Human Security Concept as an Analytical Framework for the Study of Asymmetric Conflict

Concepto de seguridad humana como marco analítico para el estudio del conflicto asimétrico

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ABSTRACT:
This article examines the human security concept and its use in international relations theory. Of particular interest is its possible use in the study of asymmetric conflict. The article attempts to identify the weakest points in human security studies in general and to propose ways of filling in existing gaps and conceptual inconsistencies. The concept of human security is not yet coherent and harmonious. A working definition of human security covering existing gaps is proposed in the article.
Keywords Government; Human security; Political practice; Security studies.

RESUMEN:
Este artículo examina el concepto de seguridad humana y su uso en la teoría de las relaciones internacionales. De particular interés es su posible utilización en el estudio del conflicto asimétrico. El artículo intenta identificar los puntos más débiles en los estudios de seguridad humana en general y proponer formas de llenar las brechas existentes y las inconsistencias conceptuales. El concepto de seguridad humana no es todavía coherente y armonioso. En el artículo se propone una definición de la seguridad humana que abarque las lagunas existentes.
Palabras clave Gobierno; Seguridad humana; Práctica política; Estudios de seguridad.

1. Introduction

Traditionally, national security has been defined as the protection of territory via military means. It was provided under conditions of an anarchic state system. Its core feature is the constant competition for security based on force. However, it can be argued that asymmetric threats and even threats originating from within the state are much more urgent threats to the

majority of the world population. Asymmetric conflict and terrorism often lead to violence, sometimes to the extremes of terrorism or genocide as prevailing forms of contemporary conflict. Therefore, traditionally defined national security cannot be the only landmark of a security policy.

Despite the objections of some experts, security studies have moved away from their traditional focus on interstate conflicts (Baluev, 2015). Since the end of the Cold War, the research in the field of security has been "broadened" and "deepened". The "broadening" relates to the inclusion of non-military threats such as environmental degradation, overpopulation, mass refugee migrations, nationalism, and terrorism. The "deepening" refers to paying attention not just to external threats to states but also to the security of individuals and groups (Paris, 2001). Human belief systems are also becoming an important factor in understanding asymmetric conflict and terrorism(Francis, 2016). Security studies have shifted away from the state as the object of security and have included other referents and values.

Different kinds of non-traditional security approaches have been introduced and accepted to some extent not only in academia but in foreign and security policy-making communities and in the various countries as well. East Asia is a good example of this as most threats to security are transnational in nature and difficult to control by a single state (Nagy, 2013). At least at a rhetorical level, the main international actors express concern for human security even when they are pursuing their national interests and are dealing with traditional security concerns.

The idea of human security as a multidisciplinary paradigm for understanding global threats at the level of individuals originating in the West and in the new environment has attracted increasing attention as an alternative approach for confronting new challenges. As a starting point, international security as traditionally defined (with a predominant territorial emphasis) does not necessarily provide real security for the individuals who comprise the population of a state. This idea is not new. Its origins can be traced back to the cooperation between Canada and Norway in the 1960s UN peacekeeping operations. By the end of the 1990s, the human security concept had become a focal point of debates on foreign policy. In 2012, for the first time, the United Nations General Assembly agreed on a common understanding of the human security concept(Gomez et al., 2015). Japan has endorsed the promotion of human security as one of the major points of its foreign policy. Russian scholars have also delved into human security studies demonstrating the necessity of a transnational appeal for human security. Furthermore, some rhetoric from the human security field (i.e. concern for civil population in the zone of conflict) is used even when pursuing naked traditional security policies during the Ukrainian crisis.

Thus, the term "human security" is used widely both in the West and the Asia Pacific and even in Russia. It influences security policy decision makers (Carpenter & Duygulu, 2014). It applies both to academia and to the policy-making community. According to E.Newman (2016), the concept of human security has had some success as a normative reference point for human-centered policy movements internationally, and it reflects a broader shift towards human agency and human-centered conceptions of security. As a theoretical concept, the idea contributes to a multi-disciplinary reconceptualization of security. However, there is still a lack of theoretical background and other significant weaknesses and drawbacks to the concept in its current state. The most important of these are the absence of a common definition and terminology in the field of human security, the lack of understanding of the place of a human security paradigm in security studies, the inability to separate rhetoric from solid theoretical backing of the concept, the dubious role of the state as both the provider of human security and the major threats to it. All of these are preventing the effective use of the concept as an analytic tool for the understanding of asymmetric conflicts. The concept itself becomes too vague and amorphous and need to be narrowed and cut of excessive elements. This article attempts to fill these gaps. Its principal aim is to propose the definition of human security which is devoid of all-inclusive terminology used in political rhetoric during last 20 years and which could be real analytical frameworks for analysis of asymmetric conflict. Research tasks

include narrowing and sharpening of definition, exploring relationships between human security in a narrow sense and good governance practice and the role of the state.

2. Methodology

First of all, we should understand what is not defined as human security. There are strong relationships between human security and national security, development, and human rights spheres of discourse (Howe, 2013). However, human security is not the same as state security (under certain conditions, it can even be its opposite). State security is primarily concerned with the protection of territory from external military threats, as well as preserving the existing political system. However, often the threats not related to the territorial integrity and military protection (hunger, human-made disasters, environmental degradation, repressive or/and corrupt state machine, etc.) are more relevant to the public. For some people (or in some countries for most people), the main threat comes from their government rather than from an external enemy. Almost everywhere, the concept of the state does not take the existence of people into account. According to this concept, the people exist for the benefit of the state, and not vice versa. Human security is thus not the same as the "security of the nation", as such an interpretation would focus only on the group component. In fact, human security relates equally to the group/ collective/ society level, and to the personal and individual level.

In 1945, the US Secretary of State Edward Stettinius wrote that the battle for peace must 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. And only a victory on both fronts can assure the world of enduring peace (now called human security by many) (UNDP, 1994). Currently, the growing population around the world will rather add a third component that is predominantly outside the scope of human security studies and the consideration of most scholars' writings on this topic as well: the freedom from an oversized state apparatus that is posing a major threat to the security of its own population be it freedom from oppression and extortion by the Internal Revenue Service, or freedom from eavesdropping on electronic communications, or freedom from ideological pressure and attempts to implant "traditional" (as defined by the state) values. A strong connection exists between human security and welfare. However, a necessary precondition is that welfare is not the same as human security. In some cases (for example Russia during the first decade of this century), rising prosperity can coexist with reduction of the level of human security.

Human security differs from the security of the individual in its neo-liberal value. It has nothing to do with liberal rules of competitive individualism. Instead, it relates to existential conditions, meeting basic material needs, with the protection of human dignity, including the ability to participate in society. This security is indivisible as it cannot be provided for one group at the expense of another (Thomas, 2001). In addition, it should be pointed out that the notion of human security is much broader than the physical safety of an individual.

As this concept is in its infancy, even in the West there are different interpretations of human security. Each interpretation focuses on different aspects and four main interpretations deserve particular emphasis. The human security interpretation in reference to basic human needs, represented by the United Nations Development Program and proceeding from several key points includes:

1.   People, not the state or community groups, are the subject of human security.

2.   Although the intensity of various threats to human security varies, they remain universal threats.

3.   The components of human security are interdependent.

4.   This concept mainly focuses on security and freedom, not on the broader concept of development.

The concept of human security involves the concept of freedom. Thus, the idea of human

security is linked to the quality of life for people, society, and the political process. Thus, everything that reduces this quality is assumed to be a threat to security. On the contrary, everything that can improve quality (economic growth, access to resources, etc.), increases human security. Sometimes this interpretation is referred to as a 'broad' concept of "freedom from want"(Howe, 2013).

In June 2012, the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development took place in Rio de Janeiro. The Conference itself and the reports issued by the UN in July of the same year continued the tradition of human security by reference to basic human needs. Human security, as defined by the United Nations Development Program, has been criticized for being too loose (Nagy, 2013; Shin-wa, 2003). The common approach to human security consists of creating a list of past humanitarian crises and threats, which is a useful first step, but not a sufficient definition of the concept. As a result of the lack of consensus regarding its theoretical definition, the purpose of human security protection may be unattainable.

Interventionist interpretation postulates that the security of a particular state does not necessarily ensure its citizens' security. Modern trends in conflict associated with civil wars and the collapse of states have led to a high proportion of civilian casualties. Therefore, actions should be taken to reduce the impact of conflicts on people, even if such actions affect sovereign prerogatives. This implies the need for humanitarian interventions to ensure human security. The belief that state sovereignty is not an absolute obstacle to acts of violence in situations requiring such acts was reflected in the UN Security Council resolutions on Somalia and Bosnia, in the creation of criminal tribunals. All of this reflects a correlation between civil rights and the maintenance of international peace and security (Newman, 2001).

The human security interpretation provided by a model of development considers development as the core value upon which all other freedoms and public benefits can be based. Although this model is close in reference to basic human needs, it is not limited to minimum necessities for survival. Development is considered as a means rather than an objective. In the context of this model, the idea of a partnership between different types of actors (governments, NGOs, private sector) is a central issue for discussion. Concerning globalization, the model postulates that its benefits should not be attributed exclusively to market forces. We need certain minimum regulation and institutionalization for a more equitable distribution of globalization's benefits and to minimize its negative impacts. This model is most clearly represented in the UN Development Program activities.

For adherents to this interpretation, globalization has a paradoxical value. On the one hand, it confirms the need to review policy priorities. By making the world more integrated and interdependent, globalization makes the classic threat of interstate war less possible (Stares, 2000). On the other hand, globalization intensifies the sense of danger emanating from phenomena that formerly seemed not to affect everyday life (such as conflicts in other parts of the world, crop failures, epidemics, and exchange rate fluctuations).

Sometimes we can see the paradoxical relations between human security and development states (or "catching up states"). As Howe points out, in many cases, East Asian countries have prioritized economic development over improvement in social and political conditions. While such an approach has contributed to the remarkable economic growth and the well-being of significant portions of the population in these countries, it has also created many challenges to human security (Howe, 2013).

The human security interpretation based on non-traditional approaches to security pays special attention to "non-traditional security", including drug trafficking, terrorism, and epidemics, creating challenges for democracy, development, and security. Under such an interpretation, a state is more often an object of protection. Sometimes, however, attention shifts to an individual. Since most threats arise in the context of weak state institutions, the resolution partly relates to their strengthening. As a major departure from the non-traditional security of states, human security concepts have grown from non-traditional approaches to security considering individuals or nations as objects without any reference to states' sovereignty.

All four interpretations intersect, in the most general sense, with the idea the human security considers the individual and the people as objects of protection rather than institutions, territories or sovereignty. Regardless of interpretation, human security is the normative movement in the sense that it involves an ethical responsibility to reorient security towards the individual, especially with the emergence of transnational regulations relating to civil rights. Also, it is based on empirical conclusions about basic stability within states and relations between them. Any lowering of human security level (with any interpretation) has direct consequences for peace and stability within states and in international relations.

There are however some country specific nuances in understandings of human security. In spite of the major focus on individuals, for example, the holistic development model of some East Asian states is more collective in its concepts of development and the relationship between human security and development. South Korea or Japan cannot divorce human security from collective human development in their societies but other East Asian societies are doing it quite effectively. Thus, human security is often attached to an interpretation convenient for those who use it. This is largely an objective response to the insufficiency of old concepts (security, development, sovereignty, etc.), which are associated with the transformation of the world system mentioned above, transitions from international relations to world politics and the inadequacy of political theory for these phenomena. However, the coupling of often incompatible issues from traditional security (freedom from fear) to human development (freedom from want) highly degrades the analytical value of the concept.

Some scholars have argued that the nebulous definitional nature of human security gives it the power to adapt to different situations (Uvin, 2004). In policy circles, human security is generally used to ameliorate the manifestations and symptoms of insecurity and deprivation. It is not used as a device to address the structural conditions and the institutions that give rise to this insecurity. Human security as a slogan is promoted and operationalized within the existing policy making establishment. For many academic observers, this has undermined whatever credibility the concept of human security ever had (Newman, 2001). Moreover, the absence of a unified interpretation of human security (which is separate from national or state security) interferes with the concept's effective use in international practice. Therefore, the main objective is to define the concept and present it in such a way that it can be operationalized and measured in an international environment (and surprisingly in an academic environment as well) which is not ready for a radical rethinking of security concepts. We thus need to develop a working definition of human security at the very least.

Such a definition, in our view, should include several essential components:

•   Life itself and its environment (biological, social, communal, informational), and the physical security of the individual; the quality of life for people, for society and the stability of the political process

•   Existential conditions meeting basic material needs, with the protection of human dignity, including the ability to participate in social life (value component)

•   Development of the individual

•   Realization of individual rights and the concept of freedom

•   Subjects and objects of human security

•   Basic threats to human security (although the definition cannot be based on a simple list of these threats)

•   Interrelationships between people and state security

Besides, such a definition must contain both subjective and objective principles of human security provision, providing an indication of the major threats to human security (although the definition should not simply be limited to a list of threats). Thus, the working definition of human security is freedom from both external and internal (including those posed by own state) threats to an individual's life and quality of life, while creating the conditions for being

free and unobstructed by state development and the realization of rights and opportunities to participate in social life (both at national and global levels). In this definition, we can see clear linkages between "freedom from fear", "freedom from wants", and "freedom from oversized state" camps mentioned above. The human security concept in this sense involves overcoming the contradiction between the individual and society (while the opportunity to participate in social life is a component of this concept), the individual and the state (while the state, for example, through law enforcement bodies, continues to be a mechanism for ensuring the physical security of the individual in daily life), society and the state (while civil society in its opposition to the state is largely a mechanism for creation of conditions for free development of the individual). Under the conditions of shifting from international relations to world politics, human security may be a link between individual and global levels.

This definition could be a good starting point for the operationalization of the concept for its use in policy-making and applied policy research which demands a departure from the current vagueness of an all-encompassing approach to human security, under which the concept has been promoted as an extension of traditional security studies as well as a field of development and good governance. It could also help to overcome mentioned above disillusionment with the concept.

Cutting the Excesses: What is "Good Governance" in the Context of Human Security?

A substantial part of the scholarly research of human security is devoted to "good governance" models as an instrument of promotion. However, even then there are no universal mechanisms for "good governance". Even western style democracy is not able to provide human security for everyone or even for the more or less substantial parts of the world population. The western way of life and the western "good governance" model are only attractive as long as they are perceived as preferable to other alternatives. Should the capitalist democratic world system enter a pronounced downturn, this may no longer be the case (Howe, 2013). In South East Asia, economic development has only strengthened authoritarian forces (Howe, 2013, p. 48). As Henry Nau pointed out, bureaucratic politics in Asian democracies are often elitist, and corrupt, with weak civil societies, a controlled media, corrupt judicial systems, brutal policing, and commonplace human rights violations (Howe, 2013).

Opposition to western cosmopolitan values is strong in East Asia due to the existence of so-called 'Asian values' (Nagy, 2013; Kim, 2010) that place the state (in Shintoism), society or family (Confucianism) or even religion (Buddhism) above the self. This provides a valid justification for enhancing state power at the expense of human security in a traditional western sense. The same is the case in many other parts of the world. Sometimes there are real foundations for such a divergence in values. Sometimes they are artificially created. State sponsored social constructs include "traditional values" such as the prevalence of the state over individual freedoms or the so-called "moral conservatism". This moral conservatism includes negligence of personal freedoms postulating state sovereignty and state values as "sacred values" which are embedded in the Russian psyche (in spite of the fact that the majority of the population now still views, as centuries before, the state as a major source of threat to their security). These constructs are now developing increasingly in Russia enabling us to see the process of localization and regionalization of human security based on different cultural interpretations.

East Asia (which is a larger part of the world territorially and in terms of population than the West) continues to largely be a state-centric security operating environment, resistant to concepts of universalism and collective security, where most countries strongly defend traditional concepts of national sovereignty and resist foreign intervention in their internal affairs (Howe, 2013). In East Asia, this is partly a result of colonialism and post-colonial state building (Howe, 2013). In Russia, it represents the inheritance of a long struggle for state

survival in the face of external enemies. Thus, we can easily identify non-western (and sometimes even anti-western) traditions regarding interrelations between states and their citizens. As Howe states, Asian exceptionalism in the field of governance survives in the constitutive documents of regional international organizations and in many of the foreign policy priorities of Asian states (Howe, 2013).

The only good governance possible is limited governance and the only good state is small or weak (compared to non-state regulative mechanisms). East Asian cases have illustrated how sometimes it is better to have a big but 'weak' state which intentionally leaves social welfare to individuals (the social welfare system in the Kingdom of Thailand is a good example of this) than to have a state which is strong enough to confiscate its population's social welfare savings in pension funds for its own current consumption (as in the case of Russia, which is undergoing pension reform aimed now at confiscating people's welfare).

Only such an approach could allow for symbiotic (as opposed to parasitic) relations between people (and society) and states, and between state security and human security. Good governance is not always (or rarely) identified with state governance. Governance in the context of human security should be viewed as a process not coinciding with a government (or sometimes opposing it). Therefore, non-state (or even anti-state) mechanisms of governance and good governance for the promotion of human security should be explored further in future research on human security.

3. Results

Traditional security concepts pay particular attention to order and stability, while the concept of human security focuses on the protection of values, especially civil rights, democracy and the market economy. However, such sets of values (as well as their relationship to each other) can be quite controversial. Herein lies a major problem with the application of human security and its connections with values. If human security ought to protect traditional democratic values, civil rights, and market economy, it only applies to countries with those institutions and priorities. And the fact that human security principles espoused in Europe do not have any meaning (or have very little meaning) in Russia or East Asia reveals that the values of human security are very subjective.

There are many links between traditional approaches to security and human security. First, both traditional approaches and human security are concerned with conflict prevention. Traditional security was interested in this issue because states preferred to realize their interests through cheaper means than war. Human security also cannot be achieved in the context of armed conflicts. Secondly, all approaches have the reduction of the vulnerability of the security subject as their major objective. The traditional approaches use such concepts as the state, territorial sovereignty and the social contract to ensure order. Human security considers the state to be one of the numerous agents making up the environment that determines the state of security. Third, in both cases by providing human as well as traditional security, it is very difficult to create an effective coalition due to a crisis of collective security at regional and global levels.

It can be argued that sovereignty and human security concepts are not completely incompatible. In fact, states are often controlled by elites whose legitimacy is questioned and whose policies threaten existing political systems more than any external threats. The idea of "failed states" is often not taken into account by traditional approaches to security, which focus on a state-centric balance of forces and consider the state as the sole unit of analysis. In these circumstances, non-governmental organizations may be a link between the needs of individuals and the ability and willingness of the state to meet such needs.

Human security includes many aspects of comprehensive security. Both human security and comprehensive security deal with various non-military issues, including political, economic, social, and environmental factors. In Japan, for example, foreign aid, debt rescheduling, and

contributions to international organizations were called 'comprehensive security cost", and were seen as a contribution to international security (Inoguchi, 1991). The Commission on Human Security, sponsored by the government of Japan, promoted a broad, development-focused model of human security which has formed the basis for UN human security activities (Newman, 2016). However, these approaches have different units of analysis. While human security considers an individual as a unit (included in a society), comprehensive security considers a national state as a unit. Although the concept of comprehensive security recognizes that the interests of individuals are important to society, national security can be achieved without the protection of such interests.

In the contemporary international system, the concept of human security may complement the concepts of national and international security, rather than replace them. Indeed, strategy, policies, and activities in the field of human security are necessary to overcome humanitarian crises that could lead to conflicts. However, the protection of human security should not cause damage to national and international security.

Adherents of the human security concept often reject the "old geopolitics" because of the tendency to build its schemes around individual national states. The need to adapt to the changes in the interstate system is not satisfied merely by consideration of factors such as military conflict, the balance of power and anarchy. The protagonists of the concept of human security consider that their regulatory scope is wider than realists' narrow-mindedness (Tow et al., 2000).

Therefore, the concept of human security is different from traditional concepts of security where the state is the primary object of analysis. Instead, citizens and their economic and social interactions become the main aim of the security policy. According to Heinbecker(1999), human security is linked to the ability to protect people as much as protecting the states. The growing importance of human security relates to the fact that, in the 21st century, intra-state conflicts have become more common than interstate conflicts. These conflicts are often conducted without high-tech weapons, and, in contrast to the conflicts of the early 20th century, most of the victims of these conflicts are civilians. Human security has both quantitative and qualitative aspects. The quantitative aspects relate to materials and resource adequacy. The qualitative aspects are connected to the protection of human dignity, which includes personal autonomy, control over one's own life and participation in society. Liberation from oppression by authorities (global, national or local) is a necessary condition for human security. The concept can be linked to processes of globalization, the problems connected with it and the individuals it is supposed to serve.

Human security has evolved since the 1990s from being a radical challenge to state-centric realism to a rather conservative idea that largely runs in parallel with, but secondary to, conventional security thinking. A comparison between the UN Development Program work in the 1990s and the manner in which human security is employed 20 years later illustrates this (Newman, 2016). The 1994 UN (2013) vision of human security pointed to a potential tension between human security and the state (and the conventional security agenda). 20 years later that tension has disappeared from the UN (2013) human security agenda. UN (2013) activity focused on the development side of the human security agenda, explicitly excluding the threat of direct violence and the possible role of intervention for human protection purposes. New UN (2013) conception of human security does not acknowledge that states may sometimes be the enemy of human security. It suggests that 'governments retain the primary role and responsibility for ensuring the survival, livelihood, and dignity of their citizens' and reaffirms 'full respect for the sovereignty of States, territorial integrity and non-interference in matters that are essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of States'. This broad approach to human security currently commands the most support and tackles a range of manifold challenges to economic, societal, and environmental systems encompassing both material and quantitative aspects and hitherto less-regarded issues affecting individuals (Tadjbakhsh and Chenoy, 2012).

4. Conclusions

In sum, an analysis of the concept of human security can lead to the following conclusions. Firstly, the need for new approaches to security, departing from the traditional focus on security of states is crucial. The emergence of the concept of human security was in many respects a response to this need.

Secondly, the concept of human security is still not coherent and harmonious. There are in fact a variety of interpretations, united by a common idea that an individual or people should be the object of protection, not institutions, territories or sovereignty.

Thirdly, in its most general form human security can be defined as freedom from threats to an individual's life and quality of life while creating the conditions for free development and realization of rights and for opportunities to participate in social life (both at national and global levels).

Fourthly, the concept cannot yet replace the traditional concepts of national and international security in the contemporary international system. It can only complement them. The fact that human security and traditional concepts have many common points contributes to this idea.

Fifthly, the concept of human security in its current condition is a "unifier" for experts and stakeholders in development and security fields and a means of getting additional budget allocations. However, it can be argued that it is taking researchers' attention away from real problems and its true potential is yet unrealized.

Sixthly, contrary to widespread views, human security is not related to the practice of good governance. As outlined above, the search for "good government" could be fatal for human security. On the contrary, human security could be the paradigm to empower people to overcome governmental restrictions on their freedom from fear and fear from want. It could allow for symbiotic (not parasitic as we are witnessing now) relations between people and states. Thus it should be about opposing the uncontrolled growth of the state not about social welfare or development.

Finally, the emergence of the concept human security is a response to the transformation of the global system, trans-nationalization and the greater involvement of people in international life. Therefore, the concept may be developed in the long term into analytical tools useful for practical policy (especially for mitigation of asymmetric conflicts), which allows for the creation of environments for the realization of individuals (in both a physical and social sense) even in the face of hegemonic state domination. This requires clarification of the basic terms, a narrowing of the concept of human security and an accurate study of the main asymmetric threats and ways of ensuring human security (mainly through non-state mechanisms of governance). The radical departure from attempts to link the human security to good governance is also necessary in order to transform a concept from normative statement into a working analytical instrument.

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