National Security, Human Security, and the Practise of Statecraft in International Society

by

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The end of the Cold War is one of the definitive moments of the twentieth century: it signalled the end of the ideological struggle between east and west, it transformed the political landscape of Europe, and it strikingly re-ordered relations among the world’s great powers. But the peace and prosperity enjoyed in much of post-Cold War Europe has not been similarly experienced in large parts of the non-European world. Sierra Leone, Liberia, Rwanda, Congo, Somalia, Sudan, Cambodia, and Burma continue to be extraordinarily dangerous places to live. Daily life in these broken societies is marked by gross human rights abuses, genocide, civil war, mass starvation, mutilation, and slavery. Yet, barbarism of this sort is not peculiar to Africa and Asia: the atrocities committed in Bosnia-Hercegovina and Kosovo ought to divest us of the idea that the moral, material, and political achievements of western civilisation have rendered Europe immune to the sort of wanton human destruction that has ravaged parts of the non-European world. The peculiar nature and consequences of the type of war that has ravaged these societies has stimulated a debate about the doctrines of national security and human security, with the latter presenting a serious challenge to established ways of thinking about security and world politics.

The question I wish to ask is: how do national security and human security shape our understanding of statecraft and our responses to failed and unjust states? I will begin by exploring the moral character of national security and human security; I want to examine their key assumptions, their principal justifications, and the quandaries and predicaments to which they give expression. This investigation will lead into a discussion of the idea of responsibility and how I believe it enters into human relations. It will become evident as a result of this investigation that national security and human security express, not the objective content or the concrete essence of the idea of security, but beliefs about how human beings might best achieve a condition of security. And in doing so, they arrange fundamental human values in such a way that some values are subsumed to others. National security may be morally objectionable because it is insufficiently responsive to claims of justice, human security is morally objectionable because it may be corrosive of liberty. Thus, it will also become evident that, considered by themselves, they are insufficient guides for the practise of statecraft. Rather for national security and human security to have practical
relevance, both for scholarly and practical purposes, they must be considered along with the circumstances of particular problems and the virtues, such as prudence and responsibility, which are required to answer them.

**The problem of national security**

National security is concerned with the safety of particular political communities: sovereign states. Individual security is assumed to follow from national security by virtue of our membership in a particular political community. Thus, national security presupposes the assumption that states express something worth preserving: they are moral communities in their own right and, as such, they are entitled and competent to determine the nature of their security interests and how best to address them. This idea is deeply entrenched in the constitution and practise of international society. States, irrespective of enormous differences in size, population, wealth, power, and influence, are legally equal to all others. And all states are entitled, by virtue of their membership in international society, to preserve what is of value, their achievements and their way of life, from the jealousies and intrigues of their neighbours. Thus, each member of international society is endowed with the ‘inherent’ right, as is enshrined in Article 51 of the United Nations Charter, of self-defence. The right of self-defence, perhaps more than any other cardinal norm of international society, gives practical effect to the doctrine of national security and other theories which assume that states are properly conceived, not as mere instrumental arrangements, but as communities invested with moral value.

In ordinary international relations the right of self-defence expresses a very specific pattern of human conduct. Self-defence may be invoked only in relation to a just cause; that is, in our present world, its rightness obtains only as a response to aggression. And after having invoked the right of self-defence, all uses of armed force must be both discriminate and proportionate. All of this is to say that the right of self-defence is narrowed or qualified by international law pertaining to armed conflict and to the rules of humanitarian law. In this form, the right of self-defence expresses a fundamental rule of mutual accommodation in international society: it promotes the coexistence of diversity in international society. It is one of several constitutive norms, such as legal equality, political independence, territorial integrity, and
non-interference, that make it possible to speak of at least an element of society in world politics. However, the authority of the right of self-defence is not dependent upon the existence of society. International practise and the language of the Charter seem to suggest that, in the tradition of Thomas Hobbes, the right of self-defence presupposes the existence of society. It is this idea that signals the profound moral value that is generally attached to states.

The discourse and practise of world politics suggests that right of self-defence is regarded as something that approximates a natural right; it is a right, even if it is not truly natural, whose importance is such that it is not susceptible to qualification or limitation.¹ Rights of this sort are believed not to be the products of human activity: they are assumed to exist prior to rights created by human beings. The clarity of these rights may be enhanced when they are enshrined in instruments of positive law, but their fundamental character and inviolability are not debased by an absence of formal recognition. But if rights created by human beings issue offence to natural rights they are necessarily void. That is why the right of self-defence is rarely, if ever, subject to absolute or permanent limitation; it is a right that is ignored or transgressed only in the most extreme circumstances, such as when the survival of international society itself is at stake. Indeed, national survival is so deeply an established value that the imperatives of national security may justifiably warrant the resort to self-defence in such a way that it pre-empts other fundamental norms. International practise seems to support this contention, for ‘[w]hen it comes to the supreme interests of state, the practise of this century has been to set aside the Charter and the most important provisions of international law.’²

But the practise of world politics also reveals a more troubling side of national security: some states are unable or are unwilling to provide security for their citizens. Failed or unjust states are typically bastions of tyranny, sources of great misery, and are often themselves the most immediate threat to their citizens’


security. In these states, the activity of politics is largely, if not totally absent. Disputes are not resolved with an eye toward tolerance, compromise, and accommodation: virtue is subsumed to vice, politics to violence. Thus, civilians, rather than uniformed soldiers, are most often targets of indiscriminate killing because governments are often unable to provide adequate protection for their citizens or because the political leadership itself uses the apparatus of state to oppress and abuse their citizens. Surely these states are not sources of the good life, but of misery and despair; they fail to provide the minimum conditions of social order and they provide nothing that resembles basic social goods. In failed and in unjust states, the term ‘national security’ is often no more than a misnomer; that is to say, ‘national security’ refers to a juridical entity rather than a sociological nation.

This state of affairs raises important questions about the principal justification of states in the traditional theory, practise, and law of international society. That some states are oppressive places to live or are unable to effect peaceful and just arrangements of social intercourse, yet, manage not only to survive but to participate fully in international society, casts a dark shadow upon their worth as moral communities and upon the doctrine in which this idea is intelligible: national security. The great irony is that the constitutive norms of international society sustain this condition in a rather perverse way: the rights of legal equality, non-interference, territorial integrity, and political independence help to ensure the survival of what are otherwise unviable states. Their survival is a deleterious, albeit unintended, consequence of an important development in international law that accompanied the break-up of European empires in Asia and Africa. Prior to de-colonisation participation in international society was premised upon the principle of reciprocity. A nation, in order to be admitted to international society, not only had to undertake to establish a competent authority to maintain order and to dispense justice, it also had to demonstrate a willingness and ability to fulfil the obligations of statehood.

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In an essay that is representative of this type of thinking, John Stuart Mill argues that only civilised nations can be counted upon the respect the rules of international morality; barbarians, who know nothing but passion and violence, are incapable of reciprocating the law of nations: their minds are incapable of such an effort. Thus, barbarians are not entitled to the rights of nations; they are fit only to be conquered and to be subjugated to foreign rule. However, the law of force does not govern relations of civilised and barbarian; these relations are governed by the universal morality that obtains between human beings. On Mill’s view, human beings are endowed with the ability to sympathise with others of their kind; and it is this capacity for sympathy makes it possible to conceive of a community of interests between civilised and barbarian.⁴ The nineteenth century international lawyer, James Lorimer, makes a similar point when he argues that a state wishing to secure plenary or formal political recognition must demonstrate both the will and the power to reciprocate the recognition which it demands. Barbarian and savage societies, inasmuch as they are unable to perform the duties of statehood, are entitled only to partial or human recognition because they cannot be trusted, as experience with the Ottomans demonstrated, to perform the duties of a civilised nation. These societies are populated by child-like races and ‘the right of undeveloped races, like the right of undeveloped individuals, is a right not to recognition as what they are not, but to guardianship—that is, to guidance—in becoming that of which they are capable, in realising their special ideals.’⁵

The principle that a state must be able to perform certain duties as a condition of participation in international society has been carried forth into the twentieth century and is evident most notably in the Charter of the United Nations. Article 4(1) stipulates that membership shall be comprised of states who accept the obligations of the Charter and who, ‘in the judgment of the Organization, are able and willing to

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carry out these obligations.” Although the principle of reciprocity is intelligible in the Charter, the moral justification of de-colonisation rendered it a legal fiction. The principle of self-authorship, that is, self-determination, displaced the principle of reciprocity. This shift is most strikingly evidenced in the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, which specifies radically different criteria of participation in international society than that specified by Mill and Lorimer. The declaration proclaims that the subjection of people to alien rule constitutes an offence to fundamental human rights and that the denial of self-determination represents a serious impediment to the achievement of world peace. And in an explicit rejection of the principle of reciprocity, it also proclaims that ‘inadequacy of political, economic, social or educational preparedness should never serve as a pretext for delaying independence.’ Thus, the standard of virtue in statehood in international society shifted from knowledge of ability to authenticity and self-authorship in human conduct. This shift resulted in the creation of a class of states entitled to all the rights of statehood, but who lack working institutional arrangements, rely disproportionately upon international support for development assistance, and whose existence and legitimacy is underwritten by the moral justification of self-determination. That some of these states do not provide adequate security for their citizens, yet manage to ensure their own survival, signifies to some observers the moral bankruptcy of national security.

The promise of human security

The problems presented by failed and unjust states have forced scholars and practitioners of world politics to confront directly the moral dilemma of national security, a dilemma that expresses a conflict between the rights of states and the rights of human beings, security of the collectivity and security of individual persons. The doctrine of human security has emerged as one possible response to this conflict.

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8 Jackson, Quasi-States, 21-26.
The United Nations Human Development Report of 1994 first popularised the term ‘human security’ by suggesting:

Human security is a child who did not die, a disease that did not spread, a job that was not cut, and ethnic tension that did not explode in violence, a dissident who was not silenced. Human security is not a concern with weapons—it is a concern with human life and dignity.\(^9\)

In the main, the doctrine of human security supposes that security consists of something more than the narrow Cold War agenda that focused upon problems of nuclear deterrence, military balances, zero-sum games, competing power blocs, and inter-state diplomacy and war. Human security embraces a much broader agenda, one which enlarges significantly the scope and substance of the word ‘security,’ that includes issues such as environmental degradation, human rights, equity, human potential, health, children, labour standards, narcotic trafficking, organised crime, small arms proliferation, religion, ethnicity, gender, identity, governance, civil society, and internal conflict. The idea of human security is evident in the activities of the United Nations, global civility society, and most recently, in national foreign policies. Indeed, the purpose and value of recent global initiatives, such as the Ottawa Treaty which prohibits anti-personnel mines, the nascent International Criminal Court, efforts to define the rights of the child, attempts to confront the global problem posed by the spread of AIDS, and changing ideas about the use of armed force in humanitarian crisis are all intelligible and are frequently justified by the ethics of human security.

The moral foundation and justification of human security differs in several important ways from the doctrine of national security which has, in this century, dominated both the theoretical and practical understanding of security. Recognising the principal difficulty of national security—individual security does not necessarily follow from the security of the political community—underscores the key normative difference between national security and human security. Whereas national security postulates states as moral communities worth preserving, human security confers moral priority on the security of individual human beings. The dilemma of national security rests upon the reality that failed and unjust states, as Robert Jackson observes, stand the justification of national security and its Hobbesian premises on its head:

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‘the state of nature is domestic, and civil society is international.’\textsuperscript{10} Advocates of human security admittedly disclose great differences in attempting to respond to this dilemma; they often differ on matters of emphasis and prescription. However, they share a common belief that human security is a better way to engage the complexities of our changing world, one in which personal security is challenged less by interstate threats than by threats which are contained wholly within states or which transcend the jurisdiction of particular states.

One of the earliest concrete responses to the dilemma of national security is found in the Report of the Commission on Global Governance. The Commission recognises the crux of this dilemma when it suggests that in instances of massive human suffering and abuse ‘there is a need to weigh a state’s right to autonomy against its people’s right to security.’\textsuperscript{11} Thus, the Commission recommends that global security policy ought to be founded upon the idea of human dignity. Human security is concerned with something more than protecting states from external threats: it is a people-centred approach that includes chronic threats such as hunger, disease, repression, and grave disruptions of ordinary life. On this view, the rights of statehood are justified solely by the benefit they confer to the governed and by their continuing consent and democratic representation. These conditions of participation in international society are restricted further by the interests of humanity; for there are occasions when the rights of states ought to be subsumed to the interests of humanity. Thus, the Commission concludes that when properly conceived, security is premised upon the principle that, ‘although it is necessary to continue to uphold the right of states to security, so that they may be protected against external threats, the international community needs to make the protection of people and their security an aim of global security policy.’\textsuperscript{12}

The doctrine of human security is, in a national context, perhaps most fully developed and articulated in Canadian foreign policy. For Foreign Minister Lloyd Axworthy, human security is concerned

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{10} Jackson, \textit{Quasi-States}, 169.
\item \textsuperscript{12} Report of the Commission on Global Governance, 70-71.
\end{itemize}
above all else with the protection of the individual.\textsuperscript{13} Human security entails a commitment to democratic
development, and to ensuring quality of life and equity for all human beings; it also recognises the
elementary importance of ‘human rights and fundamental freedoms, the right to live in dignity, with
adequate food, shelter, health and education services, and under the rule of law and good governance.’\textsuperscript{14}
These ideas have been developed and refined in a recently released policy statement entitled \textit{Human
Security: Safety for People in a Changing World}. According to this document, human security seeks to
engage directly the sources of human insecurity: it is an approach that makes ‘safety for people’ as the
principal interest of statecraft. In putting people first, the Canadian approach does not endeavour to replace
national security with human security; rather it seeks to establish the principle that national security is not an
end in itself.\textsuperscript{15} Thus, the rights of statehood should not be permitted to impede action intended to secure
safety for people. The ethics of human security do not allow us remain detached from, or indifferent to,
human suffering on account of deeply ingrained injunctions against interfering in the domestic affairs of
sovereign states.

Nowhere is this idea more alive than in the context of NATO’s intervention in Kosovo. For
Minister Axworthy, the decision to intervene was not motivated by any direct threat to a NATO member;
rather it was the systematic violence directed against Serbia’s Albanian minority, and the threat this action
presented to the values and beliefs of the alliance, that justified the use of force against Serbia. Indeed, he
argues that ‘Kosovo symbolizes how human security has become a focus of attention and concern for the
international community.’\textsuperscript{16} NATO’s action re-asserted the old principle that duties to fellow human beings

\textsuperscript{13} Notes for an Address by the Honourable Lloyd Axworthy, Minister of Foreign Affairs, to the 52nd Session of the United Nations

\textsuperscript{14} Notes for an Address by the Honourable Lloyd Axworthy, Minister of Foreign Affairs, to the 51st General Assembly of the United

\textsuperscript{15} Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, \textit{Human Security: Safety for People in a Changing World}, (Ottawa:
Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, 1999), 5-6.

\textsuperscript{16} ‘Kosovo and the Human Security Agenda,’ Notes for an Address by the Honourable Lloyd Axworthy, Minister of Foreign affairs,
to the Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Relations, Princeton University, Princeton New Jersey, April 7, 1999,
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extend beyond national frontiers.17 But what is truly novel about the intervention in Kosovo is that it did not satisfy the conditions for the lawful use of force in international society. Axworthy concedes that Security Council authorisation would have been preferable to unilateral action; yet he maintains that the international community cannot acquiesce to human suffering and oppression because ‘certain members of the Council could not reconcile yesterday’s assumptions about sovereignty with today’s imperatives of human emergency.’18 Thus, Axworthy and other advocates of human security seem to advance a principle whose justification is not unlike that of national security, though only in the opposite degree: when it comes to gross instances of human insecurity it is permissible, when it is in the interest of humanity, to set aside the Charter and the most important provisions of international law. Herein lies the distinctive moral character of human security: it raises the moral claims of individual human beings above those of the communities in which they live.

The idea of responsibility and human conduct

The respective moral characters of national security and human security express two distinct ideas about how we ought to respond to the problem of insecurity. These ideas are frequently presented as separate and exclusive ideal types or models that disclose some fixed or essential content. And from these ideal types and models, scholars proceed to construct regimes and institutions, and to specify processes and procedures, all of which are aimed at solving the problems of human conflict and insecurity as if they are merely problems of technology or engineering. That is not to say that this enterprise is wholly without merit: it may very well help ease our confusion about important issues. But it may just as well contribute to obscurity and to a type of pedantry that follows from treating ideas as if they exist in splendid isolation from human relations. Such perfection and separation exists only in universities where scholars labour, their ideas uninterrupted and too often untouched by the course of ordinary life. If we wish to make some sense


18 ‘Kosovo and the Human Security Agenda,’ 3.
of the debate about national security and human security, and if we hope to understand how they enter into our world, then we must engage them for what they are.

More than anything else, national security and human security belong to human relations: they express large moral ideas that say something about how human intercourse ought to proceed. Understood as historical ideas, rather than abstract intellectual ideas, they disclose beliefs, opinions, interests, motives, and values from which conceptions of the good life spring. They are concerned with some of the fundamental problems of political theory: they say something about right conduct, the nature of obligation, the demands of justice, the conditions of order, the best constitution, how human beings ought to conduct their relations with other human beings, and how they might best live alongside one another. What is characteristic of ideas of this sort is that, unless we believe that there is a single universal truth and that all other truths are, in fact, evidence of error, they do not necessarily entail other truths. Moral ideas are, by their nature, indeterminate; their edges are blurred, their boundaries are constantly shifting, and their content is always open to challenge and revision. That is why, as Alastair MacIntyre contends, ‘moral debate is notoriously inconclusive.’

As moral ideas, that is, ideas that are distinctive of human conduct, national and human security coexist in the practical world; they exist in degrees of strength and weakness, and they advance and retreat in response to the problems and circumstances which colour a particular moment in history. Surely it strains credulity to suggest that one exists to the total exclusion of the other. To do so amounts to an assertion that the right of non-interference and human rights, principles which are readily intelligible in contemporary international theory and practise, both do not really impinge upon our lives in some meaningful way. Rather the problem presented by national and human security is not one of establishing truth or falsehood; it is one of sorting out and reconciling conflicting claims and conflicting obligations. We are confronted with a conflict between the rights of statehood and the rights of individual human beings. And in responding to

this conflict, we are not free to pick and choose the instruments of international law we wish to observe and those we wish to ignore. The rights which attach to states and to individuals are, in practise, an eclectic bunch; they are to some considerable degree accidental and perhaps even haphazard in their origin. That they are flawed in some way, that they sometimes demand conflicting action, is only to remind us of the imperfect creatures who created them. Thus, our problem is moral in character: it involves questions of right and wrong. And in responding to this problem, we must realise that rights, and the commands they issue, can carry us only so far. Indeed, Edmund Burke once observed that the principal weakness of rights and rights-based approaches to human relations is that ‘their abstract perfection is their practical defect.’

The commands that rights issue must also be considered along with the idea of responsibility and the circumstances of particular situations if we are to have any hope of comprehending relevant beliefs about right and wrong in our world.

To be responsible is to be held accountable for something by someone. Thus, the idea of responsibility fundamentally involves recognition of the authenticity of human agency. Human conduct proceeds from conscious and deliberate choices; that is, human beings deliberate about means meant to achieve some sort of end. To speak of responsibility presupposes the possibility of different ways of doing things; it is to confront alternative courses of action. Responsibility, then, does not reside in the human psychological disposition; and, consequently, it is not possessed equally by all. Responsibility resides in the human character: it something that is developed, shaped, and honed in the act of choosing things.

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choices are not determined by impersonal forces: they are made in relation to what is believed to be of value to individuals and to societies. Therefore, human conduct is intelligible, not in the context of permanent laws of social action, but in terms of virtue, vice, and circumstance. And to be responsible is to be accountable for these choices, that is, accountable for the motives from which they proceed and the consequences they yield.

The word ‘responsibility’ is one of several words that collectively comprise the vocabulary of political discourse. Political discourse, Michael Oakeshott argues, arises in situations that involve probability, contraries, and alternatives. It reveals how we deliberate about things; it consists of a specialised vocabulary which is meant to persuade someone to perform some action or to demonstrate the rightness of some act. Thus, political discourse is argumentative: it is used to indicate that something is likely to happen, not that it will happen. We use political discourse to propose the best course of action, to invite someone to think about a situation in a specific way, or to favour one alternative to the prejudice of another. The word ‘responsibility’ is an important part of this vocabulary: it is a word that relates human activity to relevant beliefs and how human beings might achieve them.\textsuperscript{23} The idea of responsibility, as does the whole of political discourse, presupposes the existence of at least an element of human freedom, for freedom unavoidably involves responsibility. This is not to assert the claim that we are free to choose as we wish. Surely factors not in our control, the circumstances of our material, physical, and moral condition, limit the range of human conduct; but they are not so powerful so as to eliminate the area of human freedom altogether. Indeed, Oakeshott argues that human conduct enjoys a circumscribed range of movement; however, the limits of this range are themselves the product of human conduct: they are a part of, rather than external to, human history.\textsuperscript{24}

We nonetheless encounter the discourse of determinism in a world which accepts the authenticity of human agency. There are times when human beings attempt to disavow responsibility; they attempt to

justify their conduct by claiming it was ‘necessary’ or ‘inevitable.’ They often plead: ‘I had no other choice.’ It is in these cases that people speak as if impersonal forces act upon human beings or that human beings are endowed with constant structures that describe their essence or their nature. These forces or structures give expression to permanent laws that govern human behaviour. In a determined world, human relations is intelligible as a universal pattern, a pattern in which each person occupies a particular place and performs a particular function. And in this sort of world, the word ‘freedom’ loses coherence: human beings are no longer regarded as self-determining creatures. Indeed, it makes little sense to speak of responsibility in a world totally devoid of human freedom; for without at least an element of freedom in human relations the idea of responsibility is no more than a device with which to deceive and to obscure the true course of history.

But it is rarely the case that we find ourselves with no choice at all; and it is rather doubtful that world politics operates according to some impersonal force that is the political analogue of Adam Smith’s invisible hand. We resort to the discourse of determinism when we find ourselves in difficult situations, when we are unable to reconcile fundamental values, when we are unable to avoid great collisions, or when we feel compelled to commit evil in order to achieve something good. In these situations it is not uncommon for human beings to avoid great moral dilemmas or to pretend as if they do not exist. Thus, according to Isaiah Berlin:

determinism arises and is one of the great alibis, pleaded by those who cannot or do not wish to face the fact of human responsibility, the existence of a limited but nevertheless real area of human freedom, either because they have been too deeply wounded to wish to return to the traffic of normal life or because they are filled with moral indignation against the false values and the, to them, repellent moral codes of their own society, or class or profession.25

Human beings resort to determinism when they lack the courage or the imagination to think of another way. But even though we sometimes take refuge in the language of determinism, human relations is still, in the main, distinguished by the authenticity of human agency and freedom. Otherwise, it is difficult, if not

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impossible, to enter into the moral world, to understand what human beings value, and to reconcile and disentangle conflicting claims and commands.

**Responding to conflicting claims**

The idea of responsibility is meaningful only in a world in which the ends of life remain unsettled. For it makes little sense to speak of accountability in a world in which history is determined, where some impersonal force or vitality, our class, nation, civilisation, religion, race, party, ethnicity, gender, the revolution, globalisation, modernity, post-modernity, or the spirit of the age, determine how we act. Life there is not one of possibilities, alternatives, and contraries. Life in a determined world is a technical enterprise. Thus, a conflict of rights or collisions of values are not really problems of contrary claims, each expressing a moral way of living our lives; rather they are evidence of ignorance and insufficient acquaintance with the true nature of things. In this sort of world, of national security and human security, and their relation to the practise of statecraft is one of truth and falsehood, perfection and error. And the only task of the statesperson is to ascertain which doctrine is the correct one, and to apply it to our problem, as if relations between societies and within them can be manipulated mechanically. In a determined world, statecraft is transformed from an art into a science.

But if we do not live in a determined world a much different relation of national security and human security comes into view. Scholars and practitioners, in an effort to re-conceptualise or broaden the meaning of security, have variously suggested or implied that security consists of a vantage point or a perspective. Thus, it becomes possible to speak of military security, economic security, gender security, environmental security, and, most recently, human security. And all of these ‘securities’ perform the function of a lens, a template, or reflect an identity: they are different ways of viewing and understanding our world. While all of these things can refer to security, the word ‘security’ conveys, more than anything else, a moral condition. And if we conceive of national security and human security as moral ideas that are related to the achievement of this condition, they are intelligible, not as manifestations of truth, but of truth claims. National security and human security are suggestive of a desirable state of affairs: they express a particular belief about how human beings might best achieve a condition of security. They are ways of
arranging fundamental human values, not out of intellectual curiosity, but out of practical necessity. And in doing so, national security and human security are not merely lenses through which to passively view our world, they speak to what human beings believe to be the conditions required for realising the good life.

National security and human security are, then, different responses to the proposition that the ends of life are not settled. And if we exert sufficient energy and imagination we can grasp the reality that all good things are not always compatible, and that we must sometimes choose between them. However, if we are unable to comprehend that it is possible for ends equally ultimate and sacred to be irreconcilable, and if we insist upon ordering these ends according to one universal and absolute principle, then we fail to see how the unrestrained pursuit of good, right, justice, order, equality, liberty, welfare, and virtue can lead to tragic consequences. For there are times when human beings love some thing more than life itself; they love an idea too much, or they love a group of their own kind too exclusively, that they are willing to justify cruelty and oppression for the sake of their cause.\(^{26}\) If we are to have any hope of achieving a world that is reasonably peaceful, secure, and prosperous, we must practise in our relations with others the virtues of moderation, compromise, temperance, and modesty, even when we confront people, ideas, and ways of life that we find detestable and quite alien to our own. Thus, we must learn that, in certain situations, some values must yield to others.

When we recognise and understand national security and human security, not as intellectual constructs promising human perfection, but as contingent and imperfect ideas that are alive to different understandings of the good life, we avoid to the greatest extent possible that type of blinding hubris and over-confidence that are the harbingers of tyranny disguised as benevolence. But when we forget that these doctrines of security are ways of arranging fundamental values, that they propose one possible way that human beings might obtain security, and that they provide some insight into how we ought to choose between conflicting values and obligations, we transform them into some sort of metaphysical dogma.

\(^{26}\) Berlin, ‘Historical Inevitability,’ 102; and Herbert Butterfield, *History and Human Relations*, (London: Collins, St. James’s Place, 1951), 49.
Indeed, to practise any doctrine of security absolutely, without sufficient consideration of the circumstances that distinguish particular situations, is to run the risk of inflicting a much greater injustice than what is to be remedied. That such a danger exists seems to be lost on the most enthusiastic advocates of human security; that the single-minded devotion to the cause of humanity may yield disastrous and, indeed, inhumane consequences; and that ‘[a] society ruthlessly purged of all injustice might turn out to be a vast prison.’

For example, Tony Blair proclaimed that there can be ‘no doubt’ about the justice of NATO’s war in Kosovo; that it was a war justified by the pursuit of values rather than territorial appetite or some other less righteous cause. On Blair’s view, intervention in Kosovo represents evidence of an emerging ‘doctrine of international community,’ a doctrine that reserves to a portion of international society trusteeship of the universally valid values of liberty, the rule of law, human rights, and an open society. And the pursuit and protection of these values admits no moral reason for compromise or negotiation: the response to Slobodan Milosevic’s campaign of ethnic cleansing stands as yet another attempt to ‘ensure that others do not make the same mistake in the future.’

It is this assertion of an absolute and uncompromising claim of humanity which informs Blair’s view that Bismarck was wrong when he suggested that ‘the Balkans were not worth the bones of one Pomeranian Grenadier.’ But the claims of humanity were not divorced entirely from Bismarck’s statecraft. He opened the Berlin Conference of 1885 by saying:

[i]n convoking the Conference, the Imperial Government was guided by the conviction that all the Governments invited share the wish to bring the native of Africa within the pale of civilization by opening up the interior of that continent to commerce, by giving its inhabitants the means of instructing themselves, by encouraging missions and enterprises calculated to spread useful knowledge, and by preparing the way for the suppression of slavery, and especially of the over-sea Traffic in blacks.

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29 Blair, ‘Doctrine of the International Community.’
30 Blair, ‘Doctrine of the International Community.’
At Berlin, the trustees of nineteenth century European civilisation undertook the cause of what was perceived to be the most disadvantaged and oppressed portion of humanity: the depressed and destitute African who endured the barbarity of mutilation, human sacrifice, irrational justice, wanton cruelty, chronic disorder, endemic warfare, and slavery. Thus, the signatory powers to the Berlin Act agreed to eradicate the odious commerce in human beings, establish a system of free trade in the territories comprising the Congo basin, and to adopt uniform rules of conduct that were ‘destined to remove all causes of disagreement and strife from international relations.’32 These measures were justified by the obligation, imposed by Article VI, to ‘watch over the preservation of the native tribes, and to care for the improvement of the conditions of their moral and material well-being, and to help in suppressing slavery, and especially the Slave Trade.’33 Herein lies the great achievement of the Berlin Act: it enshrined in an instrument of international law, a principle that repudiated naked exploitation and domination, and which established that conditions of native life constituted a legitimate subject of international scrutiny.

The moral purpose and justification of the Berlin Act seems to suggest that Blair’s notion of an ‘ethical foreign policy’ is hardly novel; for the delegates who assembled in Berlin, no less than the statespersons who decided to wage war against Serbia, were, in Blair’s words, ‘guided by a more subtle blend of mutual self interest and moral purpose in defending the values we cherish.’34 And if Bismarck’s aversion to adventure in the Balkans was not attributable to an absence of moral purpose, then perhaps he was aware of, or guided by, something that Blair and the contemporary trustees of civilisation are not: the virtue of prudence. Praiseworthy political action is most likely to disclose the virtue of prudence rather than to satisfy absolutely the dictates of systematic and logically sound theory or the absolute and uncompromising standard of humanity. Prudence is a species of practical wisdom: it discloses a mode of common sense which is the antithesis of abstract intellectualism. Prudence is the name we give to that type

33 General Act of the Conference of Berlin, Parliamentary Papers, 1885 LV mf. 91.436, 80.
34 Blair, ‘Doctrine of the International Community.’
of wisdom which is associated with careful consideration, deliberation, restraint, and foresight; it is a type of sound judgement which guides the statesperson through the difficult choices and which makes some sense of conflicting demands and obligations. Thus, the statesperson who aspires to choose well must assess all legitimate claims and decide which one, under the circumstances, appears to be the closest to the truth. And it is the prudent statesperson who, through the complexity, mystery, and uncertainty of our world, is able to choose the most profitable course of action from the many available.

Prudential statecraft discloses the art of compromise. It is an approach which takes proper notice of the circumstances of particular problems. Thus, prudential statecraft is at home in the world of history and experience, rather than in the world of theory. Principles postulated by theory and rights stripped of circumstance are alien to the complexities that distinguish a problem’s moral significance. The statesperson, in order to be successful, must learn to distinguish between what is good absolutely and what is good under particular circumstances.\textsuperscript{35} It is the prudent statesperson who recognises, often with great anguish, that evil must be sometimes tolerated for the sake of some other good; that sometimes we must choose between evil and evil; and that sometimes we must make painful compromises between good and evil. Indeed, there is no one idea whose importance is so great and so fundamental, as Raymond Aron insists, that all else must be sacrificed in order to secure or sustain it. To be prudent, he argues, ‘is to act in accordance with the particular situation’; and it is to ‘prefer the limitation of violence to the punishment of the presumably guilty party or to a so-called absolute justice.\textsuperscript{36} This means that there are times when statespersons must lie and deceive, they must excuse themselves from observing an accepted and expected rule of conduct, and they must restrain, or perhaps even extinguish, the liberty of some people for the sake of others. That is why we call prudent and, therefore, praise statespersons who do something discreditable for great ends; and conversely, we blame those who act shamefully for paltry advantage.\textsuperscript{37}

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\textsuperscript{35} MacIntyre, \textit{Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry}, 61.
\textsuperscript{37} Aristotle, \textit{Ethics}, 44.
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This mode of human conduct suggests that in the practise of statecraft we must remain acutely attuned to the claims of justice. We cannot easily acquiesce to genocide, flagrant human rights abuses, and the indiscriminate use of violence, especially when it is directed against civilian populations, without it being corrosive of the ultimate justification of states and that of international society itself. For it is scarcely reconcilable to accord absolute sanctity to the principles of state autonomy and non-interference when they are productive, not of the good life, but of tyranny and the worst forms of oppression. On this account, it is understandable that some statespersons find the subordination of personal or human security to the established rules of international society to be impermissible. But, also, we must be prepared to accept that interference in the affairs of others necessarily narrows their freedom to act; that is, no matter how badly a society may be ordered, interference always entails a loss of liberty. The idea of liberty is not invoked here in the abstract; for Berlin is right to suggest that to speak of interfering in the liberty of the Tutsi or the Albanian who is being slaughtered is to mock their condition. And it may well be the case that, in certain circumstances, food, medicine, or personal safety is more important than the sanctity of liberty. However, he also cautions us about confusing fundamental values: ‘liberty is liberty, not equality or fairness or justice or culture, or human happiness or a quiet conscience.’38 Intervention in Kosovo secured a measure of justice only at the expense of liberty; that is, interference responded to the claims of humanity by preventing both Serb and Albanian from directing their own affairs, for better or worse.

The supreme importance that most human beings attach to the value of liberty suggests that we ought not be too hasty in dismissing the value of state autonomy and non-interference, or in weakening these principles, even in cases of profound injustice. If we believe that societies and states are the products of human conduct, that they are a contrivance of human wisdom and imagination rather than the result of technique and sound engineering, then this reason alone stands as powerful injunction against interfering in the affairs of failed and unjust states. In the Burkean tradition, this view assumes:

The science of constructing a commonwealth, or renovating it, or reforming it, is, like every other experimental science, not to be taught a priori. Nor is it a short experience that can instruction us in the practical science; because the real effects of moral causes are not always immediate; but that which in the first instance is prejudicial may be excellent in its remoter operation; and its excellence may arise even from the ill effects it produces in the beginning. [emphasis in original]39

By interfering in the affairs of others, we may destroy something that to us appears to be hopelessly defective; it may be unjust, disordered, inefficient, irrational, lacking in economy and utility, or plagued by war, but it is nonetheless an object of great value to some people. Building a valuable society, a society that is productive of the good life, is an activity that occurs over many generations and is never directed mechanically. Rather, it is a painstaking and difficult activity, one that is marked by joy and suffering, and which joins ‘those who are living, those who are dead, and those who are to be born’ in an ongoing enterprise.40

For human beings that understand social relations in this context, there is great value in experiencing the adventure of choosing, an adventure that fundamentally entails the risk of failure. This idea follows from the belief that moral goodness resides in the ability of ‘each man to decide things for himself, to make his own choices, to determine the directions in which his own happiness lies and to move in those directions.’41 States, then, disclose value because they are made by someone’s own efforts and because someone else did not make it from them. Virtue here is not understood as the achievement of some specified end, but as the authenticity of one’s action and the motives from which they originate. In a world in which human beings aspire to be the author of their own actions, they must be permitted to succeed and to fail in their efforts. To deny this opportunity is to reduce morally autonomous human beings to a condition of tutelage; it implies that they are not competent to make their own decisions and to direct their own affairs. Here, duties to strangers assume a paternal form; ignorant, wayward, or hapless strangers must be instructed in the ways of a more perfect life. In nineteenth century Africa, this duty consisted in tutoring the savage in

fundamental respect for individual personality, the moral and material benefits of free markets, and the advantages of resolving disputes through legitimate and settled social arrangements. This prescription for the restitution of the savage African is not unlike Bill Clinton’s prescription for the rehabilitation of Serbia; for Serbia will come to appreciate and enjoy the benefits of trade and investment only when it ‘practices democracy, respects human rights, and has leaders who uphold the basic standards of human conduct.’

The practice of statecraft in this sort of world is little more than an exercise of sweeping away all that obstructs and corrupts the implementation and realisation of the doctrine of international community. But in a world in which at least some people prefer the consequences of failure to a condition of tutelage, claims of non-interference, even in the context of failed and unjust states, cannot be dismissed as mere rationalisations of expediency, excuses for misrule, and shields behind which leaders oppress their people.

Even if we were to concede that the general presumption against intervention might admit exception, that the claims of human security ought sometimes to displace those of national security, interference in the affairs of others may still be a foolhardy and dubious enterprise. To demonstrate the justice or the permissibility of intervention is not to establish the wisdom, prudence, or desirability of such action. If, in fact, intervention in Kosovo ‘symbolizes how human security has become a powerful factor in global relations,’ as Axworthy claims, then we must ask what ‘safety for people’ means when wiping away fear and insecurity in the lives by Albanians entails the destruction of public infrastructure, the imposition of economic hardship, and instilling fear and insecurity in Serbs. Perhaps Mill was right when he expressed doubt that human beings could be made free and virtuous; that ‘if people do not have sufficient love for liberty to be able to wrest it from merely domestic oppressors, the liberty which is bestowed on

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43 Axworthy, ‘Kosovo and the Human Security Agenda,’ 5.
them by other hands than their own, will have nothing real, nothing permanent."\(^{44}\) The declaration of protectorates over vast territories in Africa certainly contributed to the safety of people; it put a stop to the destruction of inter-tribal warfare, restored law and order, instituted regularised systems of justice, and destroyed the slave trade, an activity that the signatories powers to the Berlin Act construed to be a 'crime of high treason against humanity.'\(^{45}\) Yet, the establishment of order and the enjoyment of security, though laudable, proved to be an insufficient justification of paternal rule. Before long, the peoples of Africa and Asia began asserting their claim to be masters of their own affairs; and for this cause, they were quite willing to imperil their personal security by risking and, indeed, laying down their lives for the cause of liberty.

It is this love of liberty, no less than a love of security, that is guarded by Article 2.7 of the United Nations Charter; for these cherished values have been trampled in the past by those who are so impressed with their own achievements that they assume that their habits, customs, usages, traditions, and values constitute the standard of perfection for all. The ill-effects of power in human relations have long been the subject of philosophical, historical, and legal theorising. Surely the arbitrary, unjust, and irresponsible exercise of power in domestic society is no less reprehensible and immoral than it is in other realms of human conduct. But the character of international law, the institution of sovereignty, and the constitution of international society itself, all imply that the arbitrary, unjust, and irresponsible exercise of power internationally constitutes an especially grave threat to security, liberty, human dignity, and to all other things that human beings value. For this reason, the toleration of some evil, while distressing and unsatisfactory in so many ways, might be both wise and justified, for intolerable consequences may result from the unqualified and unrestrained pursuit of the ideal global society. Thus, we must be most judicious and cautious before we acquiesce or promote any weakening of the non-intervention principle, a principle


\(^{45}\) Annex 1 to Protocol No. 4, Protocols and the General Act of the West African Conference, Parliamentary Papers, 1885 LV mf. 91.436, 80.
that stands as the most basic and fundamental injunction against the arbitrary exercise of power in the relations of states. And this means that there will be times when recognition of tragedy and expression of sympathy and solidarity is preferable to intervention; that is to say that when we confront human suffering and cruelty, inaction is sometimes a morally justifiable alternative to action.

Conclusion

While there is no necessary reason why national security and human security should always lead to moral conflict, likewise, there is no necessary reason why they should co-exist in perfect harmony. Historical experience suggests that there are times when we must sacrifice one good for another. In Kosovo, responding to what Blair described as ‘unspeakable’ crimes entailed the unlawful use of military force. Thus, at the very centre of the debate about national security and human security we encounter a dilemma manifested by the conflicting demands of justice and liberty. The task of the statesperson and the scholar is to somehow disentangle these conflicting demands. National security and human security express particular beliefs about how human beings might best achieve a condition of security, they suggest which values ought to be subordinated to others, and they propose how we ought to choose when confronted with a collision of values. National security and human security recommend different ways that human beings might live and organise their lives, and conduct their affairs with others. But by themselves, as theoretical constructs deprived of the circumstances that distinguish the problems of our world, they are insufficient guides for the practise of statecraft. If one were applied to human relations with little regard for the other, their respective promises of human perfection, of good and happiness, would most likely yield tyranny, subjugation, and the destruction of human freedom.

The problems of human relations are not susceptible to such simple solutions. National security and human security arrange the relation of individual claims of justice and national claims of liberty in different ways. Justice and liberty are fundamental human values; and to trespass cavalierly on either constitutes an affront to human dignity. Whereas national security may be morally objectionable because it is insufficiently responsive to situations of domestic repression, human security is morally objectionable when it narrows a person’s or a community’s liberty to an extent that it is rendered meaningless. This latter
danger is particularly objectionable because it may deny what many advocates of human security hold to be
dear; for if we understand human essence as consisting in a disposition to author one’s own actions, then to
manipulate them toward ends that they do not see or cherish is to ‘deny their human essence, to treat them as
subjects without wills of their own, and therefore to degrade them.’ And to treat human beings this way is
to engage them paternally, that is, in a mode of conduct that Immanuel Kant described as ‘the greatest
despotism imaginable.’ However, when national security and human security are considered along with
some notion of responsibility and prudence, we are able to meaningfully confront the conflicting claims that
distinguish human relations, to engage the circumstances of their situations, and to comprehend the virtues
necessary to respond to them in a reasonable way. For the rights of statehood and the rights of individual
human beings are not sufficiently responsive to the requirements of tolerance, compromise, and
accommodation when they are cast as categorical imperatives. Knowledge of responsibility and prudence
transform national and human security into living moral doctrines that inhabit the practical world of human
conduct: they render the circumstances of particular problems and the virtues required to respond to them
intelligible to those wishing to make some sense, if only provisionally and tentatively, of the commands
issued by rights that are sometimes incompatible.

47 Quoted in Berlin, ‘Two Concepts of Liberty,’ 137.