Human security and the rise of the social

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Abstract. As the concept of human security has become part of the mainstream discourse of international politics it should be no surprise that both realist and critical approaches to international theory have found the agenda wanting. This article seeks to go beyond both the realist and biopolitical critiques by situating all three – political realism, biopolitics and human security – within the history and theory of the modern *rise of the social* realm from late eighteenth and nineteenth century Europe. Human security is the further expansion of *social* forms of governance under capitalism, more specifically a form of *socialpolitik* than *realpolitik* or biopolitics. Drawing on the work of historical sociologist Robert Castel and political theorist Hannah Arendt, the article develops an alternative framework with which to question the extent to which 'life' has become the subject of global intervention through the human security agenda.

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The concept that has done most to organise thinking and international action around the management of poverty and armed conflict in the post-Cold War period is human security, usually defined as the protection and empowerment of people caught up in extreme violence and underdevelopment.[1] So conceived, security and development are mutually reinforcing. Security can be extended through tending to material needs and vice versa. Based on a contrast between the old geopolitical security agenda of states and a new agenda concerned with individuals and of populations, International Studies usually presents human security in terms of a new politics of fostering life rather than focussing on sovereign states and their control over the means of death. Where national security

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[1] Caroline Thomas, *Global Governance, Development and Human Security: The Challenge of Poverty and Inequality* (London: Pluto Press, 2000); Commission on Human Security, *Human Security Now: Protecting and Empowering People* (New York: UN, 2003); Sandra Jean MacLean, David Ross Black and Timothy M. Shaw (eds), *A Decade of Human Security: Global Governance and New Multilateralisms* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006); Shahrbanou Tadjbakhsh and Anuradha M. Chenoy, *Human Security: Concepts and Implications* (London: Routledge, 2007).

is about the defence of the sovereign state from violent attack, human security is intended to protect and defend individuals and groups from all forms of violence. It is about securing the lives of individuals as ends in themselves, not as means to the ends of states. This seemingly new agenda requires the participation of a much broader range of actors than national governments. It often bypasses the state to work with populations through a range of economic, health, and educational interventions. Not only states, but international institutions, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and civil society are all empowered to intervene on behalf of the worldwide society of humankind.

For many advocates of this new agenda, human security is a progressive transformation away from the Cold War (and 'War on Terror') obsession with military issues towards UN Development Programme (UNDP) concepts of economic security, the security of food, health, the environment, the person, communities, and even politics itself.[2] In defining human security so broadly – the protection of 'the vital core of all human lives in ways that enhance human freedoms and fulfilment' – the UN has put itself in the position to act on behalf of a wide range of needs. The UN Trust Fund for Human Security administers almost two hundred projects around the world that 'promote multi-sectoral, multi-organization and sustainable solutions to the most under-funded and intractable challenges'.[3] An extensive bureaucracy of global health and welfare, food and housing, security, and policing has been established for the transnational administration and merging of 'security' and 'development'. The human security bureaucracy is a measure of how far the concept has penetrated the architecture of global governance. In addition to the work of the UN, an extensive network of government agencies, international financial and political organisations, academics and university centres, international commissions, non-profit NGOs, 'civil society' groups, and private and semi-private companies are all dedicated to working out, funding, and implementing the human security agenda.[4] On the ground, at the operational level, this network translates into a global division of labour designed to implement human security policy.

Human security has been described as 'the dominant framework of international regulation', and yet, as David Chandler argues, the dramatic change in the discourse of international intervention has occurred 'without radical changes at the level of ... power relations'.[5] The dominant states and their international organisations appear to be quite comfortable in promoting the 'human' as the

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[2] UN Human Development Reports {http://hdr.undp.org/en/} accessed 4 June 2011; Mary Kaldor, *Human Security* (Cambridge: Polity, 2007); Mary Martin and Mary Kaldor (eds), *The EU and Human Security External Interventions and Missions* (London: Routledge, 2009).

[3] Comments made at 'Sixth Meeting of the Friends of Human Security' (4 June 2009), {http://ochaonline.un.org/SixthMeetingoftheFriendsofHumanSecurity/tabid/5709/language/en-US/Default.aspx} accessed 4 June 2011; The UN Trust Fund for Human Security was established in 1999 and the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs created the Human Security Unit in 2004 which manages the Trust Fund, integrates UN human security activities and translates the concept into concrete activities on the ground. Since 1999, the Fund has committed over $340 million to projects in over seventy countries, mainly in Africa, Asia-Pacific and Eastern and Central Asia. {http://ochaonline.un.org/Home/tabid/2097/Default.aspx} accessed 4 June 2011.

[4] Neil S. MacFarlane and Yuen Foong Khong, *Human Security and the UN: a Critical History* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006).

[5] David Chandler, 'Human Security II: Waiting for the Tail To Wag the Dog: A Rejoinder to Ambrosetti, Owen and Wibben', *Security Dialogue*, 39 (2008) pp. 465–6.

referent object of security. What explains this apparent paradox, the distinction between the celebratory tone and grand claims surrounding the new framework and the political and economic hierarchies within which human security occurs? To date, the two most compelling explanations would seem to be provided by political realism, which emphasises continuing geopolitical power relations, and followers of Michel Foucault, who point to biopolitical forms of control.[6] For political realists, the human security agenda is ultimately compatible with the exercise of hegemonic state power and *realpolitik*.[7] It is no surprise that the human security agenda has authorised intervention and reconstruction based on a sliding scale not of need but of threats to the interests of powerful states in the West and the dominant classes in both the North and South. After all, one goal of human security is to reconstruct effective and responsible states capable of providing security themselves. Seen this way, such interventions reinforce rather than challenge the existing distribution of power and policy discourse in international politics. For those drawing on Foucault, human security should also not be understood as a benign humanitarian framework for the protection of the world's most vulnerable; it is about the 'socialisation' and disciplining of states in the global South.[8] From the eighteenth century, Foucault claimed, a new form of 'biopower' emerged in Europe that could work on and through populations. Biological 'life itself' became subject to a variety of interventions aimed at *improving*, but also controlling and normalising, certain forms of life. On this view, the distinct means of biopolitical governance is 'man-as-species', a form of power central to human security.

As the concept of human security has become part of the mainstream discourse of international politics it should be no surprise that both realist and critical approaches to development and security have found the agenda wanting. This

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[6] Michel Foucault, *Society Must be Defended: Lectures at the Collège de France 1975–1976*, trans. David Macey, ed. Mauro Bertani and Alessandro Fontana (New York: Picador, 2003); *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1977–1978*, trans. Graham Burchell, ed. Michel Senellart (London: Palgrave, 2007); *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1978–1979*, trans. Graham Burchell, ed. Michel Senellart (London: Palgrave, 2008).

[7] Stephen D. Krasner, 'Sharing Sovereignty: New Institutions for Collapsed and Failing States', *International Security*, 29 (2004), pp. 85–120; James D. Fearon and David D. Laitin, 'Neotrusteeship and the Problem of Weak States', *International Security*, 28 (2004), pp. 5–43.

[8] Stefan Elbe, 'AIDS, Security, Biopolitics', *International Relations*, 19 (2005) pp. 403–19; Mark Duffield and Nicholas Waddell, 'Securing Humans in a Dangerous World', *International Politics*, 43 (2006), pp. 1–23; Mark Duffield, *Development, Security and Unending War: Governing the World of Peoples* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007); Jacqueline Berman, 'The "Vital Core": From Bare Life to the Biopolitics of Human Security', in Giorgio Shani, Makoto Sato and Mustapha Kamal Pasha (eds), *Protecting Human Security in a Post 9/11 World: Critical and Global Insights* (London: Palgrave, 2007), pp. 30–49; Kyle Grayson, 'Human Security as Power/Knowledge: the Biopolitics of a Definitional Debate', *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, 21 (2008), pp. 383–401; Miguel De Larringa and Marc G. Doucet, 'Sovereign Power and the Biopolitics of Human Security', *Security Dialogue*, 39 (2008), pp. 517–37; Kosuke Shimizu, 'Human Security, Governmentality, and Sovereignty: a Critical Examination of Contemporary Discourses on Universalizing Humanity', in François Debrix and Mark Lacy (eds), *The Geopolitics of American Insecurity: Terror, Power and Foreign Policy* (London: Routledge, 2008), pp. 143–60; David Roberts, *Global Governance and Biopolitics: Regulating Human Security* (London, Zed Books, 2010); Marc G. Doucet and Miguel de Larringa, 'Human Security and the Securing of Human Life: Tracing Global Sovereign and Biopolitical Rule', in David Chandler and Niklas Hynek (eds), *Critical Perspectives on Human Security: Rethinking Emancipation and Power in International Relations* (London: Routledge, 2010), pp. 129–43; Suvi Alt, 'Problematizing Life under Biopower: a Foucauldian versus an Agambenite critique of Human Security', in Chandler and Hynek (eds), *Critical Perspectives on Human Security*, pp. 144–56; also see Hans-Martin Jaeger, 'UN Reform, Biopolitics, and Global Governmentality', *International Theory*, 2 (2010), pp. 50–86.

article seeks to go further than the realist and biopolitical critiques by situating all three – political realism, biopolitics, and human security – within the history and theory of the modern *rise of the social realm* from late eighteenth and nineteenth century Europe. Human security is the further expansion of *social* forms of governance under capitalism, more specifically a form of *socialpolitik* than *realpolitik* or biopolitics. The claim is not that concepts drawn from realism or biopolitics are totally inadequate to the task of analysing human security. Both capture crucial elements of social regulation, namely the interests dominant states have in promoting human security and the increasing levels of intervention into the biological life of populations.[9] As political realist Max Weber observed, 'in spite of all "social welfare policies", the whole course of the [modern] state's inner political functions, of justice and administration, is repeatedly and unavoidably regulated by the objective pragmatism of "reasons of state"'.[10] On the other hand, human security as a field of knowledge and practice could easily appear to be fertile ground for those looking for the latest manifestations of biopolitical power over life that operates on a global scale. Rather, the argument is that political realist and biopolitical power are less the essence of contemporary relations of domination than two elements of something broader and more fundamental: the modern rise of the social realm as an arena for the management of collective needs under capitalism.

The idea of a separate and identifiable *social realm*, distinct from politics and economy, *polis* and *oikos*, is a relatively new development in the history of political thought dating only to the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries in Europe. Rather than a timeless and universally applicable concept, the definition and meaning of 'the social' can only be understood in the context of a specific historical constellation, which developed after – not automatically with – the rise of territorial states in modern Europe.[11] At the broadest level, the rise of a social realm within and eventually across distinct 'societies' was a product of the capitalist and democratic revolutions and associated large-scale and geographically variable processes of working class radicalisation, bureaucratisation, and imperialism. The rise and study of the social were first oriented around the problem of managing the new 'mass society' in increasingly differentiated capitalist nation-states. The first 'social' theories, the beginning of social explanations for political and economic developments, emerged in response to a question, the 'Social Question': could the welfare of the radicalised working classes be managed such that the capitalist system of wage labour was not overthrown?[12] The dominant

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[9] Hence the argument here departs from David Chandler's criticisms of biopolitical theory, which he argues is a parody of the liberal cosmopolitanism that it aims to undermine. See Chandler, 'Critiquing Liberal Cosmopolitanism? The Limits of the Biopolitical Approach', *International Political Sociology*, 3 (2009), pp. 53–70.

[10] Max Weber, 'Religious Rejections of the World and their Directions', *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1946), p. 334.

[11] This approach contrasts with much of the recent 'social turn' in international studies, which adopts 'the social' as a form of explanation and particular ontology while marginalising the historical origins of the very concept. See, for example, Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

[12] J. A. Hobson, *The Social Problem: Life and Work* (James Nisbet & Co.: London: 1901); Andrew Robert Aisenberg, *Contagion: Disease, Government, and the 'Social Question' in Nineteenth Century France* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999); Patrick Joyce (ed.), *The Social in Question: New Bearings in History and the Social Sciences* (London: Routledge, 2002).

political ideologies of the nineteenth century – liberal, conservative and socialist – all agreed on the existence of the social; they disagreed on the justification and method of intervention into it. Political realism, which could appear in a liberal or a more conservative and authoritarian guise, was deeply shaped by the Social Question and its identification of the potential threat to state power from organised workers.[13] One method of social governance – how class conflict became subordinated to state power – was targeted interventions into the basic life conditions of populations, a development pioneered by well-known practitioners of *realpolitik*, Otto von Bismarck and Max Weber, and later powerfully described by Foucault.[14]

A variety of historians and theorists have pointed to the historical specificity of the social, its rise within late eighteenth and nineteenth century Europe and its consequences for economy and politics. They include Karl Polanyi's analysis of political economy and the 'discovery society'; Gunnar Myrdal's writing on 'social housekeeping'; Hannah Arendt's account of the life process acquiring its own public domain; Jürgen Habermas's writing on the political function of the public sphere in bourgeois 'society'; Jacques Donzelot's account of the 'invention of society'; the later Foucault's account of the image of society as a self-contained unity with its own laws, mechanisms and liberal governance techniques; Robert Castel's study of the emergence and various transformations of the Social Question since the Middle Ages; and George Steinmetz's study of different paradigms of social regulation.[15] Drawing on each of these thinkers where appropriate, this article will nonetheless offer a focused analysis of two that have analysed 'the social' in different but complementary ways, an historical sociologist and a political theorist. Specifically, Robert Castel's work on the Social Question and Hannah Arendt's account of the modern rise of the social offer a persuasive theoretical ground from which to question the extent to which 'life' has become the subject of global intervention through the human security agenda.[16] It is possible to reconstruct and defend an historical and theoretical analysis of the social, an account that overlaps with but is irreducible to the one suggested by Foucault and which offers an entirely different evaluation of politics to the political realism of Weber.

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[13] For an excellent discussion of how political realism dealt with the Social Question in the German context see George Steinmetz, *Regulating the Social: the Welfare State and Local Politics in Imperial Germany* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), pp. 19–24.

[14] Marcel van Meerhaeghe, 'Bismarck and the Social Question', *Journal of Economic Studies*, 33 (2006), pp. 284–301.

[15] Gunnar Myrdal, *The Political Element in the Development of Economic Theory*, trans. Paul Streeten (London: Routledge, 1953); Karl Polanyi, *The Great Transformation: The Political and Economic Origins of Our Time* (Boston: Beacon Press, [1957], 2001); Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: Chicago University of Press, 1958); Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: an Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, [1962] 1991); Jacques Donzelot, *L'Invention du Social: Essai sur le Déclin des Passions Politiques* (Paris: Librairie Arthème, 1984); Foucault, *'Society Must Be Defended'*; Robert Castel, *From Manual Workers to Wage Laborers: Transformation of the Social Question*, trans. and ed. Robert Boyd (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, 2003); Steinmetz, *Regulating the Social*.

[16] There is a small, but growing, literature on Arendt in international political theory. See Anthony Lang Jr. and John Williams (eds), *Hannah Arendt and International Relations: Readings across the Lines* (London: Palgrave, 2005); Patricia Owens, *Between War and Politics: International Relations and the Thought of Hannah Arendt* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007); Patrick Hayden, *Political Evil in a Global Age: Hannah Arendt and International Theory* (London: Routledge, 2009).

The article proceeds in three moves. The first section offers some preliminary distinctions between primary sociability and specific forms of 'social' institutions, drawn by Castel, and between these institutions that centre on managing 'life' and the political 'world', drawn from Arendt. This is necessary not only for the history of the modern social realm but to distinguish the argument about the merging of biological and political life (that Arendt identified twenty years before Foucault) from political realism and biopolitical theory. The second section offers an account of the social realm as a distinct historical formation and its specific ontology as a scaled-up form of public housekeeping. Managing the 'life process of society', and placing the life process at the centre of governance, is described as an exercise of power that works through the merging of activities associated with *polis* and *oikos*, 'public' realm and 'private' household. The third part illustrates the usefulness of the historical and ontological account of the social through a conceptualisation of human security as securing and developing the 'life process of society' on an increasingly global scale; how human security is 'socially' administered; and how the subjects of human security are constituted in a manner appropriate to social behaviour rather than political action.

The social and the political, life and world

The concepts of 'social' and 'society' – like the related terms 'societal' and 'sociability' – can mean several things depending on political and historical context. The Latin term *societas* referred to a loose federation of allies for a specific purpose and later to particular fellowships and partnerships of various sorts (such as 'High Society' in the eighteenth century). There are many forms of human collective and not all of them are 'social' in the sense developed here. Humans are obviously dependent on others and 'provisions must be made', as Arendt put it, 'that affect the existence of all, since without such provisions, communal life would be impossible'.[17] Robert Castel has usefully described this element of communal life as 'societal' and is the elementary relationship of dependency that can be understood in terms of human primary *sociability*.[18] At the most basic and general level, collective existence can be referred to as 'societal' and is chiefly concerned with tending to the basic needs of life. Primary sociability is the dominant form of interaction in feudal communities, which tend to be defined by patrimonial relations of obligation and protection, blood bonds, strict hierarchies of gender and sexuality, and, in Castel's words, seemingly 'permanent relationships of dependence and interdependence rooted in bounded territorial communities'.[19] Such historically and geographically variable arrangements can be characterised as 'societies without the social'.

Human collectivities *become* 'social' when primary sociability breaks down and 'public order' – as defined by dominant political and economic groups – is

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[17] Arendt, *Promise of Politics* (New York, Schocken, 2005), p. 115.

[18] 'The first historical act', according to Marx and Engels, 'is thus the production of the means to satisfy these needs [food, water, shelter], the production of material life itself'. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The German Ideology* (New York: International Publishers, 1970), p. 48.

[19] Castel, *From Manual Workers to Wage Laborers*, p. 11.

disturbed. More specifically, social institutions are those specialised bodies – hospitals, orphanages, homeless shelters, refugee camps – which arise in more complex human collectivities when the primary bonds of sociability are inadequate to the task of attending to basic needs to an extent which threatens existing economic and governance hierarchies. Castel has suggested five formal characteristics that can be found in all social institutions: 1) 'a collective *construct* of practices whose function is protective, integrative, and only later, preventative … societal assistance arises from the intervention of society upon itself'; 2) 'some degree of specialisation and later professionalisation in the provision of social assistance'; 3) 'a level of routinisation in the determination of when "social" interventions are required, which groups should receive it and which should not'; 4) 'delivery of social assistance is always implicated in the creation of new forms of space, of territorialisation and localisation, of treatment in a specialized institutional site'; and 5) 'the criteria for receipt of assistance depends on communal belonging'.[20] Later we will describe and analyse some of the formal characteristics of these institutions that are evident in the administration of human security. The point to note here is that we can describe these institutions as 'public' in that they reflect matters of common concern. However, strictly speaking, they should not be understood as 'political'.

The social and the political are not synonymous concepts. Confusion over the difference, according to Arendt, can be traced, in part, to a misreading of Aristotle's famous definition of the essence of humans as *zōon politikon*, as a political animal. As early as Catholic theologian Thomas Aquinas this became '*homo est naturaliter politicus, id est, socialis* ("man is by nature political, that is, social")'.[21] '"Social animal"', sociologist Raymond Aron similarly asserted, 'is as good a definition of *zoon politicon* as "political animal"'.[22] Yet Aristotle's '*politikon*', Arendt insisted, did not mean any form of human collectivity. It referred only to the organisation of the *polis*, 'a unique, outstanding way of life, of being-together'.[23] If what is particular to humans is that we are social beings then surely we would not have needed Aristotle to realise the 'banality'.[24] As Castel has put it, 'the social should not be understood … as the collection of relationships that distinguish humanity as the species'.[25] Yet one consequence of the claim that *homo est naturaliter politicus, id est, socialis* is that in modern sociology and even much 'political philosophy', argued Arendt, 'politics does not even have an origin of its own: it came into being because of the elementary and prepolitical fact of biological necessity, which makes men need each other in the arduous task of keeping alive'.[26] Up to and including the contemporary period, the management of communal life is imagined to be the end purpose of 'politics', now conceived as a form of governmental administration. Its purpose is to manage the basic needs and processes necessary to sustain human life. Such assumptions about politics –

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[20] Ibid., pp. 16–17.

[21] Arendt, *Human Condition*, p. 23.

[22] Raymond Aron, *Progress and Disillusion: the Dialectics of Modern Society* (Middlesex: Penguin, 1968), p. 8.

[23] Hannah Arendt, 'Karl Marx and the Tradition of Western Political Thought', *Social Research*, 69 (2002), p. 295.

[24] Arendt, 'Karl Marx and the Tradition', p. 295.

[25] Castel, *From Manual Workers to Wage Laborers*, p. 10.

[26] Arendt, *Promise of Politics*, p. 83.

that it is to 'secure life, livelihood, and a minimum of happiness for the many' –
make it plausible to assume that politics exists everywhere and every form of
human interaction is political.[27]

To better distinguish the social from the political it is necessary to briefly review
the philosophical-anthropological character of primary sociability, the require-
ments of human 'life itself'. Arendt's approach is famously built on her analysis of
three forms of human activity: labour, work, and action. The closest activity to the
primary sociability described by Castel is the elemental character of labour and
labouring activities. Arendt defined labour as 'the activity which corresponds to the
biological process of the human body, whose spontaneous growth, metabolism,
and eventual decay are bound to the vital necessities produced and fed into the life
process by labor. The human condition of labor is life itself'.[28] We engage in
labouring activities, humans as *animal laborans*, to sustain natural, biological life
on earth, an activity we have in common with all animals. *Animal laborans* is not
the labouring class itself, or any 'sociologically' defined group. Rather it is a 'way
of life, even of a relationship to the world'.[29] Human labour links us most closely
to nature and the earth we inhabit with other living creatures. We confront the
physical realities imposed on us independently of our will, through our subjective
needs and wants, though the conditions under which humans labour are always
shaped by human conventions.

In contrast to the life sustaining activity of labour, *work* is the human effort to
create, to fabricate and make an artificial and objective world of durable objects
and things. This 'world' is different from the natural environment of the earth, the
lived place shared by all biological creatures. 'the human condition of work',
Arendt suggested, 'is worldliness'.[30] To engage in work, humans as *homo faber*, is
to rebel against the dictates of nature, perhaps even to the point of destroying it.
Work is constituted by a world of objects and things governed by the categories
of means and ends; the ends justify the means. Fabrication, reification, and
instrumentalism are the modes and methods of *homo faber*. 'If nature and the earth
generally constitute the condition of human *life*', Arendt maintained, 'then the
world and the things of the world constitute the condition under which this
specifically human life can be at home on earth'.[31] From art and architecture to
laws and public monuments, it is through work that humans create the artefacts
that make the world our home.

Arendt's third and distinctively political activity is *action*. This is the human
capacity for initiative and spontaneity, the ability to begin something new that
cannot have been predicted. It can never be captured by a plan or blueprint found
in the making activities of work. The ontological bases of political action are two
facts: natality and plurality. The former is the biological fact of birth, which means
that the essence of humans is that we are beginners. Through action and speech,
humans have the capacity to begin and create new worlds and thereby interrupt
and disrupt the endless processes associated with labour and the instrumentality

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[27] Ibid., p. 115.
[28] Arendt, *Human Condition*, p. 7.
[29] Martin Levin, '*Animal Laborans* and *Homo Politicus*, in Hannah Arendt: a Note', *Political Theory*,
7 (1979), p. 523.
[30] Arendt, *Human Condition*, p. 7.
[31] Ibid., p. 134, emphasis in original.

associated with work. Metaphorically and literally, childbirth and childrearing connect labour to the public, political world; it is how the human body is 'transcended into a common world'.[32] This is human life in its 'non-biological sense, the span of each time man has between birth and death'. *This* form of life, Arendt wrote, 'manifests itself in action and speech'.[33] Plurality refers to the fact that there are many of us, but in a manner more than the simple multiplication of the human species; 'nobody is ever the same as anyone else who lived, lives, or will ever live'. This 'plurality', she argued, 'is specifically *the* condition ... of all political life' and is expressed in the human capacity to join together with others to create a public political world.[34] In common with the activity of 'work', political action is constitutive of a public realm; it is a *worldly* and world-making activity.

Pause to note how this conception of political action is fundamentally at odds with the theory of political realism. While Arendt agreed with Max Weber, Carl Schmitt and Hans Morgenthau that political conflict and the political realm could not be reduced to a scientific problem with a technical solution, that the political was distinct from other forms of human endeavour, she possessed an entirely different evaluation of the *meanings* of politics, power, and violence.[35] As Margaret Canovan has put it, Arendt 'defied the German tradition of "realism" by maintaining that it is action-as-speech rather than government that constitutes true politics; that agreement and consent, not domination, found republics, and that acting in concert, not violence, creates power.'[36] It is also important to note here that political action discloses a unique form of political subjectivity that Arendt described in terms of 'who' rather than 'what' we are. It is an account of political subjectivity wholly absent from the realist tradition but which illuminates something fundamental to social regulation as distinct from political action, a contrast we return to in the analysis of human security.

'Who' we are and 'what' we are is not the same. 'What-ness', Arendt argued, is an attribute of physical fact and identity that may connect a person to and define them against others, such as gender, race or sexuality. Once the identity construct has been adopted or imposed, this 'what-ness' becomes the quality that describes a certain type; it identifies different specimens 'of the animal species man-kind', such as the constructions of 'women', 'men' and 'children' or different ethnic and

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[32] Arendt, 'Karl Marx and the Tradition', p. 285; Arendt, *Essays in Understanding, 1930–1954* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1994), p. 321.

[33] Arendt, *Human Condition*, p. 173.

[34] Ibid., pp. 7, 8, emphasis in original. As Arendt put it, the 'term "public" literally signifies the world itself, insofar as it is common to all of us and distinguished from our privately owned place in it. This world ... is not identical to the earth or with nature ... It is related, rather, to the human artifact, the fabrication of human hands, as well as to affairs that go on among those who inhabit the man-made world together ... the world, like every in-between, relates and separates men at the same time'. Arendt, *Human Condition*, p. 52.

[35] See Weber, 'Science as a Vocation', *From Max Weber*, pp. 129–56; Carl Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996 [1932]); Hans J. Morgenthau, *Scientific Man vs. Power Politics* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1946). As Peter Baehr has written, 'few authors of the twentieth-century offered a more comprehensive alternative to Weber's political and sociological thought than Arendt did.' See Baehr, 'The Grammar of Prudence: Arendt, Jaspers, and the Appraisal of Max Weber', in Steven E. Ashheim (ed.), *Hannah Arendt in Jerusalem* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), pp. 307, 323.

[36] Margaret Canovan, *Hannah Arendt: A Reinterpretation of Her Political Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 185.

racial groupings.[37] Someone's 'who-ness', in contrast, is their specific, unique, and distinguishing identity that is constantly recreated and revealed in political action and speech. As Arendt insisted, 'only man can . . . distinguish himself, and only he *can communicate himself and not merely something – thirst or hunger, affection or hostility or fear*'.[38] This is action and speech among individuals that are *not* the same but *equal*.[39] Who somebody is, Arendt wrote, is 'implicit in everything somebody says and does'.[40] This agent is disclosed to others through words and deeds in the common public realm that is itself constituted by such action and speech. This distinctly human ability to initiate new beginnings and found new political spaces is, in practice, an historical and cultural construction. It is within the capacity of all humans to found and sustain a political world, but only under certain conditions.

The distinction between labour, work, and action is also a distinction between 'life itself' and the possibility of constituting a public, political 'world'. Since Aristotle's *The Politics*, various traditions of political thought and practice have struggled over the meaning of the difference between life and world. The distinction is at the root of the most important political binaries in Western thought – between private and public, subject and citizen, even though the usage of these terms frequently changes as an effect of gendered, economic and military power. Sometimes the distinction between life and world has appeared fundamental to the way humans have thought about and organised community and sometimes the distinction has been ignored. Life and world have been understood as constituted by different activities, different spatial locations and sometimes they have merged into a concrete historical formation, as in the modern social realm described in more detail momentarily.

To be clear, political action and the founding of a public political realm should not be conflated with the human togetherness of primary sociability. It is much more episodic and rare. Political action is not the same as cooperating with others socially for the sake of sustaining life processes or treating others instrumentally as means to the end of securing and accumulating wealth. Yet international theory has not been very good at explicitly distinguishing between forms of life and human activity, such as biological 'life' and 'world'. To be sure, the field has now belatedly joined others in the humanities and social sciences in investigating the deep interest power has in the human body and the politics of regulating the biological life of populations.[41] As the growing literature on 'biopolitics' suggests, analysis of the distinction and blurring of the distinction between our biological

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[37] Arendt, *Human Condition*, p. 46.

[38] Ibid., p. 176, emphasis added.

[39] Ibid., pp. 180, 179.

[40] Ibid., p. 179. Recalling the significance of natality to action, the experience of disclosing one's who-ness is 'like a second birth . . . This insertion is not forced upon us by necessity, like labor, and it is not prompted by utility, like work . . .; its impulse springs from the beginning which came into the world when we were born and to which we respond by beginning something new'. Arendt, *Human Condition*, pp. 176–7.

[41] For other recent applications of 'biopolitics' to international themes see Cristina Masters and Elizabeth Dauphinee (eds), *Logics of Biopower and the War on Terror: Living, Dying, Surviving* (London: Palgrave, 2007); Stephen Morton and Stephen Bygrave (eds), *Biopolitics and the Defence of Society: Rethinking Foucault in an Age of Terror* (London: Palgrave, 2008); Michael Dillon and Julian Reid *The Liberal Way of War: Killing to Make Life Live* (London: Routledge, 2009); Michael Dillon and Andrew Neal (eds), *Foucault, War, Society and Politics* (London: Palgrave, 2009).

and political lives is important, but this is only to the extent that such work does indeed rely on the existence of such a distinction. To in any way replicate the blurring, for example, in embracing such a thing as 'bare life' as an exemplary form of political action,[42] is to reinforce rather than challenge the modes of governance that have come to dominate in the contemporary period.

Thus far it has been suggested that certain preliminary distinctions – between primary sociability, social institutions and political action – underpin the difference between life and world and 'what' and 'who' we are. In the next two sections, these distinctions will be used to describe and analyse the blurring of life and world into the modern social realm under capitalism that underpins the human security agenda. International interventions that constitute and act on subjects based on 'what-ness' homogenise and depoliticise their subjects. Rather than empowering the most marginalised, the subjectivity of those governed this way is produced in a manner destructive of the plurality and capacity for new beginnings required for political action. This is not an accident; it is a mode of conduct integral to the modern social realm under capitalism. However, to make this argument in relation to the human security agenda it is necessary to describe and analyse the historical rise of the modern social realm from late eighteenth and nineteenth century Europe.

The 'social' realm as historical formation

To think historically about the modern rise of the social is to think through the political consequences of the transformation of primitive economy to a complex capitalist and nation-state system. At first glance, Hannah Arendt's peculiar understanding of the modern social as the realm 'where the life process has established its own public domain'[43] is idiosyncratic. Indeed, her writing in this area has not always been well received or well understood, even by those sympathetic to her thought. For Hanna Pitkin, whenever the concept of the social appeared in Arendt's work it unwittingly resembled the Blob from the 1958 movie *Attack of the Blob*. Pitkin accused Arendt of reifying the social, turning it into a horrifying monster menace 'capable of doing and being done to'.[44] On this view, we need to demystify the Blob to properly understand the 'real world' problems

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[42] See, for example, Jenny Edkins and Véronique Pin-Fat, 'Through the Wire: Relations of Power and Relations of Violence', *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, 34 (2005), pp. 1–24. Edkins and Pin-Fat draw on both Foucault and Giorgio Agamben to argue that we should repudiate all distinctions or drawing of lines between 'forms of life'. Cf. Patricia Owens, 'Reclaiming "Bare Life"? Against Agamben on Refugees', *International Relations*, 23 (2009), pp. 567–82.

[43] Arendt, *Human Condition*, p. 47.

[44] Hanna Fenichel Pitkin, *The Attack of the Blob: Hannah Arendt's Concept of the Social* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), p. 226; see also Seyla Benhabib, *The Reluctant Modernism of Hannah Arendt* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1996). Arendt clearly and repeatedly gendered her analysis of the social, for example feminising the toil and pain of labour and using masculine imagery to describe the domination over nature associated with work. Crucially, however, she did not posit any fundamental gender hierarchy as integral to the problems she was trying to explicate. As Mary Dietz, has pointed out, the sex-gender binary is displaced in Arendt's work by the tripartite distinction between labour, work and action. Political action escapes the gender dichotomy; politics, properly understood, is neither masculine nor feminine. Dietz, *Turning Operations: Feminism, Arendt, Politics* (London: Routledge, 2002).

Arendt was trying to address, according to Pitkin: 'the gap between our enormous, still increasing powers and our apparent helplessness to avert the various disasters – national, regional, and global – looming on our horizon'.[45]

In fact, Arendt's writing on the social is grounded on more than some generalised feeling of subjection. When properly read alongside comparable historical and theoretical work, Arendt's concept can be defended as a powerful analysis of the political consequences of industrial capitalism and supporting ideologies, that is, the rise to power of the bourgeoisie and the dominance of bourgeois categories of thought regarding economy and politics with their specific formulation of the public-private distinction and the collapsing of the distinction between life and world. We do not look to Arendt for a conventional history of the social and what she does say about its historical evolution is incomplete. In *Origins of Totalitarianism*, the elements that 'crystallized' into 'the social' (as well as the totalitarian) are the political emancipation of the bourgeoisie; imperial accumulation of capital in which 'Expansion again appeared as a lifesaver, if and insofar as it could provide a common interest *for the nation as a whole*';[46] and the rise (and decline) of the nation-state. In *The Human Condition*, 'society's victory in the modern age'[47] is again explained by capitalism and the bureaucratic nation-state in addition to three earlier events – imperial, religious, and scientific – at the 'threshold' of the 'modern age'.[48] As with her account of totalitarianism, Arendt deliberately resisted the temptation to offer a linear path of causality that might be understood as culminating in the creation of the modern social realm. Nonetheless, her writing in this area is united by the consistency of her unique form of philosophical anthropology, described above, and analysis of capitalist modernity.

The specifically capitalist modernity of the 'social' is captured in a remark of Justin Rosenberg's in *Empire of Civil Society*. 'Sociology', he noted,

is commonly defined as 'the study of society'. Yet this apparent universality bears its own historical stamp. For 'society' does not present itself as an object of study . . . before the institutional differentiation of public and private spheres, state and civil society, which characterizes the modern West . . . In a chapter entitled 'Political Economy and the Discovery of Society' [Karl Polanyi] suggests that new forms of understanding were needed because 'no human community had yet been conceived of which was not identical with law and government'. The intellectual novelty of this problematic thus reflects the historical novelty of an actual historical formation.[49]

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[45] Pitkin, *Attack of the Blob*, p. 6.

[46] Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, new ed. with added prefaces (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1966), p. 152. She goes on, quoting J. A. Hobson, 'and it is mainly for this reason that imperialists were allowed to become "parasites upon patriotism"'.

[47] Arendt, *Human Condition*, p. 45; there has been one other effort to extend Arendt's writing on the social to the international, specifically the 'evil of neoliberal globalization' (rather than capitalism in general). See Hayden, *Political Evil in a Global Age*, pp. 92–121.

[48] These events were 'the discovery of America and the ensuing exploration of the whole earth; the Reformation, which by expropriating ecclesiastical and monastic possessions started the two-fold process of individual expropriation and the accumulation of social wealth; the invention of the telescope and the development of a new science that considers the nature of the earth from the viewpoint of the universe'. Arendt, *Human Condition*, p. 248. In *On Revolution*, there is even less focus on the rise of the social as an historical formation, but instead an analysis of the 'high society' of the French court, an attack on how the 'Social Question' was answered during the French Revolution. Arendt, *On Revolution* (New York: Viking, 1970), p. 61.

[49] Justin Rosenberg, *The Empire of Civil Society: a Critique of the Realist Theory of International Relations* (London: Verso, 1994), pp. 156–7; Polanyi, *The Great Transformation*, p. 119.

The concept of society emerges with capitalism because newly defined 'private' economic activities needed to be distinguished from the state. Civil society was capitalist economy distinguished from state 'politics' defined as government. John Locke famously grounded civil society on the security of property and the capitalist requirement that labour-power be 'free' and separated from the means of production. This arrangement became liberal common-sense with 'social contract' theories that presented the conditions of bourgeois society as the state of nature existing prior to political order and justifying restrictions on state control of private property and wealth.[50]

The modern social realm is a distinctly capitalist form of public regulation. With Adam Smith, the concept of civilised society shifted from a contract binding the individual to the state toward a self-regulating domain emerging out of individual material interests and communal needs in a market economy.[51] As David Frisby and Derek Sayer have put it, 'the very possibility of abstractly conceptualizing society at all would seem to have been historically dependent upon the concrete development of *bürgerliche Gesellschaft:* market society, civil society, bourgeois society. Only then did the generality *society* become visible, a possible object of theory, in a way comparable to the emergence of the *polis* as an object of reflection for the Greeks'.[52] Human life came to be understood as something to be rationally acted upon through a series of discrete ontological domains – economy, politics, and now *society* – each with its own distinct patterns and norms. Hegel, for example, conceived civil society as the totality of private individuals connected together into a 'system of needs' that could be integrated by the rational, universalising state that transcended the market, representing for the first time the interests of *society as a whole*.[53] 'Never before', Arendt noted, 'had any political organism sought to encompass all those who had actually lived in it'.[54]

As distinct from *polis* and *oikos*, modern market society was conceptualised as the mass or multitude of households in which 'social housekeeping' was to be provided by a bureaucratic state. Etymologically and in antiquity, *oikonomia* (economy) and *oikonomikos* (economics) denoted the management of the household with the aim of increasing its use value to household members. As Jean-Jacques Rousseau noted in a famous entry for 'political economy' in *Grande Encylopédie*, 'Economy or *oeconomie*, a word derived from *oikos*, meaning a house,

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[50] C. B. Macpherson, *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism: From Hobbes to Locke* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964).

[51] As Smith put it, 'in the great chess-board of human society, every single piece has a principle of motion of its own, altogether different from that which the legislature might choose to impress upon it'. Smith, *The Essays of Adam Smith* (London: Alex Murray and Son, 1869), p. 207.

[52] David Frisby and Derek Sayer, *Society* (London: Tavistock, 1986), p. 120; see also Gilles Deleuze, 'Foreword: the Rise of the Social', in Jacques Donzelot, *The Policing of Families: Welfare versus the State* (London: Hutchinson, 1979), pp. ix–xvii; Eric R. Wolf, 'Inventing Society', *American Ethnologist*, 15 (1988), pp. 752–61; Nikolas Rose, 'The Death of the Social? Re-figuring the Territory of Government', *Economy and Society*, 25 (1996), pp. 327–56; Peter Wagner, '"An Entirely New Object of Consciousness, of Volition, of Thought": The Coming into Being and (Almost) Passing Away of "Society" as a Scientific Object', in Lorraine Daston (ed.), *Biographies of Scientific Objects* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), pp. 132–57.

[53] G. W. F. Hegel, *Philosophy of Right* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967 [1821]); Polanyi, *The Great Transformation*; for an excellent critique of Polanyi notion of 'society as a whole' see Sandra Halperin, *War and Social Change in Modern Europe: The Great Transformation Revisited* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

[54] Arendt, 'Karl Marx and the Tradition', p. 288.

and *nomos*, meaning law, ordinarily signifies merely the wise and legitimate management of a house for the *common good* of the entire family. The meaning of the term has since been extended to mean the management of the larger family of the state'.[55] Gunnar Myrdal similarly drew an analogy between the traditional patriarchal model of the family household – in which the dominant *paterfamilias* is in control – and the hybrid 'political economy' of the modern bureaucratic state that 'keeps house for its members'.[56] For Arendt, explicitly drawing on Myrdal, 'the collective of families economically organized into the facsimile of one superhuman family is what we call "society"', and its political form of organization is called "nation"'.[57] Rather than the labouring classes identifying themselves as such, modern 'society' identified itself with a piece of territory called the nation-state.[58] Its end purpose was to provide security for the life process of society.

Marx, of course, powerfully exposed civil society as *bürgerliche Gesellschaft*, as bourgeois society. The abstractions of both 'the individual' and 'society' were ideological justifications for class interests.[59] This problematic, the reality of class conflict and the increasing radicalisation of workers, called forth a novel set of 'social questions', namely how to secure private wealth in light of the misery of the working classes.[60] The class dimension of the rise of the modern social realm and social administration is crucial. Recall Robert Castel's characterisation of 'societies with the social', communities that have developed specialised bodies to deal with the break down of primary sociability or the requirements of more complex communal life. Large-scale social assistance is associated with maintaining existing hierarchical structures, especially to the extent that it shores up 'public order' as defined by dominant classes. In the pre-industrial period, the dominant formulation of the Social Question was how to contend with the disordering effects of vagabonds, purposeless wonderers who did not work. With industrial capitalism, not the vagabonds at the margins but the labouring masses themselves were a threat to public order and the security of property. Rather than mass poverty and vagabondage caused by the absence of the means of subsistence, widespread pauperism, Castel observed, was now the result of 'the precariousness of employment ... *at the very heart* of the wealth-creating process'.[61] The issue was no longer how to maintain social harmony in the face of vagabonds who did not work but the insecurity of those integrated into the system of wage labour; 'labor as a human activity ...' Arendt observed, 'became a public political fact of the first order'.[62]

[55] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, 'De l'économie politique', *Grande Encylopédie*, 5 (1755); available at: {http://www.taieb.net/auteurs/Rousseau/economie.html} accessed 4 June 2011, emphasis added; see also Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*, p. 95.

[56] Myrdal, *Political Element*, p. 140. According to Habermas, the social arose when 'the private realm as a whole assumed public relevance'. See Habermas, *Structural Transformation*, p. 127.

[57] Arendt, *Human Condition*, p. 29.

[58] Ibid., p. 256.

[59] Karl Marx, *Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy* (London: Penguin, 1973).

[60] Douglas Moggach and Paul Leduc Browne (eds), *The Social Question and the Democratic Revolution: Marx and the Legacy of 1848* (Ottawa, Ont.: University of Ottawa Press, 2000).

[61] Castel, *From Manual Workers to Wage Laborers*, pp. 205, 197–8.

[62] Arendt, 'Karl Marx and the Tradition', p. 284; Castel, *From Manual Workers to Wage Laborers*, p. 146.

Social welfare emerged as a compromise between the cruelty of the profit motive under capitalism and the strategic requirements of minimal solidarity. In mitigating the worst effects of capitalism, existing property relations could be secured through a combination of 'social' and moral regulation. For political realists, accepting the reality of class antagonism but rejecting socialist hopes for its resolution, the creation of and intervention into the social realm served an important function for state power.[63] Observing first German Chancellor Otto von Bismarck's formation of comprehensive social insurance during the 1880s, the first system of its kind, Max Weber realised that a strong *Sozialstaat* was necessary in the context of the power struggle between nations; state run social policy would tie the fate of the German working classes to the success of the imperial nation.[64] Successful *realpolitik* required strong *socialpolitik*. Impressed by the 'social imperialism' of nineteenth century England, in which class resentment was partially displaced by the cultivation of working class pride in the Empire, Carl Schmitt believed that in 'protect[ing] one and disarm[ing] the other' social policy neutralised the friend-enemy opposition of class antagonism.[65] In France, Émile Durkheim's conception of solidarity emerged as a third way beyond liberal individualism and Marxist class conflict. For Durkheim, social cohesion was based on the degree of dependence the component parts of society have on each other. Society itself and the social ties between people were conceived as objects of intervention with the state and its laws the 'public' entity responsible for maintaining the bonds of solidarity.[66]

The mechanics of such modern 'social' arrangements are not captured in Hobbes' sovereign model of power and its associated conception of security. 'Security remained the decisive criterion', Arendt noted, 'but not the individual's security against "violent death", as in Hobbes … but a security which should permit an undisturbed development of the life process of society as a whole'.[67] The term 'government', from 'govern', the Greek word *kubernan*, 'to steer', indicates the purpose of civil administration, the steering of large-scale human conduct and the remodelling of 'society'. Successful nation-states are imagined to secure a way of life in which the pursuit of 'private' interests is made compatible with the

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[63] For analysis of the political realist paradigm of social regulation in 'population-centric' counterinsurgency see Owens, 'From Bismarck to Petraeus: The Question of the Social and the Social Question in Counterinsurgency', *European Journal of International Relations* (forthcoming).

[64] Wolfgang J. Mommsen, *Max Weber and German Politics, 1890–1920* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1984); see also Steinmetz, *Regulating the Social*; van Meerhaeghe, 'Bismarck and the Social Question'.

[65] Carl Schmitt, *The* Nomos *of the Earth: in the International Law of the Jus Publicum Europaeum* (New York: Telos, 2006 [1950]), p. 332, fn. 17. On 'social imperialism' see Hans Ulrich Wehler, *The German Empire, 1871–1918* (Oxford: Berg Publishers, 1997).

[66] Émile Durkheim, *The Division of Labour in Society*, intro. Lewis A. Coser (NY: New York: Free Press, 1997); the apparent opposition between a political realist and even Schmittian logic in the provision of social security and the more liberal and solidarist emphasis implicitly animate the debate over human security. As Pauline Ewan has noted, according to many, 'rather than the human security agenda's initial "solidarist" concern for poor people in the global North and South, the securitization of poverty, displacement and disease fosters a [Schmittian] logic of enmity that constitutes Southern populations as threats to' wealthy states in the global North. See Ewan, 'Deepening the Human Security Debate: Beyond the Politics of Conceptual Clarification', *Politics*, 27 (2007), p. 186.

[67] Arendt, *Between Past and Future: Eight Exercises in Political Thought* (New York: Viking, 1968), p. 150. For a more recent rendition of this argument see Mark Neocleous, *Critique of Security* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008).

so-called 'public' good. However, the social realm is neither properly public nor private. Matters related to building the common public political world, as described above, are conflated with those related to maintaining life; the so-called public (government) became a *function* of private, class interests.[68] In such a system, Arendt insisted, any so-called common good (as in Rousseau) or common-wealth (as in Hobbes) ought to be distinguished from notions of the *worldliness* of the public realm; concepts of common good or common-wealth signal 'only that' newly defined 'private individuals have interests in common', that is, the security of life and property.[69]

The public was redefined and made synonymous with government and government's primary rationale was the sustenance of 'society'. In Arendt's terminology, 'the criterion for action within' this new realm of the social 'is competence and efficiency in securing life's necessities'.[70] This is the context for Foucault's increasingly influential claims regarding the workings of 'power over man insofar as man is a living being'.[71] Biopower, he argued, regulated populations through pastoral care, producing whole populations – societies – amenable to coordination and mobilisation in the face of new threats and material vulnerabilities. Novel forms of statistical and demographic knowledge justified and sustained systems of intervention into more and more areas of life; it determined whether some groups needed more direct management than others, more targeted interventions in populations subdivided socially, that is, along lines of nationality, class, gender, sexuality, and race. While modern life was made healthier, longer lasting, rational, productive and efficient, man-as-species became an object of administrative control, intervention and normalisation.

It has not been difficult for international theorists of biopolitics to present human security as the latest effort to constitute subjects, this time in the global South, 'that contribute to global stability through their good health, employability, competitiveness, productivity and political docility'.[72] This section has suggested that biopolitical forms of control, as well as political realist subordination of class conflict to state power, are two elements of something broader, the rise of the social realm under capitalism. Moreover, as the next section will illustrate, the distinction between the historical rise of the social and the worldliness of public, political action, thus far absent in international theories of biopolitics, offers a distinctive and broader position from which to query human security and suggests what is at stake in the emergence of the transnational management of human needs under worldwide capitalist relations: 'the linkage of politics and life results in an inner contradiction that cancels and destroys what is specifically political about politics'.[73]

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[68] Arendt, *Human Condition*, pp. 35, 69.

[69] Ibid., p. 35.

[70] Ibid., p. 135.

[71] Foucault, *Society Must be Defended*, pp. 239–40; see also Foucault, *History of Sexuality: an Introduction, Volume 1*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage, 1978), p. 139; On the overlaps between Arendt's writing on the social and Foucault's account of biopolitics see Kathrin Braun, 'Biopolitics and Temporality in Arendt and Foucault', *Time and Society*, 16 (2007), pp. 5–23; André Duarte, 'Hannah Arendt, Biopolitics, and the Problem of Violence: From *animal laborans* to *homo sacer*', in Richard H. King and Dan Stone (eds), *Hannah Arendt and the Uses of History: Imperialism, Nation, Race, and Genocide* (Oxford: Berghahn, 2007), pp. 191–204.

[72] Grayson, 'Human Security as Power/Knowledge', p. 395.

[73] Arendt, *The Promise of Politics*, p. 145.

Human security as the social

The discourse of human security emerged, in part, out of dissatisfaction with orthodox conceptions of security and development, the former largely concerned with the power of the state against external risks and threats and the latter synonymous with economic growth in a global capitalist economy. When juxtaposed to state or geopolitical security, human security appeared to be revisionist almost by definition; the intention was to undermine many of the power structures that create humanitarian catastrophe. Much about the effort to move beyond orthodox conceptions of security and development is well meaning and the agenda here is not the reactionary one of merely criticising those seeking to assist those living in abject fear and want. Indeed, to extend a point made about social work in general, it is worth noting that human security 'has a relationship of continuous tension arising from the conflicting roles of maintaining the consensus (and acting as an agent of social control) and on occasions of being involved in conflict and confrontation situations against authority'.[74] Perhaps in the face of capitalism's relentless exploitation of both the natural earth and the public, political world the reformist social work of the human security agenda is the best that can be achieved.

To think about the modern social today means thinking in a context of the dismantling of welfare states, but also of the greater regulation of under-development and violent conflict by global and regional institutions.[75] Given the long history of colonial administration and its heyday in the nineteenth century, forms of social regulation have always been implicated in imperial hierarchy.[76] However, the 'social policies' that provide content to human security interventions take place in a transnational economic and military context in which a greater variety of institutions are involved in its design and implementation. Social forms of governance have become transnational in scope; the relationship between 'social policy' and the state is breaking down. The idea of the 'national economy' that was central to the rise of the social realm in the nineteenth century has given way to an awareness of the greater intensity and consequences of worldwide economic connections. Although governing elites still largely organise public administration based (with some exceptions) on a national and territorial logic 'they no longer conceive of themselves as operating upon a naturally functioning and systematically integrated national population whose "social" coherence is a condition for its economic security'.[77] National and transnational private entities are assuming responsibilities previously viewed as 'public'. Governance has flowed upwards to supranational entities and downwards to local and regional governments. 'The social' is mutating.

For Robert Castel, recall, the primary purpose of all organised social assistance is to maintain or create the greatest possible social harmony, to uphold order and

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[74] Colin Pritchard and Richard K. S. Taylor, *Social Work: Reform or Revolution* (London: Routledge, 1978), p. 1.

[75] Christopher Pierson, *Beyond the Welfare State? The New Political Economy of Welfare* (Cambridge: Polity, 2006).

[76] See, for example, Gayan Prakash, 'The Colonial Genealogy of Society: Community and Political Modernity in India', in Patrick Joyce (ed.), *The Social in Question: New Bearings in History and the Social Sciences* (London: Routledge, 2002), pp. 81–96.

[77] Rose, 'the Death of the Social?', p. 330.

equilibrium. In our context, threats to security and development are no longer seen as unrelated or affecting only the most problematic parts of the earth. Dominant states and their international organisations have sought to intervene and transform other collectivities into societies with a functioning social realm; it is the most effective means of ensuring their ability to govern themselves. From the perspective developed earlier, the 'social' agenda of human security is the continuation of the process of capitalist security management in which the catastrophes created and sustained by imperial hierarchy are contained in the global South. As a result, an uneven global social realm has been conceived as a totality, 'the facsimile of one superhuman family',[78] to borrow Arendt's words, that can be acted upon in the name of social progress. More specifically, human security regulates the life process of parts of the human species by watching over and intervening in the general health and wellbeing of certain populations in need, what the UN refers to as the 'vital core of all human lives'.

There can be little doubt that the protection and sustenance of life processes has become the central function of national and now increasingly global forms of social governance. The institutional growth and acceleration of the human security agenda is partly driven by a logic Arendt identified as crucial to the social realm, its 'irresistible tendency to grow'.[79] It is a cliché that bureaucracy, 'the most social form of government',[80] expands to meet the needs of an expanding bureaucracy. This bureaucracy is constantly produced and reproduced because, recalling Arendt's phenomenology of different human activities, 'the life process itself . . . has been channelled into the public realm'.[81] The multiple and complex threats to human life from unequal access to heath services, food and water, climate change, and economic and military crises demand urgent action into the most basic conditions of human existence. These conditions are 'born of a great urgency', Arendt commented, 'and motivated by a more powerful drive than anything else, because life itself depends on it'.[82] This life sustaining labour is cyclical and repetitive and yet at some point the task of the bureaucratic administrator of social assistance 'is less to keep the life process intact and provide for its regeneration', Arendt warned, 'than to care for the upkeep of the various gigantic bureaucratic machines whose processes consume their services and devour their products as quickly and mercilessly as the biological life process itself'.[83] If the human security agenda can be understood as an expansion of 'the organizational device of the household',[84] then it is not the despotic patriarch, but the bureaucrat, who rules.

The diversity of administrative forms and variety of non-state actors carrying out the human security agenda should be no surprise in light of the particular ontology of the social realm as a hybrid of public and private. None of the formal characteristics identified in Castel's study of social institutions require assistance to be provided by unambiguously 'public' or 'private' actors.[85] Social institutions,

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[78] Arendt, *Human Condition*, p. 29.
[79] Ibid., p. 87.
[80] Ibid., p. 40.
[81] Ibid., p. 45.
[82] Ibid., p. 87.
[83] Ibid., p. 93.
[84] Ibid., p. 40.
[85] As Gilles Deleuze also observed, the social 'leads to a new hybrid form of the public and the private, and itself produces a repartition, a novel interlacing of interventions and withdrawals of the state'.

recall, are those specialised and often professionalised constructions aimed at protecting and integrating members of a perceived collective; increasingly routinised decision-making processes determine who receives assistance; and these practices are 'implicated in the creation of new forms of space'.[86] The panoply of actors involved in the identification, provision, and implementation of human security, the creation of 'humanitarian' space, similarly constitutes a system of governance and all that this implies in terms of 'steering' human societies. Keeping in mind the distinction between different public forms, these humanitarian spaces should be understood as social, rather than political, as concerned with life rather than world.

In a manner comparable to the surveillance and governance of welfare recipients in the core capitalist states, human security workers are tasked with managing populations conceived as dangerous to others and themselves. The pressing task is to create operational procedures for implementing the new security agenda, the accumulated standards of knowledge and ideas about progress, on particular populations. In the administration of human security, populations are divided and segmented into ethnic, gendered, age, national, and regional categories. This system of distinguishing one group from another, Arendt argued, is a 'constituent element of the social realm'.[87] This is social discrimination based on human categories and types, and is necessary when operating on such a large-scale. The problem, Arendt continued, 'is that in society everybody must answer the question of *what* he is – as distinct from … *who* he is'.[88] Recall the discussion of 'what-ness' and 'who-ness', the different social and political subjectivities. Because human security intervenes into different specimens of the human species, it constitutes subjects in the manner of social behaviour rather than political action. Behaviour is routine conduct, regulated and normalised, the following of norms, conventions, and standards created by expert others. The mentalities and modes of conduct required for political action, in contrast, not only reveals a unique 'who-ness', they require the presence of a plurality of others who are equal, but not the same (equality is to the political what sameness is to the social). This plurality underpins the human ability to do more than multiply and sustain the species for the sake of life; it is creative of a public political *world*, an artefact in-between people where it is possible to interrupt and disrupt the repetitiveness of labouring processes and the instrumentality of work.

With the modern rise and transnational expansion of the social – in which management of the life process of dangerous populations is the central function of governance – the distinction between life and world has collapsed. Seen in this light, the defining feature of modernity was not self-alienation, as Marx had it, but world alienation.[89] Worldly political existence is different from the simple fact of living. To live and labour on the earth is not the same as inhabiting a world of

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Deleuze, 'Foreword', p. x. Similarly, for Foucault, liberalism exists 'not from the existence of the state … but rather from society, which is in a complex relation of exteriority and interiority with respect to the state'. Foucault, *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: New Press, 1997), p. 75.

[86] Castel, *From Manual Workers to Wage Laborers*, pp. 16–17.

[87] Arendt, *Men in Dark Times* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, 1968), p. 155.

[88] Ibid.

[89] Arendt, *Human Condition*, p. 254; Jennifer Ring 'On Needing Both Marx and Arendt: Alienation and the Flight from Inwardness', *Political Theory*, 17 (1989), pp. 432–48.

stable institutions and experiences that make political life possible. In the 1950s, Arendt predicted that a new stage of world alienation would emerge from the processes now commonly associated with so-called 'globalisation' and the human security agenda: the 'decline of the European nation-state system; the economic and geographic shrinkage of the earth . . .; the transformation of mankind, which until our own time was an abstract notion or a guiding principle for humanists only, into a really existing entity'.[90] These conditions mark our current stage of world alienation, an era in which global governance, global steering, is a reality – the transnational, uneven, bureaucratic administration of the global life process. 'Just as the family and its property were replaced by class membership and national territory', Arendt observed, 'so mankind now begins to replace nationally bound societies, and the earth replaces the limited state territory'.[91] Arendt was anticipating the extent to which forms of 'social' control would operate through humans as *animal laborans*, how the necessary metabolism with nature of millions could become the concern of an entire architecture of global governance.

Conclusion

Human security discourse has been contentious and there are a variety of criticisms of its effort to broaden and deepen the security field. While many of those involved in the theory and practice of human security are well meaning, this form of intervention upholds rather than fundamentally challenges existing hierarchical structures. The new architecture of global governance build around the concept is intended to prevent disruption to the circulation of global capital and the infliction of mass casualties on the consumer societies of 'the West'.[92] Yet the security/ insecurity cycle continues like the repetitive cycle of the life process itself. This is because much in the human security agenda is a scaling up of a much older phenomenon, the management of the life process of society implicit in the understanding of security required by the modern capitalist state.[93] At the level of philosophical and historical foundation, the human security agenda cannot be radically distinguished from this earlier incarnation. Modern security discourses provide the justification for the expansion of the life of 'society' under capitalism. The human security agenda has become assimilated to 'the life process of society which', Arendt wrote, 'like all biological processes insatiably draws everything available into the cycle of its metabolism'.[94]

Some elements of this assimilation process are found in political realism. The historical relationship between *realpolitik* and *socialpolitik*, identified by Weber, illuminates how 'social' problems need to be subordinated to the requirements of state power and why 'under-development' can become a strategic concern. However, to the extent that political realism merely uses the social for strategic

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[90] Arendt, *Human Condition*, p. 257.
[91] Ibid.
[92] Duffield, *Development, Security and Unending War*.
[93] For a fuller discussion see Owens, 'The Supreme Social Concept: The Un-worldliness of Modern Security', *New Formations*, 71 (2011), pp. 14–29.
[94] Arendt, *Between Past and Future*, p. 207.

ends, it debases the very possibility of meaningful politics; it is simply a legitimated form of domination. This is a description of government under capitalism rather than a theory of politics. Any refusal to tell the story of human security in terms of a simplistic realist dichotomy between securing states (the supposedly old agenda) and securing individuals (the supposedly new one) is to some degree praiseworthy. The concept of biopolitics is useful to the extent that it refuses this dichotomy and also highlights the blurring of the distinction between 'bio' and 'politics' – or better 'life' and 'world' – characteristic of much modern life. However, an account of the rise of the social and the distinction between life and world more specifically suggests what it is about 'life itself' that makes it acquiescent to manipulation and why politics-as-life is fake politics. As Arendt put it, 'human beings in the true sense of the term can exist only where there is a world, and there can be a world in the true sense of the term only where the plurality of the human race is more than a simple multiplication of a single species'.[95] The concept of the social and its life processes does not tell us everything that we need to know about recent changes in the architecture of global governance. But it does suggest that there are real dangers in placing the servicing of life at the centre of politics. Human security is about building collective responsibility, a will to intervene, to protect those in danger. The problem is that 'the larger the population . . . the more likely it will be the social rather than the political that constitutes the public realm'.[96]

[95] Arendt, *Promise of Politics*, p. 176.
[96] Arendt, *Human Condition*, p. 43.