

The concept of human security and security studies politics essay



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What role does the concept of human security have to our understanding of security studies? The concept of human security does not challenge the relevance of the state-centric arguments in so far as these concern the protection of the state from external military violence. However, the concept does show that state-centric realism is not a sufficient security argument in that it does not adequately address the security of people within states and therefore does not serve as the dominant understanding.

Feedback: The label human security came into currency in the mid-1990s, the origins of which are found in earlier human-centric arguments which proposed that people ought to be secure in their daily lives. The concept now serves several useful purposes, the most important being to highlight some critical issues, especially intra-state political violence that are not included in the state-centric paradigm. However, so far attempts at conceptually reconciling, or converging, the arguments about the security of the state and people are underdeveloped. From a practical perspective the concept of human security has been received inconsistently; some of the policy community adopts both; some of the policy community rejects it; some of the policy community misuses it to justify policies that have ulterior motives.

In what ways has the purpose of human security been conceptually significant?

Human security has put particular emphasis on the nexus between conflict and development, a concept which is very useful. The significance of the nexus between development and conflict is not just that it raises ethical

issues about human suffering and inequalities, but that its frequent outcomes, so called state failure, has dire local, regional, and global effects.

From a normative perspective the concept serves to highlight good global norms. Human security often serves as an umbrella norm. Developing good global norms is not only important for moral and ethical reasons but also because they serve to enhance state and international society.

The development of the human security highlights the view that the threats to humans as well as to state entities are changing and increasing. These changes have spurred debates about the meaning of security and the arguments for its broadening and deepening. Like internal violence, these transnational issues have serious local, regional, and global effects.

Feedback: Concepts are tools and the predominant purpose of the concept is to focus attention on the serious local, regional and global effects which are precluded from the state-centric policy agenda. This is not to infer, however, that human security is incompatible with state-security concerns. Indeed the concept of human security may even serve to support realpolitik interests.

For example, Sukhrie suggests that Canada and Norway were strong advocates of human security not least because the concept could assist their lobbying efforts during the early 1990s to gain a seat as non-permanent members of the UN Security Council (2004: 365). Yet, there are important differences. State-centric security is focused on protecting the state from external military threats via deterrence and use of force. Infringements on the principle of sovereignty are a central justification for the use of force. It is

usually said that in state-centric arguments the state is the referent object of security whereas in human-centric arguments people are the referent object

What does the concept of human security involve?

Human security is the wide label understood to denote a broad understanding of the need to protect humans and advance their freedoms. Human security is therefore equated with a broad spectrum of threats and needs and requires further analysis before it can be termed a school in security.

Feedback: To its advocates human security challenges the traditional state-centric view that the state is and should be the primary object, or referent object of security. For the advocates human security is the end and state - centric security is the means to that objective. But what does human security actually mean? Aside from differences between state-centric and human-centric positions, the meaning of human security is contested by different schools of human security. While all advocates agree that people are the referent object they are divided over what type of threat should be prioritized or securitized; The narrow school contends that security is freedom from violence, (freedom from fear); the broad school argue that security is those threats arising from underdevelopment (freedom from want); finally the very broad school argue that human security should be understood as all human freedoms.

In what ways has it been argued that humanitarian intervention is a justifiable form of human security?

Human security perspectives on humanitarian intervention raise questions about the principle of sovereignty, the state, and international stability.

While sovereignty may be an explanatory tool, it is also the case that an increasingly inter-related global international stability will depend on human security inside states.

Feedback: The means is complicated by argument over the role of the state as the appropriate agents of human security, and indeed form the perspective that the state constitutes a large part of the problem (a perspective that is synonymous with the state-centric position.) Human security will be hard to achieve so long as the state remains the central actor. However, this raises issues about the role of the state as a means to human security:

1 Not all states or state-centric positions work against human security

2 States continue to have the concentration of material ability

3 State-building is an objective of global institution

4 Comprehensive normative change is long-term but human security requires immediate action

Therefore, it is necessary to engage in a direct way in a policy agenda for human security, including involvement of actors to address narrow and broad agendas.

To what advantage can tensions in human security be reconciled in order to create a possible framework of analysis?

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The connections between the schools in human security are apparent. The causal link can be multi-faceted and interrelated. For example threats of poverty, disease and poor governance are interconnected to causes of political violence. In these ways the schools are mutually constitutive, the different conceptual approaches work towards the same analytical links.

Causality can be a circular dynamic, for example not only can poverty and poor governance cause political violence, it can also work to the opposite end as well: political violence can cause poverty and bad governance

Because the conceptual framework identifies the problem of violence and the causes of violence, it provides a sound basis for the policy community. Important crisis management will require immediate action and crisis prevention. Proper management requires policies that address the narrow schools focus on violence and the broad schools focus on development

Feedback: The divisions between the different schools of human security raise questions about the concepts capacity to challenge the dominant state-centric arguments. However, a framework based on narrow and broad schools can establish important connections. The framework focuses on:

- 1 Human security as political violence

- 2 The causes of human security as political violence.

Human security as political violence (narrow school) is the dependent variable whereas the causes of human insecurity as political violence includes the problem of underdevelopment (the broad school) and are the

independent variables. However, the question still remains: Can this framework challenge the state-centric argument?

How sufficient are the state-centric and human-centric arguments to an understanding of security?

Realism focuses on external threats to the state and has failed to deliver security to people inside states which is normatively objectionable and makes the state, the realist referent object, vulnerable to both external and internal threats.

Feedback: Human security is also a necessary but not sufficient argument in security studies. Although it focuses on threats to people (95% of all battle deaths are caused by internal conflict) it ignores external military threats. While only 5% of battle deaths are the result of inter-state war, if WMD were used the consequences would be catastrophic. Ironically the focus of human security on internal and international violence and malfunctioning states is more likely than realism to lead to better governance of states, and hence to international stability. Yet, the primary objective of human security is not the enhancement of state-centric security per se but rather to ensure that people do not suffer from those versions of state-centric security that ignore internal violence and its causes.

To what extent is realism and/or human security a sufficient argument for the concept of sovereignty?

Sovereignty is conditional on the extent to which the people are secure.

Neglecting consideration of the contractual nature of sovereignty, realism

leaves the impression that it has reified the state at the expense of the people.

Feedback: The comparison between the state-centric and human security arguments suggests that both have positive and negative attributes. Realism is one version of the state-centric position and is relevant for some important threats to the state but not all of them. Realism state-centric focus, unlike Hobbes' state-centric position, fails to acknowledge that security concerns internal violence and malfunctioning states and that sovereignty is conditional. Moreover, realism fails to explicitly address problems if its focus on the state is at the expense of the people within. Conversely human security does address these issues. However, it fails to address the threats that realism elevates. Indeed, some branches of human security thought fail to accept that some state-centric positions have positive effects for human security. If both state centric and human security arguments are necessary but not sufficient, does security analysis require both?

To what extent can an understanding of both state-centric and humans security arguments be deemed necessary in the contemporary context of the scope and extent of threats?

Attempts to facilitate the emergence of a dual understanding of state-centric and human-centric arguments are too abstract and embryonic to develop a complete understanding of security. Much more work needs to be done to make it a clear and consistent framework, although theoretical moves are evolving in the right direction.

Feedback: Conceptually, in the case of properly functioning states, the proposition is that state-centric and human-centric arguments are necessary but not sufficient. Lodgaard's approach - of the re-conceptualization of security on both lines, involving the defense of territory, freedom to choose one's government, includes that people are free from violence (2001: 1-6) - can be elaborated to argue that there are only dual referent objects (states and peoples) but also internal and external threats to both which will involve both measures including non-military and force

What is the utility of the concept of human security to practitioners of security policy?

Case studies have demonstrated that the narrow human security agenda has been adopted in occurrences of human insecurity crisis if it serves their own national interests. However, policy objectives have resulted in the production of decreasing internal violence.

Feedback: From the perspective of practitioners in many developing countries human security is a subversive concept. The narrow school is regarded as arbitrary interference into domestic politics of a de-colonized state and is synonymous with western imperialism and changing ideas about sovereignty. Whilst the broad school's emphasis on development and broader non-military trans-national threats have greater acknowledgement in the Asia-Pacific region, there is little support for the narrow school's emphasis on the inside and human rights. At the non-state level, however, the reverse is true. Human security is a useful diplomatic framing tool for practitioners in the West who make policy connections between conflict and

human development. Among the positive outcomes of policy objectives is the decreasing incidence of internal violence in the mid-1990s largely explained by UN and international activism in peacekeeping operations.

What are the future prospects of the human security concept to the study of security and to practitioners in the policy community?

Because human security makes people the referent objects it puts an onus on explaining why the state is the referent object if it is not a means to people's security. Human security continues to usefully highlight this disparity and the understanding of security and the role of sovereignty

Feedback: Perhaps the most significant imperative to elevate the concept of human security is the need for security in conditions of political violence:

1 Two-thirds of the Afghan population saw security as the biggest problem facing the country

2 37 percent saw the biggest security problem as violence

3 29% saw the biggest security problem as poverty

4 9% saw the economy, employment, education, electricity, roads and buildings as the biggest security problem

(2005: 94) Furthermore, in Iraq security remained the largest concern of its citizens. These cases serve to highlight that there is a want for human security and states have a responsibility to provide it.

In what ways can the environment be linked to human insecurity?

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Environmental change does not undermine human security in isolation in terms of the social determinants of insecurity, larger scale processes affect people sensitivity to environmental change and their capacity to adapt to them, whilst past processes shape present insecurities and ongoing processes shape future insecurities.

Feedback: Human environmental insecurity requires the examination of larger-scale past and present processes that create disparities in wealth distribution and environmental change impact. Therefore even though the focus of human security is the individual, the processes that undermine and / or strengthen human security are extra-local and consequently the approach to a solution involves multi-layers of actors and cannot avoid taking into account nation-states and their security policies.

In what ways does the disaggregation of data facilitate our analysis of human security in the context of globalization?

Human-security analysis places the individual at the centre of analysis rather than imagined objects such as the ' nation' that may be irrelevant in some cases. The disaggregation of data allows more sophisticated exploration of the complex and contradictory impacts of globalization.

National averages and statistics are often unreliable and unrepresentative as data.

Feedback: Mechanistic state-level analyses of security, which place the state at the centre of analysis, are based on zero- sum games, assumptions of governmental legitimacy, and impermeable borders. Human security adopts

a human-centric approach that is more suited to regions where ideas of the 'national' are not appropriate for study, such as in the 'South' where ideas of the 'national' are often weak. Despite the shortcomings of national averages as data, they have previously often been relied upon as indicators of development, such as poverty, and water or food availability. Unlike orthodox state-based analyses based on national income and expenditure data, the human-security approach invites far greater disaggregation of data and a consideration of additional criteria. In doing so it potentially offers a fuller, richer, and more meaningful picture.

The adoption of a human-security approach to globalization facilitates our understanding of the process and its impacts. In what ways does the scope of this security agenda apply to this particular concept?

Human security offers a scope of analysis that suits the broad and complex subject of globalization. Analysis through the lens of human security facilitates a holistic approach that focuses on the human as referent object, thus inviting a consideration of whatever factors affect the security of human beings.

Feedback: Human security provides a useful starting point for thinking about the inter-related nature of many current and future global political challenges. It requires us to investigate and reflect holistically on matters that affect the security of real people and their communities, and, where appropriate, to make connections in a way that traditional state-based analysis - whether in terms of the security debate or the development debate - has failed to do. Thus, it invites a consideration of whatever factors

affect the security of human beings, ranging from state-sponsored repression, to international hostilities, to the climate, to environmental degradation or resource depletion, to the unregulated activities of multinationals, to fluctuating commodity prices, or to capital market volatility. Human security requires an analysis of the interconnections between these factors, as a necessary step to addressing the security concerns of human beings

What are the potential criticisms of the human-security approach when adopted in the analysis of globalisation?

Human security analysis confuses the agendas of international security with those of social security and civil liberties. Securitization of issues surrounding lifestyle reduces the coherency of the security model, broadening the concept to a point of reducing its practical utility.

The practical implication of security studies on policy formulation is reduced by the adoption of the human-security approach, which produces 'vague' and 'confusing' models of analysis.

Feedback: For some commentators the securitization of issues related to livelihoods is quite problematic, not least because it risks mixing up the quite different agendas of international security, on the one hand, and social security and civil liberties, on the other. However, they have missed the fundamental point about the utility value of the concept. The very breadth and inclusiveness of the concept serve a political function that perhaps explains the enthusiasm with which it has been embraced by practitioners of development – encompassing and empowering the hopes and aspirations for <https://assignbuster.com/the-concept-of-human-security-and-security-studies-politics-essay/>

a better world. An analysis based on simple 'one-size-fits-all' national-security or national-development indicators is limited. A human-security analysis, by contrast, is more in tune with lived experience on the ground, where 'multiple factors affect the existence of concrete people', charging us to identify causes of insecurity wherever we find them and to work to overcome them at multiple levels

In what ways has HIV/AIDS been considered within the 'human security' framework?

HIV/AIDS is a human security issue; AIDS is a direct threat to human life; and AIDS is also an indirect human security threat having adverse affects on many economic, food, health and personnel security issues of the human security agenda, representing the evolving security dimension of the HIV/AIDS pandemic and the individual and social impact.

Feedback: If the human security approach is concerned with securing not only the survival of the state, but also of the survival of human-beings, then HIV/AIDS clearly amounts to a security issue within this framework of analyses. In quantitative terms. HIV/AIDS is already amongst the five most frequent causes of deaths worldwide. In Africa the illness even vies for the position of posing the greatest human security threat. There HIV/AIDS is not only the leading cause of death; it is also estimated to cause more than ten times as many deaths as armed conflict. AIDS thus poses a numerically greater risk to the survival of many Africans than armed conflict.

Qualitatively, moreover, HIV/AIDS also directly and indirectly affects most of the components of human security identified by the United Nations

Development Program. At the most basic level, HIV/AIDS is a lethal illness that threatens the life for those who develop AIDS and who do not enjoy access to medicines. As a result, the average life expectancy in some African countries is likely to drop by as much as 20-30 years over the next decades. By 2010 the life expectancy in many countries could even be lower than at the beginning of the twentieth century.

What have the implications of the human, national, and international security dimensions of the HIV/AIDS pandemic been on the future of global security studies?

Awareness of the human, national, and international security dimensions of HIV/AIDS is necessary for arriving at a comprehensive understanding of the nature and the extent of the contemporary pandemic. While the economic and social implications are now being considered more widely and seriously by scholars and policy-makers on a country-by-country basis, this is not yet occurring with reference to the security dimensions of HIV/AIDS

It is necessary to acknowledge the security dimension of HIV/AIDS in order for the level of international response to become commensurate with the extent of the challenge posed by the AIDS challenge. These security challenges must be taken seriously because of the armed forces - as a high risk group and vector of the virus - must make a contribution to international efforts to reduce the transmission rates.

The armed forces will have to address the issue of HIV/AIDS with due consideration that human beings living with the virus are not the enemy in

the quest to address the illness and consequently should be included, not excluded from the processes.

Feedback: An effective strategy for the security sector with regard to HIV/AIDS would also incorporate a greater appreciation and support for the wider efforts currently being made to combat the pandemic, such as making cheaper drugs available internationally and contributing to the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria. Such wider efforts are necessary because the root causes of the AIDS pandemic are located in a much broader set of economic, political and structural conditions that will have to be reevaluated if any attempt is to be successful. The security sector would benefit from recognizing the convergence of interests with regards to addressing the global AIDS pandemic and to broadly support this wider endeavor. All of the new security challenges that HIV/AIDS is presently giving rise to be likely to lessen if there is a significant decrease in the AIDS pandemic. Such wider international efforts to reduce the transmission of HIV will only be successful in the long run if they also take into account the multiple security dimensions of the AIDS pandemic