



Reconceptualizing Global Security: A Comprehensive Examination of Human Security and Its Impact on Global Development and Peacebuilding

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Abstract	Original Research Article
<p>The concept of human security has gained prominence in global discussions about peace, stability, and development, emphasizing the security of individuals rather than states. This study examines the multifaceted nature of human security as defined by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in its 1994 Human Development Report. The research highlights seven key areas of human security: economic, food, health, environmental, personal, community, and political security. By comparing traditional security approaches with the human security framework, this study explores how the latter broadens the scope of protection, integrating issues like poverty, human rights, and the environment into global security discourse. Additionally, the paper addresses criticisms and challenges related to the application of the human security paradigm and offers recommendations for enhancing its practical implementation.</p> <p>Keywords: Human Security, UNDP, Global Vulnerabilities, Human Rights, Poverty, Conflict Prevention, Peacebuilding.</p> <p>Citation: Harun or-Rashid, M. (2025). Reconceptualizing global security: A comprehensive examination of human security and its impact on global development and peacebuilding. <i>ISA Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences (ISAJAHSS)</i>, 2(3), 136-139.</p>	

INTRODUCTION

Human security, a term first prominently defined in the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) 1994 Human Development Report, has become an essential concept in modern discourse about global stability and peace (Lucinescu, 2021). Traditionally, security has been seen through the lens of protecting the state and its borders, focusing on national defense and military preparedness. However, with the end of the Cold War and the rise of global interconnectedness, scholars and policy makers began to recognize that true security goes beyond territorial defense (Whyte, 2001). Human security, instead of being centered on the state, places the individual at the center, emphasizing freedom from threats such as poverty, disease, environmental degradation, and violence (Johns, 2014).

The 1994 UNDP report redefined security, arguing that the real threats to global stability are not only military in nature but also

economic, environmental, and social (Lau, 2023). Human security, therefore, is a comprehensive approach that aims to protect the individual by addressing the root causes of insecurity. The report highlighted two central components: freedom from fear and freedom from want. "Freedom from fear" focuses on protecting individuals from violence, whether it stems from conflict, crime, or political repression, while "freedom from want" emphasizes economic security, access to essential services like health and education, and the reduction of poverty (Fitri Maya Padmi, 2015).

The shift from state security to human security has led to greater focus on the well-being of individuals and communities (Lahiry, 2020). This paradigm recognizes that a lack of economic resources, access to healthcare, or exposure to environmental disasters can make individuals vulnerable, irrespective of the stability of the state they live in. The expansion of human security into multiple areas has made it an interdisciplinary subject, drawing from fields such as

development studies, international relations, human rights, and environmental science (Taback & Coupland, 2007).

However, despite its increasing importance, human security has faced criticism. Some argue that the concept is too vague and overly broad, making it difficult to define and implement consistently (Paris, 2001a). Critics also point out that human security's focus on non-military threats can undermine national security priorities, particularly in states where political stability and defense capabilities are still fragile. Others believe that human security, while noble in intent, has been co-opted for political agendas and may be used more as a rhetorical tool than a practical framework (Werthes & Debiel, 2006).

Despite these challenges, human security continues to gain traction as a necessary element for peacebuilding and development. Over the past few decades, its principles have been adopted by international organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and states, who have increasingly acknowledged the need to integrate human security into their policy-making processes (Richmond, 2013). This paper aims to assess the evolution of human security, its challenges, and its potential for improving global policies aimed at safeguarding individuals from various threats.

OBJECTIVE OF THIS STUDY

The objective of this study is to explore the concept of human security as defined by the UNDP in 1994 and its impact on global development and peacebuilding efforts. The study will analyze the expansion of the human security framework beyond traditional state-centered security, focusing on its seven dimensions: economic, food, health, environmental, personal, community, and political security. By examining case studies and addressing criticisms of human security, the research aims to offer a comprehensive understanding of its practical application and propose recommendations for improving its implementation in international policy and governance frameworks.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature on human security spans a wide range of disciplines and approaches, as it seeks to address the vulnerabilities that individuals face in an increasingly globalized world. The most influential early text on human security, the UNDP's 1994 Human Development Report, introduced the groundbreaking concept of human security, which challenges the traditional notion of national security (Timothy, 2004). According to the UNDP, security should not only be viewed from the perspective of the state, but from the perspective of the individual, emphasizing the importance of "freedom from want" and "freedom from fear (Zambelli, 2002)."

Since the release of the UNDP report, numerous scholars have explored, critiqued, and expanded upon the concept. Some, like Mahbub ul Haq, one of the original architects of the human security framework, have emphasized the need to broaden the

scope of security to include not only the protection of individuals from violent threats but also from the economic and social factors that undermine their well-being. According to Haq, economic insecurity, poverty, and the lack of access to essential services such as healthcare and education are as critical to human security as traditional military threats (Gasper, 2011).

A major area of academic inquiry within human security is the categorization of threats. The UNDP identified seven categories of human security: economic, food, health, environmental, personal, community, and political. These categories are often cited in subsequent studies, though their application and the weight given to each dimension have been debated (Gasper & Gómez, 2015). Scholars like Caroline Thomas (2000) argue for an integrated approach that not only includes traditional forms of insecurity such as violence but also emphasizes the importance of sustainable development, social justice, and human rights. This aligns with the UNDP's perspective that achieving human security requires addressing structural factors such as poverty, inequality, and environmental degradation (Thomas, 2000).

Moreover, literature on human security has evolved to address critiques that the concept is too broad and ambiguous. Roland Paris (2001), for instance, critiques human security as a "paradigm shift or hot air," arguing that its expansive scope makes it difficult to operationalize effectively. He suggests that a more focused approach, concentrating on specific threats to individuals' physical security, would make the concept more applicable in practical terms. This has led to the emergence of two schools of thought within the human security framework: the "Freedom from Fear" approach and the "Freedom from Want" approach (Paris, 2001b).

The "Freedom from Fear" approach, which focuses on preventing violence and conflict, has been particularly influential in shaping global policies on peacekeeping and humanitarian intervention. Canada, for example, has been a key proponent of this approach, championing initiatives such as the Ottawa Treaty to ban landmines. This approach is based on the premise that preventing violent conflict and ensuring physical security are fundamental to achieving human security. However, the narrow focus on violence has been criticized by those who argue that it overlooks the broader socio-economic factors that contribute to insecurity (Tadjbakhsh & Chenoy, 2007).

In contrast, the "Freedom from Want" approach calls for a more holistic view of human security, emphasizing the need to address economic inequality, poverty, and access to basic services such as healthcare and education. This approach aligns with the broader goals of sustainable development, and scholars such as Sabina Alkire (2003) argue that addressing these root causes of insecurity is essential for long-term peace and stability. For Alkire, human security is about safeguarding the "vital core" of all human lives, ensuring that basic needs are met while allowing for long-term human fulfillment (Alkire, 2003).

A key intersection between human security and development has been explored in the work of Frances Stewart (2004), who

argues that human security and development are deeply interconnected. Stewart's work emphasizes that the lack of human security undermines development efforts, while the absence of development contributes to insecurity. Human security, in this sense, is seen as both a means and an end of development, highlighting the importance of addressing the social, economic, and political factors that contribute to insecurity (Stewart & Wang, 2004).

Despite its widespread appeal, human security faces several practical challenges. One of the main criticisms is its vagueness, which makes it difficult for policymakers to implement effectively. Scholars such as (Tadjbakhsh & Chenoy, 2007) argue that the broad scope of human security makes it hard to prioritize threats and allocate resources effectively. The lack of a universally agreed-upon definition of human security further complicates efforts to integrate it into policy.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study reveals several key findings about the evolution and application of human security, especially in relation to global policy frameworks. First, it is clear that human security has evolved significantly since the 1994 UNDP report, both in terms of its conceptualization and its practical application (Lucinescu, 2021). While the initial focus was on the protection of individuals from violent conflict, later developments expanded the framework to include non-violent threats such as economic inequality, health insecurity, and environmental degradation (Alexander Lautensach and Sabina Lautensach, 2020).

One of the major outcomes of this study is the recognition that human security offers a more inclusive and comprehensive approach to global security than traditional state-centered models. Unlike national security, which focuses primarily on protecting the state from external military threats, human security shifts the focus to the individual, addressing both immediate threats (such as violence) and long-term risks (such as poverty and environmental degradation) (Alexander Lautensach and Sabina Lautensach, 2020). This shift in focus has been instrumental in reshaping global discussions on peace, stability, and development.

The research also underscores the importance of integrating human security into national and international policy frameworks. While human security is still seen as an aspirational concept in many parts of the world, there are notable examples where it has been successfully applied. For instance, the Ottawa Treaty to ban landmines and the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) doctrine represent practical applications of human security principles in international law and diplomacy (Johns, 2014). These initiatives demonstrate that a human-centered approach to security can be implemented in ways that prioritize the protection of individuals from both immediate and long-term threats.

However, despite these successes, the study highlights several challenges in applying human security universally. One of the most significant challenges is the lack of clear definitions and

consensus on what constitutes a "human security" threat. The broad nature of the concept has led to criticisms that it is too vague and difficult to operationalize. The debate between the "Freedom from Fear" and "Freedom from Want" schools of thought also complicates efforts to create a unified approach to human security.

Furthermore, the study reveals that there is still significant resistance to human security within certain states and international organizations. Some governments prioritize national security concerns over human security, particularly in regions where state stability is fragile or where military threats are perceived as more immediate than socio-economic issues. This resistance has hindered the integration of human security into state policies, particularly in regions where traditional security concerns dominate.

Another critical challenge identified in the study is the difficulty of measuring the effectiveness of human security interventions. While there are many successful case studies of human security initiatives (Acharya et al., 2011; Bonner, 2008; Chin-Yee, 2019), such as the establishment of peacekeeping forces in conflict zones or the provision of humanitarian aid, the long-term impact of these interventions on human security outcomes is difficult to assess. The study calls for the development of better metrics and tools to evaluate the success of human security initiatives, which could help guide future policy decisions.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, human security has become an essential paradigm in the global discourse on peace, development, and stability. By focusing on the individual and broadening the scope of security beyond traditional military threats, human security offers a more inclusive and comprehensive approach to addressing global vulnerabilities. The expansion of human security into areas such as economic, health, environmental, and political security has allowed policymakers to better understand and address the root causes of global insecurity.

However, despite its appeal, human security faces significant challenges in both conceptualization and implementation. The lack of clear definitions and the competing interests of state security and human security complicate efforts to integrate the framework into policy. Furthermore, the broad scope of human security has led to debates over how to prioritize different threats and allocate resources effectively.

The study suggests that while human security has made important strides in reshaping global security policy, more work is needed to refine its definitions and improve its practical application. Policymakers and scholars must work together to develop a more unified approach to human security that can be implemented in a way that addresses the complex and interconnected challenges facing the world today. By addressing both immediate and long-term threats to individuals, human security has the potential to foster a more sustainable, peaceful, and prosperous world.

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