

The Corona - An Opportunity to Replace Militarist Security with Individual and Human Security

Part 4

By [Jan Oberg](#)

Global Research, June 01, 2020

[Transcend Media Service](#)

Theme: [Police State & Civil Rights](#), [Science and Medicine](#)

Parts 1 and 2: introductory, diagnosis

Part 3: the fraudulent threat analysis that fuels militarism

Part 4: some theories and concepts about human security and how those concepts differ fundamentally from state-anchored dominant military policies

Read: [Part 1](#), [Part 2](#), [Part 3](#)

As pointed out in earlier parts of this series, the obsolete security concept was about *national security* - national *military-first* security.

A new concept must take its departure elsewhere, namely in *individual security*, *humanity's security* and - thereby, implicitly - the *security of the environment*. That is, individual and global human security *and* the security of the environment. It's a much-needed holistic way of looking at it - also in the sense that human life cannot be secured if the environment decays into global climate breakdown.

This lends a new dimension to the word *common* - common security with other human beings in the global system *and* common security in the Man-Nature relationship. We want to be as safe as possible from Nature's vagaries - such as earthquakes - and Mother Nature would surely like to be safe from our exploitation and destruction.

A short history of the human security concept

So, where does *human security* and *common security* concepts come from in terms of intellectual history?

Common sense

A first approach would answer: That is common sense, philosophers have pointed to them for centuries. M K Gandhi rested his life and politics on the idea of securing basic human needs satisfaction for all - the needs for food, drink, housing, freedom from poverty and ignorance but also for spiritual enrichment, seeking truth, etc. In modern psychology, some may think of Abraham Maslow's humanistic *needs* model - a theory that can be criticised but whose main argument about the centrality of human needs remains valid.

Anthropocentrism – the art of placing Man (rather than all living creature in Nature) – in the centre of everything is a dominating Western way of thinking and also to make Man the explorer of the rest of the world and of nature: discoveries ending in colonialism, on the one hand, and natural (male) science to penetrate Mother Nature, find her secret (the atom, for instance) and then controlling her, on the other.

Those are the negative sides of anthropocentrism. The positive side is that – done in benign, caring ways, placing human beings and their wellbeing in the centre of what we do – that is, the *whole* human being and *all* human beings) is essentially natural to humans. But indeed “benign and caring”: It must be in cooperation, in respect – in Partnerschaft with – all other living beings.

Or to put it in another way: What could be more important to secure but the survival, wellbeing and realization of the tremendous *potentials* of the human being – of the *whole* human being and of *all* human beings – of humanity?

This makes states and their governments much less central. After all, states are just a relatively recent inventions, or thought construction, and there is no promise, or need, that they shall last much longer. The world is coming together from below and above the nation-states, or the governments – in vast long-term processes of *trans*-nationalism and globalization.

So it is indeed time to plan for the embedding of security in the individual, from the single individual over all the groups of individuals who make up humanity as one big family with quite amazing diversities.

And that means *replacing* the state-military security thinking, not *supplementing* it. We shall illustrate now why that is an important distinction.

The UNDP and the Ogata/Sen “Human Security Now” Report

Human security was one of the noble, innovative ideas of [Mahbub ul Haq](#) who drew global attention to the concept of human security in the [United Nations Development Programme’s 1994 Human Development Report](#) and sought to influence the UN’s 1995 [World Summit on Social Development in Copenhagen](#).

The UNDP’s 1994 [Human Development Report](#)’s definition of human security argues that the scope of global security should be expanded to include *threats in seven areas*: economic, food, health, environment, personal, community and political security – all of which you can read more about [here](#).

Today, the concept of human security is most often related to the Japan-initiated so-called independent UN Commission headed by *Sadako Ogata* and *Amatya Sen* – [“Human Security Now” \(2003\) which you may read here](#).

Among the Commission’s members, you find mostly diplomats and former ministers, plus people with a background in the Rockefeller Foundation, Goldman Sachs and the US administration.

This explains to a large extent, one can safely assume, that their concept of human security is what I would call *compensatory*, or *supplementary* and does not fundamentally address, challenge or attempt to change the Realpolitik military national security concept.

They state at the outset that:

“The Commission on Human Security’s definition of human security: to protect the vital core of all human lives in ways that enhance human freedoms and human fulfilment. Human security means protecting fundamental freedoms – freedoms that are the essence of life. It means protecting people from critical (severe) and pervasive (widespread) threats and situations. It means using processes that build on peoples strengths and aspirations. It means creating political, social, environmental, economic, military and cultural systems that together give people the building blocks of survival, livelihood and dignity.”

and...

“Human security complements “state security” in four respects:

- Its concern is the individual and the community rather than the state.
- Menaces to people’s security include threats and conditions that have not always been classified as threats to state security.
- The range of actors is expanded beyond the state alone.
- Achieving human security includes not just protecting people but also empowering people to fend for themselves.”

You may catch the flavour of this report’s many words – and platitudes if I may – when reading a paragraph about human security for refugees such as this:

“More than 50 years since its adoption, the refugee regime is under severe strain, leaving gaps in the protection of people fleeing war, violent conflict, human rights violations and discrimination. To help close these gaps, states have signed on to an Agenda for Protection, developed under the UNHCR through global consultations.

Strengthening the protection of refugees requires a better understanding of the causes and actors forcing people to flee. A narrow state-centric understanding of persecution and protection fails to address the needs of people who have fallen victim to rebel groups and criminal triads – and whom the state fails to protect. A broader understanding would include grave threats of generalized violence, internal conflicts, massive violations of human rights and other serious disturbances of public order.”

It is clear from such formulations *that human security is seen as a “repair” policy*: When the catastrophe, e.h. war, has happened, we must become more effective in protecting the victims.

Another way of dealing with it would be to have asked: What can be done to reduce those types of wars and other violence that cause people to flee? How do we change the standard mode of operation of the military Realpolitik – and its national-military security paradigm – that, first, consumes horrendous resources needed for making life more secure for hundreds of millions of people and, for instance, alleviate poverty – and then spends those values on killing some people and forcing others to flee?

In that sense, the entire report is about *mitigating* a series of consequences of a wrong-

headed, over-militarised security thinking and policies - rather than changing it.

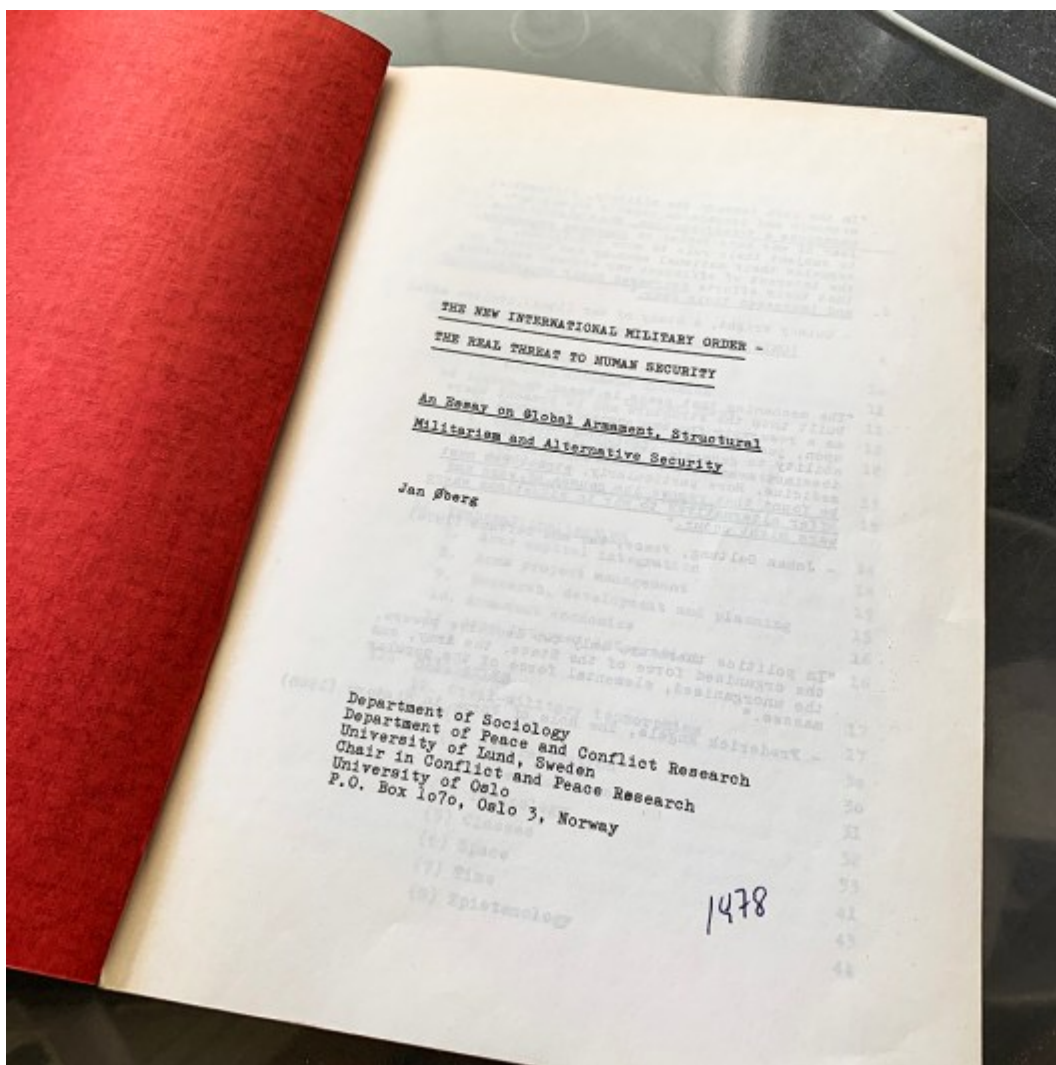
And in *that* sense, the report is extremely problematic because such an uncritical approach paradoxically also *directly serves militarism* in seeking to make its brutal consequences just a little more bearable.

One must assume that that is a major reason political leaders and many experts have embraced the Ogata/Sen conceptualization of human security and used it rhetorically again and again.

Earlier conceptualizations

As far as the present author is aware, the first time ever the term *human security* is used is in a research report from 1978 entitled "*The New International Military Order - The Real Threat to Human Security*". *An Essay on Global Armament, Structural Militarism and Alternative Security.*" It was part of a collaborative research project by the Lund University Peace Research Institute, LUPRI, and the Chair in Conflict and Peace Research at Oslo University directed by the holder of that chair, professor *Johan Galtung*. (Papers Nr. 65).

It was written by me under Galtung's guidance and published in stencil format in 1978. So it is no wonder that those who worked with the concept decades later did not know about it.



Additionally, it is not uncommon that new thinking takes places in smaller settings or margins of society, not in the centre or in powerful elite circles. Neither is it uncommon to

expect a lead time of about 25-40 years from something radically new is stated until it is taken in, taken seriously and begins to influence politics in a concrete manner.

The point of departure of that report was that security is a basic human need.

Implementing it would require a series of structural changes towards a society which has a *built-in strength* – a *resilience* towards outer pressure – and which has a *diversity of security measures* but which can never become aggressive in the eyes of neighbours or anybody else, i.e. is fundamentally *defensive* (whether or not it has military components).

One criteria for its intellectual validity was that it would be in accordance with the UN Charter's Article 51 about the right to self-defence (not other-offence).

In other words, we need a world system in which the security apparatus of one does not automatically represent a threat in the eyes of the other actors – neither in terms of *intentions* nor in terms of *capabilities*. It would, rather, bring capabilities and intentions on harmony – in contrast to today's general, military-first policies in which everybody has long-range offensive weapons that can kill and destroy far away from home while the constantly declare that they have no bad intentions but want peace.

Such a way of thinking will never bring about stability and the feeling of security in the system as a whole.

It may seem to be bordering on the banal to state that human beings should be in the centre of defence, security and peace. But it isn't.

Human beings play an extremely small and marginalized role in today's security policies operated by elites in the MIMAC – the Military-Industrial-Media-Academic Complex – as has been documented by the Coronavirus crisis.

To even think of nuclear weapons as serving human security is bizarre, perverse or unethical – and it won't solve their inherent problem to state that they are there only for *deterrence* and therefore to never be used. There can be no deterrence unless the parties are *willing* to use them (otherwise they won't deter). And there exists no nuclear weapon that is defensive – i.e. shall only be used on one's own territory.

And if you are aware of the millions upon millions who have been killed over a handful of decades – by the apparatus which worldwide is called 'defence', 'security', 'stability' and 'peace', you've been a spectator to *the Theatre of The Absurd* in the tradition of, say, [Samuel Beckett](#) or [Eugene Ionesco](#).

Security, of course, has to do with *avoidance of direct violence* – bodily injury, being killed, tortured, etc. But, paradoxically, the same states and governments which provides 'security' are the ones that tortures and kills.

Next, human security is about *survival* – minimum survival. An individual who has not satisfied her or his basic human needs for, say, food, clothes, housing, health, education and employment can hardly be described as secure – irrespective of how much weaponry she or he, or the government, possesses.

The Coronavirus has shown how little real security human beings had in countries in which the governments had allocated gigantic resources to the military and against military –

constructed – threats – instead of guaranteeing a minimum security when it comes to survival.

It's reasonable to argue that many more people have died due to the Coronavirus than would otherwise have been the case had governments put people first in their defence and security thinking. The security policy that allocated all the "security" budget to weapons has *caused* deaths among their own citizens.

This should give rise to worldwide debates, protests and change, reorient research and stimulate political dialogue. Tragically, the elites who operate the militarist security – the MIMAC mentioned above – are likely to rather exploit the Coronavirus phenomenon than recognise the utter intellectual and moral failure they represent.

Like slave owners and absolute monarchs they should depart from civilisation. If not now, when?

*

Note to readers: please click the share buttons above or below. Forward this article to your email lists. Crosspost on your blog site, internet forums. etc.

*TFF Director **Prof. Jan Oberg** is a member of the [TRANSCEND Network for Peace Development Environment](#).*

The original source of this article is [Transcend Media Service](#)
Copyright © [Jan Oberg](#), [Transcend Media Service](#), 2020

[Comment on Global Research Articles on our Facebook page](#)

[Become a Member of Global Research](#)

Articles by: [Jan Oberg](#)

Disclaimer: The contents of this article are of sole responsibility of the author(s). The Centre for Research on Globalization will not be responsible for any inaccurate or incorrect statement in this article. The Centre of Research on Globalization grants permission to cross-post Global Research articles on community internet sites as long the source and copyright are acknowledged together with a hyperlink to the original Global Research article. For publication of Global Research articles in print or other forms including commercial internet sites, contact: publications@globalresearch.ca
www.globalresearch.ca contains copyrighted material the use of which has not always been specifically authorized by the copyright owner. We are making such material available to our readers under the provisions of "fair use" in an effort to advance a better understanding of political, economic and social issues. The material on this site is distributed without profit to those who have expressed a prior interest in receiving it for research and educational purposes. If you wish to use copyrighted material for purposes other than "fair use" you must request permission from the copyright owner.

For media inquiries: publications@globalresearch.ca