AS THE UNITED STATES considers, adopts, and implements preemptive national security policy for the 21st century, it is important to ensure that we maintain a broad policy that not only keeps America secure, but also demonstrates a realistic and moral approach to solving national security challenges—challenges that can no longer be answered by the cold war policies and paradigms of containment, détente, and peaceful coexistence. A genuinely preemptive strategy shouldn’t just “defend the peace against threats from terrorists and tyrants”; it should attack the causes and conditions that give rise to terrorists and tyrants. Our “gravest dangers to freedom” do not come from “the perilous crossroads of radicalism and technology”; they come from the crossroads of ignorance and poverty.¹

National security policy in the latter half of the 20th century changed dramatically. Following the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, it moved from addressing a bipolar, international power struggle between NATO-allied countries led by the United States and Warsaw Pact countries led by the former Soviet Union, to assuming U.S. hegemony. Geopolitical fault lines that had defined international politics seemed to melt away.² The first Gulf War set the precedent for a benevolent superpower leading an international coalition against tyranny. With Operation Iraqi Freedom, however, that paradigm was soon replaced by the precedent of a unilateral superpower leading a “coalition of the willing.” Many historians now believe that the bipolar, international security framework of the cold war provided a more stable, secure, and predictable strategic framework. But living in the past is not an option.

Interestingly, some students of international relations see a new paradigm forming in the 21st century that bears some resemblance to the cold war. For example, former Iranian President (1997-2005) Mohammad Khatami postulates that the world order is morphing, once again, into a bipolar struggle. In this instance, the struggle will entail a global conflict between NATO-allied countries led by the United States and Islamic-based, theocratic states.³ Similar hypotheses in elite foreign relations circles suggest that the new security paradigm will probably pit the haves against the have-nots, or, as Samuel Huntington has posited, civilization against civilizations. Either way, the great clash will not be between states.⁴ Even our own president, George W. Bush, seems to refer to the U.S. “War on Terror” as being a “war of ideas,” not a contest between states.
If the world order has indeed changed in any of these ways, the implications for how the United States formulates its forward-looking national security policy will be profound. Containment, détente, and peaceful coexistence will not work. To ensure its long-term national security, America will have to remain decisively engaged, with the full understanding that in a global economy its security and prosperity are both directly and indirectly linked to the most remote regions of the world. A national security policy best disposed to meet this challenge must be considered in the guise of “enlightened self-interest” and human security; in effect, we must broaden our past definition of national security to meet the challenges and threats that lie ahead.

I am proposing here that we build the future framework of U.S. national security policy around a new paradigm: “human security.” First, however, we must understand where the term “human security” comes from. Some would argue that justification for a policy based on human security is a priori rational. Through our study of history and our most recent national experiences, we see that the concept can also be proven a posteriori.

**Background**

Following the fall of the Wall, a community of political scientists, academics, and leaders of international governmental organizations and nongovernmental/humanitarian assistance organizations began to talk about changing the way “we” think about national security. They postulated that rather than formulating security policy around the state, security policy ought to be thought of and formulated around individuals. In other words, instead of thinking about how to make nations secure, we ought to think about what makes individuals secure. Whereas “national security,” the traditional term used to frame security concerns, emphasizes the safeguarding of territory and populations, human security focuses on protecting “the dignity and worth of the human person.” In essence, this approach to security studies is “people-centric” rather than state-based. It reframes traditional human-rights issues as national security challenges.

However, using individuals, not states, as the reference point for security policy can be problematic because it diffuses fiduciary responsibility and accountability. Providing for the security of citizens is a principal attribute of national sovereignty. Indeed, nation-states are best prepared to fill this role, for which they are held accountable by the governed. The nation-state is, and will likely remain, the greatest guarantor of individual freedoms in the 21st century. Shifting the focus of security from the collective desire of free people to provide for their common defense to the protection by international standards and non-state actors of a range of individual political, economic, and cultural rights can confuse, rather than clarify, the nature of the modern state’s roles and responsibilities. However, through patient, prioritized, strategic national leadership and full engagement and partnership with international organizations and institutions, such a shift can work.

**Repackaged Wilsonianism?**

Conservatives will quip that the concept of human security strongly resembles liberalism, the conception of foreign policy that appeared over the course of the first half of the 20th century. Under liberalism, states are not monolithic, rational actors; rather, their decisions represent the cumulative influence of social-group interests. Foreign policy and national security strategy are products of the cooperative view of the state’s “empowered” elements. Liberalism also takes a structuralist approach to international relations (power is exercised and distributed through formal organizations and institutions), but its theoretical framework includes domestic players (legislatures,
unions, corporations) and non-state actors (nongovernmental and international organizations). In the liberal paradigm, conflict and competition are not inevitable. Institutions can act to ameliorate international conflict and promote cooperation, trust, and joint action.  

Roosevelt’s Four Freedoms

A dialogue about using the collective power of states to protect the rights of individuals emerged as part of the debate over what the world would look like after World War II. The challenge was how to prevent the reemergence of poisonous fascist ideologies that, during the Nazi era, became state policies, without interfering in the legitimate sovereignty of individual states. President Franklin D. Roosevelt attempted to provide an answer in his “Four Freedoms” speech on 6 January 1941, to the 77th Congress.

Roosevelt’s speech outlined the world he wanted to see in the future—the one the United States would be helping to make secure in the coming years of World War II. This world would be founded on four freedoms. The first was the freedom of speech and expression everywhere in the world. Second was the freedom for everyone to worship God in his or her own way. Freedom from want, which Roosevelt translated into economic relationships, came third on his list. Roosevelt’s fourth freedom was the freedom from fear, by which he meant “a world-wide reduction of armaments to such a point and in such a thorough fashion that no nation will be in a position to commit an act of physical aggression against any neighbor—anywhere in the world.” Altogether, he envisioned a world order in which all peoples would enjoy a secure, peaceful life.

In July 1941, Roosevelt, in concert with Winston Churchill, used the Atlantic Charter to expand on his “four freedoms” view of the world. A former Wilson administration member, Roosevelt left an ambivalent record of what he believed the charter stood for, but many of his administration’s postwar initiatives encouraged international governance by democratic processes, with international organizations serving as arbiters of disputes and protectors of the peace. The years following the end of World War II saw the establishment of mechanisms that stabilized the international economy and further promoted a vision of collective security of all types.

For example, the Bretton Woods Agreement (1944) established rules, institutions and procedures to regulate the international monetary system. The agreement required each country to adopt a monetary policy that fixed its currency exchange rate to a certain value plus or minus one percent in terms of gold, and it permitted the International Monetary Fund (established during the Bretton Woods conference) to bridge temporary payment imbalances. For approximately the next 30 years, the system worked to promote its members’ common goals.

The signing of the United Nations charter on 26 June 1945 provided yet another push toward collective security. The charter established the following goals for the organization:

- “To practice tolerance and live together in peace with one another as good neighbors.”
- “To unite our strength to maintain international peace and security.”
- “To ensure, by the acceptance of principles and the institution of methods, that armed force shall not be used, save in the common interest.”
- “To employ international machinery for the promotion of the economic and social advancement of all peoples.”

In the decades that followed, the U.N. bureaucracy came to view itself as a body whose role was to facilitate international security, international law, economic development, and social equity.

Much of the U.N. agenda involved the protection of “human rights.” Although the term human rights had been in common use before 1945, its meaning was largely recast in the postwar years. In the
Enlightenment, human rights had been associated with concepts of natural law, often interchanged with the term “rights of man.” Referring to a narrow set of individual legal entitlements, human rights also served as a synonym for “civil rights.” After World War II, “human rights” was used to delineate the difference between democratic and fascist civil society. Democratic societies recognized that individuals were entitled to certain rights merely by being human. In 1948, the U.N. published a universal declaration of human rights in 300 languages.

**Cold War to Present**

The outbreak of the cold war did much to dampen the drive toward international governance. While there was much discussion of the role of human rights in foreign affairs, their protection was considered a matter of national policy only. Charges of human rights abuses were endemic during the course of the cold war. Some were valid complaints. Others were made for propaganda value or as part of psychological warfare campaigns. In part because of the cold war standoff between the nuclear superpowers, the international community was loath to interfere in the internal governance of other countries, even in the face of massive human rights abuses and genocide.

Everything changed when the Wall fell. “Human security,” used in the international context to signal movement away from “national security” (a term frequently associated with the cold-war emphasis on states as actors), came into vogue. The term was and is meant to define security within a new context and global framework: it broadly defines security as “political, strategic, economic, social, or ecological [in] nature.” It is now argued that “security” means more than just physical security and the benefits of common defense, and that the international community has rights and responsibilities to protect human rights that may supersede those of individual states. This is, in effect, the global village concept.

One impetus behind the human-security movement is the continued globalization and interconnectedness, in all its forms, of the world. Specifically, the growth of international, multinational, transnational, nongovernmental and non-state actors challenges academics and practitioners of security studies to think more broadly and to reconsider the world construct and the role of traditional state actors.
In the early 1990s, the U.N. Development Program published a series of annual reports referring to human security. These reports stated that “now that the cold war is over, the challenge is to rebuild societies around people’s needs.” Furthermore, “security should be reinterpreted as security for people, not security for land [emphasis added].” The emphasis was clear. In the post-cold-war world, individuals, and not the collective community, mattered most.

**Human Security Today**

United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan recently wrote in *Foreign Affairs* that “the states of the world must create a collective security system” for all peoples. He was harkening back to President Roosevelt’s grand vision of a world with “freedom from want” and “freedom from fear.” However, while human security sounds good rhetorically, in practice it must clarify, not obscure, how states and non-state actors should think about national security, as well as where international organizations should direct their attentions to monitor state activities appropriately. Non-state actors may voluntarily or at the behest of the state monitor, assist, and facilitate states in their responsibilities, but at the end of the day, the state is solely responsible and accountable to the population in its charge.

The human-security movement is making great progress in promoting an individual-centered security regime as a reasonable approach to addressing national security. Many states use its principles as the foundation for their foreign policy, and burgeoning international organizations and global networks are dedicated to its values and underlying missions. In January 2001, for example, the U.N. established the Commission on Human Security. The Commission has three goals:

- To promote public understanding, engagement, and support of human security and its underlying imperatives.
- To develop the concept of human security as an operational tool for policy formulation and implementation.
- To propose a concrete program of action to address critical and pervasive threats to human security.

The U.N. also established a permanent U.N. Advisory Board on Human Security, and shortly thereafter the European Union study group published “A Human Security Doctrine for Europe.”

Countries and organizations are increasingly making human security the foundation of state foreign policy. Nevertheless, as more states and organizations embrace human security, its dangers must be considered.

**Conservatives Consider Human Security**

Proponents of human security often imply that it is based on two universal, unimpeachable truths—that human security is a grand and noble goal for which all humankind should strive, and that the human community as a whole has and must fulfill global responsibilities in the international community. The term also suggests that there is a broad consensus over which political, economic, cultural, legal, and physical rights constitute human rights. There is, however, a debate brewing among conservatives and liberals over whether these presumptions are true.

It is also not clear what the term adds to the discourse about the state’s obligations to serve and protect its citizenry. Conservatives argue that rather than being a genuinely new paradigm through which to approach international relations, human security is really more of a repackaged “neoliberal” philosophy of international relations. They also contend that there is great danger in the way the term is being applied. As currently conceived, human security can readily be used to delegitimize and undermine even secure states with productive economies and strong, open civil societies. Under the current U.N. definition, human security includes:

- Economic security – ensuring individuals a minimum income.
- Food security – guaranteeing access to food.
- Environmental security – protection from short and long-term natural and manmade disasters.
- Personal security – protection from any form and perpetration of arbitrary arrest or violence.
- Community security - protection from the loss of traditions and values, and from secular and ethnic violence.
- Political security – ensuring individual basic human rights.

Conservatives argue that this definition essentially requires each state to establish a perfect society, and that the standards for a state’s satisfactory performance are relatively ambiguous. No
state, they say, can meet all the security needs of its people as outlined by the U.N. For example, under the U.N. definition the United States might, it could be argued, be illegitimate because it failed to adequately look after citizens in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. This proposition is, of course, absurd; still, conservatives would have us believe that it could logically follow from the guidance laid out by the U.N.

Along the same lines, since states do not have infinite resources, no state will ever be able to meet all the human-security needs of every individual. And because the U.N. has failed to set priorities among the six kinds of security, states seeking to meet the demands of human security might easily disburse their resources on peripheral priorities that fail to meet the community’s most basic responsibilities—the physical security of its citizens and fundamental political freedoms.

Conservatives also complain that the ambiguous nature of the term human security could be exploited as a tool for unwarranted state oppression or international intervention.

In short, the current concept of human security suffers from three significant shortfalls:

- There is a lack of common understanding and application of the term.
- It provides no new conceptual advantages to assist in understanding the nature of international relations.
- It does not prioritize rights, and therefore can be readily exploited to undermine the legitimacy of any state.

Conservatives point to these shortfalls and profess to be disconcerted by the notion that human security should become an integral part of the international relations lexicon. In their estimation, the term’s undefined and incomplete nature—its failure to articulate clearly the responsibilities and accountability required of state and non-state actors—naturally confuses and potentially misdirects state fiduciary responsibility.

What’s Next for National Security

Although conservatives believe it would be naïve and wrongheaded to supplant national security and the preservation of freedom with human security as the state’s fundamental responsibility, it is clear that our conceptions of national security must evolve to reflect the realities of the world in which we live. For the United States, one way to do this would be to address national security in tandem with international security challenges.

During the cold war, national security was simply considered within the context of our bipolar world, a world in which the United States, the USSR, and their respective spheres of influence squared off against one another ideologically, diplomatically, economically, politically, and militarily. National security was measured in terms of nuclear warheads, weapons platforms, military divisions, and defense spending. Now, states view their security not just in terms of military threats or territorial invasions, but also with regard to challenges that, left untackled, become breeding grounds for terrorism and radical ideologies; facilitate economic threats, dangers, and catastrophe; and permit environmental degradation and devastation.

The term “national security” is legitimately under scrutiny. For over a decade, world-renowned scholars have written about the need for new thinking in national security. Francis Fukuyama alluded to it in 1989 in an article in The National Interest and again in 1992, in The End of History and the Last Man. In 1993 and 1996, Samuel Huntington and Michael Klare offered glimpses of the threat we currently face. According to Huntington, “World politics is entering a new phase, and intellectuals have not hesitated to proliferate visions of what it will be—the end of history, the return of traditional rivalries between nation states, and the decline of the nation state from the conflicting pulls of tribalism and globalism, among others . . . . It is my hypothesis that the fundamental source of conflict in this new world will not be primarily ideological or primarily economic . . . . Nation states will remain the most powerful actors in world affairs, but the principal conflicts of global politics will occur between nations and groups of different civilizations . . . . The fault lines between civilizations will be the battle lines of the future.”

Klare opined that “the changes associated with the cold war’s end have been so dramatic and profound that it is reasonable to question whether traditional assumptions regarding the nature of global conflict will continue to prove reliable in the new, post-cold-war era. In particular, one could question whether conflicts between states (or groups of states) will

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remain the principal form of international strife, and whether the boundaries between them will continue to constitute the world’s major fault lines. . . . Others have argued that the world’s future fault lines will fall not between the major states or civilizations, but between the growing nexus of democratic, market-oriented societies and those ‘holdout’ states that have eschewed democracy or defied the world community in other ways.”

Dan Henk has appropriately summarized the flood of new thinking loosed by such theorists as Fukuyama, Huntington, and Klare: “The end of the Cold War unleashed a debate that had been growing for years, provoked by scholars and practitioners increasingly dissatisfied with traditional conceptions of security.”

Discarding the idea of national security is not the answer, however. Rather than replace the term with a broad moniker that could be perceived as useless and dangerous, international relations theory should strive to clarify the relationships among security, economic, political, and foreign-policy issues, and the cascading effects each has on the others. In his February 1993 confirmation hearing, James Woolsey, President Clinton’s first director of the CIA, alluded to the United States as having defeated the USSR or “slain the dragon.” In its place, he feared, “We now live in a jungle filled with a bewildering variety of poisonous snakes, and in many ways the dragon was easier to keep track of.”

As it has in the past, the Department of Defense continues to use reflexive terminology to describe the global operating environment and U.S. policy. For DOD, such terms as “deterrence,” “détente,” “containment,” “crisis response,” “conflict management,” and “consequence management” are still current. All of our national strategies are spelled out in this defensive-reactive context. That’s got to change.

If President Bush truly changed the nature of U.S. strategy on 1 June 2002 to one of preemption that requires “all Americans to be forward-looking and resolute, to be ready for preemptive action when necessary,” where should the United States set its sights and what elements of threat should it target?

Thomas P.M. Barnett outlines a grand strategy to answer this quandary in his book *The Pentagon’s New Map: War and Peace in the 21st Century*. According to Barnett, as globalization continues to shrink our world, it will confront friction from underdeveloped nations, peoples, and cultures: “A few years ago, I was doing some simple mapping of where we sent US military forces since the end of the Cold War. We sent soldiers into conflicts almost 150 times, seemingly around the planet, but when you actually plot it out, you realize it’s clustered, rather significantly, in a series of regions. When I drew a line around those regions on the globe, I realized there were certain things about those regions that were similar. . . . there was a pattern: when you look at the area where we’ve committed our forces, you’re seeing the parts of the world that are least connected to the global economy. . . . I realized the shape I was staring at I’d seen in many, many forms: biodiversity loss, poor soil quality, where the most fundamentalist versions of religions are, where there’re no fiber optic cable, where there are no doctors.”

About the stable and unstable regions of the world, Barnett noted: “Across that Core I see integrating economies, the regular and peaceful rotation of leadership, and no real mass violence. . . . [there is] commonality in a struggle against global terrorism. Meanwhile, when I look at the other areas . . . . I see almost all the negative situations we’ve faced since the end of the Cold War. . . . in that Gap I found virtually all the wars, civil wars, ethnic cleansings, genocide, use of mass rape as a tool of terror, children forced or lured into combat activities, virtually all the drug exports, all the UN peacekeeping missions and almost 100% of the terrorist groups we’re fighting . . . . It’s a simplistic map, of course, but the match-up is profound: show me where globalization and connectivity are thick.
and I’ll show you people living in peace. Show me where globalization hasn’t spread, and I’ll show you violence and chaos.”

Human Security as Human Welfare

From the lowest military commander to the highest, from Afghanistan to Iraq, and from the Pentagon to Foggy Bottom, those who implement national security policy on the ground and on the frontline must understand that outdated approaches will not succeed. Providing weapons, uniforms, equipment, and training to the security institutions of Afghanistan and Iraq will not pan out. Frontline leaders already understand that the Afghani and Iraqi people have a vote. Rather than guns, they want education. Rather than tanks, they want jobs. Rather than military formations, they want electricity and health care. To ensure our long-term national security, we must provide for their long-term human welfare and personal security. In fact, their national security will evolve from their human security.

The discourse over human security is really about human welfare and human rights. They are the means to an improved standard of living. Human security equates to dignity and a sense of well-being, to working for a greater sense of happiness and self-fulfillment. It is the means that allows competition within a free market economy and, secondly, a means to provide rights and human dignity.

Recognizing the concept of human security as a desirable condition rather than an international social issue has three advantages:

- It legitimizes the notion that international organizations have the responsibility to debate intercession in state sovereignty based on human security concerns.
- It allows communities maximum freedom to shape their own destinies and build the kinds of civil societies that suit them best.
- It preserves the unique distinction of human rights as a category of inalienable rights broadly accepted by the community of free nations.

Recommendations

To date, with no exception, a liberal democratic state appears to be, in the words of Francis Fukuyama, “the endpoint in mankind’s ideological evolution.” The goal of international relations discourse should be to strengthen the state as the best guarantor of the security and liberty of individuals and to preserve the core notions of evil that define regimes that sacrifice their right to sovereignty (e.g., genocide, unjustified war). Additionally, today’s policymakers must understand that there will always be threats to global peace and stability. It is human nature—we are a world forever divided by ethnicity, race, culture, language, religion and caste.

Divisions in society act as natural friction points. But friction can be lessened through the formulation of realistic, moral, and preemptive national security policies—policies that address economic, demographic, sociological, and environmental challenges. Therefore, a preemptive U.S. national security policy should:

- Retain recognition of geopolitical boundaries, and implement policies with an awareness that cultures, religions, and ethnic ties and allegiances ebb and flow freely across manmade boundaries.
- Encourage, foster, and promote broadened thinking on how human security imperatives are interwoven with domestic, social, economic, political, defense, and foreign-policy priorities.
- Promote study, dialogue, and debate on human security, human welfare, and human rights as cornerstones like-minded states can use to promote common programs of social, economic, and political development.
- Nurture the linkages between national security and human rights and discourage consideration of the two as mutually exclusive. Acting within the rule of law, national security policies must target and preempt those threat elements that endanger human rights, globalization, and the development of disadvantaged peoples.

Short-term, shortsighted policies that achieve instant political gratification via heavy-handed security and stability are not the answer. The United States must gather the courage and political will to implement long-term policies that foster and protect human security. War, aggression, violence, inequality, and all the negative aspects of living in a real world will continue to impact and affect individuals, states, and regions of the world. As long as this remains a reality of international politics and foreign relations, national security as a function and responsibility of the state will remain key to human security overall. Any discourse that suggests anything less risks making us less safe and less free.
Unlike Antoine Lavoisier*

Here is where it all goes wrong: you’ve got twenty teams in perimeter at the site of the bombing, boy, quartered on the cloverleaf overpass unable to see each other, some local men start a scrap fire for tea as if the world billowing from dust is nothing new, squatting, while police hover at the government building unsure if they should blame themselves. the blast, northwest of the bypass, blooded ventricle, you’ve shut down traffic, make them go around, pump them, compress, suck, the flares sputter for flat, safe landing, and slowly for the dead a flight medic drapes and zips the bags.

Anticipation, rather than reaction, one team must sacrifice its Igloo, ice and all; off

To find when the wrecker rolls it, An experiment unlike blinking in the sand.

—CPT Benjamin Buchholz

*Antoine Lavoisier (1743-1794), the “Father of Modern Chemistry,” used empirical methods to debunk much of what had passed for science prior to the Enlightenment. Through a series of experiments, he figured out that combustion and respiration are chemical reactions involving oxygen. As Commissioner of the Royal Gunpowder and Salt peter Administration, he greatly improved the process for manufacturing gunpowder. In 1794, Lavoisier was sent to the guillotine by Robespierre. Legend has it that Lavoisier arranged one last experiment before his execution: after the blade fell he would blink his eyes as long as he could, so that his assistant might determine how long a man could retain consciousness after beheading. Lavoisier supposedly blinked between 15 and 20 times.