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Security and development through human lenses: Beyond the realist theoretical tenets 'a holistic approach'

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Abstract:

The rapid transformations in international relations since the end of the Cold War and in recent decades revealed a fundamental shift in security studies, as it is one of the most prominent branches of research in this field of knowledge, namely to focus on the individual in his needs, security and environment, instead of the state and its traditional powers and authority, especially under the influence of Globalization and the technology revolution, which resulted in social, economic and environmental challenges that require dealing with everything threatening societies and individuals in particular, under the slogan of the individual first. The dimensions of the new security studies in light of this transformation, i.e. critical and human, tended to consider emancipation and empowerment as essentially core principles to serve the issue of new security, based on the sacred relationship between security and development, which goes beyond the classical thinking about power, security and interest in realist theory.

Keywords: Human security; Emancipation; New Security; Traditional security; Global politics

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INTRODUCTION

It is widely assumed in the literature of security studies and international relations, theoretically and conceptually speaking, that states, individuals, communities and other entities can enjoy peace and security once states, as main actors according to realist tradition, build more power and maximize it at the expense of others, with which it is in constant interaction, whether in times of peace or war. Furthermore, scholars of security studies highlight that the security concept itself has undergone a qualitative change, since the map of international system continuously shifting from high politics to low politics thinking, with concomitant altering assumptions given by the main theories in this regard, namely realism, liberalism and post-positivist conceptions of the global politics that re-focus on the human dimensions of the security.

As the security concept is essentially evolving and epistemologically having new features compared with the traditional one, long shaped and portrayed by realists, scholars of political science do emphasize the interconnectedness between human first and the responsibility to protect in terms of new turn in security studies that prioritize individuals/communities as vulnerable to all forms of violence and conflict from states and non-states alike. Accordingly, any effort to build a developed and a stable state is necessary to be linked to human security approach based on the philosophy of emancipation, empowerment and sustainable development with centering, more than ever, on the balanced relationship between the state and the individuals.

Also, development in its newest form 'human and sustainable' is an inextricable part of the global security conceptualization process. Besides, nearly all charters of states and international organizations take a holistic view of the complex processes that affect human security and development. Besides, the UN experts tend to reiterate the obligations of peace and security around the world through this new approach of security, away from any narrow-minded vision; namely a reductionist view of how security shall be provided and tackle in the years to come.

In political sciences, students need to have a broader understanding on

how their world is evolving, amid serious challenges at various levels, not only militarily as it has been the case for years and decades, as stated by the new generation of researchers in international relations; famously called as post-positivist and globalists. Looking ahead, serious dialogue must then proceed with critical discussions on humanitarianism and security issues, to be followed by negotiations on political and economic matters; which means that humans need to be heard, cared and empowered, if peace around the globe is wanted to be lasting and comprehensive. Having in mind that the other "significant" side of human security is freedom from fear, despite all our differences and diversities, furthermore, this concept as widely given to an emerging paradigm which, in response to traditional emphasis on the right of nation states to protect themselves, has focused on the primacy of the security of people (individuals and communities).

Based on this logic of thinking, and in light of the theoretical richness included in the human security literature, we are invited to ponder the nexus between security of humans and its relation to the development, much sought by governments all around the world, and we ask the following research question:

How can we outline a sound and objective human security concept with focus on development as a presequite and a key pillar to reckon with in security studies and developmental thought in social sciences, in general?

To investigate this topic properly, our research paper will boil down to the following points:

- Human security: a new framework of analysis (theory revisited)
- Development as a cornerstone of the security: the inevitable nexus
- Emancipation and empowerment: a zone of confluence in human security field

1. Human security: a new framework of analysis (theory revisited)

International relations, as an arena of interactions across ages, show us a genuine transition from hard power logic, as realists go, with a long historical record of experiences of wars, conflicts, balances and counter-balances of power, to a soft interpretation of power, based on the writings of

idealists and liberalists later, due to the transformative international society itself since 1970s, especially when states stood challenged by other players and new concerns transcending the national borders, as famously referred to by human society approach scholars, like John Burton[1].

Nobody can deny the fact that tremendous change in the structure of international system, under globalization and technological revolution, has led scholars to forge a new thinking about the fate of statism "the centrality and primacy of the state" and military logic in interpreting international relation phenomena; rather, as the domestic affairs of nations gain interest in analysis "internal policymaking" the emergence of sub-state actors and groups, with theinternal explosion of ethnic and minority claims in post-soviet territories, did turn the attention of scholars (from States to Humans) to the individual as a unit of analysis[2], an actor and a new focus of attention in security studies, which had been long overwhelmed by traditional map of analysis of realists. . This later stills not enough to explain new insecurities, as focus is increasingly on the security of individuals, namely Human Security Approach[3].

It has been argued that international security can no longer be defined in terms of the relationship between states; rather, it should be viewed as a commitment to put human life, human dignity and human well-being of peoples first. And in the words of Heinbecker, "Human security is about the ability to protect people as well as to safeguard states"[4].

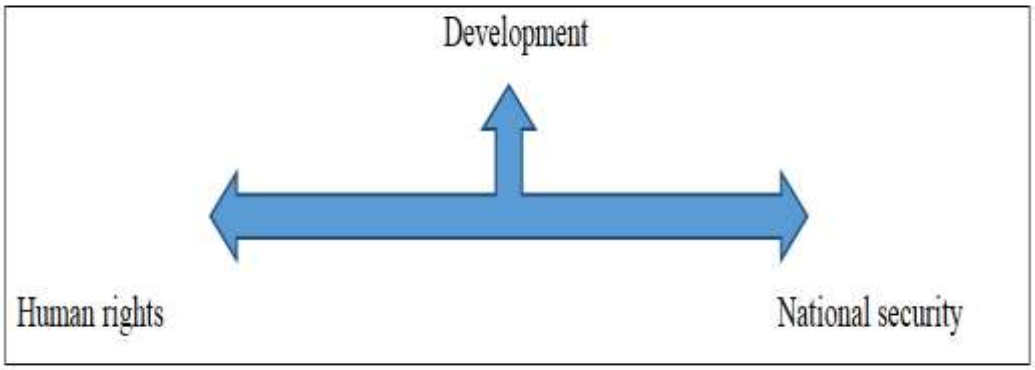
Human security, epistemologically speaking, in light of the changing theoretical approaches in world politics is the name of an emerging paradigm which, in response to traditional emphasis on the right of nation states to protect themselves, has focused on the primacy of the security of people "individuals and communities" because the main threats of the globe concern primarily the safety, security, prosperity and peace of peoples, minorities, communities worldwide.

With significant advancement in low politics topics (economy, trade, human rights, technology, environment) there is a paradigm shift in security

studies field, in view of the close relationship between security, as a central and controversial topic, and international relations, as a scholarly tradition of inquiry, like other social sciences, for security and peace, development and human rights are essential pillars in international relations.

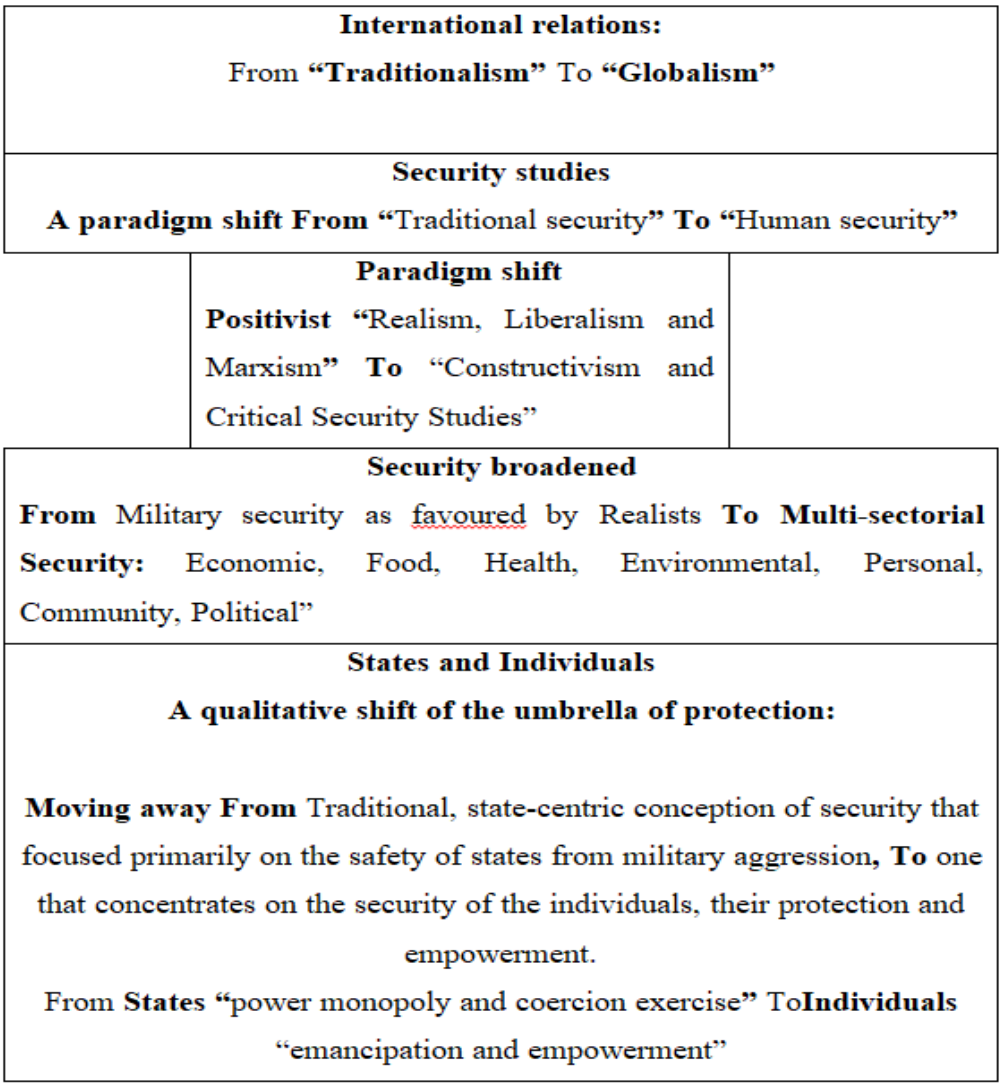
It is the most pressing issue in the world of globalization as human security threats cannot be tackled through conventional mechanisms alone. They require a new way linkage strategy; interdependence between development, human rights and national security.

Fig.1. **Dual-purpose concept of Development**



Source: Researcher's Design

Fig.2. **Development as interpreted theoretically and conceptually: closer look (Researcher summary)**



Source: Researcher's Design

Human security concept is mainly approached by constructivists, as they start ontologically from the idea that actors are shaped by the socio-cultural milieu in which they live. Accordingly, realists should not be a

priority in analysis, in this regard, the realities are no more understood through the traditional physical variables (widely used by materialist theories: realism, liberalism, Marxism) and these constructivists go beyond description to understand how actions made and what drive them. On the contrary, they should focus on norms and social structures as critical to the realization of human security[5].

2. Development as a cornerstone of the security: the inevitable nexus

Both scholars and practitioners of political sciences come to the conclusion, out of experience on the ground, that there can be no security without development, and vice versa. Assuredly, there can be no security without development, and human rights are difficult to promote and uphold in a situation where there is no political stability, as demonstrated by several cases in Africa, so it is an accepted norm that the philosophy of security, for several decades, is based on manifestations of human dignity that nobody can deny or ignore.

States and organizations, governmental and non-governmental do believe firmly in the fact that security (freedom of fear) and development (prosperity) are interlinked[6], as evidenced by the illustrative example that global inequality is a threat to global security, inseparable and mutually reinforcing and key to attaining sustainable peace around the world. In recent years, intensive research has been undertaken into the links between these two concepts, especially under the aegis of the United Nations which is the only world body with the mandate of addressing issues of security, development and human rights.

We can draw global attention to the concept of human security in the UNDP's Human Development Report 1994, as follows:

"For too long, the concept of security has been shaped by the potential for conflict between states. For too long, security has been equated with threats to a country's borders. For too long, nations have sought arms to protect their security. For most people today, a feeling of insecurity arises more from worries about daily life than from the dread of a cataclysmic

world event. Job security, income security, health security, environmental security, security from crime, these are the emerging concerns of human security all over the world"[7].

> *Security should no longer be defined solely in terms of 'freedom from fear' concerns, such as war-related violence, but should also recognize 'freedom from want' issues, such as poverty, underdevelopment and disease*[8].

For example, the challenging situation in the Maghreb/Sahel region needs a new mental map to deal with the ongoing vulnerabilities involving threats for both nations and peoples, thus, the magnitude of the threats to security in the countries of this subregion requires the adoption of initiatives that recognize the nexus between development and security in such countries.

Some connections could be put between development and security as demonstrated by the following:

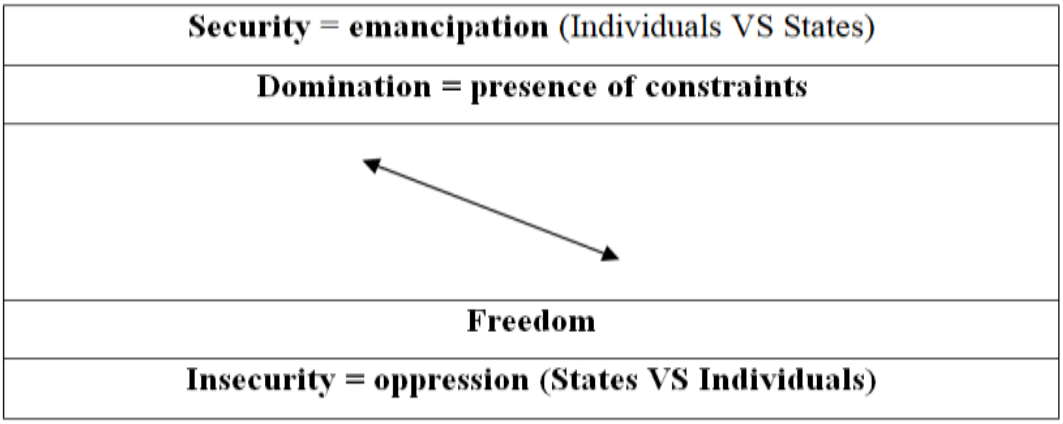
- The impact of security/insecurity on well-being and consequently development achievements. For example, democracy, by ensuring greater popular participation, also has a positive impact on development and on human security.
- The way insecurity affects elements of development and economic growth. For instance, human rights, once violated and disregarded throughout the world, create enormous suffering and affecting both security and development.
- The way development affects security. As economic and social inequalities may damage the political stability and the probability of the outbreak of conflicts remains high.
- Emancipation and empowerment: a zone of confluence in human security field

As there has been a battle of terms in the heart of the human security field, at actors and interactions levels, since the emphasis is ontologically placed on individuals as central to thinking conceptually about the human challenges on international relations; emancipation and empowerment can define the way to a more humanized world of states and beyond; based on the deep conviction that many topics surrounding our reality, like global climate worries, immigration and conflicts, water scarcity, gender and violence, religion and ethnicity, but are not limited to, deserve our attention more than ever, due to the constant changes in the structures and processes of the world today, under the influence of technology and globalization, which gave rise to the significance of Non-State entities.

Within Critical Security Studies CSS, **Emancipation** is understood as **a process of freeing the debate on the liberty of individuals and people in face of traditional power structures**, furthermore, it is regarded as key concept used to seek change in the traditional world politics, according to the theoretical contributions of Frankfurt school, Constructivism and Critical Security. Booth clarified the linkage between security and emancipation in the following way:

> "Security means the absence of threats. Emancipation is the freeing of people (as individuals and groups) from those physical and human constraints which stop them carrying out what would freely choose to do. War and the threat of war is one of those constraints, together with poverty, poor education, and political oppression and so on. **Security and emancipation are two sides of the same coin**. Emancipation, not power or order produces true security"[9]

Fig.3. **Security and emancipation: goal-oriented concept.**



Source: Researcher's Design based on several readings on the topic: Whatever Happened to the Frankfurt School in International Relations?[10]

One asks who the main actors in this new equation are? Evidently, individuals in different settings and origins need to be heard and given all rights and freedoms to thrive and live in peace and prosperity, especially against the backdrop of the worst past record of human rights violations, and With reference to new challenges posed to individuals as victims, global catastrophes; like natural disasters and internal conflicts affecting regional communities, furthermore Wars and natural disasters have a significant impact on the emergence/re-emergence of diseases in the population[11]. It is more than urgent to appeal to a new security conception, as mentioned before, relying on humans and their needs.

"*According to world bank estimation two billion people are living in poverty and fragility situations. Wars destroy health systems and infrastructure, curtail existing disease control programs, and cause population movement leading to an increase in exposure to health risks and favor the emergence of infectious diseases. A total of 432 catastrophic cases associated with natural disasters were recorded globally in 2021*" [12]

In this context, it is revealed that That, based on Global overview of countries/ territories with food crises, 2024–2025 that in 2024, more than 300,000 South Sudanese refugees returned home due to the ongoing conflict in Sudan, bringing the total number of returnees since April 2023 to approximately 686,000. These returnees are among the most vulnerable, with nearly 210,000 – three-quarters of the returnees included in the study – facing acute levels of food insecurity. A further 28,000 were in catastrophic situations, while another 98,000 were in a food emergency requiring urgent intervention[13].

To emancipate, means to remove or alleviate constraints upon the lives of individuals and groups, such as: poverty, diseases, lack of education, For the empowerment, it is about, first of all, a theoretical break with realist tradition; as security involving only military protection of state interests, while individuals who are long neglected as a referent object of analysis and emphasis, are directly challenged by the global security challenges, like cross-border terrorism, climate change and pandemics worldwide. In this regard, human security adherents are using the concept of empowerment specifically for humans who are suffering from all bad policies of nations, furthermore, the umbrella of protection shifted from states to peoples, as stated by globalists of international relations[14].

In this regard, the Canadian diplomat Rob McRae stated that the idea of human security takes the individual as the nexus of its concern, the life as lived, as the true lens through which we should view the political, economic, and social environment, at its most basic level, human security means freedom from fear[15].

As human security is closely linked to empowering people to live in peace, it is significant to emphasize empowerment, Lexically speaking, it can be viewed, based on the Gita Sen definition, as the process by which powerless individuals gain greater control over their life circumstances[16]. In light of the human security conceptualization, we can give an example about **women's economic empowerment**; which means being able to use their rights, capabilities, resources and opportunities to make strategic

choices and decisions. For example, access to finance and support for entrepreneurship have significantly contributed to women's economic empowerment. According to the World Bank, the Women Entrepreneurs Finance Initiative (We-Fi) has successfully provided $7.8 billion in financing to more than 600,000 women-led businesses in 81 countries[17]. While **women's political empowerment** means women's increased control over their lives both inside and outside the household so as to enable them to improve the institutions that shape their lives and to promote the building of stable lives in conflict-free societies. In this context, according to data from the Inter-Parliamentary Union, the percentage of female heads of national parliaments reached 26 %[18].

Fig.4. human security as empowerment (individuals emphasized)



Source: Researcher's Design

CONCLUSION

Building on the above analysis, it appears that, despite the importance of classical contribution of security studies, based on the work of realists, there has been a dire need to rethinking the security dilemma in this new age of global and trans-national challenges, since the world has evolved

rapidly under the constant influence of globalization and technology. Besides, scholars of this field of inquiry called Security Studies reiterate the main new variables that revolutionized our thinking, both conceptually and theoretically, over how security is provided, for whom and by which tools and strategies, taking into account the human side of the security equation, especially as the negative implications of state policies and strategies damaged individuals first.

According to the analysis this paper has made, there are some remarks that need to be emphasized, starting with the spectacular effect of the world order changes in the years and decades following the end of the cold war and the war on terror, on the conceptual philosophy of international relations in general, and the security studies, in particular, as the state finds itself no more central and sole in face of the trans-national and global factors of instability, in all its manifestations, added to the huge efforts undertaken by new political sciences thinkers who turn to reflexive approaches of human security, cosmopolitan politics and humanizing international relations in general.

As for the intertwined relationship between the variables of analysis in this paper, mainly, security, development and human security as a whole, tackling this issue is impossible without understanding the fact that there can be no security without development and no development without security, and without peace and security there can be no sustainable development. Also, recent empirical research has always shown how political instability adversely human development.

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