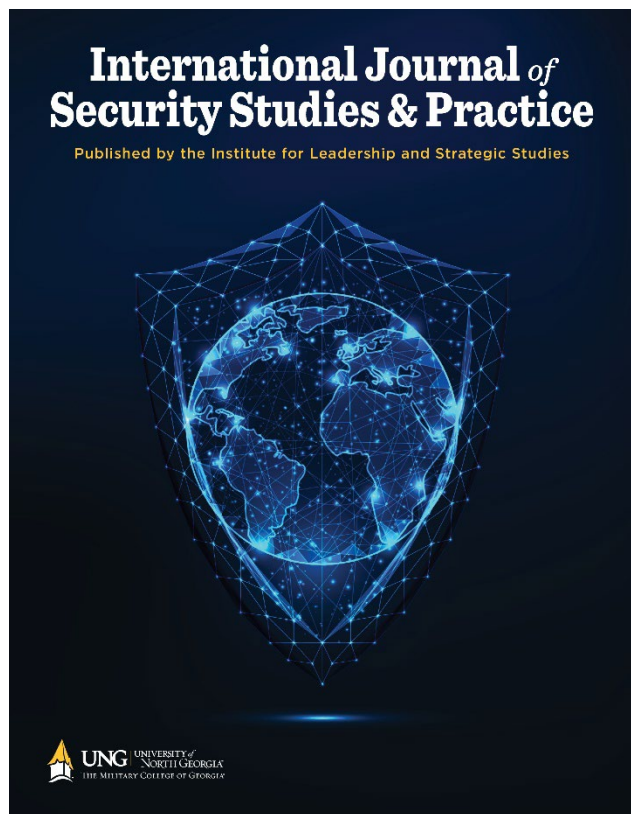


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Delineating Boundaries for Human Security Studies:

Evidence from Praxis and Curricula Analysis

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Contestation over the usefulness of the state-centric analysis of threats which pervaded the international security environment from the Westphalian period until the end of the Cold War has enabled reflections on the question of survival relating to both the State and its residents. At the core of this is the recognition that a focus on the state-centric conception of security, and by extension, threats to the State do not necessarily assure residents of security from pandemics, chronic poverty and many others largely perceived outside the scope of traditional security. To address the functional inadequacy of the state-centric security model, it has become critical to adapt to security discourse and usage, a complementary paradigm that looks beyond the State as the referent object of security to residents within states and the factors that threaten their survival. This trend has been mirrored by a rising consensus regarding the utility of assigning people "referent object" status. What has remained ambiguous, notwithstanding, is human security's boundaries. This obstructs efforts to establish academic boundaries or some standard curricula for human security studies. The ensuing variations in current programs imply that human security lacks limitations or, at the very least, has broadly acceptable boundaries. For a concept that was once described as "imprecise" and "vague" (Paris, 2001, p.88), such challenges with academic boundaries may jeopardize the integrity of human security studies as a sub-discipline in security studies.

The study analysed the synopsis of randomly-selected human security training and academic programmes from around the world, including Aarhus University's Master of Science (MSC) in Human Security, Bangladesh Ansar & VDP Academy's Master's in Human Security; Embry Riddle Aeronautical University's MSC in Human Security and Resilience; and the Institut Barcelona Estudis Internacionals and the Institute of Peace and Security Studies (IPSS) Human Security and Development Programme. The rest

are Keene State College's Master of Arts (M.A.) in Genocide Prevention and Human Security; Royal Roads University's Master of Arts in Human Security and Peacebuilding; University of London's Artificial Intelligence and Human Security programme; The Fletcher Schools Human Security Programme; Tohoku University Graduate School of Environmental Studies' Human Security Programme; University of Baltimore's M.A. in Global Affairs and Human Security; University of Tokyo's Graduate Programme on Human Security (HSP); Universität Bonn/United Nations University Institute for Environment and Human Security's Master of Science in Geography of Environmental Risks and Human Security; and University of Southern California's Master of Science in Human Security and Geospatial Intelligence. Other programmes reviewed include the University of Pittsburgh's Graduate School of Public and International Affairs; the University of East London's M.A. in Conflict, Displacement and Human Security; the University of Bridgeport's Masters in Criminal Justice and Human Security; the University of Massachusetts, Boston, McCormack School of Policy and Global Studies' M.A. in Global Governance and Human Security; and the University of New Hampshire, Master of Global Conflict and Human Security. Consequent to the analysis, this original study deduced the factors influencing the content of human security curricula and the degree to which these indicate the boundaries of human security as an academic subject.

Relevance of Human Security as an Academic Field of Study

The relevance of human security as an academic field of endeavor is fundamentally tied to the utility of the concept within the context of security. A good starting point for appreciating this is the state-centric model of security, which accords referent status to states and hence views threats as primarily targeting states' geographical integrity and political independence. Under this model, the security of those residing within the State is predicated on the assumption that once the State is secure, so will those living therein.

The Westphalian system, which made it possible for States to take center stage as participants in the international system is the basis of the state-centric arrangement. Emerging from this, states working within the framework of the international system were recognized as sovereign and not subject to any norms or regulating authority to direct, sway, or force action. The implication of the resulting anarchy is that States

owe their survival to the pious operation of a self-help system that anticipates threats to the State and confronts the same. The threats so identified have to be belligerent in character to reasonably threaten the survival of the State. Assuring the security of states, therefore, necessitates a framework that is comparable to the nature of the threats. Attuquayefio (2012) identifies three security pillars established by this scenario. One, a State has primary responsibility for the security of its residents; two, threats are made towards the State rather than its residents and three, threats are belligerent in nature.

Evolutionary trends in the perception of security have challenged the dominance of the three pillars. Regarding the nature of threats, it has become prudent to consider issues that are hardly new yet endanger people's lives, such as diseases and poverty. As a result, the justification for giving belligerent threats priority status has become untenable. In December 2019, for instance, the outbreak of the Corona Virus Disease did not only elevate public health to an urgent global concern but also saw countries activating emergency measures akin to urgent security threats. So sweeping were these measures that three months after the virus was first reported, Aljazeera (2020) reported that 145 countries had restricted entry into their territories or had shut their borders entirely to limit the spread of the virus from countries that have been hardest hit. Relative to this is the contention overseeing states as primary referent objects of threats. This is based on the fact that some threats have a trans-territorial component, meaning they impact residents of states whether or not they are militarily secured. Apart from the obvious trans-territorial nature of pandemics, there are other socio-economic and political threats that often evade the tight margins of orthodox security arrangements. Cyber threats, for one, can evade military-style physical security measures modelled along conventional threat deterrents. This undermines the idea that when the State is protected, the citizens who live there must also be safeguarded, as per the state-centric security setup.

State's' utility in providing security to those who live within them has also come under scrutiny. It goes without saying that the State is legally obligated to protect its residents. However, in practice, the active state representatives of the executive, legislature, and judiciary have occasionally jeopardized the State's duty to protect. The threat posed by the *de jure* providers of security to the people they are supposed to protect thus the first aspect of this challenge. Historical examples include Rwanda, Liberia, and Bosnia

and Herzegovina, where state agents, rather than ensuring individual security, assaulted such security with impunity. Another source of the challenge to the State's capacity to provide security to residents comes from the seemingly burgeoning power of the sub-state, often militant or insurgent groups that contest the State's hegemony over the coercive use of force. Around the world, including in Africa, insurgent and terrorist groups, including Boko Haram and the Islamic State West Africa Province, have challenged the State's conventional monopoly over the coercive use of force by palpably matching State force in defined territorial spaces over specific periods.

To address the challenges posed to the traditional pillars of security, human security serves to address critical and pervasive threats to survival posed by both belligerent and non-belligerent factors. These can come from a range of fields, such as politics, agriculture, science, and the environment. While acknowledging the importance of the State in security discourse, human security also advocates referent status for individuals and communities within states. It also expands the actors capable of supporting the security of residents but still acknowledges the State's supremacy in protecting residents.

Although a good chunk of the factors, actors, and trends that define human security may be taken into account in a number of subfields, its inclusion as an academic subfield in security studies is arguably justified by the importance it accords to individuals, its affinity with development issues and the potential for "downgrading" security matters to rhetoric about development, as well as its implications for security policy-making and implementation.

Reviewing the Sources of Boundaries for Human Security Studies

The essential assumptions behind human security, as a notion that balances individual desires with state interests, are hardly novel. Regardless, it is admissible that human security lights up a human condition that would have been altogether suffocated beneath conventional frameworks guaranteed by state-centric security. That gleam in security reconceptualization commenced with the formation of the Independent Commission on Disarmament and Security Issues in the autumn of 1980. Similarly, the United Nations Development Programme (1993) in its Human Development Report (HDR) signaled a widening of threat perception to better reflect threats that directly affect people living within states. Building on studies about

threats to populations in some of the most deprived terrains around the world and highlighting the nexus between development and security, the United Nations Development Programme (1994) in its 1994 HDR reinforced the case for reconsidering security, especially on account of the reality of instances when the State could barely ensure the security of its territory let alone the people within the territory. The HDR, in this way, made express reference to human security.

There have been clear attempts since 1994 to research human security, and consequently, the establishment of Human Security Studies (HSS) as a subfield of security studies with a variety of courses, programs, and specializations. The variety and breadth of HSS's content have frequently suggested a lack of limitations or, at the very least, boundaries that are broadly flexible. However, an examination of curricula and practice reveals some factors that define boundaries.

Definitional History of Human Security

The definitional history of human security is one of the main sources of HSS content and, implicitly, HSS borders. This dates back to the UNDP 1994 HDR, which recognized the two key components of human security as safety from long-term risks like starvation, disease, and repression and against abrupt and harmful disturbances in routines of everyday life like in work, homes, or communities. Based on this idea, it recommended seven aspects of human security—economic, food, health, personal, community, and political. Economic Security represents the assurance of the economic well-being of households and individuals through income, remittances or assured hand-outs, often from a public finance system. National institutions are, therefore, central to the assurance of economic security. Food security colloquially relates to the availability of food quality and quantity wise, as well as the absence of structural factors that inhibit access to such food. Consideration of food security is also operationalized from a contextual point of view, particularly where food is tied to customs, traditions and usages of particular people. In this regard, issues bothering food systems and their resilience in a variety of settings are considered relevant for deliberations on food security. Health security refers to protection from the threat posed by illnesses and lifestyle choices that are typically harmful to people's well-being. On the global scale, the World Health Organisation (2023) describes public health security as activities across geographical regions and international boundaries to

reduce the danger and impact of acute public health events that endanger people's health. Human security also includes safety regarding the natural environment and its exploitation. In this context, environmental security refers to safeguards against environmental dangers. Personal security is also understood as the defence of individuals against physical harm or their empowerment in the face of such aggression. Further on the spectrum of human security, cultural values may be seen as essential to people's well-being, hence preventing threats to these beliefs and ways of life is seen as a sign of community security, whilst assurances provided for the safeguarding of fundamental human rights are seen as the hallmarks of political security.

UNDP's definition and the types it spawned are the most obvious contributors to the consideration of human security as a sub-discipline. The typologies, in particular, largely serve as base criteria for considering human security. As a result of the 1994 HDR, various definitions have been provided. According to the Commission for Human Security (2003)

human security means protecting the vital core of all human lives in ways that enhance human freedoms and human fulfillment. Human security means protecting people from critical (severe) and pervasive (widespread) threats and situations. It means using processes that build on people's strengths and aspirations. It means creating political, social, environmental, economic, military and cultural systems that together give people the building blocks of survival, livelihood and dignity.

(p.4)

The term vital core, as used by the Commission, refers to the prerequisite for survival and the assurance of such prerequisites.

Due to the inherent contrasts between state-centric and people-centred security models, definitional clarity has been one of the limiting factors for human security studies. It is the fundamental condition for designing a course on human security. In accordance with this, all the assessed course summaries highlighted human-centeredness as a major aspect of the curriculum. Other fundamental characteristics of human security include prevention and comprehensiveness. These were obvious in some of the course synopsis and strongly appeared to dictate the boundaries of human security studies. In their synopsis, the Fletcher School (2023), Institut Barcelona Estudis Internacionals (2023), Bangladesh Ansar & VDP

Academy (2023), Institute of Peace and Security Studies (2023), Embry Riddle Aeronautical University (2023), University of Pittsburg Keene State College (2023), The Fletcher School (2023) and the University of Bonn (2023) all pointed to the concept's defining characteristics.

Typology of Threats

The types of threats that are taken into account while considering human security serve as another source of HSS boundaries. Two broad classifications of threats to the vital core have emerged, namely the "narrow" and "wide" definitions. The narrow definition entails the absence of risks to individual safety, such as violence and other behaviours that put human life in danger. Its applicability, therefore, focuses on fending people against threats such as those posed by terrorism, violent extremism, trafficking in small arms and light weapons, and ethnic and political conflict. This classification also acknowledges the possibility that these violent threats are related to inequality, state incapacity, and poverty. By allowing for immediate intervention rather than long-term planning for sustainable development, the narrow designation is said to give a more practical and achievable approach to human security. The narrow designation frequently shows up in courses or programs like conflict studies, humanitarian emergencies, or peacebuilding in HSS curricula.

On the other hand, the broad definition of human security includes the freedom from want and the freedom to live in dignity. This approach views the reality of human security in light of the fact that, beyond the factors that pose a threat to violently disrupt lives, other less immediate and chaotic threats, such as political repression, drought, and hunger, have the potential to endanger the security of individuals. It was inspired by both the 1994 HDR and the CHS report. Owen (2004), for instance, negates the difference between deaths from floods, communicable diseases, or war, as all preventable harms could potentially become threats to human security. The broad categorization enlarges the boundaries to cover development and security objectives within the context of HSS. It consequently permits content that touches on topics including food, culture, the environment, and health, among others. The threat bracket is effectively opened up to what would initially appear to be every security or development threat but actually depends on a threshold set by what is critical and pervasive. As a result, the long list of dangers to human security that

impedes the concept's analytical integrity is significantly reduced. In establishing content, the sample reveals a number of threats, including civil wars and human trafficking, genocide, gender-based violence, human trafficking, forced migration, environmental risks, displacement and genocide that are considered detrimental to the security of individuals and communities. Beyond dictating the content of the course, they also provide an indication of the boundaries of the respective courses.

Interdisciplinary/Multidisciplinary Appeal

A key element of the human security approach is comprehensiveness. The human security ethos thus includes opening up to a wide array of fields and subfields while retaining the fundamental focus on individuals and groups. Thus, a variety of academic fields conjoined to human security provides additional boundaries to human security studies. Analysis of the sample obtained showed an expansive list of fields merged with human security, including artificial intelligence, geography, peace and conflict studies, criminal justice and global governance. Others are Global affairs, geospatial intelligence, Maritime Security, and humanitarian affairs. The resulting character of these courses, a mix between human security and the respective courses, establishes a multidisciplinary boundary for human security studies.

Context Specificity

Context-specificity is one of the attributes of human security. Context relates to the specific setting in which threats are analyzed and/or interventions are framed. The idea that threats have different characteristics in different situations leads to references to the context in human security narratives. As would be expected, such context-specificity has an impact on HSS content. As a result, certain curricula are influenced by realities unique to the setting for which they were created. For instance, from the middle of the 1990s, Africa's conflict profile, marked by intra-state wars with high casualties, the persistent threat provided by violent extremists, and ethno-political contestations, among others, have shaped the boundaries of HSS in some Africa-related programmes. In most cases, conflicts also reverse the minor economic gains made in the individual countries, in addition to causing physical destruction. Elements of Post Conflict Reconstruction and Development (PCRD) have therefore filtered into such studies. Analysis of the sample points to a number of contexts, including post-natural /man-made disaster recovery, resilience building,

governance, refugees, and food and agriculture. Because context is critical to human security, identifying the above context is critical to defining the boundaries of the respective programmes analyzed.

Responsibility for Human Security

A network of state and non-state actors, intergovernmental and regional organizations, among others, are typically responsible for promoting human security. The State's function is very important. This is due to the fact that, in reality, few projects focused on human security can be completed without the State's presence and active involvement. The concept of Responsibility to Protect (R2P) makes this fact concrete. The R2P emphasizes the crucial function of the State in safeguarding people and, consequently, communities within such states. The social contract that is hypothetically formed between the State and its citizens clarifies that the basic rights of individuals and communities do not derive from the State but rather that the State is formed and operates on the basis of its primary role as "duty-bearer". Despite this, the inherent contradiction shown in situations where the State or its agents are the de facto perpetrators of threats to the security of individuals or communities within these states poses a puzzling challenge to human security.

The involvement of non-state actors may not be defined as faultless, much as the difficulties posed by the State's role in providing human security. Non-state actors, such as party militias, private security companies, and community groups, can contribute to human security by defending people from internal armed conflicts or assaults on personal safety, among other things, but they also have the potential to pose security threats or be the perpetrators of crimes against security. Across the West African sub-region, for instance, vigilantes elicit controversies by exhibiting ambivalent utilities. In Nigeria, for instance, the Civilian Joint Task Force is known to support efforts to confront the challenges of terrorism and violent extremism. In Ghana, however, political vigilantes are considered problematic due to their roles in fomenting or supporting violence during elections and other political activities (Attuquayefio & Darkwa, 2017).

Additionally to the aforementioned, the international community can guarantee human security, especially through the R2P norm. The core principle of R2P, which was agreed upon at the U.N. Summit

in 2005, concerns States' obligation to protect their populations against genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing, and crimes against humanity. The UN Secretary-General's 2009 Report on Implementing the Responsibility to protect further reflects the connection between R2P and the possible responsibility of the international community in guaranteeing human security. Three pillars were outlined in the report as the basis for R2P deployment. The objectives of pillars two and three, titled International Assistance and Capacity-building and Timely and Decisive response, respectively, conveyed the obligation of the international community to support member states in enhancing their capacity to protect their citizens as well as the obligation to take prompt, decisive action when a state is egregiously failing to do so in areas covered by the doctrine of R2P. The creation of an environment that permits the well-being and safety of the population as well as the actors through which such provisions are created is thus noted by reference to a human security approach within HSS. As previously stated, this includes global governance norms such as R2P, which allows for interventions by international actors. Content produced in response to these aspects of human security may frequently include state policing, treatment of vulnerable groups, or general management of threats to livelihoods. Within the sample selected, at least two institutions offered human security courses that focused on addressing the question of the responsibility for human security. And similar to what is captured in the literature, it includes responsibilities by the military NGOs and IGOs among others.

Approaches to Ensuring Human Security

Aside from the actors involved, another fundamental consideration for creating content and, by extension, establishing boundaries for HSS revolves around the approach used by the various actors in establishing or promoting human security. When considering human security strategies, the mutually reinforcing principles of protection and empowerment outlined by the Commission for Human Security provide a very useful framework. The former revolves around norms, processes, and institutions that comprehensively protect people from critical and pervasive threats. This includes strategies devised by states and non-state actors to protect people from threats. By definition, such protection strategies are thought to emanate from top to down, in accordance with the recognition that people face threats over which

they have no control. Empowerment, on the other hand, refers to strategies that help people develop resilience in the face of adversity. This includes strategies that enable people to realize their full potential and participate in decision-making processes that affect their lives. Consequently, consideration of measures for ensuring human security in a variety of settings must necessarily include both top-down strategies, such as state-sponsored institutions, and bottom-up strategies. Thus, the context in which human security is sought can influence the mix of strategies for ensuring that security. This also implies that, while formalized structures can ensure human security, informal structures may be more appropriate in certain contexts. The issue of approach was also represented in the sample analyzed. In particular, a number of the U.N. training courses on human security focused on the approach with issues like early action, building resilience, inclusive, participatory processes and addressing emerging risks to survival and livelihood, forming the content of these courses. Others, such as the University of New Hampshire, also focus on addressing Gender-Based Violence, Countering Violent Extremism, Climate Change and humanitarian response plans as part of the approaches to promoting human security and thus establishing same as boundaries.

Human Security & Peacebuilding

Another source of HSS boundaries is the utility of human security for peacebuilding, particularly in the aftermath of conflicts. The recognition that post-conflict development revolves around people serves as the foundation for this submission. As a result, any meaningful strategy must have at its core the protection and empowerment of individuals and communities harmed by years of violent conflict. This fact's veracity is not improbable. Economists focusing on the economic aspects of post-conflict peacebuilding that translate into aspects of economic security, such as employment, have pointed to a positive relationship between economic policies relating to aid and job creation and reduced vulnerability to renewed conflict. The human security approach, on the other hand, holds significant promise for preventing relapses into violent conflict, owing to its contribution to state building. State-building, in its most basic form, refers to the processes that enable post-conflict states to function as stable societies. The goals of state-building (as deduced from some characteristics of stable societies) thus include efforts to

persuade post-conflict states to provide security, justice, and the rule of law to the people who live within their borders. It also includes the development of adequate platforms for meeting the population's health and education needs, as well as an enabling environment for the pursuit of economic, political, and cultural aspirations. Citizens must accept the legitimacy of the State by meeting obligations such as taxes and accepting the State's monopoly over coercive force as a corollary to these responsibilities.

The importance of human security in driving the post-conflict agenda has also been translated into content for curricula. Royal Roads University (2023) in Canada offers a Master of Arts in Human Security and Peacebuilding. It looks at the relationship between human security and post-conflict development in a variety of contexts.

Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus

One of the boundaries for human security studies comes from the consideration of the relationship between humanitarian development and peace. Interventionist actors have long been involved in activities that are governed by organizational mandates, objectives, or modes of implementation in stressed communities, such as humanitarian emergencies, in-conflict, and post-conflict environments, and in particular, humanitarian, development, and peace actors. While the focus for all these actors invariably featured individuals and communities, the differences in operational dynamics often result in "silosisation" of efforts that have proven to be counterproductive in some instances. In the last decade, however, there have been progressive efforts to enhance coherence in the deployment of efforts under the humanitarian, development and peace banners in stressed communities. A consideration of the nexus tries to overcome difficulties of coherence that had obstinately thwarted efforts to address individual needs before, during, and after crises by placing people at the center. It reduces incoherence-linked vulnerability that adds to complex scenarios in stressed communities. The coherence enabled through nexus planning also facilitates a much more thorough cooptation of cross-cutting concerns for individual well-being, including issues like gender, into interventionist planning.

The Do No Harm principle is a key component of nexus planning and execution, one that has the individual libertarian nature of human security at its foundation. In its most basic forms, it promotes the

necessity of interventions in order to prevent exposing individuals to unplanned or increased danger brought on by otherwise appropriate intervention models. In sum, it shifts the interventionist discussion away from statist representation and toward taking into account people and their well-being. For peace actors for example, limits on mobility, transportation, or the practice of specific trades, even when implemented with security in mind, can, among other things, promote dependency and prevent struggling communities from recovering. By shifting the conversation away from merely controlling territory and weakening the power of insurgent organizations, the Do No Harm principle will thus need to make sure that security responses to violent extremism and terrorism, among other things, are framed within a human rights-based framework. This aims at avoiding fallouts from the alienation of communities such as a typical us-them dichotomy that feeds into radical narratives in terrorism-affected communities. Such an approach requires the highest possible levels of accountability of peace actors. Similar expectations are required of humanitarian and development actors to ensure that their interventions are conducted within a high degree of transparency while ensuring that elements of sustainability of interventions are effectively factored into interventions in stressed communities.

Reflections on Praxis as a Boundary Delineating Source

Boundaries for human security studies also emerge from the practice community. At inception, coopting human security into the mainstream of security practice was problematic. After all, it was supposed to be the vague and amorphous rendition of security that dilutes the sanctity of state-centric security. With orthodox security offering marked resistance, the practice community showed little interest in the idea, and state centrism continued to dictate the content and, as a result, set the boundaries of security studies. Subsequent local, regional and global events, including the rise in intra-state conflicts, violent extremism, climate change and its nexus to security, and basically all the predicate factors that instigated the consideration of security in human-centred terms, have reverberated in the practice community. This has also reinforced earlier policies and frameworks that reflected human security concerns. On the African continent, for instance, human security has emerged as the predominant reality for security considerations. The African Union Peace and Security Council, the continent's standing decision-making organ for the

prevention, management and resolution of conflicts, have time again reestablished the indivisibility of security, noting the importance of human security to state stability. Indeed, so dominant has human security been that the African Union, in collaboration with the United Nations, has, in recent times, launched efforts to develop an African Human Security Index to enable a holistic assessment of human security. The African Union, Agenda 2063, the continental development framework, as well as key policies and programmes such as the Youth for Peace Framework and the Great Green Wall, are all anchored on human security. Similarly, Regional Economic Communities and countries on the continent have all recognized and coopted human security into security policy frameworks. Africa is not alone in this endeavor. All across the world, the acquiescence to human security as a framework is providing content and thereby establishing boundaries for the study of the subject. At the level of the United Nations, the sustainable development goals treat human security as central to sustainable development. The European Union, much as other regional organizations, also recognizes the agency of human security providing a Human Security Doctrine that ensures that the concept is mainstreamed into policies and programmes. A veritable fallout from this trend has been the development of content from the practice community around the world.

Conclusion

A number of non-traditional threats to global security have emerged in the 21st century. Such threats stem from the changing nature of war, from primarily inter-state to intra-state conflicts; disregard for and violation of international humanitarian and human rights law; and, among other things, diseases, epidemics, and natural disasters. Consequently, the dominant utility of the state-centric notion of security has been decisively questioned. Human Security is central to this challenge. Since its introduction, human security has been progressively established as a critical part of a realistic perception of threats and security as it applies to individuals and communities. As the frontier for human security expands, research and teaching of the subject matter will inevitably expand. Although some argue that human security is merely a subset of the human rights/development studies discourse and thus has nothing new to offer, research into the subject reveals that the subject has boundaries that define its existence as an academic discipline. An analysis of the preceding information reveals some determinants of the boundaries for HSS. From

definitional history, threat typology and interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary appeal to consideration of context, responsibility for human security and approach as well as its place within the context of peacebuilding and the broader practice community, the concept of human security is not devoid of boundaries per se, but it appears to have fluidly permissive boundaries anchored primarily on one key interest – individual concerns or interest in security matters. As long as the individual, and not the State, is at the center of a security issue, it is arguably acceptable to invoke the concept of human security. Thus, beyond the aforementioned determinants, security of individuals and communities remain the ultimate reference point in Human Security Studies.

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