HUMAN SECURITY TODAY FROM THE JAPANESE PERSPECTIVE

Petra MARTAUS
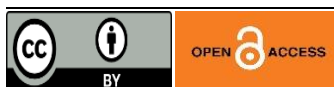
ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 pandemic and at the same time, the largest number of violent conflicts since 1946 are causing record-high numbers of people to be forcibly displaced from their homes. That includes the Israeli-Hamas conflict and war on Ukraine, which is not only causing immense human suffering but is also playing a role in precipitating a global food, energy, and financial crisis. As a result, the world now faces its worst cost-of-living crisis in a generation. This paper sets out the human security today from the perspective of japanese foreign policy.

INTRODUCTION

According to UNDP´s Human security special report, just before the COVID-19 pandemic hit, as the world reached unprecedented development levels, six of every seven people around the world felt insecure. And this feeling of insecurity was not only high—it had been growing in most countries with data, including a surge in some countries with the highest HDI values. Indeed, as many development indicators were moving up, people's sense of security was coming down. This is also related to Japan´s recent announcement about increasing military spending.

The human security approach has long been championed by Japan as a backbone of its foreign policy and in its engagement with UNDP globally. For decades, Japan has been putting the human security concept into practice across the world. The concept of Human Security is deeply imbedded in Japan's own development history. Japan has focused on building its Human Security through investments in education, health, rule of law, and disaster risk reduction. These efforts, together with its economic growth, are now attributed to the country's development success. But will increase of military spending affect country´s development activities around the world?

1 ORIGINS OF HUMAN SECURITY

Human security has been understood very differently through all the years since its introduction in Human Development Report 1994, prepared by the United Nations Development Programme. Human Development Report introduced the concept of human security as a novel way of thinking about security along seven interrelated areas — economic security, food security, health security, environmental security, personal security, community security, and political security. We can see, how all of these seven pillars of human security are mutually interlinked, how all human needs are closely connected. Poverty and inequality are undoubtedly a cause of violence and crime.

The origin of the concept was tied to a specific moment in our history: the Cold War was over and there was hope for a new period of international relations guided by meaningful multilateralism. Human rights issues came to the fore. Originating out of the human development discourse, human security was considered as being rooted in the "freedom from fear" and the "freedom from want".

As report argues "The concept of security," has for too long been interpreted narrowly: as security of territory from external aggression, or as protection of national interests in foreign policy or as global security from the threat of nuclear holocaust…. Forgotten were the legitimate concerns of ordinary people who sought security in their daily lives." This opinion was one of the reasons, why human security has also been subjected to sustained critique. Roland Paris critics suggested that human security is so vague that it verges on meaninglessness—and consequently offers little practical guidance to academics and who might be interested in applying the concept, or to policymakers. Almost 30 years later, international relations have aligned themselves around new concerns and are being driven by different forces. According to Buzan and Hansen human security has contributed to 'deepening' (from the state to the individual) and 'widening' (from state and military security to economic, environmental, etc.) the concept of security from the Cold War focus on military defence of the state to include a much broader and comprehensive set of concerns. Human security is still often framed more as an aspirational agenda persistently debated in academic and policy-making circles, with its future impact open to speculation. But it has nevertheless left its imprints on policy, practice, and research.

Discussions about human security undermining state security (and vice versa) are still widespread. No doubt, instinct to prioritise state security may seem natural during such crises as Russia´s invasion to Ukraine or Israeli-Hamas war. However, doing so at the expense of human security, according to Anna Brach, may negatively impact prospects for peace and efforts to build security. This, however, doesn´t mean the human security approach rejects the role of the state as a provider of security for its own people[1], but rather the approach argues that states are providers of security for individuals in ideal conditions, with recognition that sometimes states endanger human security. Furthermore, the approach as a challenge to state-centric approach changes the sovereignty of the state from absolute sovereignty to conditional sovereignty.

The concept of human security will obviously be part of the wider discussion on security in the near future. It continues to play an important role within the UN, EU and

---

[1] On the contrary, it has opened practical possibilities of human security – the notion that governemnts and international institutions take responsibility for wellbeing of its individuals and communities in which they live.

NATO, despite the fact that the operationalization of the concept still strongly reflects the interests of the states. Anyway, academics and policymakers in relation to human security can be currently placed into three categories:

i) those, for whom human security appears to be an attractive idea, but lacks analytical rigour,

ii) those, who accept concept of human security, but insist on limiting it with a narrowly conceived definition (focused on factors causing violence),

iii) those, for whom a broad definition of the concept of the human security is an essential tool for understanding current crises in context of human rights and development issues.

Even though the professional public still did not agree on the defenitive meaning of the concept of human security and the extent to which the concept can be applied, everyone agrees on relevance and validity of the concept—despite the criticism.

2   NARROW VS. BROAD UNDERSTANDING OF HUMAN SECURITY

Surrounding discussions of the 1994 report, as mentioned above, have led others to judge the concept of human security to be too all-encompassing for practical purposes, the report idealistic, and its recommendations naïve. While some of the harsher criticisms bear further discussion, it is fair to argue that the conceptual distinction between human development and human security was not sufficiently clear, as the dimensions do seem to embrace the entirety of the human development agenda unnecessarily. If human security is to be a feasible agenda it must be narrower. In this connection state and international developments in human security showed states and international organizations have focused on narrow definitions of human security that prioritize the category of personal security.

Today we can see growing interest in human security especially within NATO and some national militaries, notably the UK. For both UK and NATO, according Mary Kaldor, human security is understood as un umbrella concept that encompasses Building Integrity (anti-corruption), Protection of Civilians, Cultural Property Protection, Children and Armed Conflict, Conflict-related Sexual and Gender-based Violence, Human Trafficking and Women, Peace and Security.

Next state which for a time championed the human security concept, is Canada, also focusing on physical threats as the core indicator of threats to human security. This approach reflected a narrowing of human security to just 'freedom from fear', focusing on crisis prevention or conflict management. It left aside the dimensions of the human security concept that emphasised immediate but non-violent threats to people. Norway likewise focuses on the freedom from fear aspects of human security, The Armed Forces have a special role to play in creating security, and are required to pursue an integrated approach to human security in operations at all levels, as Norway´s National Action Plan: Women, peace and security (2023-2030) sets forth.

According to United Nations, human security is a multidimensional analytical framework that can assist the United Nations system to assess, develop and implement integrated responses to a broad range of issues that are complex and require the

combined inputs of the United Nations system, in partnership with Governments, non-governmental entities and communities.

3   HUMAN SECURITY IN JAPAN´S FOREIGN POLICY

Canada and Japan were the first countries to include this concept in their foreign policy. Japan maintains the broadest definition of human security, which "comprehensively covers all the menaces that threaten human survival, daily life and dignity… and strengthens efforts to confront these threats." A year after the UNDP issued its report, in a speech in the United Nations, Prime Minister Murayama Tomiichi endorsed human security as an important idea for the UN. Murayama's endorsement made Japan one of the first countries to offer its support to the human security idea.

Japan was searching for an international role commensurate with its considerable economic power and the Japanese government had began to take measures to strengthen Japan's international contribution. In 1994, Murayama had been elevated to prime minister from the post of chairman of the Japan Socialist Party (JSP), and his support for human security can be seen as rather natural, given the fact that the human security concept is non-military in nature and fitted like a glove to his party's highprofile pacifist stance.

Nevertheless, as some mentioned, it was Keizo Obuchi in 1998, which put a cornerstone of the commitment to human security in Japanese foreign policy. He mentioned health and employment as "human security" concerns and showed an intention to enhance cooperation in this area further by putting priority on social development in Japan's Official Development Assistance (ODA) policy. Related to the promotion of human security, Obuchi announced that the Japanese government would establish the "Human Security Fund" under the United Nations. Establishment of this fund was initially purported to provide flexible and timely financial support for international organizations eager to implement projects in Asia. The rest of the world was not included in the scope of the fund, but when the Human Security Fund was established, the fund became available to projects implemented in any part of the world. In a speech in Tokyo on December 2, 1998, Obuchi said:

"An unavoidable fact is that Asia's remarkable economic development in recent years also created social strains. The current economic crisis has aggravated those strains, threatening the daily lives of many people. Taking this fact fully into consideration, I believe that we must deal with these difficulties with due consideration for the socially vulnerable segments of population, in the light of 'Human Security,' and that we must seek new strategies for economic development which attach importance to human security with a view to enhancing the long term development of our region." (AKIYAMA, 258-259)

Japan posed a different case as the country seeks to broaden the scope of human security. From the Japanese government's point of view, human security encompasses not just the security from the threat of aggression in wars, but also the fundamental needs of citizens. The Japanese government takes a more comprehensive view of the UNDP's definition of human security as it believes human security should be safeguarded even during the absence of conflict. Thus, for Japan, human security comprehensively covers all the measures that threaten human survival, daily life, and human dignity, such as

environmental degradation, human rights violation, transnational organized crime, illicit drugs, refugees, poverty, anti-personnel landmines, and infectious diseases. Consequently, Japan stands out differently from Western countries like Norway and Canada, which have concentrated solely on issues of arms control while overlooking the security of human life during peace time. Both ideas of "freedom from want" – as initiated by Japan and UNDP and "freedom from fear" as affirmed by Canada and Norway – mutually constitute the understanding of the concept. It doesn´t mean that Japan prioritizes "freedom from fear" over the "freedom from want", but holds them as dual objectives of human security.

In 2000, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs added a grassroots human security program to its grant aid portfolio within Human Security Trust Fund. All the issues identified in the human security agenda, moreover, are amenable to action through existing ODA programs. Governmental agency that delivers the bulk of ODA for the government of Japan is called The Japan International Cooperation (JICA). This aid is distributed through embassies abroad mostly for small-scale social development projects. JICA is the agency committed to the links between human security, peace-building, and development. This shift is visible in JICA's development activities regarding transition situations between conflict and peace in fragile states or conflict-affected countries like, for example, Afghanistan, Iraq or Cambodia.

According to some, human security was a *„godsend for Japanese aid policy makers, because it provided a way to make a contribution to the maintenance of international security without having to engage in the politically delicate tasks of constitutional reinterpretation or commitment to increased military spending"*. (Potter, 50)

As Edstrom mentioned, the japanese poliucy makers downgraded human security from a key foreign policy pillar to simply a basic principle of ODA after the intervention in Afghanistan and Iraq. After 2001, human security continued to inform japanese development assistance but aid also began to be used as a tool of counter-terrorism, an issue that straddles the demarcation between hard and soft security. Have these changes in Japan's approach to development assistance affected aid allocations?

3.1 Human security and military expenditure

According to new data on global military spending published by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), world military spending is increasing, with new historical levels year by year. Japan last year announced that it plans to increase defense spending over the next five years as it faces an increasingly assertive China and an unpredictable North Korea.. (Carnegie endowment for international peace, february 2023) It intends to raise defense spending to 2 percent of GDP by 2027. This will give the country the third-largest defense budget in the world. Japan's new national security strategy explains how it will take primary responsibility for its own defense within five years and assume a far more active role in Indo-Pacific security. So the question is, will aid (or human security gaps) allocations be affected by increased military expenditure?

In response, authors of the document „The human security case for rebalancing military expenditure" argued that *„savings from military expenditure reductions could make an important contribution to the rising need to meet challenges such as extreme*

poverty and climate change, but threats and risks to human security cannot be met by reallocating funds from military spending alone. However, the goal of that paper was not showing that reductions in military expenditure can help improve all dimensions of security, but attempt to initiate discussions on opportunities for further, wide-reaching reductions of global military expenditure in the future and rebalancing security spending.“ (Brzoska – Omitoogun – Skons, 29)

CONCLUSION

The reasons why governments put forward to justify the levels of their military expenditure are often based on concern about military threats to their states and peoples. This can also be applied to Japan case. Yet a large and increasing number of the threats facing people and states across the world are not military in nature. Extreme poverty, persisting hunger, natural disasters, political and criminal violence, the consequences of armed conflict, climate change and other environmental changes cannot be addressed by military means. These are still threats to security of people but also that of states, communities and societies.

Undoubtly, Japan still needs to be considered as a significant and key actor in international politics due to its role as a leading provider of overseas foreign aid. The standard of human security implies a reconsideration of spending on the military in view of the demands of non-military risks and threats. But concerns, that are based on a traditional understanding of security that focuses on the protection of territory and the state order, must be taken seriously, too. So in my opinion, following recent events, it is necessary for Japan to link the objective of effective spending military expenditure to border security assessments. Only then it will be possible to find a balance between the resources spent on military and human security.

REFERENCES

AKIYAMA, N. (2004). Human Security at the Crossroad: Human Security in the Japanese Foreign Policy Context, in Hideaki Shinoda and Ho-Won Jeong, eds., Conflict and Human Security: A Search for New Approaches of Peace-building, IPSHU English Research Report Series No. 19 (Hiroshima: Hiroshima University, Institute for Peace Science).

BOSOLD, D. – WERTHES, S. (2005). Human Security in Practice: Canadian and Japanese Experiences (IPG I).

BRZOSKA, M. – OMITOOGUN, W. – SKONS, E. (2022). The Human Security Case for Rebalancing Military Expenditure. Stockholm International Peace Research Institute.

BUZAN, B. – HANSEN, L. (2009), The Evolution of International Security Studies (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

EDSTROM, B. (2011). Japan and Human Security: The Derailing of a Foreign Policy Vision. Institute for Security and Development Policy. ISBN: 978-91-86635-07-7. pp. 7-8.

HAMA, H. (2017). State Security, Societal Security, and Human Security. Jadavpur Journal of International Relations. 21. DOI: 10.1177/0973598417706591.

HUMAN SECURITY HANDBOOK. Jan. 2016. See [https://www.un.org/humansecurity/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/HS-Handook_rev-2015.pdf]

KALDOR, M. – RANGELOV, I. (2023). Human security in future military operations. In: Routledge Hadbook of the future of Warfare. Taylor and Francis Inc., ISBN: 9781032288901. pp. 41-51.

KALDOR, M. (2023). Paradox of human security. See [https://www.gcsp.ch/publications/paradox-human-security] accessed September 21, 2023

Norway´s National Action Plan: Women, peace and security (2023-2030). See [https://www.regjeringen.no/contentassets/a2aec6a0bf874885a1f78eb5d9674339/en-gb/pdfs/women-peace-and-security.pdf]

ROLAND, P. (2001) Human Security: Paradigm Shift or Hot Air?, International Security, 26(2): 87-102.

United Nations Development Programme. 2022. 2022 Special Report on Human Security. New York.

United Nations Development Programme. Human Development Report 1994 (Oxford University Press 1994), p. 24-25.

Petra Martaus

Ministry of Defence of the Slovak republic

0960 303 141

petra.martaus@mod.gov.sk