

HUMAN SECURITY IN SOUTH AFRICA

Sandy Africa
Department of Political Sciences
University of Pretoria, South Africa

1. Introduction

The gains that can be attributed to the cause of human security since the end of *apartheid* are significant. The right to vote, to basic education and primary health care; the introduction of an extensive social security system that has lifted many people out of poverty; the provision of affordable housing and basic services to millions, are some of the undeniable achievements of 21 years of democracy. On the regional and international fronts, South Africa has shifted from being a source of insecurity to its neighbours to being an advocate for peace on the continent, playing a prominent mediation role in conflicts such as those in Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and the Sudan. Yet the country remains dogged by unemployment and poverty, structural inequality in the economy, the failure of some state institutions to provide adequately for the needs of all people, and failures in the criminal justice system, to name several challenges.

Moreover, South Africa's formal Pan-Africanist and internationalist posture has been sullied by recurring instances of violent attacks on migrants, many of whom have fled hardship in their own countries. It could be argued that human security has not prevailed, and might even be a waning value in the South African political and social fabric. Are we in fact, seeing a reversal of gains, and the return of the traditional security approach that had characterised the *apartheid* years? This commentary asks whether the human security agenda has been lost in the quagmire of political, economic and social challenges confronting South Africa, and if this is the case, what can be done to arrest the trend.

2. Africa's contribution to the global discourse on human security

In the global discourse, 'human security' gained currency at a particular geo-political moment, soon after the end of the Cold War. At the time, South Africa's political transition was already underway, and ideas about what should replace the state-centred notion of *apartheid*, were an integral part of discussions. The poverty, racial discrimination, political repression and institutionalised violence that had characterised life for black people for centuries had been a focus of struggles and campaigns for decades. The state had clearly been a source of insecurity — this was conceded by the *apartheid* government during the negotiations in the early 1990s. The language in which discussions around a future security dispensation was framed, spoke resoundingly of a new era of 'freedom from fear' and 'freedom from want' — the language of human security.

Whilst the United Nations' (UN) 1994 *Human Development Report* is often cited as a decisive moment in shifting the conceptual understanding of security, it was in fact part of a long continuum of global political thought and action. Anti-colonial struggles, the establishment of the UN, the international struggle against *apartheid*, all contained within them a desire to rid the world of physical violence and to establish inclusive, human and just societies. Not only were these aspirations expressed in the struggles fought by many peoples and movements, they also found expression in academic analyses.¹⁾

Even before the 1994 UN Report, the relationship between security and development was captured in the seminal 1991 *Kampala Document*, which emanated from a meeting convened by the chairperson of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), President Yoweri Museveni and Olusegun Obasanjo of Nigeria, who was then chairperson of the Africa Leadership Forum (Africa Leadership Forum 1991: 4). The meeting, attended by over 500 people including several serving and former heads of state, deliberated on the prospects for Africa in the 1990s and the 21st century. It proposed the launch of a Conference on Security, Stability, Development and Cooperation in Africa (CSSDCA). It argued that the erosion of insecurity and instability were major impediments to economic integration and the socio-economic transformation of Africa. Four areas of vulnerability or 'calabashes' had to be ad-

dressed: security, stability, development and cooperation. Outlining the principles relevant to the security 'calabash', the *Kampala Document* argued that the concept of security went beyond military considerations, and included economic, political and social dimensions:

The security of a nation must be construed in terms of the security of the individual citizen to live in peace with access to basic necessities of life while fully participating in the affairs of his/her society in freedom and enjoying all fundamental human rights (African Leadership Forum 1991: 9).

The principles underlying the stability 'calabash' in the *Kampala Document* included adherence to the rule of law, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, transparency in public policy making and encouragement of the separation of state and religion. In the development 'calabash', the document recognised rapid physical and economic integration as central to Africa's survival in the 21st century. It also spoke of the need for economic diversification as opposed to the existing reliance on commodity production. Human capital development, food self-sufficiency, energy development, trade, transport, finance resource mobilisation and promoting women's access to the means to development and their full participation in decision-making were also stressed. In the cooperation 'calabash', the document urged that Africa proceed along three tiers of cooperation: cooperation among African countries, through South-South cooperation, and through North-South cooperation. In 2000 the principles were eventually adopted by the OAU in a *Solemn Declaration on the Conference on Security, Stability, Development and Cooperation in Africa* (Adewinrale 2001). Many of the ideas proposed to operationalise the Declaration have subsequently found their way into the programme of the African Union (AU).²⁾

3. South Africa's interpretation of the human security agenda

More than is sometimes realised, the principles contained in the *Kampala Document*, impacted significantly on the policy proposals that were tabled during the negotiations and featured later in the Constitution. During the South African transition in the 1990s, emphasis was placed on the need to shift from a state-centric to a people-centred approach to security. In both the democratic movement and the *apartheid* intelli-

gentsia, there was also awareness and interest in the new thinking around security that became prominent after the Cold War. The Kam-pala ideas and the new thinking on security were readily assimilated into new policy frameworks.

3.1 'Freedom from fear'

In 1993, under the auspices of a Transitional Executive Council³⁾ agreements were reached about the basic principles that should govern a new national security approach. Principles associated with democratic civil-security relations, and the broadening of the concept of security were important shifts in the idea of security. The primacy of human security — the freedom of the individual from threats to physical safety, to a decent quality of life and to human dignity — permeated the negotiations discourse and filtered into discussions on the role of the security structures both during the transition and after.

Adopted by the first democratically-elected Parliament, the 1994 *White Paper on Intelligence* pointed out that whilst the "traditional and narrower approach to security has emphasized military threats", the international security agenda was shifting to the "full range of political, economic, military, social, religious, technological, ethnic and ethical factors that shape security around the world" (RSA 1994). The 1994 *Green Paper on Safety and Security* emphasised the need for democratic control, police accountability and community participation in issues of safety and security, ideas that were carried through to the *White Paper on Safety and Security* adopted in 1998. The *White Paper on Defence*, adopted in 1996, argued that "security is an all-encompassing condition in which individual citizens live in freedom, peace and safety; participate fully in the process of governance; enjoy the protection of fundamental rights; have access to resources and the basic necessities of life; and inhabit an environment which is not detrimental to their health and well-being" (RSA 1996). These policy frameworks, along with the Constitution, provided the context for the post-*apartheid* laws regulating the security sector. The South African Constitution, adopted in 1996 and replacing the Interim Constitution that had been adopted in 1993, also invoked the language of human security when it urged that "national security must reflect the resolve of South Africans, as individuals and as a nation, to live as equals, to live in peace and harmony, to be free from fear and want and to seek a better life" (RSA 1996: s 198a).

For the integrated South African National Defence Force (SANDF), the new imperatives meant shifting the counter-insurgency focus that had marked the *apartheid* era, to defending South Africa's sovereignty and territorial integrity, and reorienting military doctrine to accommodate a new imperative in Africa: peace-keeping in conflict areas. For the South African Police Service (SAPS), the main challenges were to build trust and partnership with communities who once had viewed the police as enemies, develop effective crime prevention strategies and capable investigative capacities so that offenders could be successfully prosecuted. Transnational organised crime emerged as a problem following the end of the Cold War, and intermingled with violent extremism and the exploitation of vulnerable, marginalised and poor people, has caused the security services to direct substantial resources to combatting these problems. For the intelligence services, South Africa's status as an open democracy created enormous interest in foreign intelligence services wanting either to collaborate with or spy on the fledgling state. Counter-intelligence operations have had to address both this challenge and the many other problems that could potentially cause harm to the security of the country. These included lingering political violence, corruption within the state machinery, and even urban terrorism in the Western Cape at one stage (related to drugs and organised crime).

3.2 'Freedom from want'

If 'freedom from fear' was pursued by the reorientation of the security services towards the needs of a post-*apartheid* society, what was done to promote 'freedom from want', the other element of the human security equation? After the first democratic elections in 1994, the centrepiece of government's programme was the *Reconstruction and Development Programme* (RDP), lobbied for by the large trade union movement, the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), and adopted by the African National Congress (ANC) as a policy framework (RSA 1994). The RDP identified poverty as the most pressing problem facing South Africans, and argued that the poor should be empowered through the programme. Peace and security were identified as important preconditions for delivering these services and for nation-building in the programme. In the Presidency, a Minister (without a specific portfolio) was appointed to oversee implementation of the RDP.

Some of the programmes introduced under the RDP were an

Integrated Nutritional Project aimed at improving nutrition especially among school-going children; a National Housing Programme aimed at providing housing to low-income families and providing jobs and training at the same time; Electrification Schemes designed to provide electricity on a large scale and reduce dependence on wood and fossil fuels; a Growth and Development Strategy aimed at improving economic performance of the country, by attracting foreign investment and stimulating small, micro and medium enterprises, among its measures; a Land Reform Programme aimed at redistribution and restitution of land to previously disadvantaged communities; a Water Supply Programme which aimed to bring about equity in access to water among all communities; and a Social Security and Welfare System which offered safety nets to protect the poor, disabled, elderly and other vulnerable groups (www.un.org).

4. A mixed record for human security

For a number of reasons, human security has had a mixed record in South Africa. On the positive side, the security services gained legitimacy, and were only required to carry out functions associated with democratic values. Through the RDP initiative and subsequent government programmes, the lives of millions of South Africans changed for the better. As a result the ANC has been returned to power in all general elections after 1994. But there have been weaknesses in implementing the original policy frameworks, in ensuring the proper balance between security and development, and in making the individual the "referent object of security".⁴⁾

Even before the end of the administration's first term, COSATU was accusing the ANC-led government of having abandoned the poor through its adoption of the Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) policy which, it argued put the interests of big business and the 'Washington Consensus' before those of South Africa's working class and the poor. The government on the other hand argued the need to strike a balance between the promotion of market-friendly policies, which in turn would grow the economy and grow the revenue needed to provide services to the people. The resultant tensions were to become an ever-present current in South African politics, leading to splits in the ANC and in the trade union movement over the years.

Under President Thabo Mbeki, greater emphasis was given to

outputs and performance, with related ministries and departments ('clusters') obliged to formally coordinate their work. This did much to improve accountability and transparency, but introduced a managerialist ethos, in the view of some commentators. The emphasis placed on developing a capable state left many civil society organisations feeling they were regarded as a nuisance rather than a social partner to government. For example, there were tensions between government and the Treatment Action Campaign (TAC) and other organisations campaigning for access to anti-retroviral treatment for persons infected with the HIV/Aids virus, before a policy swing to the position of civil society organisation.⁵⁾

Applying a widened definition of security has corresponded to an ever-widening interpretation of where the security services should be involved. It was perhaps inevitable that framing national security would lead the domestically based National Intelligence Agency (NIA) to consider crime, political dissent, and social protest as legitimate areas of interest. Other issues that have received the attention of the intelligence services have been food security, resource security and environmental security. Over time, more and more matters of public life have been regarded as security matters. Today, even the energy crisis has provoked the establishment of a 'war room' by government, suggesting that the language of security has a reach far beyond the normal. The paradox that has unfolded is that organised civic participation in governance has diminished, whilst government's role has expanded. Where there has been engagement, it has often been violent and confrontational.

Some political analysts have argued that since at least 2009, a class of 'securocrats' has been on the ascendancy in the administration (McKinley 2013; Duncan 2014). They argue that the state has become increasingly heavy-handed in recent years in dealing with the demands of citizens for access to basic rights. They point to the re-emergence of a culture of secrecy within the state, the unjustified use of force, many instances of police brutality, the passage of laws that militate against a democratic ethos, and a weakening of parliamentary oversight structures as evidence of this trend. Also looming large is the spectre of the *Protection of State Information Bill*, approved by Parliament in 2013 but not yet assented to by President Jacob Zuma (RSA 2013). Critics of the Bill fear that its real intention is to silence whistle-blowers on corruption within the state, and not simply to protect sensitive information from disclosure.

5. How to recover the human security agenda

When violence against foreign migrants broke out in parts of KwaZulu/Natal and Gauteng in March 2015, resulting in the deaths of at least seven people and the displacement of thousands, many people were bewildered, and could not link the chaos with the image of the 'rainbow nation' that South Africa had come to be known as. The violence, committed largely in poor and marginalised communities, exposed several sides of South African society that are often conveniently forgotten: how unequal South African society remains after more than 20 years of democracy; how structural violence begets violence among the people; how cut off from the rest of the continent most South Africans, struggling with eking out a daily living, are.

The *Kampala Document* may well provide a refresher to South Africa on how to move forward. The central thesis in the document is that greater physical security through the ending of wars, conflict and strife should free up more resources and create enabling conditions for economic development. As societies grow more prosperous, the inclination to resort to violence fades further away. It is commonly acknowledged that the political transition to democracy in South Africa has not been accompanied by an economic transition that benefits the country's majority. A raft of structural problems, including skewed ownership of the means of production, growing unemployment and income inequality, labour market inefficiencies, and the retention of *apartheid* spatial planning, have gnawed away at the economy, and tended to reinforce *apartheid* patterns of poverty and access.

Government's blueprint to fix these ills, the National Development Plan (NDP), recognises the problems (RSA 2012). These problems have not been made easier by a global economic recession that began in 2008 and from which the world is only just recovering. But policy contestation by a range of vested interests — organised business, the labour movement and diverse political voices — has made it difficult for government to arrive at decisions on how to drive its second-stage transformation, an electoral promise both in 2009 and 2014. As a result, some of the fault lines have remained stubbornly in place.

The *Kampala Document* presented the four 'calabash' approach as a comprehensive set of tools for the continent. However, the security

problems seem to be outpacing progress in implementing the stability, development and cooperation strategies it advanced. What it did not anticipate was the form that violence and instability would take, nor the duration. The default position of most states is to resort to their coercive powers, thus triggering the cycle of insecurity and instability, conditions under which development and cooperation are not possible.

The *South African Defence Review*, adopted by the Cabinet in 2014, argues that South Africa is a 'developmental state' and that all institutions must align their efforts with this reality. According to the Review:

South Africa's domestic security focuses on the interrelated priorities of national sovereignty, territorial integrity, constitutional order, the security and continuance of national institutions, the well-being, prosperity and upliftment of the South African people, the growth of the economy, and demonstrable good governance. These interests are pursued in a coordinated manner by all entities of the State, including the Defence Force (RSA 2014).

The Defence Review goes on to argue that the constitutional terminology of "defend and protect" does not only entail engagement in combat operations, but also includes "military operations other than war", including peace missions. The Review speaks of the responsibility of the Defence Force to lend support to other institutions in engaging non-military threats; it argues that the challenges that would require a defence response are social stability (or the lack thereof occasioned by poverty and inequality); organised and violent crime; acts of terror; and natural disasters.

At first glance, this appears to be asserting the human security principles. But, if not looked at alongside what is happening across the security sector, it is possible to be blind-sided. Policy makers need to proceed cautiously in redefining the role of the security services. Regarding more and more issues as security issues, implies spending more resources on the coercive arms of the state. This could introduce an ethos of violence once again, for this is what is likely to happen if people become too used to seeing tanks and heavily armed men and women in spaces that are supposed to be for civic life, or if intrusions of privacy and interference by, or deployment of the security services in politics become normalised. The socio-economic challenges that stand in the way of human security are too readily addressed by invoking the

coercive powers of the state.

The Government's *National Developmental Plan (NDP) 2030* provides the platform to manage the security-development nexus in the context of a new discourse. In fact, this is vital given that several significant constituencies have already expressed cynicism towards the NDP. The burning need is to build skills, to create employment and to create industries. These needs have been identified across the region and South Africa, which has a relative economic advantage must be at the forefront of these initiatives.

Poor leadership has resulted in poverty-stricken South Africans failing to connect their experiences of poor governance and economic inequality with the experiences of other peoples on the African continent. Some fundamental and perennial questions must be asked and collectively answered: security for whom, to be delivered by whom, and in whose interests? The world we live in now experiences threats of violent extremism, civil wars, violent and organised crime, the effects of which are felt among the poorest people. What principles should guide the global and regional responses to these threats which often know no borders? What implications does this have for domestic policy, including security policy, and the role and resourcing of institutions of state, the private sector and civil society? How do we advance developmental agendas and create caring humane societies, as the human security paradigm urges, without descending into chaos, as happened during the recent attacks on migrants. Since all Africans have a vested interest in the answers, the platforms to debate them should be created. Perhaps it is time to dust off and re-read the *Kampala Document*, and interpret it for the 21st century. This time round though, there should be new voices at the table: the youth, women, farmers, rising industrialists, artists, peace advocates. Governments need to listen to the voices of the people once again.

Endnotes

1. See, for example, Galtung, J (1984), *There are alternatives. Four roads to peace and security*. Nottingham: Bertram Russell House; Azar, E and C Moon (1988), "Towards an alternative conceptualisation", in Azar, E and C Moon (eds), *National Security in the Third World. The management of internal and external threats*. Aldershot: Edward Elgar Publishing Limited; Fukuda-Parr, S and C Messineo (2012), "Human security: a critical review of the literature", Centre for Research on Peace and Development (CRPD),

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2. Among the specific policy measures around security, proposed in the *Kampala Document* were the revitalisation of the OAU Commission on Mediation, Conciliation and Arbitration; taking into account the lessons from UN missions, the institution of a continental peace-keeping machinery; confidence-building measures between countries such as information exchanges, joint military training and military manoeuvres, and joint studies on military matters; non-aggression pacts; the lowering of military expenditures; and the establishment of an African Peace Council consisting of distinguished personalities and African elder statesmen, operating under the OAU framework.
3. This body was established through the passage of the *Transitional Executive Council Act, 1993* (No 151 of 1993), that set out the mechanisms for the transition to a democratic order in South Africa. The TEC consisted of representatives of the South African government, the homeland governments, political parties and organisations which were part of the Negotiating Council which had been engaged in talks about South Africa's political future.
4. See Buzan B, Waever, and O J de Wilde (1998), *Security: A new framework for analysis*. Boulder, London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, for their influential ideas that have challenged traditional International Relations theory and analysis. In their commentary on the 'securitisation' of issues, they explore the interplay of factors when the interests of the state and not those of the individual, are made the referent object of security analysis and intervention.
5. Other issues where there have been differences between the state and organs of civil society have been the Department of Defence's 'arms deal', public sector wages, and poor service delivery in townships.

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