

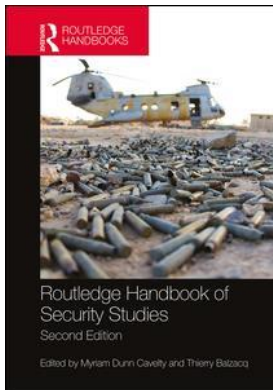
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HUMAN SECURITY: LESSONS LEARNED FROM AFGHANISTAN

Gunhild Hoogensen Gjørsv

Human security made its big debut in a nineteen-page chapter in the 1994 United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Human Development Report, expanding the notion of security to include dimensions of food, health, community, environmental, economic, personal, and political security, with the vague and noble intention to address some of the glaring weaknesses of security policy, and shed light on the importance of the security of people. The UNDP report defined human security as ‘freedom from fear, freedom from want’, and claimed it consisted of four essential characteristics: it was universal, interdependent, easier to ensure through early prevention, and people-centred (UNDP 1994). It additionally encompassed seven categories: political, personal, food, health, environment, economic, and community security (UNDP 1994). Therefore, human security can be simply understood as security in everyday life.

More than twenty years later, academic and policy literature are still uncertain about a definition (Breslin and Christou 2015). The human security concept has been subject to much discussion and debate, including arguments about ‘how the concept is difficult for policy makers to operationalize when it is defined too broadly, how it is meaningless to focus upon individuals per se, as well as how it is such a necessary concept that finally brings non-state actor voices into the security debate’ (Hoogensen Gjørsv 2014b: 61). At the same time, one can question where the power behind the concept now lies – is it an empowering tool? Do human security analyses focus on the lives of ordinary people and their (in)security challenges, and potentially thereafter affect policy (bottom-up approach)? Or do we find that states have co-opted the concept for their own devices, not least in claims and justifications for military intervention, a critique more and more frequently heard?

This chapter will look at these questions, engaging with common critiques of human security and bringing forward a new understanding of human security emerging at the civil–military interface. It has three parts. In the first, I discuss some of the consequences of the hijacking of ‘human security’ by the world of states, and then point out that civil–military interactions are a site to study interactions between top-down (state) and bottom-up (human) security. This is further elaborated in the second sub-section, in which I show how a multi-actor security perspective, based on positive security notions, helps us to observe and assess conflict and post-conflict settings. In the third, I share observations from my research in Afghanistan to offer insights into how we can support human security in civil–military operations and reduce the ‘virtuous imperialist’ footprint at the same time.

Human security – a state agenda in sheep’s clothing?

Until the end of the Cold War, security was largely confined to the militarized and elite notion of state security bound within an anarchic international system regulated by superpowers (Hough 2008; Walt 1991). These traditional approaches have focused on the state as the primary security referent (or target) for security, as well as the primary security actor (creating security). It became clear in the 1990s, however, that the fixation on the state and its existence often had little to do with the way security was experienced ‘on the ground’.

The development of ‘human security’ as a concept was in large part a response to a lack of acknowledgement of the personal experience of security in those ‘traditional’ approaches to security. It had also become increasingly clear that the state was by no means the sole security actor, particularly in conditions of weak or failed states, where civilians (and non-civilians) have had to rely on other sources, including themselves, to establish some semblance of security to manage their day-to-day existences. The concept thus draws attention to the security dynamics taking place at the level of civilians/non-combatants/non-state actors (Tadjbakhsh and Chenoy 2007; UNDP 1994; Wibben 2008). Understanding the needs and capacities of persons, and how they understand and manage their security needs, is crucial for any other security actor who will operate in the same environment.

Even though the ‘human security agenda’ was proposed in the early 1990s as a global initiative focusing on the security of individuals, it thereafter seemed to be largely adopted as a foreign policy approach by a number of global North countries, practising a ‘new’ way of understanding and providing assistance to the global South. The co-optation of human security by states, particularly those engaging in military interventions, comes with several consequences, addressed in the first sub-section. In the second, I suggest examining the experiences of civil-military interaction as a theoretically and analytically fruitful lens for the analysis of human security and how it is operationalized or practised.

Virtuous imperialism

Oz Hassan assesses the development of human security through the category of political security, which he claims has dominated the debates with its focus on ‘the prevention of government repression, systematic violation of human rights, and threats from militarization’ (Hassan 2015: 86). Though the apparent original intention was a focus on civilians, Hassan shows how political security has been subjected to tensions with the dominance of the state, whereby the state determines threats to political security, in particular through ‘Responsibility to Protect’ (R2P), which is a policy platform that has strong roots in human security (Abiew 2010; Bellamy 2009; ICISS 2001). Humanitarian interventions, which play a significant part in R2P, then become a primary vehicle for human security, but based on threats towards civilians that were largely identified by states, for state security. As Michael Pugh claims, ‘rational, civilized “humanitarian intervention” may be a part of the packaging in which Western security culture, self-perception, and self-interest are wrapped’ (Pugh 2005: 50).

Beyond identifying and perhaps ‘solving’ human security crises abroad as a foreign policy platform, human security also seemed to become a way of identifying the ‘other’ as a source of insecurity for those living in the global North, both as individuals and communities but also state security (Hoogensen Gjørv 2014b). The concept can be understood to entrench linear and elitist thinking with regard to security and lead to the perpetuation of the superior-subordinate relationship in North-South relations (Chandler 2008; Hoogensen Gjørv 2014b).

Although the human security concept appeared to break the apparent stranglehold that a narrow state-based conception had managed to co-opt since the Second World War and

particularly through the Cold War, the prevailing assumption about human security is that it is a concept only relevant for particular regions of the world. It perpetuates ahistorical claims about the state and sovereignty, uncritical assumptions that state security trickles down to individuals and provides security at the community and individual level, that state security is well established in global North states. These sorts of claims have often been rooted in the realist tradition that assumes that ‘strong states provide better security’ (Wibben 2011: 70). Through this logic, the global North is composed of ‘strong’ states, having eradicated its own human security issues, and is well placed to assist the South in eradicating the same. This understanding of security is also very state-based, assuming that security is addressed by state actors alone, rather than being a process that involves multiple actors, state and non-state (Hoogensen Gjørv 2012). The result becomes an imbalance in perceptions and explanations of what occurs within and across regions and the globe, as well as disguising the contributions and competencies of different actors in providing security at different levels (Hoogensen Gjørv 2012; Stuvøy 2009).

I have described elsewhere the co-optation of human security for state security purposes as ‘virtuous imperialism’, whereby global North states engage in humanitarian interventions or other proclaimed human security measures for the purposes of ensuring that unrest in the global South does not find ways to extend to northern states through migration or terrorism (Hoogensen Gjørv 2014b). David Chandler raised this point as well, noting that human security was just a vehicle for state-security agendas (Chandler 2008). A state-security based orientation and implementation of human security renders non-state actors passive, and further renders invisible any human insecurities and vulnerabilities that are not identified by states. It assumes that community and individual voices are fully represented and attended to by a state actor, and it disguises, if not prevents, possible shared human security concerns and experiences between peoples across communities and regions, let alone states. The question is, whose expressions of security are actually ‘heard’ by those who have the power to act on these articulations (Hansen 2000)? If speech acts of security are made by marginalized or even ‘everyday’ people, but not recognized by those with the choice and power to respond, does that mean these are no longer articulations of security or insecurity?

Narrowing the focus: human security and civil–military engagement

Although the above criticisms of a state-based human security approach need to be taken seriously, this attempt to ‘hijack’ the original (though vague) human security agenda, to put it bluntly, is not so black-and-white. I want to suggest that tensions exist between state and individual/people-based security whereby it is clear that states are not the only game in town, and that bottom-up/community/individual perspectives on security can be influential in the creation and maintenance of state security, not only the other way around. The past two decades have illustrated these tensions well, as they have been characterized by expensive, personnel/troop heavy operations that have relied upon close military contact with civilian actors (local populations as well as civilian organizations and local to national authorities). Here, a new site for human security emerges.

Civil–military contact can be perceived in different ways, not least as either a militarization of civilian space whereby the military encroach upon and make use of civilian resources and information, or as a recognition by state and military actors that awareness and support for human security issues (well-being of populations affected by and within areas of operations) is crucial to the end goal of stabilization and security, or a combination of both, which I will argue here. Though military activities have largely always affected civilian populations, there

has been an alarming trend since the end of the Cold War where there has been an enormous increase in civilian casualties as compared with military. The spaces between civilian and military have become much more narrow, and more often than not overlap. The recognition of these developments has resulted in a field of theory and practice called civil–military interaction: ‘Civil–military interaction speaks to that untidy place where the ethics, ideals, practicalities, and realities regarding the relations between militaries and civilians meet up and often struggle with each other’s goals and mandates. Civil–military interaction refers to the range and nature of contact, coordination, and/or cooperation between national (local) and international (foreign) civilians (ranging from government officials to NGOs both humanitarian and development, to local populations) and military actors in crisis situations’ (Hoogensen Gjørøv 2014a: 7).

A new framework for analysis

The security of civilian actors, including non-governmental agency aid workers and government employees, as well as the general population, lies at the core of the civil–military interface. Though militaries act at the behest of their governments, linking military strategy and goals to state security, their efforts on the ground affect, and are affected by, the state of human security in the area of operations. An analysis of human security in the local spaces where operations are taking place requires broader insights into security than what is offered by traditional state-based approaches. In what follows, I use a multi-actor security perspective that helps to refocus attention to new sites of human security and include feminist perspectives for the evaluation of power and authority in these sites.

From negative to positive security

The notions of positive and negative security can be used to reflect upon the human security distinction between ‘freedom from want’ and ‘freedom from fear’ and the measures by which security can be achieved. Negative security relies considerably upon state actors and use of force/violence, and is rooted in fear, whereas positive security makes space for non-violent measures and non-state actors. Positive and negative security can contribute to theorizing about what human security perspectives might imply for civil–military interaction (Hoogensen Gjørøv 2012; Knight 2008; UNDP 1994).

Positive and negative security both reflect the tensions within the ways the concept of security in general has been conceptualized, who provides security and how, and how scholars and practitioners themselves place a ‘value’ on security. Negative security relates to the treatment of security as a concept we wish to avoid, one that should be invoked as little as possible. We value it negatively because it represents the use of force. On the other hand, the concept of security has also been known to represent something that is positively valued, or as something that is good or desired, providing a foundation to pursue our needs and interests and enjoy a full life (Hoogensen Gjørøv 2012; Roe 2008).

Negative security can thus be understood as ‘security from’ (a threat) and positive security as ‘security to’ or enabling. Negative security is often associated with what is called traditional security that assumes a universally defined actor called ‘the state’ with state-centric security issues, addressed by a universally agreed-upon tool of security – the military. This is often understood to be the more dominant understanding of security, a type of “big S” security, given its dominance in relation to other security perspectives. The focus upon identification of threats and the use of violence affects the way we understand and practice “big S” security. The identification of danger and enemies legitimizes or justifies the use of force. It reduces the possibilities for recognizing multiple actors because we do not *want* multiple actors employing violence.

Thus negative security has been dominated by a ‘uni-actor’ approach, whereby the term ‘security’ ought to be a limited, one-actor, state-centric concept, linked to the state’s assumed monopoly of force. Negative security thus invokes the deployment of the most extreme measures (usually the military) to address issues of immediate and existential danger. When the state invokes security-producing measures to protect the state, however, these same measures may or do have a deleterious effect on other actors, such as individuals and communities, who may feel inclined to respond to ensure their own security.

Positive security, on the other hand, reflects a central foundation for enabling, the foundation of trust. Trust is established largely through non-violent means, through negotiation, compromise, and dialogue. This is often framed as ‘everyday’ security (associated with individuals and communities), which reflects positive security, assumes the existence of trust created through good governance, respect for the law, cooperation, and an open society. Positive security allows the security analyst to ask how, for whom, and by whom, security is produced, exposing the values and contexts behind a diversity of practices of security. Positive security makes visible as well as prioritizes non-state actors, attempting to ‘know’ security that affects individuals every day.

Positive security therefore has much in common with some of the human security literature that recognizes individuals and communities as security actors (Hoogensen and Stuvøy 2006; Scharffscher 2011; Stern 2006). These non-state actors endeavour to seek security, not just in relation to avoiding threats, but also to building their capacities. Many of the practices to avoid threats and build capacities are non-violent in character, including measures ranging from humanitarian and development aid, to economic, education, environmental, and other social network supports. These measures and practices are crucial to providing secure environments. Thus when the state disappoints (which is not insignificant, as the state will always play a crucial role for providing certain measures for its citizens), individuals and communities often employ their own non-violent practices to ensure security, building upon whatever resources they might have at their disposal at the time. These are practices in positive security.

Understanding the core assumptions within positive and negative security allows us to observe and assess the field where multiple actors play a role in conflict and post-conflict settings. The ways in which conflict has ‘developed’ have a direct bearing upon how we will perceive and operationalize civil–military interaction. Although insurgencies and guerrilla warfare have been present throughout history, state-based perceptions involving large scale, professional armies have dominated. This dominant view has increasingly had to share space with the complex conflict formations we have seen over the past two decades, moving from large armies fighting against each other to a complex combination of a variety of actors vying to gain control (host nation military, intervention militaries, combating political opponents, criminals), while other ‘civilian’ or non-combatant actors are actively engaging within the same area of operations (Kaldor 2007).

The increased recognition of diverse actors as well as the complexities behind interventions (consent-based or support to one ‘side’) also affects the ways in which third parties or international organizations are able to interact with other actors as well as how they are perceived, rendering now-classical notions such as ‘peacekeeping’ less relevant (Soderlund et al. 2008). In many instances combatants have no intention of responding to diplomatic efforts or laying down arms at the behest of international actors which claim a moral authority on behalf of the international community (Soderlund et al. 2008).

All of these actors embody a set of values that they prioritize and wish to see survive into the future; these values inform their vision of the political, of which perceptions of security are an important part (Wibben 2011). Some actors, both military and civilian, engage in positive-security oriented projects or activities. These contribute to practices and experiences of security that support insecure populations with capacities to build upon and stabilize their lives once

again. The same or other actors might also create insecurity (for example, political and military actors using force for regime-changing or state-building goals) with a purpose to generate a new system that prioritizes their own values and political projects, creating a different vision of the political, a different framework for security. Thus one's understanding of security depends upon the political agenda or political vision of the relevant actors.

A multi-actor security perspective

We should ask whether or not it should suffice to think of security largely in terms of military action and the protection of the state, and leave other actors out of the security picture. Although there are some who might argue this, experience has shown that both military and their political leadership need to be aware of who else is influencing security and security perceptions in their area of operations, and that this includes many non-state actors who traditionally have not been acknowledged. Civil–military interaction is about recognizing this multitude of actors, and about operationalizing a multi-actor security perspective, by including, if not prioritizing, the roles and security perceptions of people.

People across the political spectrum (from humanitarian to government to local populations) are 'everyday' security actors, and function alongside the 'traditional' (read: dominant or big 'S' security) tool of security: the military. 'Everyday' security has interacted with and been influential on big 'S' security. In past and current complex operations, we see the operationalization of negative security or (in)security which expresses vulnerabilities and sources of fear, as well as positive security focusing on capabilities and enabling, whereby people, societies, and groups have been able to create or build their security by a variety of means, to ensure that life continues, and to ensure a good life can be found (Bajpai 2004; CHS 2003; Hoogensen 2005; Hoogensen Gjør 2012). Using an actor-based security framework, various actors, from communities and individuals to researchers, policy makers, state-based security practitioners (military and police actors), and private security agencies/NGOs/industry, are made visible, and are recognized as participants who express their perceptions of threats and assess their capacity to cope, in concert with others.

In other words, the state and the military are not the only 'security' actors, particularly where human security is concerned (Hasegawa 2007). Government, military, and policy-makers are neither always the leading actors in providing or identifying security, nor need to intervene at all levels of identified human (in)security as they may not have the competency to do so; however they can act as important conduits for the facilitation of knowledge between communities and actors, as well as respond to human in/securities when communities can no longer effectively respond to threats (UNDP 1994).

Questions of legitimacy and authority

The various actors within a security dynamic will be perceived as having differing forms of legitimacy and authority according to their roles. Questions about the legitimacy and authority of the host nation (questioned either by the host population and/or external actors) are used to justify decisions to intervene in a complex emergency, at which time political and/or legal legitimacy and authority transfers, ideally temporarily, to external actors, both military and civilian. This can create relationships of dependency by local populations upon external actors (where external actors become service-providers of everything from schooling and medical aid to veterinary care), particularly upon long-term actors such as non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and international organizations (IOs), and at times militaries. Over time, external actors working in the host nation might still have authority, but their legitimacy is reduced if the popular feeling

is that there is not a timely transfer of authority to ‘more legitimate’ institutions such as the host government, if local populations see the external actors as potentially threatening their security (physical as well as identity), or if local populations do not see an increase or an improvement in their own security. In other words, legitimacy and authority are not static, and change over time depending on the circumstances (Hoogensen Gjørv 2014a).

Local populations find themselves in the unique situation of, in part, being a target for the efforts of many if not all of the other security actors and their efforts, as well as actors themselves that can influence the security dynamic. The military, as well as government/ministerial, NGO, and local community leaders attempt to exercise forms of control over populations, either to win their trust, or to protect them, or both. This is particularly the case in the civil–military relationship, where different actors vie for control through the use of force or claims to competence to argue for the legitimacy and authority of their roles in relation to civilian populations: ‘sometimes competing claims for control over populations (between militaries and NGOs, for example) will work to disenfranchise or depower local populations, even if that is not the intended consequence’ (Hoogensen Gjørv 2014a: 44). External actors such as international militaries and NGOs/IOs need to constantly be vigilant over how their own legitimacy functions in relation to other actors, and where legitimacy and authority ought to rest ultimately. Ideally legitimacy ends up in the hands of local populations and more specifically given local leaders or potential leaders. Finding out who is a risky task in itself and is an equally important part of the security dynamic and the possibilities for a long-term and stable security for the future.

Civil–military interaction is thus influenced by a mix of moral, political, and legal authority. International and national/host militaries act with political and legal authority, but may often lack moral authority and legitimacy amongst affected constituents (local populations, NGOs), such that they might meet with resistance. NGOs are often considered to have a legal (international humanitarian law (IHL)) and moral authority, particularly when acting on the basis of a humanitarian mandate to help people in need, but may also suffer legitimacy issues if they have not convinced their potential beneficiaries of their merit (Hilhorst 2003), or where their relationships with donor countries and the challenges of national/international aid systems come into question (Tvedt 2007).

Governments, both host nation and donor/troop contributing nation, engage political and legal authority, but also to some degree moral authority, when making claims and pronouncements regarding the need to protect civilians from harm and suffering. The extent of government authority is connected to legitimacy with the local population, but is not always dependent upon it. At times, the political authority of the host government, despite its weaknesses, might hold more weight with communities than does the moral authority of NGOs, if in the long run the host nation government means greater long-term stability and independence. Thus legitimacy and authority to act are important components of the civil–military relationship and depend greatly upon the context of the crisis situation.

Bringing in feminist perspectives

In the realm of interactions between different actors at different political and social scales, feminist approaches have been ground-breaking and trail-blazing for security theoretical perspectives. Feminist security theories have had a strong people-centred focus and have been developing in parallel, as well as in concert with, human security theorizing (Hoogensen and Rottem 2004; Sylvester 2010): ‘security narratives limit how we can think about security, whose security matters, and how it might be achieved’ (Wibben 2011: 65).

The extensive research in Feminist Security Studies, spanning over 20 years, can be used to further inform the dynamics of the civil–military interface, as well as human security theories (Blanchard 2003; Hoogensen and Stuvøy 2006). Feminist Security Studies looks theoretically and empirically at how security is created from the position of marginalized voices, exposing those security processes that are happening ‘on the ground’ whether they are recognized by state authorities or not. Feminist security theory brings to light “Everyday” security, making visible the processes and actors that are also primary in the civil–military spaces existing at the ‘tactical level’, or rather, at the level where people actually live and survive, if not thrive.

Instead of feeding into dominant approaches to Security Studies that focus on a very small portion of the security grid and from the top down (big ‘S’ security), gender analysis takes its starting point from the bottom up; in concert with human security, but with an increased awareness of the impact of gender socialization on personal relations and security perceptions. Acknowledging that the personal is political, these analyses reach down to the individual’s experience, claiming that they are relevant, not just at the level of the individual, but also in relation to the community, the state, and the global order. By identifying the articulation of security needs by those who are least secure or in positions of non-dominance, security is reoriented away from elite interests (Hoogensen and Stuvøy 2006). Feminist approaches have had a long and established tradition of highlighting marginalized realities faced on a daily basis by, arguably, the majority of the world’s population, from economic insecurity and domestic violence, to rape as an institutionalized strategy of large-scale warfare, as well as from the gendered roots of war itself.

Practising human security in a complex space: the case of Afghanistan

The claim of human security, through R2P or humanitarian intervention, as well as from aid organizations, is that the most important actors ‘on the ground’ are the people who live in the ‘host’ nation, or that nation where international actors deploy to support in the provision of assistance and establishment of security. In today’s complex operations, troop-contributing/donor nations and NGOs claim to be acting on behalf of the welfare of host-nation people where the complex emergency is occurring.

The protection of the host-nation civilians may not be always the primary reason for an intervention (at least by foreign governments), but often local population security and well-being, their human security, is invoked by donor/troop-contributing nations as a key concern of those who choose to engage themselves in complex emergencies. Civilians of the host nations are often used as the *raison d’être* behind ethical foreign policies and principles such as R2P. These are the people who are labelled as ‘beneficiaries’ of NGOs (national, local, or international), or are the ‘local population’ with whom militaries will interact. Not all civilians are beneficiaries of course, nor will all civilians have direct contact with governmental or military personnel. However, many if not most might be impacted by these external actors in either direct or indirect ways.

Often the civilians of the host nation are portrayed as those who need help or protection. What is important to remember first and foremost is that they are people who are the frontline of effort and support for their own communities when crisis arises, as they themselves must find ways to cope and survive, sometimes with little to no resources and supplies, before any NGO, military, or official presence arrives in their area. These civilians are by far the best ‘experts’ on their culture and customs, and while foreigners (militaries and international NGOs) may compete about ‘who has been in the area the longest’ or who can best identify local population needs when making claims about competency and expertise, these civilians have been on site and are aware of their own needs, though these might be competing. These same civilians are a mix

(as any population) of people who are biased, politically motivated, restricted/influenced/coloured by the knowledge-base and skills available to, and developed by, their communities and cultures, and play roles in complex power arrangements based on gender, class, ethnicity, and other social classifications.

As such, it was not surprising that amongst the Afghan citizens I spoke with during my own research on the relevance of human security to civil–military interaction, I was met with a wide range of opinions and thoughts about the future of their families, their communities, and of Afghanistan. To even write about ‘civilians’ in this sense, the people living in and amongst complex emergencies (in Afghanistan or otherwise), is extremely difficult. There are no unified principled or political positions here, as people’s expectations for the future, and their sense of security, vary according to the diverse values they hold. There may be some uniformity of values along religious and/or ethnic lines (though not always), and education access and levels can also play a significant role (and cause simplistic divides between the ‘educated’ and ‘non-educated’). It is thus difficult to try to capture the ‘civilian position’ in a complex emergency, but this group of civilians have the most to gain or lose in the civil–military interface, and play a crucial role, if not the most crucial role, in a multi-actor security dynamic. A number of individuals, many operating at the local level as local leaders, also have considerable influence on security.

The importance of local ‘acceptance’ and willingness to work with other actors (military or NGO) has been long acknowledged to be relevant to the creation, development, and maintenance of security – at both local (human) and regional as well as state levels. This impact is hotly debated as well. On the one hand it is recognized that local community acceptance is necessary for other actors – from NGOs to warring parties such as Afghan government forces and NATO ISAF forces, as well as opposition forces such as the Taliban (in the Afghan case) – to gain power in the region in question. Government and military forces want to gain legitimacy with local populations because local community support means solidification of authority and power. Part of the process for establishing legitimacy with local populations is ensuring the provision of human security – ensuring the security of everyday lives, from health care to education to job opportunities to local physical security. The delivery of services plays a crucial role in human security perspectives at the local level, and when these are delivered in cooperation with local community authorities, they can contribute to the establishment of stability in their region.

Different interpretations arise regarding these legitimization processes and the creation of security. These interpretations take us back to the tensions within the human security agenda, where the security needs of people are set against the security needs of the state. On the one hand, claims by many aid organizations or NGOs are that they work with local communities (and their authorities) to gain access and acceptance to be able to deliver needs-based services to that community. Emphasis is placed on the legitimacy that they gain by negotiating through local authorities. The process is framed in such a way that we see how non-state actors work together to provide crucial basic services that contribute to human security – the everyday lives of local populations.

At the same time it is acknowledged that part of the process, particularly in such politically tense and conflict-filled environments, implies that the acceptance of NGO involvement by local authorities also might mean that these same authorities use the NGO delivery of services for their own purposes to gain legitimacy with their own populations (ANSO 2010). These local authorities may not be state-based actors or support the current state leadership, but they may be allied with those who are attempting to gain power at the state level (such as the Taliban). Thus the acceptance and legitimacy provided by local populations, in conjunction with the potential that this also means greater legitimacy for the local powerbrokers, can have a significant effect on security at the local, regional, and even national levels (Hoogensen Gjørv 2014a). On the other

hand, similar processes taking place by other actors (state or state-supporting international actors) such as ISAF militaries and/or ISAF civilian actors who attempt to negotiate acceptance with communities and offer services for the fulfilment of human security needs, have been heavily criticized as ‘hearts and minds’ operations whereby local community acceptance and legitimacy is ‘bought’ by offering different services or products desired by the community (Gompelman 2011).

In both cases we see different arguments employed – where the delivery of crucial services to communities is consistent with community needs and driven by ‘bottom-up’ needs and processes, or where the state/powerbrokers use human security needs for their own solidification of state-based security. The latter argument is particularly levelled against the Western forces that have been largely active in Afghanistan up until December 2014. The ‘hearts and minds’ critique reflects the arguments against the human security agenda where human security is just a virtuous framing of standard state interests and security.

Conclusion

What the case illustrates is that human security, and the complex multitude of actors that are involved in creating security (which we see exemplified in the civil–military interface through different forms of interaction), cannot be understood as ‘either/or’. Human security approaches indeed do expose the activities and processes that are taking place ‘on the ground’, creating spaces of security, often fragile, but in constant development. We see the efforts made locally, by women and men according to varying capacities. We see also how these efforts and processes can be and are influential to perceptions of security beyond the individual and community level, where these processes can influence balances of power for competing interests. And where the powers behind these competing interests indeed understand that local community perceptions and experiences of security can be decisive for their own purposes.

The lessons we should take away therefore are that human security perspectives emanating from the community and individual levels, from the bottom up, are not irrelevant or side issues to the so-called traditional or big ‘S’ security articulated by state actors. Particularly in situations where state authorities are weak, fragile, or virtually non-existent, the relevance of community needs and interests can be even more crucial to security at multiple levels. At the same time we have to be on constant vigil for the ways in which human security agendas can be and are abused, insofar as ‘everyday’ security is not prioritized or is devalued for purposes considered separate or more important than ensuring human security.

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