



Human security: A theoretical analysis

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Abstract

The world today is facing a wide range of crises and instabilities, causing immense suffering to millions of people and threatening the security of human family into the future. Sometimes, the government that is considered as the fundamental purveyor of security often fails in its obligations and at times becomes itself a threat to its own people most obviously in extreme cases of repressive or failed states. Even in the democratic societies, sometime the acts of government also hurt the rights and safety of individuals. Besides, the threats like war, nuclear weapons, terrorism, environmental degradation, poverty, hunger are also risks to the security of human beings. In the case of Third World countries, these threats become over-determined and complex. Great power tension and stockpiles of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons would negatively affect everyone's safety. Sometimes violent death dehumanization, deprivation, domination influence one's safety. To get rid of all these threats, there is a need to change the attention of the world from military or state security to that of human security. There is a strong need to protect the people's lives from all the critical and pervasive threats. In this paper, an attempt has been made to present a critical analysis of this concept.

Keywords: Human Security, Rights, Terrorism, Environmental Degradation.

INTRODUCTION

The end of the Cold War and the increasing pace of globalization have given rise to fundamental changes in many of the paradigms employed in the social sciences. Amongst the various new ideas which have emerged, "Human Security" has become a catchphrase in the global debate on the changing meaning of security. Over the last ten years, the concept of human security has begun to influence the global politics, institutions and governance. The debate over the referent object of security is not a new idea. In fact the end of the Cold War unleashed a debate that had been growing for years, provoked by scholars and practitioners increasingly dissatisfied with the traditional conceptions of security. The conventional wisdom is that the term „human security“ was invented or at least broadly popularized in

the international community by the UN Development Programme in its 1994s Human Development Report intended as an agenda-package for the following year. The definition it gave was,

“the security of people through development not arms; through cooperation, not confrontation; through peace not war.....human security can be said to have two main aspects. It means first, safety from such chronic threats as hunger, disease and repression. And second, it means protection from sudden and hurtful disruptions in the pattern of daily life- whether in homes, in jobs or in communities (UNDP, 1994).

But as the Report itself points out, this is not really a new idea at all. It reminds us that the founders of the UN have always given equal importance to people's security and to territorial security. The idea of „freedom from want“ and „freedom from fear“ is found in Roosevelt's „Four Freedoms“ during world war 2, and in dozens of reports and analysis in the decade since. But the traditional state-centered concept of security reached at peak during the cold-war. The major powers of the world entrusted the security of their populace, and to a certain extent of the world, to a balance of power among the states. For this prevailing realist view, the referent object of security is the states and presumes; in a very Hobbesian fashion that if the state is secure, then so too will those that live within it (Kanti, 2000). This type of security relies primarily on an anarchistic balance of powers, the military buildup of two superpowers and on the absolute sovereignty of the nation-state. With the fall of Berlin Wall, it became clear that despite the macro-level stability created by the east-west military balance of the cold war, citizens were not necessarily safe. They may not have suffered from outright nuclear attack, but they were being killed by the remnants of wars, environmental disaster, poverty, disease, hunger, violence and human rights abuse. The traditional notion of security failed at its primary objective; protecting the individual. This led to the challenging of the notion of traditional security by such concepts as cooperative, comprehensive, societal, collective, international and human security (Johan, 1997).

Human Security: A People Centered Approach

Among all these concepts, human security takes the most dramatic steps by making the referent object not the state, society or community, but the individual. As the traditional concept of security is „state centered“ and its core value is to gain the security of the state from all types of threats that endanger its sovereignty, territory and its existence. But the human security is totally different from it. It is a „people centered“ concept and its main idea is „how free and secure are we as individuals“. A spectrum has been used to describe the possible definition of human security. In its narrow sense, the spectrum, although still focuses on the traditional security that is related to state. It is limited to violent threats such as landmines, small arms, violence and intra-state conflict (Lylod, 2000). It can be seen in its broad sense as incorporating a long list of possible threats such as, war, some new concerns related to development such as health, poverty and environment. Thus the new definition of human security is the protection of the vital core of all human lives from critical and pervasive threats and situations, building on their strengths and aspirations. It also means creating system that give people the building blocks of survival, dignity and livelihood. Human security connects different types of freedom- freedom from want,

freedom from fear, and freedom to take action on one's own behalf. To do this, it offers two general strategies: protection and empowerment. Protection shields people from dangers (UNDP, 1994). It requires concerted effort to develop norms, process and institutions that systematically address insecurities. Empowerment enables people to develop their potential and become full participants in decision making. Protection and empowerment are mutually reinforcing and both are required in most situations. There is another strategic approach to human security, which is respect. Respect for human security means that whatever their primary objective may be, all actors, whatever institutional or corporate or individual must ascertain that their action do not foreseeable albeit unintentionally, threaten human security. This sense of respect has a close relationship to respect for individual human beings.

A Multi-dimensional Approach

The 1994 UNDP, Human Development Report is generally seen as the first significant attempt at articulating the broad approach to human security. This document argued that human security required the attenuation of a wide range of threats to people. These were grouped under several constituent parts:

- Economic security refers to an individual's enjoyment of a basic income, either through gainful employment or from a social safety net.
- Food security means end of hunger, malnutrition, ensuring healthy diet and life-styles, especially for vulnerable groups, ensuring availability of food entitlement with work and end of famine.
- Health security, guaranteeing a minimum protection from disease and unhealthy lifestyle.
- Environmental security means integrity of safe water, fresh air and arable land and also includes freedom from deforestation, desertification and natural disasters.
- Political security encompasses freedom of speech, conscience, and assembly. It also means freedom from government repression, systematic human right violation and militarization.
- Community security covers the right to freedom of identity (of race, language, caste, class, ethnicity, gender, generation, religion, nationality etc).
- Personal security means protecting people from physical violence, whether from state, from external states, from violent individuals and sub-state actors, from domestic abuse, from predatory adults, or even from the individual himself (as in protection from suicide) (UNDP,1994).

In addition to food, resources and environmental instability, there is growing anxiety about whether the world has enough oil to meet its future energy

requirements. An energy disruption in one area of the world has an immediate impact on price and energy security in other areas. The national security dangers arising from dependence on foreign oil, combined with aggressive competition for strategic reserves of fossil fuels, are likely to lead further degradation of natural resources, continued global warming and major economic instability, particularly in the world's most impoverished regions. This is likely to further inflame extremism and terrorism in some places, particularly where rising energy costs severely impact human livelihood. Access to reliable and affordable supplies of clean energy is an essential human rights based on the responsibility of the world community to empower the poor to meet their material needs to fuel economic productivity and to ensure the quality of life for people everywhere (Doug, 2007).

Last but not least, there is also a broad range of social problems. Progress in science and technology could in some aspects affect the safety of an individual. The development of a global information society can cause "future shock"-the stratification of communities with various accesses to new technologies-or to the creation of new categories of social exclusion and criminal acts like cybercrime. Gender issues, especially in societies operating in a patriarchal paradigm when there is change in the social position of women, can lead to conflict, though such issues are likely to be a hallmark of social development (Rafal, 2003). At present world population is 6.6 billion, and nearly 220,000 new people are being added each day. The enlarging global population-combined with rising wages, purchasing power and consumption in the emerging economies-has escalated the demand for food, commodities, oil and other resources. If the world is going to carry 9 billion people by 2050, all must have the right to population security, ensuring that the resources available on this planet are sustainable in relation to the population growth and consumption per person. It would seem obvious that there is a strong need to frame the meaning of security within an expanded context, that human security must now contain the imperative of human survivability and resilience. Imbalance between nations- population growth, poverty, food, resources, ecology, migration, energy money, peace and cultural understanding- are pivotal security issues. They have the capacity to impact individual lives exponentially in all places across the world. As transnational issues, they are the multipliers of human security-either for widespread stability or instability- and these multipliers can provide a new foundation for human security as a responsibility of the global common. Besides, it must acknowledge that all these dimensions of human security are interrelated and equally affect human security (Shahrbanon, 2004).

Major dimensions of human security make it explicit that this concept is a combination of major innovations in the security field that culminate in the shift from

understanding international relations and security problems from the state's stand point to individual's perception. It allows for a gamut from prevention to emergency through a practical merger and reconciliation of human rights, human development and security. It comes within the scope of Mill's insight that no people can really be free unless they themselves fight for this freedom. It is indeed, the means by which people shall be empowered and regain dignity, freedom from fear and freedom from want that will leave them free to strive for democracy and rights. It represents a necessary widening and deepening of traditional notions, given the new imperative to respond to the challenges of globalization, weak and predator nation-states and new actors in international relations (Shahrbanon, 2004).

Problems

A human security approach gives rise to a host of policy implications, critiques and challenges. It is challenged on the arbitrariness, vagueness of the idea and the broadness of its epistemology of threats. As the UNDP's report and Canadian Government's papers list of threats to human security. It includes everything from substance abuse to genocide, making it impossible to determine where policy attention is most required and priorities for action to be established. When the potential set of critical and pervasive threats is so wide, by what criteria is a small subset of these chosen for consideration?

Other challenged it on the basis that the purpose of this concept is yet to be fulfilled. For example, human security contains health security as one of its dimensions, but when one go by the reality, it is said that there is no health security in the world. In spite of so much advancement in the health sector, 22 million people died of preventable diseases in 2004. HIV/AIDS has become the greatest health catastrophe. It killed more than three million people in 2011. In the Sub-Saharan Africa, by 2015, about half of all the orphans in their region will have become orphans because of HIV/AIDS. Polluted water is affecting 132 million people in 20 countries. Child mortality and maternal mortality are other threats to health security (khanchit, 2007). Another criticism is based on the vagueness and incoherence nature of this concept. Roland Paris, who reviews some of the skeptical literature, writes "human security is like sustainable development" -everyone is for it, but few people have a clear idea of what it means. Existing definitions of human security tend to be extraordinarily expensive and vague, encompassing everything from physical security to psychological well-being, which provides policy makers with little guidance in the prioritization of competing policy (Roland, 2001). Besides, human security as a concept aspires to explain almost everything and consequently, in reality explains nothing. It is academically confusing because it seems to support all hypotheses and their

opposites at the same time. It therefore seems to add complexity without extra-explanatory power.

Another limitation of this concept is that it challenges the role of the state and is considered as threat to state's sovereignty. Human security challenges the role of the sovereign state as the sole provider of security. Any expansion of security definition will result in an increased use of power and justified by the international community as their „responsibility“. On the basis of humanitarian issues some powerful states get an excuse to intervene in the matter of weak states. Viewing underdevelopment as a source of conflict provides justification for continued surveillance and engagement and use by dominant powers to legitimize self-interested interventionism. The concept of human security may be used to justify military interventions and may impose military solutions to problems of the welfare states. It can become a new excuse for interventionism in areas where sovereignty was previously respected. A key obstacle to operationalisation of human security is the role of international aid. Aid therefore is a double-edged sword. If effectively used, it can clearly help overcome development issues, conflict situations, poverty and insecurity. Otherwise, it can erase past efforts, increase underdevelopment and poverty, great instability and insecurity. Aid can be used as a tool for the powerful countries to fulfill their political, diplomatic and strategic interests in the poor countries. Second, aid means that beneficiaries have to use it to buy material and expertise from the donors. Thus the aid with wrong intentions runs the danger of creating perverse incentives leading to conflicts or exacerbated human securities (Shahrbanon, 2004).

Prospectus

Human security thus seems to appear as an endless debate between its proponents and critics, and even among its advocates, who have not agreed on a single unified definition reconciling maximalist and minimalist understandings. However, such quarrels and disagreements cannot be seen as damning flaws of the concept. The lack of firm definition for a concept does not bring down the utility of this concept. Rather, it is perhaps a general problem within the social sciences of not being able to provide a definitive definition because the objects of the study are in constant motion and there can be no methodological posture of objectivity. Secondly, the widening nature of the concept is not its limitation. This is related to the all dimensions of human life and all these dimensions are interrelated. It classifies different types of threats and their relationship to traditional security as well as illustrating the inter-connectedness of threats. So its vastness is not its limitations. It shows the importance and relevance of this concept. The notion of human security does not replace but ultimately supplements that

of state security. It emphasizes the role of the state as the „fundamental purveyor“ for the protection of its citizens. Besides, it also emphasizes on the theory of multilateralism. According to this, human security approach has to be global. Multilateralism means a commitment to work with international institutions and through the procedures of international institutions. The ideal-type human security approach envisage the state to be part of a dynamic and seamless policy network with non-state actors, including NGOs and civil society, international and regional organizations as well as individuals and their communities. This means working with the United Nations framework, but it also entail working with or sharing out tasks among other regional organizations such as the OSCE and NATO in Europe, the AU, SADC and the OAS in the western hemisphere, the ASEAN, the SAARC, the NAM in the Asia. Local knowledge and expertise, enhanced capabilities and obvious self-interest can make regional institutions longer terms, prevention-inclined, specifically-adopted actors in the protection of human security. Now the criticism of human security on the basis of humanitarian intervention is also not true. Because RTPR (Responsibility To Protect Report) and the ICISS (International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty) set out number of additional conditions for interventions which diffuse the controversy around human security as an excuse for interventions. Their primary goal is to establish clear rules, procedures and criteria of humanitarian intervention, especially those related to the decision to intervene, its timing and its moralistic purpose. To remove the criticism on the basis of foreign aid, the donors and aid agencies must be self-critical and aware of the potentially negative effects of aid (Shahrbanon, 2004).

CONCLUSION

Human security as a concept needs to be forcible enough to adapt to changing situations and levels of understanding. The practical remedies to human insecurities can be geared towards analysis of root causes, comprehensive and holistic policies and appropriate measurements for monitoring. The human security concept can be constituted as a space of research, not at least in during the times of paradigm wars. The main challenge is not to try to convince states authorities to be moral, even though their self-interest is not at the stake, but to change the way they think and make them realize that the problems are crossing borders in multiple ways. Human security threats are global in scope. So the government around the world ought to understand that it is in everyone's interest to achieve it. One must recognize that it is not merely to satisfy a moral need to promote human security; it is also because this is the only chance for humanity to survive in

the face of challenges confronting it. Human security is not only an ethical discourse; it is also a utilitarian discourse.

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