

NEW INTERPHASES AMONG TRADITIONAL AND HUMAN SECURITY

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While most of the focus in the past two years has been on the COVID-19 pandemic, the security landscape has been steadily transforming with increased geopolitical tensions and development challenges in all parts of the world.

[“The New Humanitarian”](#) lists humanitarian crises and trends to watch in 2022. Global trends such as poverty, inequality, border insecurity and health consequences of climate change are as prevalent as the current political crises in Ethiopia, Myanmar, Afghanistan, and Yemen. In its [November/December 2021 Global Conflict Tracker](#) the International Crisis Group sees three conflict risks in Yemen, Libya and Ukraine while twelve countries and conflict situations are deteriorating. A sound security analysis would be incomplete without the growing US-China competition and the growing divergences between the Russian Federation and the West.

Current challenges to peace include, to varying degrees, aspects of both traditional and human security. It is crucial to better understand this so-called “interphase”, to allow for a dynamic analysis of peace and security globally, regionally and on a national and local levels. The key would be to find a context specific balance between the two.

In short, traditional security focuses on the state, its sovereignty and self-defence. It implies the use of traditional security tools including the military. When in 1994 the United Nations Development programme coined the term human security, the idea was to put human beings at the centre of security and focus on protection and empowerment of individuals with a widespread preventive approach. However, bringing the “freedom from fear” and “freedom from want” to all has not been universally accepted or operationalised by all states. Some saw it as, yet another post-colonial concept imposed by international community and having the potential to limit sovereignty of states. Furthermore, the 9/11 terror attacks in 2001 and the resulting wars in Afghanistan and Iraq re-aligned security thinking towards traditional approaches. The focus of peace and security actors moved even further away from human security despite lingering challenges such as small and light weapons, the emergence of security dimensions to health and the environment, to name just a few.

In looking at the situation today, as 2022 begins, the current security landscape will not allow for this “tug of war” like situation between traditional and human security to continue. It is imperative to engage in a comprehensive analysis and policies that account for all aspects of insecurity. There are several steps we can take to find this new balance.

First, we need to go beyond the dichotomy between traditional and human security. Security actors need to understand that this is no longer an “either, or”, but an “and” question. As mentioned before all the current challenges to security and peace, have aspects of both traditional and human security and need to be addressed in a comprehensive manner. This requires increased consultation and cooperation between states while including other actors, and topics ranging from classic disarmament issues to questions of environmental degradation and even going beyond the planet to the outer space.

Second, understanding that an individual state cannot address current security challenges singlehandedly is a must. Most emerging threats and challenges transcend borders and therefore require multilateral cooperation. It is in the national interest of all countries, including great powers, to work together on issues like climate change, pandemics, organised crime, terrorism, and migration. Indeed, they *have* to work together. Cooperation is *realpolitik*, not altruism. This approach brings together both concepts and offers better, updated solutions.

Third, while peace and security actors have been broadening, there is a real need to expediate a more inclusive approach and not just engage military, diplomats, politicians, or experts from the security sector, but also scientists, the private sector, civil society, academia, and youth in a real way. Collective wisdom can only be harnessed if we go beyond echo chambers, openly engage with different voices and this is how we can bring innovative and comprehensive answers to current security challenges that very often do not have traditional, military solutions. This is particularly crucial when working on new technologies both disruptive as well as those offering new pathways for a safer world.

Fourth, combining traditional and human security policies makes it possible to work on different levels of governance and integrate top-down and bottom-up approaches. For example, in building sustainable peace in post-conflict countries and regions, such multi-layered approaches to security policies are invaluable. This approach will also allow the integration of various security challenges, such as violent conflict, radicalisation, health, and the environment, and address them in a systematic and interconnected manner.

Which leads to the final point, there is an elegant way of finding the new, updated balance between traditional and human security approaches. Cooperative security was developed as an answer to current security challenges and increasing difficulties in finding solutions among states with significantly different, and even competing, security policies. Potentially, it could use emerging human security topics as an entry point to building consensus in an inclusive manner. This, in turn, could strengthen consultation, reassurance, transparency and prevention when addressing traditional security challenges.



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As per the famous Albert Einstein quote: “We cannot solve our problems with the same thinking we used when we created them” – the current security landscape invites us to update our thinking about security and ways in which we build a much-needed comprehensive approach accounting for both traditional and human security with the cooperative security as a unifying idea.