

***HUMAN SECURITY AND THE RESPONSIBILITY TO PROTECT – A  
CONSTRUCTIVIST ARGUMENT FOR RESTRUCTURING THE INTERNATIONAL  
REALITY***

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*Abstract: In the context of the world risk society, where the international interconnections are intrinsically based on communication, as a horizontal dimension of the main pillars (politics, economics, law, security, peace), the capacity of discourse to structure the international context is tremendous, but paradoxically underestimated. This analysis focuses on the role of discourse and communication in re-structuring the international security reference, from state, towards the individual, through the human security paradigm. The human security paradigm aims to approach the insecurity that the individual faces in the post-Cold-War period, by encompassing in its goals “freedom from want” and “freedom from fear”, in the context of human dignity. The main hypothesis of this analysis is that the rhetoric of the human security paradigm, and of its operationalization, the principle of responsibility to protect has, through discourse, the capacity to transform the individual in the international security epicenter. The research premises are constructed on the fact that the human security rhetoric has a powerful role in structuring international reality through the principle of responsibility to protect and sovereignty as responsibility, although it has not yet a juridical fundament. Nevertheless, through discourse and communication the human security paradigm has the potential to connect all level actors around shared values, and to transform the individual in the international security reference. The theoretical framework for this analysis is Constructivist theory, which fundamentals the idea of reality as “a subjective state of mind” (Kolodziej 2005, 14) and gives to the language and communication the power of reification of ideas in structuring reality. The methodology used in this paper is qualitative, following an argumentation line that connects the human security paradigm fundamentals with the constructivism principles, which legitimize it and with the international reality. This research demonstrates the capacity of the rhetoric of the human security paradigm for re-creating the international reality through discourse and on constructing global communities around common values, reinforcing the constructivist principle that advocates the power of values and ideas to change reality.*

*Keywords: Human security, Constructivism, Transformative discourse, Responsibility to Protect, World risk society, Sovereignty as Responsibility*

### **Introduction**

After the end of the Cold War, a change of source of conflict could be observed, from the previous international threats to internal threats and domestic sources of conflict. In the context of the current changing international environment, the meaning of security was

transformed as a response to the new realities, because security is, above all, a ubiquitous “subjective state of mind” (Kolodziej 2005, 19). The concept of security is extended from state security to the security of groups and individuals (Rothschild 1995, 55). The humanization of the field was interpreted as a rethinking of morality and ethics vis-à-vis of international politics, being a consequence and a determinant of the transformative action of discourse on international community.

The value of human security paradigm is placed in the capacity to fill the conceptual and practical void in the international security, through the evolution from a reactive to a proactive thinking (Williams 2008, 57). The responsibility to protect principle represents the operationalization of the human security principle and induces structural changes of the perennial values of the Westphalian system, through the principle of sovereignty as responsibility.

As Beck (1999, 137) explains, the reflexive modernity, in which is placed this analysis, is described by the logic “no-longer but-not-yet — no longer trust/security, not yet destruction/disaster”. These coordinates of society determine a preemptive action of society, which is resulted from the possible “boomerang effect” (Williams 2008, 63), explained by the end of *the other* and the loss of control. The increasing awareness about the current sources of uncertainty and global risk is reflected in a process of reflexivity and rethinking of the values and models that structure the current global reality. The empathy generated about the permanent perception of the world risk society - outrageous violations of human rights and of international law - determines the re-imagination of the core values that found global reality, fact that generates the restructuring of collectivities around common shared values (Beck and Levy 2013, 5). Therefore, a global civil society, animated by the imperative of re-affirmation of global humanitarian norms (as human security and responsibility to protect) emerges.

This article starts by analyzing the dimension of human security as being a palliative for the current mutual vulnerability of the world risk society. The analysis of the core principles of the human security rhetoric is conducted in order to identify its capacity to transform the international reality through the aggregation of communities around shared ideas. The following section approaches the evolution of the human security strategy, for tracing the changes in international relations induced by the human security paradigm. The third section of the article approaches the principle of responsibility to protect as the reification of the rhetoric of human security, by translating in the international reality the ethics of intervention and sovereignty as responsibility, in order to demonstrate the transformative ideas of the concept on international relations principle of non-intervention. The following section represents the analysis the theoretical framework of the proposed hypothesis, Constructivism as a holistic theory that explains the role of discursivity in structuring reality, and of the non-material factors to transform the international community. In the fifth part of the article, is demonstrated with Constructivist principles, the central hypothesis of this paper, proving the capacity of the human security paradigm and of the responsibility to protect principle to transform the international reality by moving the focus of international security from state toward the individual.

#### **Human security – “palliative for mutual vulnerability”**

The “new threats” and the “dark side or underside” effects of globalization determined

the search for a new concept of security, because the “one size fits all” national security approach was flawed (Thomas 2007, 118). This fact determined the necessity to adopt a holistic and contextual concept of security (Jolly and Ray 2006). Therefore, the concept of human security was derived from the idea of “mutual vulnerability” of the international system (Tigerstrom 2007, 19). The human security concept is emerged from liberal internationalist thought, which correlated domestic and international political aims (Franceschet 2006, 32), process which is explained through constructivism arguments.

The UNDP 1994 Report asks for the extension of the traditional security concept from territorial security toward people’s security and from security of armament to security assured by sustainable human development (UNDP 1994, 24). Human security is defined in paragraph 143 of the 2005 World Summit Outcome as “the right of all people to live in freedom and dignity, free from poverty and despair”. The purpose and effects of human security is to enlarge the individual’s freedom to make free choices and to contribute to development in a secure environment. The human security paradigm is integrative because it tries, based on a spirit of solidarity, to ensure the possibility to a participatory existence, in the spirit of human life and dignity (UNDP 1994, 22-3). UNDP identified in 1994 report the pillars of human security in economic security, food security, health security, environmental security, personal security, community security and political security. In addition, it aims the enfranchisement of the global citizen, by overcoming the traditional concepts of national state and pushing for a new form of sovereignty proper for the post Westphalian era (Benedek 2008, 7).

Furthermore, Beebe and Kaldor (2010, 11) mention that the primacy of human rights, the legitimate political authority, a bottom-up approach, effective multilateralism, regional focus and clear civilian command drive the framework of action under human security auspices. Thus, as Newman (2001, 249) observes, human security cannot be entailed in a sole theory; it is supported instead by social scientific theories that argument the fact that a reconsideration of security referent toward the individual can increase the effectiveness, efficiency and stability of the international system and moreover, it represents an important ethic input.

As an integrative and comprehensive paradigm, human security works proactively, because its goal is to reverse the process of violence escalation (Beebe and Kaldor 2010, 134).

### **The evolution of the human security paradigm – tracing the change in international relations**

The human security thinking is originated in Kantian democratic peace theory, in global justice ideas, in Wilsonian thinking (Franceschet 2006, 32) and in the theories and institutions that focus on the individual, humanity or human communities (Fine 2007, ix). This ethics was reactivated at the begging of 1940s, as a response to an era of wars, mass atrocities and events that were proscribed to never happen again, through the engagement of the US president Roosevelt for a vision of “freedom from fear” and “freedom from want” (Koehler, et al. 2012, 13). The first institutionalized concretization of proto-ideas of human security was encompassed in the United Nations Charter as an engagement to defense the peace and security for the individual, nuance observed in the expression “we the people of the world”, focusing on shared interest above nationality (Brauch 2008 , 29).

The events during the Cold War that determined in the academic world the request of

redefining security and those that followed after the fall of the Berlin Wall (Rwanda, Srebrenica) determined the orientation of institutional thinking towards a new, improved concept of security that would value the world citizens. The critical juncture in human security development was the publication of the Human Development Report by UNDP in 1994. In a chronological order, there can be made three stages delimitation in the development of this concept in relation with international politics: the first step was the proposal in UNDP 1994 report, which was received with skepticism by international community because it was believed to attack state sovereignty (Tadjbakhsh and Chenoy 2007, 23). The second was the Copenhagen Summit that adopted the UNDP definition in 1995 and the next step was the establishment of the Human Security Network in 1999. In 1997 the Canadian prime-minister Lloyd Axworthy mentioned that “this concept recognizes the complexity of the human environment and accepts that the forces influencing human security are interrelated and mutually reinforcing” (Axworthy 1997, 184).

The role of the UN was incontestable in developing the normative commitments that gathered, emerged in human security paradigm. In this direction, it can be counted the decision of modifying the laws of war towards an increased individual security (MacFarlane and Khong 2006, 86). By defining human security as a distinct concept of traditional military security and of human development, UNDP realized simultaneously a shift in the referent object of security and the mechanism to achieve it (Tigerstrom 2007, 16). Following the publication of UNDP 1994 report, and the echoes it had in academia and among some countries, Kofi Annan adopted the human security agenda in 1999 Millennium Declaration. In this perspective, human security includes economic development, social justice, environmental protection, democratization and respect for human rights and the rule of law, including good governance, access to education, health and to assure equal opportunities for personal development (K. Annan 2000, 2001). The concept was “reinforced” by showing its importance in response to international events in the UN paradigm was continued by the 2004 report “A more secure world: Our Shared Responsibility”.

### **The responsibility to protect – the ethics of intervention and sovereignty as responsibility**

The Critical theories sustain that the concept of human security offers a window of opportunity in reinterpreting reality and changing the meaning of the core principle of Westphalian order. The new international dynamics and conception of liberal peace places the new realities in the post-Westphalian world-order, which is changing the meaning of state sovereignty toward sovereignty as responsibility, through the implementation of the principle of responsibility to protect.

The failure of the UN to prevent genocide and massacres led to a rethinking of the realities of cooperation (Hoffmann and Nollkaemper 2012, 13) and generated the reification of the human security paradigm in the responsibility to protect principle. In 2001 the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty, released the report “Responsibility to Protect” in which proposed three pillars for the change of paradigm in this field of UN: (i) state responsibility implies protection responsibilities, (ii) every state has the primary responsibility to protect the people on its territory, and (iii) the international community has a residual responsibility to step in if states are unable or unwilling to protect

the people on their territory (ICISS, 2001). At the World Summit from 2005, Responsibility to Protect received the authoritative framework with full support from the international community.

At the core of R2P stands human security, which encompasses human rights, being a “conceptual framework for international action”. It is recognized as both applying to states and people, because the “the human impact of international actions cannot be regarded as collateral to other actions, but must be a central preoccupation for all concerned (...) as one of the fundamental objectives of modern international institutions” (ICISS 2001, 6).

The concepts of human security as well as of the responsibility to protect are used as overarching theoretical frameworks necessary in order to achieve not only negative but also positive peace, which means not only the absence of violence, but also the presence of social justice (Feigenblatt 2009, 28).

### **Constructivism – structuring reality on shared values**

Constructivism is a holistic theory, perceived as a reflexive meta-theory (Guzzini 2000, 149). Furthermore, Guzzini identifies the role of *Zeitgeist* of constructivism build on the theoretical capacity to offer explanation for a “meta-theoretical shift in social science”.

The central thesis of Constructivist theory is that nonmaterial factors can change the reality of international politics. It advocates the “socially constructed character of actors’ interests and identities” (Phillips 2007, 60). In addition, Constructivism establishes a direct relation between “what actors do and what they are” in explaining reality and interactions (Wendt 1992, 417-424). Therefore, through this explicative framework, it is emphasized the social character of international relation, which is determined by shared knowledge, values, norms (Baylis and Smith 2001, 265). Reality is a social construct, which is formed on instrumental knowledge and principled ideas, values and norms, in which identity occupies a central role. The explicative focus on identity is settled in Constructivism because what distinguish groups from others are knowledge, norms and values (Leuffen, Rittberger and Schimmelfennig 2013, 86). Therefore, the constructivist principles include embed in these mechanisms human consciousness, national identity and interest formation (Tsai 2009, 21).

The process of structuring reality explained by Constructivism is completed by the role of discourse. Critical constructivism underlines the discourse and linguistic methods as instruments for social construction of world politics (Karacasulu and Uzgören 2007). Therefore, society and people make or transform each other in an ongoing, two-way process, where ideas, identities, speeches, and rules play a role in shaping realities and preferences (Zehfuss 2004, 31). Constructivism summarizes this logic affirming that “by speaking, we make the world what it is” (Onuf 2002, 126). The speech act theory merges in the constructivist approach by explaining the reasons for entities to participate in certain policies or decision, even if a direct advantage does not result for them (Waeber 2009, 177). Through discourse, constructivism participates, according to Guzzini (2000, 148), in the social construction of meaning and of the construction of social reality. Furthermore, constructivism sustains that “ideational or normative structures constitute agents and their interests” (Katzstein, Keohane and Krasner 1999).

### **The capacity of the human security rhetoric to structure international reality**

After the end of the Cold War was identified a paradigm shift from the traditional

Realist approach of understanding international relations toward a mobile, liquid understanding of reality embedded in Constructivism, which could explain the necessity to transform the individual in the epicenter of international security.

As it was presented in a previous section, the human security paradigm represents a comprehensive and integrative approach, which responds to the largest area of threats toward the individual's security, which is an ethical approach toward humanity valuing principles (Browning and McDonald 2013, 238-243). This fact is explained through the recognition and acceptance of *the other*, being the materialization of the culture of recognition (Carpinski 2012, 12) and a possible source of global governance based on the mutual recognition. Therefore, this inclusiveness creates the leverages of a shared idea between individuals, regardless their other differences. In the context of the world risk society, the human security paradigm has the potential to become a widespread shared value, due to the fact that it represents the solution to the current insecurity that the individual faces.

According to constructivist ethics, social structure, which is compound on shared knowledge, material resources and practices, structures the international community (A. Wendt 1995, 73). Following this logic, the human security paradigm has the capacity to transform the international community, because it represents an incentive for sharing of knowledge and aggregation of global communities due to common, shared ideas (Tsai 2009, 21). This transformative capacity of the human security paradigm on the international community can be explained through the bottom-up pressure of the global community toward political decision-makers (at national and international level) to embed it in a juridical international law. Following the bottom-up approach impetus for the values encompassed in the human security strategy, the international reality can be transformed in a multilateralism type of system, which is based on created common rules and on the process of reaching solutions to problems through cooperation and empowerment (Kaldor, Martin and Selchow 2007, 285).

Werthes and Bosold (2006, 12) identify the function of motivation and mobilization of the human security strategy as a political leitmotif. The function of motivation can be explained in the capacity of this paradigm to structure social reality through new collectivities formed around shared ideas and values. The mobilization function can be traced in the capacity of human security principles to determine a bottom-up pressure action of the communities constructed around the shared values of human security for the political factors to adopt it and to transform the individual in the referent of security.

The possibility that a new concept, that challenges the traditional international relations theories emerge on the agenda of UN and to an increasing number of states, demonstrates the structural changes in international relations that determined a restructuration of interests and identities (Tsai 2009, 22). The change of international discourse was synthesized in the formula that human security "has become a central organizing principle of international relations and a major catalyst for finding a new approach to conducting diplomacy" (Axworthy 2001, 10). Following this logic, it can be observed that human security became a self-reinforcing phenomenon.

The highly sensitive question for international relations field brought by the human security paradigm and its operationalization, the principle of responsibility to protect is

connected to the fact that they challenge the state's sovereignty and the sacrosanct principle of non-intervention. The concept of sovereignty as responsibility represents the increasing impact in international discourse of the concept of human security (ICISS 2001, 12-13). Despite these specifications, there is still a strong debate between morality, legitimacy, and legality in case of interventions under R2P principle which is still seen as an intrusion in state sovereignty. Nevertheless, human security is a solution in overcoming the unhelpful the human rights/sovereignty dichotomy (Tigerstrom 2007, 90-101). Through his process, the common and comprehensive concept of security extended the international view from an international system of states towards an international society, which legitimized institutions as new international actors and made a step towards enhancing security through international law (Debiel and Werthes 2006).

As it could be observed in the reaction of international community to the crises from East Timor, Libya and unsuccessful in Syria, the responsibility to protect rhetoric is used in order to respond to situation that threat the security of the individual. Thus, when analyzing the coherence in using this principle, it can be observed a reluctance of the international actors to use the rhetoric of human security and responsibility to protect. This reluctance is determined by the fact that if the discourse and ideas are spread and enter in the common mental, then a spillover effect could happen, or following the constructivist logic, it would re-shape the international reality.

The critics of the human security paradigm are placed around the fact that it "normatively attractive, but analytically weak" (E. Newman 2010, 82). This critique can be explained by the fact that human security has mobile, subjective and hard to achieve and to quantify goals, which makes difficult to follow coherently the actions under its auspices. Moreover, the human security paradigm does not have juridical force because it is not institutionalized in an international law. Thus, taking into consideration the emergence of the responsibility to protect principle and its application in the current international reality, it can be observed the capacity of rhetoric and discourse for transforming reality. The fact that the principle of responsibility to protect had a rapid translation from idea to become the centre of international normative, policy and institutional arenas and is one of the pillars of ongoing process of global governance, although it does not have a juridical force represents the power of discourse in structuring international reality.

As Newman (2010, 84) observes, the constructivist approach embedded in human security paradigm is a guarantee of the interrelation-communication with the social dimension of reality and the rapid response-capacity to new situations, security being a socially constructed concept, fact that arguments the transforming capacity on the international community.

### **Conclusions**

This analysis demonstrates the fact that the human security rhetoric, whose evolution is explained by Constructivism, represents a strong incentive for the transformation of international reality. The article reinforced the constructivist thinking that the values and ideas can have an impact upon international relations and on the implications of relations and structures between actors. The human security rhetoric has a transformative effect on international community by coagulating the support of communities and peace and security

oriented states. In addition, the responsibility to protect principle and its derived concept of sovereignty as responsibility prove the potential of norms without a juridical force to re-configure international reality through focus on the individual as the referent of security.

The Constructivism theory explains the phenomena to which realism is blind, like the assumption that threats are constructed, not inevitable, and they can be altered or mitigated (Tadjbakhsh and Chenoy 2007, 89). As presented in the previous analysis, the promotion of the human security paradigm is justified discursively on the basis of the idea that all human lives have the same value as we all belong to humanity. The main argumentative pattern was structured on the constructivist principles. Therefore, this paper demonstrated that based on shared values encompassed in human security rhetoric, it can be created bottom-up pressures, as well as top-down incentives for the implementation of human security and R2P, as consequence of a spill-over effect. The process of socialization based on the contagion of “good beliefs” represents the driving path of the launched call for a new international reality. The human security strategy has the necessary formulae that can encompass the basic human values that the individual worldwide share in order to restructuring collectivities around shared values. Considering the Constructivist theory, though the discursive method a domino process of soft values of human security internalization and a bottom-up pressure for elaborating corresponding external policies is possible. As the vehicle of a “global imaginary”, the human security paradigm amply fulfills the defining criteria of an ideology. Therefore, considering the potential transformative force that the human security paradigm has, the idea that the UN is a “key legitimizing device” of human security norms and practices reversed so that human security paradigm is to become a legitimizing device of the UN.

This analysis demonstrated that in reflexive modernity, in the context of insecurity of “no-longer but not-yet”, the human security rhetoric represents the response to the necessity to increase the promise of security and the factor which correlates the shared values for the security of the individual of global community. The human security paradigm represents palliative that can cover the subjective and inner fears of the individuals to the current permanent risk, therefore, in the constructivist logic, it has the potential to mobilize a bottom-up pressure for the international reality to change according to its principle.

Thus, the limits of this research are that it is not exhaustive, because it did not analyzed all the implications of the human security paradigm and of the responsibility to protect principles for international law and for the role of state in international relations. Moreover, the theoretical model validated in this analysis was not tested for the current international reality, which could be interpreted through a neo-realism resurrection of international relations. Further research should focus on testing the validated hypothesis of this article on the current international reality.

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