A Human Security Assessment of the U.S.
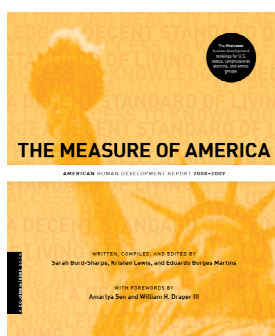

BACKGROUND PAPER COMMISSIONED FOR:

THE MEASURE OF AMERICA
American Human Development Report 2008-2009

Deepayan Basu Ray
Oxford Policy Management

June 2008

June 2008

ABSTRACT

Why has the United States of America, rich in human and natural capital, not been able to create a more safe and harmonious society, and delivered its promise of the 'level playing field' for all? By using the human security framework, this paper looks at the drivers of insecurity in the US, and develops a contextual understanding of the fears and threats experienced by ordinary Americans. The paper first situates the concept of human security within the context of the US. It then looks at some of the specific social conditions that have generated insecurity amongst American citizens. This includes analysis of challenges to personal, community, economic, and political security. The paper concludes with an exploration of a number of policy areas where the application of human security can make positive impacts on the lives of Americans.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

INTRODUCTION

> *"For too long, the concept of security has been shaped by the potential for conflict between states. For too long, security has been equated with the threats to a country's borders. For too long, nations have sought arms to protect their security."*
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> *UNDP Human Development Report 1994 (pg. 3)*

The 20th century witnessed the rapid rise of the United States of America to become the undisputed military and economic superpower of the world. Today, America's economy continues to grow steadily at about 2% per annum[1], and the Per Capita GDP (US$ PPP) is the second highest in the world (US$41,890).[2] The US Dollar continues to be a benchmark for economic value and performance around the world.

The picture inside America however is not quite so promising. Despite low unemployment rates[3], 37 million Americans were living below the poverty line in 2005 – more than 12% of the entire population (DeNavas-Walt et al., pg. 13). In 2007, the US ranked 17th amongst all OECD countries on the human poverty index – a measurement of life expectancy, functional literacy skills, long-term unemployment, and the percentage of the population living below the poverty line.[4] Approximately 12% of the population faces the probability of dying before the age of 60 (27th amongst all high-human development countries)[5]. Americans are still unable to afford key social services such as health-care, further education, and affordable adequate housing. Twenty-three million Americans were victims of crimes including assault, rape, armed robbery, burglary, larceny, and arson (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2006, Table 1). The justice system continues to face fundamental challenges on issues such as racial and ethnic bias, individual rights, privacy laws, the death penalty, and imprisonment[6]. America has the largest prison population – 738 per 100,000 of population – than any other developed country in the world (HDR 2008, p.322). Poor and uneven investment by the federal government has also seen the degradation of critical public infrastructure. The inadequacy of disaster relief in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans in 2005 offers strong evidence of this.

The security situation in the country has also fundamentally changed since the tragic events of September 11th, 2001. The government's aggressive pursuit of measures to safeguard its borders through its controversial "War Against Terrorism" has had a deep impact on the overall security situation both inside and outside of the US. Following nearly five years of aggressive internal security measures, and extensive and expensive military engagements abroad, Americans today are, in many respects, less safe than they were before 9/11. For example, since its introduction on the 12 March 2002, the Homeland Security Advisory System has never fallen below Yellow (Elevated Risk).[7] The US State Department also

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[1] US Department of Commerce, "News Release – Gross Domestic Product: First Quarter 2008 (Preliminary)", Bureau of Economic Analysis, BEA 08-21, p.6
[2] Only Luxembourg is higher - 2005 PPP US$60,228 – UNDP, HDR 2007/8, pp.277
[3] Department of Labour, "The Employment Situation: 2007", http://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/empsit.pdf
[4] UNDP, "HDR 2007/2008", p.241
[5] UNDP, HDR 2007/2008, p. 241
[6] According to the US Census Bureau, nearly 2 million Americans were behind bars in 2000.
[7] Homeland Security, "Chronology of Changes to the Homeland Security Advisory System", 15 June 2007, http://www.dhs.gov/xabout/history/editorial_0844.shtm

continues to issue Worldwide Cautions to American citizens travelling abroad, which outlines potential threats to Americans and American interests all over the world.[8]

How has this happened? How has a country, with so much human and natural capital, not been able to create a safe and harmonious society which strives to create a level playing field for all? Why, amidst so much wealth and potential, is a country seemingly perpetually gripped by fear for its security?

It appears that the policies of the federal government have failed to make America a more secure place. As this paper will argue, much of this failure can be attributed to the government's reticence to engage with a broader concept of security. America's security calculus continues to be governed by the principles of realism – a focus on the state and factors which affect its survival. In the post 9/11 world, America's security has been tied closely with the actions of the US Military in overseas operations. As this paper will show, this approach to addressing (real or perceived) threats to America's security has effectively excluded the concerns of the average American citizen – both individually or as groups and communities. In today's inter-connected world, this approach is inadequate. It does not recognise the multi-dimensionality of security, nor the fundamental fact that security means very many different things to different people.

Through the 1990s, the human security framework has emerged as a counter-balancing idea to the militaristic approach of governments such as the US. Human security identifies areas of policy-engagement which addresses the fears of and threats to ordinary people rather than the state. Until now, human security has predominantly been applied in the analysis of security situations in developing countries because of the prevalence of developmental issues expressed as factors of insecurity. This has typically been characterised by a lack of access to basic necessities such as adequate housing / shelter, food and water, lack of employment and economic opportunities, inadequate health and education systems, gender-based discrimination and violence, persistent conflict and civil war, poor systems of governance, and high levels of corruption.

These fears are not confined to the developing world. The experience of certain sections of society living in the periphery in developed countries can and often does mirror the circumstances of people living in poor countries. Residents of the Projects in Chicago, Compton in Los Angeles, and northern St. Louis could very easily identify with the challenges faced by residents of the *favelas* of Rio de Janeiro, the slums of Johannesburg, and the *bostis* of Dhaka.

The application of the human security framework in developing countries has produced a number of blueprints for policy-reform and government engagement.[9] This framework, when applied to the US, has the potential to reveal a number of new directions for public policy.

This paper will apply the human security framework to the US to develop a contextual understanding of the fears and threats experienced by ordinary Americans. The paper first situates the concept of human security within the context of the US in Chapter 1. This chapter focuses on the value-added elements of this framework, looking at what is necessarily new and different about the approach. A review of the critiques of the human security approach further contextualises the theoretical framework. Finally, this section clarifies the parameters of analysis for the US.

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[8] US Department of State, "Worldwide Caution – January 17, 2008", http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/pa/pa_1161.html
[9] For more information, see Latvia NHDR, Liberia NHDR, Colombia NHDR, Afghanistan NHDR

Chapter 2 explores the problems and limitations of conceptualising security at the national level. In Chapter 3, the paper looks at some of the specific social conditions that have generated insecurity amongst American citizens. This includes analysis of the challenges to personal, community, economic, and political security.

The paper concludes with an exploration of a number of policy areas where the application of human security can have a positive and cost-effective impact on the lives of Americans. From gender-based violence to health care, and from rebuilding confidence in the justice system to the impacts of the 'War on Terror', these policy considerations aim to highlight the inter-connections within peoples' experience of security. If the experiences of other countries that have undergone similar analysis are any benchmark at all, engaging with the ordinary citizen's experience of fear and insecurity will uncover a multitude of new directions for policy makers to consider.

This paper does not attempt to catalogue every element of human insecurity in America. The aim instead is to provide a broad overview of some of the key elements of human security to illustrate the applicability of the framework in developed country contexts. This analysis also aims to offer a number of alternative and broader areas for consideration by security policy-makers in the US.

CHAPTER 1: THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

For most people around the world, the high-level considerations of state-security and defence have very little direct relevance to their lives. For the average citizen of both developing and developed countries, security concerns related to issues such as income, health, community, and personal safety inform their day-to-day lives. Aggregating these security issues and moving them up to be considered by national-level policy makers is very rare, and states tend not to base their actual security policies on these concerns. For instance, the US government mobilises the language and apparatus of security only when the government, the territorial integrity of the country, a significant proportion of the population, or strategic foreign, economic or political interests are threatened.

The task of aggregating the threats perceived by individuals, communities, and groups to inform government policy is admittedly not an easy one. However, it is not impossible. The human security framework is well suited for this task of aggregation.

The human security concept has its roots in the human development agenda. First introduced in 1990 by the inaugural Human Development Report[10] and the related human development index, human development is best defined as "both the process of widening people's choices and the levels of their achieved well being. Human development should focus on the three essential elements of human life – longevity, knowledge, and decent living standards" (UNDP, 1990: p.10-12). As a result, the human development approach links the achievement of poverty reduction to the simultaneous improvement of factors such as education and health.

The most fundamental problem with the human development approach is that it does not deal with people's experience of insecurity. As such, the concept of human security has emerged as a parallel framework to human development, arguing that the concept of security has "been interpreted narrowly: as security of territory from external aggression, or as protection of national interests in foreign policy, or as global security from a nuclear holocaust. It has been related more to nation states than to people" (UNDP, 1994, pg. 22).

The 1994 Human Development Report widened this narrow concept of security and specifically included the safety of individuals and groups from such threats as hunger, disease and political instability; and protection from "sudden and hurtful disruptions in patterns of daily life". The report went on to identify seven core elements that, when addressed together, reflect the basic needs of human security: economic security, food security, health security, environmental security, personal security, community security and political security (Jolly & Basu Ray, 2006, pg. 4). Each of these core elements can be further categorised into two categories of action – 'Freedom from Fear' and 'Freedom from Want'. To achieve Freedom from Fear requires addressing personal, community, political, environmental and health security considerations. To achieve Freedom from Want requires focusing on economic and food security.

Human security is thus an analytical concept based on four key premises: it is contextual, inter-connected, people-centred, and multi-dimensional. The following brief exploration into the characteristics of each of these premises is necessary to clarify how the framework fits together, and more importantly, what is new and different about this approach.

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[10] The human development paradigm and subsequent Human Development Reports was pioneered by the late Mahbub ul-Haq, and more recently, Amartya Sen.

Contextual analysis:
Strategies that have worked in securing peace in one part of the world are very unlikely to be successful when applied to other situations. That hasn't stopped the international community from relying on the same formula for international action – first condemnation, then sanctions, then military action. One of the most important elements of any theoretical and action framework is the ability to set the parameters of analysis based on the specific socio-political, economic, and cultural conditions on the ground.

The human security approach derives parameters of analysis directly from conditions on the ground rather than working within the confines of a pre-determined theoretical framework. For instance, human security analysis conducted in Sierra Leone[11] identifies poor governance and mis-management of natural resources as key causes of the civil war (UNDP, 1998, pg. 45). In Latvia, human security analysis identifies economic and political drivers of insecurity in the country.[12] In these cases, other theoretical frameworks such as conflict analysis (for Sierra Leone) and political economy analysis (for Latvia) prove inadequate. Therefore, by being flexible in the process of determining *what* causes insecurity, this framework is able to engage directly with the problem without having to omit any key factors that may not fit another theoretical model's framework.

Inter-connected analysis:
Human security analysis recognises that often, several factors combine to create conditions of insecurity in any given situation. In response, this framework strives to identify the related factors that constitute a particular condition. For instance, Bangladesh has widely been considered a very corrupt country. Most international aid interventions have focused on judicial and governance reform in the country. However, human security research has shown that tackling corruption in Bangladesh also requires sustained investments in education, police reform, social assistance structures, and the provision of economic opportunities.[13] Therefore, by identifying networks of connections that create particular situations, the human security framework is able to generate a contextual and substantial 'check-list' for policy-making.

People-centred analysis:
The majority of discussions about security involve states, government agencies, and military forces. On the other hand, human security is, first and foremost, about the individual. As discussed by Jolly and Basu Ray, "Human security represents an effort to re-conceptualize security in a fundamental manner. It is primarily an analytical tool that focuses on ensuring security for the individual, not the state. Exploring options aimed at mitigating threats to the insecurity of individuals thus becomes a central goal of policy recommendations and actions" (Jolly and Basu Ray. 2006. pg. 5).

One of the key benefits of this level of analysis is that it is easier to aggregate individual concerns and move them up to the state than it is to do the reverse – i.e. identifying a 'national security' problem and disaggregating the impacts successfully down to the individual. The state security calculus usually fails to disaggregate downwards, which in turn

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[11] UNDP. 1998. '*Sierra Leone Human Development Report 1998: From Civil Conflict to Human Security'*. Freetown.
[12] The factors of insecurity are identified through a 2-round sample survey and ranking exercise of individual experiences and perceptions of insecurity. UNDP. 2003. '*Latvia Human Development Report 2002/2003: Human Security'*. Riga.
[13] UNDP. 2002. '*Bangladesh Human Security Report 2002:In Search of Justice and Dignity'*. Dhaka.

leads to an unbalanced policy-focus on national solutions rather than ones which focus on individual security. For instance, in Canada, the excessive strain on the country's free health care system has affected the quality of individual experiences. By making the sustenance of the health care system an issue of national security, the government has to divert investments from other considerations traditionally deemed to be in the interest of national security. This change in policy direction could have a fundamental and direct impact on Canadians, and improve their perceptions of security. On the other hand, disaggregating the threat of a missile attack on Canada down to the ordinary people will be a much more difficult task. What is interesting, however, is that the cost of significantly bolstering the health care system is roughly the same as Canada's participation in the Missile Defence Shield proposed by the US. The impact of investment in the former would have a direct resonance on the lives of Canadian citizens, whereas the individual gains achieved by the development of the missile defence shield, though important in its own right, would be much harder to gauge.

Multi-dimensional analysis:

Traditional security analysis considered threats to states as the most important area of focus. The security calculus was based on a zero-sum outcome, with gains on one side coming only as a result of losses on the other. This 'realist' approach to security governed the relationship between the US and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics from the onset of the Cold War in the 1950s until the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. Since the early 1990's, however, this approach has come under increasing scrutiny. With the ever-widening acceptance of the human development approach, the power-politics approach to understanding the world today has been found to be lacking. A realist framework only considers national threats to security, which although not necessarily 'wrong', is often imprecise, overlooking key factors that would be obvious from a more nuanced perspective.

The human security approach fundamentally changes this calculation of threats and responses. Threats to territorial integrity, issues surrounding political stability, military and defence arrangements, and economic and financial activities no longer define the breadth and extent of security concerns. Human security analysis widens the range of threats to include socio-economic and political conditions, food security, health, and environmental, community and personal safety. Thus, this framework adopts a holistic approach to understanding the drivers of insecurity, and enables the definition of the parameters to be dictated by contextual factors.

The 'value added' of this approach:

Human security analysis can be applied in most situations of perceived or real insecurity. Of-course there are limitations to the efficacy of this framework – like all other theoretical approaches. In cases where state security is being threatened directly by the actions of another state actor – such as Iraq's occupation of Kuwait and the resulting Gulf War in 1991 – traditional security analysis can offer the most insightful analysis. However, even in these cases, additional analysis of the wider socio-political, economic or environmental security dimensions is still helpful.

Human security analysis is particularly strong in the analysis and identification of policy alternatives when considering all forms of conflict in the post-Cold War global order. Most instances of conflict and war since the beginning of the 1990s have not involved two countries' armies. Rather, they have been characterised by violent resistance to established structures of the state – as explained by Mary Kaldor in her 'new wars' thesis.[14] She

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[14] Kaldor, M. 2001. "*Beyond Militarism, Arms Races and Arms Control.*" Paper prepared for the Nobel Peace Prize Centennial Symposium. Social Science Research Council. http://www.ssrc.org/sept11/essays/kaldor.htm

contends that conflict in the era of globalisation represents the erosion of the autonomy of the nation-state, whereby the very legitimacy of those structures of governance is called into question.[15] Therefore, any theoretical framework that does not account for the root causes which lead to conflict will not be able to develop successful policy mechanisms.

Thus, human security's value-added is that it is a very malleable approach. Security concerns identified by this approach send a clear message to policy makers – that ordinary citizens do not necessarily agree with the government's prioritization of factors of insecurity. This conclusion is supported by a number of UNDP reports that have conducted analysis of insecurity through the human security framework in a number of different countries.[16]

In addition, unlike traditional theories of conflict analysis, human security is as relevant to developing countries as it is to the US. By focusing on individuals *within* the community, human security is able to identify a new list of priorities for policy actions.

Some have argued that human security is essentially taking existing problems and re-labelling them as something else. This may be true, but only to a certain extent. At the outset, the process of labelling a problem or crisis as a security threat serves to move the issue up the ladder of political importance, which in turn enables more attention and resources to be channelled into the mitigation of the problem or crisis. As noted by Eyben and Moncrieffe, only the most powerful actors tend to have the ability to label and determine how particular issues and categories of people are regarded and subsequently treated (Eyben and Moncrieffe, 2005: p.2). This process is also referred to as 'securitization'. When left unchallenged, securitisation has had disastrous consequences. The securitisation of immigration issues has resulted in the recent introduction of a number of draconian laws in the United Kingdom and Australia. The securitisation of development in the US has necessitated the involvement of its military in development-related projects in Afghanistan and Iraq.

The human security approach aims to influence processes of securitisation to include real and perceived threats experienced by people and communities who do not have the ability to influence the political agenda. This is done in two ways, (a) by identifying and labelling new sources of threats to security, and (b) by concurrently harnessing the processes of securitisation to ensure similarly nuanced policy responses to mitigate these threats.

As a result of this approach, human security marginalises the use of military means to achieve its objectives. Instead, the innovative use of economic and political policy tools represent a far better opportunity to address most security threats. These policy tools aim to address the root causes, and thus aim to achieve a longer, more sustainable resolution to the security threat.

Policy makers have frequently questioned the efficacy of the human security approach. They have claimed that it is impossible to develop a coherent national framework based on aggregating individual perceptions of fear and insecurity (Carafano, 2006, pg.13). This criticism demonstrates the reticence of the traditional security community to acknowledge the fact that the concept of security is not in the sole interest of the state. National security – in its current manifestation – is a deeply flawed, misguided, non-representative, and often patronising approach to understanding security. It fundamentally seeks to protect the interests of elites and powerful sections of society and government while disregarding the

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[15] Ibid
[16] See Jolly and Basu Ray (2006) for a review of 13 UNDP National Human Development Reports which have used human security as the basis of their analysis.

experiences of ordinary citizens. It follows the long tradition of protecting the property and security of elites, long after displacing them from their earlier eminent positions.

Analytical framework for US Human security analysis:
On average, Americans enjoy a very good standard of living. The US is consistently ranked in the top five by the UNDP's annual human development indices. However, this story is quite deceptive. Despite being the richest country in the world, the US has not been able to take care of all its citizens equally. As the Human Development Reports show, the percentage of Americans affected by human poverty and deprivation is higher than all but two other developed countries in the world (HDR 2007/2008: pg.241). Greater numbers of Americans are unable to afford social services and health care. There are increasing incidences of gender-based violence, racial tension, and corruption affecting police and the judiciary. Deprived areas continue to experience a severe lack of investment in both infrastructure and services, as witnessed by the insufficient levee protection system in New Orleans in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. The gulf between the rich and the poor continues to grow, and has a negative impact on education standards and incidences of unemployment. US foreign policy has also managed to create a climate of constant fear within the country. This has lead to the introduction of draconian laws and policing measures and has resulted in severe challenges to civil liberties and the freedoms of its citizens.

Therefore, the challenge is to develop a framework that addresses the security fears of citizens as well as the state itself. This paper applies a human security analysis to four core experiences of insecurity in the US – personal security, community security, economic security, and political security.

Personal Security:
The direct experience of individual insecurity is the most logical place to begin a human security analysis of the US. Personal security can and does mean many things to many people. As noted earlier, this paper does not intend to be exhaustive in its consideration of all personal security issues prevalent in the US. The focus is instead on those questions which do not get adequate exposure in mainstream analyses of insecurity in the US. As such, this paper considers threats emanating from perceptions and experiences of violence and crime, and gender-based violence and related forms of gender-based discrimination as the two key elements of personal security in the US.

Community Security:
The second level of analysis focuses on communities of individuals, and the drivers of insecurity found within and about these communities. As such, this paper considers the unique demographic make-up and the experience of immigrant communities, and the degradation of protective infrastructure and environmental insecurity as the main threats to community security.

Economic Security:
The third level of analysis looks at economic security – a particularly important consideration in light of the US' economic power, and also the impact of the economic downturn in 2008. This paper considers the experiences of poverty and the inter-generational transmission of inequalities, and the overly expensive and inaccessible health-care system as the main threats to economic security in the US.

Political Security:
The fourth level of analysis looks at political processes and issues of representation. Increasingly, as this paper will demonstrate, Americans are feeling politically disenfranchised from issues of national significance. In particular, perceptions of inadequate judicial

protection and lack of due process, the impacts of policies associated with homeland security, and the local impact of the US's global war on terror are the three key elements of political security in the US.

Analysis of these four key elements of human security in America will help to identify a number of areas of policy action and reform which have hitherto not been explored in the context of security considerations. Securitising these issues moves them beyond the domain of political debate and discussions. The positive impact of this is that concessions made in the name of special interests or political bargaining are immediately ruled out, and the issues are considered in their entirety. The negative impact of this approach is that the potential to distort the goals and rationale for undertaking this strategy are very high.[17] As has already been noted, the process of securitisation offers a number of opportunities to effect positive change – so long as the negative consequences are substantively addressed.

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[17] For discussions on the distortion of human security approaches, please see Jolly and Basu Ray (2006).

CHAPTER 2: CONCEPTUALISING THE US'S NATIONAL / DOMESTIC / HUMAN –SECURITY NEEDS

In the post Cold-War period, security concerns in developing countries have been understood to be quite different from those in richer countries. In developing countries, the condition of citizens has frequently been a key factor in the analysis of insecurity. For example, the experience of insecurity in Afghanistan has been attributed to both conflict-related issues (i.e. militias and clan-warfare, drugs, and the proliferation of small arms) and socio-economic factors such as unemployment, levels of poverty, health risks, and lack of education. Aid agencies in Afghanistan have been forced to incorporate holistic approaches to address the security concerns of the population. The UK Government's 2006 White Paper on International Development has recognised the need for multi-dimensionality when addressing drivers of insecurity. The policy states clearly that eliminating conflict and insecurity requires simultaneous action on both conflict issues (freedom from fear) as well as the provision of basic needs of the population (freedom from want).[18]

In contrast, assessing security threats of rich countries has been a completely different exercise. Most rich countries continue to follow a state-based approach to defining security, focusing on perceived threats to territorial integrity or economic interests. The most common drivers of insecurity among rich countries tend to focus exclusively on external threats such as rogue states, terrorist networks, and regional conflict which have the potential to 'spill over' and compromise their strategic or economic interests.

The security of rich countries has also frequently been linked to the security and stability of the rest of the world. On occasion, addressing security and conflict concerns in many parts of the developing world has been done with the sole focus of ensuring the protection of the West and not those caught up in the conflict. The 2006 US National Security Strategy recognises that the US's security is closely tied to instability in other parts of the world. In order to protect American interests, the NSS concludes that it may be necessary to intervene forcefully overseas (The White House, 2006). The former UK Secretary of State for International Development Hilary Benn also noted that insecure environments around the world can have fundamental impacts on perceptions of security in rich countries (Benn, 2004).

This rationale has been visible in a number of cases of western intervention, particularly that of Afghanistan. The international community forcefully deposed the Taliban government, who were believed to have aided the perpetrators of the 9/11 attacks. The call to action in this case was based upon the moral duty to remove a repressive and totalitarian regime that ruled its citizens through fear, corruption, and acts of brutal violence. It is however worth mentioning the existence of evidence which puts forward a very different rationale for intervention – that of protecting western security and economic interests in the region[19]. Had the actions of the international community been solely virtuous, the same altruistic reasoning for intervention should have also been applied to crisis situations in Sudan, Cote d'Ivoire, Rwanda, and many others. In essence, one could argue that because these countries have not directly affected security in the west, they remain a low priority for international engagement.

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[18] DFID, 2006, "*Eliminating world poverty: making governance work for the poor*", London, UK,
[19] BBC. 2002. "Afghanistan plans gas pipeline". Monday, 13 May, 2002.
http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/business/1984459.stm

Given these geo-political and strategic considerations for the definition of security, it is no wonder that policy makers generally assume internal threats emanating from issues of want and need do not necessarily pose acute threats to security. As a result, there is little or no policy focus on micro-level drivers of insecurity such as poverty, a lack of social security, political disenfranchisement, domestic and gender-based violence, and environmental insecurity.

This approach to conceptualising security has been the backbone of America's national security strategy after the 9/11 attacks. Since then, addressing terrorist threats, and the risk posed by states (such as Iraq, Iran and North Korea) perceived as sympathetic to anti-American causes has been the sole preoccupation of some policy makers. Foreign policy institutions such as diplomatic missions, overseas financial aid agencies, and even the US military have increasingly adopted the language of the War on Terror. Even internal institutions such as the judiciary and police forces have been 'transformed' to meet the new challenges and responsibilities associated with this strategy.

The 2002 National Security Strategy (NSS-02) states that America's "best defence is a good offence" (White House, 2002: pg.6). In order to make Americans safe, this strategy looks to strengthen international alliances, undertake pre-emptive military action against both state and non-state actors to eliminate potential threats, and expand the reach of democracy and the free market. The subsequent 2006 National Security Strategy (NSS-06) continues to focus on issues of terrorism and failed/fragile states, and does not offer any fundamental shifts in policy from the 2002 iteration. In fact, the NSS-06 is unequivocal in its belief that the plan "…is the best way to provide enduring security for the American people" (White House, 2006: p1). Critiques of the strategy however note that the updated strategy "…continues to confuse pre-emption with preventive war, emphasizes the unachievable goal of "ending tyranny" completely throughout the world, and fails to make a realistic assessment of the threats to [US] security" (Korb & Wadhams, 2006: p1). In addition, the execution of this strategy has further entrenched a negative image of America both at home and abroad. The majority of Americans (66%) feel that the US was now less respected by the international community (Pew, 2005: p.10). Most Americans also feel that the strategy is now becoming the very cause of America's insecurity (Ibid: p.11).

The national security approach in America focuses exclusively on external sources of threats to America's territorial and economic security. There is no doubt that these are indeed important considerations for the US Government to engage with. However, to assume that these external sources are the only threats posed to the US's security is overlooking the day-to-day experiences of the average American. Since 2006, American perceptions of what constitutes the most important problem facing the country have changed. Forty-two per cent of Americans identified socio-economic issues such as the state of the economy, health care, the cost of energy, immigration, unemployment, social security, education, and poverty as the most pressing issues facing the country (Pew Research Centre, 2007b: p.5).

The focus on the 'big' global problems has meant that comparatively 'little' individual problems have been routinely neglected, or in some instances exacerbated by security policy analysts. The dominant focus on matters of national security has meant that institutions such as the judiciary have become increasingly inaccessible to ordinary Americans. For instance, provisions passed under the Patriot Act[20] have severely curbed civil liberties such the laws of privacy and possession, and given the judiciary and the police powers to suspend human rights when deemed necessary. As a result, confidence in some of these institutions has

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[20] "Highlights of the USA Patriot Act", US Department of Justice
<http://www.lifeandliberty.gov/highlights.htm>

diminished amongst most Americans. Perception surveys have illustrated this growing discontent. In 2004, half of all Americans (50%) believed that civil liberties did not need to be sacrificed to combat terrorism, up from 39% in January 2002 (Pew Research Centre, 2003: p.73). Gallup polls from June 2007 showed a mere 19% of Americans had a "Great deal/Quite a lot" of confidence in the criminal justice system (Gallup, 2007a). As the next chapter goes on to argue, these micro-level considerations *within* the US are beginning to once again fundamentally impact people's perceptions of the country's national security.

A human security focus enables policy makers to examine a number of different drivers of insecurity. The aggregation of these human security components effectively generates an alternative narrative to traditional national security considerations. A good example of this is the changing nature of what Americans identify as the most pressing problem facing the country. As the importance of international threats start to diminish, the focus turns more to national and local drivers of insecurity. For instance, 24% of Americans believed terrorism to be the most important problem facing the country in March 2002 (Pew Research Centre, 2007b: p9). That dropped to 6% in September 2007 (Ibid). On the other hand, in September 2007, 46% of Americans believed that socio-economic[21] issues were the most important problems facing the country compared to just 32% in March 2002 (Ibid). This change in public perceptions is not mirrored by government policy, and can potentially offer one explanation of the steadily decreasing approval ratings of the current Bush administration – only 37% of Americans stating a favourable opinion of the federal government in May 2008 (Pew Research Centre, 2008b: p.1).

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[21] The Socio-Economic categories included: Economy; Health care/costs; Energy Costs/Rising gas/heating prices; Immigration; Dissatisfaction with govt/politics; Unemployment/Lack of jobs; Social Security; Education; Inflation/Difference in Wages/Costs; Poverty/Hunger/Starvation; Environment/pollution/Global warming; Crime/Gangs/Justice system; and Youth.

CHAPTER 3: HUMAN SECURITY IN THE US

This chapter looks at the key drivers of insecurity that emerge from the 'little' problems. The collection of threats shown here is by no means exhaustive. These particular drivers are considered because within the rubric of human security, they paint a fundamentally different snapshot than what traditional security analysis considers to be viable security issues in America. By securitising these drivers of insecurity and moving them higher on the list of political, governmental and societal priority, the potential to transform perceptions of fear becomes a very real possibility.

Personal Security:
There are a number of issues that affect personal security for Americans. The purpose of this human security review is two-fold: (a) to identify and analyse those drivers which impact the perception and experience of insecurity of individuals or a group, and (b) to assess the repercussions that these experiences have on society at large. As a result, this section on personal security issues focuses on crime and its impacts on society, and on gender-based drivers of insecurity. The realist approach to policy-making ignores crime unless it directly affects national security - i.e. crimes against the state. Human security analyses focuses on the crimes of one citizen against another, and therefore does a better job at understanding both individual insecurity and the resulting social impact.

Crime:
In 2005, an estimated 23 million US residents aged 12 or over were victims of violent and property related crimes, according to the National Crime Victimization Survey (Catalano, 2006: p.1). Violent personal crime accounted for 23% of all crime in the US in 2005 (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2006: Table 1). Twenty four percent of all incidents of violent crime were committed by an armed offender, including 9% by an offender with a firearm (Catalano, 2006: p.1). The rate of firearm violence increased between 2004 and 2005, from 1.4 to 2.0 victimizations per 1,000 persons aged 12 or over (Ibid). A staggering 2,193,798 prisoners were held in Federal or State prisons or in local jails at the end of 2005 - an increase of 2.7% from year-end 2004 (Harrison, 2006: p.1). This is the highest total in both absolute figures as well as percentages - 738 per 100,000 of population – anywhere in the world (HDR 2007/2008: p.322). The next closest country is China, which has nearly four times the total population of America, and only 118 prisoners per 100,000 of population (Ibid: p323). The percentage of female prisoners in America – 9% of total prison population in 2007 – is also the highest amongst all OECD countries (Ibid: p.322). Only 10 countries[22] worldwide have a larger percentage of women in their prisons (Ibid).

Given these statistics, it is easy to understand why most Americans (71%) feel that incidences of crime are up nationally – despite actual rates of violent crime having been in decline since the 1990s (Gallup, 2007b). This negative perception further reinforces the lack of confidence with the criminal justice system because, as noted by Blumenthal, the justice system's rulings and actions seem out of line with the lay-person's own notions and perceptions (Blumenthal, 2007: p6). It also feeds into the perceptions of a firm majority of Americans (65% in 2004) that the country is "not tough enough on crime" (Gallup, 2004).

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[22] The 10 countries with a larger percentage of women in prison are: Maldives (22%), Hong Kong, China (SAR) (20%), Myanmar (18%), Thailand (17%), Kuwait (15%), Viet Nam (12%), Singapore (11%), United Arab Emirates (11%), Ecuador (11%), and Lao People's Democratic Republic (11%). (HDR, 2007/2008: p.322-325)

Another key question that has been at the forefront of debate has been gun control. According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics, firearms were used in 70% of murders in 2005 (Catalano, 2006: p.2). This problem has started to affect all levels of society, as evidenced by the increasingly deadly shootings in schools and universities in the past ten years. More than 75 students and teachers have lost their lives in school shootings since 1997.[23] The active gun lobby in the US has been preaching restraint on the part of gun-owners, but statistics on crime and murder in the country clearly points to the need of much stronger governmental control and regulations. Although the majority of Americans (59%) continue to oppose a ban on the sale of handguns, most Americans (58%) continue to say that in general it is more important to control gun ownership than to protect the rights of gun owners (Pew Research Centre, 2008b: p.1). Those most in favour of stricter laws include women (66% support stricter gun laws), those living in urban areas (67%), those with postgraduate educations (69%), liberals (70%), Democrats (72%), and those who do not have a gun in the home (70%) (Gallup, 2007c). The need for policy and action to stop the proliferation of small arms has never been greater. The degree of ease with which firearms are available in America is undoubtedly a major source of personal insecurity in the country.

Gender-based drivers of insecurity:
Women in America experience many different forms of insecurity, ranging from physical and sexual violence to insecurity stemming from being undermined, undervalued, and underpaid in the work-place and society. Gender-based insecurity has not received adequate attention from policy makers. The impact of gender-biases has had a profound impact on the lives of women in America. The problem starts right at the top, with low levels of political representation and leadership in both the Congress and the Senate. High rates and incidences of gender-based violence, and inadequate and unfair employment policies (which include maternity leave entitlements) are just two examples of institutional failures to address gender-based drivers of insecurity in America.

The US ranks 83rd in the world in women's political representation. In 2007, American women held 16.3% of seats in the House of Representatives, ranking the US 22nd out of the 30 OECD countries (HDR 2007/2008: p343). Women in Afghanistan (27.3%) and Iraq (25.5%) are better represented in their respective political systems than women in the US (Ibid).

Domestic violence is still a major issue today. One in every 320 households were affected by "intimate partner" violence in 2005.[24] About seven in ten female rape or sexual assault victims stated that the offender was an intimate partner, other relative, a friend or an acquaintance.[25] In 2001, women accounted for 85% of the victims of intimate partner violence (BJS, 2003). Women were five times more likely than men to be victims of 'simple assault'[26] by intimate partners, three times more likely to be victims of robbery, and twice as likely to be victims of aggravated assault (Ibid). Thirty-nine per cent of American women have at some point in their lives been physically or sexually assaulted (Collins et al, 1999: p. 7). Nearly one in five women in America is reported to have been raped or sexually assaulted in their lifetime (Ibid: p.8).

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[23] BBC. "*Timeline – US School Shootings*". http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/americas/4371403.stm
[24] Bureau of Justice Statistics, "Crime Characteristics", http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/cvict_c.htm#intimate
[25] Ibid
[26] The Department of Justice defines "Simple Assault" to include threats, attempts and attacks without weapons that resulted in at most minor injuries. http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/pub/press/ipv01pr.htm

Whatever the reason, the institutional response to address specific gender-based experiences of insecurity in the US has been inadequate. One of the most glaring areas where this problem has been highlighted is the confidence of female victims of gender-based violence to turn to public institutions for assistance. In 2005, only 38% of rape and sexual assault cases (176,540 cases) were reported to the police (Catalano, 2005, pg. 10). A simple extrapolation based on this percentage would put the actual figure of cases of rape and sexual assault at well over 440,000 for that year alone. In addition, the US Department of Justice also noted that many more cases of assault on women were also reported and not specifically categorised as sexual assault or rape (Ibid). Although the overall number of sexual assaults has dropped by 22% since 2000, the percentage of sexual assaults that are reported to the police rose to an average of 42% in the last five years (Ibid).

Another gender-based driver of personal insecurity stems from the role of women in America's workforce. Whereas women made up nearly 47% of the American adult labour force in 2003, their share of part-time work was 68%.[27] Average estimated annual incomes for 2006 showed that women earned nearly a third less than men (HDR, 2006, pg. 363). Not only did women work longer each day when compared to men, they also had the added responsibilities of engaging in non-market related work[28] – which accounted for 63% of their time (Ibid. pg. 379). These statistics continue to reflect the difficulties women face in earning a living while simultaneously undertaking domestic and caring responsibilities.

An added complication for working women in the US is the length of maternity leave provided to expectant mothers. In 2005, women were entitled to 12 weeks of unpaid maternity leave, the lowest amongst all OECD countries[29]. American women also receive no institutionalised financial assistance during this period. Shockingly, this entitlement was the same as Haiti, Bangladesh, and Gambia, but even in these poorer countries, employers pay women100% of their wages during this period.[30] American women's entitlement is also less than Cuba, Mali, and Viet Nam where state-based social security provides the coverage and pays 100% of their wages during the period.[31]

These experiences and trends point to three very specific messages for the policy community. Firstly, there needs to be a greater focus on providing support to victims of gender-based crimes and violence by way of targeted assistance. Policy makers must ensure that the courts and police are more accessible in order to report such cases and that victims always have access to better social and psychological assistance in the aftermath. These facilities should not be dependent on the wealth of neighbourhoods whereby richer communities receive better or more assistance than poorer communities (Hope, 2005). Secondly, policy makers must continue to focus on prevention of gender-based violence through education, and ensuring that justice is served for both the offenders and the victims. Finally, the federal government must take steps to bring maternity pay in line with (at the very least) other OECD countries, and continue to strengthen 'equal-pay for equal work' legislation.

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[27] DESA, 2006, pp. 150

[28] Non-Market activities refers to work that is done at home without pay (Burda et al, 2007, pg. 2)

[29] Countries like Australia and Norway gave 52 weeks of maternity leave, and most other OECD countries averaged between 14-18 weeks. Only Mexico was tied with the US at the lowest end of the scale at just 12 weeks (DESA, 2006, pg. 148-154)

[30] DESA, 2006, pg. 148-154

[31] Ibid.

Community Security:

Collective experiences of insecurity are, arguably, the foundation of most national security policies in the rich countries of the world. Unfortunately, it is often the dominant interests of economic or political elites that shape policy initiatives on collective or community security. Much of the collective apprehension toward insecurity felt by a range of different communities in the US is routinely neglected. The analysis in this section focuses on the very demographic makeup of the US, and the experience of the diverse immigrant communities that make up America's social fabric. This section also looks at environmental security and the impact of environmental policy on communities across the US.

Demography and Immigrant Communities:

The American population is made up of a large number of diverse ethnic communities. These communities exist and thrive because of the US's history of progressive immigration policies. The flow of immigrants to the country remains vital to its economic and social evolution. Since 2000, nearly 8 million immigrants have come to the US, taking the total immigrant population to over 35 million in 2005 (Camarota, 2005, pg. 1). Today, 12% of the American population is Black, a further 12% is Hispanic, 3.5% are Asian, and less than 1% is American Indian and Native Alaskan (US Census Bureau, 2001, Table DP-1).

Many of the immigrant communities often maintain strong economic, social, and cultural links with their countries of origin. This relationship is sometimes strained under US foreign, economic, or military policy – as was the case with the Somali community in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks. Members of the Somali Diaspora were engaged in sending remittances to family members still in Somalia through a range of money transfer organisations. In 2001, fearing that these companies were being used to channel money to terrorist networks in Africa and Asia, the US government forced the closure of two of the largest remittance firms, the Somalia Internet Company and al-Barakaat[32]. Whether or not the strategic objectives of these actions were achieved is ambiguous. What was immediately obvious was that a very large percentage of Somalia's urban families[33] were suddenly cut off from a vital lifeline, and the Somali immigrant community in the US were powerless to assist their relatives. These communities were undoubtedly under considerable stress until these lines of communication and assistance were re-established. In this instance, American foreign policy was the driver of this immigrant community's insecurity.

The existence of large immigrant communities within the US has a significant impact on the perceptions of insecurity amongst US-born citizens as well. If any member of these communities is threatened, feels insecure, or is in fact the perpetrator of insecurity themselves, the potential to internationalise the situation is great. Nowhere was this more evident than in the recent shootings at the Virginia Tech campus in April 2007. The gunman was identified as a South Korean citizen with US permanent residential status. Within hours of the incident, the South Korean cabinet had issued statements condemning the attack and noting that South Korean immigrants were hard working and peaceful contributors to US society. [34] Furthermore, the South Korean foreign minister announced that safety measures had also been established for Koreans living in the US – for fear of reprisals.[35]

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[32] BBC. "*US shuts down Somalia internet*". http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/1672220.stm

[33] The World Bank estimated nearly 40% of all urban households in Mogadishu and Hargasia depend on financial remittances from family members abroad (Maimbo, 2006)

[34] "Korea fears prejudice with shooting link," Associated Press. 17 April 2007, <http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/20070417/ap_on_re_as/virginia_tech_skorea>

[35] Ibid.

Environmental security:
In addition to ecological considerations, the environment encompasses diverse issues such as the state of urban housing and air quality and drinking water. Environmental security focuses on the unequal distribution of risks and dangers among different socio-economic groups. Invariably, poorer communities, as a group, are faced with greater environmental security concerns. As the following examples illustrate, this generates acute local problems relating to preventative capacity, adaptation, and mitigation of crises, and ultimately, these environmental problems threaten national environmental security.

Toxic industries have faced opposition from many quarters of civil society, but more so if they are based near inhabited areas. For instance, residents of the Kennedy Heights community in Houston, Texas, are suing Chevron. They accuse the company of polluting the land on which they live back in the 1960s prior to selling it to a developer[36]. Another example was when in 1994, community groups in the Bronx managed to shut down a hazardous medical waste incinerator which they claimed was built because the Bronx was a poor neighbourhood.[37] As these cases highlight, not only do these industries have the potential to damage the ecosystem, they can also affect the quality of life for local residents, adding unknown threats to their health and well being.

Almost invariably, these neighbourhoods have turned out to be poor. Given that the initial establishment of many of these industries were supported by political and economic elites, the decisions on their location should come as no surprise. The presence of these industries has only further compounded the insecurity of the most vulnerable members of society. Poor neighbourhoods have also been forced to live alongside inadequate and crumbling public protection infrastructure such as dams, levees, and flood-defences. The aftermath of Hurricane Katrina brought the dangers of continued under-investment of this infrastructure into sharp focus.

The lack of attention to potential environmental problems faced by poor neighbourhoods in New Orleans enabled developers to build on wetlands that abutted many of these communities. After those wetlands had been paved over, the storm surge caused by Hurricane Katrina completely devastated both poor neighbourhoods and nearby rich ones. The damage inflicted by the hurricane also threatened the oil industry, causing millions of individual and insurance company losses. As a result, failure to address environmental concerns of the poor communities in New Orleans ultimately threatened not only the poor communities themselves, but also the national economic output and the long-term energy security of America itself.

The White House published a detailed report on events preceding and following Katrina, but failed to acknowledge that much of the damage could have been minimised had the requisite amount of funding been allocated toward the upkeep of the levees (White House, 2006). Former Louisiana Governor Kathleen Blanco said recently that "for years, Louisiana has been begging the federal government to invest in strengthening our levee system and

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[36] CNN. "Houston residents sue Chevron over health problems",
http://www.cnn.com/US/9705/26/toxic.controversy/index.html
[37] Halbfinger, D.M. 1997. "*Closed Incinerator in Bronx To Be Replaced by Sterilizer*". New York Times, 10 July 1997; and Kennedy, R. 1994. "*Illegal Emissions Add Fuel To Battle Over Incinerator*". New York Times, 20 February 1994.

rebuilding our wetlands. These investments will protect life and property. Unfortunately, the storms served as a far more expensive demonstration project proving we were right".[38]

In 2004, when the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers asked for $22.5 million to make emergency repairs to the storm protection system in New Orleans, the White House cut that figure to $3.9 million.[39] Over the same time-period, it was found that over US$30 million was also mis-managed by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) in Louisiana. The government would regret these decisions and oversights bitterly the following year.

A focus on environmental security as a blueprint for action would ensure that vital infrastructure such as dams and levees, and other forms of flood defences, were not compromised. As the world's climate becomes increasingly more volatile, it is imperative that appropriate preventative measures are taken to mitigate the negative impact of any crisis that may occur in communities within America – particularly among poor and vulnerable communities.

Economic Security:

Economic security in the US looks at specific causes of vulnerability in the context of the world's richest country. These drivers are core systemic and institutional features of American society which require further analysis.   The American economy is one of the strongest in the world. In 2005, the real median income of households in the US was $46,326 (DeNavas-Walt et al., 2006, pg. 3). The unemployment rate stayed low, and was a little over 5% in 2005 (HDR, 2007/2008: p.298). The Government had stayed in line with other OECD countries by prioritising public spending on health care (6.9% of GDP) and education (5.9% of GDP) (Ibid: p.294).

Despite these statistics, 12.6% of Americans were officially living in poverty (DeNavas-Walt et al., pg. 13). American policy makers have been unable to deliver an affordable public health care system, and this is having devastating consequences on low and middle-income families across the country. The following human security analysis of economic drivers of insecurity in America will therefore focus on poverty and the inter-generational transmission of inequalities, and the impacts of an overly expensive and inaccessible health-care system.

Poverty and the inter-generational transmission of inequalities:
In 2006, 36.5 million Americans were officially living in poverty, of which nearly 13 million were under the age of 18 (DeNavas-Walt et al. 2007: p.11; US Census Bureau, 2006). The poverty threshold in America is based on individuals or families. Therefore, in 2004, an individual with no family would have a poverty threshold of $9,827, and a family of two adults and two children under the age of 18 would have a poverty threshold of $19,157 (US Census Bureau, 2004). Whereas this level of income is comparatively higher than most countries in the world, the fact remains that this salary is not adequate for meeting the basic costs of living in America today.

Some researchers have pointed out that the profile of poverty in the US is not as bad as people are being led to believe – most poor people own cars, appliances, televisions, and

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[38] Blanco, K.B., "*Governor Blanco addresses the first meeting of the Southeast Louisiana Flood Authority-West Bank* http://www.blancogovernor.com/index.cfm?md=newsroom&tmp=detail&articleID=2637
[39] CNN. "*Flynn: U.S. not prepared for the next 'big one'*",
http://www.cnn.com/2007/US/02/20/flynn.commentary/index.html

other 'modern conveniences'.[40] And 46% even own their own homes.[41] The point being missed in this line of argument is that poverty in America is not about material quantity, but more about the quality of life. Amartya Sen's argument about capabilities and freedoms applies to the poor in America as well[42]. Essentially, the issue is not whether poor people own cars and appliances, but rather if they are able to live dignified and productive lives. Many poor people live in ghettoised neighbourhoods where incidences of crime are high, access to progressive and fulfilling job opportunities are limited, and public services such as schools and hospitals are either in grave need of investment, or simply not able to cope with the needs of the communities. Without access to opportunities and services, poverty-stricken individuals and families are unable to improve their futures, or that of their children.

There is a great degree of concern in the US that the material and income disadvantage of parents is passed on to their children, locking new generations into the cycle of poverty. Recent research from the University of Essex in the UK has concluded the following:

> "A large body of research has found that, compared to children from more affluent families, children from low-income families turn out to be disadvantaged in many dimensions. On average, they have lower birth weight (Currie and Hyson 1999), higher risk of infant mortality (Bonnie *et al.* 1999), more behaviour problems (Duncan *et al.* 1994), are less successful in school (Haveman and Wolfe 1995; Blanden and Gregg 2004), do worse in the labour market (Gregg and Machin 2000; Mayer 2002), and have inferior health (Case *et al.* 2002; Currie *et al.* 2004). And these outcomes are all ones that are associated with income later in life."[43]

These assertions are backed up by the US Census Bureau, which notes that 23% of all individuals living below the poverty line do not possess high-school qualifications (US Census Bureau, 2006). Statistics from the Centre for Disease Control showed that in 2006, 12.7% of poor children and 16.5% of near-poor children did not have health insurance coverage (Cohen and Martinez, 2007: p.4). Such disadvantage ensures that breaking out of the poverty cycle is virtually impossible, and as a result can and does increase perceptions and experiences of insecurity. Families are forced to endure severe and difficult conditions for prolonged periods of time with the knowledge that their children will be no better off. This adds psychological stress in addition to persistent worries about long and short-term economic and financial security.

The statistics also show that women are more at risk of living in poverty than men in America. Some 14.7% of women in America live below the poverty line, as compared to 11.9% of men (US Census Bureau, 2006). Women also make up the largest percentage of unemployed Americans living below the poverty line (32.5%) (Ibid). When these statistics are combined with income disparity and working conditions for women outlined in the previous section, it is altogether clear that women experience particularly acute economic and personal insecurity and disadvantage.

Policy makers need to continually ensure that access to and standards of public services such as health care and education are evenly accessible across the US. Some continue to

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[40] Rector and Johnson. 2004. "*Understanding Poverty in America*", The Heritage Foundation, Backgrounder #1713, http://www.heritage.org/Research/Welfare/bg1713.cfm
[41] Ibid.
[42] Sen, A. 1999. "*Development as Freedom*". Oxford University Press, Oxford,
[43] Jenkins and Seidler, 2007, "*The intergenerational transmission of poverty in industrialized countries*" CPRC Working Paper 75. pg. 1

argue that increased spending per child has had no impact on the quality of education being offered in America.[44] However, research has shown that high poverty and low performing schools were staffed with lower than average salaried teachers (Roza and Hill, 2003: p.15). Teachers in low performing schools were paid even less (Ibid). Combined with deteriorating physical structures and educational standards of schools in poor neighbourhoods, the American education system is simply not providing its most vulnerable pupils with a strong enough base to break the cycle of poverty. In response, the Bush administration's No Child Left Behind policy has set ambitious targets aimed at specifically targeting under-performing schools. As of June 2007, only 34% of Americans believe that the law has made schools better, compared to 26% who say it has made schools worse, and 32% who say there has been no impact at all (Pew Research Centre, 2007c: p1).

An overly expensive and inaccessible health-care system:
The number of people with health insurance in 2006 was 249.8 million, of which 201.7 million people were covered by private health insurance (DeNavas-Walt et al. 2007: p.18). Government health insurance also covered 80.3 million Americans that year (Ibid). Over 47 million Americans (14.8% of population), including 8.7 million children (9.3% of all children) were without health insurance (Ibid: p.19). Approximately 35.6% of poor working-age adults were covered by public coverage, and 25.5% were covered by private health insurance (Cohen and Martinez, 2007: p.4). Among adults who were without a high school diploma, 30.3% were uninsured – reinforcing the inability to move out of poverty. Although men are more likely to be un-insured (16% of all American men), some 13% of American women were uninsured in 2006 (Ibid: p.14).

Statistics from the Centre for Disease Control and the US Census Bureau found that the higher an individual or family's income bracket, the greater the coverage of health insurance. The cost of health insurance for a family of four in 2006 was over $12,000 a year (Pilkington, 2007, pg. 6), and higher still if there was any previous history of illnesses such as cancer. For a family of four earning on or around the poverty threshold amount ($19,157), paying this amount to receive health insurance is simply not an option. As a result, "[t]his condemns many Americans who fall ill to the choice of either forgoing treatment or going bankrupt" (Ibid). Every year, 1.5 million Americans are forced to become uninsured simply because they cannot afford the monthly premiums. For some, cost is not even the central issue. If an individual is diagnosed with an illness, disease or other medical condition and lose their job – or indeed want to change jobs – new insurers can refuse to insure them.

There have been many documented cases of individuals and families being denied treatment outright when no proof of health insurance has been provided to health practitioners. However, in the case of life-threatening emergencies, hospitals are obligated to take the case on. In these cases, the cost is presented back to the recovering patient in the form of an exorbitant bill. The median charges incurred by uninsured patients for hospital stays in 2005 were $9,907, compared to $16,394 for patients on Medicare (the US government's health-insurance agency).[45] These figures reflect two painful realities of health care in the US. Firstly, those able to afford Medicare are receiving better and more expensive care when compared to uninsured patients. Secondly, uninsured patients have to pay the full cost

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[44] Hood, J. 1990. "*Education: Is America Spending Too Much?*", Cato Policy Analysis No. 126, Cato Institute, Washington, http://www.cato.org/pubs/pas/pa126.html
[45] United States Department for Health and Human Services, "*2005 National statistics*" http://hcupnet.ahrq.gov/HCUPnet.jsp?Id=F2F5D323A4277436&Form=DispTab&JS=Y&Action=%3E%3ENext%3E%3E&__InDispTab=Yes&_Results=Print&SortOpt=

of care effectively in one lump sum following a trip to the hospital, whereas patients on Medicare continue to pay their monthly premiums.

Only five states have unilaterally introduced health coverage for all their residents (Maine, California, Vermont, Hawaii, and Massachusetts), but this approach is yet to be adopted nationwide (Steinhauer, 2007). California's approach has been the most ambitious to date, as the estimated cumulative cost to date is in excess of $12 billion (Ibid). The successful implementation of health coverage for all residents in America's most populous state could serve as a model for the rest of the country.

The drive toward providing universal health coverage in America is key to alleviating a very large source of insecurity for the population. The possibility of no access to medical assistance in a potential health-related crisis is also a very real prospect for much of America's poor. The challenge for policy makers is to develop a health care system that is equal in its treatment of both rich and poor patients. Having a two-tiered system, whereby the rich continue to get the best treatments and the poor receive the bare-minimum or nothing at all – is also not a viable or just solution. Given America's wealth and leading position in the global economy, it is equally difficult to imagine that the establishment of such a system is beyond the reach of Americans. It is all the more significant that most OECD countries, and some far poorer countries like Cuba, are able to provide free health care to all their citizens.

In addition, a lack of health insurance means the actual cost of emergency services become much higher. Consequently, there are more chances of real public health crises because people cannot take preventative steps to improve their health and perceptions of health security by simply visiting their local doctor. As noted by Hale, the inability to protect oneself "either because they cannot run fast, or lack the physical prowess to ward off attackers, or because they cannot afford to protect their homes, or because it would take them longer than average to recover from material or physical injuries", has a profound impact on an individual's perceptions of insecurity (Hale, 1996: p.195-210). The aggregation of these fears can, once again, be reflected in declining confidence in political structures and the political process.

Political Security:
Political security in the US refers specifically to the institutions and processes that represent the interests of citizens. Policies pursued by the government, both internally and externally, are ideally supposed to reflect the beliefs and wishes of the electorate. Analysis of drivers of political insecurity in the US therefore focuses on those specific institutions and policies which have been unable to mitigate perceptions of fear and insecurity.

Americans have always prided themselves on the strength of their democratic and judicial processes. Indeed, many institutions around the world have used the US examples as blueprints. Theoretically, the political and judicial systems give agency to each citizen, and the numerous checks and balances in place are meant to ensure that power is not monopolised by any one ideology or branch of government. In practice however, the experience has been very different.

The US Justice System has fundamentally failed citizens belonging to ethnic minorities. The widely held perception is that money can buy justice, and that due process exists only in name. The government is increasingly seen as acting only in the interests of powerful lobbies that fund election campaigns. Racial and religious ideologies are also becoming tools of policy justification, thereby alienating large cross-sections of the population. A

number of powerful lobbys are seen to be exerting a great deal of pressure and influence on American foreign and domestic policy, and that is having very negative consequences on the perceptions of national security within the country. A recent survey of top priorities for the government showed that 39% of Americans rated reducing the influence of lobbies as a major priority (Pew Research Centre, 2008a: p.4). Given these factors, this section looks specifically at drivers of insecurity stemming from a failing justice system, the policies of homeland security, and US foreign policy such as the global War on Terror.

A Failing Justice System:
The justice system has failed ethnic and racial minorities in America. This is most aptly demonstrated by the prison population in the US today. In 2005, Black inmates totalled 1,139,200, Hispanic inmates totalled 514,100, and White inmates totalled 958,900 (Harrison and Beck, 2006, pg. 8-9). In addition, as of 2005, 42% of all prisoners sentenced to death Black (Snell, 2006, pg. 1). When considering that the Black population accounts for just under 13% of the total American population, and yet represents over 50% of the prison population and 40% of prisoners on death row, it is hard to dispute that the criminal justice system has systematically targeted minorities and is in dire need of reform.

Another key area of concern is the quality and accessibility of legal advice that is available to defendants. American law firms charge anything from $100[46] to $1000[47] an hour, which puts poor defendants at the mercy of 'free' state appointed council. In many States, "court-appointed defense lawyers for the poor are not required to have any experience or expertise in criminal defense; they do not even have to be awake" (Rhode and McFarland, 2005, pg. 30). The result has been that a higher proportion of poor defendants serve prison time, face execution or both in States with the death penalty. Another related issue is the inadequate provision of translators for defendants – a complaint voiced particularly within the Hispanic community.

Racial and ethnic bias has also manifested itself in the judicial system through 'differential sentencing' – the perception that minorities receive harsher sentences than Whites. This belief is held for all sorts of decisions made in the legal process such as the decision to prosecute, the setting of bail/bonds, and length of sentences (Neeley, 2004, pg. 27). Policy makers could alleviate some of these concerns by increasing the numbers of ethnic minorities serving at all levels of the justice system.

Racial inequality, perpetuated by a justice system unable to eliminate a perceived bias against people of ethnic minority, has a fundamental impact on national security. The statistics show that young black men are more likely to go to jail than to university - Black men account for just over 5% of all undergraduate students (1.2 million in 2007), whereas (as already noted) Black men account for more than 50% of all prisoners in the country (US Census Bureau, 2007).

The Impact of "Homeland Security"
Following the 9/11 attacks on the US, the federal government was expected to implement as many protective measures as it possibly could to prevent any further attacks. The establishment of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS)[48] was one of the most

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[46] Committee on Appropriations, 2007. "Summary: 2008 Financial Services Appropriations" US House of Representatives, http://appropriations.house.gov/pdf/FinServHP.pdf

[47] Koppel, N. "Lawyers Gear Up Grand New Fees", The Wall Street Journal, 22 August 2007. http://online.wsj.com/article/SB118775188828405048.html?mod=hpp_us_whats_news

[48] Department of Homeland Security, http://www.dhs.gov/index.shtm

significant outcomes of this process. The Department is responsible for coordinating all matters relating to internal security, which include issues such as crime and terrorism (including cyber crime and cyber terrorism), natural disasters, and immigration matters.

One of the most important impacts of the DHS has been the active and systematic use of paranoia and fear to keep the security agenda at the front of all national debate. The website for the DHS features a prominent "National Threat Advisory System" – a traffic light system with five levels of threat which indicates the level of threat to the US at any given time. The threat levels range from "Low Risk of Terrorist Attack" to "Severe Risk of Terrorist Attack", and each level also necessitates a specific set of policy responses from the federal government to mitigate potential threats.

The website also encourages citizens to undertake the following activities at all times:

- "All Americans should continue to be vigilant, take notice of their surroundings, and report suspicious items or activities to local authorities immediately.
- Everyone should establish an emergency preparedness kit and emergency plan for themselves and their family, and stay informed about what to do during an emergency."[49]

The website also encourages users to become actively involved in protecting the security of the US – including offering links to report 'suspected criminal or terrorist activity' directly to the FBI from the website[50].

Many of these measures appear to be targeted in a way so as to maximise the psychological impact of the key message – that America is under a constant and never-ending threat of attack. Although there has been very good progress made by federal authorities to improve emergency preparedness, national institutions such as the police and the intelligence services have been given much greater powers. These powers come at the direct cost of individual civil liberties. There is significant opposition to such measures from all ranks of American society. As noted earlier, half of all Americans now believe that civil liberties do not need to be sacrificed in order to protect the country (Pew Research Centre, 2003: p.73). Congressman Ron Paul noted recently in a speech to the House of Representatives that "terror and fear are used to achieve complacency and obedience, especially when citizens are deluded into believing they are still a free people. The changes, they are assured, will be minimal, short-lived, and necessary, such as those that occur in times of a declared war".[51] This is particularly poignant given that the 2006 National Security Strategy opens with the sentence "America is at war." (The White House, 2006, pg. 1).

Needless to say, the strategies of the DHS appear to be achieving their objectives. Public opinion continues to support partial/full suspension of civil liberties and privacy laws in order to prevent terrorist attacks against the US. In a poll undertaken by the Pew Research Centre in September 2006, "a majority of Americans (54%) continue to say it is generally right for the government to monitor the telephone and email communications of Americans suspected of having ties with terrorists without first obtaining court permission" (Pew Research Centre, 2006: p.13). Some 43% of those polled also stated that it was necessary for the government to suspend civil liberties in order to curb terrorism (Ibid). Since the policies of the DHS have

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[49] Ibid.
[50] Ibid.
[51] Paul, R. 2002. "*Is America A Police State?*" Speeches and Statements, United States House of Representatives. http://www.house.gov/paul/congrec/congrec2002/cr062702.htm

come into effect, Americans have slowly but surely become increasingly polarised on the issue of homeland security. This divergence has split down both partisan and racial divides.[52]

Americans have sacrificed much of their democratic rights and freedoms in order to feel more secure. But, this strategy has not worked, and has, in itself, heightened perceptions of paranoia and fear. The case study of the Muslim community in New York City by Andrea Elliot illustrates this point. There is a strong belief within this community that the police and intelligence services have increased their surveillance and monitoring of the Muslim community in order to pre-empt any potential terrorist attacks (Elliot, 2006). As Elliot shows, this perception has affected the likelihood of individuals within the community cooperating with authorities and volunteering information which could potentially be critical to national security (Ibid).

Local Impacts of the US's Foreign Policy and its "War On Terror"
American foreign policy has changed significantly since 9/11. In the immediate aftermath of the attacks, President Bush gave his infamous ultimatum to the global community – "You're either with us or against us in the fight against terror."[53] This tactic immediately isolated the US internationally. American foreign policy steadily grew to incorporate an "us versus them" mentality. "Them" became an indistinguishable entity comprising of subversive terrorist networks such as Al Quaeda, political figures such as Saddam Hussein and Yasser Arafat, and the governments of Iran and North Korea. In the mindsets of many Americans, fuelled by political and media rhetoric, the face of "them" had become Islam.[54]

The Bush Doctrine of pre-emptive military action was also brought into effect in the immediate aftermath of the 9/11 attacks by the National Security Strategy of 2002 (The White House, 2002). It was this doctrine that enabled the US to launch military campaigns in Afghanistan and later Iraq. At the time of the launch of each attack, most Americans felt that the government was doing the right thing (Pew Research Centre, 2007a: p.26). However, by 2007, the lack of ostensible progress, the death toll of American soldiers, and the sheer cost of operations in the face of economic slowdown in the US has significantly changed public opinion. Americans are not feeling any safer as a result of the pre-emptive policies of their government, nor are they sure that it is the right approach to ensure their security (Ibid, pg. 20).

Associated with the pre-emptive strike doctrine, the Bush administration also initiated a global War on Terror after 9/11. This war has seen military engagement in all corners of the world, including Nigeria, Mali, Iraq, Pakistan, and Indonesia.[55] Despite committing large numbers of American troops and reiteration that this is a campaign designed to continue for a number of years, Americans have been losing confidence in this strategy. Bush's approval rating had never been lower than it was in the first half of 2007 (28%)[56]. Some 67% of Americans believed that the Iraq war was going badly, and more than half of all Americans,

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[52] In 2003, 71% of Republicans and 48% of Democrats said they were patriotic. 78% of African Americans said they were patriotic, compared with 93% of whites (Pew Research Centre, 2004: p.33)
[53] CNN. 2001. "*Bush says it is time for action*", 6 November 2001.
http://archives.cnn.com/2001/US/11/06/ret.bush.coalition/index.html
[54] Polls conducted by the Pew Research Centre found that 45% of Americans did not have favourable opinions of Islam in 2005 (Pew Research Centre, 2005: p.1)
[55] The Economist. 2007. "*Policing the undergoverned spaces*", 14 June 2007,
http://www.economist.com/world/africa/displaystory.cfm?story_id=9340544&CFID=5851703&CFTOKEN=17627598
[56] CBS News. 2007. " *Poll: Bush Approval Rating At New Low*", 22 January 2007, New York,
http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2007/01/22/opinion/polls/main2384943.shtml

with hindsight, felt that invading Iraq was the wrong decision (Pew Research Centre, 2007a: p.1).

The US's aggressive foreign policy has not made its citizens any safer. In fact, the inability to eradicate terrorism – a very tall order – has ensured that the Homeland Security's threat advisory system has never been lower than "Elevated" since its inception in 2002.[57] Americans are realising that the government's approach of ensuring peace by flexing its military muscle is not paying the promised dividends. In 2002, 61% of Americans believed that military engagement could bring about peace, but by 2007, that figure had dropped to 49% (Pew Research Centre, 2007a: p.20).

Despite undertaking drastic changes to its foreign policy, the US has not been able to improve the perception or reality of security for its citizens. Political decisions to pursue aggressive tactics in international relations have not resulted in reducing the threat of attack or perception of insecurity in any significant way. The responsibility to ensure political security in the US was ceded to the government in the aftermath of 9/11. In hindsight, the policies of the Republican government were not able to deliver their promise of security.

Today, American interests around the world are under increased stress and threat as a result of its aggressive foreign policy. Instead of fostering and leading a coalition of like-minded democracies, America has managed to isolate itself from its historical allies in the OECD and Europe. This may potentially affect trade and economic relations – although American interests in this sector appear far more stable than that of security. Therefore, a fundamental re-evaluation of the US's role within the international multilateral system is crucial to repositioning America favourably in the coming decades.

Conclusions:
This chapter has looked at a variety of drivers of insecurity in the US. Based on the tenets of human security, it has advocated the importance of recognising that each of these drivers are intimately connected with one-another. Any engagement on one specific issue has the capacity to positively or negatively impact on perceptions of insecurity based on other drivers.

Personal security in the US is gravely affected by experiences and the impact of crime on individuals, as well as gender-based violence and discrimination. Community security is affected by the experiences of the diverse ethnic communities that make up the social fabric of the US. Issues of environmental justice also have a strong impact on the security of communities. The paper has identified the drivers of economic insecurity in America to include poverty and the inter-generational transmission of inequalities. The soaring costs of health care also have a fundamental impact on perceptions of economic insecurity amongst Americans. Finally, drivers of political insecurity have included a failing criminal justice system, the draconian and fear-mongering policies of the homeland security initiative, and the very negative impacts of the US's aggressive, violent, and often unilateral foreign policy.

Each of these drivers is intimately connected with one another. For instance, addressing the failing justice system has repercussions on reducing crime, lowering incidences of gender-based violence, and reducing racism and other forms of discrimination. Similarly, addressing issues of poverty can fundamentally affect political participation, environmental justice, and help to reduce crimes fuelled by economic destitution.

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[57] Department for Homeland Security. 2007. "*Chronology of Changes to the Homeland Security Advisory System*". http://www.dhs.gov/xabout/history/editorial_0844.shtm

The analysis in this chapter has identified a number of areas for policy makers to consider. The next chapter gives a number of recommendations that could significantly improve human security in America.

CHAPTER 3: POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

As this paper has shown, the national security approach overlooks a number of fundamental experiences and perceptions that, when aggregated, have a comprehensive impact on the US's security. The human security approach widens the traditional calculus of conceptualisation, and includes a more relevant and contextual collection of issues affecting the experience and perception of security. The aggregation of these issues presents a situation where the results are able to deal equally or better with matters of national security than the traditional realist approach to national security.

Based on the preceding analysis of human security in the US, the following collection of policy recommendations is proposed:

- A comprehensive strategy to address gender-based drivers of insecurity should include considerable educational outreach for example in all levels of schools, and significant government-backed and funded public exposure of the issues surrounding gender-based violence and discrimination. In addition, the government must consider strengthening the legal rights of victims of such violence and discrimination, and consider introducing harsher penalties for offenders.

- Gun control in the US must be tightened now. The federal government must lead the way in developing a coherent strategy to control the legal ownership of guns. In addition, both federal and state authorities need to focus on developing strategies to keep illicit small arms off the streets.

- Hurricane Katrina opened the eyes of the US and the world to the gross under-investment in critical public infrastructure – particularly in poor neighbourhoods. The government must encourage and financially support state governments to undertake immediate reviews of the status of all critical public infrastructure. The federal government must also ensure that state governments develop a timeline and costing-structure for the upgrading of these facilities – beginning with all the under-served and poor neighbourhoods in America.

- America continues to be the destination of choice for hundreds of thousands of immigrants each year. Ensuring that these communities face no barriers in contributing to American society should be of paramount importance to the government. As such, government agencies should promote, financially support, and create spaces for dialogue with established communities of ethnic minorities as well as newer immigrant communities. The product of these discussions should also be publicised in the public domain in order to dispel myths and suspicions regarding these communities.

- More applied research needs to be conducted on the qualitative experience of poverty in the US. As such, policy makers should actively support and commission qualitative research into the experiences and impacts of poverty, which should include gender analysis, the experiences of ethnic minorities living in conditions of poverty, and the transmission of poverty across generations in America.

- Policy makers need to study the Californian Health Care system carefully (and indeed the systems in Maine, Vermont, Hawaii, and Massachusetts) and identify the key elements for a model that could be successfully implemented on a national scale. Additional studies looking at costing models need to be conducted as well, including ones which consider public-private partnerships in the delivery of health-care and prescriptions.

- Government institutions at all levels should conduct (and fund the creation of) more rigorous and applied research into critical justice sector reform issues such as racial discrimination, differential sentencing, and systemic prejudice.

- The government must consider building the capacity of NGOs working to defend the rights of minorities. This should be done by providing appropriate technical assistance, funding/grants, and creating parallel advisory structures within national judicial institutions to facilitate scaling up of lessons and knowledge on current legal issues.

- The federal and State governments should develop costing structures to increase and improve the provision of legal-assistance and make it more accessible.

- US Foreign Policy is not truly representative of the American people. Policy makers should consider the experiences of other OECD and G-8 countries and conduct several rounds of national consultations to get a bearing on national attitudes on policies such as the War on Terror. The consultations should include perceptions of the role of the armed forces, since they have increasingly become a central tool of foreign policy in the post 9/11 world.

The most important consideration for this collection of policy recommendations is that much like the War on Terror, this agenda requires patience and sustained financial and political backing. Experience from other countries has shown that by recognising vital drivers of insecurity, the potential to galvanise public opinion and identify innovative strategies to mitigate these threats is considerable indeed.

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