

## THE CONCEPT OF "HUMAN SECURITY" AND MULTICULTURAL AND TRANSITIONAL SOCIETIES

### *1. Concept of Human Security*

In this text I shall endeavour to deliberate upon the notion of human security from the aspect of its importance and the need in multicultural societies with a relatively high tension arising from cultural-identity issues/disputes. My aim is to show that many of the general theoretical dilemmas related to this notion would be clarified if they are viewed from this type of multicultural context. Thus, its importance and applicability in the future would also be clarified in this manner.

During the last several years, the concept of human security has been garnering growing attention by the governments and inter-governmental fora. During the last decade, the primary concept of security has changed from the implication of ensuring the territorial integrity of a sovereign state via the use of military, political and diplomatic measures (state centric security, intended to protect the physical sovereignty and territory), towards a concept focused on the people. This expanded concept now encompasses the parameters of a "welfare state" in which the individual or groups are guaranteed protection from physical or mental violations, freedom from fear and distress (worry), freedom from poverty, and the right to live a life of dignity. The changing nature of the conflicts and the clear understanding of the threats facing the people in the globalisation and transition era has spurred on this redefinition of security.

"Collective security" can no longer be so narrowly defined as the lack of armed conflicts – between different states, or conflicts within the country itself. Serious human rights violations, mass migration of the civil population, international terrorism, organised crime, drugs and arms trafficking, catastrophes within people's environs constitute a direct threat to human security, forcing us to accept a more co-ordinated approach to a whole variety of issues" (Kofi Anan)<sup>1</sup>.

The main threats to human security include military conflicts, criminal, violent transfer of governing power and the so-called "unconventional" threats to the security which arise from non-military activities of

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<sup>1</sup> Kofi Annan, "Report of the Secretary-General on the Work of the Organization", General Assembly Official Records Fifty-fifth session Supplement No.1 (A/55/1), New York: United Nations, 2000  
<<http://www.un.org/documents/sg/report00/a551e.pdf>>

individuals or groups in the society. Examples for these types of threats are: religious fundamentalism, which often involves conflicts, human rights violations, economic crises and changes to human environs, caused by phenomena such as disasters/catastrophes, climate changes and pollution. "Human security refers to the quality of life of the people of a society or polity. Anything which degrades their quality of life... is a security threat." (Ramesh Thakur).<sup>2</sup>

The UNDP 1994 Human Development Report<sup>3</sup> in actual fact constitutes the first true formalisation of the concept of human security, hence the term Human Security is linked to this document. In 1994, for the purposes of Human Development the UNDP introduced the special term "Human Security" including seven dimensions of this concept: economic, in terms of food, health, in terms of the environment, personal, in terms of the community and political "security".<sup>4</sup> The UNDP seven dimensions of human security implicate numerous interlinked and overlapping dimensions focusing on human dignity, but not a coherent framework for their integration into a single concept.<sup>5</sup> Nevertheless, the main objective of the UNDP was to use the human security as an organisation concept of the UN Social Development Conference held in Copenhagen, 1995. Since it was not used as a basis at the social summit, human security as proposed by the UNDP continued as an organisation concept in developing economies, public health and security communities. Today there are governmental and academic networks (The Human Security Network), University centres, international commission (World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization), research initiatives (The Human Security News Association), publications, official reports, which are directly involved in

<sup>2</sup> Ramesh Thakur, "From National to Human Security", *Asia-Pacific Security: The Economics-Politics Nexus*. Eds. Stuart Harris, and Andrew Mack. Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1997.

<sup>3</sup> UNDP, Human Development Report 1994, "New Dimensions of Human Security".

<sup>4</sup> United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), *Human Development Report 1994*, New York: Oxford University Press, 23. <<http://www.undp.org/hdro/1994/94.htm>>.

<sup>5</sup> Jorge Nef's Five-Fold Classification System is similar. It is based on his analysis of the elements of the global system: ecology/environment, economy, society, political governance and culture. According to Nef, these subsystems are connected with a set of bridges: the environment and the economy are connected via the resources; the economy and the society, via societal forces; society and political governance, via trade intermediaries and associations; and politics and culture, via ideology. Jorge Nef, *Human Security and Mutual Vulnerability: The Global Political Economy of Development and Underdevelopment*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Ottawa: International Development Center, 1999.

Another example of defining human security via a "descriptive list" is the widely outspread scheme of George MacLean. According to him, human security includes security of the individual in his/her personal surroundings, community and environ. This encompasses personal security of the individual from violence and violations; accessibility to basic life essentials; protection from crime and terrorism, pandemic diseases, political corruptions, forceful migration absence of human rights; freedom from violations based on gender; rights for political and cultural association; political, economic and democratic development; prevention and abuse and overexploitation of natural resources; maintaining the environment; and efforts to reduce pollution. George MacLean, "The Changing Perception of Human Security; Coordinating National and Multilateral Responses; The United Nations and the New Security Agenda," United Nations Association in Canada, 1998 (<http://www.unac.org/canada/security/mclean.html>), 10 March 2001.

human security. In this sense, the establishment of the Independent Global Commission on Human Security in 2001 is significant, as this body is independent from the UN and other international organisations and governments.

The concept also found its place in the framework of foreign politics of certain countries,<sup>6</sup> but above all within the framework of the UN system, as well as in the agendas of NATO and the European inter-governmental organisations, such as: the OSCE, The Council of Europe and the European Union.

For example, the Alliance is committed to a broad approach to security, which recognizes the importance of political, economic, social and environmental factors in addition to the indispensable defence dimension. This broad approach forms the basis for the Alliance to accomplish its fundamental security tasks effectively, and its increasing effort to develop effective cooperation with other European and Euro-Atlantic organizations as well as the United Nations.<sup>7</sup> Respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, democracy and the rule of law is at the core of the OSCE's comprehensive concept of security. Strong democratic institutions and the rule of law play an important role in preventing threats from arising. Weak governance, and a failure of States to secure adequate and functioning democratic institutions that can promote stability, may in themselves constitute a breeding ground for a range of threats.<sup>8</sup> OSCE's mandate in the Republic of Macedonia was within this concept, which pursuant to the Ohrid Framework Agreement encompassed the activities such as: return of the police in the former crises regions; assistance in the sphere of governance of the rights and development of the media; assistance to the Government in increasing the participation of the non-minority communities in the public administration, military institutions and public institutions; strengthening the institutions of the local self-government; assistance in the area of education. The Political Declaration and the Action Plan that were adopted at the third Summit of the Council of Europe (Warsaw, May 2005), emphasise the main tasks of the Organisation in the coming years: promotion of the common general human rights values, the rule of law and democracy, strengthening of security of the European citizens via the fight against terrorism, organised crime and people trafficking, cultivation of the co-operation with other international and European Organisations.

However, all of this occurred under conditions when the field of theory was only beginning / or debates were held on various lines: definition of the concept, normative practice of human security, etc. Namely, its integration in the inter-governmental organizations (although may be it is not registered under the human security label) occurred in parallel with the still influential position that it is a concept without clear theoretical

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<sup>6</sup> Canada, Norway and Japan are the first countries that have incorporated the concepts of human security in their official foreign policies.

<sup>7</sup> Quoted from NATO's Strategic Concept.

<sup>8</sup> Quoted from the OSCE Strategy to Address Threats to Security and Stability in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century adopted by the OSCE Ministerial Council at its session in Maastricht, December, 2003.

grounds, with hardly any sufficient political precedents, without a consensual guiding definition, and an extremely unsure future. In this area, among its growing use to a degree that makes it a "trendy" term, under the criticism that it bears the risk to mean everything and nothing<sup>9</sup>, I shall try to analyse the term in the light of preventive diplomacy, of special significance to the multicultural and transitional communities, leaving the theoretical consensus to come via longer term theoretical debate and political experimenting (for which again, its application in these communities may denote a significant contribution).

What is centrally evident in the debate concerning the notion of human security, at least amongst its advocates, is the dichotomy of a broad-versus-narrow conceptualisation.<sup>10</sup> The arguments of the advocates of the narrower focus may include requirements for pragmatism, conceptual and analytical clarity, (avoiding the list of "bad things that may happen") as reasons for linking human security solely with threats of violence.

The advocates of the broad conceptualisation, however, suggest that human security signifies much more than security from threats of violence, considering the analytical and normative difficulties (which inevitably arise) as unfortunate, yet unavoidable consequences of extending the security paradigm over the threats to the state.

Especially interesting are the considerations that elevate above the broad-versus-narrow categorisation, and instead, focus on the social and cultural context in which people experience the lack of security, and the issue of handling this matter via the social institutions. These kinds of considerations may be the most significant thesis concerning the usefulness of the concept of human security, which I shall further develop in the second part of this text. Instead of looking at the very questions/issues, they look at the cultural response and social co-operation used to alleviate the malevolence. According to them, vulnerability is simultaneously broad in its nature and structurally dependant, and if we wish to alleviate human insecurity, we have to focus not only on the threats, but also on the capability of the society to take them into consideration.

In any case, we can distinguish common elements in the various interpretations of "human security": the movement of the emphasis (accent) of security of the state towards the security of the people, the obligations of the states to ensure the security of all its citizens, the interdependency of people and the fact that many issues transcend state

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<sup>9</sup> Ogata Sadako, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, "Human Security a Refugee Perspective", Keynote speech at the Ministerial Meeting on Human Security Issues of the "Lysoen Process", Group of Governments, Bergen, Norway, 19 May 1999, <http://www.unhcr.ch/refworld/unhcr/hcspeech/990519.htm>.

<sup>10</sup> Don Hubert quite correctly emphasises that although the debate may at first seem polarised (widely as opposed to narrowly), in actual fact there are difference directions among the advocates. However, the differences (according to Taylor Owen) are not in terms of the contents. Namely, the advocates do not debate the value of the various threats, but the contribution towards the appropriate policy measures. See McRae, Robert Grant & Don Hubert, *Human Security and the New Diplomacy: Protecting People, Promoting Peace*, Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001.

borders, recognition of the significance of the non-state actors, the requirement for violators of human rights and humanitarian law to be held responsible (for example, creation an International Criminal, Court, as well as the International Criminal Tribunals for the former Yugoslavia and Ruanda), and the very important: acknowledgement of the complexity of the security issues and the need for a multidimensional answer.

## *2. The significance of human security as a means for maintaining peace in post-conflict and multicultural societies*

Human security offers a new angle to a perspective and a wide scope of evaluation of various policies. The systematic concentration on security of people emphasises the need for a more focused attention on the key issues which the society still does not correctly address. The very idea of security contains two key elements: orientation towards future risks and focus towards the risks from descending below a certain critical poverty line. In this sense, the main objectives and forms of occurrence (application) of human security provide special significant contribution toward the maintenance of peace in societies that have cultural-identity disputes and conflicts. Social stability in such societies is a complex and daily task of politics, since society demands unity and cohesion in order to be held together as a single entity, while succeeding to maintain the differences.

The measure (measurement) of the welfare of the people, in the context of their equal conditions as human beings, is the main objective of human security. This has different effects on multicultural societies: on the one hand, it transcends any geographical borders and religious or ethnical differences and unites everybody in the global society; on the other hand it focuses on each individual as a human being. These two factors do not exclude each other, and both focus on the individual, the trend of the present day human security. This emphasis placed on individuals raises their solidarity as a feeling of belonging to the same group – a group of people.

Furthermore, the operating means of human security contain practical indicators and beginning values for each domain of welfare.<sup>11</sup> The beginning values play a crucial role in the risk assessments in the society with cultural-identity problems. Any decline under those starting values (under such line/limit), shall mean poverty, which dangerously coincides with the different and often opposing interests of multicultural groups, and such a combination may result in a conflict. Therefore, the settlement on the level of human security not only involves all the minimum conditions for humanity, but it also attempts to settle or prevent the sources of the crisis.

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<sup>11</sup> See in greater detail Gary King and Christopher J.L. Murray, Rethinking human security, in *Political Science Quarters*, Volume 116, N. 4, 2001-2.

Furthermore, the concept of human security lays down a set of welfare areas such as: democracy, political freedom, income, education, healthcare. Their universality and essentiality reduces the scope of speculation against a certain group or within a certain group. In other words, since the above mentioned areas cannot be commented as unnecessary or irrelevant for certain cultures, the tendency to justify the internal restrictions in relation to their application on ethnic or religious grounds comes to an end.

Correct quantification of human welfare is impossible, but certain useful indicators may serve as early warning with regards to the question whether the country is facing problems in terms of human "non-security" and whether it proceeds toward social disintegration and possible breakdown of the country. The following indicators are particularly significant: lack of security in the area of food<sup>12</sup>, in the area of employment and income<sup>13</sup>, human rights violations<sup>14</sup>, ethnic or religious conflicts<sup>15</sup>, inequality<sup>16</sup>, and spending of military funds.<sup>17</sup> This is only a partial set of indicators. But, despite the fact that it encompasses only certain dimensions, if several of the indicators point to the same direction, the country may be sliding towards problems.<sup>18</sup>

Nevertheless, considering the specifics of each society, some of the areas/indicators in a certain society prevail with regards to all those that would be dominant in the implementation of the concept of human security in another society. Placing an emphasis only on one or some of them must not mean omission or forgetting the rest. In addition to it, the possibility to establish quantitative criteria (number of victims, monetary expenses, etc. -see above), is best viewed as a political line. Since there is no fixed list with regards to what is, and what is not considered a traditional security threat, human security threats shall be determined by the international organisations, national governments and non-governmental organisations. In the same vain as traditional security, what is deemed as a threat for the international community is different from what is deemed as a threat for a single nation or region. The line, hence, is laid down in view of political priority, capability and will. The first possibility and primary responsibility for ensuring human security should fall upon the national governments. In any case, if the threats which cross the line/limit of human security are caused by the governments or if the governments are incapable of providing protection

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<sup>12</sup> Measured via daily supply of calories as a percentage of the general human needs, the index of production of food per capita and the trend of the ratio of dependency of import of food.

<sup>13</sup> Measured via the high and prolonged rate of unemployment, the steep fall of the realistic state revenue or the realistic income, the extremely high inflation rates and the great differences of the income between the rich and the poor.

<sup>14</sup> Measured via the political deprivation of freedom, torture, disappearance, censorship of the press and other human rights violations.

<sup>15</sup> Measured via the percentage of the population involved in such conflicts and the number of victims.

<sup>16</sup> Measured mainly via the difference between the HDI values of the different groups of the population.

<sup>17</sup> Measured via the scope of military spending with the combined expenses for education and healthcare.

<sup>18</sup> UNDP, Human Development Report 1994 - "New Dimensions of Human Security".

against them, then the international community should act. In this sense, this conceptualisation of human security forces the political community to create appropriate responses to various threats.<sup>19</sup>

Therefore, for instance, two fundamental strategies are known for the achievement of human security in transitional and post-conflict societies: by strengthening the legal norms (institutional building) and the development of the capacities for their application (capacity building). Namely, there is little sense in defining new norms and rights, if the society does not have the capacity to enforce the implementation of the existing norms or to protect the already recognised rights. Due to these reasons, the improvement of the democratic governance within the framework of the countries is the first central strategy for achieving human security. The building of institutional capacity without strengthening the adherence to the norms, i.e. their implementation as a second strategy complementary to the rights shall reduce the human-oriented security standard. Strengthening the norms without building capacity for their protection only opens the door to disappointment, with the possibility of tightening/limiting the power of the rule of law. The two strategies are essential in the overcoming of the problems.

What is characteristic about the “weak countries”, as well as the societies in transition, is the deficit of power of the state, where the institutions are still too weak and the administrative capacity in the country is inadequate and/or incompletely developed. This is even more dangerous in the multicultural societies in transition, as the most complicated and most difficult case of transition, where in the absence of “healthy institutions”, ordinary crime and inter-ethnic disaccord may become dominant, causing erosion of the conventional monopoly of the state on the legitimate use of force and seriously endangering the security of the state. There is a great danger that the state may become embroiled in interethnic conflict, since there is a lack of capacity of the institutional procedures that process the ethnic conflict with their application, absorbing its violent energy and offering solutions for it<sup>20</sup>. Therefore, the existence of solid procedural and institutional democratic arrangements is crucial for the functioning of such societies.

Nevertheless, in the transitional periods, all aspects of human security have to be taken into consideration in order to maintain the balance while progressing. Such balance may be brittle. In post-conflict situations, if the states focus too much on consolidating political stability, they may be destabilised by the economic concessions (or any of the other factors). The transition, was in many societies, disturbed by the weak or negative growth, weak institutions, corruption and extinguishing of social protection, thus leaving the people to ask why the democratic forms of governance do not provide the promised benefits.

In multicultural societies, however, a problem that arises is maintaining the cultural identity of the groups. Here, development/functioning of the democratic institutions has again its own specifics. (See below). In such societies, the existence of professional and, as much as possible, politically neutral state administration is of crucial significance. In

<sup>19</sup> Taylor Owen, Human Security-Conflict, Critique and Consensus: Colloquium Remarks and a Proposal for a Treshold-Based Definition, *Security Dialogue*, Vol.35, no.3, September 2004.

<sup>20</sup> Lj.D. Frchkoski, *Contemporary Political Theories*, Forum, Skopje, 2003.

addition to this, a series of activities and measures are required with a view to successful addressing of the cultural practices via the concerned functional central administration<sup>21</sup>. In fact, it appears as the most important axis for the stabilisation of the state, while the functioning via recruitment, maintaining professionalism and transparency of the international monitoring.

The adherence to the human rights also represents a significant segment in (and external to) the human security concept, as without it, it would remain empty. Although previously mentioned within the indicators useful for quantification of human security, this segment deserves special attention. The basis for this extracted thesis is the presumption that the society which voluntarily strives towards human rights, is embroidered with the spirit of adherence to human rights. Society which can reduce the risks of conflict gravitates toward a culture of human rights.<sup>22</sup> The respect of human rights is key for a successful development strategy and in this sense it is important for the strategic importance of the respect of human rights to make clear the establishing and sustaining peace and security.<sup>23</sup> The development strategies which have the realisation of the basic economic, social and cultural rights and the citizen's and political rights as their own key objectives achieve the best progress, leading towards visible improvements of the lives of individuals: they are development oriented toward people and human security. Respecting human rights also requires efficiency and effectiveness of governance. There are many cases of societies in the past half century of international co-operation which have dwindled/spent enormous quantities of resources and assistance due to the fact that their governments were not representative and, as a direct consequence, were inefficient and often corrupt. Simply put, development is inconceivable without freedom. Additionally, the principle of non-discrimination as a keystone principle of international human rights, enables striving towards more righteous societies, even up to the level of their available resources.<sup>24</sup>

In today's world, there are numerous situations where different ethnic groups or different population groups ended up in conflict because the fundamental rules in the societies have not provided them respectable and righteous opportunities in life, or where one group feels like a victim of unfair treatment within the society. Therefore, the strategies for conflict prevention must be built integrally to the strategies for promotion and protection of the human rights/minority rights, or liberal justice in combination with mere treatment of cultural diversity (justice for groups).

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<sup>21</sup> See Lj. D. Frchkoski, *International Human Rights Law*, Magor, Skopje, 2005, p. 318.

<sup>22</sup> Betrand Ramcharan, *Human Rights and Human Security*, The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 2002.

<sup>23</sup> The Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the wider body of human rights instruments were conceptualised to enable human beings to be safe in freedom, in dignity, with equality, via the protection of their general human rights. From this perspective, Article 28 of the Universal Declaration of Human rights is of fundamental significance. It stipulates that everybody has the right to societal and international order in which the rights and freedoms referred to in this Declaration can be fully achieved.

<sup>24</sup> Betrand Ramcharan, *Human Rights and Human Security*, The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 2002.



In our deliberation, this introduces the issue of protection of minority rights, which is especially complex in multicultural societies. It deserves special attention, due to the fact that in the building of successful democracies cultural factors have proven to be more important from the economic ones. These societies, as conversely opposed to the above mentioned transitional societies, need to discard the unjustified optimistic expectations that the processes of modernisation and economic development shall substitute, suppress or erase ethnic or other cultural differences and identifications. There is a need for a new, more subtle and more realistic development of a strategy for building of democracy with radical ethnic, religious and cultural differences and pluralism. In this respect, the state mainly has the following obligations: to accept and respect the universally recognised human and minority rights and to integrate them explicitly in the internal legal order, to integrate criminal, administrative and civic justice protection of such rights; and to assist the state in the creation of conditions in which people shall be able to achieve their rights, especially the members of the minorities, which may have equal treatment in enjoying the rights with incentives by the state.<sup>25</sup>

### *Concluding Observations*

The aim of this text is to connect the concept of “human security” with the concept of “preventive diplomacy”, as well as to evaluate it within the latter.<sup>26</sup> Such relation can be identified via two main factors: firstly, it is people-centred it and it goes beyond any geographical, traditional, religious or cultural borders. Secondly, such emphasis on humanity within the whole society decreases the potentials for a crisis, both by promoting an instrumental measurement and familiarization with poverty issues among mainstream and minority cultures. It aims to encourage work on consensus via various factors of integration, such as: efficient democratic governance, respect of human rights, education. This consensus must be intended from the majority/mainstream group towards the minority group(s) and within the latter itself.

Human security contributes toward such an aim, especially in multicultural societies. In addition to the reduction of threats maintaining peace, consensus is also linked with the ideal that would motivate those who are working on human security: to develop a system for measuring welfare, not as a forced act, but through dialogue and concerning the basic human rights. This spirit of co-operation is in the interest of the feeling of social solidarity.

And finally, human security also ensures human dignity. Human horizons have expanded way over bare survival, toward matters such as

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<sup>25</sup> Lj. D. Frchkoski, *International Human Rights Law*, Magor, Skopje, 2005 (p. 315)

<sup>26</sup> The whole debate concerning narrow-versus-broad definitions, theoretical as opposed to practical implications and fundamental criticisms, although mentioned in the first part of the text, has been left aside as a special topic for my future elaboration.

love, culture, faith. Human security must aim at developing the capability of individuals and communities to make decisions and to act to the advantage of the reasons and benefits in many spheres of life. Therefore, human security begins with the acknowledgement that people are the most active participants in determining their wellbeing, and that they are free and creative actors.

Namely, I would like to emphasise again that we are aware of the fact that the application of “human security” is not the same as the demands for respecting human rights. The former does not guarantee welfare in a multicultural and post-conflict society. This is only a step in the process of evaluation and alleviation of human suffering throughout the world, but nevertheless, it is a very significant sector.

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## RESUME:

The aim of this text is to connect the concept of “human security” with the concept of “preventive diplomacy”, as well as to evaluate it within the latter. Such relation can be identified via two main factors: firstly, it is people-cantered and goes beyond any geographical, traditional, religious or cultural borders. Secondly, such emphasis on humanity in one whole society decreases the potentials for a crisis both by promoting an instrumental measurement and familiarization with poverty issues among mainstream and minority cultures. It has the aim of encouraging work on consensus via various factors of integration, such as: efficient democratic governance, respect of human rights, education. this consensus must be intended from the majority/mainstream group towards the minority group(s) and within the latter itself.