Human Security and Its Dimensions

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The concept of human security is a controversial approach by a certain group of post-Cold War 1.0 academicians (after 1990) for the purpose of redefining and at the same time making broader the meaning of security in global politics and the studies of international relations (IR).

We have to keep in mind that up to the end of the Cold War 1.0, security as both political phenomena and academic studies exclusively were connected only with the protection of the independence (sovereignty) and territorial integrity of states (national polities) from the military threat (war, aggression) by external factors (players) but in fact, by other states. Actually, that was the crucial idea regarding the concept of national (state) security, which had unquestionable domination within security analysis and policy-making decisions after 1945 up to the 1990s.

However, from the mid-1990s, security studies, responding to the new global geopolitical changes after the collapse of the Soviet bloc, started to research security issues in broader, but not only state-military categories regardless of the fact that state and state security still remained the focal object of security studies as the entity to be protected.

Nevertheless, the new concept of human security challenged the state-centric paradigm of security by stressing the individual, as the focal referent, and object of security.

In other words, studies of human security deal with security for the people (individual or group) rather than of governmental administration or/and national state (borders). Advocates of the concept of human security claim that it is a significant contribution toward resolving the problems of human safety and survival posed by poverty, environmental changes, disease, the abuses of human rights, and local/regional armed conflicts (for instance, civil war). Nonetheless, today, it became quite obvious that at the time of turbo globalization, security studies must take into account a broader range of concerns and challenges than simply defending the state from external armed action.

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The idea of human security was born in contrast to realists who saw the issue of security only linked to the state to secure it from other states by liberal thinkers who argued that famine, disease, crime, or natural catastrophes cost in many cases much more human lives compared to wars and military actions in general. In short, the liberal idea of human security stresses the welfare of individuals rather than the welfare of states.

The concept of human security is dealing with the next seven scopes or areas of research:

1. **Political security**: to ensure that the humans living in a society that honors individual freedom and groups from the policy of governmental authorities to control information and free speech.
2. **Personal security**: to protect individuals or groups from physical violence, either by state authorities or external factors, from violent individuals and sub-state factors, from domestic abuse, and from predatory adults.
3. **Community security**: to protect a group of individuals (usually the minority group) from the loss of their traditional culture, habits, relationships, and values, as well as from sectarian (religious) and ethnic violence.
4. **Economic security**: to assure fundamental income for individuals from their paid work, or, in the last resort, from some charity organization.
5. **Environmental security**: to protect individuals from both short/long-term destruction of nature usually as the result of human-made threats in nature and poisoning of the natural environment.
6. **Food security**: to ensure that all people at all times have both physical and economic access to basic food in order to survive.
7. **Health security**: to guarantee a minimum protection from diseases and unhealthy lifestyles.

Human security, it can be said, is an approach to security issues that holds as a focal point that many people (particularly in the developing part of the globe – the Third World) are experiencing growing global vulnerabilities in relation to poverty, unemployment, and environmental degradation.

However, it has to be stressed that both the concept and idea of human security do not oppose traditional national security concerns – the government's job is crucial to defend ordinary citizens from external attacks by a foreign power.

Instead, the advocates of human security idea claim that the appropriate focus of security is the human individual rather than the state. It means that the concept of human security is taking a people-centered view of security which, according to its advocates, is necessary for wider national, regional, and global stability. The concept itself draws on a number of disciplinary areas as are, for instance, development studies, international relations, strategic studies, or human rights.

The proponents of human security studies are, in fact, dissatisfied with the official notion of development, which viewed it as a function of economic development either local, regional, or global. However, they are proposing, instead, a concept of human development. The main focus of this concept is on creating human capabilities to confront and overcome illiteracy, poverty, diseases, different kinds of discrimination, restrictions on political freedom, as well the threat of violent (armed/military) conflict.

The studies of human security are closely related to the research on the negative impact of defense spending on development ("guns vs butter") as the arms race and development are in a competitive (opposite) relationship (in this sense, probably the case of the U.S. military spending and the development of the U.S. society is the best example). In fact, the proponents of human security require more resources for development and less for arms (a dilemma of "disarmament and development").

During the post-Cold War 1.0 time, human security prospects have grown in salience. One reason for such practice was the rising incidence of civil armed conflicts in different regions (the Balkans, Caucasus, Rwanda...) which cost a large number of lives (for instance, in Rwanda in 1994 up to one million), displacement of local population within the national borders (internally displaced people) or across the national borders (refugees/war emigrants). It is quite true that traditional studies on national security did not take into consideration the cases of conflicts and armed struggles over ethnic, cultural, or confessional identities around the world after 1990.

However, the idea of the spread of democratization, protection of human rights, and humanitarian interventions (R2P), however, unfortunately, usually misused by Western policymakers, had a certain influence on the development of academic studies on human security.

It involves the principle that the international community (in fact, the UN, but not individual states by their one-sided decisions) is justified in doing military interventions against other states accused of gross violation of human rights. Consequently, this principle led to the realization that while the concept of national security is still relevant, it, however, no longer sufficiently accounted for different types of danger that were threatening the security of local societies, national states, or the international community.

The notion of human security are as well as brought to the academic agenda due to the crises that resulted from the process of turbo globalization after 1990 like the issue of widespread poverty, high levels of unemployment, or social dislocations caused by economic-financial crises as such problems stressed the weakness of individuals facing the effect of economic globalization.

It has to be noticed that academic debates regarding the issue of human security as a relatively new branch of security studies have been developed in two directions: 1) Both supporters and skeptics of the concept disagree over the question of whether human security is a new or necessary notion followed by the problem what are the costs and benefits of adopting it as an intellectual tool or a policy framework; 2) There have been debates regarding the scope of the concept, primarily among the supporters of it.

On one hand, critics of human security as a concept claim that it is too broad in order to be analytically meaningful or useful as an instrument of policy-making. Another criticism is that such a concept might cause more harm compared to bringing benefits. For them, the definition of human security is seen to be too moralistic compared to the traditional concept of security, and, therefore, it is unrealistic. Further, the most powerful criticism of human security is that the concept does not take into consideration the role of the state as a source of security. They claim that the state is a necessary framework for any form of individual security for the reason that if no state is not clear what other agency is to act for the benefit of the individual(s)?

On the other hand, advocates of human security did not discount the practical importance and real influence of the state as a guarantor of human security. They claim that human security complements state security. In other words, weak states are incapable of protecting the safety and dignity of their inhabitants. However, whether the traditional role of state security conflicts with a new role of human security depends essentially on the nature of the political-economic character of the state authority. It is known that there are not a few states in which human security for their citizens is, in fact, threatened by the policy of their own governmental authorities. Therefore, while the state authorities are still crucial for providing the set of obligations regarding human security, they, however, in many cases are the focal source of the threat to its own citizens. Consequently, the state cannot be regarded as the only source of human security and in some cases even not as the most important one.

The concept of human security regards the individual as the referent object of security, recognizing the role of the process of turbo globalization and the changing nature of armed conflicts in the creation of new threats to human security. The proponents of the concept stress safety from violence as a key objective of human security, calling at the same time to rethink state sovereignty as a necessary factor in protecting human security. They agree that development is a necessary condition for (state and human) security, just as security (state and individual) is a necessary condition for both state and human development.

For the proponents of human security, poverty is probably the most dangerous threat to the security of individuals. Although the total global economic pie is growing, its distribution is quite uneven making a deeper and deeper rich/poor gap between the global North and global South. In many of the developing countries, rapidly growing populations erase, in fact, economic growth. As a matter of statistical facts, the poorest 40% of the global population account only for 5% of global income, while the wealthiest 20% receive ¾ of the world's income. Furthermore, since 2007, the income gap between the top and bottom 10% has increased in many countries. Therefore, the crucial effort by human security policy has to be to alleviate poverty.

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) contribute tremendously to human security in a number of ways as a source of information and early warning about conflict, providing a channel for relief operations. The NGOs are those who are very often to be the first in doing so in areas of conflict or natural disaster, and supporting local government or UN-sponsored peacebuilding and rehabilitation missions. NGOs as well as in many regions play a focal role in promoting sustainable development. It can be stressed that up to now a leading NGO with a human security mission is the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) that is established in Geneva. It has a unique authority based on the international humanitarian law of the Geneva Conventions to protect the lives and dignity of victims of war and internal violence, including war-wounded individuals, prisoners, refugees, displaced persons, etc., and to provide them with assistance. Another crucial NGO involved in the protection of human security and human rights is Amnesty International.

Finally, as a matter of conclusion, several key points are on the agenda:

1. The concept of human security represents both vertical and horizontal expansion of the traditional notion of national security, defined as the protection of the independence of the national state and its territorial integrity from the armed (military) threat from the outside.
2. Human security is distinguished by three elements: A) Its focus on the individual

or group of people as the referent object of security; B) Its multidimensional nature; and C) Its global (universal) scope (applying to both more developed North and lesser developed South).

3. The concept of human security is influenced by four crucial developments: A) The rejection of economic growth as the main indicator of local/regional/national development and the accompanying notion of "human development" as empowerment of people; B) The rising incidents in different parts of the world (usually military) of internal conflicts; C) The impact of globalization in the process of spreading transnational dangers (like terrorism or pandemic diseases); D) The post-Cold War 1.0 emphasis on human rights and humanitarian intervention (right to protect, R2P).

4. Human security, basically, means and deals with protection against threats to the lives and well-being of individuals in areas of fundamental need which includes freedom from violence by "terrorists" (including both state terrorism and organization terrorism of different kinds and backgrounds), criminals, or police, availability of food and water, a clean environment, energy security, and freedom from poverty and economic exploitation.

5. Human security focus is on individuals no matter where they live as opposed to viewing them as citizens of particular states or nations.

6. Human security has a long way to go before being universally accepted as a conceptual framework or as a policy tool for national governments and the international community.

7. There is a doubt that threats to human security whether understood as freedom from fear or freedom from want.

8. The challenge for the international community is to find ways of promoting human security as a means of addressing a growing range of new transnational dangers that have a much more destructive impact on the lives of people than conventional military threats to states.

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