

Has the Apple Fallen Very Far From the Tree? An Assessment of Old Modernization Theory and the New Human Security Approach

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Abstract

In comparing development approaches, this paper argues that the human security doctrine, while an improvement on the modernization approach in theoretically significant ways, ultimately means a continuation of the modernist status quo when applied practically on an international scale. The paper compares the theory behind them, arguing that human security is preferable. It then delves into their practical application, and after covering the practice of modernization theory, demonstrates how the vagueness of the human security approach in practical terms, ultimately allows global institutions to safely adopt it only rhetorically, while continuing to follow the modernist status quo. In conclusion, the paper argues that academics and policy-makers must be made aware of the dangerous similarities between old modernization theory and the new human security approach to development, and learn to avoid repetition of past missteps.

Résumé

En faisant comparaison entre diverses théories de développement, cette dissertation propose que la doctrine de sécurité humaine signifie en pratique une perpétuation des préceptes modernistes. La discussion avance les mérites de la théorie de sécurité humaine. Cependant, en analyse pratique, l'imprécision de cette théorie empêche les institutions globales de l'exécuter. En adoptant la rhétorique de sécurité humaine, ces institutions maintiennent néanmoins des perspectives modernistes. Pour éviter les méprises historiques des théories modernistes, les académiques et les politiciens doivent prendre conscience des dangereuses similarités entre ces théories traditionnelles et la nouvelle rhétorique de sécurité humaine.

Finding a way to end world poverty and human misery has been one of the greatest challenges of our time. Though unequivocal solutions have been elusive thus far, academics and policymakers remain undaunted in their efforts, and development discourses continue to evolve. The modernization school of development thought has been the dominant mainstream ideology in the West since the 1950s, and though highly criticized in recent years, continues to influence development policy in less developed countries.¹ Then in the 1990s, an increasingly popular approach to development arose: the human security approach.² For the purposes of this essay, I will refer to the definition of modernization proffered by W.W. Rostow, as well as that of Fen

Osler Hampson for human security, both to be elaborated upon below. In comparing the two approaches to development, I will argue that the human security doctrine, while an improvement on the modernization approach in theoretically significant ways, ultimately means a continuation of the modernist status quo when applied practically on an international scale. I adopt this position with full knowledge of its controversial nature. Human security has quickly reached a mythical "fix-all" status in international relations, yet I feel it important to explore the other, less popular side of the debate. After defining both modernization and hu-

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¹ Wenran Jiang, Lecture. Comparative Politics. University of Alberta, Edmonton. Jan-Apr 2004.

² Fen Osler Hampson, *Madness in the Multitude: Human Security and World Disorder*. Canada: Oxford University Press, 2002, v.

man security outlooks, I will compare the theory behind them, particularly the levels of analysis they focus on (state versus the individual). I will argue that the latter is preferable. I will then delve into their practical application, and after covering the practice of modernization theory, will demonstrate how the vagueness of the human security approach in practical terms, ultimately allows global institutions to safely adopt it only rhetorically, while continuing to follow the modernist status quo.

IN THEORY...

I will begin my discussion by providing some context to the modernization and human security theories of development. While various definitions are available, John Isbister's characterization of modernist thought is most helpful: "Modernization theorists focus on deficiencies in the poor countries – absence of democratic institutions, of capital, of technology, of initiative – and then speculate about ways to repair these deficiencies".³ According to W. Andy Knight and Sandra Rein, modernization theory became prevalent in the 1950s.⁴ Emerging in the post-World War II period, it draws upon the classical works of Adam Smith⁵ (1723-1790), Karl Marx⁶ (1818-1883), and Max Weber⁷ (1864-1920).⁸ Reaching its

height in the 1960s and 1970s, it is greatly influenced by W.W. Rostow's seminal book, *The Stages of Economic Growth* (1960). In it, he theorizes that the development of any state can be summed up in five stages:

- Traditional society
- Preconditions for take-off
- Take-off
- Drive to maturity
- Age of high mass consumption⁹

In keeping with modernist thought before and after him, Rostow held that all countries must follow the above linear path of development in order to succeed. It is Rostovian modernization that will be the basis of this paper.

Modernization theory is largely state-centric, focused primarily on domestic economic growth and the augmentation of international capitalism.¹⁰ These sentiments are incorporated heavily in structural adjustment, the modernist fix-all solution to poverty and underdevelopment. Based on Rostovian reasoning, the World Bank, International Monetary Fund, and World Trade Organization have endorsed structural adjustment-like programs¹¹ since the 1980s.¹² Structural adjustment is aptly described by Charles Hauss: "[It is] a mix of policies designed to open up the domestic economy to imports and investments, reduce government spending and national debt, slash inflation and restore a macroeconomic equilibrium, and sell off state-owned enterprises".¹³ Through conditional financing, these international institutions coerce underdeveloped states into concerning themselves almost

³ John Isbister, 6th ed. *Promises Not Kept: Poverty and the Betrayal of Third World Development*. USA: Kumarian Press, 2003, 32.

⁴ W. Andy Knight and Sandra Rein. "Chapter 20: Development and Its Future Prospects." *Critical Concepts: An Introduction to Politics*. Ed. Janine Brodie. Scarborough, Ontario: Prentice-Hall Canada, 1999, 355.

⁵ As explored in his well-known book, *Wealth of Nations*, Smith argued that development could be achieved through laissez-faire economics. He also believed that the power relationship that existed between workers and owners under capitalism, was more equitable than in previous stages of development (Knight and Rein 355-57).

⁶ Though this may surprise those familiar with the principle of communism, Marx's understanding of development was in fact quite similar to Adam Smith's (Knight and Rein 356).

⁷ In his seminal 1930 book, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, Weber argued that Protestantism, particularly the Calvinist branch, was an important factor in the great industrialization and economic growth of the West, particularly of Britain and the United States. Over time Protestant values took on a life of their own as capitalism developed. As for develop-

ment in the South, he believed that non-Christian societies lacked the *geist*, or spirit, to overcome their poverty (Knight and Rein 357).

⁸ W. Andy Knight and Sandra Rein, 355-359.

⁹ John Isbister, 37.

¹⁰ James Busumtwi-Sam, "Development and Human Security: Whose Security, and From What?" *International Journal* 57 (2). 2002, 258.

¹¹ Though not always called by the name of structural adjustment, they essentially incorporate the same elements into their development strategies (Jiang).

¹² Wenran Jiang.

¹³ Charles Hauss, 4th ed. *Comparative Politics: Domestic Responses to Global Challenges*. Australia: Wadsworth, 2003, 345.

exclusively with economics, the end "prize" being integration into the global market economy as swiftly and completely as possible.¹⁴ The merits of such a strategy have been criticized heavily, particularly as human needs, ignored in the pursuit of economic growth, are concerned. While citing success stories such as that of South Korea,¹⁵ modernization theorists readily admit that social programs have suffered under such policies. Indeed, it has been the combination of structural adjustment and unbridled bor-

After the human cost of modernization theory and structural adjustment became apparent, demand for a new development paradigm was inevitable.

The most apparent theoretical difference between modernization and human security is their disparate levels of analysis: the state under modernization versus the individual under the human security approach. The genesis of today's notions of human security was Robert McNamara's¹⁹ 1968 book, *The Essence of Security*, in which

Three Views of Human Security¹⁸

Conception of Human Security	Key Elements	Strategies and Instruments	Object of Security
1: Human rights/rule of law	Basic personal rights, legal rights, political and civil rights	Sanctions, co-optation, shaming, prosecution and conviction (criminal tribunals and International Criminal Court)	Individuals
2: Safety of peoples (humanitarian)	Basic personal rights, including subsistence rights	Military intervention, humanitarian and emergency assistance, peace-building, conflict prevention	Individuals
3: Sustainable human development	Economic, social, and environmental rights	Redistributive measures that address inequalities in wealth and income between rich and poor, new participatory governance structures at subnational, national, and global levels	Individuals

rowing that has tragically resulted in severe debt crises in Latin America and Africa,¹⁶ as well as a growing wealth imbalance between the north and south.¹⁷

he broadens the definition of security to include non-military aspects.²⁰ Since then, human-centred approaches to development have gradually grown, reaching the mainstream in 1994 with the United Nations Development Program's *Human Development Report*.²¹ It introduced seven separate components of human security, based on the work of Asian scholar Mahbub ul Haq: economic security, food security, health security, environmental security, personal security, community security, and political secu-

¹⁴ Tanya Narozhna, Lecture. Dynamics of Globalization and Development in the New Millennium. University of Alberta, Edmonton. July-Aug 2004.

¹⁵ Charles Hauss, 346.

¹⁶ In the 1980s, following decades of unrestrained lending and borrowing, three events occurred which condemned many LDCs to crippling debt: I) Rich countries increased interest rates, which in turn led to a substantial jump in the size of payments due; II) the price of primary commodities dropped, causing LDC incomes to also fall; and III) oil prices quadrupled, driving up production costs (Jiang).

¹⁷ Ana. Cortez, "Chapter 13: Introduction - Africa." *Global Financial Turmoil and Reform: A United Nations Perspective*. Ed. Herman Barry. USA: United Nations University Press, 1999, 202-204.

¹⁸ Fen Osler Hampson, 33.

¹⁹ Robert Strange McNamara was US Secretary of Defense from 1961 to 1968. He resigned that position to become President of the World Bank from 1968 to 1981 (Wikipedia).

²⁰ Tanya Narozhna.

²¹ Fen Osler Hampson, v.

ity.²² Despite subsequent attempts to characterize it more definitively, the term remains highly ambiguous and therefore controversial.²³ Recently however, Fen Osler Hampson of the Norman Paterson School of International Affairs, Carleton University, has distinguished three main conceptions of human security:

Although all three of Hampson's points are relevant, I will focus my analysis on the third, sustainable human development. Its all-encompassing focus makes it the most paradigmatic, and therefore the most comparable to modernization theory.

Unlike modernization, Hampson's human security outlook has a strong social justice component – a welcome reversal. Rather than focusing solely on the economy and global market, it subsumes all elements that might affect the well being of individuals, including economic, social, and environmental aspects.²⁴ Theoretically, the human security outlook is refreshingly daring:

[It is] clearly a departure from traditional liberal internationalism, which sees international order as resting on institutional arrangements that, in varying degrees, help secure the viability and integrity of the liberal democratic state by attenuating threats in the state's external environment. To the extent that individual interests are served, they are of secondary importance to those of the liberal democratic state itself. In the human security 'paradigm' this order of priority is reversed. (emphasis added)²⁵

Since the time of the original Westphalian system,²⁶ violation of state sovereignty was tantamount to a violation of international law.²⁷ It was only after the First World War and the introduction of US

President Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points,²⁸ that the inviolability of state sovereignty was lessened, and principles such as national self-determination recognized.²⁹ A precedent became set during the Cold War (1945-1990) as in-state interventions by the US and USSR – in the name of democracy and communism respectively – became commonplace. This precedent led to expanded avenues following the end of the war. Bystander countries began to recognize an "obligation to intervene" in extreme cases such as genocide or ethnic cleansing.³⁰ Rather than be concerned with maintaining the strength of the state, human security theory advocates the impact on *people* as the main criteria for assessing policy.³¹ This is a significant theoretical shift, and a positive one. Yet despite its refreshing theoretical take on development, in practice the human security approach does little more than allow the status quo of modernization to continue. This aspect of the human security approach will be broached below.

IN PRACTICE...

Now that the major theoretical differences between modernization and human security have been discussed, I wish to delve into the ways in which the two operate in practice. During its post-World War II pre-eminence, the Western-based modernization movement was in a position to greatly influence the character of newly minted global institutions, thereby promulgating Western values and interests worldwide. The most significant example of this is the role modernization theory played in the 1944 founding of the Bretton Woods³² institutions, the International Monetary Fund and the World

²² Amitav Acharya, "Human Security: East versus West." *International Journal* 56 (3). 2001. 445.

²³ Fen Osler Hampson, v

²⁴ *Ibid*, 33.

²⁵ *Ibid*, 4-5.

²⁶ The Treaty of Westphalia was signed in 1648, bringing an end to the "Thirty Years War" in Europe. As a result of a "stalemate" among those powers involved powers, it also resulted in the unintended emergence of the European state system. From it emerged the institutions of anarchy and state sovereignty. These principles are now the basis for our international political system (Keating).

²⁷ *Ibid*, 3.

²⁸ Wilson's Fourteen Points were proposed in 1918, following the end of the second World War. Many of the ideas therein became hallmarks of the international system and were implemented by the League of Nations (Keating).

²⁹ *Ibid*, 3.

³⁰ *Ibid*, 3.

³¹ *Ibid*, 6.

³² The name refers to the Bretton Woods Conference held at Bretton Woods, New Hampshire, USA in 1944. The event was formally called the United Nations Monetary and Financial Conference (infoplease).

Bank.³³ According to Ankie Hoogvelt, author of *Globalization and the Postcolonial World*, modernization theory and its practice are irrefutably based on Western interests and values. He notes that Rostow and other modernization theorists generally studied the historical social evolution of the West and incorporated its themes into modernization theory until the patterns became "normative and prescriptive logic".³⁴ They divided the world theoretically into two poles: "modern" (often called rational) and "traditional":³⁵ "[To them], the essence of a traditional society is that it is stagnant and unchanging".³⁶ This cleared the way for "superior" Western culture and methods,³⁷ and indeed, they wrote and promoted virtual "how-to-develop" manuals for Southern states based on Western history.³⁸ Since then, the basic assumptions and themes of modernization theory have generally remained the same.³⁹ Critics have come to recognize the problematic assumptions housed within modernist discourse,⁴⁰ and new development methods have been sought.

It can be agreed upon by most that modernization theory is outdated, and indeed, it has been criticized widely over the years for its assumption and promotion of Western universalism.⁴¹ Yet I argue that, regardless of its theoretical promise, in practical terms human security supports the international status quo, which largely represents modernism. Human security theorists may criticize our current global governance systems as being state-based and socially unjust,⁴² yet no concrete alternative systems of wealth redistribution or participatory

governance structures have actually been proposed.⁴³ Granted that the human security approach is a recent and relatively underdeveloped doctrine, yet I would still argue that it is unlikely that human security theory will ever provide any significant challenge to current models, nor that any human security-based systems aimed at rectifying global inequality and championing social justice, will ever come about. As Roland Paris points out, the very nature of the term makes it impossible for it to provide a viable alternative to current modernist global systems, and the framers of human security discourse have a hand in this: "The most ardent backers of human security appear to have an interest in keeping the term expansive and vague ... [to the point where] human security is so vague that it verges on meaninglessness".⁴⁴ Many champions of the human security approach, including Human Security Network⁴⁵ member Canada, are complicit. While championing human security and "freedom from want" in the South, the Canadian government has quietly cut its foreign aid budget for the last several years.⁴⁶ While seemingly promising on paper, the broad mandate of the human security approach makes it practically inapplicable, thus allowing the continuation of the modernist status quo.

Despite the impracticality of the concept, many international institutions seem to have readily adopted its approach. The very ambiguity and inapplicability of the human security approach has allowed our modernist international institutions to successfully veil themselves in human security "rhetoric,"⁴⁷ and express support for its broad application, while maintaining the status quo and quelling criticism of their

³³ The World Bank as it is now known, was called the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development upon its founding in 1944 (infoplease).

³⁴ W. W. Rostow, 3rd ed. *The Stages of Economic Growth: A Non-Communist Manifesto*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990, 36.

³⁵ John Isbister, 37.

³⁶ Ibid, 33.

³⁷ Wenran Jiang.

³⁸ Ankie Hoogvelt, 2nd ed. *Globalization and the Postcolonial World: The New Political Economy of Development*. Hampshire: Palgrave, 2001, 35.

³⁹ Wenran Jiang.

⁴⁰ John Isbister, 37.

⁴¹ W. Andy Knight and Sandra Rein, 360.

⁴² Fen Osler Hampson, 33.

⁴³ Ibid, 33.

⁴⁴ Roland Paris, "Human Security: Paradigm Shift or Hot Air?" *International Security* 26 (2). 2001. 88,102.

⁴⁵ The network includes Austria, Canada, Chile, Greece, Ireland, Jordan, Mali, the Netherlands, Norway, Switzerland, Slovenia, Thailand and South Africa as an observer (The Human Security Network).

⁴⁶ James Busumtwi-Sam, 270.

⁴⁷ Note that the United Nations Development Program has adopted the human security approach more fully than the Bretton Woods institutions (Narozhna).

antiquated methods. Hampson supports this assertion:

[Organizations such as the World Bank, the United Nations Development Program, and the Development Assistance Committee of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development] have tended to adopt those elements among the different conceptions of human security that are most compatible with existing organizational mandates and prevailing institutional and ideological philosophies.⁴⁸

Like with almost all institutions, our global governance systems are resistant to change, and tend to maintain the principles of modernist theory on which they were founded in the post-World War II period.⁴⁹

Unfortunately, these institutions have learned to adopt in-vogue lingo, while changing very little: "The culture of conventional development has been adept at appropriating language and symbolism that appear to signify meaningful change but, in reality, simply mean 'business as usual'".⁵⁰ As Busumtwi-Sam points out, having an open multilateral trading system and liberal economic order, both products of modernization theory inspired policies, has become immutable for the West, and are likely to remain a fixture of the international scene.⁵¹

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⁴⁸ Fen Osler Hampson, 151.

⁴⁹ Tanya Narozhna.

⁵⁰ James Busumtwi-Sam, 260.

⁵¹ Ibid, 257.

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