of life of all individuals within the OSCE region, but also implicitly defined human security in the OSCEcontext as 'the safety of the individual from violence, through armed conflict, gross violations of human rights, and terrorism'.[17] More specifically, the Bucharest Ministerial Meeting in 2002 stated explicitly that the mandate of the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities 'defines the modern concept of human security'.[18] These references, scattered over a number of — albeit important — OSCE documents hardly make human security a guiding principle for the organisation's work.

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[12] Werthes and Bosold, supra note 10, 21-38.

[13] See Gerd Oberleitner, 'Human Security – a Challenge to International Law?', (2005) 11 *Global Governance,* 185-203.

[14] E.g. Rob McRae: 'International Relations and the New Diplomacy', in Rob McRae, ed., *Human Security and the New Diplomacy: Protecting People, Promoting Peace* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001), 25; Lloyd Axworthy, 'A New Scientific Field and Policy Lens', (2004) 35 *Security Dialogue*, 348-349; and Caroline Thomas, 'A Bridge Between the Interconnected Challenges Confronting the World', (2004) 35 *Security Dialogue*, 353-354.

[15] Istanbul Summit Declaration, 1999, paragraph 2.

[16] Eleventh Meeting of the Ministerial Council, Maastricht, 2003, MC.DOC/1/03, 10.

[17] Eighth Meeting of the Ministerial Council, Vienna, 2000, MC.DOC/2/OO, 21.

[18] Ninth Meeting of the Ministerial Council, Bucharest, 2002, Chairman-in-Office's Activity Report for 2001, MC.DOC2/01, 53.

Rather, the absence of human security language in OSCE official documents since 2003 seems to indicate uncertainty within the organisation on how to approach this new concept.

Support for human security can be expected to come from states with simultaneous membership of the OSCE and of the Human Security Network.[19] Indeed, the Dutch OSCE chairmanship in 2003 presented human security as one of their priorities and defined human security as a combination of peace and the rule of law in which the fight against trafficking, security for minorities and socially vulnerable groups, and offering protection through stronger national institutions, appropriate legislation and the rule of law must be assigned a high priority.[20]

More recently, human security has been advocated with even more persistence by the Asian OSCE partners. Led by Japan, they seek to promote human security within the OSCE area since 2006.[21] The OSCE-Thailand Conference in Bangkok in April 2006 considered human security — due to its overlap with the OSCE's concept of comprehensive security — as relevant for OSCE forums.[22] In a side-event at the Warsaw Human Dimension Meeting in October 2006 Japan presented the concept for discussion,[23] and in a Workshop on Promoting Human Security in the OSCE Area in Vienna in May 2007 interested OSCE delegates and academics explored the value of the concept for the OSCE.

The OSCE 's approach to security
The very principles of human security are neither new nor alien to the OSCE.[24] Indeed, the language used by the OSCE to describe its understanding of security mirrors human security. The OSCE considers security as comprehensive. In the organisation's structure this is reflected in the three dimensions (which developed out of the 'baskets' of the Helsinki process): human, politico-military, and economic/ecological. However, the historic strength of the OSCE to explore this comprehensive understanding of security in different dimensions seems increasingly to develop into a weakness.[25] The fragmented view of security can seemingly neither conceptually compete with human security nor does it unfold the same motivational force. Arriving at a more holistic understanding of security which is not broken down into dimensions but integrated into all of the OSCE's activities seems to be a challenge which lies ahead;[26] a challenge which may be tackled by engaging more thoroughly with the concept of human security. After

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[19]   Austria, Canada, Greece, Ireland, Norway, the Netherlands, Slovenia and Switzerland.

[20]   See http://www.osce.org/item/7231.html.

[21]   Yasuhisa Shiozaki, 'Japan and the OSCE', (2006) 4 *Asia Europe Journal* 1, 20.

[22]   14th OSCE Ministerial Council, OSCE Troika Meeting with Asia Partners, MC.DEL /95/06.

[23]   See http://www.osce.org/conferences/hdim_2006.html?page=20779.

[24]   Thomas Buchsbaum, ' OSCE's Comprehensive Security: Integrating the Three Dimensions', in Daniel Warner and Valérie Clerc, eds., *Challenges Faced by the OSCE 2001* (Geneva, PSIO Occasional Paper Number 2, 2002), 145.

[25]   Ibid., 80-82.

[26]   Ibid., 149.

all (and notwithstanding the dispute over the exact scope of the concept), human security is considered to be inclusive, too. The concept has been described as encompassing at the very least 'freedom from pervasive threats to people's rights, their safety or even their lives'[27] and, more broadly, as orientated towards 'safeguard[ing] the vital core of all human lives from critical and pervasive threats, in a way that is consistent with long-term human fulfilment'.[28]

Furthermore, the OSCE sees security not only as comprehensive but also cooperative. It seeks to achieve the common security of all participating states through international cooperation. Similarly, human security entails cooperative, multilateral action in defence of common values, as demonstrated by human security initiatives, most notably the Human Security Network.

Next, human security is about both top-down activities ('protection') and bottom-up activities ('empowerment'), as reflected in a number of broader definitions of human security. Sadako Ogata and Johan Cels, for example, consider human security to mean 'protecting vital freedoms — fundamental to human existence and development (...) protecting people from severe and pervasive threats, both natural and societal, and empowering individuals and communities to develop the capabilities for making informed choices and acting on their own behalf.'[29] Such a protection/empowerment approach is not alien to the OSCE: protective activities (e.g. human rights protection, protection from the proliferation and use of small arms) are accompanied by empowering initiatives (e.g. support for elections and democratization).

OSCE practice, too, is to a large extent about human security. This is, in particular, the case with its human dimension, but also the economic/ecological dimension. More specifically, the organisation's work on trafficking in human beings,[30] children in armed conflict,[31] and small arms and light weapons[32] are areas in which a number of activities have been undertaken by the OSCE which, in other settings, are referred to as 'human security issues'.[33]

Even the OSCE's very structure is a reflection of what the concept of human security wants to achieve. It mirrors, in particular, the structure of the Human

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[27] Human Security Network, http://www.humansecuritynetwork.org/menu-e.php.

[28] Sabina Alkire, 'A Conceptual Framework for Human Security', CRISE *Working Paper #2,* http://www.fas.harvard.edu/~acgei/Publications/Akire/Alkire_Human_Security_Concept_c rise_wp2.pdf, 2.

[29] Sadako Ogata and Johan Cels, 'Human Security - Protecting and Empowering the People,' (2003) 9 *Global Governance* 3, 274.

[30] See e.g. Helga Konrad, 'Trafficking in Human Beings – the Ugly Face of Europe', (2002) *Helsinki Monitor* 3, 260-271.

[31] See OSCE Human Dimension Seminar on Children in Armed Conflict, Warsaw 2000, http://www.osce.org/documents/odihr/2000/05/1782_en.pdf.

[32] See OSCE Document on Small Arms and Light Weapons (2000), http://www.osce.org/documents/fsc/2000/11/1873_en.pdf

[33] See Buchsbaum, supra note 24, 145; and Human Security Network, http://www.humansecuritynetwork.org/network-e.php.

Security Network, as it considers a cross-regional, flexible network to be the best response to transnational security threats. Likewise, the openness of human security initiatives to cooperate with NGOs so as to empower and engage the individual has a long-standing tradition in the OSCE. Furthermore, the organisation's history shows the same pragmatic approach that puts practice over theory in solving security crises. Finally, the OSCE is a 'middle-power organisation' which offers a framework for consultation and activities and reflects the interest of such states in relying on such multilateral frameworks to guarantee security.

Consequently, it seems fair to say that although 'human security' is not OSCE parlance, much of the essence of the concept — that security is comprehensive, cooperative and ultimately geared towards protecting and empowering the individual; is best achieved in trans-regional networks and in cooperation with civil society actors; should be dealt with in multilateral settings which also serve small and middle-power states; puts practice over theory; and seeks to create a visionary and geographic space in which security is considered a common good and shared value — is part of the OSCE's self-perception and is reflected in a number of its activities.

Advancing human security in the OSCE: added value?
The OSCE's way of thinking about security, the organisation's activities and its very structure are very much in line with what human security postulates. Given this overlap between the idea of human security and the organisation's perception of security, is there added value for the OSCE in taking on board the concept of human security? Can an OSCE based on the idea of human security offer something which the present OSCE cannot?

We have alluded above to the function of human security as a leitmotif and we have referred to the view that human security unfolds its strongest impact where it connects different areas of concern. Adopting human security with this understanding may be of advantage for the OSCE. As mentioned above, it must today be considered a shortcoming to compartmentalize security in three dimensions and to enable only one of those dimensions — the human dimension — to clearly focus on the individual and develop operational tools to protect human rights and foster individual security. Perhaps human security has the added value to serve, in a more comprehensive way, as a bridge which connects these three dimensions and emphasizes both their integral and indivisible character and the ultimate aim of the OSCE to increase individual security in the region. In invoking these principles more strongly, the OSCE could better respond to current security challenges regardless of their denomination in traditional OSCE language. In particular, a commitment to a human security approach may support attempts to strengthen the OSCE as an organisation which is willing and able to confront threats to the security of persons from all sources, including OSCE member states. Reliance on a human security approach would allow the OSCE to re-examine the validity of thinking in the box of three security dimensions that are likely to be

balanced against each other. Trading off security concerns in the different dimensions has for a long time been a way of advancing security in the OSCE region.[34] The challenge today is to ensure that no decoupling of human rights from promoting security and stability occurs.

Two possible caveats against applying human security in the OSCE (and indeed against human security in general), namely that the concept is overly ambiguous and that it merely serves as a pretext for 'humanitarian intervention', can be rejected by reference to the analysis of the concept above. In terms of 'ownership' human security is not anyone's concept and, if applied by the OSCE, it will be the organisation's view and definition of human security which is relevant for the organisation. The way in which an increasing number of states use human security as a political leitmotif, based on a loose and dynamic working definition which captures the essence of human security, seems to provide an example of how one can pragmatically rally around the essential innovative ideas which human security promulgates rather than getting bogged down in a theoretical debate.

Likewise, human security is not simply a pretext for humanitarian intervention. This is not to say that the concept does not serve as a strong basis for a 'responsibility to protect' as understood by the ICISS report. Although there is disagreement among states promoting human security as to the 'interventionist' character of human security, the concept certainly can be invoked as one of the reasons why an absolute understanding of state sovereignty must give way to a responsibility to protect individuals in situations of grave threats to their security. However, neither do considerations for human security per se trigger an intervention, nor does human security prescribe the tools for such an intervention. It would also seem strange that the OSCE, which after all has pioneered the idea that concern for human rights is no longer a matter of domestic jurisdiction,[35] would reject the view that it is necessary to respond to gross and serious threats ('critical and pervasive threats'[36] to 'people's rights, their safety or even their lives'[37] in human security parlance).

One should certainly not see the application of such a human security approach as a remedy for the OSCE's present crisis.[38] Invoking human security means neither a more effective implementation of commitments nor does it remedy organisational and structural shortcomings. It does not address or remedy the lack of commitment to OSCE principles by some member states. Human security will not get the OSCE out of this crisis and will not per se make the

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[34]   Ibid., 80-82.

[35]   '[C]ommitments undertaken in the field of the human dimension [...] are matters of direct and legitimate concern to all participating states and do not belong exclusively to the internal affairs of the states concerned', Helsinki Summit Declaration, 1992, paragraph 8.

[36]   Alkire, supra note 29, 2.

[37]   Human Security Network, http://www.humansecuritynetwork.org/menu-e.php.

[38]   Pál Dunay, *The OSCE in Crisis* (Paris, Institute for Security Studies, Chaillot Paper No. 88, 2006).

organisation more effective, responsive or efficient. This requires a number of other initiatives.[39] Part of the OSCE's crisis, however, seems also to be a lost vision as to what the organisation is for.[40] Thinking along the lines of human security may bring the OSCE back into the innovative approach it once applied to fostering security.

Generally, it seems more important to capture the essence of human security than transplanting new terminology into the OSCE.[41] What we have derived from our analysis of the development and present state of the debate on human security is that, in essence, human security asserts that the individual is the ultimate beneficiary of security rather than the state; that the security which really matters to the individual is a comprehensive security in everybody's life, livelihood and dignity; and that in order to achieve such security the individual must be both protected and empowered. It is not that the OSCE has not understood this challenge; quite to the contrary, of all the organisations concerned with security it was for a long time at the forefront of thinking along these lines and has created innovative tools, methods and procedures to counter insecurity. It seems high time that the OSCE hooks up, once again, with such innovations.

To sum up, the OSCE could use the essence of the concept of human security to foster cohesion and to remain innovative; two areas which have been identified as crucial for OSCE reform.[42] Needless to say, such a human security approach may not be appreciated by all OSCE members. For those in the OSCE, however, who are willing to further advance the organisation's original purpose to not only provide stability in the OSCE region but also effectively make people more secure in their everyday lives, human security can become a vision around which they may be able to converge more successfully than around the OSCE's present thinking in three boxes.

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[39]   See e.g. Gérard Stoudmann, 'The OSCE: Still Relevant to the New Global Security Environment?', (2005) *Helsinki Monitor* 3, 198-203.
[40]   Buchsbaum, supra note 24, 98.
[41]   Buchsbaum, supra note 24, 147.
[42]   Walter Kemp, ,Time to Prune the OSCE Tree', (2006) *Helsinki Monitor* 3, 212-213.