HUMAN SECURITY FROM THE CRITICAL THEORY PERSPECTIVE:
EU AND THE REFUGEE CRISIS

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ABSTRACT

The notion of Human Security is the result of an attempt to conceptualise new understandings and practices of security that are alternative to the realist thought. This search for a new security notion views the nation states are unable to provide security for people. However, this claim does not prevent usage of this concept as a foreign policy instrument in the conventional sense. In this context, Critical Theory, another alternative approach to Realism, helps to evaluate the human security in such a critical manner. This article firstly deals with the issue of security with a special focus on the developments in security studies after the end of the Cold War. In this sense, the main differences of realist and critical notions of security will be compared and the basic premises of Human Security will be highlighted. Secondly, Critical Theory, which is another alternative paradigm to realism in security studies, will be discussed in relation with Human Security. Finally, with the help of Critical Theory, it will be argued that how Human Security can be used as leverage for conventional foreign policy goals. In order to evaluate to what extent content this is true, this paper will focus on the European Union's response to the Syrian Refugee Crisis. The directives and actions in response to the refugee crisis will be analysed in order to answer the question of whether a Human Security approach could be a viable model for the European Union in international relations.

Keywords: Security, Human Security, Critical Theory, European Union, Syrian Refugee Crisis

1. INTRODUCTION

The end of the bi-polar world paved the way for new alternative security studies to the Realist paradigm and this situation 'has been portrayed as a major paradigm shift' (Peterson, 2013). Questioning of the state and its security notion with the proliferation of the globalisation phenomenon has contributed to this trend. In such a context, Human Security (HS) approach emerged. HS, like other theories which are critical of realism, rejected realism's "High Politics" and "Low Politics" categorical division within the security issues. Instead, HS highlighted the topics of "low politics" such as poverty, scarcity, famine, water and sustainable development etc. HS can be considered as a constellation of approaches that points out the difference between two opposing paradigms (Fakiolas, 2011) which struggle with each other over the 'heart and soul of global policymaking' (Chandler, 2008).

The notion of HS is the result of an attempt to conceptualise new understandings and practices that are alternatives to the realist thought in security studies (Furtado, 2008). As noted "the concept of HS was proposed and popularised in the first half of the 1990s, when some optimism remained that, in a 'new world order', a peace dividend was possible in which security defined as 'freedom from want' as well as 'freedom from fear' would be enhanced" (Maclean, 2006).

In order to evaluate to what extend HS is effective in practice it can be helpful to evaluate it in relation with the other alternative approach to social sciences; Critical Theory (CT). CT also developed as an unconventional approach to mainstream theories and paradigms. With the help of CT, it may be possible to see to what extend HS is unaffected from power relations and interests. In such a manner, Syrian Refugee Crisis may provide a good example to assess HS in the light of CT. By this method, the weaknesses and strengths of HS can be revealed and also, may help to answer the question of to what extend HS is desirable and feasible. Thus, this study aims to provide a sceptical perspective to some of the understandings and practices of HS.

Human Security

Although HS is considered as an alternative theory, actually it first emerged as a policy.[i] The definition of HS can be read from 1994 UNDP Human Development Report which can be accepted as the milestone of HS studies. According to the Report, HS means 'first, safety from such chronic threats as hunger, disease and repression. Also, it means protection from sudden and hurtful disruptions in the patterns of daily life – whether in homes, in jobs or in communities.'[ii] That is to say, HS focuses on 'core individual needs' (Newman, 2010). Unlike the Realist categorisation of security issues as "high politics" and "low politics", HS regards the issues like environment, health, famine, development, water, ethnic struggles as primarily important problems. This means that the main issues of HS are 'non-military threats, such as environmental problems, disease epidemics, poverty' etc. (Inglehart and Norris, (2012):

In challenging the neorealist orthodoxy, human security argues that for many people in the world – perhaps even most – the greatest threats to "security" come from internal conflicts, disease, hunger, environmental contamination or street crime. And for others, a greater threat may come from their own country itself, rather than from an "external" adversary. Human security thus seeks to challenge attitudes and institutions that privilege so-called "high politics" above disease, hunger or illiteracy (Newman, 2010).

HS assumes that with the improvement of the wealth of the "people", policy change is possible (Newman, 2010). However, the basic proposition of HS comes from its search for new referential points to the security which considers that states are "inadequate" to provide this type of security for people and from its rejection of the concepts like "national interest" and "national security".[iii] Instead, HS asserts that the individual 'should be' the main referent object

of security which means 'prioritising the security of people rather than states' (Duffield and Waddell, 2006 in Peterson, 2013) [iv]

Growing interest in human security since the early 1990s can be seen within a particular historical and social context that eroded the Westphalian primacy of the sovereign state in security thinking. First, the end of the Cold War eroded the bipolar construction of international relations and the heightened sense of "security dilemma" that had provided a pretext for the extremes of the narrow national security paradigm in policy and academic circles. This new environment challenged and problematised the state-centric, power-based model of international politics that privileged "high politics" above all else (Newman, 2010).

In summary, HS draws together 'freedom from want' and 'freedom from fear' (Buzan, 1991):

Human security connects different types of freedoms – freedom from want, freedom from fear and freedom to take action on one's own behalf. To do this, it offers two general strategies: protection and empowerment. Protection shields people from dangers. It requires concerted effort to develop norms, processes and institutions that systematically address insecurities. Empowerment enables people to develop their potential and become full participants in decision-making. Protection and empowerment are mutually reinforcing, and both are required in most situations.[v]

In order to evaluate to what extent HS concepts have impacted on EU Security strategies in recent years, this paper will focus on the EU's response to the Syrian Refugee Crisis looking for evidence of the six core principles named above. The directives and actions in response to the refugee crisis will be analysed in order to answer the question of whether a HS approach could be a viable model for the EU in international relations. But before we do that, it can be useful to take a look some basic premises of the CT so as to evaluate HS in a more comprehensive manner.

Critical Theory

The CT, also known as the Frankfurt School, is a philosophical and sociological movement which focuses on 'the critique of modernity and capitalist society, the definition of social emancipation, as well as the detection of the pathologies of society' (Corradeti):

Critical Theory provides a specific interpretation of Marxist philosophy with regards to some of its central economic and political notions like commodification, reification, fetishization and critique of mass culture (Corradeti).

Pioneers of Critical Theorists were Max Horkheimer, Theodor Adorno, Herbert Marcuse, Walter Benjamin, Friedrich Pollock, Leo Lowenthal, and Eric Fromm and Jürgen Habermas (Corradetti).

In international relations CT emerged as a questioning approach toward dominant theories with the studies of some scholars such as Richard Ashley, Robert W. Cox, Andrew Linklater, and Mark Hoffman in 1980s.[vi] They all argued the importance of emancipatory politics in studying international relations. Although it has its roots in the Enlightenment era and the writings of Kant-Hegel-Marx, CT is linked with Frankfurt School, specifically with the works of Max Horkheimer, Theodor Adorno and Jürgen Habermas.

CT argues that value-free analysis in social sciences is impossible. One of the pioneers of critical theorists, Robert W. Cox (1981) asserts that 'theory is always for somebody and for some purpose'. In this sense, CT asks the fundamental question of what is the ontology (and also epistemology) of international relations (Cox, 2001). CT focuses on the physical, institutional and ideological roots of the power and control (Bostanoğlu and Okur, 2009). The basic

issues of CT are hegemony, power, the relationship between the mode of production and power relations, power structures and emancipation. This point gets more important, since globalisation is changing the world's social structure (Cox, 2001). The CT gives special importance to the 'who gets what, when and how'[vii] questions rather than state behaviours and interstate relations. One important dimension which CT underlines is that it is not necessary to have a state for the existence of the interest and power struggles. States are not the sole actors and not the projection of existing power relations. As Cox (1981) says 'Social forces are not to be thought of as existing exclusively within states. Particular social forces may overflow state boundaries, and world structures can be described in terms of social forces just as they can be described as configurations of state power'.

As Nicola Machiavelli asked the question of how social fundamentals can be constructed for a political power in the 16. Century; Cox asks the same question for the beginning of the twenty-first century (Bostanoğlu and Okur, 2009). In such a context, the concept of civil society gains special importance. The "civil society" places itself between the political authorities and the people (Cox, 1999). However, the civil society itself is a subject to the power opposition or struggle that develops a relationship in terms of a support or an opposition (Cox, 1999 as quoted in Bostanoğlu and Okur, 2009). Hence, rather than being an apolitical domain or a being immune from the political and economic interests, civil society itself is a politically constructed entity (Bostanoğlu and Okur, 2009). In the contemporary globalising era, the reconstruction or the 'reorientation of civil society' in the needs of dominant powers' interests gains special importance. In parallel Cox argues that, 'the hegemony rests upon the global civil society' (Eralp, 2005).

Some examples and practices of HS can be evaluated as a part of the hegemonic project which tries to portray itself as it is for the interest of the civil society and the common good. In other words, it can be leverage for the building of the 'Empire of Civil Society' (Lacher, 2006) by individual actors. By focusing on the basic needs of the people, HS can be labelled as a policy towards 'bio-political tyranny' (Papavac, 2005; Duffield and Waddell in Peterson, 2006): 'which uses the altruistic rhetoric found within the human security discourse to mask or legitimise interventionist, neocolonial, and neo-imperialist activities' (Peterson, 2006).

According to Cox, the basic principles of the international politics not only serve to dominant states' political and economic interests, they also shape and promote the way in which objection and conflict is done (Linklater, 1990 in Bostanoğlu and Okur, 2009). The powerful ones don't need power as long as they are able to present their interests as if they are for the "common good" and for the "universal peace" and "cooperation" (Bostanoğlu and Okur, 2009).

A comprehensive appraisal of CT is beyond the context of this study. CT is very wide in its scope and perspective. However, these basic premises of this approach may pave the way for the evaluation HS in relation with the EU in a critical manner.

2. ORIGINS OF HUMAN SECURITY IN THE EU

A HS approach to security strategies and development has been a prominent theme of discourse in EU publications, since the Barcelona Report in 2003 selected it as the most suitable strategy for the EU to adopt in a globalised world. The report advocated a shift away from traditional security modelling around defence of borders and containment, in recognition that in a globalised world, "Insecurity experienced by people living in places like the Middle East has a tendency to spread" (Kaldor, M. et al, *Barcelona Report* (2004), pg. 3)

Barcelona Report was developed from the European Security Strategy (ESS), which had identified five key threats to Europe borne from regional instability and escalated by in a globalised environment. These key threats were, "terrorism, the proliferation of weapons of

mass destruction, regional conflicts, failing states, and organised crime" (European Council, *A Secure Europe in a Better World* (2003), pp. 3-5). Though 'weapons of mass destruction' has slipped from the agenda post-Iraq war and the publishing of the Iraq Survey Group report, the other four named threats have maintained their relevance a decade on.

The EES and Barcelona Report were only the beginning of EU policy formation around a concept of Human Security, in so much as they set out the challenges and threats faced by the EU, but did not propose how Human Security could be used to neutralise these threats. In answer to this the Madrid Report in 2007 proposed six principles by which Human Security should be placed at the centre of EU initiatives and civil and military missions; 1)The Primacy of Human Rights, 2) Legitimate Political Authority, 3) A Bottom-up Approach, 4) Effective Multilateralism, 5) An Integrated Regional Approach, 6) Clear and Transparent Strategic Direction (Kaldor, M. et al, *Madrid Report* (2007), pp. 4-5).

There can be many conceptualisations of a HS approach in security strategies, though the EU has focused on the definition of HS as, "the comprehensive security of people, not the security of states, encompassing both freedom from fear and freedom from want" (Ferrero-Waldner, European Commissioner (2006). As established in the Madrid Report, "Respect for Human Rights is the main challenge – not military victory or the temporary suppression of violence", and human rights in this model includes dignity as well as physical safety (Kaldor, M. et al, *Madrid Report* (2007), pg. 4).

3. THE DUBLIN REGULATION

The EU's reaction to the Syrian Refugee Crisis has by its own admission been inconsistent in its effectiveness; with divisions among member states as how best to respond to the humanitarian crisis. In a press release in October 2015, the European Commission warned that, "Member States must also ensure proper implementation of EU law", referring to the Common European Asylum System guidelines and stating there had been 40 warning letters sent to member states the previous month, "in addition to the 34 already pending cases, on potential or actual infringements of EU asylum legislation" (European Commission (2015)). This high level of infractions by the member states highlights a key criticism of the EU, that in times of international crisis it lacks a cohesive plan of action due to the diverging interests of the member states.

The European Commission has recognised the structural weakness of the current asylum and migration policy and in April 2016 reported, "it is time for progress to be made in reforming the EU's existing framework so as to ensure a humane and efficient asylum policy," (European Commission (2016), pg. 2) listing the Dublin protocol, differing levels of treatment of asylum seekers across the Member States, and the lack of a centralised EU asylum agency as areas requiring immediate attention (European Commission (2016), pp. 4-6). By May, the Dublin Regulation in particular has been identified as the most in need of reform owing to the admittance that, "The current Dublin system was not designed for situations of large-scale uncontrolled arrivals and does not ensure a sustainable and fair sharing of responsibility for asylum applicants across the Union" (European Commission (2016a). The lack of fairness of the current system has also been blamed for leading to, "complex and lengthy procedures, which in turn creates a disincentive for compliance with the rules by applicants", as well as disenfranchised Member States failing to meet all of CEAS guidelines as they are overwhelmed and under disproportionate pressure (European Commission (2016a)).

The continuation of the Dublin Regulation in times of international crises, such as during the current refugee and migrant flow, would be incompatible with the Human Security approach which the EU has advocated. As exemplified by recent events, the disproportionate strain placed on Southern and Eastern European members has led to the breakdown of asylum

processing systems which has had the direct impact of the failure to implement primacy of human rights. The UN High Commission for Refugees has collected evidence of, "inhuman detention conditions in several EU member states", and specifically referred to the draconian actions of the Czech Republic who have, "routinely subjected these migrants and refugees to detention for 40 days…in conditions which have been described as degrading" (Carrera et al (2015), pp. 13-15).

Dublin system in this instance is not the best method for creating effective multilateralism or providing clear and transparent strategic direction among EU member states, so it is necessary for the EU to amend the regulation to increase fairness and efficiency which they have proposed doing through the adoption of a 'fairness mechanism'. This mechanism would link member states responsibility for processing asylum applications and resettlement to their size of population and total GDP - with equal weighting on both considerations (European Commission (2016a). This would re-balance the disparity of burden placed on countries such as Greece, Hungary and the Czech Republic, towards their wealthier and more populous neighbours in Western Europe.

The Human Rights Commissioner for the Council of Europe has said that the Dublin system doesn't conform with international human rights standards, and it also fails to take account of the refugees' personal preference towards settlement country including family reunification (Carrera et al (2015), pp. 13-14). This sentiment is echoed by civil and human rights organisations such as Amnesty International - "Persevering with a system that has stranded 50,000 refugees in Greece in dire conditions is nothing short of madness" (Amnesty International (2016). Discussions regarding revision of the Dublin Regulation are on-going in the European Commission, though it is likely to be a protracted process as all member states must agree and there is strong opposition from the UK despite them being able to opt out of EU asylum policies.   The following section of this paper will look in more detail at the divisions present in the EU, and evaluate the impact of Human Security concepts on the member states policies towards the current refugee crisis.

4. DISCUSSION

In order to examine the new concept of HS as opposed to theory, it is important to highlight some basic premises of the term "security". In its simplest meaning, security refers to a situation of immunity from "fear" and "threat" (Trager and Kronenberg, 1973). Until the end of the bi-polar world, the security was described with reference to state. However, defined as, there is a search for reconceptualising security with new reference points instead of state. In this context, HS claims to be an alternative to the classical notion of state security perspective. HS equals to an understanding of where state's security perspectives and/or practices are considered as "inadequate" and/or even "guilty" to provide security for people. The fundamental argument of HS is its acceptance of individuals as the main referent or reference point in terms of security with a notion of 'responsibility to protect' (R2P) (Kaldor, 2007). That is why HS is the product of searching new referential points to security rather than the nation state. For HS this new referent is the individuals (Newman, 2010): 'With human security [the individual 'qua person', rather than 'qua citizen'] becomes the ultimate actor. His/her security is the ultimate goal' (Chandler, 2008).

Although HS can be seen as an example of 'broadening' (Buzan: 1991) the scope of security studies, HS defines security in a narrow sense. First of all, a political context is needed in order to talk about the phenomenon of security. Security is a political issue which requires the political will of a political society and an entity. In this sense, security is not safety. It refers to a situation and an act in which a political society is secure physically and mentally (norms, rules etc.). The examination of HS from a critical theory perspective which asserts that, 'theory

is always for somebody and for some purpose' (Cox, 1981) can help enhance HS both in theory and practice.

So as to get closer to an "interest-free" HS notion, the CT may provide the necessary analytical tools to criticize HS. Especially, the CT's aim of revealing the power and interest structures that lay beneath the interstate relations and international politics may help prevent HS from being a foreign policy tool. In conclusion it is possible to say that HS is notional rather than being practical or implementable.

5. CONCLUSION

HS first emerged as a policy rather than a theoretical approach. It evolved into a practical diplomatic tool with the help of the theoretical developments about the issue. Now HS became one of the important aspects of the political, economic, military and psychological campaigns.

The EU has embraced HS as a framework for building a new model of international intervention and diplomacy, moving away from state-centric defence of borders and national interests. This is still a relatively new security model reflecting a globalised world, and it provides a way for the EU to build its credentials as a global security actor without forsaking the 'soft power' methods which have been its mainstay since inception.

The handling of the Syrian refugee crisis thus far has been a period of learning for the EU, as it has faced criticism from human rights groups due to the actions of some member states and has attempted to move from reactionary to mid to long-term planning in its security frameworks. The HS approach has not yet been fully embedded in all member states security policies and it will take some time to do so, but it is well on its way to becoming the kitemark for effective multilateral action in international crises.

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[i] For practical usages of HS, both as a foreign policy tool and a set of values and norms, see Fakiolas: 2011.

[ii] UNDP, *Human Development Report,* 1994: 3. In: Newman, 2013.

[iii] For an argument that elaborates HS as a response to the failure of national security paradigms, see Grayson, 2009 and Shani, 2007.

[iv] It should be noted that although HS scholars agree about the main referent should be the individual; they disagree about the main threats to them. See Newman, 2013.

[v] This definition of HS is taken from the report, 'Human Security Now' prepared by the Commission on Human Security and presented to the United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan on 1 May 2003. www.humansecurity-chs.org and see Sandra MacLean et al (2006).

[vi] The difference of CT from the post-modern critical theory is its notions of "enlightenment" and "emancipation". See Linklater, 2001.

[vii] Harold Dwight Lasswell was the first to develop such a notion in political science with his book *Politics: Who Gets What, When, How*.

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