Concept of Human Security: Individual as a Referent Object

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Abstract

The traditional security of state fails to give security to the people. A paradigm shift of focus from security of state to security of the individual is inevitable. The study tries to provide a conceptual understanding and the importance of human security with the individual as a referent object. The traditional notion of state security believes that by strengthening the military power of the state, the security of the people could be maintain. But the world has experienced the two World Wars, a disaster for the world economy and a threat for the survival of human being and many people lost their lives in the war. So the report of the United Nations Development Programme raised a very important concept of human security.

Keywords: Human Security, Human Development Report, Referent Object.

Introduction

The notion of security has been interpreted as security of territorial integrity from external aggression, so that the nation's foreign policy and its interest is protected and secure from nuclear threats. This means that the concept of security is more focussed on the national security than that of the security of people. "National security denotes a nation`s determination to preserve certain interest at all costs. Foremost among these national interests are the nation's territorial integrity, political independence and fundamental government institutions. It embraces not only survival of the nation but also its ability to survive" (Osgood Jr, 1953). The world has witnessed two World Wars where many people lost their lives, suffered economic insecurity, while others deteriorated physically and mentally thereby threatening human survival. During the Cold War era where 'there is neither peace nor war', the world was encouraged in an arms race, and the control of the military-industrial complex and military-bureaucratic structure (Chari & Gupta, 2003). However, in the post Cold War

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era, there is a shift of paradigm in the concept of security, that is, a shift of focus from the traditional notion of state-centered security to the individual as the primary focus which is referred to as human security.

Development of the Concept of Human Security

Substantial ideas as regards to what security means for human being appears already in the Treaty of Westphalia (1648), in which the issue of freedom and individual rights is viewed in contrast to the issue of nation- state security. The United Nations evolved as a consequence of the World Wars to maintain peace and justice, and to counter progressive war and military aggression through negotiations and collective responsibility. Though the United Nations was basically founded to ensure the concept of national sovereignty, it was also evident from the very beginning, that the importance of the people`s security was not neglected. The UN Charter's first Charter of the United Nations states, "WE THE PEOPLE OF THE UNITED NATIONS determined to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, which twice in our lifetime has brought untold sorrow to mankind…." (Charter of the United Nations). In the early 1990s, the United Nations was significantly engaged with a plethora of novel issues in the course of its policies and programmes. With the end of Cold War and the disintegration of the Soviet Union which led to the end of East-West divide, decentralized and non-conventional threats to security became one of the major issues. Therefore, the need to implement an approach which attempted to be mutually holistic and contextual becomes obligatory. As the world has experienced and faced two World Wars, the concept of security was at the vanguard of many dissensions, as the idea of this concept may be viewed differently by various personnel, communities and also varies in different regions. As a consequence, the concept of human security was set forth from this context (Jolly and Ray, 2006).

The concept of human security emanates as part of the holistic concept of human development at the United Nations Development Programme by former Pakistani Finance Minister Mahbubul Haq, the then Finance Minister of Pakistan with strong support from eminent economist Amartya Sen (UNDP`s Human Development Report, 1994). Therefore, the foremost worldwide document of human security which articulates in theoretical terms with proposals for strategy and actions can be seen in the report of United Nations Development Programme`s Human Development Report of 1994 and sought to influence World Summit of the United Nations in Copenhagen in 1995 on Social Development (*ibid*). Some of the key developments of human security at the United Nations is shown in the following table.

The table 1 shows the development of human security in different intervals at the United Nations and also shows the primacy to the modern notion of the concept of security by the United Nations as the concept has been an important agenda in its framework.

Table 1: United Nations as the key development for human security

1992	Agenda for Peace	UN Secretary General Boutros-Boutros Ghali's call for "an integrated approach to human security" to address root causes of conflict, spanning economic, social and political issues.
1994	Human Development Report	Debut of human security, broadly defined as 'freedom from fear and freedom from want' and marking the move from a state centric to a human-centric security paradigm.
1999	United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security (UNTFHS)	In March 1999 the Government of Japan and the UN Secretariat launch the UNTFHS to finance UN human security projects and increase human security operational impact.
2001	Commission on Human Security (CHS)	Establishment of the independent Commission on Human Security under the chairmanship of Sadako Ogata and Amartya Sen
2005	2005 World Summit Outcome Document	Heads of States and Governments refer to the concept of human security. Paragraph 143 of the Document recognized that: "all individuals, in particular vulnerable people, are entitled to freedom from fear and freedom from want, with an equal opportunity to enjoy their rights and fully develop their human potential".
2008	UN General Assembly: Thematic Debate on Human Security	Debate to reflect on the multidimensional scope of human security and to further explore ways to follow up on its reference in the World Summit Outcome Document.

Source: United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security

State as a Referent Object

The traditional concept of security focuses and relies on the state as a referent object and gives primacy to the state. It is a state-centered notion of security and believes that the security of the people is ensured through traditional military diplomacy as in the ideas of the realist. Military power of the state becomes the main issue in national and international political principles before the Cold War and even during the post Cold War period. As a consequence of the two World Wars that the world has experienced, and as the states continue to play a significant role in relations with other states, the exact responsibility that the states should and can fulfil regarding the provision of security among their citizens, andthe status of the statesas a primary security referent in regard to their significance as guardians for the people or the citizens against domestic and external threats is vehemently debated. So, there arises the need to change the referent object as the states fail to provide the security of the individual. "The state itself, far from being the provider of security as in the conventional view, has in many ways been a primary source of insecurity…it is difficult to

see how any useful concept of security can ignore the participation of states in "disappearances" and abuse of human rights in so many societies" (Walker, 1988).

A Paradigm Shift

As per the Human Development Report of 1994, the concept of security has been described narrowly: "as security of territory from external aggression, or as protection of national interests in foreign policy, or as global security from a nuclear holocaust. It has been related more to nation states than to people". The narrow approach of this notion was positively widened to incorporate the individual's safety and groups from certain threats like, disease, political instability, hunger and protection from "sudden and hurtful disruptions in patterns of daily life" (*ibid*). Since 1994, the notion of human security emerged as a fundamental matter of various governments' policies and gave importance in their foreign affairs strategy and their defence policies. The following definition of security by various authors can bring out the main focuses during the course of time.

Table 2: Views of security by various authors

Authors & Year	Views on Security	Focus
Walter Lippman (1943)	"A nation has security when it does not have to sacrifice its legitimate interests to avoid war, and is able, if challenged, to maintain them by war"	Military threat
Wolfers (1952)	"National security is synonymous with national interest, which emphasizes that the security policy subordinates any other interests to those of the nation"	National interest
Morton Berkowitz and Bock (1968)	"The ability of a nation to protect its internal values from external threats"	Internal values from external threat
The Report of the Palme Commission and the Thorssen Report (1982)	"Both reports note security could not be attained through nuclear detente. By pursuing active armament as a strategy to make oneself 'more secure', the world was edging closer to nuclear war— a scenario where no state could possibly come out the winner. Instead, the focus had to be on disarmament, development and capacity building."	Disarmament, development and capacity building
Nye & Lynn-Jones (1988)	"During most part of the Cold War, security studies were basically focused on issues revolving around the control, threat or use of force"	Threat to security and use of force
Charles Maier (1990)	"National Security.... is best defined as the capacity to control those domestic and foreign conditions that the public opinion	self-determination or autonomy, prosperity and wellbeing

	of a given community believes necessary to enjoy its own self-determination or autonomy, prosperity and wellbeing".	
Morgenthau (1993)	Security is a derivative of power since "We assume that statesmen think and act in terms of interests defined as power, and the evidence of history bears that assumption out"	Power
Emma Rothschild (1995)	"Indeed, with the end of the Cold War, the concept of security has been broadened, or extended as posits to include threats that have no longer a purely military character"	Non-military threat
Baldwin (1997)	Argued that there might be some degree of ambiguity in the expression "absence of threats"	absence of threats
Koffi Annan (2001)	"We know that we cannot be secure amidst starvation, that we cannot build peace without alleviating poverty, and that we cannot build freedom on foundations of injustice. These pillars of what we now understand as the people-centered concept of 'human security' are interrelated and mutually reinforcing."	Freedom and people-centered security.
Commission on Human Security (2003)	"…to protect the vital core of all human lives in ways that enhance human freedoms and human fulfilment"	Freedom of individual
Ullman (2011)	"Presents a more subjective idea of security. To him, security is not a goal to be pursued at all costs, but a consequence of measures adopted to reduce possible threats and vulnerabilities."	Reduce possible threat and vulnerabilities

From the above table, the shift of focus from the traditional notion of state-centered security to the people-centered security can be seen, and the focus on the referent object gradually shifted towards the individual particularly after the Cold War.

Individual as a Referent Object

A shift of security paradigm discourse since 1994 had enveloped the idea that the security of the individual needs to be given primacy to the fore front among other security concerns. The then President of United States of America, Franklin D. Roosevelt incorporated 'freedom from fear' and 'freedom from want' among his four fundamental freedoms (freedom of – speech, worship, want and fear) which he refers to as freedom from

poverty, lack of food and water (Roosevelt, 1941). Subsequently, the report of the United Nations Development Programme`s Human Development Report of 1994 defines security as freedom from fear and freedom from want in which the idea of 'fear' and 'want' identify the changeover from one perceptive to another. In this perception, the UNDP concept of fear is extensively be acquainted as fear from physical violence, external aggression, whether it is individual or collective. So, the concept of security as a safeguard from physical violence is therefore deliberately incorporated to the traditional belief of security. Freedom from want tends to include issues more conventionally the distress of development studies and development politics (Saurabh & Upreti, 2012).

Shifting the paradigm of security to individual as referent object makes way in recognising threat to securities rather than wars and violence and to what matters to people in their daily survival and dignity. It therefore expands security to non-military threats, or structural violence like inequalities or poverty. Thus it is important to imagine how the analysis of security is significant in certain ways as the explanations of security are reliant upon the condition of both the ideals to be protected and referent object. From the experiences of different perceptions of security, consideration can be now focuses upon its implementation of the individual as the referent object of security studies rather than the state, as is the case in traditional perceptions (Gospel, 2019). By means of the individual as a referent object, the concept must inevitably consist of all aspects of human rights consisting the need to meet the basic necessities and the demands of social and political freedom as have stated- both 'freedom from fear' and 'freedom from want'. In the view of Frene Ginwala, political leader of South Africa, "Thinking about security broadened from an exclusive concern with the security of the state to a concern with the security of people. Along with this shift came the notion that states ought not to be the sole or main referent of security. People's interests or the interests of humanity, as a collective, became the focus. In this way, security becomes an all-encompassing condition in which individual citizens live in freedom, peace and safety and participate fully in the process of governance. They enjoy the protection of fundamental rights, have access to resources and the basic necessities of life, including health and education, and inhabit an environment that is not injurious to their health and well being. Eradication of poverty is thus central to ensuring the security of all people, as well as the security of the state'' (Ginwala in Commission on Human Security, 2003). In short, there is a paradigm shift from traditional notion of state-centered security to the modern concept of human security, a concept which gives primacy to the individual.

From the table 3, the traditional security focuses on the integrity of the state and the state act as the main provider of security to the individual. This conventional concept of security aims to ensure security to the individual by giving protection against interstate war, nuclear war and revolution. However, as mentioned before, the world has faced two major World Wars where many people lost their lives, there was economic insecurity, physical and mental health were deteriorated as a consequence of the wars etc. This implies that the states fail to ensured security to its citizens or people or individual, there is a threat to human security as diseases, poverty, human rights abuse, natural disaster, and violence etc. become the main issue.

Table 3: Traditional vs Modern Human Security

Type of Security	Referent Object	Responsibility to Protect	Possible Threats
Traditional Security	The State	The Integrity of the State	Interstate War, Nuclear Proliferation, Revolution
Human Security	The Individual	The Integrity of the Individual	Disease, Poverty, Natural Disaster, Violence, Landmines, Human Rights Abuses

Source: Owen (2004)

Conclusion

Even though a large number of people remain in poverty, owing to lack of sufficient nutrition, violence and harassment etc, there is yet hope for freedom from such imminent threat. The Human Development Report of 1994, UNDP considered the concept of human security as a potential transformative project to curb such threats to human lives. The report further mentioned seven dimensions of human security such as- economic security, food security, health security, environmental security, personal security, community security and political security. As such, security threats to these dimensions and their implications to act against these threats are the need for the hour. There is an increasing awareness of the threat to different security dimensions in various countries and it is important for the implementing agencies to come up with an agenda in government policies, in relations with neighbouring states, in dealings with other international countries, and give due importance to human security in their foreign policy as well. Shared knowledge and cooperation of individual countries in development processes and a common approach of implementing policies to curb the threat to security of the individual will prove significant, therefore it is important to understand individual as the referent object. Though the raison d'être of human security focuses on the individual, this is not an implication that the state is completely out of focus. Rather, the state is one of the most important and powerful implementing agency for the accomplishment of the concept of human security. By highlighting the relationship of certain security threats, it is significant to consider the individual as a referent object, as the concept needs to protect the populations and provide for them in cases where the security of the individual is threatened or endangered. Therefore, in order to ensure the safety and survival of the people as well as their livelihood and dignity, those authoritative institutions such as the state, international community/organisation and even the civil societies are responsible for both defending and empowering them.

It is evident from the definition of human security by various authors listed in the paper that the notion of human security is not a novel perception as the concept itself dates before the Cold War era. However, from the ideas of certain authors who define the concept of security, it is apparent that the shift of focus gradually changes in the course of time. The consequences of both world wars and the failure of the state to ensure the security of its

people led to the change of focus from traditional perception of security to modern concept of security. This is visible from the ideas of various scholars in their definition of the concept of security as their focus moves away from the military power of the state to the individual or human being centered security. From the report of the Commission on Human Security, the conventional philosophy of national security focuses on the threats to values and integrity of states and also recognises that states often threaten, rather than protect their own person, which ultimately means that the concept of military force can threaten the security of the individual.

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