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Between *National* and *Human Security*: Energy Security in the United States and Western Europe in the 1970s

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Abstract: »Zwischen Sicherheit und Human Security: Energiesicherheit in den USA und Westeuropa in den 1970er Jahren«. The article examines, on the one hand, the changes to the concept of energy security in the second half of the twentieth century, particularly in the 1970s, and on the other hand, the influence of these conceptual changes on the overall change to the perception and architecture of “security”. It argues that the concept of “energy security” lost its close connection to state and military security while being extended with respect to its spatial scope, reference object, issues, and classification of dangers. This extended the notion of energy security and, in turn, exerted a crucial influence on the overall extension of the security debates from state to human security via the Brandt, Palme and Brundtland Commissions, which tried to address global security issues. Thus, in the 1970s our current energy and security constellation emerged, partially superseding the logic of the Cold War.

Keywords: energy, energy security, security, USA, 1970s, oil crisis, oil embargo, United Nations, Brandt Commission.

1. Human Security and Energy Security – Concepts and Historical Analysis

Since the publication of the Human Development Report in 1994 the concept of human security has undergone an impressive career. Today, many texts celebrate the term as setting a new political agenda in the post-Cold War world, but almost as many bemoan its vagueness that allegedly precludes both thorough political analysis and concrete policy-making.¹ Despite major disagreements over the contents and usability of the term, there is a consensus at least about a core meaning of human security. The term extends classical notions of security that dominated in the 20th century or even, as some argue, since the creation of the so called Westphalian System. These older conceptions of security considered the state to be the primary subject and object of security.² In

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¹ Hampson and Penny 2007; Study Group on Europe’s Security Capabilities 2004; Paris 2001; King and Murray 2001-2002.

² Ogata 2001.

contrast or rather in addition to state security, human security focuses on individual human beings and attempts to guarantee and expand their vital freedoms, encompassing freedom from fear and freedom from want.³ Therefore, human security also concerns new types of threats that were not at the center of state security, such as economic risks or environmental hazards. Moreover, it expands the number of possible conveyors of security from states to international and non-governmental organizations.

In general, 'human security' is mostly used in order to describe the security of the basic core of people's livelihoods which may be threatened by civil wars, natural disasters, or failing states. Because of its empowering dimension, however, it is far from clear where the scope of human security ends. As Roland Paris enumerates, depending on the context, human security may refer to:

(1) economic security (e.g. freedom from poverty); (2) food security (e.g. access to food); (3) health security (e.g. access to health care and protection from diseases); (4) environmental security (e.g. protection from such dangers as environmental pollution and depletion); (5) personal security (e.g. physical safety from such things as torture, war, criminal attacks, domestic violence, drug use, suicide, and even traffic accidents); (6) community security (e.g. survival of traditional cultures and ethnic groups as well as the physical security of these groups); and (7) political security (e.g. enjoyment of civil and political rights, and freedom from political oppression).⁴

Today, the extensive use of energy and especially the burning of fossil fuels are essential to several of the above-mentioned dimensions: Economic security depends on the access to sufficient energy resources and, above all, on the continuous flow of oil; food security has largely been achieved by the use of artificial fertilizers which are based on hydrocarbons; environmental security is threatened by the extensive burning of coal and oil, and even political and thus personal and community security are endangered by military conflicts which are fought over the access to natural resources. However, the concept of energy is conspicuously absent from both the 2003 *Human Security Now* Report and the 2004 *Human Security Doctrine for Europe*.⁵ The former only vaguely acknowledges the necessity of securing everybody's access to sufficient natural resources and sees this access – particularly in the case of water – as a potential source of conflict. The latter even argues that, while older conceptions of security had focused on strategic assets such as oil, today human security concentrates on "five key threats to Europe: terrorism, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, regional conflicts, failing states, and organised crime".⁶ En-

³ Commission on Human Security 2003.

⁴ Paris 2001, 90.

⁵ Commission on Human Security 2003; Study Group on Europe's Security Capabilities 2004.

⁶ Study Group on Europe's Security Capabilities 2004, 8.

ergy and oil, however, do not seem to be related to Europe's major security questions.

Because of this discrepancy, I will examine the relationship between energy and security in Western Europe and the United States since the Second World War in greater detail. This analysis is complicated by the changes to "energy" and "security" on both a conceptual and a factual level in the period under scrutiny. On the one hand, the global economy of oil and energy and its conceptualization underwent fundamental changes in the second half of the twentieth century which accelerated significantly in the 1970s as a consequence of the oil embargo and the oil price increases. On the other hand, security regimes changed and, as Emma Rothschild or Christopher Daase have shown, the concept of security was extended from a narrow understanding of state to the broader idea of human security.⁷ In Christopher Daase's analysis the widening took place in four different dimensions: with respect to the spatial scope, the reference object, the issue area, and the classification of dangers.⁸

Owing to these conceptual changes, my questions point in two directions: On the one hand, I will ask how energy supply and demand were situated within the context of the changing debates on security in Western Europe and the United States: When, how and why was energy supply perceived as a matter of state and military security? When was it related to broader concepts of security and when was it even considered to be an element of human security? On the other hand, I will ask if and how the rising importance and politicization of energy and especially oil in the 1970s influenced the conceptual change within the discourses about security: Did the emergence of "energy security" as a central political category influence more general conceptions of security and the discursive change from national to human security?

While the first set of questions uses "national" and "human security" as analytical concepts in order to examine the changing perceptions of energy and energy security, the second set tries to elaborate the influence of changing energy regimes on the conceptual change from national to human security. The simultaneous use of terms as both analytical and source concepts poses severe problems for historical analysis. In attempting to write a theoretically informed contemporary history, however, it is hardly possible to avoid using terms of the neighboring disciplines while at the same time historicizing them. So far, historical theory has not addressed the problems arising from this constellation for contemporary history in a satisfying way. While this article is not the place to develop a theoretical account of how to deal with concepts from neighboring disciplines, it still tries to explore how it might be done.

Moreover, it deals with a crucial period in the history of Western security systems in which *détente* led to an easing of East-West tensions while simulta-

⁷ Rothschild 2007, 2.

⁸ See Christopher Daase's paper in this volume.

neously new threats arose. With the emergence of energy security as a central concern of political decision-making on all levels, the logic of the Cold War that had prevailed since 1945 seemed to be in question and was even partially superseded. New lines of confrontation between the First and the Third World or rather the producers and consumers of raw materials emerged which, for many observers, foreshadowed a new world order. As both energy systems and security architectures were globalized, their transformation in the 1970s changed the perception of the world and one's own position within it, anticipating the post-Cold War debates of the 1990s. Hence, focusing on "energy" and "security," the 1970s appear as a crucial transformative period in the history of Western industrial countries, heralding the beginning of our time.

2. Energy – from National and Military to International and Economic Security

In the First World War, oil emerged as the essential resource for the successful conduct of warfare. From then on national security, understood as military security of a nation state, depended on the availability of sufficient amounts of oil in order to fuel warships, planes, tanks, and other military vehicles.⁹ The importance of oil as a strategic resource became even more apparent in the Second World War when it propelled Germany's *Blitzkrieg*, motivated the Japanese decision to attack the USA, and was decisively lacking after the failure of the German armies to capture the oil fields in the Caucasus.¹⁰ In the course and the aftermaths of the wars, and especially after the Second World War, the United States and its allies placed access to sufficient oil reserves at the center of their national interests.¹¹ In the postwar world these oil reserves were increasingly found in the Middle East, which became a highly contested region. The importance of oil for the security strategies of the Western alliance became particularly clear every time its continuous flow was endangered, as for example after the nationalization of the Iranian oil industry in 1951, in the Suez Crisis in 1956, the Six Day War in 1967 or the oil crises in 1973/74 and 1978/79.

Over the course of the three postwar decades from 1945 to the mid-1970s, the structures of the global economy of oil and, accordingly, the conditions of the relation between oil/energy and security changed fundamentally. This was, above all, owing to the sharp rise in demand in Western industrialized countries. The postwar economic boom required growing energy supplies which

⁹ Yergin 1991, 167-183.

¹⁰ Yergin 1991, 303-388; Barnhart 1987, 215-234; Eichholtz 2006.

¹¹ Stoff 1980; Painter 1986; Kapstein 1990. But, as early as "the 1940s, Secretary of Interior Harold Ickes and other government officials recognized that oil was strategically important not only for the military, but the national economy as well." (Beaubouef 2007, 3).

were increasingly met by oil, substituting coal as the primary source of energy.¹² Apart from mass motorization and residential heating, more and more parts of the economy became dependent on the continuous flow of oil, while the oil industry presented itself as the basis not only of economic growth but also of modern civilization and its social and political stability. As Halliburton asserted in an advertisement in 1959, oil was the “energy for civilization”:

The needs of civilized man have increased throughout the ages based on desires of increasing populations to live better. Oil and its energy making components have been and will continue to be part of this progressive program of civilisation which guarantees function and preservation of this ideology. On this theme the future of democracy will forever depend. Halliburton’s extensive research and development programs are devoted to this progressing civilization ... through scientific application of Halliburton services and techniques, our tomorrows will be better ... because of oil.¹³

The growing dependence of Western industrial nations on oil and especially oil imports from the Middle East did not necessarily pose a problem for their national security. Energy experts carefully distinguished between “dependence” and “vulnerability”. As long as the United States remained the world’s largest producer of crude oil and had a significant surplus production capacity at its disposal, energy imports did not produce national security risks. In fact, advocates of oil imports argued that foreign oil would enhance US national security as it would spare oil reserves at home.¹⁴ As late as during the Six Day War in 1967, the United States could counter an embargo attempt by OPEC countries by simply augmenting its own production. Owing to increasing domestic demand, however, this possibility ceased to exist soon afterwards and the security of oil supplies and especially the possibility of intentional oil supply interruptions became a matter of great concern to the governments of Western industrialized countries.¹⁵

How far did these developments influence or change the conception of energy security in itself? Traditionally, energy and particularly oil security had been linked to a conception of national security that was largely understood in military terms. According to this narrow conception, national security was guaranteed as long as the state was able to provide sufficient oil supplies for its armies in order to defend itself. In 1971 the independent analyst and former member of the Army Nuclear Power Program with the US Atomic Energy Commission, Carl Vansant, produced a late and, at the time of publication, almost anachronistic expression of this view analyzing the “strategic energy supply and national security”. Vansant argued that energy sources were “fun-

¹² Chick 2007.

¹³ Halliburton 1959.

¹⁴ Chick 2007, 16.

¹⁵ Yergin 1991, 598-599.

damental to a nation's strength" and that they had to be secured, above all, by military and political means.¹⁶ But even Vansant acknowledged that there was more to energy security than its military dimension:

From a military point of view, it is important that the energy supplies for military forces be designed for, and maintained in, a secure posture. It is even more important, however, that national systems for energy supply be built on secure foundations of political, technical, and economic policy; for, in fact, it is the civil structure of energy systems that underlies and braces strategic security.¹⁷

In general, energy experts as well as experts of national security acknowledged the rising importance of oil for the functioning of industrialized economies in the postwar world and, therefore, broadened the concept of energy security, which was essential not only to the conduct of modern warfare but to the vital functions of economy and society as a whole. This conceptual change was to a large extent induced by political actors, national governments, and international organizations. Still bearing in mind the Suez crisis and facing threats to a continuous flow of oil throughout the 1960s, the countries organized in the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) tried to coordinate their oil and energy policies in order to achieve security against interruptions of supply. In May 1960 the Council of the OECD recommended that its member countries should "prepare, in advance, plans that will enable them to introduce prompt and effective reductions in consumption of petroleum products if an oil supply emergency should occur".¹⁸ In order to review the degree to which these plans had been developed and implemented, the OECD Special Committee for Oil sent detailed questionnaires to the governments and in turn distributed the results of these surveys to all member countries in 1963, 1966, 1970, and 1972.¹⁹ In the member countries these questionnaires raised attention to oil and energy issues and induced national activities in these fields. The efforts mainly aimed at politically motivated short term supply interruptions and were intended to guarantee the ability of the states to sustain their vital functions and military capabilities. However, in the late 1960s and early 1970s the relevant ministries in most Western industrialized countries started to develop plans to restructure their energy sectors in order to secure the continuous availability of sufficient energy sources at low prices, which indicates a diversion from the close connection between energy and military security.

¹⁶ Vansant 1971, 7, 47-74.

¹⁷ Vansant 1971, 83.

¹⁸ OECD. Council: Recommendation of the Council Concerning the Apportionment of Oil Supplies in an Emergency, 5.5.1960, National Archives of the United Kingdom (NA UK), POWE 63/642.

¹⁹ OECD. Oil Committee Reports, NA UK, POWE 63/642.

In this process the concept of energy security was broadened in exactly those dimensions that Rothschild and Daase observed for the overall development of the concept of security: Energy and especially oil supply security was not only related to military ability and strength but also to economic development as a whole and, thus, the issue area of energy security was widened. It was fundamental for economic, but also for political stability, as the legitimacy of Western democracies depended on delivering a high standard of living and sufficient consumer goods. Accordingly, energy security concerned not only the well-being of the state but also of individual human beings in the industrialized countries, i.e. the reference group was significantly extended. As the oil economy was a global system and Western industrialized countries became increasingly dependent on oil imports from the Middle East, threats to energy security ceased to be domestic and regional – they became increasingly globalized and therefore the geographical scope of energy security widened. Among the central and most disturbing experiences of the oil crises in the Western world in the 1970s was the perception that the decisions and actions of rulers in remote regions of the world who seemed to be irrational and hard to control had an almost immediate effect on the everyday life of the people in Western Europe, Japan, and the USA. Moreover, categorization of dangers moved from direct threats to discussions of vulnerability and risk. Finally, for various reasons states had only limited capacities to influence the flow of oil and to secure their own supplies. Thus, several looked for internationally coordinated strategies, for example within NATO, the European Community or the OECD, in order to achieve energy security. Accordingly, the number of possible providers of energy security increased as well.

This tendency towards the widening of the concept of energy security and the loosening of its connection with military and national security became apparent in the workings of the United States National Security Council in the early 1970s. In order to assess the consequences of the changes in the global economy of oil for the national security of the United States, the Security Council issued two National Security Study Memoranda (NSSM) that influenced US strategy and decision-making in the field of energy throughout the so-called first oil crisis: NSSM 114 on the “World Oil Situation” was produced in 1971 and NSSM 174 on “National Security and US Energy Policy” was composed in the spring and summer of 1973.²⁰ NSSM 114’s aim was to answer the question of how the changing world oil situation – that is the increasing prices due to OPEC and the producing countries’ demands of sovereignty over their mineral resources – affected “US security, political, and economic inter-

²⁰ National Archives and Record Administration, Nixon Library (NARA), NSC Institutional Files (“H-Files”), Box H-180 and Box H-197.

ests”.²¹ It distinguished between two different positions: On the one hand, experts judged that the growing dependence on oil from the Middle East posed a severe security risk for the USA and NATO. While the oil import control and domestic resources put the USA in a comparatively good position, NATO partners only had petroleum inventories for about three months which would be used up much faster in the case of East-West tensions. This might cause serious problems, but the Department of Defense did not believe that “US military operations in Southeast Asia [sic] would be seriously endangered by an oil crisis – in the event of a Libyan or Persian Gulf shutdown.” On the other hand, experts thought that even these fears were exaggerated because politically motivated interruptions of supply were very unlikely, as the producing countries were primarily concerned about prices and most of them could not afford supply interruptions.²²

Two years later, NSSM 174 was commissioned by Henry A. Kissinger as a “study of the national security implications of world energy supply and distribution” in order to “define and discuss the national security aspects of the prospected situation and propose alternative policies”. Compared to NSSM 114 it expressed a greater sense of urgency concerning the security of oil supplies while at the same time diminishing the military aspect of the problem. Projecting energy supply and demand up to 1985, it judged that the USA would “become increasingly vulnerable” to oil supply disruptions that might be caused by three factors: a non-nuclear war, a war in the Middle East or a politically motivated embargo. In all cases military security was the smallest problem. Experts argued that the Department of Defense’s “needs for oil would be greatest in a general non-nuclear war involving NATO. However, these needs would be only about 10 percent of US domestic production and could be met, on a priority basis, solely from our domestic production.” Rather, they suggested that the “major effect of a supply cut-off on our military capabilities would likely be indirect: the adverse effect on our economy as a whole and the pressure which cutoffs would create for diversion of military oil supplies to civilian use.”²³ Because of the different degrees of dependence on oil from the Middle East, the oil question might also cause frictions within the Western alliance and thus weaken its security structure. All in all, NSSM 174 concluded that “the energy question does not stand in isolation from our major monetary, trade, environmental and national security issues facing this country. It is intrinsically related to these issues.”²⁴

²¹ NSSM 114: World Oil Situation, January 24, 1971, NARA, NSC Institutional Files (“H-Files”), Box H-180, 17.

²² *ibid.*, 41.

²³ NSSM 174: National Security and U.S. Energy Policy, August 1974, NARA, NSC Institutional Files (“H-Files”), Box H-197, 17.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 57.

In October 1973 the Organization of Arab Petrol Exporting Countries announced overall oil production cuts and a full embargo against the United States and the Netherlands in order to pressure Western governments to assume a pro-Arab stance in the conflict with Israel, which had again become violent in the Yom Kippur War. Supported by oil price increases unilaterally implemented by OPEC as a whole, the so-called first oil crisis confirmed expectations of the possibility of an intentional supply interruption. However, even in the European countries and Japan, which were much more dependent on oil from North Africa and the Middle East, the oil crisis had consequences not for military but for economic, social and, thus, political security. Already in preparation for oil supply emergencies, the British Central Policy Review Staff and an interdepartmental group of officials headed by the Department of Trade and Industry developed strategies to secure energy supplies not because of the expected military but because of the general economic effects of an oil shortage.²⁵ When the oil crisis coincided with a miners' strike at the end of 1973, the conservative Heath government introduced a state of emergency and announced a three-day working week. Even the gloomy Joint Intelligence Committee Report of December 5, however, did not see Britain's or NATO's military capabilities endangered. Yet it argued that a prolonged embargo might lead to international tensions, military conflict and even superpower confrontation. Thus, it suggested that an oil shortage might have severe consequences for Britain's national security, but also for the (as we might say human) security of people around the globe.²⁶ As in Great Britain, neither the state planning commission in France nor the Expert Council on the Assessment of Economic Development (*Sachverständigenrat zur Begutachtung der gesamtwirtschaftlichen Entwicklung*) in Germany saw the oil embargo and the oil price hikes as threats to national security and military capabilities.²⁷ However, they diagnosed significant consequences for economic and social development and suggested alternative energy strategies.

The only constellation in which the oil crisis seemed to endanger military capabilities occurred at the beginning of November 1973 when the Saudi Arabian government imposed a secondary embargo on those countries from which the American fleet, which was distributed around the globe, obtained its oil.²⁸ Noting that the oil embargo's effect on the United States was not severe enough, the Saudi Arabian government had requested that Aramco obtain the

²⁵ Central Policy Review Staff: An Energy Policy for Great Britain. Summary and Recommendations for 1973 and 1974, 2.5.1973, NA UK, PREM 15/1847; Interdepartmental Group of Officials: Report on Oil Policy, January 1973, NA UK, POWE 63/848.

²⁶ Report by the Joint Intelligence Committee (A), JIC (A) (73) 34 CAB 186/15, 5.12.1973.

²⁷ Centre des archives contemporaines, Service du Premier Ministre, Commissariat General du Plan, 19890617, Art. 99-101; Sachverständigenrat zur Begutachtung der gesamtwirtschaftlichen Entwicklung 1973.

²⁸ US Congress. Senate. Committee on Government Operations 1974.

relevant data for a secondary embargo from its mother companies in the US: Exxon, Texaco, Mobil and Standard Oil. Despite the fact the American fleet was on strategic alert because of the seemingly impending superpower confrontation in the Middle East in the course of the Yom Kippur War, executives of the multinational corporations complied without hesitation to Aramco's demands and supplied Saudi Arabia with the data. In the ensuing hearings in front of the Senate Committee on Government Operations, the Democratic Senator Henry A. Jackson asked:

Didn't anyone say 'Look, boys, we are in the midst of a strategic alert. Shouldn't the Secretary of Defense, the highest people in the government, be advised of the October 31 wire and what do we do about it?' Wouldn't that be the thing an ordinary stiff would understand?²⁹

As it appears, none of the executives had had this idea; instead they called the Pentagon only shortly before the end of the deadline set by the Saudi Arabian government in order to make sure that they could not be sued for giving out the data.

Even this incident, however, did not cause a serious impediment to US military security. However, the oil embargo and the oil price hikes as a whole changed the perception of energy security. Even though energy security had been an important concern of OECD governments throughout the 1960s, in most countries it was only the energy crisis of the early 1970s that established it as central field of political activity. The awareness of energy as a basis of economic and political life rose as experts constantly talked about it in the media and the highest government officials received weekly, and at times even daily, reports on the energy supply situation in their countries. Experiencing or rather expecting a lack of oil supplies, governments restructured and centralized energy competences and some sought international cooperation in the field of energy, which led to the Washington Energy Conference in 1974 and to the establishment of the International Energy Agency. However, energy security did not become a central concern because oil was needed for military purposes, but because it was closely connected to economic development and the well-being of the people. Contemporary fears concerning the possible consequences of supply disruptions for the economy and the people in Western industrialized countries were magnified as the oil crisis coincided with general worries about the exhaustibility of mineral resources. Criticizing American-style consumerism and arguing that the German economic growth rates in the 1960s had depended on the unlimited availability of cheap oil, the German weekly magazine *Der Spiegel*, for example, declared that the oil crisis heralded the coming end of "affluent societies" and of the age of abundance in the West and painted the future in dark colors.³⁰

²⁹ US Congress. Senate. Committee on Government Operations 1974, 900.

³⁰ "Mit knappen Vorräten sorglos geast," *Der Spiegel*, November 19, 1973.

Reading drastic depictions like these, the discourse on energy security in the 1970s appears almost as a discourse on human security *avant la lettre*. Of course, in the industrialized countries energy supply interruptions did not pose such severe limitations to people's vital freedoms as wars or ecological disasters, which are commonly associated with the concept of human security. Yet, "security" and especially its emotional components are relative to the achieved living standard and, therefore, threats to embargo Europe and to wreck its economies could engender significant fears concerning the security of the people in Western industrialized societies.³¹ Moreover, less-developed countries were hit much harder than industrialized countries that could afford higher prices more easily, and the plight of the people in these countries for whom a lack of oil could indeed affect very basic freedoms was discussed intensively as consuming countries used them as an argument against OPEC.³² Finally, as the above-mentioned British Joint Intelligence Report argued, the structure of energy regimes had severe implications for the security of the international system. Particularly advocates of alternative energy paths, such as Amory Lovins, suggested that the current, highly centralized energy systems that relied heavily on fossil fuels would foster undemocratic political structures and destabilize the international order, thus affecting conditions we deem essential for human security worldwide.³³

3. The Energy Crises of the 1970s and the Changing Perceptions of Security

As I have shown so far, due to increasing oil consumption, the notion of energy security changed over the course of the postwar decades and especially in the 1970s. While it had been closely connected with conceptions of military capability and national security, it gradually widened and encompassed economic, social, and political security. In certain respects the discussions on energy security even resembled later debates on human security. Thus, I will now continue to scrutinize whether the widespread discussions on energy in the 1970s, and especially the broadened notion of energy security, influenced the widening of the overall discourse on security: Did energy security contribute to the conceptual change from state and military to human security?

³¹ See for example Muammar al-Gaddafi's interview in *Le Monde*, October 23, 1973, quoted in: *Middle East Economic Survey* 17 (October 26, 1973), 11: "We've made all the preparations – and so have the other Arabs – to deprive Europe completely of oil. We shall ruin your industries as well as your trade with the Arab world."

³² Jungblut 1973. See also NA UK, FCO 15/1866, Effects of Energy Crisis in South East Asia.

³³ Lovins 1976.

Most authors consider the emergence of “human security” and the widening of the security concept as a product of the post-Cold War era when the confrontation between the United States and the Soviet Union lost its dominant position, but its beginnings can be located earlier. While Emma Rothschild traces ideas of human security back to the Enlightenment, she depicts the 1970s as a formative period for contemporary conceptions of human security.³⁴ In the same vein, Christopher Daase argues that the awareness of threats to national security other than military attacks rose in response to the economic crises in the 1970s and that, therefore, the contents of the concept of national security widened.³⁵ Indeed, in the 1970s economic stability and growth became essential elements of national security concerns; in the opinion of the democratic Senator and later US Vice President Walter F. Mondale “the risk that the operation of the international economy may spin out of control” even overshadowed the dangers arising from nuclear armaments and superpower confrontation.³⁶ For this change in the perception of threats as well as the feelings of insecurity, the Arab oil embargo and OPEC’s oil price increases of 1973/74 were crucial. As the American President Richard Nixon put it when addressing the Washington Energy Conference of non-communist oil-consuming countries in February 1974, for Western politicians it had become evident that “security and economic considerations are inevitably linked, and energy cannot be separated from either”.³⁷ In a similar way, the German Chancellor Helmut Schmidt argued in front of the International Institute of Strategic Studies in London in 1977 that the economy was first among the “new dimensions of security”. Schmidt continued that if there was one single most important question for the economic security of the West, it was the energy question for which, in turn, oil was essential.³⁸ This assessment was shared throughout the political spectrum. As the Christian Democrat Manfred Wörner had already declared at the Munich Security Conference in 1975, NATO was not autarchic any more in providing security to its member states. Following Karl Kaiser, Wörner held the view that, while NATO could span a nuclear umbrella to shelter its members, it could not offer an umbrella of raw materials.³⁹ For both Schmidt and Wörner, the oil embargo of 1973 had been the event that sparked this insight and, therefore, Wörner even called it a “fundamental watershed” and the “key event of the Western world in the second half of the 20th century”.⁴⁰

This appreciation was shared and to a large extent produced by political scientists and foreign policy experts, who wrote in the aftermath of the embargo

³⁴ Rothschild 2007, 3-4, 7-11.

³⁵ See Christopher Daase’s paper in this volume.

³⁶ Mondale 1974.

³⁷ Nixon 1974.

³⁸ Schmidt 1979, 627.

³⁹ Wörner 1979, 593.

⁴⁰ Wörner 1979, 590, 594.

and the oil price hikes and constructed them as a turning point in world history.⁴¹ Reviewing the contemporary literature on energy security and foreign policy for the newly founded journal *International Security*, Linda B. Miller argued that since 1973 the close connection between energy and security as well as the impossibility of guaranteeing national security by military means alone had been obvious to everybody.⁴² According to Miller, the oil crisis and its aftermath from 1973 to 1975 had already become a new paradigm case for the study of world politics. This paradigm suggested that state-centered views were insufficient because the complex interactions in the fields of energy and other resources involved a multitude of non-state actors.⁴³ In the same vein, Joseph S. Nye discussed the prospects of collective security in 1974 and argued that it was insufficient to treat it as a military question but rather that one also had to integrate economic stability. As economic security was a matter of degree, Nye suggested that it could be severely endangered by resource supply disruptions and advocated international structures on a mutually beneficial basis for producing and consuming countries.⁴⁴ In the discourse on oil/energy and national security after the first oil crisis, only a few authors still concentrated on the military aspects of the question, such as Bo Heinebaeck.⁴⁵ Apart from the geopolitics of scarce resources and their importance for economic development, authors dealing with “energy” and “security” also discussed nuclear proliferation, military preparedness, the possibility and risk of a military confrontation at the Persian Gulf and the consequences of energy policies for conflict behavior.⁴⁶

At the beginning of the 1980s, however, the economically widened notion of security, and the essential importance of energy and particularly oil in this context, had been firmly established as the majority view.⁴⁷ Thus, Philip Odeen, who had been a staff member of the National Security Council during the preparation of NSSM 174, preached to the already converted when he argued that the essential connection between energy and national security had been neglected too long and that energy had to be put at the center of US national security concerns.⁴⁸ This had become the official US strategy at least with the announcement of the Carter Doctrine, according to which the United

⁴¹ Vernon 1976.

⁴² Miller 1977, 111. By contrast, Joan Edelman Spero argued in 1973 that for twenty years energy self-sufficiency had been at the center of US national security concerns, which had already been guided by a wider notion of security (Spero 1973, 123).

⁴³ Miller 1977, 114.

⁴⁴ Nye 1974.

⁴⁵ Heinebaeck 1974.

⁴⁶ Deese 1979.

⁴⁷ Krapels 1977; Dafter 1979; Deese and Nye 1981; Nye 1982; Blair and Summerville 1983; Fesharaki 1983; Luttwak 1984.

⁴⁸ Odeen 1980.

States understood any attempt to change the power structure around the Persian Gulf as an attack on its vital national security interests.⁴⁹ The Carter Doctrine points at another dimension in which energy and security became linked and which also contributed to an extension of the security concept: Energy and security were not only closely connected because supply interruptions endangered the economic, social, and political security of the people in the consuming countries, but also because the fear of supply interruptions might engender military conflicts or resource wars. As Richard H. Ullmann observed in 1983, “‘resource wars’ (as some call them) [had] figured prominently in the doomsday literature for more than a decade”.⁵⁰ This understanding that the heavy reliance on fossil fuels and particularly oil posed a primary international security risk can still be found today in both scholarly treatises and the popular media.⁵¹

Another influence of oil and energy on the broadening of the security concept was exerted via the debates on international development and on the establishment of a fairer economic world order. Since the late 1960s and throughout the 1970s there had been intensive discussions among the developing countries to take OPEC and the oil embargo as an example and turn other natural resources into strategic assets in order to achieve more favorable terms of trade or even a New International Economic Order.⁵² These claims of permanent sovereignty over natural resources voiced by so-called Third World countries raised significant fears in the Western world⁵³ and led to the establishment of various commissions and discussion groups in order to avoid confrontation, such as the Euro-Arab dialogue. These groups aimed at the establishment of more secure living conditions in both the developing and the developed countries. At the level of the UN or at least inspired by the UN, several commissions dealt with global security issues and constituted important precursors of the 1990s debates on “Human Security” within the United Nations Development Program: From 1977 to 1980 the “Independent Commission on International Development Issues” (the so-called Brandt Commission) produced the report *North-South – A Programme for Survival*; two years later the “Independent Commission on Disarmament and Security” (Palme Commission) published *Common Security*, and from 1984 to 1987 the “World Commission on Environment and Development” (Brundtland Commission) worked on the report *Our Common Future*.⁵⁴

⁴⁹ Horowitz 2005; Hakes 2008.

⁵⁰ Ullmann 1983, 140.

⁵¹ Klare 2001; Rutledge 2005; Seifert and Werner 2005; Gelpke and McCormack 2007.

⁵² Murphy 1984; Rahman 2002.

⁵³ Bergsten 1973.

⁵⁴ Hampson and Penny 2007.

Named after the Swedish Prime Minister Olof Palme, who had headed the commission, the Palme Report dealt mostly with questions of military security and – particularly nuclear – disarmament. Characteristically, it turned the already established connection between national and economic security around, suggesting that a common security structure between the East and the West would reduce the costs of military armaments and thus free financial capacities for achieving social and economic security.⁵⁵ However, the Palme Report also advocated a wider notion of security, arguing that security could not be achieved by military means alone.⁵⁶ Yet, on its priority list of how to reach the new “common security”, economic issues were only ranked at the sixth and last spot.⁵⁷

By contrast, the Brandt Commission had set itself the broader task of “securing survival” and, accordingly, laid much greater emphasis on the importance of addressing economic and especially energy questions in order to overcome the contemporary worldwide dangers and security risks. The focus on energy as the crucial factor for the global security situation is not surprising if we look at the biographies of the members of the Brandt Commission, which first met in 1977. Several of them had held high government positions during the first oil crisis and had thus experienced how disruptive an imagined or real shortage of oil could be to both economic life and international relations: Willy Brandt himself had been Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany, Edward Heath the British Prime Minister, Haruki Mori the Japanese ambassador in London, Olof Palme the Swedish Prime Minister, Layachi Yaker the Algerian minister of trade and Jan P. Pronk the Dutch minister for developmental cooperation. On the basis of their first-hand experience of the oil crisis, they argued that the world economy was in severe danger because of the huge differences in wealth between the North and the South. If nothing changed and developments simply continued, they envisioned ecological disasters, hunger and poverty in the developing world, inflation and high deficits in the industrialized. Considering the exceptional position of oil in the international economy and its use by OPEC in order to voice Third World demands, they saw energy as the decisive issue that had to be addressed in an “Emergency Programme” in order to “secure survival”.⁵⁸ While secure oil supply at a reasonable price concerned the standard of living in industrialized countries, it affected the basic life chances of people in the least developed countries. The “Emergency Programme” therefore recommended that oil-producing countries should pledge not to decrease or interrupt supplies, oil-consuming countries should reduce demand, oil prices should be fixed at a fair level, and the international commu-

⁵⁵ Palme 1982, 9.

⁵⁶ Palme 1982, 20.

⁵⁷ Unabhängige Kommission für Internationale Entwicklungsfragen 1980, 158-192.

⁵⁸ Unabhängige Kommission für Internationale Entwicklungsfragen 1980, 201-215.

nity should invest in collaborative research and development of alternative energies.⁵⁹

With its goals to secure survival and distribute life chances more equally or at least to secure basic necessities of human life for everybody on this planet, the Brandt Report already resembled later visions of human security which were formulated in the 1990s. The central trigger for the formulation of the report, however, was the changing energy scene of the 1970s and its consequences for both the security of living conditions in Western industrialized countries and the lives of people in least developed countries which might be threatened by lack of resources, future resource wars or even the ecological consequences of the burning of fossil fuels. Ecological problems and the threat they posed to worldwide survival but also to economic well-being and security were the main issues of the “World Commission on Environment and Development”, which was headed by the former Norwegian Prime Minister Gro Harlem Brundtland, who had also been a member of the Brandt and the Palme Commissions. The report argued that the traditional concept of security which concerned political and military threats to national sovereignty had to be extended because of the increasing influence of environmental pollution on a local, national, regional and global level.⁶⁰ In this respect, energy, understood not as a single product but as a combination of products and services, was essential: On energy, the report maintained, depended the well-being of the individual, the sustainable development of the nations, and the life-sustaining capacities of the world ecosystem.⁶¹ With the upheavals of the oil economy in mind, the report argued that oil was crucial in the field of energy.

4. Conclusion: Energy Security as Human Security?

This article pursued the twofold goal of examining, on the one hand, the changes in the concept of energy security in the second half of the twentieth century and, on the other hand, the influence of these conceptual changes on the overall change to “security”. Following Emma Rothschild’s and Christopher Daase’s theses that the concept of security was significantly extended in the postwar world, that this extension accelerated in the 1970s, and engendered current conceptions of human security, I showed how the scope of “energy security” increased in a similar fashion. As oil became increasingly important for modern industrialized economies in the postwar world, more and more often discourses on “energy security” did not treat oil as a strategic resource necessary to fuel the war effort, but rather as the foundation of economic, so-

⁵⁹ Unabhängige Kommission für Internationale Entwicklungsfragen 1980, 347-348.

⁶⁰ Hauff 1987, 22.

⁶¹ Hauff 1987, 204.

cial, and political life in Western industrialized countries. Owing to its vital importance for a wide variety of economic processes, even short supply disruptions or minor price increases posed threats to economic development, to the social cohesion of consensual democracies, the stability of political institutions, and thus to national security. In drastic depictions of the consequences of a loss of oil supplies for the industrialized, but especially for the developing countries, as well as in the debates concerning the destabilizing effects that the world energy economy might have on the international system and the increasing risk of military confrontations, discourses on energy security anticipated later discourses on human security.

This resemblance is not coincidental, as the flourishing debates on energy security in the 1970s directly influenced the extension of the concept of security in the postwar world from state-centered military to human security. The challenge of energy security during the oil crises of the 1970s opened the security debates up to the appreciation of new risks, their global nature, and thus also the relevance of international cooperation, the importance of non-state actors, and the acknowledgment of individual people whose livelihood was to be secured. The Brandt Report in particular focused on energy, as it aimed at securing survival on the planet by bringing about a fairer world order. Against the backdrop of the 1970s oil crises, high government officials, who had experienced the economic and political upheavals a lack of oil supplies or even rising oil prices could cause, judged that energy was the crucial issue that had to be addressed in order to achieve ecological, economic, social, and political stability. In its broadened conception of security the Brandt Report already resembled later UN reports on Human Security. From the point of view of the twenty-first century's discussions on climate change and resource wars, its diagnoses and recommendations appear to be surprisingly up-to-date. However, it would be exaggerated to describe the Commission as prescient. Rather, the changes in the energy and particularly oil economy in the 1970s had cut through the traditional Cold War structure of threats and security, which was ultimately abolished in the years around 1990. The oil crises of the 1970s thereby created a situation in which several of the most fundamental political, economic, and cultural problems emerged which continue to occupy us today, so that they appear as an important watershed in the history of Western industrial nations.

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