

The Concept of Security Revisited

New Approaches: Human Security and Risk Assessment

Adriana Mărgărit
“Lucian Blaga” University of Sibiu, Romania
Master in Management of European Integration and Public Administration
margarit_adriana@yahoo.com

Abstract: The field of study of security is confronted today with a proliferation of security related concepts. In this regard we can mention various concepts, such as: “transnational security”, “extended security”, “human security”, “global security”, “cooperative security”, “international security”, “economic security” and many others. Ever since the end of the Cold War, the concept of human security began to appear more often in the speeches of scholars, policy makers and even the media. Despite the more frequent use, the concept of human security does not have a clear definition because it includes a variety of issues ranging from economic security to personal and political security. Generally speaking, human security defines the overall problems and challenges a person is faced with. This paper is focused on revealing key aspects related to the concept of human security, its definitions and approaches. Furthermore, the paper presents the risks and vulnerabilities to human security, thus emphasizing the challenges for this field of study.

Keywords: security; human security; risks; vulnerabilities; globalization

Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person.
(Article 3, The Universal Declaration of Human Rights)

1. Introduction

Security is a fundamental right of the human being. It is a state in which menaces and conditions that could cause physical, mental or material harm are controlled in a manner that allows the protection of health and the welfare of individuals and human community.¹ If we choose the human individual or the population from which he belongs as the object of security, then global security is reflected in a state of calm, safety and lack of fear and in adequate and effective control of risks and threats that could affect the physical and mental integrity and the material

¹ Traian PIGUI, *Global Economic Security and Human Security*, in *Colocviu Strategic*, nr. 10, August 2004, retrieved from: http://cssas.unap.ro/ro/pdf_publicatii/cs10-04.pdf

goods of people. According to this view, the emphasis is on the individual, regardless of his nationality, ethnic group or religion.

Welfare of the human individual is seen today in a multiple determination that goes beyond the mere limitation to the economic factor. In this context, other factors are taken into consideration such as longevity, health, universal access to education or to a decent life, human rights. Any person may carry out their life and activity unhindered if there are created and maintained a series of favorable conditions. Such conditions are represented mainly by: the feeling that there is no real or imaginary danger that would cause physical, psychological or material damage; the existence of a system of control over potential dangers that could affect people; an optimum psycho-social climate existent in human groups in particular and in society in general; the climate of confidence between the countries of the world based on collaboration, cooperation and collaborative work in all the fields of activity; norms and rules of conduct and living, widely recognized and respected by all people, both as individuals and as members of various groups, human communities, states and unions of state.

Therefore, *human global security* can be considered as the normal state of planetary security, in which risks and threats that could affect the physical and mental integrity of people and their material goods are under the effective control of those managing human activity both at national and global level. In other words, global security is not a state in which hazards and threats are absent, but is a state of dynamic equilibrium, a result of multiple and complex interactions between world states, between state and non-state actors, in the normal course of life and human activity. (Dușu, 2005, pp. 402-405)

Human security is focused on individuality, is concerned with how people live and how free they feel in society, how freely they can exercise their multitude of options, to what extent they have access to market and social opportunities and whether they live in a state of conflict or peace.¹

¹ Teodor FRUNZETI, *Knowledge and counteracting of risk factors and vulnerabilities to human security (II)*, retrieved from www.defense.ro/gmr/Ultimul_nr/frunzeti-p.134-141.pdf

2. The Concept of Human Security: International Definitions and Approaches

The concept of human security has its beginnings in the 60s, 70s and 80s when it was discussed for the first time the need to establish a new system of development, both economic and human. In 1992, the Institute for Strategic Studies in Great Britain proposed to change the strategy that had been successfully adopted so far. Like many similar institutions, the Institute analyzed the concept of security in terms of military security, but nevertheless, they had to recognize the importance, more or less ignored up to then, of other notions such as political, economic, social and environmental security. In fact, the end of the Cold War had given vent to discussions and analysis that were partially blocked until then, which were rooted in the feeling of discontent created by traditional methods of analysis from the field of international relations.

Human security as a concept started to take shape in 1994 when it was defined in the "Human Development Report" of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP). According to this report, the concept of security was used in a too narrow manner, representing only border security in front of external aggression or the defense of international interests of the states, the individual's daily needs thus being ignored.

Although it was still a controversial subject, human security became the basis for all future security models. Thus, *the "new security" puts the individual in the first place, in contrast to the old security strategies which were centered on state security.* (Scarlat, 2007, pp. 263-270)

In the opinion of UN, human society must be part of a two-level transformation process, which results, on one hand, in transferring the center of gravity from territorial security to people security, and on the other hand, in transferring the means for achieving security from weapons procurement to sustainable human development.

In 1999, several states have launched the Human Security Network (HSN), the first meeting taking place at ministerial level in Norway. This network includes 12 countries (Austria, Canada, Chile, Switzerland, Greece, Ireland, Jordan, Mali, Netherlands, Norway, Slovenia and Thailand, South Africa participating as an observer), being an international mechanism for collective action, which, at the level of foreign affairs ministers, maintains dialogue on relevant issues to human security.

According to HSN principles, the respect of human rights is the basis of human security development. Human security is developed in each country by defending and promoting human rights, the rule of law, democratic governance, the culture of peace and peaceful settlement of conflicts. Promoting sustainable human development by reducing poverty, providing basic social services and achieving people-centered development goals are necessary aspects for the development of human security.¹

HSN is gradually becoming an actor on the international political stage and its efforts to achieve a broader human security includes aspects such as: the universalization of the Ottawa Convention against landmines, weapons control, protection of children in armed conflict, the fight against HIV, educating individuals on human rights, fight against transnational organized crime, conflict prevention.

“A human world where people can live in safety and dignity, free from poverty and despair, is still a dream for many and should be a benefit to all. In such a world, everyone would have equal chances to develop human potential. Development of human security is essential for achieving this goal. In essence, human security is the liberation from threats to human rights, to safety or to human life. Human security has become both an indicator of global security and a new aspect on the global agenda. Safety and wellbeing are features of the world characterized by human security. Human security and human development are two sides of same coin, mutually reinforcing and leading to a favorable environment for everyone.”²

In 2000, Canada took significant steps to implement the concept of human security, establishing this concept as the cornerstone of its international policy. Canadian diplomatic efforts have not remained unanswered, countries like Austria and Switzerland adopting quickly this concept, and in 2003, due to the support provided by the UN and its Secretary at that time - Kofi Annan, was established a committee specifically dedicated to human security in the UN. These steps, together with the publication of Barcelona Report elaborated by the European Union in 2004, led to the development of the Human Security Doctrine for Europe, a doctrine that required the mandatory creation of a rapid response group in case of threats to human security. Although this group is not yet constituted, nor it was

¹ Retrieved from <http://www.humansecuritynetwork.org/principles-e.php>

² <http://www.humansecuritynetwork.org/menu-e.php>, *A Perspective on Human Security: Chairman's Summary 1st Ministerial Meeting of the Human Security Network*, Lysøen, Norway, 20 May 1999.

fully developed, it is a serious incentive for all European governments and beyond. (Scarlat, 2007, pp. 264-265)

The Human Security Doctrine for Europe emphasizes the implementation of the European Security Strategy. Focusing on regional conflicts and failed states, this report suggests a human security doctrine for Europe that would include “seven principles for operations in case of serious insecurity”¹, “a human security response force” and “a legislative framework that should detail instructions for interventions and operations in conflict areas”.²

European Security Strategy was completed with a new concept developed around the idea of individual’s security. It has also been developed the Western “acquis” of security, by “acquis” understanding a common set of standards and procedures. “This Western acquis related to national security includes seven items: 1) the triad of national interests (security, prosperity, identity), 2) the multidimensional concept of security, 3) the individual as beneficiary of security, 4) quality of life as the main criterion for assessing institutional performance, 5) civil management and democratic control, 6) integrated management of security (the idea of community), 7) managing globalization as a main concern.”³

Rise of humanity cannot be achieved without human security, which typically involves a condition in which people can safely and freely exercise their options, without fearing that the opportunities they enjoy may be lost or withdrawn. Security means that the benefits people have reached in expanding their opportunities and improving their capabilities are protected by current social, economic and political arrangements.

At methodological level, “human security” is perceived as a positive factor, as there it appears as a full feature which unites the parameters reflecting both objective and subjective aspects of human social life. Security is approached as a multidimensional concept, related not only to weapons and their use, but also to

¹ The seven principles are: 1) Human security involves treating each individual as a citizen. 2) EU to exercise clear political authority regarding the attributes to command and control of the tasks performed. 3) The approach of multilateralism in a broader conception than the action of a group of states. 4) “Bottom up” approach. 5) Regional focus. 6) The use of legal instruments. 7) Priority given to the objective of protecting civilians.

² Retrieved from <http://www.globalgovernancewatch.org/resources/a-human-security-doctrine-for-europe--the-barcelona-report-of-the-study-group-on-europes-security-capabilities>

³ Iulian FOTA, *Conceptualization, efficiency and legitimacy in the national security system*, 6 October 2006, 22 Magazine, Retrieved from <http://www.revista22.ro/conceptualizare-eficienta-si-legitimitate-in-sistemul-de-securitate-na-3110.html>

everything that can touch upon human safety: society, economy, environment, food. The subject and the reference object of human security is the human individual and the security state of individuals is the starting point, regardless of the analysis level - national, regional, regional or global.

The concept of human security is closely related to the security of human development and human rights. Human development cannot occur without ensuring the respect for universal human rights and in order to ensure human rights it is necessary to ensure the development of society and of the individual. Human security encompasses both concepts and transforms them into a unitary whole. But because of the fact that human security encompasses everything related to human society, the definition of the concept is almost impossible, as it is impossible to classify in individual needs in their order of importance. (Scarlat, 2007, pp. 269-270)

From the perspective of sustainable development, the concept of human security has the following characteristics: it is a universal problem - many threats are common to all people, ranging in intensity from country to country, from region to region; components of human security are interdependent, so if the public safety is in danger anywhere in the world (famine, epidemics, pollution, drug trafficking, terrorism, ethnic tensions, social disintegration), nations are involved in some way or another, and the consequences of these hazards can expand at both regional and global level; human security is better achieved by prevention interventions than later interventions; security is related to the integration of the individual in society but also to his freedom to exercise the right to choose in a multitude of possibilities.

The two concepts – “sustainable development” and “human security” are related, interdependent, but not identical; there is yet an interconnection, meaning that progress in one area extends the possibilities for progress in the other, and vice versa.¹

¹ Teodor FRUNZETI, *Knowledge and counteracting of risk factors and vulnerabilities to human security (I)*, retrieved from www.defense.ro/gmr/Ultimul_nr/frunzeti-p.36-44.pdf

3. Menaces, Risks and Vulnerabilities to Human Security

The beginning of the 21st century is marked by profound changes of security environment. The world becomes increasingly complex and interdependent while the process of globalization seems to be irreversible. Challenges brought by globalization, with its overlapping trends of regionalization and fragmentation generate new tensions and risk factors.

New sources of insecurity are taking the shape of risks and threats that are beginning to express a wide range of manifestations, of which the most important are such as ethnic tensions, traffic with drugs, radioactive substances and human beings, organized crime, political instability, the redistribution of areas of influence, proliferation of weak state entities, so-called "failed states" (failed states), characterized by inefficient and corrupt administration. (Petrescu, 2006, p. 33)

One of the most important aspects of human life, which determines largely how we perceive the absence or presence of risks, dangers and threats to existence as a whole is *the quality of life*, an evaluative concept, a result of reporting living conditions and activities that make up human life to the needs, values and human aspirations. It is noticeable that that this concept refers both to the objective conditions of human life and to the subjective way in which each individual evaluate their own life.

The main threats to security are rooted also in the individual's sense of insecurity caused by: degradation of human condition, economic development disparities both between individuals and between states and regions, the struggle for power, competing interests manifested at individual level to the level of alliances, etc. For these reasons, it is obvious that we cannot talk about achieving the state of security at state, regional and global level in environments in which the individual does not feel safe. If an individual is threatened, then the security of the group of which he belongs and of other related communities is also threatened. If all social groups want to achieve and preserve security, they must start by ensuring individual security. (Sarcinski, 2005, pp. 62-69)

Most threats for individuals arise from the fact that people live in an environment that constantly generates inevitable social, economic and political pressure.

Advocates of human security theory analyze both *direct and indirect sources of threats*, grouping them in two main categories: direct threats and indirect threats. In

the category of direct threats can be placed the following: violent death (victims of violent crime, killing of women and children, terrorism, riots, pogroms, genocide, torture and murder of dissidents, victims of war), dehumanization (slavery, kidnapping, arresting political opponents), drugs (drug dependence, illegal trafficking), discrimination (discriminatory legislation, practices against minorities, undermining political institutions), international disputes (tensions and crises between states), destruction weapons (weapons of mass destruction).

Indirect threats for human security can be considered threats such as: deprivation of the basic human needs (food, water, primary care, primary education), diseases (rate of occurrence of life threatening diseases), natural disasters and / or caused by people, underdevelopment (low GDP / capita, slow growth in GDP, inflation, unemployment, inequality, poverty, economic instability, stagnation and demographic transformation at national, zonal, regional, global), displacement of people (refugees and migration at national, regional and global level), environmental degradation.

Experts have identified a number of *sources of insecurity*. Among them, according to the study of Juliette-Voinov Kohler, there are: economic security (unemployment, access to employment, poverty, child labor); food security (unequal access to food); health protection (existence of serious diseases, different and differential access to health care); environmental security (water, soil, air, logging, natural disasters); personal security (physical violence, domestic violence, child abuse, gender-specific issues, human dignity, drugs); cultural security (harm to the system of values, discrimination, oppression); political security (interstate conflict, freedom of expression, torture, repression, human rights violations). (Pigui, 2004)

Security is essential to the life of individuals, communities and states. Practically every area of life needs security. On the other hand, insecurity reflects a combination of threats (Sava, 2005, pp. 189-197):

Military threats - their action affects all components of a state and may lead to military occupation, destruction of institutions, moving population, natural resources;

Political threats – affect the organizational stability of the state: internal political instability, poor governance, corruption, insecurity of borders;

Societal threats - societal identities are related to language, tradition, religion, local culture, myths and symbols; an example may be the resistance to globalization of certain countries: France protects from the culture of Coca-Cola, some French radio stations and television channels do not transmit American music or movies, and some transmit the Anglo-Saxon productions subtitled in French.

Economic threats - difficult to identify because the economic environment is essentially governed by competition, risk, aggression, poverty, financial crisis, reduction of natural resources (water, oil and gas), piracy;

Environmental threats - are global and can be represented by environmental accidents, acid rain, natural disasters or other phenomena (earthquakes, floods, global warming and other sudden and radical changes in conditions of life), global environmental changes, pollution, etc.

As identified and described by various authors (Frunzeti, Zodian, Sava, Neagoe, Alexandrescu), the main vulnerabilities, risks and global threats to human security can be considered as follows:

International terrorism: Terrorism constitutes a threat to life, requires expensive costs, tries to undermine the openness and tolerance of global society and represents a growing threat worldwide. International terrorist networks have access to modern technology and can benefit from bank transfers and rapid means of communication, infrastructure and assistance from ethnic-religious extremist organizations, support from transnational organized crime or from regimes that are corrupt or unable to govern democratically. They can cause heavy loss of lives and extensive material damage.

Proliferation of weapons of mass destruction: Nuclear, chemical, biological and radiological weapons are another very serious threat in terms of their potential to destroy. Access to such resources becomes easier in terms of technology and the temptation of their acquisition increases threateningly, while diminishing the guarantees of responsible behavior. A frightening scenario is one in which terrorist groups acquire weapons of mass destruction. In this case, a small group might be able to cause extensive damage, which was previously only possible for states and armies.

Regional conflicts: Conflicts can lead to extremism, terrorism and failed states, favoring organized crime. Ethnic or religious conflicts are a serious threat to

regional security. Such conflicts generate more waste of resources and perpetuate poverty. They also feed other forms of violence and crime and promote terrorism.

Failure of states (failed states): Bad governance described by corruption, abuse of power, weak institutions, lack of accountability and civil conflicts weaken states from within. In some cases this has led to the collapse of state institutions. The collapse of government may be associated with obvious threats such as organized crime and terrorism. Failure is an alarming phenomenon, which generates instability.

Transnational organized crime: Is an expression of the proliferation of negative phenomena which are amplified in the context of globalization. Such criminal activities can include: illegal trafficking of weapons, ammunition and explosives, narcotics trafficking, illegal migration and human trafficking, trafficking in counterfeit goods, money laundering and other financial aspects of economic crime. By their nature and extent such activities are encouraged by local conflicts and, in turn, can foster terrorism and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

The problem of migration: Immigration can create security risks in receiving countries, transit countries and countries supplying immigrants. From origin countries most often migrate the citizens that are able to work, which often accept jobs below their qualifications. Social phenomena occur seriously affecting economic and social balance: disintegrated families, unattended minors, pension system without resources, etc. In transit countries, migration encourages trafficking industries. In host countries, the main difficulty lies in the social integration of newcomers: camps appear, local bureaucracy for processing of immigrants data, new legislation, delinquency, etc.

The negative consequences of globalization: Globalization can be a major threat to the security of the individual by the implications it may have regarding humanity. These may vary depending on the situation and the region: the uncontrolled growth of population, compared with trends of decreasing birth; wealth, compared with trends of poverty; excessive urbanization, compared with the popular trends of rural decreases population; youthful population, compared with trends of increased aging populations; the natural growth of a particular ethnic group, compared with the downward trends of the other ethnic groups; demographic concentration in certain areas, compared with dispersal tendencies of others. Globalization creates both opportunities and vulnerabilities for any social entity.

Threats to information: Cyberspace in which information flows does not belong to states but is a universal good. Any threat to this area, invisible, in fact, but without which progress seems that it cannot be conceived anymore, is a threat with universal valences. Unlike traditional threats, the information security threats require fewer resources and techniques that can be more easily hidden and concealed. They allow a high rate of improvement and diversification, difficult to follow and evaluate. In fact, this is the reason why the estimates regarding information security are dependent to the human factor, with full subjectivity and uncertainty involved. Information is vulnerable at all stages of obtaining, storing and disseminating it.

Energy resources and raw materials are generally limited and unevenly distributed across the planet: Competition for energy is polarized on the Gulf states, Caspian Basin, Eastern and Western Siberia, West Africa, Southeast Asia, South America, Canada.

Purchase of food: Is a matter of concern especially in overpopulated countries poor in natural resources in Africa and South Asia. Besides the lack of schools, and qualified medical assistance, famine is threatening the lives of over 1 billion people.

Insufficient water resources: This vulnerability affects mainly Saharan African states and societies, Middle East or Central Asia.

Environmental degradation continues to affect the planet's natural balance bringing new environmental challenges.

Analysis of risks, dangers and threats to regional, national and international security lead to the following conclusions: human societies are victims and at the same time generating risks; the border nature of certain risks makes it difficult to classify and control them within national strategies; diversification and multiplication of risks and their asymmetrical nature determine the development of new policies, doctrines and strategies to counter them.

4. Conclusions

The human being is the focus of security. People go through every level and every dimension of security. People are at the core of all forms of social organization and their security achievement is reflected in the security of group to which people belong.

Human security is an indispensable resource of everyday life and community that allows individuals to freely fulfill their aspirations and ideals. Now, individual welfare, in addition to the role of economic factors, begins to be associated with other factors such as longevity, health, access to education or adequate living standards, active involvement the political and social life.

In a relatively broad sense, human security is focused not only on the global range of threats for the individual and for the population to which he belongs, but it implies also the concern of all state and non-state factors responsible to ensure the wellbeing of people.

5. References

- Alexandrescu, G. (2005). *Amenințări în mediul de securitate/Threats in the Security Environment*, in "Studii de Securitate și Apărare"/"Security and defense Studies", Vol. 1. Bucharest: Editura Universității Naționale de Apărare.
- Dușu, P. (2005). *Impactul factorilor demografici asupra securității umane globale / The Impact of Demographic Factors on Global Human Security*, in "Provocări la adresa securității și strategiei la începutul secolului XXI" / "Challenges for Security and Strategy at the Beginning of 21st Century". Bucharest: Editura Universității Naționale de Apărare.
- Frunzeti, T. & Zodian, V. (coord.) (2007). *Lumea 2007, Enciclopedie politică și militară, studii strategice și de securitate – The World 2007. Political and Militarz Enciclopedy, Strategic and security Studies*. Bucharest: Editura Centrului Tehnic-Editorial al Armatei.
- Frunzeti, T., *Cunoașterea și contracararea factorilor de risc și a vulnerabilităților la adresa securității umane / Knowledge and Counteracting of Risk Factors and Vulnerabilities to Human Security (I)*, retrieved from www.defense.ro/gmr/Ultimul_nr/frunzeti-p.36-44.pdf.
- Frunzeti, T., *Cunoașterea și contracararea factorilor de risc și a vulnerabilităților la adresa securității umane / Knowledge and Counteracting of Risk Factors and Vulnerabilities to Human Security (II)*, Retrieved from: www.defense.ro/gmr/Ultimul_nr/frunzeti-p.134-141.pdf.
- Petrescu, S. (2006). *Apărarea și securitatea europeană / European Defence and Security*. Bucharest: Editura Militară.

Pigui, T. (2004). *Securitatea economică și securitatea umană globală / Global Economic Security and Human Security*, in “Colocviu Strategic” / “*Strategic Colloquy*”, no. 10. Retrieved from: http://cssas.unap.ro/ro/pdf_publicatii/cs10-04.pdf.

Sarcinski, A. (2005). *Omul – subiectul securității naționale și internaționale / The Human Being – Subject of National and International Security* in “Challenges for Security and Strategy at the Beginning of 21st century”. Bucharest: Editura Universității Naționale de Apărare.

Sava, I. N. (2005). *Studii de securitate / Security Studies*. Bucharest: Romanian Center for Regional Studies.

Scarlat, D. (2007). *Conceptul de securitate umană – evaluare și analiză / The Concept of Human Security – Evaluation and Analysis* in “Dinamica mediului european de securitate” / “Dynamics of European Security Environment”. Bucharest: Editura Universității Naționale de Apărare „Carol I”

<http://www.globalgovernancewatch.org>.

<http://www.humansecuritynetwork.org>.

<http://www.revista22.ro>.

<http://www.unesco.org>.

<http://www.un.org>.