

Human security and sustainable development

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(Summary)

The concept of human security has made a leap forward in the area of peace and security as a consequence of the emerging new concept of the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) which was recognized by a UN General Assembly resolution in 2005. While the two concepts are considered distinct from each other, the international community now has a legal means to protect people from four crimes - genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity - by way of the intervention of the UN Security Council as a last resort.

On the other hand, in other areas, notably the global environmental agenda, the concept of human security has not yet found an overarching international governance structure like the R2P and the UN Security Council. The concept of sustainable development could play such a role, but it hasn't as yet. The Rio-plus-20 Conference of last year agreed to negotiate sustainable development goals which would be integrated into post-2015 development goals to replace the MDGs. It is, therefore, critical that the agenda of global environmental governance and human security be addressed within the process.

Universal values of human rights

“Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person”, according to Article 3 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which was adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1948.

Therefore, to live in safety, liberty and security is a fundamental human right recognized by all states. In return, the sovereign state has the responsibility to protect its population. However, as we see now in Syria, many states and governments have failed to protect their own population. Rather, they often become perpetrators of crimes and human rights violations against their own people.

The world has struggled with how to protect citizens—and how to look after their welfare – for a long time. The Holocaust, and the genocides in Cambodia, Rwanda and Srebrenica in the 20th Century, are a few horrific examples of our failures.

Attitudes towards the responsibility of states to intervene in the affairs of another country to protect fellow human beings have changed considerably since these brutal tragedies.

Two schools of thought on human security

Over the past 20 years, since the end of the Cold War, there have been a number of different approaches, and different schools of thought, about how to deal with the vital question of saving peoples’ lives beyond the border of another country.

International development experts, including those in the World Bank and the OECD, have focused on what

they described as “failed states” or “fragile states”, where governments have lost their effective capacity to look after the welfare of their own people. Special economic and development strategies have been suggested to donor countries to address dire developmental needs in these countries.

Another prominent approach to deal with the issue of human protection has been put forward by political and security strategists. Some of their ideas were referred to as “humanitarian intervention,” and the “right to intervene”.

In 1994, the Human Development Report, produced by the United Nations Development Programme, introduced a new concept of security - one that moved away from security as defined solely for the nation-state, to one defined by security for the people – “human security.” The Human Development Report’s definition of human security included threats in seven areas: economic, food, health, environmental, personal, community and political security.

Since the introduction of the concept of human security in 1994, two distinctly different schools of thought and approaches have emerged.

One, promoted chiefly by Canada, focused on the protection of individuals from violent conflicts, through measures such as conflict prevention and resolution, and peace-building.

The other, promoted chiefly by Japan, focused on root causes of human insecurity, including hunger, disease and natural disasters. Environmental problems have also been addressed.

I was directly involved in the very first days of establishing the Japanese foreign policy on human security in the late 1990s – when the question of human protection was at the top of the international agenda, particularly with respect to the war in Kosovo and the need of international assistance to the people of Kosovo.

As you know well, the Japanese approach deliberately avoided entering into the delicate sphere of humanitarian intervention and national sovereignty. Rather than directly dealing with the issues of “freedom from fear”, Japan focused more on the issues of “freedom from want” – want of such basics as water, food security, decent living with dignity, education and health care. Canada tried in vain to woo Japan.

R2P

Since then, the Canadian concept of human security in the context of peace and security to protect people from fear has made enormous progress.

The Canadian Government established the International Commission on the Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS) in December 2001, and the Commission’s report, “The Responsibility to Protect” proposed that when a State fails to protect its people – either through lack of ability or a lack of will – the responsibility shifts to the broader international community.

The 2005 World Summit held at the United Nations endorsed the concept of R2P, and the General Assembly adopted the Summit Outcome. The Security Council then reaffirmed the provisions relating to the R2P. Here we

saw, for the first time, the unambiguous acceptance by all governments of their individual and collective responsibility to protect populations from four heinous crimes: genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity.

There are three pillars in implementing the R2P:

- The first pillar is the responsibility of the state to protect its population from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity;
- The second pillar is the commitment of the international community to assist states to meet these obligations, including by national capacity-building; and,
- The third pillar is the responsibility of the international community of states to respond collectively in a timely and decisive manner when a state is manifestly failing to provide such protection. When non-coercive measures fail, enforcement under Chapter VII of the UN Charter will need to be considered by the Security Council. This means carefully crafted sanctions, including the use of force.

The R2P was used in Security Council Resolution 1973 of 17 March 2011 on Libya which authorized Member States to take all necessary measures to protect civilians and civilian populated areas under threat of attack. The reported French proposal of the Security Council resolution to address the current Syrian crisis contains a similar provision for the use of all necessary measures.

The R2P is often mistakenly thought of as relating solely to the third pillar of the Security Council's intervention by the use of force. However, the second

pillar, the support of the international community, is also an important part of it, and it clearly corresponds to the concept of human security.

Various activities under the Human Security initiative of Japan, including the use of the Human Security Fund, can be directed towards the prevention of mass atrocities. For example, the Fund may be provided to reduce civil insecurity and to strengthen intercultural communication and improve interethnic relations, as has been done in a recent project for Nicaragua.

Human security and sustainable development

On the other hand, the concept of human security in the areas of economic and social development has not made as much progress as the R2P. Here, we do not yet have such an overarching global concept to embrace human security.

The resolution on human security by the UN General Assembly last year (66/290) recognized that the advancement of human security should contribute to realizing sustainable development as well as development goals including the MDGs.

What is critically missing is an international consensus on sustainable development as an overarching objective to protect future generations from the consequences of over exploitation of natural resources. Indeed, there appears to be an international agreement on the general concept of sustainable development which was originally proposed by the Brundtland Report in 1987. However, the concept of sustainable development has not yet been translated into concrete international goals like the MDGs.

In the meantime, the Kyoto Protocol on climate change has not been able to play the expected role to stop global warming. The 2009 Copenhagen Conference on climate change was a failure, and we still do not have concrete agreed goals to cope with climate change. The Rio+20 Conference on Sustainable Development in 2012 did not achieve a meaningful outcome on sustainable development, except for an agreement to work on future sustainable development goals (SDGs).

There are several reasons for the current stalemate. First, the definition of sustainable development has been too ambiguous, and the term has been used for everything - from agriculture and fisheries to completely different things like insurance, making it more difficult to grasp in a practical and useful way. To make a difference, the international community needs to measure development beyond gross domestic product and develop a new sustainable development index or set of indicators.

One of the most vexing problems about sustainable development is the absence of consensus on a set of measurable indicators. Attempts to establish the set of indicators for sustainable development have failed due to disagreement over the inclusion of greenhouse gases. As Galileo Galilei said, we need to “measure what is measurable, and make measurable what is not.”

Second, institutional support has not been sufficient. The three pillars of sustainable development – economic, social and environmental – continue to be looked at independently. This is because economists, social activists, environmental scientists and decision makers have simply talked past each other - almost speaking

different languages.

There is no such a thing as a UN Sustainable Development Council equivalent to the Security Council. The Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) is too weak and dysfunctional, and the UN Commission on Sustainable Development is not up to the task.

Within nations themselves, policy consensus is not easy. The food crisis, energy crisis, financial crisis, and climate crisis are addressed separately in different departments and ministries. While the sustainable pattern of production has been addressed on many fronts, the sustainable pattern of consumption has not.

For instance, we had a very hot summer in Japan this year. Scores of people died and tens of thousands were hospitalized. Yet, we do not have any idea about how we can prevent the recurrence of such hot summers. The same thing can be said about other disasters such as floods, tornadoes, forest fires and droughts – all are caused by climate change. And all of us are just shrugging our shoulders as if there is nothing we can do about them. Is this also not a matter of human security?

Third, international efforts have been too much focused on developmental issues like poverty reduction. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), chiefly designed to reduce world poverty by the target year of 2015, have become the dominant goals for the international community to achieve, leaving sustainable development on a back burner.

Fourth, the support by science and technology has not been strong enough to advance international negotiations on climate change and other environmental

agenda. The loss of credibility of the IPCC (Inter-governmental Panel on Climate Change) was a blow to such negotiations.

Fifth, the fault-line between the developed and developing nations has proved to be an obstruction to negotiations on climate change and other issues. The principle of “common but differentiated responsibility”, agreed upon in the Rio Earth Summit in 1992 has exempted developing countries from obligations to deal with global challenges like climate change.

The relationship between States is further complicated by the rise of emerging economies like China, India and Brazil, which hide behind smaller countries in the name of, or solidarity with, developing countries. Some say that elephants are hiding behind mice.

At the Rio+20 Conference in June 2012, UN member States agreed to launch a process to establish universal sustainable development goals – SDGs. They agreed to establish an intergovernmental working group tasked to design the SDGs. The SDGs should be “action-oriented, concise and easy to communicate, limited in number, aspirational, global in nature and universally applicable to all countries”. The SDGs will build on the advances under the MDGs, and they will be an integral part of the post-2015 development framework.

The Rio-plus-20 Conference also agreed to establish a high-level political forum on sustainable development. It will provide political leadership, guidance and recommendations for sustainable development, meeting every year for 8 days including a Ministerial segment.

This forum will replace the current CSD.

How effective will this forum become? That we must see, but judging from its mandates, it is not yet likely to become like the Security Council for peace and security.

A need to establish HS in the context of SDGs

Currently, there are no effective legal grounds or means for the international community to intervene in a nation's domestic economic, social or environmental policies, even if they are causing palpable damage to the lives of that nation's people and their government is not capable of saving them. The threats may include hurricanes, floods, droughts, rising sea level, air pollution and other environmental damage and threats of damage.

You may recall that in May 2008 the cyclone Nargis in Myanmar caused catastrophic destruction and about 138,000 fatalities. The military leaders initially refused to allow international NGOs to enter the country to help.

The main responsibility to deal with such catastrophes rests with national sovereign states, and the assistance of the international community is left to the decision of the national governments, although it is obvious that not all countries are capable of dealing with them effectively.

Can we establish another overarching concept to embrace the concept of human security for the protection of people from life-threatening environmental threats on the same lines as the R2P in the case of the four crimes? Could the high-level forum on sustainable development develop into a more robust organ like the Security

Council?

It may take a long time before we can identify and take action against the exact villains causing such damage and threats of damage. However, there are certain important actions we can take now so that the global governance for sustainable development can be improved, at least for the time being. They may include decisions on:

- 1) A set of SD indicators;
- 2) The issuance of a global annual SD report;
- 3) The effective management of the High-level political Forum;
- 4) A mechanism which allows constant review of national policies on SD, like the TPRM and the OECD's peer reviews
- 5) A future mechanism which allows the Forum - or its future version - to take measures that are legally binding on member States.

Could the R2P be extended to the most serious development and environmental agenda?

The current international governance structure over the sustainable development agenda is a shambles and we must fix it. As Japan's initiative on human security has gained greater international recognition, it is most appropriate that Japan should take a leadership role in advancing the initiative further for that end. Thank you.

