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The concept of human security: characteristics, dimensions and determinants

Abstract. This article is called to present some theoretical foundations of the concept 'security' both in its traditional sense as that of a state and its territorial integrity, and in its newer sense according to which the human is the entity to be cared for first and foremost, with the accent made on the latter. It examines the underlying premises and evolution of such a human-centered approach, its definition, and scope, and the debates around it, as well as the main characteristics and dimensions of the concept. Additionally, the paper notes the efforts of the international community to strengthen and operationalize human security to empower individuals by creating and giving access to new opportunities, which would then potentially lead to their country's sustainable development. It also informs on the diversity of challenges to human security in today's world which retard the economic growth in separate suffering states or regions and even the whole world, impedes on the human development goals, and thus dampens prospects for the country's prosperity.

Keywords: global threats, human-centered approach, human development, freedom from fear, top-down protection, bottom-up empowerment.

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Introduction

The new millennium, so much awaited for with its hopefully beneficial changes for the whole humanity, has long come and its second decade has just switched with the next.

Unfortunately, though naturally, it is not always when hopes to come true, and mankind

is still fighting old and new global challenges: poverty, underdevelopment, overpopulation pressures, health pandemics, sudden economic downturns, shortage of food and drinkable water, environmental issues, and the list can yet be continued.

Obviously, these problems cannot be resisted by the suffering countries separately as well

as relieved by some urgent measures. This is an agenda for a time demanding process of sustainable human development which, once successful, not only promotes economic growth but aims to evenly distribute its benefits, empower people with new opportunities giving priority to the poor, and provide their participation in decisions that would really affect their lives in a positive way. It is a development that is “pro-people, pro-nature, pro-jobs and pro-women” [1, p.3].

It is a great contribution to the yearly Human Development Reports issued by the United Nations Development Programme that has stimulated international dialogue on such models of development. And it was the 1994 Human Development Report when the concept of human security was first mentioned as an indispensable condition for human development.

According to the Report, it will not be possible for the world’s community to achieve any of its major goals – neither peace, human rights, and democratization, nor environmental protection, and social integration except in the context of sustainable development that leads to human security [1, p.2].

Tasks and goals

The goals of the paper are rather theoretical in the sense that it reveals the basic notions of the concept of human security, its constituent elements, detailed characteristics, and determinants by an in-depth review of the literature devoted to security studies and development issues.

Methodology

This paper is part of a larger academic work and is in fact intended as speculation about human security with the aim to get the readers acquainted with the basics of the conception and make them understand what it is special for and how it is special, why there was a need for this conception, who it is aimed for and other questions. For this reason, the paper was prepared with such a speculative method of the research as an in-depth review of the literature

devoted to security studies and development issues to fully reveal the underpinnings of the concept and ground on that in further research.

Discussion

The history of the very concept of human security is commonly believed to start with the Human Development Report published in 1994 by the United Nations Development Programme, which was the product of a joint collaboration of the world’s most prominent scholars and policymakers. But, in fact, the prerequisites and talks on this issue had begun long before 1994. In June 1945, the US secretary of state Edward Reilly Stettinus, Jr. reported to his government on the results of the San Francisco Conference: “The battle of peace has to be fought on two fronts. The first is the security front where victory spells freedom from fear. The second is the economic and social front where victory means freedom from want. Only victory on both fronts can assure the world of an enduring peace....No provisions that can be written into the Charter will enable the Security Council to make the world secure from war if men and women have no security in their homes and their jobs” [1, p.3].

The Willy Brandt Commission of 1978 known as the North-South Report focused on ensuring human survival by improving the economic and social conditions of disadvantaged communities. The North-South Report produced in 1980 played important role in conceptualizing human security. Under the title “To Ensure Survival”, the report suggested improvements in economic and social conditions in deprived countries by making the discourse on security much wider inclusive and highlighted the need for incorporating the human-centric agenda in the global policy framework [2, p.1].

In 1991, the Stockholm Initiative on Global Security and Governance highlighted the need for a new concept of human security. The report called “*Common Responsibility in the 1990s*” indicated threats to security other than military and political confrontation. This wider security paradigm included the failure of development policy, ecology deterioration, extreme poverty, and health pandemics [2, p.2].

The definition of the concept “human security”

Mahbub ul Haq, the consulting economist who played a key role in the elaboration of the Human Development Report once said, “We need to fashion a new concept of human security that is reflected in the lives of our people, not in the weapons of our country.” [3, p.2]

So, what is human security? An average person would say “being free from insecurity and threats” but there is much beyond that simple definition. It is a whole complex of multi-dimensional and interrelated issues over which humankind has long been struggling. Correspondingly, the term cannot be something sharply marginated. Then it is predictable that the term may have multiple definitions, elements, and approaches.

This plurality in dealing with the term can be found on the very surface in the literature devoted to development studies and security issues, where it has been regarded differently: as an emerging paradigm, an approach, a world community’s perspective, an agenda to be accomplished, or as a policy framework to work within.

To continue, the notion of security was traditionally used in the collocation “national security” and meant protection of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of a state from external military aggression. It then implied the state’s duty to protect its citizens and guarantee freedoms.

This sense of the concept had long dominated in security studies and policymaking until eventually academics on security, having seen that at times states fail to fully ensure security and/or can in some way even distress its citizens, began to think of security in the broader sense. Then, in 1994, the United Nations Development Programme in the Human Development Report introduced the “newer” conception.

The Commission on Human Security (hereinafter CHS), in its final report Human Security Now, defines human security as: “... (Author: see one of the above – an emerging paradigm, an approach, a perspective, an agenda, framework) to protect the vital core of all human

lives in ways that enhance human freedoms and human fulfillment. Human security means protecting fundamental freedoms – freedoms that are the essence of life. It means protecting people from critical (severe) and pervasive (widespread) threats and situations. It means using processes that build on people’s strengths and aspirations. It means creating political, social, environmental, economic, military and cultural systems that together give people the building blocks of survival, livelihood, and dignity”. [4, p.4]

Briefly and overall, the definition proposed by the Commission on Human Security re-conceptualizes security in a fundamental way by:

- shifting the focus from a traditional, state-centric understanding of security as safety of states from military aggression, to one that concentrates on the security of the individuals, their protection, and empowerment;
- drawing attention to the intersection of security, development, and human rights as complementary elements of a complex matter;
- and promoting a new integrated, coordinated and people-centered approach to advancing peace, security, and development within and across nations [5, p.6-7].

Thus, according to the human-centered notion of security, major threats are not necessarily external, that is military aggression from other states, but rather domestic: financial instability and vulnerability, violation of human rights, political or ethnic discrimination, food shortage, health threats, and other struggles. Hence, national security is no longer to be ensured by armed forces, but by favorable social, political, and economic conditions, human development, and human rights protection.

In such a sense, the notion has produced further debate among scholars and politicians. Critics doubt whether such an approach is the best way to address the global challenges of the international community. Conversely, advocates of human security view the concept as a milestone to mankind’s safety and survival challenged by poverty, diseases, environmental stress, as well as armed conflicts, and human rights violations [6, p.7].

Overall, the concept of human security seems promising or even, as realists might say, utopic.

This is one of the reasons why there are so many questions among the academics and practitioners alike: “Security for whom?”, “Security for which values?”, “How much security?”, “Security from what threats?”, “Security by what means?”, “Security at what cost?” and even “Security in what time period?” [7, pp.13-17]. However, there is an opinion that some of these questions may be neglected and much depends on the agenda [8, p.9].

The scope of human security

According to the Human Development Report, the scope of human security includes seven areas with the main objectives of each as the following (see Figure 1):

- **Personal security**- to protect individuals from any physical and psychological persecution, and from abuse whether from the state or any external powers, as well as from any violent individuals and possible minor and heavy crimes;
- **Political security**- to ensure people basic human rights and freedoms, as well as to secure citizens and groups from government’s practice to control their ideas, activities, and intentions non-destructive by implication, or any other kind of pressure imposed by the state power;
- **Community security**- to long-term facilitate preservation of traditional values, protect individuals from any possible ethnic violence and enhance protection and trust of populations in general, and women in particular;
- **Economic security** (or otherwise Financial security) - to guarantee individuals or households steady income from paid work or other means for decent living at present and foreseeable future, or, in case of unemployment - regardless of the reasons - pension or other payments so that they are able to sustainably cover their essential needs like food, shelter, clothing and hygiene necessities along with the costs related to education and health care;
- **Food security**- to guarantee populations that safe and nutritious food that meets the dietary standards and preferences for a healthy life is sufficient, physically accessible, and financially affordable;

- **Environmental security**- to ensure the world’s whole population sanitary water supply, non-polluted environment, preserving biodiversity, non-degraded agricultural lands and natural resources for the forthcoming generations at scales ranging from global to local;
- **Health security**- to guarantee health care services and protection from pandemics irrespective of the circumstances –deliberate use of chemical or biological weapons intended to cause harm, events with mass gatherings (festivals, major sporting events, and other), or a natural disease outbreak.

These areas of security are not to be dealt with in isolation as they overlap in most cases. According to Des Gasper and Oscar A. Gómez, overlaps arise because the seven areas were not all identified by the same criterion, and “they were somewhat arbitrarily selected and delineated” [9, p.14].

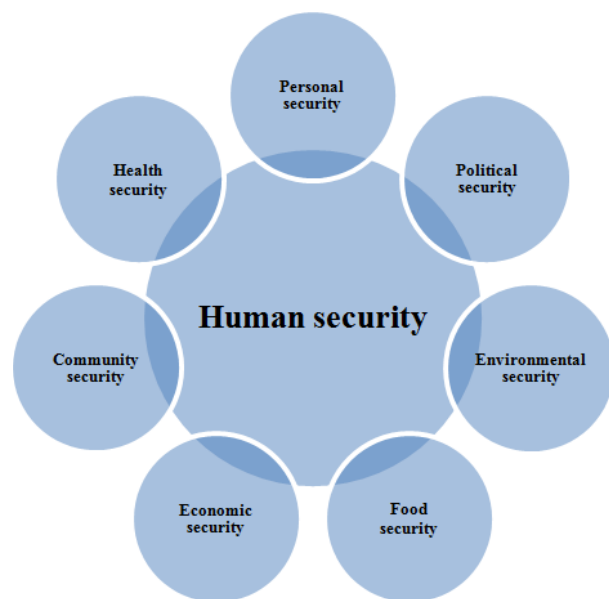


Figure 1. The main areas of human security

As a vehemently promoted notion, human security is often closely associated with human rights. Both reflect “cosmopolitan” values having no territorial borders and promises regardless of citizenship. Both are fiercely fought for, but the former (human security), however, gives a feeling of an urgent need (*Author*: and a bigger promise) in comparison with the latter [10, p.3].

In this way, CHS gives human security the following characteristics:

- *it is people-centered*. Here, again, human security places the individual in the center of analysis with a wide range of conditions that put survival, livelihood, and dignity of individuals at risk or at height);

- *multi-sectoral*. This implies that human security deals with causes of insecurity related to different spheres of daily practices of individuals such as economic, food, health, environmental, personal, community, and political security;

- *comprehensive*. Here, it implies that it is an extensively elaborated framework (or policy, approach, etc.) and in terms of its intended object, the concept is all-inclusive;

- *context-specific*. As a context-specific concept, human security acknowledges that insecurities vary considerably across different settings and as such promotes contextualized solutions that are responsive to the particular situations;

- *and prevention-oriented*. In addressing risks and root causes of insecurities, human security is prevention-oriented and introduces a dual focus on protection and empowerment [5, pp.7-8].

All of the above-mentioned features of human security imply the protection of ordinary citizens from the hazards of life no matter what the source is but, obviously enough, out of their control and thus threatening. So, one more feature is that human security is *protective*. In this sense the human security approach calls governments, international organizations, and NGOs to ensure protection that is institutionalized, not episodic; responsive, not rigid; pro-active, not reactive [11, p.2].

Up to this part of the article, we had been considering protection as the core of the conception, no matter which of the two entities we would wish to protect. However, human security is a complex of interrelated issues, so it can be associated with a conglomeration of different elements. Thus, it is somewhat a spacious notion and according to Jay Jinseop Jang can be regarded from three dimensions: security *of* humans, *for* humans, and *by* humans [12, p.9].

The first two dimensions have already become overused in literature dealing with security and make security appear as a flat notion. As for the latter, it gives an impression that people are not

objects to passively take security for granted but actors to make it when empowered. And this is exactly the point, in which the CHS pioneered: they put forward the need for 'empowerment'.

Protection and empowerment of people are the two indispensable things for achieving human security objectives. They are advocated by the CHS as the bi-parts of any human security policy framework.

Protection is defined by the CHS as "strategies, set up by states, international agencies, NGOs and the private sector, to shield people from menaces". It refers to the norms, processes, and institutions required to protect people from critical and pervasive threats. And in exercising such norms and processes protection implies a "top to down" approach. It recognizes that people face threats that are beyond their control, for example natural disasters, financial crises, and conflicts. And states, along with international and regional organizations, civil society, and non-governmental actors have the primary duty to implement such protection.

As for empowerment, it is defined by the CHS as "strategies that enable people to develop their resilience to difficult situations". Empowerment implies a "bottom-up" approach. It aims at developing the capabilities of individuals and communities to make informed choices and to act on their own behalf. Empowering people not only enables them to develop their full potential but also allows them to find ways and participate in solutions to ensure human security for themselves and others.

As clearly stated by the CHS, protection, and empowerment are mutually reinforcing and cannot be treated in isolation [5, p.8].

Obviously enough, it is rather rare when a plan is immediately set going. In most occasions a plan needs preparation, and the human security concept is exactly the case. To put the concept into the very action, three important elements should be observed [13, p.11]:

1) First of all, prior to any human security promotion program being launched, there should be a commonly shared commitment to protect human dignity, which is, in fact, the very essence of human security;

2) Secondly, this commitment should be empowered with existing normative instruments designed for implementing the human security policy as well as new ones should be elaborated so that the whole possible range of instruments “act in concert” for the concept’s sake;

3) And finally, people’s awareness about human security issues should be fostered by better articulating the policy so that the public community strives to join the efforts.

Another important point here is that human security is also to be regarded from two main aspects: firstly, as freedom from fear of such long-lasting threats as poverty, starvation, diseases, and repression; and secondly, it implies protection from sudden disruptions in the patterns of daily life whether in homes, in jobs or in communities. Such threats can exist at all levels of income and development.

All of the above-mentioned things and human security being a complex of inter-tangled issues make one think in a holistic way. The ambiguous nature of the concept has made security and development come together and the very globalism of their common issues demanded joint efforts of communities to address them globally [14, p.2]. In their academic paper, Tadjbakhsh and Chenoy stand for the holistic approach to human security concept, arguing that the sources of threats vary greatly both within and across countries, and such a broad definition of human security is in fact flexible and only suitable option [15, p.10]. Another scholar Pauline Ewan supports these arguments by saying: “Not only does a holistic approach draw different specialisms together in the quest to understand better the interconnections between diverse aspects of human insecurity, but it may also bolster co-operation between international agencies in the fields of security, development and human rights” [16, p.184].

The first point that immediately becomes obvious while doing an in-depth literature review on human security is that the concept is rather ambiguous and thus no consensus regarding its definition, target, and scope, as well as the most appropriate approach to study the concept, seems to be ever possible.

In terms of the approach, the authors follow the holistic one and strongly believe that the matter of human security cannot be dealt with separately from other urgent threats of humanity and many things need careful consideration and mostly preparation before any human security promotion program is started.

By the same token, the authors believe that when exercised within a separate state, its government, institutions, and agencies should cooperate without duplicating the functions to ensure security as if separate details work together to make one big machine move forward. Moreover, in that way, no extra expenses will be necessary, and the efforts will be put in action at a maximum.

Overall, the human security agenda comprises many interrelated and interdependent issues each being separate, at times global, issues. This fact gives ground for many further debates and particularly, academic studies in the area.

Results

The conducted study has shown that as the academics and policymakers have reconsidered the concept of human security it now represents both a vertical and horizontal expansion.

Now human security is notable for the following important points:

1) Human security focuses on the individual/people as the referent object of security rather than the state. It implies that is not actually a country to boost prosperity, but rather it is every single citizen. In that logic, the financial prosperity and well-being of citizens will reflect the country’s overall welfare;

2) According to CHS, there are several points the human security is special for and it comprises 7 major areas in which people, whether solely or as a community, might feel insecure and thus need support from their states. In general, to make the best of the human security promotion programs, the actions should be regular rather than occasional; responsive rather than inflexible; pro-active rather than reactive.

3) Human security is not a “flat” abstract notion, but a multidimensional matter and

it encompasses three dimensions: security *of* humans, *for* humans, and *by* humans. The first and the second dimensions imply that people *are taken care of* by the state. As for the third, it suggests empowerment so that people could promote. The support is called best when people are given opportunities for development instead of the things demanded. It is like handing a fish-rod to people at-need and teaching them fishing rather than giving them the fish;

4) Human security is a global matter and to achieve better and prompter results, the institutions should work jointly both on regional and international levels.

Conclusion

The concept of human security is an attempt by academics and policymakers to redefine, refine, and broaden the traditional meaning of security as protection of state sovereignty and territorial integrity from external military threats.

Although the term is still vividly contested, experts agree on the point that there really was a need for the shift of focus towards a pro-

individual approach to security, as the preceding traditional state-centric approach to national security with state borders under protection proved inconsistent when some states themselves were reasons for domestic insecurities and rise of new challenges that had no borders – poverty, forced migration, AIDS and many others.

For human security ‘dream’ to come true, individuals, communities, governments, and institutions should be given certain instruments and thus, the capacity to confront human security challenges.

The development and implementation of security policy had long been the prerogative of security professionals, who have actively discouraged civilian participation, both in government and in civil society. However, the worldview has changed greatly since then. Nowadays, communities, governments, and institutions work hard both jointly and at home to ensure security for “everyONE” with a focus on empowering individuals/people with tools to feel at least personally and financially secure, and hopefully guaranteeing security in all other areas.

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Адам қауіпсіздігінің тұжырымдамасы: ерекшеліктері, өлшемдері және детерминанттары

Аңдатпа. Мақалада тұтастай алғанда қауіпсіздік ұғымының теориялық негіздері және оның адамға бағытталған көзқарастары келтірілген. Адам қауіпсіздігі тұжырымдамасының пайда болуы мен эволюциясы, оның анықтамасы мен қолданылу аясындағы қарама-қайшылықтар, қазіргі әлемдегі адам қауіпсіздігіне кейбір қауіптер, сондай-ақ халықаралық қауымдастықтың адам қауіпсіздігін нығайту мен жүзеге асыру жөніндегі әрекеттері қарастырылады. Сонымен қатар, тұжырымдама туралы, оның өлшемдері туралы ақпарат береді, қауіпсіздік қамтамасыз етумен байланысты негізгі проблемаларды анықтауға тырысады. Мақалада сондай-ақ жекелеген елдерде және аймақтарда, соның ішінде бүкіл әлемде экономикалық өсуге кедергі келтіретін, адам дамуының мақсаттарына қол жеткізуге кедергі келтіретін және сол арқылы елдің өркендеу перспективаларына нұқсан келтіретін қазіргі әлемдегі адам қауіпсіздігіне қатысты түрлі сын-қатерлер туралы айтылады.

Түйін сөздер: жаһандық қауіптер, адамға бағытталған көзқарас, адамның дамуы, қорқыныштан арылу, мұқтаждықтан бостандық, «жоғарыдан-төменге» қорғану, «төменнен жоғарыға» мүмкіндік беру.

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Концепция человеческой безопасности: характеристика, измерения и детерминанты

Аннотация. Данная статья призвана представить некоторые теоретические основы концепции безопасности как в ее традиционном понимании в плане обеспечения безопасности государства и его территориальной целостности, так и в ее новом ракурсе, исходя из которого человек является объектом, нуждающимся в обеспечении безопасности в первую очередь. Акцент в данной статье сделан на последнем значении понятия безопасность.

В статье рассматриваются основные предпосылки и эволюция подобного подхода с ориентиром на как на отдельного человека, так и общества в целом, множество и неоднозначность определений данного понятия и споры, возникающие вследствие этого, а также сфера применения, основные характеристики и измерения человеческой безопасности. Кроме того, в статье отмечаются усилия международного сообщества по укреплению и практическому применению подхода человеческой безопасности с целью расширения потенциала людей путем создания и предоставления доступа к новым возможностям, что, в свою очередь, способствует устойчивому развитию стран.

В статье также сообщается о многообразии вызовов человеческой безопасности в современном мире, которые тормозят экономический рост в отдельных странах и/или регионах, в том числе и во всем мире, препятствуют достижению целей человеческого развития и тем самым подрывают перспективы процветания этих государств.

Ключевые слова: глобальные угрозы, ориентированный на человека подход, человеческое развитие, свобода от страха, защита «сверху вниз», расширение возможностей «снизу вверх».

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