



## HUMAN SECURITY: DIMENSIONS AND POTENTIAL THREATS

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### ABSTRACT

*The concept of Security experienced transformation in the scenery of security threats. There is a shift of focus from traditional to modern aspects of security. The 1994 Human Development Report highlighted different dimensions of human security and these different dimensions have potential threats to the life of human beings- Violent, hunger, discrimination, poverty, unemployment, political repression, human rights violation, etc. So there is a need for change in the focus from the military perspective of state security to a novel perception of the security for human beings or the individual. It is significant to find out the reason for such kind of threat and the implementation for such threat to human security.*

**Keywords:** Human Security, Different dimensions of human security, United Nations Development Programme, Threat.

### Introduction

The concept of human security is so vague and it is hard to have a uniform definition, however, the simplest explanation of security can be described as the nonexistence of threats and that security of the individual is ensured. It means to be free from all kinds of physical or mental exploitation, violence, harassment, or death which can simply be called freedom from fear. Besides, free from hunger, unsafe food, unemployment, lack of basic necessities of life, etc. can be referred to as freedom from

want. In a nutshell, human security refers to “freedom from fear and freedom from want” (World Summit, 2005). Thus, the concept deals with the ability to discover threats or possible threats and find a feasible way to avoid such threats to diminish their effects to a large extent. The concept signifies that the main purpose of security policy is to secure human lives both internationally and nationwide. It emerged with the rising disappointment with the state-centred notion of security which tries to understand the vulnerabilities of human being in a modern

world with military interventions as an adequate response to them (Bajpay, 2003). As Mary Kaldor mentions in the opening of her volume *Human Security*, “human vulnerability is omnipresent, endangered by ‘new wars’ where the states are no more actors, and do not trail the convention of conduct of ‘old wars’, and cannot be achieved by the way of old wars. In addition, these new wars are entangled with other global threats such as disease, natural calamity, joblessness, and homelessness” (Kaldor, 2007).

### **The Concept of Human Security**

The notion of human security is not a novel perception as the concept itself can be traced back to the 1990`s post-Cold War era for the intention of peacebuilding by the United Nations Development Programme. Some authors like Bindenagel Šehović (Reimagining State and Human Security Beyond Borders), Shahrbanou Tadjbakhsh (Human Security: Concepts and Implications with an Application to Post-Intervention Challenges in Afghanistan) etc even drawback to the 1648`s Treaty of Westphalia that stopped the Thirty Years' War and millions of people lost their lives its outcome resulted in sovereignty, freedom, and individuals should be allowed to practice their choice of economic interest, etc which relates to the nature and concept of human security thought the term itself is not yet mentioned. In 1992, Secretary-General of the United Nations Boutros Boutros-Ghali issued ‘An Agenda for Peace, Peacemaking, and Peace-keeping’ in which he analyses and recommends strengthening the capacity of the United

Nations to be more effective for preventive international relations, peace-making, and peacekeeping (Boutros-Ghali, 1992). However, the concept was openly mentioned in the United Nations Development Programme in 1994 (Human Development Report) as a “New Dimension of Human Security”. Thus, the human security concept evolves as an element of the multidisciplinary or people-centred theory of human development advanced by Pakistani economist and former Finance Minister Mahbulul Haq, supported by Amartya Sen at the United Nations Development Programme. Moreover, UNDP’s Human Development Report of 1994 was the foremost main worldwide document to articulate the concept of human security in terms of proposing policy and action (Jolly, 2006).

The 1994`s human Development Report declared that the idea 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 a nuclear holocaust. It has been related more to nation-states than to people. Then, this narrow approach was positively widened to comprise the security of individuals and groups against security threats such as hunger, poverty, disease, and political insecurity; and safeguard from “sudden and hurtful disruptions in patterns of daily life” (UNDP, 1994). The Human Development Report “further identifies seven core dimensions that—when addressed together—reflect the basic needs of human security: economic security, food security, health security, environmental

security, personal security, community security, and political security” (UNDP, 1994).

**Economic Security**

It needs to guarantee basic income, and job security and remove poverty. It signifies that a person is free to choose his job interest and gets his basic income. Globally, many people feel insecure because jobs are scarce and therefore it is not easy to find and keep. The developing countries, as well as advanced countries, face this experience. There is a gradual increase in unemployment in the world in the last twenty years. Though the number fluctuates in some consecutive years, there is a rapid increase in unemployment probably due to the outbreak of the covid-19 pandemic.

**Table 1: Number of unemployment in a particular year**

Year	No of the unemployed in the world in millions
1992	119.6
1994	137.79
2003	179.77
2007	164.74
2009	188.76
2010	187.8
2019	187.37
2020	220.28
2021	220.47

*Source: O’Neill, 2021*

There were 114.36 million unemployed in 1991, 137.79 million in 1994 (Statista, 2021). The number of unemployed persons increases by a huge number between 1991 and 1992. On the other hand, there was a decline in unemployed number in 2007 with 164.7 million from 167.77 million in

2003. However, “between 2019 and 2020, the global number of unemployed people increased from 187.3 million to 220.3 million, the largest annual increase in the number of being without a job. In 2021, the number of unemployed people increased somewhat to almost 220.5 million, although, it is likely to fall to 205 million in 2022” (O’Neill, 2021).

**Table 2: Top ten countries with the highest and lowest employment rate**

Lowest unemployment rate (Top ten countries)		Highest unemployment rate (Top ten countries)	
1	Cambodia (0.30%)	1	Burkina Faso (77.00%)
2	Qatar (0.60%)	2	Syria (50.00%)
3	Thailand (0.70%)	3	Senegal (48.00%)
4	Belarus (1.0%)	4	Haiti (40.60%)
5	Benin (1.0%)	5	Kenya (40.00%)
6	Gibraltar (1.0%)	6	Djibouti (40.00%)
7	Tonga (1.1%)	7	Republic of the Congo (36.00%)
8	Isle of Man (1.1%)	8	Marshall Islands (36.00%)
9	Laos (1.5%)	9	Namibia (34.00%)
10	United Arab Emirates (1.60%)	10	Kiribati (30.60%)

*Source: World Population Review, 2021*

As per the International Labor Organization's report, “many of the 3.3 billion people employed all over the world are working under deprived conditions, and that do not offer economic security, decent work opportunities, and lack of material well-being. This implies a low unemployment rate doesn't necessarily signify that employed people are living in favourable and sustainable conditions” (World Population Review, 2021). Unemployment and Poverty are one of the chief motives of economic insecurity. Unemployment leads to poverty and

hampered the development of a nation. Thus the need for a systematic and comprehensive framework for economic security is needed.

### Food Security

It implies that all human beings must be ensured to get daily necessities of food for their survival. However, this further implies that individuals have ready access to food and have an "entitlement" to food, through their labour, their sweats, by buying it, and by enchanting assistance of a public food distribution system. Therefore, food accessibility is an indispensable state of security however not a satisfactory one. No hunger-free among the people even though sufficient food availability is sufficient as experienced in the past for the reason of the poor system of food distribution and shortage of purchasing power. Thus, hunger, famine, etc. are the main threats to food security.

**Table 3: “Food Security Index”. (Global Food Security Index, 2021)**

2021 Food Security Score (Countries Performance)						
Global ranking	Country	Overall score	Affordability	Availability	Quality and Safety	Natural Resources and Resilience
1st	Ireland	84	92.9	75.1	94	74.1
2nd	Austria	81.3	90.5	75.2	91.2	65.7
3rd	United Kingdom	81	91.1	72.7	89.6	69
4th	Finland	80.9	91.7	66.2	93.8	75.1
5th	Switzerland	80.4	89	76.9	86.4	65.1
6th	Netherlands	79.9	89.7	73.7	92.2	61.2
7th	Canada	79.8	87.6	77.7	94.5	54.4
8th	Japan	79.3	90	75.7	83.4	61.9
9th	France	79.1	90.3	67	92.1	67.5
9th	United States	79.1	88.7	71	94.3	61.3
71st	India	57.2	50.2	65.7	59.1	52.8
104th	Sierra Leone	38.1	34.1	32.1	36.8	58
105th	Zambia	38	29	40.4	42	46.4
106th	Haiti	37.8	27.8	40.2	44.2	45.2
106th	Syria	37.8	34	30.1	53.2	43.3

*Source: Global Food Security Index, 2021*

From the above table (Table 3), it can be seen that the top countries with high-

income nations who score higher are from Europe to lead the index with “Ireland getting the top spot, scoring 84 (all GFSI scores are marked out of 100). However, African nations mark their place at the bottom ten spots on the index, with lowest-scorer Burundi’s achieved 34.67 only, 43% that of Ireland”(Global Food Security Index, 2021). And as per the Global Hunger Index, the African nations are the most affected in terms of hunger and poverty, and Somalia the most hungry country is designated as extremely alarming. 47 countries in the world are designated with extremely alarming, alarming, or serious levels of hunger. From African nations, the 4 countries provisionally designated as *alarming* - Burundi, Comoros, South Sudan, and Syrian in terms of global hunger which means that the countries are facing a threat to food security (Global Hunger Index).

### Health Security

Health is a vital constituent of individual welfare and human development which is ever more acknowledged on the international stage. It represents fundamental growth when people are to take in the most favourable quality of life. Moreover, the well-being and progress of the individual are hard to accomplish when people are not adequately sheltered against insecurity. Human security, health security, and human rights are hence closely interrelated (World Health Organisation Regional Office for The Eastern Mediterranean). Infectious diseases, unsafe food, undernourishment, and shortage of access to basic health care are the major threat to health security.

The main causes of death in developing and developed countries may vary from region to region. As per the Human Development Report of 1994, “the major causes of death such as infectious and parasitic diseases, acute respiratory infections, diarrhoeal diseases, and tuberculosis are prevalent in developing countries” (UNDP,1994). The main reason for this demise is related employing malnutrition and hazardous surroundings particularly contaminated irrigation, which contributes to almost one billion cases of diarrhoea a year. In developed countries, the main threats are diseases often related to diet and lifestyle. Subsequently, comes cancer, due to environmental causes in certain cases. In both developing and developed countries, the poorest are usually the most with health insecurity, particularly among predominantly children and in rural areas. Another increasing health security threat for both men and women is the spread of HIV and AIDS.

**Table 4: Global HIV/AIDS status**

No. of people in millions	Global HIV and AIDS Status
37.7	“People living with HIV in 2020 in the world (36.0 million adults & 1.7 million children (0–14 years)”
1.5	“People became newly infected with HIV in 2020”.
680,000	“People died from AIDS-related illnesses in 2020.”

*Source: UNAIDS, 2021*

Studies from the two countries of South Africa and England, “it is learnt that the risk of death from COVID-19 among persons with HIV/AIDS was twice that of

the common people. Sub-Saharan Africa is a place to two thirds (67%) of people who is infected with HIV. However the COVID-19 vaccines which can protect them are not received fast enough. In July 2021, only a lesser amount of 3% of African population were vaccinated at least a dose of a COVID-19 vaccine” (UNAIDS, 2021).

### **Environment Security**

The speedy reduction of natural resources, ensuing in the environment degradation and the shortage and mounting divergence over resources inside and among states, has led the environmental security, a growing concern throughout the world. At present it is extensively acknowledged that environmental degradation and scarcity of resource create a threat to national security (Westing, 1986).

In developing countries, water is the main threat to environmental security. Certain countries in Africa suffer from shortage of water like Libya, Western Sahara, Yemen etc. but the baseline water stress indicator expose certain countries which face water stress. Singapore, Kuwait, Qatar, Palestine, United Arab Emirates etc score high in Baseline water stress which indicates that these countries have a threat to water supply (Statista). Accordingly, one of the foremost environmental security threats is water supply; however, Bhopal tragedy and Chernobyl are the more observable rapid environmental catastrophes. In recent years, several chronic "natural" catastrophes were aggravated by human beings. Moreover, deforestation has cause further powerful droughts and floods.

### Personal Security

The main threats of personal security includes “physical torture or physical violence from the state or from ethnic tension, , crime, street violence, rape, murder, domestic violence, child abuse, suicide, drug abuse and war etc” (UNDP,1994). Not only in the third world countries individuals life are threaten by these, but also in the developed countries as well.

**Table 5: Selected Countries and their Homicide rate and count**

Rank	Country	Homicide Rate	Homicide Count
1	El Salvador	52.02	3,340
2	Jamaica	43.85	1,287
3	Lesotho	43.56	897
4	Honduras	38.93	3,732
8	South Africa	36.40	21,036
48	Russia	8.21	11,964
76	United States of America	4.96	16,214
95	India	3.08	41,651
111	Bangladesh	2.37	3,830
157	United Kingdom	1.20	809

*Source: World Population Review*

While the most protected in whichever society ought to be children, however, they are the victim to many abuses. By 2019, 72.9% of children died from child ill-treatment and 44.4 children who died suffer from physical abuse, 7.8 died due to medical negligence, and 0.9% died because of sexual abuse case (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2021). So, strict adherence to rule of law deed to be ensured and protection of

civil liberties and human rights should be enforced.

### Community Security

It refers to protection of languages, traditional and cultures, and community values. It also safeguard ethnic discrimination, ethnic conflicts, and protect indigenous people. Therefore identity based tensions; suspicions in inter-ethnic, religious war etc are a threat to community security. Individuals seek security not from themselves, but from their family or as a member of the family, a community or from certain organisation, ethnic group which will offer a cultural distinctiveness and a comforting set of values. At the same time traditional communities may also continue vindictive tradition: employment of bonded labour and then enslaves them and assisting women brutally. According to Human Development Report, in African continent, thousands of girls go through genital injury every year as a result of the practice of female circumcision which they consider it as their tradition. However, some of the traditional practices in the region are breaking down due to gradual progress of modernisation. The families are no longer supportive to such kind of distress to women in the name of their tradition. Moreover, numerous unkind practices are being encounter and fought by certain organizations by legal action (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2021).

Ethno-religious clash (the Rohingya issue) in Rakhine State, Myanmar, commonly acknowledged as Arakan, arises among the Burmese people themselves between the Buddhist and the Muslim,

Buddhist are in majority while Rohingya Muslim are a minor group. The clash between the two religious group has intensify since 2016 – with terrible consequences in the field of politics. As per the report from the media and due to the murder of nine police officers at the Bangladesh border in October 2016, resulted in the death of about 130 people for penalizing measures (Kreibich et al., 2016) By means of satellite images as evidence, about 1,500 buildings were burned to the ground as Human Rights Watch claimed (Human Rights Watch, 2016). From the report of the United Nations, because of the fighting more than 70,000 stateless Rohingya have fled to Bangladesh where they are presently stranded (UNHCR, 2017). “Investigations carried out by the United Nations indicate violence committed by the Myanmar forces incorporated indiscriminate killings, such as killing of children, imposed disappearance, gang rape and such other forms of sexual violence, torture, and devastation of material goods including food sources” (OHCHR, 2017). From the above hostile events, certain threats like repressive customary practices, unkind behaviour concerning women, or discrimination against either ethnic or indigenous or refugee groups must be protected and security from such threat should be ensured.

### **Political Security**

It signifies the hindrance of government suppression, organized violation of human rights and a form of military threats. It thus established an agenda so as to protect people against states that continued to practice political repression, systematic

torture, maltreatment and disappearance (Hassan, 2015). The Human Development Report pointed out, “One of the most important aspects of human security is that people should be able to live in a society that honours their basic human rights” (UNDP, 1994). From the United Nations News on Global Perspective Human Stories, “Michelle Bachelet while speaking at Human Rights Council’s 47th session, reiterated that the condition in the country (Myanmar) has developed from a political crisis to a “multi-dimensional human rights catastrophe”. Since the military coup, almost 900 people have lost their lives and at the same time around 200,000 people have been forced to flee from their native homes because of violent military assaults on the villages and its neighbourhood” (United Nations News). Though the situation is very hard to resolve, the United Nations must act to remove military coup and switch to democracy so that there will be political freedom and the people can make a choice of their own leaders who could govern the country. The need for UN intervention is not only for Myanmar, but also in a place where there is such kind of political insecurity or a threat to it. In such case, according to the report of the United Nation Development Programme, the most useful indicators of political insecurity in a country is the government concurrence or its main concern- that is military force and since governments often use military power to hold back their own people. So, when the military establishment is the primary referent of the government than its people, there is disproportion in social expenses and

the military expenditure ratio which indicates a threat to human security.

**Conclusion**

The concept of human security is a people-centered which gives primacy to the individual rather than the state. It considers certain conditions which threaten the life of human being such as necessities of life and nobility, and make out the doorstep beneath where humanity is threatened intolerably. It is also considered as a multi-dimensional perceptive of insecurities and require a larger perspective of its intimidation and its reasons of insecurity relating to economic, food, health, environmental, personal, community and political security.

**Table 6: Human Security Dimensions and their potential threat**

<b>Different Dimensions of human security and its potential threat</b>	
<b>Types of Security</b>	<b>Example of Main Threats</b>
Economic Security	Unemployment, persistent poverty
Food Security	Famine, Starvation
Heath Security	Lack of basic health care facilities, deadly communicable diseases, insecure food, undernourishment,
Environment Security	Environmental deprivation, resources reduction, natural disaster, toxic waste
Personal Security	Physical brutality, misdemeanour, terrorism, domestic violence, child labour
Community Security	Religious and other identity-based tensions, inter-ethnic
Political Security	Human rights abuse, political repression

*Source: Based on the UNDP Human Development Report of 1994 and the HSU-OCHA*

Further, human security is interconnected with the implication that a threat to one dimension leads to other threat, for example, a threat to food security can lead to economic insecurity which can further lead a threat to health security etc. Moreover, the implementing agency can also be a threat to insecurity in a way that human security could not encounter separately, rather it needs a comprehensive approach. “With human security [as] the objective, there must be a stronger and more integrated response from communities and states around the globe” (Commission on Human Security, 2003). Therefore, providing a practical framework to identify various security threat and encouraging neighbourhood, locality, and from domestic to international agencies and multilateral cooperation will be effective ways to encounter threats to human security. Further, empowerment of the pretentious communities to handle with the acknowledged threats and to reinforce its flexibility and choices is significant in order to protect themselves and those of the others.

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