Human Security as Ontological Security: A Post-Western Approach?

Giorgio Shani
International Christian University, Japan
gshani@icu.ac.jp

Abstract

This paper will critically interrogate the emergence of Human Security as a response to the ontological insecurity wrought by the globalization of neo-liberalism. For Anthony Giddens to be 'ontologically secure is to possess, on the level of the unconscious and practical consciousness, "answers" to fundamental existential questions which all human life in some way addresses.'[1] Religion and nationalism provide 'answers' to these questions in times of rapid socio-economic and cultural change.[2] The dislocation engendered by successive waves of neo-liberal globalization has resulted in the deracination of many of the world's inhabitants resulting in a state of collective 'existential anxiety.'[3] Under such conditions of existential anxiety, the search for identity and community becomes paramount. However, secular conceptions- including 'critical' accounts- of Human Security as 'freedom from fear and want'[4] fail to take into account the importance of identity for security. It will be suggested that a 'post-secular' understanding of Human Security[5] may be better able to provide ontological security in times of rapid global transformation but only if it accounts for the centrality of religion to post-colonial subjectivity as a legacy of colonialism. The paper will then examine the implications for Post-Western IR theory.

Biosketch

Professor **Giorgio Shani** PhD (London) is Chair of Politics and International Relations and Director of the Rotary Peace Center at International Christian University, Tokyo. From 2016-2017, he was Visiting Senior Fellow at the Centre of International Studies at the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE). He is author of *Sikh Nationalism and Identity in a Global Age* (Routledge 2008) and *Religion, Identity and Human Security* (Routledge 2014). He has published widely in internationally reviewed journals including *International Studies Review*, *The Cambridge Review of International Affairs* and *Postcolonial Studies* (forthcoming). He is a series editor of *Critical Perspectives on Religion in International Politics* (Rowman and Littlefield International) and currently serving as President of the Asia-Pacific region of the International Studies Association. For more information see here: https://icu.academia.edu/GiorgioShani

Notes

[1] Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991, p 47.

[2] Catarina Kinvall, 'Globalization and Religious Nationalism: Self, Identity and the Search for Ontological Security,' *Political Psychology*, 25(5), 2004, pp 741-768.

[3] Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity*.

[4] Commission on Human Security (CHS), *Human Security Now,* New York: Oxford University Press, 2003

[5] Giorgio Shani, *Religion, Identity and Human Security*, London and New York: Routledge, 2014.