

## HD INSIGHTS

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17



### **Human Security**

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“Human Security is not a concern with weapons – it is a concern with human life and dignity.”  
UNDP 1994 HDR

#### **What is Human Security?**

Much in the same way that Amartya Sen introduced ethics into economics, Mahbub ul Haq and his team, in the 1994 *Human Development Report* (HDR), posited that “security”, until then associated with the prerogative of states in realist international relations and political science theories, should be seen from the point of view of people. The best way to achieve security (both at the global, national and societal levels) is to increase that of people.

In the 1994 HDR, Human Security was broadly defined as “freedom from fear and freedom from want” and characterized as “safety from chronic threats such as hunger, disease, and repression as well as protection from sudden and harmful disruptions in the patterns of daily life – whether in homes, in jobs or in communities” (UNDP, 1994). The Report outlined the four basic characteristics of Human Security as being universal, interdependent in its components, people-centered, and best ensured through prevention.

Since then, a healthy debate has been raging both in academia and in policy circles around definitions of Human Security. Some focus on a narrow definition of “freedom from fear” that concentrates on physical violence and threats, while add to the “fear” debate “freedom from want” and “freedom to live in dignity”. For example, the Commission on Human Security proposed the most expansive and maximalist definition of Human Security around “vital core of all human lives” in its *Human Security Now* report of 2003.

Interest in Human Security has been pursued in at least two different fields:

- When discussed in the context of *international or national security*, Human Security is juxtaposed with state-centered paradigms of security by proposing a people-centered answer to the questions of whose security (that of people in addition to states), security from what (from non-traditional sources, direct and indirect sources of violence, including structural violence) and security by what means (through development and human rights intervention, in addition to policing and military).
- When discussed in the context of *development*, Human Security refers to the assurance that the process and outcome of development is risk-free. It draws attention not just to levels of

achievement, but to securing gains made by deliberately focusing on “downside risks”, such as conflicts, wars, economic fluctuations, natural disasters, extreme impoverishment, environmental pollution, ill health, and other menaces. It is, therefore, similar to Human Development, both an objective (a destiny) and a methodology (the road to get to the ultimate end).

Human Security and Human Development however have traveled different paths:

- For one, Human Security has become more of a political tool than the Human Development approach. Some states, such as Canada (until last year, when a change of government reversed this decision) and Japan adopted the concept officially as their foreign policy objectives, albeit with different definitions. Japan has created the largest trust fund in the history of the United Nations to fund Human Security projects. Regional organizations such as the European Union, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and the Arab League have also engaged with the concept, each adopting it to their own normative interests. The term is being used increasingly in documents of international organizations in the context of peace building, conflict prevention, and international interventions in the name of “Responsibility to Protect”.
- At the same time, however, unlike Human Development, one definition of Human Security has not been accepted globally yet. The United Nations, in its 2005 Summit Outcome Document, claimed that the general assembly will “soon” debate and define the concept of Human Security.

### What is the relationship between Human Development and Human Security?

If Human Development is about people and expanding their choices to lead lives they value, Human Security recognizes the conditions that menace survival, the continuation of daily life and the dignity of human beings. It refers to the guarantor of the continuation of Human Development, its prerequisite, as well as a prioritization of its most urgent variables.

	<b>Human Development</b>	<b>Human Security</b>
<b>Essence of definitions</b>	Widening the range of human choices, whether economic, social, cultural or political (Mahbub UI Haq). Enlarging people’s freedoms as the means and the end of development (Amartya Sen)	Enabling people to exercise choices safely and freely, while also guaranteeing that the opportunities brought today by development will not be lost tomorrow (UNDP 2004). Freedom from fear, freedom from want and a life of dignity.
<b>Values</b>	Well-being.	Security, stability, sustainability of development gains
<b>Orientation</b>	Moves forward, is progressive and aggregate: “Together we rise”	Looks at who was left behind at the individual level: “Divided we fall”
<b>Time-scan</b>	Long term	Combines short-term measures to deal with risks with long term prevention efforts.
<b>General objectives</b>	Growth with equity. Expanding the choices and opportunities of people to lead lives they value.	“Insuring” downturns with security. Identification of risks, prevention to avoid them through dealing with root causes, preparation to mitigate them, and cushioning when disaster strikes.
<b>Policy goals</b>	Empowerment, sustainability, equity and productivity.	Protection and promotion of human survival (freedom from fear), daily life (freedom from want), and the avoidance of indignities (life of dignity).

### What are the sources of human insecurity?

The 1994 UNDP Report distinguished between two sets of threats: First it identified more localized

threats, which were particular to different societies or regions of the world. The Report listed seven “components” or seven specific values of Human Security that needed to be protected: *Economic, food, health, environmental, personal, community and political security*. Second, the HDR identified threats that were global in nature because they could rapidly spill beyond national frontiers. These included all sorts of trans-national threats.

The Commission on Human Security (2003) on the other hand, preferred not to make a list of threats, leaving them to the specificity of the context. This approach is both intellectually, policy-wise, and ethically preferably, since it is not possible to deduce that the threats to Human Security are the same for people everywhere.

### **How do we measure Human Security?**

Unlike the Human Development Index which chose the most basic, universal and quantifiable variables within the Human Development approach to create a universal index; measurements of Human Security so far have come against considerable difficulties. This challenge is related to four inter-related areas:

- The lack of consensus on one definition. Those proponents of a narrow approach would prefer to establish a threshold at critical levels (such as death, extreme violence, life threatening injury, etc). Proponents of the broad approach would want to include indicators of underdevelopment and human rights in the index.
- Even for those who would prefer to limit the definition of Human Security to the narrow approach, data on death, injury and violence are usually very hard to come by.
- If Human Security is context specific, it should engage with qualitative indicators that bring out perceptions of insecurity or risk in addition to quantitative ones. Not only are these two difficult to tally up together, one could also argue that subjective perceptions, real as they may be for people, are difficult to aggregate.
- Absolute thresholds would also not do justice to the idea of Human Security as a universal concept, applicable both to people in industrialized societies as well as to those of living in developing countries. Such thresholds would undoubtedly fail to recognize human insecurities in situations of relative stability/wealth.

These challenges do not mean that measuring Human Security is a futile exercise. On the contrary. To become a malleable concept, especially for policy makers, there must be a way to recognize it and measure it. If the construction of a Human Security Index may be a futile and utopian, and perhaps even faulty, exercise, measuring human insecurities/security through different indicators should be attempted, bearing in mind that these need to be context-specific and include both qualitative and quantitative indicators.

### **What are the implications for policy and programming?**

Human Security, ultimately, is a redefinition of traditional understandings of security and development to a positive state of being and feeling “secure” for everyone in their every day lives. It requires policies that protect, empower and provide personal safety, well-being and individual freedom. These policies should be based around the following principles:

- *People-centered*, meaning they take into account the needs of people (as objects) as well as their contributions and aspirations (as subjects/agents).
- *Holistic*: The recognition that the means to guarantee security can no longer be through military and policing power, but also and especially through favourable social, political and economic conditions. This is especially true for example for conflict situations where military responses often fail to address genuine grievances that instigate violence in the first place.
- *Inter-sectoral*: The recognition of inter-linkages between development, security and human rights requires multi-sectoral and better even, inter-sectoral solutions that address together root causes of

problems and externalities of interventions. For post-conflict countries, for example, it requires an integrated peace-building architecture linking military, political, economic and social strategies together.

- *Context specific*, which requires in-depth knowledge of the situation at hand. This position is decidedly more difficult to implement for policy makers who are eager to look for priorities for their attention and budgeting, but it is a more sustainable, if not ethical, approach to dealing with real problems.
- *Preventive*: Ultimately, the most effective, but difficult, policies are those that develop and integrate preventive measures, both to avoid conflicts, and to prepare for downturns.

### Some General Sources

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2. Commission on Human Security, *Human Security Now: Final Report*, New York, 2003. <http://www.humansecurity-chs.org/finalreport/index.html>
3. Sen, Amartya. "Why Human Security?", presentation at the International Symposium on Human Security, Tokyo (July 2000) <http://www.humansecurity-chs.org/activities/outreach/Sen2000.pdf>
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5. UNDP, "*Human Development Report 1994 – New Dimensions of Human Security*", New York, Oxford University Press, 1994. <http://hdr.undp.org/en/reports/global/hdr1994/>
6. See the UNESCO series of regional publications on Human Security in different parts of the world
  - Arab States <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0014/001405/140513e.pdf>
  - Latin America and the Caribbean <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0013/001389/138940e.pdf>
  - Eastern Europe [http://www.peacecenter.sciences-po.fr/pdf/UNESCO\\_Tadjbakhsh\\_Tomescu-Hatto.pdf](http://www.peacecenter.sciences-po.fr/pdf/UNESCO_Tadjbakhsh_Tomescu-Hatto.pdf)
  - Western Europe [http://www.prio.no/files/file49869\\_burgess\\_et\\_al\\_promoting\\_human\\_security\\_in\\_western\\_europe.pdf](http://www.prio.no/files/file49869_burgess_et_al_promoting_human_security_in_western_europe.pdf)
  - Central Asia <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0014/001493/149376e.pdf>
  - East Asia <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0013/001388/138892e.pdf>

### Portals on Human Security

7. Academic & practical work in the field of peace studies and Human Security, and available training in Human Security at [www.peacecenter.sciences-po.fr](http://www.peacecenter.sciences-po.fr)
8. Digital Library on Human Security prepared by the United Nations Trust Fund on Human Security, OCHA <http://ochaonline.un.org/DigitalLibrary/RegionalPerspectives/tabid/2226/Default.aspx>
9. Human Security Gateway <http://www.humansecuritygateway.info/>

### Selective NHDRs on Human Security

1. Afghanistan 2004 NHDR <http://www.cphd.af/nhdr/nhdr04/nhdr04.html>
2. Latvia 2003 NHDR <http://hdr.undp.org/en/reports/nationalreports/europethesis/latvia/name,3194,en.html>
3. Philippine 2005 NHDR [http://www.hdn.org.ph/files/2005\\_PHDR.pdf](http://www.hdn.org.ph/files/2005_PHDR.pdf)

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