The Human Security Paradigm Shift: A New Lens on Canadian Foreign Policy?
Report of the UBC Symposium on Human Security
June 18, 1999

1.   Introduction/ Background to Symposium

A one day symposium on Human Security and Canadian Foreign Policy was organized by the Institute of International Relations (UBC) and sponsored by the Canadian Centre for Foreign Policy Development. The event was held on June 18, 1999 at the University of Toronto. The symposium brought together 17 academics and government representatives broadly sympathetic to the concept of human security. This paper is an attempt to summarize the discussion which took place and highlight some of the key ideas raised in the course of day.

The Symposium was the idea of Will Bain, a doctoral student at UBC, prompted by a concern over the dearth of discussion in the Canadian academic community about human security. The increasing use of this term by Canada's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lloyd Axworthy, and other politicians suggested a need to clarify what is meant by human security, and to examine it critically, in both theory and practice. In this context, the June roundtable sought to consider the meaning, scope and practice of human security, as well as the implications, generally speaking, for Canadian foreign policy. At the time the discussion took place, the intervention by NATO in Kosovo was at the forefront of Canadian foreign policy and figures as a key case study in the discussion, particularly concerning the use of force in humanitarian intervention.

In writing this report, the authors wish to provide both some fresh ideas, from outside of government, about the concept of human security in practical terms for government officials, as well as highlight some of the profound theoretical questions such a paradigmatic shift poses for academics, particularly scholars of International Relations theory. While the ideas came out of the discussions held, the organization of this material, and the themes drawn from the discussion are the sole responsibility of the authors.

2.   Human Security: Definition and Scope

The notion of the human being as the referent object for defining security is a new development, as is the idea that security includes human rights, freedom from state violence and other non-military threats. The real meaning of 'human security', according to the Canadian Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, is 'safety for people'.[1] There is, however, a lack of clarity about what this means in policy terms, a perceived mismatch between the idea of human security and the practices and policy tools of domestic and international institutions, and some real debate, even amongst those

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[1] *Human Security: Safety for People in a Changing World*, DFAIT, Canada, April, 1999.