



The Position of Crisis in Human Development Processes and Thinking: Using the Human Security Perspective in an Era of Transitions

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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses how development thinking around threats and consequent crises—sudden sharp or severe disruptions in development paths—has in various ways often been inhibited and inadequate. It outlines how human security thinking can help counteract these weaknesses, at various levels, from providing a broad orientation through to some particular tools in research and planning. It sets the discussion in terms of required transitions within the era of the Anthropocene, during which threats and consequent crises can be expected to grow. Crises of various sorts appear inevitable and even necessary drivers for transition and must be used as windows of opportunity for change.

Thinking on human security and human development are largely complementary. Each is focused on overlapping but partly different dimensions in people’s lives; both are relevant for new narratives about rescuing a sense of a common human fate, such as the ones underlying the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the notion of the Anthropocene, and in superseding predominant narratives of the era of the liberal international order. This paper identifies and addresses some preconceptions and clichés in relation to crises and/or development that inhibit collaboration between the two perspectives. Our discussion of ‘development’ is mostly about the dominant understanding in mainstream international development cooperation after the Second World War, which suggested a clear-cut division between ‘developed’ and ‘developing’ countries, with the former seen as already having ‘graduated’ from the process.

We understand human security thinking as including at least the following: human security as a normative concept and goal; as an analytical framework to serve that objective; as a corresponding policy philosophy linking peace, development and human rights, the three pillars of the global community established through the United Nations; and as a policy planning approach to support operationalization. Each of these four has various specific versions.

This paper contains two parts. Part One identifies ways through which understanding and addressing crises through development processes and thinking can be obstructed: by the legacy of casual crisis talk; by waiting for trickle-down (‘the Kuznets curve of everything’); by an overriding preoccupation with root causes; by developmental hypermetropia; by the politics and perceptions of crises; by limits to attention, comprehension and empathy; and by an overly narrow view of admissible solutions to crises.

Part Two turns to the contributions that a human security perspective can make in addressing those obstacles and suggests ways forward in the context of the Anthropocene. It considers how the *2020 Human Development Report* provides new thinking but also indicates some limitations in the report in terms of mechanistic understandings of social and policy processes (perhaps stemming from closed-system models); a one-sided emphasis on agency and freedoms; and a lack of a notion of ‘enough’, which is related to a limited understanding of needs theory and leads to an unbalanced rendition of drivers of change. Part Two suggests how to respond in part to the limitations by applying human security ideas at various levels. It connects those ideas to a framework for thinking about transitions, requiring changes in vision and values as well as in methodologies and tools for analysis and planning.

The concluding discussion reviews the main points on the contributions of human security ideas, encompassing both a broad vision and specific relevant practices that can help in better understanding and coping with the normality of crises in a world in transition.

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Introduction: The roles of a human security perspective

Through the human security approach, human development thinking has gained a useful set of complementary tools to engage in understanding and responding to threats and (potential) crises. Human security language speaks in terms of threats to our priority values. It encompasses how such threats arise and interact and can affect differently situated persons and groups, the diverse perceptions of such threats and effects, and potential providers and means for security (see, e.g., Commission on Human Security 2003; Gómez and Gasper 2013; Martin and Owen 2014; Gasper 2020a; Gasper, Jolly, Koehler et al. 2020). The approach pays attention to and is useful in understanding the different phases of the crisis management cycle (response, recovery, prevention and preparedness). It complements and deepens human development thinking's emphasis on valued opportunities. Human security analysis assists in identifying threats that otherwise go under the radar as well as many other impacts that (mis)perceptions of risks and vulnerabilities generate in the public sphere. It also supports efforts to better attend to future generations through promoting sustainability (Gómez et al. 2021).

Human development thinking can still be restricted, however, by several clichés and preconceptions in relation to both crises and development. These inhibit collaboration between these 'partner' (in fact, non-identical twin) perspectives: human development and human security (Sen 2014; see also Gasper and Gómez 2014; Gasper 2020a). Aiming to identify and address these restrictive ideas and to promote better partnership between human development work and human security thinking, the paper asks the following questions. The first two sets are mainly addressed in Part One and the third and fourth primarily in Part Two.

- What has been the position of crises in development thinking? When and how did threats become largely external to development thinking/practice?
- What are the obstacles to thinking adequately about crisis and crises in development thinking?
- What are the potential gains of addressing these obstacles through a human security perspective for enriching and complementing human development thinking in a world of ongoing, linked, unfolding crises, recurrent and new?
- What are the possible bases, gaps, limitations and opportunities in the innovative *2020 Human Development Report* on the Anthropocene, with regard to threat and crisis identification, analysis and response?

By ‘crises’ we mean sudden sharp or severe disruptions in development paths. This definition covers both sudden disruptions, such as an earthquake or a war, and slowly unfolding but massively disruptive trends such as climate change.

Part One of the paper identifies multiple ways that development thinking can obstruct understanding and addressing crises.¹ The section is supported by historical examples, linked to recent efforts to better understand the history of development thinking in relation to humanitarianism as a global project and to the agency of actors from the periphery in moulding this project (e.g., Frey and Kunkel 2011; Paulmann 2013; Hodge 2016; Hilton et al. 2018). Building on this interpretive historical review, Part Two highlights contributions to addressing those obstacles through the human security perspective and suggests possible ways forward in the Anthropocene. A concluding discussion reviews the main points and offers some final thoughts.

Before those discussions, we provide a brief statement of how we understand human security thinking and what it can bring to human development thinking. This understanding reflects three decades of elaboration of human security work, through which much has been added, refined and reconsidered. Human security was initially presented as a concept and goal and linked to a classification of insecurities (UNDP 1994). This initial formulation was particularly useful as an advocacy tool, as its substantial use in conflict studies and foreign policy matters attests. But many in the traditional security studies community resisted it, leading to sterile debates over narrow versus broad versions of the concept. This impasse was gradually overcome through the 2000s by a panoply of new explorations connected to regional and national studies, increasing interest in a crisis-based approach, and much specific work related to climate change, migration, gender, conflict, disasters and other fields. Major United Nations landmarks in this process were the report of the Commission on Human Security (2003) and the 2012 General Assembly resolution on human security, which included many, although not all, of the elaborations of a human security perspective (United Nations 2012a).

Human security thinking can be understood as including a series of elements, which we group here under four headings. All four sets are present in the 2012 resolution, though not necessarily presented there in the most lucid way. Here we present them partly by using expressive statements from significant United Nations documents.

First, as already mentioned, human security *is a concept and an objective*—security for persons in their basic requirements and daily lives. “It means, first, safety from such chronic threats as hunger, disease and

¹ Development thinking as discussed in this paper has some similarities with Enlightenment values with regard to a positive bias about the future and a belief in the inevitability of progress. For example, Pinker (2018) uses ‘development’ mostly in relation to economic development and human development, so our presentation can be seen as indirectly querying some of his arguments. Nevertheless, we do not directly engage with discussions of Enlightenment thinking. Expanding our analysis in this direction would require a separate paper.

repression. And second, it means protection from sudden and hurtful disruptions in the patterns of daily life—whether in homes, in jobs or in communities” (UNDP 1994, p. 23). From the outset, human security thinking has emphasized threats, disruptions and associated possible crises, and its ideas about basic requirements frequently connect to ideas about human rights (e.g., Estrada-Tanck 2016).

Second, human security analysis is *an analytical frame* to serve the objective just mentioned. “The human security approach [to situation analysis] provides a way to survey the whole spectrum of human development. It can help to redraw attention to old risks and threats that persist despite familiarity, and to identify new risks and threats that arise with changes. In short, it provides a tool to identify priorities...,” partly through its attention to combinations and intersections of risks and threats (UNDP 2009, p. xi; see also United Nations 2012a, item 3). Its holistic focus on people’s daily lives helps to bridge some conventional intellectual and organizational divides. In recent generations, socioeconomic development work has been centred in different international organizations and epistemic communities than, for example, those for crises-related work on refugees and humanitarian relief, etc. Human security analysis has helped to partly bridge these divisions (see, for example, Commission on Human Security 2003).

Third, human security thinking is *a policy philosophy* that links the three foundational pillars of the United Nations—security, rights and development. “When the UN Charter speaks of ‘larger freedom,’ it includes the basic political freedoms...[plus] ‘freedom from want’ and ‘freedom from fear’ ...conscious that progress on one depends on and reinforces progress on the others” (United Nations 2005; see also United Nations 2012a, items 3a, 3c). Development, peace and dignified enjoyment of fundamental rights are each unlikely to be sustainable without the others. Crises resulting from such imbalances are a continual concern.

Fourth, human security is *a policy planning approach* that seeks to operationalize and apply the previous elements, including, notably, through “protection and empowerment strategies that are people-centred, comprehensive, context-specific and prevention-oriented” (United Nations 2013, p. 15; see also United Nations 2012a, item 3b). The human security framework contributes to more holistic and systematic planning and decision-making.

We discuss human security thinking more fully in Part Two. Evolution in it has come through more understanding of its position, complementarity and interaction with related concepts, including human development and the capability approach, human needs, human rights, vulnerability, resilience and others. Here we mention briefly what the literature suggests that the human security perspective and the four sets of elements just mentioned bring to human development thinking (Jolly and Basu Ray 2006; Sen 2014, 2015; Gasper and Gómez 2014; Gasper 2020a).

First, the human security perspective has underlined or added essential elements by looking at whole lives, both as experienced at one time (Sen 2014) and as lived over time:

- Stressing the interconnectedness of people and of all aspects of life as is essential for understanding vulnerabilities (e.g., Bodelier 2011; Gasper 2020b; Inglehart and Norris 2012; James 2014; Raskin 2021)
- Seeing people as environmentally embedded, living within interconnected systems that have breaking points (e.g., O'Brien et al. 2010) and more generally as finite creatures with basic needs (including more than material needs alone) and with breaking points too (e.g., Hobson, Bacon and Cameron 2014)
- Understanding people as emotional and subjective creatures who create emotion-laden mind maps (e.g., Tripp et al. 2013; Nussbaum 2001)

Some of these elements can be downplayed in human development work. The *2020 Human Development Report* takes a large step in recognizing environmental embeddedness, though perhaps not yet real fragility. And: “What if a realization of our [emotional and existential] connectedness were taken as the starting point for human development rather than as an afterthought?” (O'Brien 2020, p. 162).

Second, the human security perspective consequently adds to the capability approach within human development work, for example as follows:

- A person-focus is not unique to human security thinking, but what the latter adds is systematic exploration also of threats (including of how each of us has our own particular combination of circumstances, needs and vulnerabilities) and how people perceive, experience and respond to them. Emergence of “the idea of human security signifies recognition of the many threats to the dignity and survival of individual human beings” (Pitsuwan and Caballero-Anthony, 2014, p. 202). Amartya Sen described this as, in contrast to most development thinking, a “cautious and individually articulated perspective” (Sen 2015, p. 154).
- Further, as suggested by Farer (2011, p. 47): “What the [2003 Commission on Human Security] report and Sen independently found distinctive in a human security agenda was a focus on humanitarian crises rather than [only] the chronic pathologies of underdevelopment.”
- Capability approach language can include being vulnerable and being human in relation to other humans, non-humans and the natural environment but it requires elaboration to ground the above concerns in a more conscious ontology, a structuring of people’s awareness, and in methodologies. It

has strong and sometimes idealized emphases on reason and democracy but has lacked similar elaboration in relation to emotions and perceptions of threats and risks.²

Third, similar to emphasis on the distinctive combination of conditions and vulnerabilities of each person, a human security perspective looks at the particular combinations of threats faced by countries and regions, rather than analysing primarily in terms of the broad categories of the standard development ladder conception of high income, upper-middle income, lower-middle income, low-income and least developed. “The conventional narrative of development...[brings a country classification] insufficient to reflect some of the problems that arise from the global interdependence” (Madrueno-Aguilar 2016, p. 17).³ In this way, a human security conception can improve links to other approaches for understanding crisis and humanitarian affairs, for example, as advocated by Kaldor and colleagues (e.g., Kaldor et al. 2007; Chinkin and Kaldor 2017), although this potential is not yet fully exploited in the broader human security literature.

Lastly, the human security perspective can function as an integrative umbrella for various lines of work, many of which have evolved partly in interaction with human security ideas or are at least driven by similar challenges. For example, there are different versions of human security analysis, varying according to the breadth of priority values and possible threats that are considered, and according to whether there is also a focus on the human species as a whole (‘humanity security’, see Ord 2020b; Sears 2020; Luers 2020).

Human security work helps connect human development thinking with huge parallel streams of work on disaster risk reduction and management and on conflict. By looking at all phases of the crisis management cycle, for example, human security thinking covers both ‘humanitarianism’, which deals with immediate crises, and prevention issues. Conversely, it does not focus only on prevention; in many situations, dealing with root causes would require decades or generations or is even inconceivable. “[P]revention is only one part of the crisis cycle and, no matter how important it is, we can expect the full [cycle] to require attention in order for deep transformation to be possible” (Gómez 2014, p. 36).

² Nussbaum’s sister ‘capabilities approach’ says much more here. Krupanski (2014) offers another comparison, of human development thinking, human security thinking and livelihoods approaches. “Rather than being incompatible or divergent frameworks, this review has shown the common goals, concerns, principles and methodologies that all share” (p. 39). So, for example, work on household livelihood security can be seen as a special case of human security analysis. “Similarly, [the review] has also highlighted the ways in which human security [thinking] offers a unique addition by approaching livelihood and development threats as structural violence and existential threats.... [Further, human security thinking] engages intentionally and holistically with traditional security actors and concerns in order to mitigate both direct and structural violence for the benefit of the people” (ibid., pp. 39-40).

³ Madrueno-Aguilar (2016) essays a country classification based instead on the six clusters of threats to human security specified by the 2004 High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change that reported to the United Nations Secretary-General. The paper uses radar diagrams to jointly map these threats.

Human security work motivates and links many policy areas related to international regulation and global public goods. These include issues such as climate change, the COVID-19 pandemic, migration and misinformation. This umbrella role helps inspire new perspectives, alternative gauges for policy design and broader partnerships (see, e.g., Beebe and Kaldor 2010; Drèze and Sen 1989; Estrada-Tanck 2016; Jolly and Basu Ray 2006).

The following pages seek to substantiate these statements through a special focus on crisis and against the background of humanity's ongoing environmental, economic and political transitions. These overlapping transitions, linked to the Anthropocene, (un)sustainable development and other crises of the liberal international order, allow us to contextualize and concretize the contributions that human security ideas can offer.

Part One: Intellectual and sociopolitical inhibitions in development thinking with regard to addressing crises

Many crises challenging the world today are not new. Socioeconomic conditions are certainly different from those of a century ago and have sometimes increased both our exposure and sensitivity. But threats such as infectious diseases, natural hazards or violence have accompanied humanity throughout its existence. Indeed, they have been an omnipresent justification for development, particularly as a Western project for the underdeveloped world after the Second World War. In the United States, President Truman's 1949 inaugural speech, a landmark formulation of mainstream development propositions, mentions hunger, disease, misery and despair as underlying his new programme to achieve prosperity and peace. Almost every exhortation for development mentions at least one crisis justifying action, usually combining mention of the sudden onset of threats that will have humanitarian consequences and reference to the slow-moving underlying problems and failures of previous development thinking. Therefore, we ask: *How is it that crises and threats have often been disconnected, relatively speaking, from core development thinking?* Exploring this disconnection through a review of history can help us understand better the position of human security analysis vis-à-vis development thinking, and the contributions of the former to the latter.

Recent attention to the history of development and humanitarianism offers a good entry point to identify the displacement of attention for some non-economic crises and their management to outside the development umbrella.⁴ Despite substantially shared origins, connections among thinking on human security, development and humanitarianism are often relatively absent from the literatures of each.⁵ To consider how these different approaches to threats complement each other even as some issues have slipped through the cracks, we will start by looking at the strong connections between development, humanitarianism and crisis.

There is no single explanation of the disconnection described above. Different threats and different contexts result in multiple ways through which development and crises, and thinking about them, interact. Still, we can identify some patterns in these interactions through which inhibitions to understanding and considering

⁴ One framing explored to a certain degree in the literature is the so-called security-development nexus (Duffield 2001; Chandler and Hynek 2011; McCormack 2011; Hodge 2016). Work of this type in critical security studies has argued that development was widely approached as part of the Cold War and counterinsurgency and warned against a possible similar instrumentalization of human security propositions. This is an important observation; the geopolitical dynamics underlying development conceptions are relevant for our analysis.

⁵ Michael Barnett mentioned the lack of research connecting human security and humanitarianism during a virtual symposium in early June 2021 kickstarting work on the 2022 UNDP Human Development Report Office report on human security. The literature on the humanitarianism-development continuum is an exception, but it is important to keep in mind that 'development' in this literature refers almost exclusively to international development cooperation (Gómez and Kawaguchi 2016).

threats become evident. Seven such inhibitions will be discussed in Part One, drawing on some historical examples that help in envisioning the nature and implications of these perceptions of crises:

- Casual crisis talk
- Waiting for trickle-down (or ‘the Kuznets curve of everything’)
- Overriding preoccupation with root causes
- Developmental hypermetropia
- The politics and perceptions of crises
- Limits to attention, comprehension and empathy
- An overly narrow view of admissible solutions to crises

Inhibitions to dealing with crises through development can be broadly divided into two groups, depending on the type of development thinking/practice in question: first, development seen as a goal of less rich societies (a.k.a. developing countries), and second, development seen as a goal of every society. The differences are not always clear-cut but the classification into two groups is useful as each points to different actors and levels requiring change. This division also helps recognize the current transformation of development narratives, particularly in relation to the SDGs, which now present development as (again) a universal goal. In this sense, it is important to note that our division here is based on ‘development’ as understood in mainstream international cooperation after the Second World War. It assumed a clear division between developed and developing countries, with the former seen as having already ‘graduated’ from the process.⁶ This vision came to displace an understanding of development as a common aim, an understanding that existed in the nineteenth century and informed early economic thinking (Cowen and Shenton 1996). We see discussions around the SDGs and the Anthropocene as pushing towards recovering such universality, superseding the ideas of the era of the liberal international order and the dominance of the United States of America.⁷

⁶ For instance, although ‘development’ is in the name of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), its webpage on ‘development’ is overwhelmingly about developing (i.e., low-income) countries. See: <https://www.oecd.org/development/>.

⁷ The liberal international order refers to the set of principles, rules and institutions inspired by Western liberal values that became the global standard as the United States of America became the world’s unipolar power. These include the rule of law, democracy, open markets and multilateralism. All our mentions of liberalism in the paper refer to the liberal international order. Discussing liberalism from a broader perspective is beyond the scope of the paper.

INHIBITIONS TO ADDRESSING CRISIS IN APPROACHES TO DEVELOPMENT IN UNDERDEVELOPED COUNTRIES

Casual crisis talk

Development thinking has frequently used crisis language too easily, to gather attention and justify intervention. Crush (1995) maintains that: “The language of ‘crisis’ and disintegration creates a logical need for external intervention and management” (p. 9). While there are certainly real crises that all societies confront in different ways, co-opting them to advance particular agendas has been a perpetual danger.

The capacity to protect populations against declared crises was used to legitimate domination by colonial and neocolonial powers and presented as part of civilizing missions (Kalinovsky 2021). Documenting disaster relief operations in the Caribbean and Central America, Irwin (2018) sees how “the progenitors for both disaster relief and development assistance can be found in Anglo-US citizens’ longstanding and repeated efforts to reform or ‘civilize’ populations they deemed inferior,” both domestically and internationally (p. 44). She describes how officials in charge of disaster relief operations in the first half of the twentieth century typically believed locals were incapable of effectively managing operations themselves. These beliefs were not limited to “Anglo-US citizens” but were common to different colonial and imperial administrations. They are still widespread in humanitarian assistance today, where it is common to assume that the local has little or no capacity, far less than international actors (Barbelet 2018; Gómez 2021; see also Autesserre 2021). Hence, ‘crisis talk’ is sometimes disempowering, entrenching preconceptions of passivity, incompetence and being on the periphery, and thus generating resistance.

Paulmann (2016) describes how human-made disasters, in other words, inhuman practices by other actors, were central to imperial era humanitarianism. Slavery is the paradigmatic example but ethnic cleansing against Jews and Christians in the Ottoman Empire was also proffered as justification for European intervention. Highlighting barbaric practices in non-Western societies, such as widow-burning in India, served to disempower non-white colonial subjects (at least existing dominant groups as opposed to the widows). As Crush (1995) mentions: “The causes [proffered] are mostly endogenous—tribalism, primitivism and barbarism in older versions; ethnicity, illiteracy and ignorance in more modern incarnations” (p. 9). Atrocities by colonial powers also started to receive attention in this process, however, often through activism by critical religious groups.

The strategic use of crisis as a justification for intervention continued as the ‘civilizing mission’ emphasis changed more and more to modernization. Different kinds of crises would justify different kinds of interventions, resulting in dissimilar patterns of accommodation and/or resistance. Hunger and disease played a central role during and after the Cold War, as humanitarian justifications for a need-based approach to

development (Streeten 1982). Famines were critical in galvanizing attention to the so-called Third World, although, as development scholars would also show, declarations of impending food crises were not always based on facts or sensible assumptions (Drèze and Sen 1989, p. 31). Development and development assistance themselves were repeatedly seen to be in crisis (e.g., Haq 1973; Easterly 2001), and such perceived crisis was useful in promoting the gradual spread of the human development paradigm (e.g., Haq 1984, Haq and Kirdar 1989).

Drawing attention to development by speaking of crises could be seen as a positive strategy but one liable to co-optation and consequent distrust. This was strongly visible in relation to violent conflict, which was not related by analysts to development practice until well into the 1990s and then just gradually, given its profoundly sensitive political nature. Indeed, international intervention on humanitarian grounds would not be accepted at the United Nations level until after the end of the Cold War (Finnemore 1996). Efforts against infectious diseases suffered similar mistrust. One example was the United States-backed World Health Organization (WHO) global Malaria Eradication Programme launched in 1955. It “resembled colonial disease control efforts in that its public health goals were secondary to broader concerns related to promoting economic development and political stability and allegiance” (Manela 2018, p. 95). More recently, Murphy (2006), in his intellectual history of UNDP, described how, in contrast to the United Nations, the World Bank could be seen as using “crises of human security” as “opportunities to restructure societies to reinforce the global status quo” (p. 300).

The trickle-down trope (or the Kuznets curve of everything)

The use of crisis to justify development action suggests that development actors know the problem and how to solve it. The fact that developed countries are apparently not affected by some of these crises serves as apparent proof of their superior knowledge although this can be misleading in multiple ways—e.g., because problems are hidden (see the discussion later of perception issues) or because particular threats may not be relevant for richer countries given different contexts (e.g., tropical diseases, famines).

The use of crises to promote development expenditure can be linked to two similar, indirect approaches to addressing underlying threats. The first centres on the expectation of a trickle-down effect from economic growth, which in the end results in solving the crisis. This was the initial way in which poverty was addressed through early economic development initiatives in the 1950s and 1960s, giving way to disappointment and calls for change in the 1970s (Grant 1973; Haq 1971, 1973). This view of initial development efforts led in part to the basic needs approach, precursor of many human development ideas (Jolly et al. 2009).

The trickle-down effect was also prominent in attempts at understanding environmental threats in the 1990s through the environmental Kuznets curve (Stern 2004). The original Kuznets curve was proposed in relation to

inequality and the way it had increased in developed countries during earlier phases of industrialization, as they moved from moderately unequal low-income status to more severely unequal middle-income status, but had then declined in a phase of reaching a more balanced high-income status. In the same way, problems produced by pollution would supposedly be dealt with once societies became rich enough to value, devise and pay for the necessary solutions.

Both trickle-down effects and Kuznets curves have generally been revealed as fictions in dealing with crises. Regardless of their development status, societies can and often do already address crises. Drèze and Sen (1989) showed how that is frequently the case during famine threats. The COVID-19 pandemic has also demonstrated that different performances are not necessarily correlated to income per capita. Yet this way of thinking, of supposedly accommodating crises of the short-term through long-term development, does not disappear. A similar argument nowadays is that in all countries, any disequalizing shift will in the long run supposedly generate an equalizing countershift.

The assumption that countries must wait to become rich before addressing some threats can result in silo thinking about confronting some crises, such as some infectious diseases. Eradication implies continuing to invest resources well after most of the population has been immunized, which some analysts see as taking away resources from other health problems or development goals; this was the case during smallpox eradication campaigns after the Second World War and remains the case even now for polio (Arita et al. 2006; Manela 2018, p. 103; Sutter and Zaffran 2019; Zimmermann et al. 2019). This narrow view fails to compare costs relative to other development or security expenditures, such as fighter jets or highways, which are many times more costly than immunization campaigns.⁸ Resource availability to deal with crises should be evaluated case by case.

The idea of waiting to get rich is also sometimes used to try to justify lack of access to vaccines or medical treatments in countries with less robust social security systems. This sort of argumentation was sometimes seen with antiretroviral treatments in the 1990s, in the reactions when Brazil, India and South Africa came forth to confront property rights held by pharmaceutical companies. Human development proposals that do not directly address threats might be said to assume new versions of trickle-down, in which threats will in the end somehow disappear or be resolved as human development takes place.⁹ The underlying claim has been that, first, it is possible to have a world in which economic growth with its existing patterns of production and

⁸ Jolly and Basu Ray (2006) emphasized how human security thinking promotes attention to broader cost-benefit considerations when talking about crises. See also Gasper et al. (2020).

⁹ For instance, the Human Development Report prepared at the time of the 2012 Rio+20 meeting used sustainability and equity as its main themes, giving limited attention to security and understanding crises very narrowly—only in connection to finance (UNDP 2011).

consumption works in harmony with the goal to protect populations. Second, attempts to protect the populations right now are supposedly disruptive and destructive, hence current crises should allegedly therefore largely be tolerated or simply ignored.¹⁰

An overriding preoccupation with root causes

The basic needs approach and human development ideas emerged partly as an alternative to economic growth trickle-down expectations for addressing poverty. The multiple dimensions underlying poverty started receiving direct attention in measurement and policy. From the perspective of adopting an intense direct focus on poverty alleviation, as in the 1990s, the development project (as interpreted for many years in much of international development cooperation) can be seen as specializing in a particular type of crisis—extreme poverty viewed as a humanitarian crisis.

Nevertheless, other crises continued to be seen as connected to the structural dimensions of poverty. Models to understand crises usually find correlations with so-called root causes, namely, the socioeconomic characteristics of the most vulnerable populations. These root causes are seen as deep explanations of vulnerability and harm, demanding attention in order to achieve the long-term prevention of crises (Stewart 1998). This is very positive and, to a good extent, represents learning from development practice.

There is a risk, however, that a priority focus on root causes can interfere with the practice of crisis management. This can happen in at least two ways: first, in relation to root causes that do not offer actionable opportunities for dealing with crises, and second, through competition for scarce policy resources. One common example is Sen's (1999) theory that famines have not taken place in functional democracies with a vigorous free press. While this is one more reason to keep and promote those systems, democratization and nurturing a constructive free press are beyond the reach of actors in charge of food security policies. The ideas thus offer limited help in providing solutions within the crisis management cycle.¹¹ Another example can be drawn from the UNDP (2005) human security report on the Philippines, which found correlations between reduced conflict and, for example, adult educational attainment and median income, among other indicators. While important in the long term, these relationships are hardly of use in confronting the situation in the country in the short and medium terms. Sen (1999) thus observes how "[t]he prevention of famines and other

¹⁰ Umegaki (2009) presents this problem as 'life in the interim'—the gap between promises of development and what happens to people's lives while the promises supposedly become reality.

¹¹ Drèze and Sen (1989) did not stop there. They undertook a thorough analysis of what famines are and how different tools and approaches are necessary to respond, recover and prevent them. Later parts of this section draw on their insights.

disastrous crises is a somewhat different discipline from that of overall increase in average life expectancy and other achievements” (p. 187).

In addition, there is the problem of resource allocation for crisis management. What approaches and institutions should receive the budgets to deal with different crises? Ideally, all parts of the management cycle deserve attention, and different approaches must be included. See, for instance, the long list of approaches for managing climate change risks developed by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC 2014, p. 27), including human development and poverty alleviation, alongside direct structural and institutional arrangements. Practice, however, is more complicated, as resources are limited, and different actors have varying capacities and influence over power. For example, in Honduras after Hurricane Mitch in 1998 (Suárez and Sánchez 2012; Gómez 2018), disaster risk reduction allocation was displaced from the centre of the recovery due to ‘transformation’ efforts that included addressing root causes, such as poverty reduction, good governance and transparency. Ten years after the disaster, the country was still vulnerable to disasters while transformation had also failed to materialize. A similar discussion is now underway in relation to post-COVID-19 recovery, as the pandemic has resulted in multiple social effects, all demanding attention, plus the opportunity of a ‘green recovery’. Shafik (2021), for instance, sees in the pandemic an opportunity to fix the social contract, a root cause par excellence. While commendable, to what extent pandemic preparedness and prevention will remain sufficiently central in the recovery and beyond, given so many other plausible objectives, remains to be seen.

To be fair, this is not a problem specific to a focus on longer-term development. It also affects the balance of attention inside phases of crisis management. Non-economic disasters, for instance, were mainly seen as part of humanitarian action in international cooperation until the 2000s, and even now appear as such in the OECD classification (Higashiura and Gómez 2018). Further, local actors working in prevention and recovery have not been an active part of the humanitarian community of practice. They instead had separate spheres for action, which only gradually have been integrated through international agreements such as the 2015 Sendai Framework on Disaster Risk Reduction. Overall, the balance of attention to different causes, effects and approaches to crisis requires careful consideration.

Developmental hypermetropia

Much development cooperation thinking tends to see itself as superior to humanitarian approaches, because it deals with the longer term, does more than address basic needs and goes beyond crisis management. As the previous inhibitions suggest, development cooperation typically claims to contribute to solving crises through economic growth and/or attention to root causes. The perceived superiority of developmental practice in dealing with crises is reinforced by the accepted idea that humanitarian problems do not have humanitarian

solutions (e.g., Ogata 2005). Without adequate focus on crises themselves, we argue that these good intentions may not be as helpful as expected.

Putting development cooperation exclusively in the governance driving seat can have further negative implications. As it aims to influence the long term, it could minimize present crises. This has happened from colonial times, when famines taking place under Western imperial tutelage in India and Ireland received negligent treatment. Malthusian ideas about population dynamics and early faith in market solutions were used to justify immense human tragedies and avoid emergency responses (Sen 1981; Davis 2001; Paulmann 2016, pp. 1115-1116). Disasters in colonies were considered acts of God, outside of the State's protection commitments. Similarly, infectious diseases were assumed to affect colonizers more acutely, resulting in pre-conceptions about some indigenous populations' special resistance, a belief underlying the use of labour across the tropics (Anderson 1996). Anderson (*ibid.*) describes how understanding of disease in colonial settings was based on "a vast ignorance of the actual distribution of disease in colonial populations" (p. 101). Glasman (2020) also observes how "international statistics on poverty, hungry or migration did not include the world's colonized population" until the 1940s (p. 5).

More recently, given development policy specialization on eradication of extreme poverty and on poverty alleviation, especially during the past generation, other crises were relatively sidelined. Deschamp and Lohse (2013) mention how, in early attempts in the 1990s by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to address the gap in supporting refugees, together with UNDP and the World Bank, development practitioners typically saw themselves as already too busy with the more numerous poor populations (see also Crisp 2001).¹² Violent conflicts also fell outside the scope of development cooperation until long after the end of the Cold War, for their political nature made them incompatible with the technical image of development. Environmental threats were for several decades difficult to encompass in development work, as attending to them was often seen as in conflict with economic growth and present poverty reduction goals (Gómez et al. 2021; Fukuda-Parr and Muchhala 2020). As an overly farsighted gatekeeper, development cooperation can hinder crisis management.

¹² This 2001 statement by Mark Malloch Brown, then the Administrator of UNDP, cited by Deschamp and Lohse (2013), deserves being quoted in extenso: "With regard to the linkage between emergency operations and development activities, it should not be forgotten that the latter affected 4.6 billion people whereas the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), for example, dealt with 40 million people. Once the emergency relief phase was over, the amount spent for each inhabitant fell considerably. Temporary arrangements needed to be made for the difficult period of post-disaster recovery to make sure that some form of bridging finance was available. However, it was a sensitive question: the UNDP Executive Board had itself asked questions about whether it should allocate more resources to countries emerging from conflict and had concluded that its limited resources should be entirely devoted to development, which was already underfunded" (p. 42).

INHIBITIONS TO ADDRESSING CRISIS THAT OPERATE ACROSS ALL COUNTRIES

The politics and perceptions of crises

Life used to be “solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short,” or so argued Thomas Hobbes and similar thinkers, until sovereign States emerged with the capacity to enforce a social contract of protection. We might say that crises were at the centre of modern political institutions from their very beginning—i.e., the heart of the practice of government, the reason for the existence of the State (Teitel 2011, p. 162; Manela 2018; Gómez 2019). This has deep implications for understanding the position of crisis, for such an important role implies that crises are deeply political and are rarely, if ever, considered development issues. Instead, they are about issues of survival compromising the legitimacy of the government—in other words, they are mainly considered security threats.

Dealing with crises as security issues, instead of as development problems, implies a qualitative change in thinking and practices. The COVID-19 pandemic illustrates this point vividly, as the pandemic has been a universal human security threat. Yet discussions about the pandemic as a development problem have been limited to investigating the effects on so-called developing countries. In all countries, however, confronting all kinds of threats must be weighed sooner or later against general plans for growth, sustainability and welfare. Thus, in this section, we concentrate on inhibitions to dealing with crises relevant for all countries in connection to their development. This approach allows us to add some challenges in development-security-humanitarianism interfaces and to further emphasize some double standards in thinking about different crises as explored in the previous section. At least three inhibitions can be identified: They relate respectively to the perception of crises, the knowledge required to solve them and the types of solutions favoured. We will briefly describe each of these.

Crisis are particularly challenging to manage because of the perceptions behind them. These are not only important because of their objective consequences but also because of their subjective effects (e.g., Bourbeau 2015). One can distinguish between the perceptions of those directly affected by the crisis and the perceptions of others who can intervene. Perceptual components add an additional layer of complexity to dealing with crisis, in a way that traditional development thinking does not easily encompass.¹³ Partly because of perceptions, security crises affecting rich countries (and elites) receive overwhelming priority. The security of rich populations completely trumps the security of those on the periphery. Crises may materialize because

¹³ The different attention given to perception in development and security work reflects the traditional disciplinary divisions between political economy and security studies (Palan and Petersen 2015). Some advances related to development thinking in this respect can be seen in the World Bank reports on risks (2014) and governance challenges (2017).

elites or the public do not believe they will happen, do not want to believe or do not care, or discount time differently (Gasper 2019). Competition for attention is biased towards visually appealing agendas. All these aspects are beyond the measurements of functionings through the capability approach, for example, and need their own approach.

Limits to attention, comprehension and empathy

Another crucial factor underlying crisis management is knowledge. Even if we become aware of the threats, they often become crises because we lack sufficient knowledge to address them. The race to understand threats and provide solutions, and not to treat threats as given conditions or acts of God, is central to security. This stance has related to the emergence of the development project but has distinctive implications with regard to the underdeveloped. On the one hand, shared threats require a whole-of-society effort to find solutions, well beyond the relatively narrow developmental audience. While plenty has changed from the initial economics dominance in much development thinking—i.e., the equating of development to economic growth in the first three decades (and often more) after the Second World War—much remains to be done about enhancing other epistemic communities' contributions in human development narratives. In contrast, around each type of crisis, a wide range of actors and approaches very obviously needs to gather, through whose interactions relevant solutions are then more likely to emerge. Historically, epistemic communities have consolidated around these challenges, e.g., public health, disaster risk reduction, food security and climate change. They interact and sometimes interlink with governments, particularly through line ministries, to inform policymaking. Concerning climate change, Gasper (2014) argues, however, that mutually reinforcing narrowness of attention, narrowness of awareness and narrowness of sympathies plague efforts to arrive at global solutions.

The creation and dissemination of this knowledge is still very unequal. This inequality is embedded in the development paradigm's emergence. The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries saw the beginning of some change in predominant understandings of 'acts of God' such as diseases and disasters, as knowledge in public health and meteorology, among other sciences, started to accelerate and connect (e.g., Davis 2001). With the advent of a scientific understanding of threats, it was possible both to protect societies at home and expand the scope of the civilizing mission conceived under colonial arrangements. Later this scientifically enhanced mission helped to transform 'the civilizing mission' into 'modernization' (Anderson 1996, p. 112), a shared goal across the world in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and later associated with development.

The expansion of the scientific understanding of threats was concentrated in the metropolises although the periphery was also involved.¹⁴ Japan, for instance, had its own advances in anti-seismic construction (Clancey 2006) and at the same time undertook efforts in the Meiji Era to catch up with the West by sending study missions there. Such knowledge was put into practice to improve metropolitan societies while implementation in colonies took far longer, if ever.¹⁵ Paulmann (2013) shows how humanitarian crises were initially seen as located close to Europe and how only slowly did problems taking place in other regions receive attention—with the possible exception of famines in India, but these were deemed unavoidable and considered as supporting Malthusian ideas about population dynamics. Initial efforts to agree on some international health regulations were centred in Europe too, basically focusing on cholera and opening to yellow fever only when one of the International Sanitary Conferences took place in the United States (Howard-Jones 1975). The League of Nations was basically Eurocentric; humanitarian action in that era dealt with famines, statelessness and other problems affecting Europe (Cabanes 2014). Additionally, Acharya and Buzan (2019) cite work that shows how ‘scientific racism’ was a widely accepted political view for the first half of the twentieth century, justifying double standards and contributing to the Holocaust.

For some authors (see the literature reviews by Hodge 2015, 2016; Kalinovsky 2021), development came to completely replace ‘the civilizing mission’ after the Second World War. Science and technology now played a central role. Yet as far as crises go, the divide in knowledge between the metropole and what fell into the ‘development’ domain continued. The misconception that knowledge is created in the North and flows to the South became further entrenched even if in different ways. Southern countries have tried to show that they work beyond ‘imported magic’ (Medina et al. 2014), although a certain ‘coloniality’ commonly remains about who gets the data, who publishes and how research benefits are distributed. This was a critical issue during the H5N1 outbreak in 2007 when Indonesia refused to share virus samples. The country’s decision was a reaction to the common practice of researchers and companies coming into the country and stealing disease samples, from which they could develop tests and treatments that Indonesia would have to pay for—probably at prices that could destabilize its social protection system, as was the case with HIV-AIDS. This dissatisfaction about the way disease samples were trafficked during outbreaks was conducive to a new international blueprint for resource sharing.¹⁶ The joint pursuit of knowledge creation to address crises is a constant

¹⁴ Gómez (2019) suggests that one reason why Latin America was not closely linked to international humanitarianism during its origin was that local advances allowed countries to deal with threats by themselves, particularly in relation to public health and disasters.

¹⁵ Acharya and Buzan (2019, pp. 72-73) quote several authors showing how Japan was different as a colonial power as it pursued industrialization in the periphery.

¹⁶ On Indonesia, see Fiddler (2008); some agreement on a research and development blueprint was achieved in 2016 (see WHO 2016).

challenge. Such pursuit can be constrained by the development legacies we have described, although Sen's work on famines, and other examples, show it is possible to overcome such barriers.

Crises and admissible solutions

Finally, dealing with crises through a 'development' lens implies consideration of available resources and long-term implications. First, then, when solutions are not quickly available, some may try to present many threats as 'conditions' we must live with. This normalization was not only behind the 'divine punishment' rationalization described above ('acts of God') but also underlies Malthusian ideas about how to regulate population size.¹⁷ When such catastrophes affect underdeveloped 'others', this argument becomes easier to make for the harm is not directly affecting the metropole. Also, when lower strata of societies are affected, within and between countries, considerable tolerance of harm is typically seen, as in cases of gang violence or drug abuse (Case and Deaton 2020). At the intranational level, however, as opposed to when talking about other countries, harm is more difficult to present as a given condition—e.g., the number of deaths that we purportedly must tolerate for the greater good—even though that is still common.

Second, the quality of the solutions and the amount of resources invested can vary drastically depending on whether crises are seen as menacing the survival of the nation or as a 'situation' needing to be balanced and harmonized with development goals. The present pandemic has witnessed a frenetic race for solutions, accompanied by the generous use of resources to stabilize societies during the emergency. In the case of the first antiretroviral treatments for HIV/AIDS, only rich countries could access these until intellectual property restrictions were relaxed. In the case of climate change, Gasper et al. (2013) show how while the World Bank and UNDP have approached the causes differently, both viewed market-driven solutions as the only conceivable main line of approach. Market-driven solutions are indeed very welcome if they work. The problem is when the (mainstream) 'development' lens constrains the types of solutions considered, such as in failing to emphasize more attention to State intervention, to what is enough and to the possibility of de-growth strategies.

Restrictions on admissible solutions to dealing with crisis are linked to the position of crisis management inside each society (Gómez 2019) and the presence or absence of a welfare State and its characteristics. The provision of protection can be seen either as the responsibility of the State or something that people should take care of by themselves—or somewhere in between.¹⁸ Moyn (2018) asserts that the particular manner of the rise and connection between the principles of needs and rights in the 1970s often in practice weakened the welfarist

¹⁷ De Waal (2018) shows how Malthusian arguments remain alive today in relation to famines.

¹⁸ For instance, the World Bank is keen to promote different insurance schemes to protect people against disasters, including pandemics. The COVID-19 crisis showed the limits of such an approach in relation to a major calamity.

implications of social rights. As a result, human rights propositions came to largely focus on political rights and the provision of some minimum living standards and could accommodate the market fundamentalism underlying neoliberalism, a fundamentalism that proposals such as for a New International Economic Order tried to contain. Echoes of such expectations about somehow harmonizing the existing economy with any human security goal are visible in the narrow scope for crisis solutions that is typically considered.

COVID-19 experiences have now shown that more protection is not only desirable but necessary and possible. While each country has usually been largely left to itself to develop its own version of a welfare state, mainstream development cooperation has not favoured expansive ideas of protection. Such inhibitions to dealing with crises that are entrenched in peacetime practices will become even more critical as we move into a period of transitions such as those demanded by the Anthropocene, as discussed in Part Two.

Part Two: Human security analysis contributions in considering and responding to crises and transitions required in the Anthropocene

After having explored obstacles to adequately considering crises, this paper now examines the contributions of human security analysis to understanding, examining, preparing for and responding to crises. It does so with special attention to challenges and requirements in the Anthropocene, where new thinking is essential for humanity to survive and thrive. The transitions involved are unlikely to proceed smoothly and may well involve successive crises (see, e.g., Raskin 2008, 2021). We will discuss the treatment of these issues in the *2020 Human Development Report*. While characteristic “human development ideas are not about threats or crisis” (Gómez 2014, p. 39), the 2020 report took valuable steps forward and laid a foundation for renewed attention to human security thinking, which is oriented to concerns around disruption and crisis. Part Two of this paper considers the extent to which the 2020 report provides new thinking and analyses some limitations. It then suggests how human security ideas at different levels can partly respond to certain limitations. It connects those ideas to a framework for thinking about transitions that require changes in vision and values as well as in methodologies and tools for analysis and planning. The first section of Part Two sets the scene, outlining human security thinking more fully and sketching how it can help in countering some obstacles to recognizing and coping with crises.

LIMITS OF ECONOMY-CENTRED DEVELOPMENT AND HUMAN-CENTRED DEVELOPMENT IN RELATION TO CRISES

Given the power of mechanical notions of development as control and consequent freedom, mainstream development thinking has had a relative blind spot for non-economic crises—and yet a profound connection to them. Crisis is the exogenous intruder to its models. Such thinking has “a linear model of human and social life before, during and after crisis” (Gómez 2014, p. 32); thus, “[d]evelopment literature is full of metaphors about ‘breaking vicious circles’ or ‘never again’” (ibid., p. 33). But “the traditional model of rising trends interrupted by [exogenous] crisis...ignores how threats and insecurities are inherent to human life and thus require permanent attention” (ibid.). One consequent cause of crisis is the common overoptimism in modernist developmental visions (e.g., Friedman 2016; see Gasper 2019 and Hamilton 2010).¹⁹ Also contributory is the logic of externalities in a world of competition and self-interest. Ord (2020b, p. 110) in the *2020 Human*

¹⁹ This cause of crises, plus various others, is well expounded in, for example, the work of the Great Transition Initiative (e.g., Raskin et al. 2002; Raskin 2008, 2016, 2021).

Development Report comments on the huge scale of human-caused risk and yet the enormous neglect of this because the risks bear very largely on the medium- and long-term future and/or, initially, on other countries.

Even a human development perspective, focused on improvement for persons in all major areas of life that they have good reason to value, rather than centred on measured economic growth or technological display, is insufficient for dealing with the real world of interconnecting threats and recurrent crises if it retains the linear model. We require the foci of human security thinking. First, “security thinking is about threats and can integrate relief, reconstruction and prevention under the same umbrella.... [It can] engage with the [required] convergence of humanitarian and development agendas without making of crisis the new normal, but also without leaving crisis loose as a random event that takes us by surprise every time” (Gómez 2014, pp. 40-41). Second, “[h]uman security thinking also gives special attention to subjectivity and the problems of risk perception, and thus offers a framework through which the demands [on] agency imposed [by] crisis can be discussed in all their complexity without compromising the full picture of the human” (Gómez 2014, p. 40).^{20,21} Within this perspective, however, the sort of diagnostic thinking about entitlements and capabilities that has evolved in human development analysis can contribute greatly in clarifying both the causes of crises and effective policy responses (as shown in famine analysis). In addition, the human development vision of creative unfolding of a progressive future can help balance against any possible debilitating pessimism and resulting escapism that might be induced by emphases only on threats and security (Gómez 2014).

Human security thinking can help us too in conceptualization and response, both intellectually and emotionally, and, underlying those dimensions, also perceptually (Gasper 2014). Contributions of human security analysis thus include the following:

- **Identifying insecurities more systematically**, including where these do not lead to open or immediate systemic crises, such as the health impacts of climate change for marginal groups in poor countries or the existential insecurity experienced by most groups in most countries due to unconstrained market capitalism and growing inequality.²²

²⁰ On possible perception biases, see, e.g.: Slovic (2016); Gómez and Gasper (2013); World Bank (2015).

²¹ There is a constant tension between subjectivity and the desire to have a coordinated and concerted response. This is inherent to the practice of security. We do not claim that human security ideas offer any perfect vantage point about how to solve the tension, just additional information and considerations for when we must confront threats. Thanks go to the anonymous reviewer for raising this point.

²² While market capitalism and inequality are not crises, they can lead to them.

- **Strengthening the perceptual basis for responding collectively to insecurities**, objective and subjective, including by strengthening awareness of global interconnectedness and unity, as opposed to nationalist mutual antagonism and perceptions of zero-sum games.²³
- **Encouraging and linking a diversity of response tools**. A human security perspective may link and animate many specific technical tools (e.g., relevant indicators, risk mapping, scenarios analysis and various aspects of disaster preparedness). Its role is to stimulate, connect and focus, not compete with, the variety of disaster risk management specialists, future studies researchers, etc., in their areas of specialization.
- In humanitarianism, human security ideas may be useful in **linking short-term responses to longer-term prevention and preparedness work**, which requires different orientations than those given by market values, especially in a highly unequal world (see, e.g., GPPAC 2016; Schnabel and Pedrazzini 2014).
- Facilitating **new thinking about existential risks**—e.g., asteroids, supervolcanic eruptions, environmental tipping points (Bostrom 2013; Ord 2020a, 2020b; Sears 2020)—given the exceptional challenges that they entail. We do not have previous experiences of them so we cannot learn from such experiences and thus cannot address them through the conventional crisis management cycle.

These contributions can be seen as partial responses to the intellectual and political obstacles discussed in Part One of this paper, as Table 1 indicates.

²³ A perceptual basis includes what people pay attention to and what categories they use in describing what they give attention to. This perceptual basis influences how one understands, values and acts, and is in turn influenced by them (see, e.g., Gasper 2014).

TABLE 1**Summary of human security analysis contributions and responses to obstacles**

Contributions of human security analysis	Obstacles to which human security analysis responds
Identifying insecurities more systematically Facilitating more serious attention to existential risks	Casual crisis talk Waiting for trickle-down ('the Kuznets curve of everything')
Strengthening the perceptual basis for responding collectively to insecurities	Limits to attention, comprehension, empathy The politics and perceptions of crises
Linking short-term responses with longer-term prevention and preparedness	Developmental hypermetropia Overriding preoccupation with root causes
Encouraging and linking a diversity of response tools	An overly narrow view of admissible solutions to crises

BUILDING TOWARDS A BETTER ANTHROPOCENE: A DISCUSSION OF THE 2020 HUMAN DEVELOPMENT REPORT

This section discusses strengths, possible gaps and relevant bases within the global *2020 Human Development Report*, entitled *The Next Frontier: Human development and the Anthropocene* (UNDP 2020). We aim to support and extend its effort to make human development and security analyses better fitted to the Anthropocene and its old and new challenges.

Steps forward in the 2020 Human Development Report

The *2020 Human Development Report* to a considerable extent returns to the cosmopolitan vision of the *2007-2008 Human Development Report* on the emergent crisis of climate change but augmented with additional tools. In its problem analysis, the *2007-2008 Human Development Report* put strong emphasis on human rights, on their violation caused by anthropogenic climate change and on global community and future generations. It was not able to incorporate those ideas very emphatically or effectively into its policy proposals, however, perhaps due to its concern with offering a politically palatable package for the 2009 Copenhagen climate summit (Gasper et al. 2013a). Some subsequent Human Development Reports could be seen as regressing in terms of this intellectual vision. The *2011 Human Development Report* on sustainable development had little uptake of human rights and human security themes and stepped back from the 2007-2008 report's progressive problem analysis (Gasper et al. 2013b). The *2014 Human Development Report* on vulnerability and resilience similarly downplayed discussion in terms of human rights and human security although it covered quite a few topics of the 2007-2008 report. It had little uptake of the concept of socioecological systems, thus remaining

arguably with an overly partitioned approach to socioeconomic and ecological systems.²⁴ In contrast, the *2020 Human Development Report* contains major advances on these earlier reports in several ways. It adopts and applies various relevant concepts, including regarding Earth systems, socioecological systems and ‘stewardship’. It does not yet adopt human security; we will suggest how it might have been strengthened by doing so.

Table 2 shows the use of these and various other terms in the *2020 Human Development Report*. For most concepts highlighted in the report, shown in the left-hand column, the right-hand column shows other potentially equally important and relevant concepts that were used much less.

TABLE 2

Terms used in the *2020 Human Development Report*²⁵

Highlighted concepts	Concepts left (relatively) in the shadows
Journey, 56 times; human development journey, 45 times	Constitution, 0 times; international law, 5 times
Reason (in all its forms), 55 times; Sen, 75 times	Emotion (all forms) 5 times; feeling, 3 times; Nussbaum, 6 times
Democracy/democratic/etc., 59 times	Populism/populist, 1 time (and once in the references); insecurity, 7 times
Equity, 121 times; justice, 97 times	Human right(s), around 17 uses (and around 15 times in the references)
Vulnerability (all forms), 86 times	Human security, 1 time (and 3 times in the references)
Resilient/resilience, 111 times	Human need(s), 8 times
Tipping point(s), 39 times	(Inter)connectedness, 14 times; ontology, etc., 3 times; fate, 7 times
Future generation(s), 28 times	Grandchildren, 0 times (in contrast to the 2007-2008 HDR)
Stewardship, 91 times	Overconsumption, 1 time; sufficiency, 4 times
Mechanism, 89 times; navigate (all forms), 42 times	Nationalism/nationalist/etc., 1 time
Transformation, etc., 173 times; innovation, 122 times	Capitalism, 1 time, except in references
Crisis/crises, 79 times	
Collapse, 32 times; breakdown/break/breaking, etc., 33 times	

²⁴ A report by the present authors and A. L. St. Clair in 2013 to the *2014 Human Development Report* team suggested the following: “An integrative perspective on human security/vulnerability could be an important potential value-added by the HDR and would speak to the current demand for seeing and linking multiple stressors, and thus for understanding possibilities of crises in a more holistic way than will conventional sectoral analyses. The HDR might in contrast add less, perhaps, if it mostly duplicated what specialist agencies and research programs already cover on particular sectoral issues.”

²⁵ The counts in the table are those provided by the ‘Full Reader Search’ function in Adobe Acrobat Reader DC. They cover the full document, including the references, but in a few cases we highlight that most or very many of the uses occur in the references rather than in the main text and notes of the report.

The *2020 Human Development Report* took the big step of thinking centrally in terms of socioecological systems and recognizing the consequent need to reconceive ‘the human development journey’ as not necessarily a smoothly, steadily rising graph. Indeed, its fondness for ‘journey’ language (56 uses, including no less than 45 uses of ‘human development journey’) seems to arise from viewing human development in Earth-epochal terms (Chapter 1) rather than only within the shorter-term horizons conventional in economics. The term ‘journey’ is used largely in the early part of the volume while trying to establish a revised vision of how humans have evolved, adapted and innovated over many epochs in our bounded and non-infinitely resilient habitats. The report is fond also of the sister metaphor of ‘navigating’ the journey because it realizes that the journey has not been always smooth and will not only be smooth in the future. We should ask though how far the ‘journey’ mentality is attuned to an expectation of multiple phases and crises (compare with Raskin 2008, 2016, 2021).

The *2020 Human Development Report* makes the symbolically important move to adjust the Human Development Index (HDI) to end reliance on the use of gross national product/gross domestic product (GNP/GDP), which has been known for 50 years to be a misleading indicator of human welfare and a dangerous concealer of environmental damage. The report introduces a Planetary Pressures-Adjusted HDI (PHDI).²⁶ This is worthwhile yet one might ask who will pay much attention to this refinement. Plentiful evidence of the paths of unsustainable environmental depredation followed under GNP/GDP-oriented development has been available for decades already. In contrast, other reorientations may be needed more: not just to recognize environmental damage but to acknowledge that it (together with other factors) will lead to ‘turbulence’, surprises and crises in humanity’s journey and in the lives of most or all persons.

We focus here on some possible limitations in the report, central to the assessment of prospects and requirements in the Anthropocene and/or to understanding the possible contributions of human security analysis. These contributions can help increase appreciation of the challenges now faced more and more frequently and intensely after decades of unsustainable development. They can also steer us towards relevant responses. The *2020 Human Development Report* is impressively informed and insightful but what are its gaps and limitations in terms of threat and crisis identification, analysis and response? We present the following points as a discussion checklist, to help extend and strengthen the programme of work initiated in the 2020 report. Table 3 outlines the points and how human security thinking may help.

²⁶ Another limitation remains: The *Human Development Report 2020* continued to present data predominantly in terms of whole countries. While masking intranational inequalities can be a limitation in social science terms, it is though sometimes a virtue in attracting attention in a world where strongly felt identities frequently remain defined in terms of countries.

TABLE 3**Summary of 2020 Human Development Report limitations and contributions from human security analysis**

Possible limitations	Contributions from human security analysis
1. A tendency to mechanistic understandings of social and policy processes	Affinity to complex systems pictures of socioecological systems marked by crises, tipping points and qualitative changes
2. Unbalanced emphasis on agency and freedoms	Emphases also on (powerful but sometimes unreasonable) emotions, dislikes and fears, on breaking/tipping points, and on reasonable precaution, guidance, nudging and rules
3. Absence of any notion of enough	A biology-, psychology- and environmental studies-informed sensitivity to constraints and excess
4. Reductionist understanding of human needs	A biology-, psychology- and environmental studies-informed expectation of various key requirements and possible limits

Possible limitations in the 2020 Human Development Report**1. A tendency to mechanistic understandings of social and policy processes?**

The *2020 Human Development Report* heavily relies on physical metaphors, not only the ‘human development journey’, in its descriptions of societal situations and processes, and on mechanical metaphors in its discussions of responses. Humans are seen as “squeezing” nature, and viruses “spill out” due to humans’ “grip.” “Cracks” (social divisions and imbalances, UNDP 2020, p. 3) that host diseases exist in society too; the report speaks of “wedges” between groups (ibid., p. 21). Regarding responses, if we “leverage” the human development approach (ibid., p. 20), it can “unlock” obstacles to flourishing while easing planetary pressures (p. 5). The policy language is often about “levers and mechanisms” (ibid., p. 10) and the high-control notion of “harnessing:” “Innovation...can be harnessed...” (ibid., p. 71) and “[s]everal levers could be harnessed to expand stewardship” (ibid., p. 93). This understanding of societal processes might be too mechanical, however, and with too much expectation of predictability and controllability (derived from closed-system analyses). The *Human Development Report 2020*’s Part Two on policy is structured in terms of three “mechanisms for change” (ibid., p. 129, emphasis added) referring to: norms changes, incentives and nature-based and community-based solutions.²⁷ Chapter 5’s title is not mechanical but is still masterful: “Shaping Incentives to Navigate the Future” rather than, for example, “Understanding Motives in Order to Inspire a Cooperative Common Future.” Instead

²⁷ One could discuss how far the notion of ‘mechanism’ really fits the content of Chapter 4 on norms: an “exchange of information and opinions, as well as conversations and discussions, which is what the capabilities approach suggests for the transition to sustainability” (UNDP 2020, p. 153).

of proposing a masterful narrative, we suggest that crises must be further integrated into our understanding of social and policy processes, with due reflection on problems of uncertainty and responding to the need for a common language to engender collective action.

2. Unbalanced emphasis on agency and freedoms?

The reference to ‘the next frontier’ in the report’s title conveys a heroic vision. Development and human development seem to be conceived as controlled by humans. In a sense, the 2020 report might be said to revel in the Anthropocene. People are seen as the true wealth of nations and as the most powerful and only sufficient instrument for responding to the challenges ahead. The report lauds “the role of human agency—the ability of individuals and communities *to take the driver’s seat* in addressing challenges and seizing opportunities—that is central to the concept of human development” (ibid., p. 27, italics added). If control and agency are emphasized features of being human, and not also vulnerability, fallibility, emotionality, group delusion, etc., then attention to crises and precaution may be downgraded. We should think further about what types of ‘vehicles’, ‘roads/routes/life paths’ and ‘drivers/passengers/pedestrians/human beings’ are really involved, and hence also what kinds of journeys, detours and accidents.

Chapter 3 of the report asks: “How can we use our power to expand human freedoms while easing planetary pressures? This chapter argues that we can do so by enhancing equity, fostering innovation and instilling a sense of stewardship of the planet” (ibid., p. 70). All these elements are important but they may still be insufficient. Equity should be treated as more than a technocratic target and also as perceptual, affective and foundational. It is not just an instrumental good but a *sine qua non* for acceptability and sustained cooperation. And the vision of expanding freedoms should be complemented by ideas about what is enough.

Mulgan’s celebrated book *Ethics for a Broken World* (2011) warned of how global environmental change puts in question the stress on freedom as the central and sometimes even sufficient policy means. That stress rests on “conditions long assumed in liberal Western philosophy to be present, and that rationalize and license liberalism—notably the [condition of the] presence of only moderate scarcity.... [Whereas a] broken climate system will mean that not all persons’ basic needs can be reliably satisfied” (Gasper 2019, p. 217; see also Gómez 2014). It may indeed mean far worse than that. The *2020 Human Development Report* does take preliminary steps in setting constraints on freedoms (e.g., in supporting the establishment of protected areas) and the PHDI can play a role in highlighting unsustainability. But we need to consider multiple scenarios, not only optimistic ones of agency-driven addressing of challenges and seizing of opportunities. The uncomfortable question of what freedoms are rationally permissible must be faced, including the question of what is enough.

3. Any notion of enough?

The *2020 Human Development Report's* devotion to “expand[ing] human freedoms” (UNDP 2020, p. 6) comes with rather few qualifications. It suggests sometimes an ideal of endlessly expanding freedoms; for its equation of “to flourish [while] allowing for broader and evolving aspirations” (ibid., p. 41) does not set any limits nor ask whether the rich, let alone the super-rich, have enough (or too much) and should stop further acquisition (see, e.g., Hickel 2020; Irvin 2008). Instead, by emphasizing Sen’s ideas on how human development eventually solves population growth problems via ‘public reasoning’, the report could seem to imply that freedom, leading to innovation and learning, will similarly solve any problems of super-high consumption. The lack of a notion of ‘enough’ matches a heroic conception of freedom that can engender a willingness to encounter crises, seeing them as challenges to be triumphantly overcome.

Further, the capability approach’s formal stress on what people “have reason to value” (a phrase that is, however, not mentioned until p. 22 in the 2020 report and only five times in the whole report) is sometimes displaced by talk simply of “lives they [people] value,” which is further equated to “the choices that are most desired” and according to “their own values” (UNDP 2020, p. 21)—despite earlier recognition that the world has reached a situation of “flashing red” (ibid., p. 8). The Overview of the report highlights as “critical dimensions of human development: agency (that is, the ability to participate in decision-making and to make one’s *desired choices*) and values (that is, the choices that are most *desired*)” (ibid., p. 6; emphases added). There is no explicit reference here to reason, responsibility or precaution.²⁸

Lacking a notion of ‘enough’ means that it becomes difficult to define and address some major questions: First, can developmentalism conceive of and apply such a notion? Second, how far is developmentalism part of the problem? How far must it give way to ideas of degrowth or integrate the principle of strong sustainability to confront crises such as climate change?

4. Reductionist understanding of human needs?

The stress on expanding capabilities defined as access to what people value is presented as taking us “beyond notions of sustainability based on needs fulfilment” (ibid., p. 21), with needs analysis presented as viewing humans as patients not agents (ibid., p. 38). A section on ‘beyond needs’ reduces needs analysis to external specification of minimum subsistence levels: “...meeting needs and striving for sufficiency and floors of

²⁸ The Overview, by far the most consulted section of such a report, is weaker than Chapter 1, which speaks of being “able to reason individually and collectively to establish regenerative relationships with the biosphere” (ibid., p. 32).

subsistence alone” (ibid., p. 38) which “downplays the potential of people as agents” (ibid., p. 39). Needs theory is reduced to “minimum needs” (ibid., p. 40) or “basic needs” (ibid., p. 41).²⁹

In contrast, the powerful guest essay by Gaia Vince gives a richer picture of requirements for being human: a deeper needs-centred analysis. “Humans have needs and desires that go far beyond receiving an adequate number of calories” (ibid., p. 119) and beyond any single concept such as freedom. “Human development took an evolutionary path that prioritized cooperation and group reliance instead of individual strength” and capacity (ibid., p. 120). “We cannot protect our environment unless we also protect the needs of the humans that rely on it” (ibid., p. 122), stresses Vince. This requires more serious treatment of needs theory than has been habitual in some parts of human development discourse. Much in human security analysis tries to do better in this respect (see, e.g., Green 2008; James 2014; Leaning and Arie 2000 and Leaning 2014 on both material needs and fundamental psychosocial needs of identity, recognition, participation, autonomy and attachment).^{30,31} Not coincidentally, Mahbub ul Haq was both a basic human needs advocate and a founder of human security analysis.

5. Drivers of change

A final possible lacuna in the *2020 Human Development Report* relevant to crisis analysis is a lack of attention to a systemic analysis of capitalism. Whereas most theories of capitalism note its proneness to crises, the report does not adopt the category nor address that issue.³² Instead the report appears, if we view the record of the

²⁹ The report (ibid., p. 40) suggests “the importance of going beyond social floors for minimum needs—and how marginalization and exclusion that feed into the social imbalances are often a blind spot when meeting needs is what is intended to be sustained.” The only needs theorist referred to is Ian Gough (ibid., note 166) but very briefly, with a claim that his work on clarifying minimum requirements for use as a guideline in social policy reduces ethical force (ibid., p. 39). Gough’s work (e.g., 2018) is in fact an elaboration of Gaia Vince’s proposition that: “For a human to thrive, she needs a safe physical environment that does not risk her health and a safe social environment that does not constrain her potential” (UNDP 2020, p. 122). The social floor is explicitly the precondition for thriving, not presented as the endpoint. See also Gough (2020) on “a theory of human needs that allows us to meet individual and social needs within planetary boundaries” (p. 140).

³⁰ Leaning and Arie (2000) expound in detail how “individuals and communities have greater resilience when their core attachments to home, community and the future remain intact. These links underpin a sense of identity and facilitate participation in [a] constructive collective project ... [Corresponding] indicators of psychosocial continuity [should be included] in a balanced scorecard of human security” (p. 4).

³¹ Hopner et al (2021, abstract) use the concept of the ‘Psycurity Accord’ to discuss the evolving “trade-offs between various risks and (in)securities, and issues of privacy and freedom” as populations accept and/or resist controls and restrictions for the sake of security. “... trade-offs around risks and (in)securities are never fixed and are re-assembled as new events occur and the situation evolves. New orders of authority emerge from (re)alignments of different interest groups and (re)inscriptions around risk, security, freedom and privacy.”

³² Capitalism is a concept used only once in the 2020 report’s text (plus six times in titles in the references). That one use (UNDP 2020, p. 53) is to downplay the concept’s relevance, arguing that current environmental impacts are not without precedent (although the next paragraph contradicts this and says the “evidence is contested”). Page 54 similarly downplays a ‘capitalism is a problem’ diagnosis by noting that State socialism was no better. The

past 50, 15 or even 5 years, to be notably optimistic: “[A]mple research, human will and political power—as well as urgency—[already] exist to actively engage in [the Sustainable Human Development] process” (UNDP 2020, p. 98). In contrast to the picture in the Great Transition Initiative work, the task seems to be seen as a design concern and not also centrally a political struggle. Let us consider briefly some possible drivers of such a vision. Various views on drivers are found in the Spotlights guest essays at the end of Part One of the report.

For example, Linton (2020) presents a picture where unlimited solar energy is available to sustain ever expanding freedoms and all required recycling of waste products. He notes that we cannot achieve this, however, via “the [current] social and economic paradigm of short-term localized gain and weak global, unifying, long-term structures to counteract it” (ibid., p. 103). This is very evident from the past 50 years of little progress and often even regression on sustainable development since Stockholm 1972 (the first world environment conference), the retrogression since 2015 on the Paris climate commitments, and the strong upswings of nationalism, populism and ultra-capitalism (e.g., the rocket billionaires: Bezos, Branson, Musk). In the spirit of much of the *2020 Human Development Report*, Linton trusts in local learning and innovation, and identification and incentivization of positive shifts from tipping points.

More sober in both analysis and prescription are some other essays. Toby Ord’s essay on existential risks notes that: “We need new institutions to govern global risks” (Ord 2020b, p. 106). Farrier (2020) argues that we have to change the stories we live by. He calls for stories that convey a vision of “a world driven by care for the most vulnerable rather than by the illusion of infinite growth,” and he queries stories of ‘journeys’ of unending unfolding. In contrast, “Indigenous peoples’ creation stories, Kimmerer [2013] writes, imagine time as a lake rather than a river” (ibid., p. 117). Finally, as we saw, Gaia Vince’s essay emphasizes the languages of basic human needs, human rights and safety. She notes the huge United Nations survey, UN@75, in which respondents around the world gave priority to human security themes. These ideas seem to remain secondary in the *2020 Human Development Report* but should become more central in subsequent analyses.

ELEMENTS OF A HUMAN SECURITY PERSPECTIVE AND THEIR RELEVANCE IN CRISIS ANALYSIS AND RESPONSE

The introduction to this paper distinguished four component sets of ideas in human security thinking: first, human security as a value and objective; second, a human security approach to description and analysis, guided by that objective; and third and fourth, human security frames both as a policy philosophy and in more concrete

latter remark is correct but capitalism is the overwhelmingly predominant contemporary system and theorization of it is required in sustainability analysis.

planning tools and work formats. We comment now further on each of these, especially the second and third, and their relevance to an orientation to crises.

First, *human security as a concept/norm/objective* can be understood as secure fulfilment of core requirements—of life, livelihood and dignified existence—for each and every person. The concept’s role is similar to those of its siblings, human development and human rights: to highlight and promote active concern for each person.³³ All three concepts counteract abstracted and generalized discourses that cover or wave away risks to poor people. For example:

Eighty-eight percent of the estimated deaths attributable to climate change in 2000, according to the World Health Report (WHO 2002: 223) were of babies and children younger than five years, essentially amongst poorer families in poorer countries. Yet children received no special attention in the [seven years of peer-reviewed published] work summarized in AR5 [the IPCC’s Fifth Assessment Report], even in its huge second volume on the impacts of climate change. Analysis of that volume’s Summary for Policy Makers shows that it hardly talked of “people”, and it never mentioned children (Fløttum, Gasper, and St. Clair 2016). Despite offering figures on GDP impact and other economic measures of climate change impact, it provided no figures on impacts in terms of lives lost, nor on health impacts more broadly. While separate attention was granted to eco-systems and to non-human species, specific vulnerable human groups remained virtually invisible in the AR5 Summaries for Policy Makers. All national governments have accepted declarations and conventions about human rights, and IPCC’s work is explicitly intended to inform policymakers, yet the language of human rights is completely absent (Gasper 2019, p. 214).

Second, human security as an *analytical perspective/frame* provides a people-centred and socially and environmentally situated approach to description, analysis and explanation. Different versions are available (e.g., Commission on Human Security 2003; Gómez and Gasper 2013; GPPAC 2016; Human Security Unit 2016; Schnabel, ed. 2014). Such frames fulfil a series of important roles:³⁴

- Cross-sector conspectus, bridging sectoral and disciplinary silos
- Understanding vulnerabilities, recognizing breaking points³⁵

³³ We will see more distinctive contributions of human security thinking when we turn to its role as an analytical frame and a policy orientation, for there we go on to consider threats to the fulfilment of those core requirements and ways to defend and promote them. But note that the human security concept seen as an objective can have an important instrumental role too, for its inverse serves as an indicator of societal (in)security; low human security, in some formulations, is a predictor of societal conflict (see e.g., Leaning and Arie 2000).

³⁴ The first three roles mentioned here are elaborations of the first contribution stated in the beginning of Part Two, ‘identifying insecurities’. The fourth matches the second contribution, ‘strengthening the perceptual basis for responding collectively to insecurities’.

³⁵ Compare with O’Riordan and Lenton (2013).

- Attention to subjectivities, considering how people themselves view and understand their situations, vulnerabilities and limits
- Advancing a vision of interconnectedness and shared fate

Each of these four roles is important in crisis analysis and planning.

The first role, *cross-sectoral conspectus*, is important not merely for the sake of comprehensiveness. Fundamentally, “the cross-national, cross-global, cross-sectoral connections spawn possibilities unforeseen in sectoral and discipline-bound organizational worlds [Gallopín 2016]. A cross-system or ‘nexus’ approach looks for ‘hotspots’, where multiple stresses combine and could [even] trigger system collapse or transformation (see, for example, Owen, 2014)” (Gasper 2019, p. 211).

The second role, *better understanding of vulnerabilities*, includes understanding the situations of persons confronting structural vulnerability (the subtitle of Estrada-Tanck 2016) through attention to chains and systems of interconnected constraints and threats. It leads into a policy role since understanding structural vulnerability allows human security analysis to deepen the interpretation and application of human rights. Much legal use of human rights ideas is narrowly focused. In contrast, human security analysis goes beyond a focus on individuals and damage incidents viewed in relative isolation, to consider “the structural risks to rights”, namely “the contextual and structural elements that...present obstacles to the enjoyment of human rights” and that can produce vulnerability (ibid., pp. 254, 252).

An alternative formulation of structural vulnerability is perhaps better known and more conducive to *understanding crises*, including at societal and global levels and not only at the individual level. This is the formulation in terms of ‘structural violence’ and eventual reactions against it. Johan Galtung referred to “the type of violence where there is an actor that commits the violence as personal or direct [violence], and to violence where there is no such [single specifiable] actor as structural or indirect” (Schnabel 2014, p. 17; see also Garcia Valverde 2020). For Schnabel and colleagues: “Focusing threat analysis and mitigation on an approach that applies human security [thinking] to identifying and reducing [both] direct and structural violence offers promising opportunities for creating the normative, legal and eventually political conditions for the consolidation of positive and sustainable peace in threatened societies” (Schnabel 2014, p. 23).³⁶

³⁶ The project led by Schnabel applied an impact threshold to keep a manageable focus; in his chapter, human security threats “are identified as those that *threaten the lives* of individuals and communities through either direct or structural violence” (Schnabel 2014, p. 18, italics added). See Picciotto et al. 2007 for a similar approach applied in great detail.

The first and second roles together—*better identification of possible crises that can arise from intersecting vulnerabilities*, through *cross-sector conspectus* that facilitates ‘joined-up thinking’—were illustrated in the *1994 Human Development Report* on human security. It demonstrated risk-mapping and (in this case, retrospective) crisis-warning as follows: “We looked back at 1980 to see which countries had the highest ratio [of military expenditure to expenditure on health and education]. Number one was Iraq—eight times more on military than on education and health.... Number two was Somalia.... Within a decade these countries could neither protect their national security, for which they were getting all these arms, nor their human security” (Haq 1994, p. 4, referring to Annex 1 of the *1994 Human Development Report*).³⁷

The first and third of the four roles in the list above—*cross-sector conspectus* and *attention to subjectivities*—are highlighted by Larsen et al. (2021) in their work on identifying risks associated with climate change. For them, key roles of “[t]he concept of human security...in risk modelling” are: “First, the human security concept will allow us to focus on individuals’ and local communities’ perceptions.... [It] will allow integration of local cultural dimensions and risk perception/social construction by focusing primarily on individuals.... [Second], as a broad concept, human security enables us to encompass every potential risk (or threat) that might be mentioned or perceived by participants” (p. 8).

In the June 2021 Human Development Report Office symposium for the 2021 special report on human security, two speakers from the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, Joaquin Salido Marcos and Manuella Nehme, noted how experiences in the Arab States in the past generation have underlined the relevance of a human security approach. They used terms close or identical to the first three points in our list of roles: A human security approach helps to link and thus better understand different issues, whereas State-centred security approaches have been manifestly insufficient.³⁸ Further, subjectively felt insecurities are major drivers and mainly concern matters other than the safety of property or persons. Yet data collection on subjective human security/insecurity is very deficient, as seen by the pre-2010 blindness regarding the social pressure-cooker in the Arab States. Data need to be subnationally (geographically and socially) disaggregated. Pablo Ruiz Hiebra from UNDP in Colombia expressed similar ideas: We need far better data on local perceptions and what people feel is happening.

³⁷ Tildy Stokes at the June 2021 Human Development Report Office symposium mentioned that we need to compare the scale of investments in risk generation versus that of investments in risk reduction and have long-term spending commitments for attention to extreme risks. Mary Kaldor warned of the linkage between conflicts and disease: Conflict zones will always be breeding grounds for new disease variants, so unless conflict is addressed....

³⁸ Mary Kaldor remarked, in the June 2021 symposium, on the total failure of the ‘war on terror’. Other participants noted the failure of the ‘war on drugs’.

The next two sets of human security ideas apply these analytical concerns and the guiding values of human security as a policy philosophy and in specific policy and planning tools.

Human security as a *policy orientation/policy philosophy* includes a series of principles, notably the following, all of which have strong relevance to crisis awareness/preparation/prevention/response:

- Principles of precaution and prevention, especially to protect the most vulnerable
- Attention to both empowerment and protection (Commission on Human Security 2003); promotion of resilience
- The principle of common security, where one group can typically only be secure if the groups with whom it is significantly connected are secure too, and the sister principle of the centrality of public goods—local, national, regional and global—that provide community-wide benefits
- The complementarity of peace, development and human rights; this can be seen as the underlying theme of the United Nations system (Jolly et al. 2009, Weiss et al. 2005).

The analytical contribution mentioned above of advancing a vision of interconnectedness and of shared fate, leading to more awareness of shared vulnerability, including one's own vulnerability, helps to generate a policy orientation to 'common security' and greater acceptance of the need to contribute to local, national, regional and global public goods. Along these lines, many participants in the June 2021 Human Development Report Office symposium saw a current opportunity, after widespread learning during the COVID-19 pandemic, to profile the public health logic of common human security.³⁹

Human security *planning formats and tools* include the planning formats articulated by the United Nations Human Security Unit (e.g., 2016), various non-governmental organizations (e.g., GPPAC 2016), the OPHUSEC project⁴⁰ (Schnabel, ed. 2014; Schnabel and Pedrazzini, eds. 2014) and UNDP (e.g., Gómez and Gaspar 2013). Specific planning tools include, among many: risk maps, perception surveys and comparisons of findings with those of 'objective' measures, human security indexes, insistence on regional and social disaggregation in measures and analyses, and SWOT analyses and scenarios exercises.⁴¹

³⁹ For example, Dr. Ambrose Talisuna of the WHO noted at the June 2021 symposium that the pandemic has taught people how a major threat can affect every person, every sector and every locality, and that we must use this learning before it fades.

⁴⁰ OPHUSEC refers to "Operationalizing Human Security for Livelihood Protection: Analysis, Monitoring and Mitigation of Existential Threats by and for Local Communities," a Swiss-funded multi-country study.

⁴¹ SWOT refers to strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. On scenarios analysis, see, e.g., *Development* (2004) and van der Heijden et al. (2009). Also see the worksheet formats for threat and response analysis used in

In contrast to standard humanitarianism (emergency relief and refugee support), human-security-oriented planning that reflects the analytical perspective and policy philosophy described above is more situational and flexible (see, e.g., the reviews of many such studies by Jolly and Basu Ray 2006, Gómez et al. 2013). A style of cross-national standardization now dominates modern international humanitarianism, emphasizing “the increased use of quantitative data to compare the effect of catastrophes on different societies” (Glaisman 2020, p. 1). For example:

...UNHCR is working simultaneously in 130 countries, addressing the suffering of refugees across borders and within the most diverse social and cultural settings. In order to justify the ‘impartiality’ of its actions, it relies on standard definitions, quantification, and systematic assessment procedures.... [But t]he more aid agencies have acted on larger scales [and indeed they now claim universal coverage], the more they have reduced and simplified their definition of needs (Glaisman 2020, p. 4).

Glaisman continues: “To borrow from the approach of science historian Lorraine Daston, humanitarian agencies speak from an ‘aperspectival’ point of view: They do not speak from a specific place, they take a point of view from everywhere and therefore ‘from nowhere.’ They build on an ontology of humanity” (ibid., p. 6). But in human security work we typically find a more sophisticated ontology of humanity, including a recognition that to be human is to live in a specific place, at a specific distinctive intersection of more general forces. This recognition has led to a significantly different, more situation-specific approach in policy analysis and planning (Jolly and Basu Ray 2006; Gómez and Gasper 2013; Schnabel, ed. 2014; Gómez et al. 2013, 2016).

WHAT A HUMAN SECURITY PERSPECTIVE CAN ADD TO OUR VISION OF TRANSITION AND IN ADAPTING PRACTICES FOR TRANSITION

Transitions require both vision and practical tools. Based on the United Nations Intellectual History Project (e.g., Jolly et al. 2005, 2009), the work of Murphy and others on patterns of change in international governance over the past 150 years (e.g., Murphy 2005, 2006), and the suggestions of, among others, Mahbub ul Haq as an innovator of both human development and the human security perspective (see, e.g., Haq 1994), one can identify some important elements determining ideas that are conducive to transitions (list adapted from Gasper 2011):

- Ideas have much more impact when they provide *a way of seeing, a vision* rather than only isolated information or observations.

Schnabel and Pedrazzini (eds., 2014). These are simpler than risk maps but important as part of forcing systematic attention to possible individual significant risks. They go some steps beyond the basic format in SWOT analysis.

- *Value ideas* are key since they motivate and help to organize other thinking and action.
- Ideas about values may have little impact if not incorporated into *practical frameworks, methodologies and proposals*.
- To have influence, ideas also must be *propagated* in places and ways accessible to significant audiences.
- Ideas must have *carriers* and an *institutional infrastructure*.

These notions are linked: We build, sustain and energize a carrier network in large part through values, vision and inspiring ideas. The notions together generate a principle of aiming to be prepared for *crises that may provide windows of opportunity*. This means being ready with practical frameworks, methodologies and proposals that express values and a way of seeing, plus having contacts to significant decision-makers for when some of them look for new responses in crises. This paper has sketched the guiding values and associated ways of seeing in human security thinking and mentioned some associated practical methodologies. In this section on what a human security perspective can add, we discuss more specifically the potential relevance of this way of seeing in the coming period and that of some research and policy methods.

Vision

Human security thinking starts from our existing life situation and what threatens us, objectively and subjectively. It connects to feelings and reflects the realities of wherever people are now, not a blank slate. Its theme of vulnerability is part of a richer picture of the human than one only involving capability (and lack of capability) and reasoned choice. The theme is articulated in some broader human development theory and care theory, including by Nussbaum (2001): Part of what makes humans human (and not gods) is vulnerability. Awareness of our own vulnerability is potentially a source of (or even precondition for) sympathy for the vulnerability of others (see also Bodelier 2011). As Haq and Sen emphasized, without this fellow-feeling, measurement and analysis will sometimes not achieve much. “The problem is not a lack of knowledge, awareness or understanding of the threats” (UNDP 2020, p. 96)—at least not among scientists. The problem is profound lack of attention, awareness and concern among many politicians, much of the general public, many business circles and much of the media. In contrast: “A values-based approach recognizes the collective and interdependent nature of human development, and it makes it clear that some of today’s systems lack the integrity needed to promote outcomes that benefit people and the planet” (O’Brien 2020, p. 165).

In the *2020 Human Development Report*, the Foreword by Achim Steiner noted the major imbalance in expected impacts of climate change. In the no-mitigation case, the impact on rich countries “within our

lifetime” (UNDP 2020, p. iii) may be 18 days *less* of extreme weather per annum. In poor countries, the impact may be up to 100 days *more*. So, narrow self-interest calculations will not bring justice, unless the rich come to fear the consequences of injustice and move to a broader, more enlightened assessment of self-interest. A stable human future requires the internalization of both an ontology of interconnectedness and an ethics of interconnectedness. Steiner urges the necessity of what is often called ‘joined-up thinking’, awareness of interconnection and the impacts that will follow for rich countries if poorer countries enter crisis. His remarks did not extend to emphasizing ‘joined-up feeling’ with and for others. The report proper itself stresses “a deeper awareness of our interdependence with the planet” and notes that this is only “starting to percolate” among capability thinkers (*ibid.*, p. 41).

The *2020 Human Development Report* refers to Indigenous communities’ stewardship worldviews, including expositions on and praise of Maori, Quechua and other philosophies and practices (*ibid.*, p. 90 ff). Do these worldviews rely though on the local existence of a long-established ‘community’? Will they have enough wider outreach? ⁴² We suggest that there are essential roles also for the foundational United Nations theme of human security and the associated body of thought, long established in the United Nations and articulated further in the 2012 General Assembly resolution (United Nations 2012a). The resolution’s broad view of human security matches the United Nations conception of interconnected peace, development and human rights.

We need more powerful ethical and policy ‘languages’ than only agency-freedom-incentives-mechanism-control, with more ontological depth and more affective resonance, languages that help motivate and coordinate diverse efforts worldwide and across generations. We see this argued in, for example, the essays by Farrier and Vince in the *2020 Human Development Report*.⁴³ Human rights is such a language but insufficient in isolation for various reasons (Estrada-Tanck 2016; Gasper 2020b). A human security discourse is an essential partner. It helps to counteract the lack of *attention* to people’s impacts on other nations and other societal groups, the lack of *awareness of interconnection* and hence lack of *fear of feedbacks and fight backs*, and lack of *sympathy and feelings of moral community and moral responsibility*. Put positively, human security can help to provide more of a sense of interconnection—of *causal, ontological and moral interconnection*—and hence

⁴² Elsewhere the report notes various relevant religious sources, including Pope Francis’s *Laudato Si’* encyclical and “[t]he Quranic concept of ‘tawheed,’ or oneness, [which] captures the idea of the unity of creation across generations” (*ibid.*, p. 88). The report accepts that no single religious or folk source will appeal to all or be acceptable globally but implies that there are important shared general principles. One can ask, though, how far the report as a whole walks this talk.

⁴³ See also several essays in the ISC-UNDP review of the human development idea (ISC 2020) and also the United Nations University Institute for Environment and Human Security’s WISE initiative on Wellbeing, Sustainability and Equity, which works with several ideas emphasized here: <https://ehs.unu.edu/about/departments/wise-transformation#overview>.

of shared fate (O'Brien 2020). In sum it helps to counteract the lack of felt unity, 'one-ness', as identified by Melissa Leach in the 2020 report (UNDP 2020, Box 3.4).

Practices for transition

Human security fundamentally contributes as an orienting concept, as an associated approach to analysis and as a broad policy philosophy. Thinking in terms of human security provides us with enriched understandings of progress. While getting richer, living longer and enjoying more plentiful lives remain central aims of human societies, the extent to which we minimize and avoid harms, and cope with them, deserves equal attention. The Anthropocene makes this particularly important as much more effort is required to avoid losing what has been achieved. Such a conception of progress in relation to prevention and protection has implications for how global and national institutions are conceived.

These ideas provide an umbrella for practical work rather than being a complete and specific 'policy package' or 'slot-in here' policy algorithm app. "Realistically, we most certainly will find that no single [conceptual] boundary object can cover the full cycle, so a family of ideas linking different stages [of the crisis management cycle—prevention, preparedness, response, etc.—is] required" (Gómez 2014, p. 38). Human security language seems here to connect to and across a wider range of audiences and situations than development language, although indeed not all. It helps to introduce various required tools and practices into development research and practice.

Here we point briefly to some relevant practical work that is already available or required:

- Different metrics for assessing progress and security (e.g., as seen in various regional and national Human Development Reports; Gómez et al. 2013; in connection with the SDGs, Takasu et al. 2020; for project evaluation, Sharpe et al. 2020).
- Early-warning systems (e.g., Stewart 2000, 2002; Schnabel and Krummenacher 2014⁴⁴).
- Crowd-mapping of crisis outbreaks (e.g., Ziemke 2012).
- Promotion of research on existential risks (e.g., Ord 2020a).
- Reconsideration of the role of traditional security apparatuses (e.g., Glasius 2008; Beebe and Kaldor 2010; GPPAC 2016).

⁴⁴ Stewart recommended attention in development planning in all societies to measuring the gaps between groups in order to help avert crisis. Schnabel and Krummenacher (2014) go beyond a focus only on prevention of violent conflict.

- Allocation of resources to consciously strengthen human securitability, as in the Latvian experience.⁴⁵
- Establishing offices in charge of climate change and crisis management to play central roles in governments rather than working ad hoc, as part as an overall coordination of climate change and disaster risk management joint work (e.g., Pulhin et al. 2021).
- Localization of human security work: While a strength of human security analysis is its global, transborder, transsector, etc. tracing of linkages, Michael Barnett at the June 2021 Human Development Report Office symposium underlined the necessity of localizing human security work if it is to be both fit for purpose and felt as legitimate. National, subnational and regional Human Development Reports that address human security issues can be important vehicles here (Murphy 2006; Jolly and Basu Ray 2006; Gomez et al. 2013, 2016; also Hernandez et al. 2019 and Mine et al. 2019 on East Asian perspectives and experiences).

⁴⁵ The *2003 Latvian Human Development Report* (UNDP 2003) on human security resulted in the concept of securitability, which the national Government adopted in 2012 as a way to reconsider “budget prioritization, moving the focus from sectoral (health, education, welfare, etc.) perspectives to a holistic, people centred viewpoint” (Gómez et al. 2013, p. 28). See also Simane (2015); Gasper et al. (2020). The innovative and prize-winning Latvia report defined securitability as “the ability to avoid insecure situations and to retain a sense of security when such situations do occur, as well as the ability [to] reestablish one’s security and sense of security when these have been compromised” (UNDP 2003, p. 15). The concept has evolved in Latvia into a refined interpretation of ‘resilience’. Another relevant outlier in relation to mainstream human development work is Susan Pick (e.g., Pick and Sirkin 2010).

Conclusion

“The [human security] concept has soul. It is found relevant by practitioners.”

—Pablo Ruiz Hiebra, UNDP Colombia, June 2021 Human Development Report Office symposium

We have aimed to illustrate the contributions of human security thinking in addressing crises alongside development aspirations. Positioning our discussion in the middle of multiple transitions, among which the Anthropocene represents the widest horizon, we have presented these contributions in two transition time frames: from the past to the present (Part One) and from the present towards the future (Part Two). In this way, we aim to avoid mistakes from the past and to identify some continuing and new inhibitions in humanity’s constant struggle against emerging and re-emerging threats. Here, we synthesize some observations and their implications.

The analysis has been framed in relation to development and crises because discussing human security ideas in isolation can feed into mistaken ideas of rivalry or hierarchy among approaches. In fact, the threats and harms that are the focus of human security thinking provide precious clues to figure out more sensitively the ‘reasons to value’ human ‘doings and beings’. Still, it is important to keep in mind that dealing with crises as security issues and not only as developmental problems implies a major extension of thinking and practices. We would like to emphasize the need to incorporate both perspectives as complementary but also distinctive.

A good share of the discussion has tacitly pointed at the hegemony of economics in development thinking as part of the problem. Some modern economics has become like a religion that defines the impossible (eternal growth) as the reality and defines the reality (finitude, limits, planetary boundaries) as a mirage for the simple-minded who have not grasped the true counterintuitive laws of the universe. Economics is not centrally interested in crises and disasters along the way because they are seen as trivial, temporary and/or as inevitable stumbles or healthy ‘creative destruction’ along a rising path to mastery. Human development thinking has improved on this in fundamental respects but can still sometimes be in danger of a salvationist vision.⁴⁶ Many authors argue that a human security perspective adds essential elements that can, in particular, support the required bases for a humans/environment reorientation.

⁴⁶ A salvationist vision can be associated with fundamentalist ideas about the inevitability of progress, such as in some developmentalism or extreme readings of Pinker’s defence of Enlightenment values. These dangers deserve further exploration than is possible here.

We have suggested the following:

- Human security analysis is an elaboration of and/or within human development thinking, studying (all major) threats to (all) basic human needs (not only material ones), with attention included to fears, perceptions and perception biases.
- Human security analysis looks at the intersectional situation and priority vulnerabilities of particular groups and types of people.
- By focusing on crises and their position in human life, human security thinking promotes addressing crises across the whole management cycle of relief, recovery, prevention and preparedness, as well as identification and perception studies, scenarios analyses and risk-mapping. Human security language better encompasses this broad universe of knowledge, fostering collaboration, despite perception distortions within each institution.
- Human security analysis helps to confront the instrumentalization of crisis talk. While crises happen and a shock-driven response to global threats is part of how we confront them, overly casual crisis talk is also common. We need tools to balance attention to response, recovery and a culture of prevention (UNDP 2016, p. 8).
- Human security analysis embraces the importance of perception and helps us to understand its distortions, including in the politics inherent to crises.
- It uses a fuller picture of being ‘human’, not only a focus solely on capability as freedom. It emphasizes ‘freedom in security’, and resilience and securitability. The human security notion may add content to resilience thinking (e.g., by emphasising prevention and giving more attention to psychological and existential insecurity—including to the phenomenon of the simultaneous increase of material and organizational interconnections, on the one hand, and of human disconnection on the other hand).
- Human security analysis helps unmask how responses are constrained by preconceptions about admissible (often equated to market) solutions. It thus highlights the establishment of protection capabilities facilitated through welfare State institutions. This analysis also stresses problems of access to protection and the calculations about tolerable harm that lie behind security measures.
- Human security thinking can help in changing simplistic assumptions about relations between per capita income and crisis management—e.g., assumptions of trickle-down and Kuznets curves, and presumptions that rich countries and only rich countries have all relevant knowledge and skills. It can thus promote more inclusive and fruitful global discussions.

- Use of human security ideas can help support feelings required for the transitions needed in the Anthropocene: first, a shared fate; second, a shared human identity; and, third, mutual sympathy and concern for others. This perspective combines a normative ontology of the value of human persons, as in human rights work, with an explanatory ontology of interconnectedness.
- Human security ideas support a wide range of practical emphases in policy and planning.

Table 1 summarized these various roles, presented as responses to the obstacles to adequate attention to crises identified in Part One. It is repeated below.

TABLE 1

Summary of human security analysis contributions and responses to obstacles

Contributions of human security analysis	Obstacles to which human security analysis responds
Identifying insecurities more systematically Facilitating more serious attention to existential risks	Casual crisis talk Waiting for trickle-down ('the Kuznets curve of everything')
Strengthening the perceptual basis for responding collectively to insecurities	Limits to attention, comprehension, empathy The politics and perceptions of crises
Linking short-term responses with longer-term prevention and preparedness	Developmental hypermetropia Overriding preoccupation with root causes
Encouraging and linking a diversity of response tools	An overly narrow view of admissible solutions to crises

To conclude: The treatment of crises in people’s lives and societies’ paths should be upgraded so that we can become better prepared for the challenges and opportunities that transitions will bring. A new generation of human security thinking and practice will be helpful here and can benefit from learning from past mistakes and more fully encompassing the contributions and potentials mentioned above.

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