
CONVENTIONAL AND ALTERNATIVE SECURITY STUDIES: COMPARING THE COLD WAR AND POST-COLD WAR EPOCHS

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Abstract: *THIS STUDY THEMATICALLY COMPARES THE STATE OF CONVENTIONAL AND HUMAN SECURITY STUDIES BETWEEN THE COLD WAR AND POST-COLD WAR EPOCHS. IT EXAMINES CONCISELY THE REASONS AND FACTORS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE SYSTEMATIC SHIFT FROM CONVENTIONAL SECURITY TO, AND THE RISE OF, HUMAN SECURITY DURING THE COLD AND POST-COLD WAR EPOCHS. RELYING ON HISTORICAL METHODOLOGY AND OLE WAEVER'S SECURITIZATION THESIS, THE STUDY LOCATES THE CAUSALITY BETWEEN THE FACTORS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE PARADIGM SHIFT AND THE PRESENT OVERARCHING PROMINENCE OF HUMAN SECURITY IN; FIRST, THE EVENTUAL END OF THE COLD WAR AND, SECOND, THE RISING COMPELLING HUMAN SECURITY NEEDS AND EMERGENCIES IN THE POST-COLD WAR EPOCH.*

Keywords: *CONVENTIONAL SECURITY, HUMAN SECURITY, SECURITIZATION, COLD WAR, POST-COLD WAR.*

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INTRODUCTION

The focus in security studies drastically shifted from conventional security studies to the alternative security studies cum the human security following the collapse of the Soviet Union. Prior to this collapse, specifically during the cold war epoch, the greatest security threat to the corporate existence of the entire globe was the inter-state military confrontation that ravished the international political landscape. The world was preoccupied with the quest of eliminating the threat posed by the United States and United Soviet Socialist Republic rivalry in the heat of the cold war. All other security threats aside the biggest posed by the cold war took the backseat in security studies. Traditional security preoccupation became all states' security concern. It was, for states during the cold war, a matter of protecting their territories from potential aggressors while ensuring the continued corporate existence of these territories. In the midst of all these growing security concern about state security,



scores of human lives were lost to preventable health insecurities, food insecurity or perhaps starvation, poverty and other forms of human security threats. Expectedly, the focus of states was more on the threats posed by the US-USSR military rivalry and cold war (Oyebade et al., 1998). Efforts, attentions and scholarly inquiries on traditional security studies dominated the length and breadth of security studies. While the germaneness of the alternative cum human security threats during the cold war is chiefly recognized by this study and deemed to have gained a better attention than that that was accorded to it by states, this study equally reckons with the amount of attention accorded to the conventional and traditional security concern posed by the cold war. It would have been practically illogical for states to have, at this period, downplayed the destructive capacity of the cold war by ignoring the threats associated with it while solely focusing on the human security threat that was also prevalent at this time. It could therefore be partly inferred that the considerable attention and efforts expended in the realm of conventional and traditional security contributed to the aversion of another world war that could have resulted into the complete eradication of the entire globe. The end of the cold war that signaled a significant reduction in threats to state security in 1994 gave states and the International community an opportunity to consider the prevailing human security threats the world is currently faced with. The end of the cold war, as earlier informed, brought a paradigm shift in security studies with the human security or alternative security becoming the focal point and core of contemporary. What is however important is that both the conventional and alternative security paradigms are complementary and symbiotic in terms of relationship. There could be no alternative or human security without the conventional or state-centric security option. Human security, by any standard, is the continuation of the traditional or state security approach. In fact, it is, in most instances, difficult to distinguish between the two. What is central to both security paradigms is the “human factor”. Conventional security does not seek to protect the state only but to also ensure the safety of human lives and properties. Human security does seem to build on the footing and success of the conventional or state security. Sufficed to imply that the success or otherwise of the human security is largely dependent on the functionality or otherwise of the conventional or state security.

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

Since the end of the cold war and the collapse of the USSR which trickled down the perceived threats to state security, there’s been a paradigm shift of focus from state-centric security to a more human dimension of security studies in general. This is chiefly due to the pressing need of the alternative or perhaps the human security. Human insecurities and threats like hunger, poverty, diseases capable of wrecking greater havoc than the cold war or any other war could have are now manifesting across the globe in unprecedented magnitudes. Human security discourses, scholarly inquiries as well as studies now dominate the entire parlance of security studies than any other dimension of security studies, thereby leading to a partial neglect of conventional security studies. This has however led to unhindered penetration of security threats like terrorism, illicit weapons into the territorial domains of states. It is against the backdrop of this problematic that this paper was set out with a view to examining the reasons for the shift from conventional or state-centric security to human security as well as reasons why it is best to take both security options as one since one cannot be achieved without the other.

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION

Conventional Security: Otherwise known as traditional security, conventional security has to do with the whole Defence system and capacity of a state to deter and forestall external aggression. It is more concerned with the protection of not just the territorial integrity of the state but ensure the continued protection of human lives and properties. It encompasses, most fundamentally, a state’s



military might that could readily be deployed in the quest to uphold its national and territorial integrity. It is what ensures the existence or otherwise of any state. A state with no credible conventional security system stands the risk of military intrusions and incursions. This was the trend in the pre-cold war and post-cold war eras.

Alternative Security: Human security or Alternative security has been widely associated with the 1994 Human Development Report on Human Security that was drafted and championed by Mahbub ul Haq in the early 90s. Although the term had been in circulation earlier before it was first adopted UNDP, it was however popularized by the UNDP (UNDP, 1994). The essence of the human security approach was to bridge the gap between freedom from want and freedom from fear; freedoms that lay at the very core of the United Nations' global agenda. Historically, the concept was as far back as June 1945 recognized when the U.S. Secretary of State reported to his government the results of the San Francisco Conference cum “The battle of peace has to 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. Only victory on both fronts can assure the world of an enduring peace. No Provisions that can be written into the Charter will enable the Security Council to make the world secure from war if men and women have no security in their homes and their jobs (Rothschild, 1995). The objective of human security, according to the UNDP, is to protect the vital core of all human lives from critical pervasive threat in a way that is consistent with long-term human fulfillment. It is equally poised to guarantee a set of vital rights and freedoms to all people, without unduly compromising their ability to pursue other goals whilst also creating political, economic, social, cultural, and environmental conditions in which people live knowing that their vital rights and freedoms are secure.

A BRIEF THEORETICAL SYNOPSIS

The field of International Relations and Security Studies has never experienced shortage of theories and paradigms that offer empirical lenses through which myriads of compelling security phenomena and issues could best be studied, understood and investigated. This brings to fore the indispensability of theories to societal and researchers' quests in proffering workable solutions to societal problems. The end of the Cold war between unarguably the two world's hegemony in the early 1990s opened a new vista in the empirical study of International Relations and Security Studies. The hitherto State-centric conception of security that was otherwise known as traditional security became an area of serious academic interrogations and queries following the rising manifestations of security threats that bordered on the continued survival of humanity itself rather than the human world. Issues such as food security, health security, environmental security, community security, political security, economic security and others as contained in the 1994 United Nations Development Programme's Working Paper on Human Security received robust attention from both policy-makers and scholars of Security Studies. The reasons for this systematic shift to, and emergence of, Human Security as a corollary of the traditional security are not far-fetched. Firstly, the eventual neutralization and complete eradication of an impending global war otherwise known as the cold war that threatened the very basis of global security and continued survival with the potential for a nuclear Armageddon prompted global agencies and actors into diverting attention to world's pressing needs at this period in time (1990s onwards). Secondly, the end of the cold war coincided with the time the world was faced with excruciating non-traditional security issues such as poverty, rising global diseases, global financial problems etc. These among others technically aided the ascendancy of the human security lexicon into global prominence.

Before the eventual recognition of human security as an important component of the traditional security system by the United Nations in 1994, Ole Wæver, a renowned security scholar had already

interrogated the Alternative security approach to the existing traditional security system owing to his intellectual curiosity to understand why some security threats were gaining more attention than the others. This culminated into the incubation of his Securitization theory in 1993.

The Securitization theory took off from the point of view that security threat that has been successfully securitized would attract more attention and resources than other security threats that have not been securitized. It is a theory that implies that national security policy or action at any point in time is not naturally given but it is to be taken as a careful designation of the securitizing actors in the environment. Sufficed to mean security threats are not simply so until they are so articulated and labeled by the securitizing actors. The securitizing actors here are therefore taken to include the governments, members of the political class and security experts in the area of the security threats. The obvious logic here underscores the primacy of not just labeling act as being a security threat in the securitization process but also indispensability of the speech act. No doubts, Ole Waever's intention in the conception of the Securitization theory must have been his burning zest to understand why some obvious security threats and issues had received lesser attention and resources than those less threatening from the securitizing actors such as governments and security experts. Regardless of what Ole's intention might have been, the Securitization thesis provides us a very robust theoretical lens to understanding the politics surrounding the paradigm shift from conventional security to human security issue. The rising profiles of global security issues such as poverty, diseases, hunger, climate change and others began to make leaders and scholars to think of solutions to these security pathologies whilst also ensuring that they are completely securitized and labeled as security dangers.

CONVENTIONAL AND ALTERNATIVE SECURITIES DURING THE COLD WAR

Security has, since time immemorial, been one of the greatest preoccupations of man and states have not been left out in the quest to ensure that their territorial sanctity is not defiled. Conventional security, in this wise, has been at the front-burner of inter-state relations even long before the emergence of the cold war epoch especially during the first and second world wars that characterized the multi-polar international system. The level of recognition and attention accorded to conventional security or state-centric security during pre-cold war era due its indispensable role on how states could guarantee their own survival in world that was heavily threatened global wars, was equally brought forward to the cold war era in greater magnitude. The cold war epoch has been described by scholars as the most perilous time when the world witnessed the greatest threat to its very existence which could have amounted to the complete eradication of the entire world. The threat eventually aggravated states' interest in engaging in series of international deliberations and scholarly enquiries as well as actions militarily and otherwise on how to neutralize this threat posed against state security. However, the fact that conventional security studies dominated the cold war era doesn't necessarily mean the human security or alternative security studies were relegated to the backdrop. Conventional security attracted more attention than human security because of the pressing need of restoration of state security and global peace due to the raging cold war between the US and USSR. In fact, the reason for the exaltation of conventional security during the cold war was captured thus “both the US and USSR possessed nuclear weapons that could wipe away the entire universe ten times over”. Hence, the reason why conventional security assumed the front-burner before any other security approaches during the cold war.

CONVENTIONAL SECURITY AND ALTERNATIVE SECURITIES IN THE POST-COLD WAR

The disintegration of the United Soviet Socialist Republic in 1989 ended the cold war bi-polar world. This brought the emergence of the United States as the World's hegemon in the newly emerged



uni-polar world. The official ending of the cold war era brought about significant change in the parlance of security studies. Firstly, the end of the war led to a significant trickling down of the amount of threats posed against state and global security. Until recently, the world ceased to be under the threat of complete military eradication of the entire globe (Chen, 1995). Secondly, the end of the war enabled states to turn their attention to human security threats like hunger, poverty, illicit weapons proliferation, civil wars, refugee crisis and others. For example, the nature of conflict has shifted to intra-state conflict from inter-state or states military rivalry, with higher incidence of civilian casualties. Population pressures together with consumerism contribute to environmental insecurity, increase immigration, and heighten the importance of water and energy resources. The economic crisis in East Asia not only obliterated financial and productive assets but dropped large populations roughly into unanticipated poverty. The spread of HIV/AIDS and the associated human costs of grief and caring for orphans leave indelible marks on communities. Inequality has increased, contributing to the mass mobilizations against globalization and the agencies that promote it, which express, however inchoately, the sense that all is not just and well (Rothschild, Ibid). Tragic events after September 11th mobilized many institutions and resources in the world community as nothing else could have to act in concert in response to international terrorism. Other threats that increase or change in form include international criminal activity, nuclear proliferation and security, drug-resistant disease, financial collapse, ecological threats, technological mishaps, and conflicts across gender, class, ethnicity, or religion. In recognition of the vast dangers and threats posed by these human insecurities, the United Nations Development Programme in 1994 came up with the critical dimensions of human security that should be prioritized if threats of human insecurities are to be banished (UNDP, 1994). These dimensions include health security, personal security, economic security, political security, environmental security, community security, food security. They are however anchored on “freedom from fear” and “freedom from want”. Four essential peculiarities are discernible from all the dimensions of human security (Rothschild, Ibid);

1. Human security is a universal concern. It is relevant to people everywhere, in rich nations and poor.
2. The components of human security are interdependent.
3. Human security is easier to ensure through early prevention than later intervention. It is less costly to meet these threats upstream than downstream.
4. Human security is people-centered. It is concerned with how people live and breathe in a society, how freely they exercise their many choices, how much access they have to market and social opportunities – and whether they live in conflict or in peace.

CONVENTIONAL SECURITY AND ALTERNATIVE SECURITY: ANY DIFFERENCE?

A quick response to this poser lies not in this very poser but the general conception and interpretation of security itself. If security is to be conceived as protection against all forms of threats, then the question as to whether there is a distinction or not in state security and human security should not have surfaced in the first place. Both human and state security are working together to achieve the general goal of security (Troedsson, 2001). State security’s goal of protection of territorial integrity would practically be meaningless if the people that make up the state itself weren’t there in the first place. Sufficed here that state security is not only concerned with the security of land, air and sea alone but also the people that make up the state. Since there was no state without the people in the first instance, state security can only aim of securing the state in the acknowledgement that it is the people that will benefit from a secured environment. We may however aver that the aspect of security that has received little attention in general security was the aspect of social aspect of peoples’ lives. This is



understandable partly because the pre-cold war and cold war era witnessed more of security threats that had to do with the continued survival and existence of the states as well as the protection of the people from military conquest and incursions from aggressors. This didn't however exclude the people from the equation because they may end up being the biggest casualties if states and the International community had not acted to stop the eventual outbreak of the real war. Needless here to say whichever way we may want to perceive security, security is no security without people being at the core of it.

Again, it may be quite important to work out carefully the relationship between human security and state security. One key reason is that the United Nations' existing organizational mandates and mechanisms draw heavily from state security assumptions (Ogata, 2001a). Another key reason is that collaboration with state security forces would be essential to human security at the national level, and perhaps the global level. Also grave threats to state security evoke well-funded, emphatic, expert responses. In the face of security threats, groups that otherwise differ on many niceties will rally and support joint action. And nations regularly invest considerable resources in anticipation of security threats, which range from the doctoral research of engineers to the daily calisthenics that maintain the musculature of army troops. As a result, state security issues are associated in many minds with effective response mechanisms. These characteristics of funding, research, consensus, efficacy, and “get-to-the-bottom-of-the-matter” attention are also necessary to confront the grave threats to human security (Florini et al, 1998). Furthermore, human security may be a timely extension of the state security framework, one which explores and develops the newer issues that are already on the edges of the security agenda, and brings outside expertise to bear on issues that already have the attention and concern of national security advisors (Pearson Peacekeeping Centre, 2000). In the 1999 edition of the textbook *American National Security* used at West Point and Georgetown Universities, among others, Jordan Taylor and Mazaar define national security narrowly as “protection of the nation's people and territories against physical assault” Yet even in this narrow definition, “National Security ... has a more extensive meaning than protection from physical harm; it also implies protection, through a variety of means, of vital economic and political interests, the loss of which could threaten the fundamental values and vitality of the state (Pearson Peacekeeping Centre, Ibid). More recently, the 2001 report of the Hart-Rudman Commission on U.S. National Security not only advocates investment in education as part of the national security strategy (Hart-Rudman Report, 2001) but also relates the material well-being of those living outside the boundaries of the United States to U.S. national security: the United States should pursue, within the limits of what is prudent and realistic, the worldwide expansion of material abundance and the eradication of poverty. It should also promote political pluralism, freedom of thought and speech, and individual liberty. Not only do such aims inhere in American principles, they are practical goals as well. There are no guarantees against violence and evil in the world. We believe, nonetheless, that the expansion of human rights and basic material well-being constitutes a sturdy bulwark against them (Roxborough, 2001). The broadening scope of state security has also been reflected in the emergence of terms such as “common,” and “collective” and “global” to modify “security.” *Common Security* was defined by the Common Security Forum (Edson, 2001). Collective Security, such as is envisaged in the United Nations Charter, “refers to a system in which each state in the system accepts that the security of one is the concern of all, and agrees to join in a collective response to aggression (Roberts et al, 2000). The Commission on Global Governance likewise argues that Global security must be broadened from its traditional focus on the security of states to include the security of people and the planet. These examples of a broader agenda within security studies are not isolated incidents. For example, would a collective security system be feasible or desirable or is this a period of transition to a situation of rivalry between a different set of powers. The agenda of human security likewise raises fundamental issues about the international order, both because some global threats to human security may best be addressed by international institutions,

and because security concerns are also being undertaken by NGOs and by local and regional groups. The second change is that a security study has “a fresh and full agenda.” The agenda is less Eurocentric, and the instruments under discussion are broader. This contested but observable widening brings the national security literature itself closer to human security (Florini et al, 1998).

Finally, it is “a more scholarly agenda.” This reflects the increasing need for a strong conceptual framework and a clear methodology in order to manage effectively the increase in relevant institutions and in security agendas – a need that is shared in human security. The ongoing developments of conceptions of national security clearly overlap with the human security agenda. There are also key differences between state and human security. One regards an issue of presentation or of substance in the human security agenda. As Tow et al. describe the situation, “Traditionalists have little patience with those who would dilute the established field of security studies by overloading it with an ambitious agenda of problems and issues that would compromise the analytical power of their critical idea. Human security advocates are cast as offering the promise of a new, more collaborative, but perhaps unattainable and unrealistic international order (Tow et al, 2000). One writer went so far as to associate human security with liberals who believe “human nature is essentially good and peace loving” (Kim et al, 2000). To many in national security, it seems that human security lies at the outer edge of liberal internationalism, remote in relevance, ideal rather than reliable, and undisciplined by the burden of accountability and responsibility that national security advisors regularly shoulder. This is not a position of influence. Those who promote human security might do well to mind first impressions.

A key conceptual difference between state security and human security is the populations under consideration. State agencies by definition have a different responsibility to the citizenry than they do to international populations at large. This difference is by no means a deficiency. Yet it does require clarity of the grounds for obligation to citizens outside the nation-state. One set of possible justifications is that implied in the Hart-Rudman document: that “the expansion of human rights and basic material well-being constitutes a sturdy bulwark against violence and evil.” That is, protecting others’ human security strengthens the security of national populations and thus would be in the self-interest of the nation-state, because it would be significantly less costly than countering violence or terrorism. The problem with this logic of course is that interest in human security might swiftly cease if more cost-effective terrorism prevention mechanisms were discovered. A more durable justification would be that all nations have an imperfect obligation to address breaches of human security. The case for responsibility for non-citizens must be made to state entities (as well as to individuals and groups within states), and it matters how it is made. Second, state security has at least one additional objective that is distinct from human security. For a characteristic aim of foreign policy in the realist theory, which is also a de facto aim in many nations, is to maximize the state’s power. Thus national security is also substantially concerned with the relative distribution of power between states, and with territorial integrity. That concern is legitimate and lively worldwide. However, it is not part of the human security agenda (Fitzgerald et al, 1977). In theory, the human security agenda could be realized even if American dominance disappeared, and the world saw the ascendance of India or South Africa or Iran or France as major economic or military counterweights. So long as human beings enjoyed security of their core vital functions in a way that was consistent with their long-term fulfillment, the human security agenda could be said to be complete. A core edge of disagreement between human security and state security comes when these two agendas are said to compete. Clearly the debate about intervention and “responsible sovereignty” identifies an area where views differ deeply (Ogata, 2001b). But certain conceptions of state security can also undermine human security. In a 2001 book called *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, realist John Mearsheimer defends what he calls “offensive realism,” which focuses centrally on the distribution of world power and legitimizes actions that are



counter to human security (a term he does not use) if they increase national power. For example, Mearsheimer argues that China is the key contender for power vis-à-vis the United States, and thus argues, controversially, that United States policy towards China should attempt to dampen its economic growth, *not* to support China's material and democratic development (Mearsheimer, 2001). A similar argument might have been made for the Iraq war. The dissonance between this extreme form of realism and human security is not terribly obscure.

In summary, human security proponents too rarely engage the various schools of security studies. For example, the realist and neo-realist schools of security studies clearly articulate their objectives as well as their postulates or simplifying assumptions (for example regarding motivation) (Morgenthau, 1978). Thus far human security literature has focused nearly exclusively on articulating the “objective,” or agenda; it has not delved into questions of motivation, or of simplifying assumptions, or of the economic competition that will proceed simultaneously between actors who may be cooperating in human security matters. Articulating the human security approach in a way that recognizes legitimate and distinct spheres of interest such as the distribution of power, or economic competitiveness, will strengthen it considerably.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The cold war and post-cold war orders, as this paper had rightly observed, offered different dimensions of security studies. While state security became prominent during the cold war era due to the presence of military threats against states' continued existence, the social dimension of security otherwise known as human security amongst western scholars became prominent in the aftermath of the cold war due to the rising profile of social threats like hunger, diseases, terrorism, violence, poverty and others to the continued existence of humanity but states across the globe. Threats to security are multidimensional but this doesn't suggest that a distinction exists in security in general. Conventional or non-conventional, human or state-centric, what is important is that security is in any form, is deemed a protection against all threats and dangers. Paramount to any security measure is the people that make up the state and even the universe whose inexistence invariably translates to the inexistence of the state. It is however incontestable that the world is confronted by social threats and insecurities than any other security threat and perhaps military threat. Notwithstanding, this paper recommends that the quest to tackle the social security challenges should not in any way overwhelm the responsibility to safeguard the territorial integrity and domains of states. Since no meaningful life could be achieved without the security of the state even in the absence of social threats, this paper theorizes and argues that state security is the substructure upon which all other forms of securities such as economic security, social security, political security, environmental security can be achieved or thrive. Hence, the discovery of the urgency to tackle other forms of security challenges should not downplay the importance to always ensure the security of the state which the people constitute, at all times.



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