

1-1-2008

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Recommended Citation

Giannakos, Symeon, "Mercy and Human Security: Emerging Values in International Relations" (2008). *Mercy Illuminates* . Paper 6.
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**MERCY AND HUMAN SECURITY:
EMERGING VALUES IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**

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At the end of the Napoleonic Wars, in September 1815, in Paris, the monarchs of Austria, Prussia, and Russia signed the Holy Alliance. As a standard for regulating the relations between the sovereignties, the Alliance would provide “the precepts of the Holy Religion, namely the precepts of Justice, Christian Charity, and Peace, which, far from being applicable only to private concerns, must have an immediate influence on the councils of Princes, and guide all their steps...”¹ The treaty noted that “Conformably to the words of the Holy Scriptures, which, command all men to consider each other as brethren, the Three contracting Monarchs will remain united by the bonds of a true and indissoluble fraternity, and considering each other as fellow countrymen, they will, on all occasions and in places, lend each other aid and assistance.”² Although it was signed by nearly all European sovereignties, Lord Castlereagh, Britain’s Foreign Secretary, described it as a “piece of sublime mysticism and nonsense.”³ Subsequently in 1876, when Ottoman irregular forces smashed through Bulgaria razing entire villages to the ground and killing “between 12,000 and 30,000 Bulgarians,”⁴ British Prime Minister Disraeli, revoking considerations for maintaining the balance of power in Europe, decided against intervening on behalf of the Bulgarian peasants. Trying to change the balance of power in its favor, Russia did intervene. What really prevailed was not the concern for saving human lives but the concern to promote the interest of the state to the detriment of human lives. This attitude generally prevailed among statesmen in Europe until 1951, when France, West Germany, Italy and the Benelux countries signed the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC). By 1992, the EC became the European Union and according to its Web pages it “stands for a view of humanity and a model of society that the great majority of its citizens support. Europeans cherish their rich heritage of values, which includes a belief in human rights, social solidarity, free enterprise, a fair distribution of the fruits of economic

growth, the right to a protected environment, respect for cultural, linguistic and religious diversity and a harmonious blend of tradition and progress.”⁵ The EU is working to create a borderless entity and Bulgaria is one of its members. In a sense, the European Union can be considered the realization of the human aspirations of an Alliance which was once referred to as “nonsense.”

Aside from being reflected in the realities of the European Union, the concept of the Holy Alliance is also being reflected in such international institutions as the United Nations. Yet in 1994 in Rwanda, some 50,000 extremists went on a killing spree, murdering in cold blood some 800,000 Rwandans in a mere one hundred days. No help was given to the victims, apparently because it was not in the interest of states to intervene. Yet, four years later, some 105 states signed the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court which went into effect in January 2002. It notes that “few topics are of greater importance than the fight against impunity and the struggle for peace and justice and human rights in conflict situations in today’s world.”⁶

Based on the analysis so far, two points can be made. What seemed ridiculous in Europe in the early stages of the state system and what used to be the laughing stock of the statesmen at the time has now become a reality in the context of the European Union. For the rest of the world, however, certain concepts seem to be in the infancy of their practical application. Yet a moral start is always a good thing. This paper considers the concept of Mercy and Human Security as such a moral good start.

This paper will look at the recent development of the concept of human security, and go a step further by infusing in it the concept of mercy in an attempt to demonstrate its universal applicability. The concept of mercy has a rich tradition in all established faiths and cultures of the world, and can serve as a foundation for the concept of human security. A link that connects human security with mercy will attach an obligatory value to the acceptance and practical application of the concept of human security and make it more prevalent in the study of international relations. It can reinforce its strength and reduce resistance to viewing it as a “piece of sublime mysticism and nonsense.” Consistent with testimonies regarding the Holy Alliance above, international relations theory has been primarily concerned with national security as exemplified by the notion of state interest. The primary example of state interest has been considered to be

state survival, which dictates that statesmen are obligated to undertake any action (even immoral) deemed necessary to safeguard the national interest. The President of the United States, for example, swears to “preserve, protect, and defend the Constitution of the United States.” The defense of the constitution is clearly delineated by legal principles, but the moral parameters of what is permissible action in defense of the Constitution is determined by state interest. In this context, the altruistic behavior of statesmen has often been considered detrimental to the state.

There is a widespread assumption among political figures, authors, and activists in international relations that the end of the Cold War has caused a landmark change in the relations between states. This paper argues that far from being a cause for change, the end of the Cold War was in itself an effect of attitudinal changes, which can be primarily attributed to three general developments that reached a sufficiently critical mass to change attitudes in general: the first of these is the maturity of the state system in Europe. The second is the fear of nuclear weapons worldwide. And the third is the rapid acceleration of global communications. Taken together, these three factors exposed the artificiality of state borders as human creations rather than natural landmarks. In this context, it is only a matter of time before the realization that all states are artificial constructs will become a universal perception. It is in this context, then, that the concept of human security has emerged. The first major document to make explicit reference to it is the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) Human Development Report of 1994: *New Dimensions of Human Security*.⁷ It states that “Human security is a universal concern,” and that “it is relevant to people everywhere, in rich states and in poor states.” The report notes that human security “can be said to have two main aspects: It means, first, safety from such chronic threats as hunger, disease, and repression. And second, it means protection from sudden and hurtful disruptions in the pattern of daily life.”⁸

Although the UNDP argues that human security is a universal concern there is no consensus on what it means and there is disagreement on how to practice it. The same applies to a plethora of definitions that have emerged since 1994. Explicit in all of them is the notion that human security is about survival, livelihood, and individual integrity. At first glance, all three of these terms seem to be conventional aspirations of all people, but in order to comprehend their practical meaning, their universal

validity, and their precise relation to human security, it is necessary to reduce them to their bare essence. Reduction to their essential meaning should strip them from particular perceptions conditioned by specific geographic and historical circumstances and expose them to the scrutiny of universalism. For example, the meaning of livelihood and integrity can be perceived differently by people living in different economic environments while the meaning of survival can have a variety of dimensions attached to it based on how one conceptualizes reality and human existence.

Since there is no controversy about what a human being is, at least not any that can be considered scientifically credible, any universal definition of human security must focus on the word security and the common denominator by which each person on the planet relates to it consciously or otherwise. Etymologically, security is caring for one's own existence and needs. In this context, an infant depends on others to care for her or his existence and needs. But what does existence mean to people in general? Definite indications that a human being has become or is becoming aware of his or her physical existence is to be able to recognize one's reflection in a mirror or in still water, as Bambi did in the animated classic film of the same title. The realization of one's physical existence inevitably and unavoidably leads to the realization of the terminal limitations of all physical existence: that is death. Subsequently every human language has a word about being born, a word about being alive, and a word about dying. Subsequently all human beings come to wrestle with the question of where life comes from and where it leads. In this context every human being conceptualizes existence as physical and as spiritual or metaphysical (post-physical). Caring for one's existence then means two things: taking care of one's own physical existence, i.e., by satisfying the body's primary needs, and also taking care of one's own metaphysical needs or caring for one's own spiritual integrity.

Clearly, in at least the early stages of physical existence, humans depend exclusively on others to care for them, primarily for their physical existence. Child psychologists testify that the dependence of an infant on his/her care-giver (most likely the mother) is so great that it is actually perceived as a physical attachment (a quite logical assumption since a child's physical existence does begin as an extension of the mother's physical existence). Subsequently, dependence denotes the reality that one's physical existence is not possible without the caring qualities of another person's

physical existence. It should also be pointed out that in addition to the physical dependence indicated here, there is also an indirect dependence with the physical existences that the caretaker relies upon for his/her physical existence. As the child develops physically, she/he gradually becomes less dependent on the care giver until physical dependence eventually gives way to reliance in the same way that the care giver relied on others. The difference between dependence and reliance is that dependence denotes an immediate or urgent concern for physical existence while reliance denotes that physical existence is relatively assured in the short run. Where dependence is a condition corresponding to the primary needs of physical existence, reliance corresponds to the secondary needs of physical existence. Thus while the caretaker or the physical security provider (the mother in the example above) can potentially become a dependent himself or herself, they rely themselves for their physical existence on others. Dependence then means that one cannot take care of one's own primary needs, while reliance means that one's physical security is relatively assured and that the person can rely on others to satisfy secondary needs. This means that for the duration of physical existence one can never be independent or self-reliant. Indeed the dependence/reliance condition is the building block of all human associations which are manifestations of the value humans attach to physical existence. Without the human propensity to be security providers and without the human need to depend on others for security, physical existence is not possible.

Awareness of one's physical existence is unavoidably followed by the awareness that physical existence is finite and therefore terminal. Physical existence sooner or later is replaced by metaphysical existence, whether it is a conscious condition or not. One of the reasons why humans value physical existence is because of the unpredictability associated with metaphysical existence. At this point of the understanding of cosmology, humans understand neither the origins of life, nor its purpose; metaphysical existence remains a great unknown. The lack of knowledge about physical existence provides the incentive for people to rely on belief. Belief about physical existence is the unavoidable consequence of the realization of physical existence. Whereas humans depend/rely on others for physical existence, they depend/rely on belief for their metaphysical existence. All beliefs about metaphysical existence come under two categories: conscious and unconscious. Inevitably both conditions are perceived to be indefinite.

Also the fact that humans depend/rely on belief in relation to their concerns about metaphysical security is a universal reality that binds humans together. Just as all humans are connected through the experience of being born and being concerned for physical security, humans are also bound by the inevitable experience of dying. Thus depending/relying for their physical experience on others and being concerned for their metaphysical existence are common concerns that bind humans together.

Most fundamentally, since every individual depends and relies on others for physical existence, this relationship is directly related to the termination of physical existence and by extension to metaphysical existence. For example, the abrupt termination, for whatever reason, of reliance and dependence will unavoidably lead to death and metaphysical existence. To consciously terminate the dependence and reliance of a specific person is the same as affecting the end of that person's physical existence and initiating the same person's metaphysical existence. To avoid taking actions that might terminate a person's physical existence also affects the timing of a person's passing to metaphysical existence, while taking actions that sustain a specific person's physical existence until no longer possible is also affecting the experience of a person's passing into the condition of metaphysical existence. Either way, human action is entrancingly connected with the experiences that are common to humans. The connection can be either direct or indirect, but is always present. An example of a direct connection is the case of a person terminating or maintaining physical existence, while examples of indirect connection is the inventing or manufacturing/creating the instruments/conditions deployed in terminating or maintaining physical existence. Since all behavior is taking place in the context of associations produced by the human condition of dependence and reliance, all the members of the association are connected to all behavior taking place in the association. Also, since no association exists in isolation, then activity in any given association affects members of all other associations. All behavior impacts the dependence/reliance condition of all humans. This means that humans not only are connected by the experiences named above, but also with all the activity that impacts the universal experiences named above. As a result of the dependence/reliance condition, all humans are directly or indirectly connected to each other. The complete quality of the dependence/reliance condition makes up the entire world. In addition, since all human behavior

impacts the passing of humans from physical to metaphysical existence, current physical existence relates to all the future physical existence and to all metaphysical existence, both present and future. The awareness of this reality obligates people to be mindful of all of other peoples' existence and needs, causing people to demand that others be aware of their existence and needs.

Being mindful of other peoples' existence leads us to a definition of mercy. Fundamentally, the concept of mercy means to be concerned about all other peoples' concerns. This way, mercy is the link between all peoples' concerns related to their physical and metaphysical existence and the needs whose safeguarding leads to the safeguarding of all existence. Caring also presupposes not just being concerned for all peoples' existence but also becoming positively involved in caring for all peoples' existence and for existence in general. There are three characteristics of such concern: First, concern has to be based on sympathy, meaning that one places oneself in the position of others, especially in cases of physical or metaphysical security. Second, concern means that one has to become a shareholder in all other peoples' concerns. Becoming a shareholder means realizing that one has a vested interest in other peoples' concerns. Investing in existence in general is the foundation of all investments because there is no higher goal than that of existence. Finally, concern means empathy, which dictates that one has to balance all concerns including one's own and then prioritize them accordingly. Like the medical doctor who must care first for the neediest, empathy dictates that one should care for the primacy concerns before becoming concerned for secondary concerns. All primary concerns related to both physical and metaphysical security must be prior to secondary concerns related to the same. Not affecting negatively the existence of others, but especially not affecting the termination of physical existence directly or indirectly, comes before being concerned for needs and wants in general.

To relate the analysis back to the state and the way it is perceived in international relations, it is clear the human security and mercy dictate that states should be looked upon not as ends, but as a means to caring for all human concerns. Accordingly, the interest of the state should be dictated by a careful balance of all human concerns and by concerns for existence in general. Conceptualizing state interest in an unconcerned manner is hypocritical. Conceptualizing state interest in a partial manner, where some

primary concerns are recognized but not others, is contradictory and counterproductive. Physical and metaphysical existence requires that we neither pretend to live in artificially unconcerned vacuums nor that we claim to be caring or merciful when in fact we evade such practices.

NOTES

¹ Rene Albrecht-Carrie, *The Concert of Europe: 1815-1914* (New York, NY: Harper and Row, 1968), p. 33.

² Ibid.

³ Henry A. Kissinger, *A World Restored* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1973), p. 189.

⁴ Robert Gilden, *Barricades and Borders: Europe 1800-1914* (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 1987), p. 239.

⁵ Europa, "Why the European Union"

(http://europa.eu/abc/12lessons/lesson_1/index_en.htm) Accessed on July 22, 2008.

⁶ Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (http://www.icc-cpi.int/library/about/-officialjournal/Rome_Statute_English.pdf) Accessed on May 13, 2008.

⁷ UNDP Human Development Report 1994: *New Dimensions of Human Security* (New York: United Nations, 1994) <http://hdr.undp.org/en/reports/global/hdr1994/> Accessed May 13, 2008.

⁸ Ibid.