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Worker Safety and Human Security: the Case for Global Governance

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1. Security and "Securitization" in International Relations

The process commonly referred to as globalization has led to internal political issues being increasingly externalized and external political issues being increasingly internalized. Traditionally, domestic policy concerns like health and rights are more prominent than ever on the global political agenda and events occurring in other states, such as disasters or massacres, are more often than ever deemed to be of political significance for people not personally affected. In light of these changes, and the reduced prevalence of inter-state wars, it has become a matter of contention amongst theorists of International Relations whether Security Studies should maintain its traditional emphasis on military threats to the security of states or widen its focus. Traditionalists agree with Realist Walt that "security studies may be defined as the study of the threat, use and control of military force"[1]. Alternative perspectives, though, have argued increasingly that the discipline should either: i) extend its reach to include non-military threats to states (wideners) or, ii) go further and bring within its remit the security of individual people, not just states, in relation to a range of threats, both military and non-military (deepeners).

Wideners and deepeners of security contend that wars, international or internal, are not the only threats that face states, people and the world as a whole. Indeed, they never have been. Throughout history people have

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[1] S. Walt, *The Renaissance of Security Studies, International Studies Quarterly* 35, No. 22, 1991, 212.

been killed by things other than soldiers and weapons and states have been weakened or destroyed by things other than military conflict. Hence, with the overwhelming military shadow of the Cold War lifted, many "wideners" emerged in Security Studies literature in the 1990s. A seminal article by academic and State Department adviser Jessica Matthews in 1989 proved influential on the later US Clinton-Gore administration by highlighting the need for states to give proper concern to the newly-apparent threats posed by environmental problems such as ozone depletion and global warming[2]. Ayoob highlighted that internal rather than external threats were the principal security concerns of most Less Developed Countries (LDCs)[3]. Peterson and Sebenius made the same point with reference to the most developed and powerful state, the USA, positing that a crisis in education and a growing economic "underclass" should be understood as security threats[4]. Lynn-Jones and Miller addressed the need to give attention to a range of previously neglected internal and external threats such as virulent nationalism and the social impact of migration[5]. Although viewed as unwelcome by traditionalists, such as Walt, this widening of security did not undermine the Realist logic of conventional Security Studies. The focus was still on the state system and seeing relationships between states as governed by power. Widening was simply a case of extending the range of factors which affect state power beyond the confines of military and trade affairs.

1.1. The Deepening of Security

Going beyond widening the domain of Security Studies is the "deepening" approach led by Pluralists (Liberals), Critical Theorists and Social Constructivists in International Relations. Deepeners embrace the concept of "human security" and argue that the chief *referent object* of security should not be the state but the individual people of which these institutions / groups are comprised. The Pluralist Falk, for example,

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[2] J. Mathews, *Redefining Security*, *Foreign Affairs* 68, No. 2, 1989, 162-177.

[3] M. Ayoob, *Defining Security: a Subaltern Realist Perspective*, in K. Krause, M. Williams (eds.), *Critical Security Studies*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1997, 121-146.

[4] J. K. Peterson, P. G. Sebenius, *The Primacy of the Domestic Agenda*, in G. Allison, G. Treverton (eds.), *Rethinking America's Security: Beyond Cold War to New World Order*, W.W. Norton & Co., New York, 1992, 57-93.

[5] S. Lynn-Jones, S. Miller, *Global Dangers: Changing Dimensions of International Security*, MIT Press, Cambridge USA and London, 1995.

considers that security ought to be defined as "the negation of insecurity as it is *specifically* experienced by individuals and groups in concrete situations"[6]. This is a significant leap from widening which, as pointed out by Falk "still conceives of security largely from the heights of elite assessment, at best allowing the selected advisor to deliver a more enlightened message to the ear of the prince"[7]. The United Nations Development Programme became the best known advocate for adopting a human security approach in incorporating the concept in their annual reports from the early 1990s.

> The concept of security must change from an exclusive stress on national security to a much greater stress on people's security, from security through armaments to security through human development, from territorial to food, employment and environmental security[8].

Governments which have declared that their foreign policies are influenced by human security include those of Canada, Norway and Japan. The root of the problem with the traditional approaches to security politics is what Wyn-Jones, a Critical theorist, describes as the "fetishization of the state"[9]. This tendency in International Relations is not resolved by widened approaches which – whilst accepting the idea that non-military issues can be securitized – still tend to emphasize threats from the perspective of states and maintain the logic that only the state can be the *securitizing actor* (i.e. decide whether the issue is acted upon as a matter of urgency). Hence "statecentricism" is maintained, if in a subtler form. The practical limitation with this is that not only are the traditional security agents of the state (i.e. the army, externally and police, internally) often inadequate for dealing with security problems affecting the people of that state, they are often a chief cause of those problems.

Whilst the practical concern of traditionalists like Walt that widening the focus of Security Studies should not distract attention from military threats can be arguments that have some validity, given the post Cold War rise of certain military threats such as terrorism and the proliferation of

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[6] R. Falk, *On Humane Governance. Toward a New Global Politics*, Polity, Cambridge, 1995, 147.

[7] *Ibid.,* 146.

[8] UNDP, *Human Development Report,* 1993.

[9] R. Wyn-Jones, *Security, Strategy and Critical Theory*, Lynne Rienner, Boulder, USA, 1999.

nuclear weapons, the intellectual rationale for maintaining a narrower focus is weak. In a book taking a wider approach to security, Wirtz contends that "if the threat of force, the use of force or even the logistical or technical assistance that can be supplied by military units does little to respond to a given problem, it is probably best not to treat the specific issue as a security threat"[10]. He also scoffs at the idea that global warming should be construed as a security issue, maintaining that "It is not exactly clear […] how military forces can help reduce the build-up of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere"[11]. This view gives an indication of how blinkered the mainstream study of security can be. Defining an issue as one of security on the basis of whether or not it involves military forces strips the term of any real meaning. Security is a human condition. To define it purely in terms of state bodies whose aim is to help secure their state and people in a certain dimension, rather than the people whose security is at stake, is both odd and nonsensical. This way of framing what is and what is not a security issue is akin to saying that children being taught to read by their parents are not being educated or that happiness does not exist unless it is induced by the performances of state-sponsored clowns. A security issue, surely, is an issue which threatens (or appears to threaten) one's security. Defining a security issue in behavioural terms rather than excluding certain categories of threats because they do not fit conventional notions of what defines the subject area gives the term some objective meaning. If people, be they government ministers or private individuals, perceive an issue that threatens their lives in some way and respond politically to this then that issue should be deemed to be a *security* one.

It should be noted, though, that human security itself is a contested concept with more and less expansive versions now employed in both academic and political discourse. Wider human security is often characterized as combining "freedom from want" and "freedom from fear" (from the UNDP description of the concept) in that it considers any issue with direct or indirect life-threatening consequences for individuals to be a matter of security. Concerns among some advocates of and individual-focused approach to security that "existing definitions of

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[10] J. Wirtz, *A New Agenda for Security and Strategy?*, in G. Baylis, J. Wirtz, E. A. Cohen, C. S. Gray (eds.), *Strategy in the Contemporary World. An Introduction to Strategic Studies*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2002, 309-327, 312.
[11] J. Wirtz, *op cit.,* 311.

human security tend to be extraordinarily expansive and vague"[12] led them to favour a more restricted version merely based on "freedom from fear". This narrow version of human security concentrates on direct and deliberate violent threats, excluding less directly human-caused insecurity like diseases and disasters. The Canadian government has generally been supportive of such an approach in their advocacy of human security as a pragmatic determinant of when specific, concrete foreign policy actions – such as taking part in a humanitarian intervention or developing international human rights conventions – should be undertaken. In contrast, Japanese government's endorsement of human security has tended to be more in line with the expansive version as favoured by the UNDP. Certain fatalism might be noted in assuming that only direct and deliberate threats to life can be deemed worthy of security status. Such a restriction might make the concept easier to deal with but it does so by simply choosing to ignore the insecurities of most of the world's people even when the means of securing them are apparent.

Hence, by adopting the wide human security framework, the notion of security is recast as a social construct which strips away the need for the analyst to speculate on what *they think* is the most threatening of the myriad issues on the contemporary international political agenda and concentrate instead on analyzing how and why certain issues are actually perceived of as vital and responded to in an extraordinary way by decision-makers. The preoccupation of Security Studies with the state is very much a relic of the Cold War. In some ways this is understandable since the discipline of International Relations, and its sub-discipline Security Studies, only emerged in the 1930s and was thus very much forged in an era of unprecedented military threats. Realism was in the ascendancy at the close of the Second World War since the application of force had proved its worth in curbing aggression and restoring order in Europe and Asia. Pre-World War II international cooperation, in the form of the League of Nations, and "softly-softly" appeasement diplomacy vis-à-vis aggressors failed to keep the peace comprehensively. In addition, the total war of World War Two and the "total phoney war" of the Cold War, whereby whole populations were threatened by state quarrels in ways not seen before, bound individuals to the fates of their governments in an unprecedented fashion. The scale of the threat posed by nuclear war in the second half of the twentieth century served to weld the security of

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[12] R. Paris, *Human Security. Paradigm Shift or Hot Air?, International Security* 26, No. 2, 2001, 88.

individual people in the US and elsewhere to that of their governments. The state would assume the responsibility for protecting its citizens and demand their loyalty in return for a strengthened version of the "Social Contract" relationship articulated by political philosophers such as Hobbes and Locke from the seventeenth century. Hobbes' advocacy of the need for the *Leviathan* (meaning a strong state) to save individuals from the dangerous anarchy that would otherwise result from the pursuit of their own selfish interests was a major influence on the Realists. In the late twentieth century, anarchy was the international state system and the dangers came, to a greater extent than ever before, from other states. McSweeney observes that security over time had come to be defined in International Relations solely as an adjective rather than a noun, or as "a commodity rather than a relationship"[13]. The human part of the status had been lost and the term became synonymous with *Realpolitik*, the interest of the state. Military might and the application of the "national interest" can secure lives but can also, of course, imperil them. Additionally, human lives can be jeopardised by a range of issues other than military ones. A thorough application of security in the study of global politics must, surely, recognize this or else admit that it is a more limited field of enquiry, viz. "War Studies" or "Strategic Studies". The conceptualization of International Relations, like the conduct of International Relations, was very much frozen in time between 1945 and 1990.

The meaning of "security" is not just an arcane matter of academic semantics. The term carries significant weight in "real world" political affairs since threats to the security of states have to be a priority for governments and threats to the lives of people are increasingly accepted as more important than other matters of contention. It is clear that designating an issue as a matter of security is not just a theoretical question but bears "real world" significance. The traditional, Realist way of framing security presupposes that military issues – and certain economic questions for Neo-realists – are security matters and as such must be prioritized by governments above other "low politics" ones, such as worker safety, important though these might be. For human security advocates, this is demonstrably outdated and out of step with people's real insecurities.

Deaths in accidents and disasters far outstrip political and criminal killings combined (see Table No. 1). Taken in isolation, the 321,000 deaths at

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[13] B. McSweeney, *Security, Identity and Interests. A Sociology of International Relations*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1999, 15.

work in 2008 represent nearly twice the fatalities in war, terrorism and all other forms of political violence. Why, then, are the insecurities of these victims not considered the remit of international relations?

Table No. 1 – Global Causes of Death in 2008.

Cause	Number of Deaths
Disease / ill-health	52.25 million
Disasters / accidents	3.63 million
Suicide	0.78 million
Criminal violence	0.54 million
War / political violence	0.18 million

Source: WHO, Global Burden of Disease 2008, World Health Organization, Geneva, 2011.

2. Workplace Accidents and International Security Politics

Despite the death toll, man-made accidents – in their various forms – are least frequently thought of, and hence acted upon, as matters of security. Natural disasters, crime, disease and environmental changes have come increasingly to "enjoy" being dealt with as matters of security but this has rarely been the case for accidents, including occupational ones. The absence of explicitly threatening causal factors, be they non-human or human with "malice aforethought", has led to accidents being, to a certain extent, accepted as "one of those things" and safety from them not becoming securitized in the same way as other causes of harm. Most accidents, though, are wholly unnatural and rooted in contemporary human societal practises that are becoming more widespread throughout the world. As such "technological" and "traditional" accidents are actually no more unavoidable than other social systemic problems like war and crime. In particular, accidents have underlying socio-economic causes inextricably linked to the global politico-economic system.

Most clearly associated with modern living is industrialization, which is itself related to far more hazardous forms of employment and production than pre-industrial economic activity. Table No. 2 illustrates that, like structural disasters, major industrial disasters can be prevented. Most of the disasters listed occurred in countries in the early stages of industrialization and economic development.

Table No. 2 – The World's Worst Industrial Disasters

	Place	Date	Type	No. killed
1	Bhopal, India	1984	Chemical leak	2,500
2	Hineiko, China	1942	Mining disaster (explosion)	1,549
3	Courriereres, France	1906	Mining disaster (explosion)	1,099
4	Jesse, Nigeria	1998	Oil pipeline fire	1,082
5	Chelyabinsk, USSR	1989	Gas pipeline explosion	607
6	Oppau, Germany	1921	Chemical plant explosion	600
7	Texas, USA	1947	Ship carrying fertilizer exploded in port	561
8	Cubatao, Brazil	1984	Petroleum plant fire	508
9	Lagunillas, Venezuela	1939	Oil refinery fire	500
10	Mexico City	1984	Petroleum gas plant explosion	452

Sources: CRED (2011)[14]. Disasters instigated by natural phenomena, military strikes, or military accidents are not counted towards.

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[14] CRED, *International Disaster Database*, Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters, Brussels, 2011. http://www.emdat.be/ (Last accessed 20 September 2011)

The world's worst ever industrial accident occurred at Bhopal, India, on 3 December 1984. During the production of the pesticide *Carbaryl* the plant, run by the US-based multi-national corporation *Union Carbide*, accidentally released 40 tonnes of the highly-toxic chemical methyl-isocyanine (MIC) used in the production process. At least 2,500 people living nearby the plant were killed and around 180,000 other people have since suffered from a range of long-term health effects and birth defects. As an intermediate chemical, MIC did not feature on the world's foremost safety inventory of the time, UNEP's International Register of Potentially Toxic Chemicals, and Indian authorities were unaware that it was being stored. Investigations also proved that safety standards on the plant were weak and that previous fatal accidents had occurred.

According to Dudley, at a 1986 "Chemistry After Bhopal" conference organized by the chemical industry, a spokesman compared the disaster to the sinking of the Titanic[15]. In the same way as the world's most infamous transport disaster prompted an evaluation of safety standards but not the abolition of passenger sea travel, industrial chemical production should not be restricted on the back of one major disaster, it was claimed. Whether Bhopal was a freakish one-off, however, is disputed. The disaster prompted a rise in Pressure Group activity and academic research into chemical safety in the developing world which suggested a reversal of the Titanic analogy was more appropriate. Rather, Bhopal represented the tip of the iceberg with many less visible disasters lying submerged from public and political view. Twenty years on from Bhopal, the International Labour Organization (ILO) suggested that the Indian government had reported 231 work-related fatal accidents when the true figure was nearer 40,000[16].

Whereas disasters in LDCs can escape public glare and political response, far less deadly accidents can produce significant responses when they occur in the developed world. The 1976 leak at a chemical plant in the Milan suburb of Seveso was a watershed for European chemical safety legislation and its impact continues to resonate despite claiming only one immediate casualty. A cloud of Trichlorophenol (TCP) and dioxin TCDD formed around the plant as a result of the leak, although no acknowledgement of this was made to nearby villages for four days. Within three weeks animals and crops had died, thirty people were hospitalized and one person had died whilst, long-term, a significant

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[15] N. Dudley, *This Poisoned Earth. The Truth About Pesticides,* Platkus, London, 1987.
[16] ILO *World Day for Safety and Health at Work A Background Paper,* International Labour Organization, Geneva, 2005.

increase in birth defects was recorded[17]. The disaster had profound political effects. The plant was owned by a Swiss company, prompting fears that they had exploited laxer safety standards in Italy. Directive 82/501/EEC – the so-called Seveso Directive – was drafted by the European Community, tightening safety standards and making it mandatory to notify local populations of any such accident. A similar shock to the European system occurred in 2010 when a spill of caustic waste at an alumina plant at Ajka, Hungary led to toxic chemicals burning 9 people to death and turning a stretch of the Danube across several countries red, making graphically apparent the physical and political interconnectedness of the EU.

The two most significant nuclear accidents of the 20th century occurred in the two superpowers of that age, the unprecedented international political influence of which was built on that very power source. In 1979, a technical malfunction at the Three Mile Island nuclear power plant in Pennsylvania, caused a release of radioactive gas from one of the reactors. There were no confirmed casualties from this accident but it attracted huge publicity which was seized upon by anti-nuclear protestors and no new nuclear power plants have been built in the USA since. The 1986 Chernobyl disaster in the former USSR was the worst nuclear power plant disaster ever and, in line with the added "fear factor" associated with this form of energy production, stands as the most notorious industrial disaster to date. Lax safety standards are generally held as the key reasons for the explosion and fire which destroyed one of the plant's four power reactors and released huge amounts of solid and gaseous radioactive material into the surrounding area. Thirty-two plant and emergency staff were killed in the immediate aftermath of the explosion and in the following weeks some of this material was deposited over a large swathe of Northern Europe, prompting an unknown number of long term deaths. In 2011, nuclear safety was again put in the spotlight with the disaster of the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power station, prompted by the devastating tsunami that struck Japan. Three workers were killed and thousands of residents moved out of the region and, whilst levels of public radiation exposure were officially reported as not being dangerous, many fear that significant health defects will come to emerge in the future. As with transport disasters and most human security threats, however, large scale and/or high-profile disasters represent only a small, highly

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[17] F. Pocchiari, V. Silaro, G. Zapponi, *The Seveso Accident and its Aftermath*, Springer-Verlag, Berlin, Heidelberg, New York, 1987.

visible, fraction of the full picture. The vast majority of accidents in the workplace are individual or small scale. The International Labour Organization (ILO) estimated that around one third of a million people a year in the world are killed in occupational accidents (including traffic accidents whilst working). If deaths when commuting to or from work and illness caused at work are included, the figure rises to over 1.2 million[18].

3. The Collateral Damage of Industrialization? The Rise of Accidental Threats

Deaths by accident are very much a feature of the modern world. There have, of course, always been accidental deaths but this form of threat to human life is closely associated with technological development and has risen in accord with industrialization and the onset of modernity. In fact, it is possible to argue that accidents, in terms of their perception as such, did not exist for most of human history. The pre-industrial advance of science was significant in providing a means for comprehending unfortunate acts as something that could be explained and hence avoided. Green argues that "Before 1650, an accident was merely a happening or an event, and there appears to have been no space in European discourse for the concept of an event that was neither motivated nor predictable"[19]. Today, people die in a variety of non-technological accidents, such as drowning, but most fatal accidents are an unfortunate by-product of technological development. Health and safety legislation in developed countries has succeeded in reducing the potential hazards associated with transport, industrial production and the use of public buildings but, concurrently, people continue to travel more than ever and the industrial production and transportation of potentially hazardous substances continue to increase.

Smith posits that 1984 was a watershed year for technological disasters[20]. Table No. 2 confirms this. As well the Bhopal disaster, that year also saw

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[18] ILO *Introductory Report: Global Trends and Challenges on Occupational Safety and Health at Work*, XIX World Congress on Safety and Health at Work, Istanbul 11-15 September 2011, 155-187.

[19] J. Green, *Risk and Misfortune. The Social Construction of Accidents*, UCL Press, London, 1997, 196.

[20] K. Smith, *Environmental Hazards. Assessing Risk and Reducing Disaster*, Routledge, London and New York, 2001, 322.

a petroleum fire in Cubatao, Brazil which killed 508 people and a petroleum gas explosion in Mexico City which took away 540 lives. In total, more people were killed in major incidents this year than in all technological disasters of the previous forty years. In particular, the three prominent disasters were in LDCs avidly pursuing industrial development. This served to demonstrate that, as with natural disasters, there was a socio-economic dimension with industrial accidents, too. The vast majority of such deaths prior to 1984 had been attributable to small scale accidents in the developed world, giving credence to the notion that these were an unfortunate but inevitable form of collateral damage offset by the overall social gains resulting from sustained economic growth and mass consumerism. The scale of the problem in industrializing LDCs or "emerging markets" now far outstrips that in the Global North. Between 1998 and 2001, in contrast to stable or falling figures in the developed world, work fatalities in China rose from 73,500 to 90,500 and in Latin America from 29,500 to 39,500[21].

The 1984 disasters also illustrated that technological accidents had become an international political economy issue in another dimension. It was evident from investigation that safety standards at the Union Carbide's Bhopal plant were far more lax than at their home plant in West Virginia. The disaster gave ammunition to Pressure groups and commentators concerned that globalization was a case of "race to the bottom" in that MNCs would escape domestic safety constraints and seek out low-wage, low-safety sites for their operations.

An added trans-boundary and global dimension to workplace accidents comes from the disproportionate number of victims from migrant labourers. For example, whilst confirmed figures are not available, reports have suggested a shocking death toll in the United Arab Emirates, a country with the highest proportion of migrant workers in the world. It has been suggested that two construction workers per week die in Abu Dhabi and that 880 Indian and Pakistani's working on Dubai's rapidly emerging skyline were killed on the job in 2004[22]. Even in the country with what are regularly suggested to be the world's highest living standards and one of the most liberal immigration policies, Norway,

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[21] ILO/WHO, *World Day for Safety and Health at Work A Background Paper,* International Labour Organization, Geneva, 2005.
[22] S. Sonmez, J. Apostopoulos, D. Tran, S. Dentrope, *Human Rights and Health Disparities for Migrant Workers, Health and Human Rights* 13, No. 2, 2011.

migrant workers are nearly three times as likely to suffer an accident at work than the working population as a whole[23].

4. International Policy on Accidents

In the 1996 volume *The Long Road to Recovery: Community Responses to Industrial Disaster*, which was the culmination of a four year United Nations University project investigating a number of disasters, James Mitchell argued that "it is difficult to argue that there has been much progress in converting these surprises into routing hazards"[24]. Among the chief policy recommendations of the book is for an international clearing house of industrial hazard information to be established to improve the learning process[25]. This is a particularly dismal conclusion since such a proposal has been on the global political agenda since the 1920s when debated by the International Labour Organization (ILO).

4.1. The ILO and Industrial Accidents

The ILO was founded in 1919 as part of the League of Nations system, absorbing the work of the International Association for Labour Legislation which had been set up in 1901. The ILO's 1929 *Prevention of Industrial Accidents Recommendation (R31)* incorporated a resolution of the previous year's International Labour Conference (ILC) that information be collated systematically on accidents and their causes. Numerous ILO Conventions dealing with worker safety have been drafted and concluded in the proceeding decades, culminating in the 1993 Prevention of Major Industrial Accidents Convention (C174). Amongst the key requirements placed on ratifying states of this Convention are:
a) Article 4: the formulation, through consultation with stakeholders, of state safety policies.

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[23] B. Langeland, *Work Related Accidents and Risks Among Migrant Workers,* European Working Conditions Observatory, Norway, 2009. www.eurofound.europa.eu, (Last accessed 11 August 12)

[24] J. Mitchell, *The Long Road to Recovery: Community Responses to Industrial Disaster*, United Nations University Press, Tokyo, 1996, 274.

[25] *Ibid.*

b) Article 16: the dissemination of information on safety measures on how to deal with an accident and prompt warning in the event of an accident.

c) Article 17: locating hazardous installations away from residential areas.

d) Article 22: ensuring the prior informed consent of importing authorities before exporting substances or technologies to other states prohibited for safety reasons in your own state.

These provisions are in accord with received wisdom on industrial safety and domestic legislation of most industrialized countries, but many are ambiguous and the Convention, as a whole, is surprisingly short for a legal document on such a broad, technical issue. A further limitation comes from the fact that the agreement also specifies that the provisions do not apply to the nuclear industry, to military installations or to off-site transportation (except pipelines). Despite all of this, nineteen years after the Convention had been signed, only sixteen countries had ratified it (it entered into force in 1997 after the second ratification)[26]. This is, in part, due to the snail's pace of international legislation but it can also be seen that most governments do not take much interest in international safety policy. The ratification rate for older ILO safety conventions is little better. The 1985 Occupational Health Services Convention (C161), which requires that a state's occupational health services advise employers and workers on safety, had been ratified by only 30 of the ILO's 185 Member States as for 2012. This is particularly telling since, whilst many developed states can cite the fact that they have more thorough domestic legislation as a basis for not ratifying the Accidents Convention, the ILO consider that few non-ratifying countries to C161 do have equivalent existing laws[27].

In order to increase the ratification rates and the general awareness of occupational hazards, in 1999 the ILO launched the "In Focus Programmes on Safety and Health at Work and the Environment" – known as SafeWork – headed by Takala. SafeWork is unequivocal in its belief that injuries and deaths are not an inevitable side-effect of modern work. "If all ILO Member States used the best accident prevention

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[26] Ratifying States are: Sweden (1994), Armenia (1996), The Netherlands (1997), Colombia (1997), Estonia (2000), Brazil (2001), Saudi Arabia (2001), Albania (2003), Zimbabwe (2003), Belgium (2004), Lebanon (2005), India (2008), Luxembourg (2008), Bosnia-Herzegovina (2010), Slovenia (2010), Ukraine (2011).

[27] J. Takala *Introductory Report of the International Labour Office*, XV World Congress on Occupational Safety and Health, April 12-16, 1999, 4.

strategies and practices that are already in place and easily available, some 300,000 deaths (out of the total of 360,000) […] could be prevented"[28].

4.2. Chemical Safety Policy

The obvious hazard inherent in trading chemicals across borders has prompted the most extensive of all global regimes in the industrial safety sphere. Two similar regimes, developed in the 1980s and implemented in the 1990s around the principle of "Prior Informed Consent", bear testimony to Beck's assertion in support of his Risk Society thesis that; "In contrast to material poverty […] the pauperization of the Third World through hazard is contagious for the wealthy".[29] The 1998 Rotterdam Convention[30] and 1989 Basle Convention initiated effective international regulatory systems compelling the exporters of, respectively, chemicals or hazardous waste to notify state authorities in the importing country if the material is restricted in the country of origin. These agreements provide some safeguards against the exploitative dumping of dangerous materials in countries poorly equipped to deal with them but also help wealthy countries feel surer that such dangerous substances will not revisit them in foodstuffs or pollution in the "circle of poison" effect.

Global regulation with regards to the use and production of, rather than trade in, hazardous chemicals is predictably less rigorous but has developed over time. The WHO have had a role in developing international labelling guidelines for pesticides since 1953[31]. A plethora of international standards in this area were brought together in 2002 under the Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals (GHS) co-managed by three IGOs. The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) is in charge of managing the development of health and environmental hazard information for developing a classification scheme. It has set up an expert advisory group towards this end. The United Nations Committee of Experts on the Transportation of Dangerous Goods (UNCEDTDG) has the task of

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[28] J. Takala, *Introductory Report: Decent Work. Safe Work*, XVI World Congress on Safety and Health at Work, Vienna, 27 May 2002, 6.

[29] U. Beck, *Risk Society. Towards a New Modernity* Sage, London, New Delhi, Thousand Oaks USA, 1992, 44.

[30] *The Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Pesticides and Chemicals in International Trade.*

[31] P. Hough, *The Global Politics of Pesticides*, Earthscan, London, 1998, 55-57.

determining criteria for classifying the physical hazards of chemicals (for example their flammability). The ILO has assumed responsibility for the overall coordination of the system, acting as its secretariat, and has also set up a working group containing governmental and worker representatives charged with the task of producing the means for communicating the classification scheme. As well as labelling standards, this will include data sheets for workers involved in chemical transport and guidance information for governments on how to implement the scheme. The system began the process of ratification in 2003 and by 2011 had been implemented by 67 States. It should be noted, though, that harmonized global standards are becoming more popular for they can facilitate trade by levelling the "playing field" and enhance human security.

The Seveso disaster was the catalyst for a series of EC initiatives on industrial safety culminating in the creation of the EU Major Accident Reporting System (MARS) which was fleshed out in the "Seveso II" Directive of 1996 (96/82/EC). MARS is an extensive database of accidents administered by the Major Accidents Hazards Bureau within the European Commission's Joint Research Centre in Ispra, Italy. MARS has proved so effective that it has fostered cooperation well beyond the EU's borders in what could be considered an instance of "spillover-spillover". The OECD utilizes the system to facilitate information exchange on chemical spills and the UN's Economic Commission for Europe (UN/ECE) use it as the main point of a regime based on their Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents. The UN/ECE Convention, which came into force in 2000, links the EU states with other European states including Russia and features a notification system whereby the parties commit themselves to giving full and prompt information to neighbouring countries in the event of an accident.

4.3. Nuclear Power Policy

As has been demonstrated, safety standards for the production of nuclear energy and the transportation of its constituent elements and by-products tend not to be included in general international policy on accident prevention. Instead, the responsibility for this lies with the International Atomic Energy Authority (IAEA), an IGO set up by the UN in 1957 to coordinate policy on both military and civilian use of nuclear power. The IAEA has an International Nuclear Safety Advisory Group which has coordinated the establishment of a range of "Safety Principles" and a "Codes of Practice on the International Transboundary Movement of

Radioactive Waste". Prompted by the Chernobyl disaster and the end of Cold War secrecy, the IAEA codified their most extensive legal instrument to date in the 1990s with the Convention on Nuclear Safety, which came into force in 1996. The Convention covers a range of issues including the sighting and construction of power plants and emergency-preparation. However, despite the implied strengthening of IAEA standards with the use of the term "convention" in place of "principles" and "codes of practice", this is not a robust piece of legislation. In the IAEA's own words: "The Convention is an incentive instrument. It is not designed to ensure fulfilment of obligations by parties through control and sanction"[32].

The high perception of risk attached to the production of nuclear power has made this a contentious issue of domestic politics in many countries but has also promoted a most literal form of spillover, inducing political cooperation between states. The Chernobyl disaster, more than Soviet-Western rapprochement, was the spur for the EC to launch the TACIS programme (Technical Assistance to the Commonwealth of Independent States) in 1991 which grants benefits to the successor states of the Soviet Union and has a strong focus on the modernization of the nuclear industry.

On the other side of the coin, concerns over the potential risk of nuclear accidents in other countries has also served to sour relations between closely integrated countries. Chernobyl was also a key factor in instigating independence movements in Ukraine, where the plant was based, and in nearby Belarus. In both of these Slavic Soviet Socialist Republics anti-Russian nationalism was less of a spur for secession than the feeling of being treated as the USSR's industrial wasteland. Hence many of the Ukraine's large Russian minority voted for independence and Belarus has sought to maintain as strong as possible links with Russia since gaining independence.

Further west, the desire of former USSR satellite states to integrate themselves into the European Union's integration project has brought nuclear safety questions to the fore. The Austrian government, backed by public opinion, threatened to veto the Czech Republic's accession to the EU unless it halted the development of its Temelin nuclear power station located near the Austrian border. The EU, satisfied by an International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) review in 2001 and a 2000 Austro-Czech

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[32] IAEA, Convention on Nuclear Safety, 2012. www-ns.iaea.org, (Last accessed 13 June 2012).

bilateral agreement on safety (The Melk Protocol), did not make closing the new plant a condition of membership but the issue remained contentious in Austrian civil society and party politics. in 2002, the EU called upon Lithuania to close its Soviet built nuclear plant, Ignalina, as a condition of membership, and in doing so agreed to provide substantial aid to assist in the project and compensate for the funding of alternative sources of energy production.

Even within the established ranks of the EU government policies on nuclear power differ substantially and cause friction amongst the most integrated states on Earth. The avowedly non-nuclear Republic of Ireland's government has long complained about the UK's Sellafield nuclear power station, located on the Irish Sea coast and in 2001 attempted to take legal action against the expansion of the plant. The case was dismissed by the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea but the issue continued to be a source of diplomatic tension between the two states. Similarly, the Finnish government's declaration of its plans to expand its reliance on nuclear power in 2002 drew criticism from a number of its fellow EU member states, many of whom had begun to phase out this source of energy production. The 2011 Fukushima leak caused a backlash against nuclear energy just as its stock was rising due to its relative attractiveness vis-à-vis is fossil fuels in terms of mitigating climate change. Japan and Germany were at the forefront of countries reversing future reliance on nuclear power.

5. Conclusion

Accidents are the most atypical of global security concerns and yet represent a much bigger threat to most people's lives than those most typical of security concerns, that is war and terrorism. Most of you reading this are hundreds of times more likely to die in an accident than be killed by a soldier or terrorist. Security "wideners" and even some human security advocates, whilst acknowledging that diseases, crime, environmental change and natural disasters can sometimes be matters of security, are reluctant to grant this status to accidents and man-made disasters. This reluctance seems to boil down to three objections: i) There is no military or power politics dimension; ii) They are not deliberate "attacks" on countries or people; iii) This is a domestic and not international political concern.

Security wideners ignore accidents because there is no real scope for sending in troops to fight anyone or help clear up in the aftermath.

However, such a line of argument makes sense only on the assumption that security is a synonym for "involves the military" rather than a description of what one is striving to provide for his/her own people in political life. A further barrier to the "securitization" of disasters for some is the absence of direct and deliberate human causation. Even MacFarlane and Foong Khong, whilst purporting to advocate human security, opine that disasters and accidents; "fail the 'organized harm' test tsunami waves, traffic accidents, the spread of viruses and crop failure are usually not organized by individuals to do their victims in"[33]. For most human security advocates, though, there is certain fatalism in assuming that only direct and deliberate threats to life can be deemed worthy of security status. Securing people against such accidents is, again, a political task accepted by industrialized governments from as far back as the late nineteenth century when "social security" policies began to evolve in response to changing economic and social conditions. Accidents, hence, are actually no more unavoidable than other social systemic problems like war and crime and people can be secured against them, at least to some degree. The human agency argument is flawed on two levels. Firstly, there is human agency in most accidents. Human failings, whether at the state, corporate or individual level, account for most accidents and, hence, can be addressed in political actions. Secondly, must we deduce from this line of reasoning that anyone threatened or killed indirectly is not insecure? Are the "collateral killings" of war or insurgency then not military or terrorist victims? Securing people against accidents has long been recognized as a task of responsible democratic government and, whilst that remains, there is compelling logic that globalization has now shifted some responsibilities to a wider level.

The notion that worker safety is a purely domestic concern is difficult to sustain in the face of globalization on either an ethical or functional argument. If there is a "responsibility to protect" those imperilled by political violence, why should there not be for those imperilled by their government's or host government's political negligence? Indeed, it could be argued that the international community should feel a greater sense of responsibility when it comes to industrial accidents since they are more functionally connected to these events in enjoying the fruits of this hard labour. The contemporary death of Chinese miners or Indian construction workers recruited to build skyscrapers for global finance firms and hotels

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[33] N. MacFarlane, Y. Foong Khong, *Human Security and the UN. A Critical History*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, US, 2006, 275.

in the Gulf States should trouble Western consumers and governments as much as notorious domestic disasters did in the nineteenth and twentieth century.

This shift, though, has a long way to go. Global standards on the safety aspects of business and employment are limp when set against comparable standards for facilitating the trade in the devising of this process. The ILO and the IAEA do not have the same sort of authority in compelling states to protect workers and citizens living near industrial areas that the World Trade Organization has in compelling them to allow goods into their countries. Hence we see one reason why many political activists have come to view economic globalization as a dangerous exercise in unfettered liberalism, guided only by the profit motives of the global North. It is indeed telling that, whereas the idea of freeing up the movement of products, services and money is well established as a global norm, the notion of a free movement of the workers producing such common goods is barely conceivable. As Davergne says of accidents; the "global jury of states is assigning no blame, no ethical responsibility, dismissing these deaths as mere accidents in the quest for global prosperity"[34].

However, "unfettered liberalism" is not the political system which has emerged from the political evolution of states which have industrialized and modernized and there is no reason to believe that it will be for the global polity. The industrialization of Western European and North American states prompted the emergence of policies to protect those put at risk by these social changes based both on compassion and pragmatism. An ideological consensus emerged in the late nineteenth century in support of the notion of "state welfarism" (dependence on the state). The dangers associated with industrial employment and the economic uncertainties of trade prompted the emergence of interventionist Liberalism in place of its previous unfettered free-market version, paternal Conservatism and the birth of Socialism. The development of welfare systems in Western Europe, and to a lesser extent in the USA, arose from a blend of altruistic human security concerns and internal state security. Germany, under the arch-Conservative Bismarck, pioneered the idea of state protection for workers prompted mainly by the pragmatic realism that reform from above was the best means of prevent revolution from below. Bismarck's aim was not so much human security as state security;

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[34] P. Dauvergne, *Dying of Consumption: Accidents or Sacrifices of Global Morality, Global Environmental Politics* 5, No. 3, 2005, 44.

maintaining the unity of his newly-formed country which was witnessing some of the earliest manifestations of Socialist thought.

In addition, the precedent for freeing up trade between countries on a regional scale is that a levelling of an uneven playing field is a necessary precursor to achieving this. The issue may not arise for countries of a similar level of economic development, like the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) or the European Economic Community in its early years. The logic of spillover later dictated, however, that the EC embraces a social dimension alongside the "Single Market" when it took on board the relatively poor states of Ireland, Portugal, Spain and Greece. States with poor safety standards are either giving themselves an unfair competitive advantage (from an economic perspective) or being exploited (from a social perspective). Hence, even the North American Free Trade Association (NAFTA), set up very much on an economic rationale without the idealism of the European integration project, drew on the start the "North American Agreement on Labor Cooperation" (NAALC). NAALC, centred on an industrial dispute resolution mechanism incorporating occupational safety, came into force alongside the main NAFTA agreement in 1994 to overcome the problem of Mexico's comparative advantage / disadvantage compared to its wealthier partners in the North.

With the inexorable rise of a coherent global economic system, global society is now, albeit slowly, awakening to this need for worker safety standards. Incidents of workers or residents near industrial plants in LDCs being killed are no longer unfortunate problems unconnected with the relatively safe lives of people in the global North. Developed world consumers are functionally connected to these systemic failures as never before and increasingly aware of this fact. The rise in the global North of "fair trade" products, in which the consumer pays a premium for goods imported from developing countries on the premise that the workers have not been exploited, and the "anti-globalization" social movement bears testimony to this fact. What is needed, though, is not the abandonment of globalization but a more rounded notion of globalization which balances profits with responsibilities as is broadly the norm in most developed democracies.

Such changes are slowly occurring. As with most of the areas of security, the globalization of democracy and human rights offers hope for improving personal safety from accidents since more and more people are able to demand action from their governments. Studies have shown, for example, that the unionization of work forces increases human security in that countries, such as China, without independent trade unions tend to

have higher numbers of accidents[35]. In addition, recent evidence points towards the development of a "union effect" on safety at the global level. In 1997, the work initiated by the WTO towards establishing ISO (International Organization for Standardization) standards for health and safety management, alongside other "technical standards" by which to harmonize the global trading environment, was abandoned in the face of intensive global lobbying led by the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU). The ICFTU campaigned, principally over the internet, for global standard setting to be informed more by human safety than an economic rationale and so be coordinated by the ILO with its Union affiliations. Evidence is now beginning to emerge of a globalization of a safety culture. Whilst progress has been limited on the C174 and C161 conventions, ratifications for subsequent ILO conventions on occupational safety and health (OSH) have notably improved since most countries committed themselves to a "national preventative safety and health culture" and the notion of a "right to a safe and healthy working environment" at the Seoul Declaration on Safety and Health at Work[36]. International guidance has been disseminated more effectively in a networking of the "good safety is good business" message. As evidence of the progress, the number of global work fatalities has reduced in recent years. Having risen from just under to just over 320,000 per year from the late 1990s to early 2000s, the figure recorded for 2008 was 320,580. Securing people at work, at home, travelling or at leisure is for governments and societies, though, more than charity or even duty. A more secure and health workforce and society is more productive and contented. 4% of global GDP is estimated to be lost to accidents and around this amount was trimmed off the Japanese GDP by the single Fukushima disaster[37]. As industrialized European states came to realize from the nineteenth century, exploiting workers and short-changing citizens is only profitable as long as such people can be shown that there are alternatives. Disillusioned and angry workers have been a factor in nearly all revolutions. Health and safety is the dull stuff of politics and business but it is, nonetheless, "life and death" both for members of

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[35] A. Abrams, *A Short History of Occupational Health*, *Journal of Public Health Policy* 22, No. 1, 2001, 34-80. A. Cheng, *Fatal Accidents Fall Slightly on Roads, at Work*, *South China Morning Post*, 17 April 2003 www.china-labour.org.hk (Last accessed 5 June 2003).

[36] ILO*, Introductory Report: Global Trends and Challenges on Occupational Safety and Health at Work*, XIX World Congress on Safety and Health at Work, Istanbul, 11-15 September 2011, 155-187.
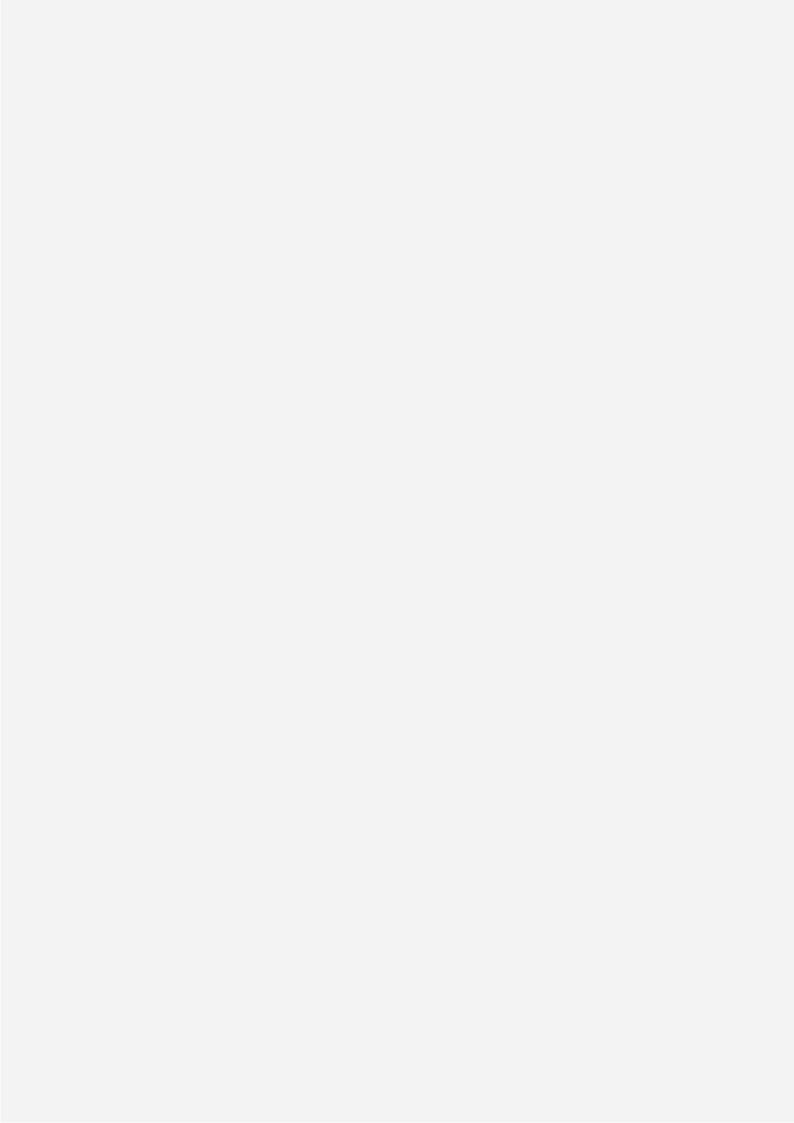
[37] *Ibid.*

society and for governments and long recognized as such in industrialized democracies.

Such evidence of progress cannot disguise the fact that the WTO far outstrips the ILO in global influence but indicates that globalization is not entirely driven by corporate profit and that a future, more evolved form of the process may see a world in which human security is enhanced alongside the spoils of increased trade. Apart from the occasional high-profile disaster, like those at Bhopal or Fukushima, the victims of workplace accidents do not trouble our consciences or enter into the calculations of government's international political priorities.

If the daily global casualty rate at work would be concentrated in one place, it would be all over the first pages of the world's newspapers[38].

The growing global discourse of human security can help in the battle to redress the currently skewed governmental and intergovernmental priorities. Human security can shine a light on the dark side of globalization and be the basis for a better, fairer kind of global governance in which workers as well as consumers are appropriately rewarded and secured. History shows us that this is a natural development and ultimately beneficial to all sides. It gives expression to the plight of most insecure and neglected people, individual vulnerable workers.

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[38] K. Tapiola, ILO, 2005.