



# Human Security and Disasters A Dialogue

Thursday, 13<sup>th</sup> December 2012

Research Lounge, RMIT

Building 8, Level 5

Presented by the Human Security & Disasters Program  
of the Global Cities Research Institute

## Program

10.00	Welcome, coffee
10.30 First Panel  'Theorising resilience and security'	Chair: Jeff Lewis (RMIT)  Presenters:  Blythe McLennan and Karyn Bosomworth  Peter Rogers (Macquarie)  Robin Cameron (RMIT)
11.45 Morning Tea	
12.15 Second Panel  'Evaluating civil-military interaction after disaster or conflict.'	Chair: Joe Siracusa  Presenters:  John Handmer  Philippa Nicholson  Paul James
1.30 Lunch	
2.30 Third Panel  'Addressing vulnerability and insecurity'	Chair: Elizabeth Kath  Josh Whittaker  Chris Hobson (UNU)  Peter Chambers (UniMelb/RMIT)
3.45 Afternoon Tea	
4.00 Closing comments and discussion	Chair: Jeff Lewis
5.30 Dinner and drinks at Sahara restaurant	Upstairs, 301 Swanston St

## **A more 'human' human security: The importance of existential security in resilient communities**

Robin Cameron

This paper offers a revise of the concept of the concept of human security in order take the human condition seriously. The human security approach seeks to shift the referent object of security from the state to people. In practice the latter is generally treated as synonymous with a western, liberal individualist notion of the subject, even while it is applied largely as a concept to the developing world.

In order to taken both the concept of human security and the condition of the human seriously, this paper seeks to expand the material concerns of human security so as to encompass the relational and community based dimensions of what will be described here as 'existential security'. A lot can be learnt from approaches taken within disaster management, which focus on how communities respond to unexpected adverse events. Drawing from these approaches an account of security that is more attentive to the patterns of everyday life can be reached. In so doing human security will also become more attentive to the forms of insecurity that stem from disasters.

## **Unalerted and Unattributed: the SIEV 221 shipwreck, border security, and the inability to know**

Peter Chambers

This paper presents a schematic overview of the events and governmental traces of SIEV 221 (Suspected Illegal Entry Vehicle 221), Australia's deadliest shipwreck since 1880. SIEV 221, the administrative acronym given to an Indonesian fishing boat overloaded with people attempting to reach Australia to seek asylum as refugees around December 15, 2010, is examined in terms of epistemology. The revealed picture demonstrates the gap between the instrumental form of procedural knowledge practiced by Australia's border security authorities, BPC, and the possibility of a horizon of critical thought. SIEV 221 reveals BPC as being capable of responding, but only within its own epistemology, which knows boat arrivals as threat objects, natural givens within a vast maritime space construed as a threat environment. In the event, BPC was unable to know those aboard SIEV 221 as anything but security threats: the vessel was 'unalerted and unattributed', until it was too late. At stake here is what the practice of a an epistemology consistent with the border security paradigm is doing to space, time, and human vulnerability, and the implications that has for the future thinking of any nation-state that institutes the border security paradigm as a way of performing national security and projecting state sovereignty.

## **Emergency management and the Australian military.**

John Handmer

Contemporary Australian emergency management emerged from a combination of war related civil-defence and private sector fire suppression. It took over two decades to shake off the war focus and to concentrate on civilian emergencies – ie human security. Nevertheless, the military continued to play an important role.

Over the past decade there has been a shift back to a war or rather state security emphasis, under the guise of an “all hazards” approach, which attempts to combine state security interests with human security interests. At the same time the use of the military for civilian tasks has increased greatly. Paradoxically, this has occurred as national emergency management moved entirely to civilian hands.

These trends raise practical questions concerning issues of cost, appropriateness, and competition policy; and a fundamental philosophical question: can human security and state security be handled by the same agency? Can they be neatly combined?

## **Human Security and the Fukushima Dai-ichi disaster: The nuclear village's inability to know (or care)**

Christopher Hobson (United Nations University, Tokyo)

Japan has been one of the biggest proponents of the human security approach, but until March 11, 2011, there was an underlying assumption that it was something only relevant for ‘others’. Human security was a development issue; there seemed little need for it in domestic policy. The fallacy of this assumption became abundantly clear as a result of the 2011 Tōhoku earthquake and tsunami, however. In this context, the purpose of this paper is to reflect on this disaster through a human security lens. It will be proposed that human security can offer a valuable perspective, if the limitations of the approach are acknowledged. Focusing specifically on the disaster at the Fukushima Dai-ichi nuclear power plant, the paper will identify serious vulnerabilities – at the individual and societal levels – that were pre-existing before the disaster, and how these were amplified as a result of the way the Dai-ichi meltdown was handled. More than 1.5 years after the disaster commenced (and it is far from being over), Japan’s nuclear village – the informal coalition of politicians, bureaucrats, and private industry that uses its power to promote nuclear power – has proven to be remarkably consistent, and persistent, in prioritising its own interests ahead of those people affected. In this context, the basic move that human security makes – that the most severe threats and vulnerabilities that people face should drive our decision-making – represents an important, perhaps even radical, critique of the prevailing situation.

## **Towards Positive Human Security: Arguing the Dialectics of the Human Condition**

Paul James (RMIT)

Sometimes the obvious is obscured by detailed attention. Sometimes the accretion of constant use buries the obvious in the glitter and dirt of taken-for-granted past assumptions. This is very much the case with the concept of 'human security'. The adjective 'human' in 'human security' has since the first breakthrough documents become substantially taken for granted. Certainly the concept has evoked much discussion and debate over how it should be defined. However, despite this direct attention, it has become inexplicably rare for the obvious semantic core of the concept to be examined. To do so is to begin to interrogate the meaning of 'the human'. In this essay, rather than getting buried in debates over the narrow version of security, 'freedom from fear', versus the broad version of 'freedom both fear and want', I want to take a couple of steps into this task by treating security and risk as part of the contingent and negotiated condition of human living. In these terms, the liberal notion of 'freedom from', for all its importance, is exposed as a negative and limited approximation of the richness of positive human security.

## **Resilience matters in disaster management**

Blythe McLennan and Karyn Bosomworth (RMIT)

The emergency services sector in Australia has recently been asked by the National Strategy for Disaster Resilience to adopt a "resilience-based" approach to disaster management. This presentation considers what the idea of resilience means (or could mean) for thinking and practice in the emergency services sector. It asks what – if anything – is different about disaster management based on the concept of resilience compared to the prevailing emergency management model in Australia. We argue that – on a conceptual level – "resilience-based disaster management" is really asking for a shift in the foundation of the social contract between governments and citizens for living with disaster risk in Australia. However, in practice it is just as likely that resilience language will be overlaid onto the status quo to become a case of "old wine in new bottles".

## **The Necessity and Utility of a Gender Perspective in Conflicts and Disasters**

Philippa Nicholson

The impact of conflicts and natural disasters reaches all segments of a population. However, women and girls often experience these crises differently from men and boys. This differentiated impact (McAskie 2000) is due in large part to their different

socially constructed identities, roles and responsibilities. Differences in their experiences of conflict and disaster influence their needs and vulnerabilities during and following a crisis, the opportunities available to them, and the knowledge and ideas they may have to contribute in the response and recovery stages that follow.

Just as conflict and natural disaster are *gendered* crises, affecting men, women, boys and girls differently, the operations sent to respond to these crises must demonstrate a sound understanding of and sensitivity to these differences to be effective. Similarly, relevant policy-making, advocacy, research and training institutions must base their own respective efforts on a gender-sensitive understanding of the circumstances on the ground. As peace and stabilisation operations and disaster response have become more multidimensional and complex civil-military efforts, a gender perspective is increasingly recognized as a core requirement for all personnel involved, whether civilian, police or military, and a pre-condition for effective operations.

The mission of the Australian Civil-Military Centre is to 'support the development of national civil-military capabilities to prevent, prepare for and respond more effectively to conflicts and disasters overseas'. A gender perspective is a core civil-military capability and thus central to the Centre's mission. Framed by its core mission, the Centre has been tasked with contributing to the implementation of the *Australian National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security 2012–2018*, which was officially launched in March 2012. The National Action Plan provides a whole-of-government framework to guide the integration of a gender perspective across Australia's peace and security efforts (Government of Australia 2012). The Centre's contributions to the National Action Plan relate to a range of issues, in particular gender-based violence and wider protection matters, gender training of Australian civilian, military and police personnel, engagement with and support to Australian non-government organisations, and women's participation

This presentation aims to provide a broad overview of the gender dimensions that will confront civilian, police and military actors participating in conflict and disaster response and those organisations like the ACMC that work in the fields of training, education, research and doctrine. It also examines the practical benefits of applying a gender perspective in such work.

## **Securing the Citizen and the City: From Counter-terrorism to Community Resilience**

**Peter Rogers**

Since September 11, many cities have undergone significant changes in both morphology and management as a result of the greater perceived risk of terrorist attack. Such changes have often sought to territorialise the city through the redesign of space and the modernisation of management systems. More recently, such 'resilience' planning is becoming increasingly focused upon how the general public can assist this securitisation process by becoming better prepared and more responsible for their personal risk management. To illustrate these processes research conducted in the UK, between 1996 and 2010 will be used to indicate how these operational changes are having impacts on the rebordering of the city and

upon broader issues of citizenship. The paper also questions how greater public acceptability can be achieved within urban security strategies.