

**CONCEPTUALISING SECURITY IN INTERNATIONAL  
RELATIONS: A CRITICAL REFLECTION ON HUMAN  
SECURITY AND ITS ENGAGEMENT WITH EMANCIPATION**

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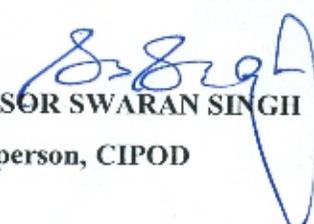
**DECLARATION**

I declare that the dissertation entitled "CONCEPTUALISING SECURITY IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS: A CRITICAL REFLECTION ON HUMAN SECURITY AND ITS ENGAGEMENT WITH EMANCIPATION," submitted by me, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of **Master of Philosophy** of Jawaharlal Nehru University is my own work. The dissertation has not been submitted for any other degree of this University or any other university.

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**CERTIFICATE**

We recommend that this dissertation be placed before the examiners for evaluation.

  
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*Dedicated to Ma and Baba*

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## ABBREVIATIONS

ARF	ASEAN Regional Forum
ASEAN	Association of the South East Asian Nations
HDI	Human Development Index
HGI	Human Governance Index
NGOs	Non Governmental Organizations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UN	United Nations
USA	United States of America
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
WOMP	World Order Model Project

## INTRODUCTION

Traditionally, security has been defined and conceptualised primarily at the level of the state and almost exclusively through the military prism and this thinking, in spite of being modified, continues to dominate the discourse on security. There are multiple extensions of the concept of security which has not been adequately conceptualised. The notion of human security represents one such extension. Conceptualising human security and to explore its emancipatory potential is the aim of this study.

Despite the numerous efforts by scholars of security studies to conceptualise 'security' in a coherent and systematic way, no single, generally accepted definition of security has been produced. It is pointed out that, 'security is a contested concept which defies the pursuit of an agreed general definition' (Buzan 1991: 15-16). The concept of security has evolved considerably over the years. Traditionally, the state has been the referent object for the understanding of security. This exclusive focus on external military threat to national security was particularly dominant during the Cold War. It would be misleading, however, to associate the origins of security studies with the Cold War and the attendant nuclear threat. It is observed that 'the focus of security studies grew narrower and more rigid during the Cold War than it had been before' (Baldwin 1995: 119). To understand the impact of the Cold War on thinking about national security, it is necessary to examine the pre-Cold War scholarship on the subject. The interwar period was of significance to the development of security studies.

In the first decade after the Second World War, academic interest in security studies increased significantly. Although questions of national security were usually treated within the broader framework of international relations and foreign policy, this period has been described as 'the most creative and exciting period in the entire history of security studies' (Baldwin 1995: 121). Two major graduate schools devoted exclusively to international affairs were founded in the United States: these were the schools at the Johns Hopkins University and Columbia University. Influential research centres focusing

on national security were established at Yale, Columbia and Chicago. During this period two major academic journals were founded, *International Organization* (1947) and *World Politics* (1948), both of which have been functioning as a platform for a scholarly debate on national security.

Baldwin (1995: 122) identifies four recurrent themes during the period between 1945 and 1955. First, security was viewed not as the primary goal of all states at all times but rather as one among several values, the relative importance of which varied across time and space. Second, national security was viewed as a goal to be pursued by both military and nonmilitary techniques of statecraft. Third, the emphasis on caution and prudence with respect to military policy were commonplace. Fourth, much scholarly attention was devoted to the relationship between national security and domestic affairs, such as the economy, civil liberties and democratic political processes. This relatively broad notion of security reflects in certain respects, the contemporary debate in security studies on the 'broadening' and the 'deepening' of security. Considering these overlaps, a question could be raised as to why the work of scholars prior to 1955 has been almost entirely ignored. As Baldwin (1995: 122) argues: 'it is as if the field came to be so narrowly defined in later years that the questions addressed during these early years were no longer considered to belong to the field of security studies'.

Throughout the Cold War era, several approaches to security were developed in relation to the conflict between the 'East' and the 'West'. The driving force in this debate was the presence of nuclear weapons which altered international relations and security studies fundamentally owing to its destructive potential. The end of the Cold War offered scholars of international relations and security studies, an opportunity to focus on subjects other than theories of deterrence and balance of power. The first signs of a trend towards the expansion of the notion of security could be traced to the late 1960s, when Robert McNamara suggested that security implied the freedom of a state to develop and improve its position in the future:

‘Security is development and without development there can be no security [...] development means economic, social and political progress. It means a reasonable standard of living, and reasonable in this context requires continual redefinition; what is reasonable in an earlier stage of development will become unreasonable at a later stage’ (Mc Namara 1968: 149-150).

The growing influence of scholars seeking to broaden the notion of security has important implications for both academic and policy discourses. From the late 1980s onwards, there has been a tendency among academics, law enforcement agencies and political thinkers to develop a concept of security that links together a range of security issues as diverse as terrorism, drug trafficking, transnational organised crime and illegal migration and asylum seekers. This entails an evaluation as to what constitutes the human security approach to security. It could be variously termed as human needs approach, human development approach etc. Human beings, by definition, need a number of essentials to survive. In the opinion of Abraham Maslow and John Burton, these essentials go beyond just food, water and shelter (Maslow 1943; Burton 1997). They include both physical and non-physical elements needed for human growth and development, as well as all those things that humans are innately driven to attain. Being not able to meet these needs could be potentially dangerous for the society as it weakens the base of the society. ‘It breeds structural violence’ (Galtung 1969).

Prior to the idea of human security entering into national security perspectives, the concepts of balance of power and collective security dominated the theory and practice of International Relations. Collective security has not worked because UN sanctions have not been effective. Threats to security from environmental degradation, depletion of natural resources, terrorism, natural disasters, and economic globalisation can be handled, by doing it in cooperation with other states far more effectively rather than alone.

The *Global Human Development Report* released by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in 1994 was the first international document which clearly and explicitly articulated human security as a concept for vision and an agenda for action

(UNDP 1994). Closely associated with this idea from the beginning was Mahbub Ul Haq, the former Finance Minister of Pakistan and consultant for UNDP. It is under his initiative that the Human Development Index (HDI) and Human Governance Index (HGI) were prepared. The paper, *New Imperatives of Human Security* that he published in 1994 provides a theoretical explanation for human security and paved the way for its global acceptance (Haq 1994). This report proposed a shift from conventional security dilemma – which is rooted in militaristic terms – to human security which focuses more on the issue of basic human needs. It is these basic needs which plague the lives of the human being. The human security approach has been promoted by a number of trend-setting commissions: the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty, which promoted the ‘Responsibility to Protect’; the Ogata-Sen Committee; and the recent Human Security Commission.

It has to be recognised that people constitute the means and the end of development. The living condition of people seems to be a reasonable yardstick for measuring the success of any development initiative. Economic growth and military budget spending does not always mean that the quality of life of the individual is also good. Critical approaches towards human security could answer the questions left unanswered by the mainstream contemporary discourse. Alternative approaches of security could only be brought into existence if the ‘emancipation of the species’ is taken to be the aim of academic endeavour.

The literature on security ranged from an attempt at understanding a generally agreed notion of security to those explaining different sets of issues, purposes and values which has given rise to various conflicting theories on security. The following section will outline the way conceptualisation of the notion of security has taken place over the years.

One of the first documents which highlighted the variety of problems facing humankind other than the territorial threats was in 1970s when the Club of Rome came out with a series of volumes on the complex problems facing human kind. The title of the report was *The Limits to Growth*. The group proposed that there were alternative ways to

conceptualise global development so as to ensure that global security is achieved and sustained.

Conceptualisation of threat in contemporary political literature is derived from the neo-realist tradition which formulates a zero-sum approach to the resolution of any conflict. In the neo-realist view, the response to a physical attack is the deployment of counter-attack. Here violence is also defined in terms of physical blow. A policy that does not involve the use of force, security specialists would argue, falls outside the scope of security altogether. Realism's appropriation of the term security rests on the assumption that interstate war is the greatest threat to personal safety and freedom. However, this view is flawed. Whereas war as an institution is highlighted, the causes of war are not examined. 'A vast literature on the causes of war has appeared, but this literature says little about how war can be prevented. To quote Van Evera, 'stock of hypotheses on the causes of war is large, but not useful' (Van Evera 1999: 1).

A major difference between the traditional thinking on security and the non-traditional approach is that in the latter, the referent object is the individual. Fundamental questions are sought to be answered by the two strands: security for whom and of which values. Yet another question that necessitates analysis is the following: security from what threats and security by what means. In the traditional thinking the answers are given from the perspective of the state. A major hallmark of the non-traditional approach is the human security approach. The idea of human security is generally thought to go back to the UNDP report of 1994. Closely associated with the idea from the beginning was the consulting economist, the late Mahbub ul Haq, who had earlier played a key role in the formulation of the Human Development Index (HDI) and who was subsequently the driving force behind the more recent Humane Governance Index (HGI). Haq's approach is outlined in his paper, '*New Imperatives of Human Security*' (Haq 1994). He was of the opinion that the whole concept of the security needs to be changed and fashioned in a different way so as to serve the people and not just provide the security for the territory. The

notion of human security is given a more concrete shape in another book of Haq titled *Reflections on Human Development* (Haq 1995). The book offers a new vision of human security for the twenty-first century where real security is equated with security of people in their homes, their jobs, their communities, and their environment.

However, this book is not an attempt to critique the neo-realist vision of the attainment of security by the states. It does raise a question as to what constitutes threat for a state which in a way points towards the shortcomings of the neo-realist vision of anarchy and threat. 'Survival, self preservation and therefore security are thus, according to a neorealist, best achieved by having a strong military and preparing for war whether it comes or not' (Rudolph 2003: 5). Waltz goes as far as to apply Hobbes's state of nature to the realm of international politics, by declaring that 'among men, as among states, anarchy, or the absence of government is associated with the occurrence of violence' (Waltz 1979: 102; Hobbes: 1968). 'The Hobbesian attitude that realists take towards security in International Relations was particularly popular in the bi-polar world of the cold war, an era of arms racing and zero sum politics' (Rudolph 2003: 5).

The state centric nature of a neo-realist approach is perhaps best captured by Walt (1991: 212) when he defines security as being 'the study of the threat and use and control of military force'. The state is the only legitimate user of military force. 'While some neo-realists such as Waltz agree that economic security is also somewhat important, they only see it as important so that money is available in order to build more powerful militaries' (Glaser 2010: 21). State centrism, a central facet of neo-realism, means that it fails to effectively deal with security issues such as food insecurity, energy security, disease and environmental issues. It is inadequate to deal with security on a multi-level basis. The dynamic of security and conflict is moving away from the traditional inter-state model. For example, 'in Sub-Saharan Africa, of twenty-six conflicts in the region between 1963 and 1998, nineteen were internal civil

wars as a result of ethnicity, power-sharing and factional rivalries' (Luiz 2006: 633). 'Countries such as the Democratic Republic of Congo have been made insecure by internal factors such as infectious diseases, economic misconduct and a volatile political situation' (Marriage 2010: 353).

Cooperation among various actors is needed to deal with the above-mentioned problems. To make this possible, existence of actors other than the state has to be acknowledged. There has to be an agreement as to what constitutes 'security'. David Baldwin's work 'the concept of security' deserves mention in this context. According to him, security policies are those actions one takes to reduce or limit the probability of damage to one's acquired values. It is on the 'acquired values' that the states differ. Unless there is a consensus on this, human security cannot be achieved as pointed out by Mahbul ul Haq's '*New Imperatives of Human Security*' (Haq 1994). According to him, human security will be achieved through 'development, not...through arms'. He emphasized that north-south partnership has to be there so as to implement the new conception of security *i.e.* human security. As a result, legitimate concerns of ordinary people were overlooked or ignored.

However, the concept of human security is criticised by many authors. It has been criticised as 'an illustrative laundry list of threats: disease, terrorism, and poverty' (Bajpai 2000) The Report lists seven 'components' or 'seven specific values of human security economic security, food security, health security, environmental security, personal security, community security, and political security'. The problem with this approach is that all forms of threats are mentioned. The fault lies with the lack of definitional boundaries in the concept of human security. It is too broad. Because the concept encompasses both physical security and more general notions of economic and social well-being, 'it is impractical to talk about certain socioeconomic factors 'causing' an increase or decline in human security, given that these factors are themselves part of the definition of human security' (Paris 2004). A precise definition of human security is needed so as to deal with the cause which creates an obstacle in the attainment of human security. Discussions on human security have produced little or no headway in producing

a concrete result in terms of bringing the concept of human security into existence. Many are in favour of an open-ended definition but the problem with this view is that it has become an all-inclusive concept which represents holism but little else.

Perhaps the most striking feature of these exchanges is how strongly committed some of the contributors are to the open ended definition, even to the point of suggesting that those who prefer a narrower definition are actually ‘complicit’ in the very structures that cause ‘human insecurity’ (Bellamy and McDonald 2002). Among the most vocal promoters of human security are Canada and Norway, which have taken the lead in establishing a ‘human security network’ of states and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) that endorse the concept.

Nonetheless, sceptics dismiss the notion of human security as ‘the latest in the long line of neologisms including global security, comprehensive security’ (Paris 2001). Many academic writings on the subject have been equally vague which goes on to validate the claim made by Kanti Bajpai that contemporary literature on human security indeed represents a ‘laundry list’. Laura Reed and Majid Tehranian list human security’s ten constituent elements—including psychological security, which ‘hinges on establishing conditions fostering respectful, loving, and humane interpersonal relations’ (Reed and Tehranian 1999: 39 and 47). For Robert Bedeski, human security includes ‘the totality of knowledge, technology, institutions and activities that protect, defend and preserve the biological existence of human life; and the processes which protect and perfect collective peace and prosperity to enhance human freedom’ (Bedeski 2000).

Human security is a concept which needs to be ‘filled with content’ (Dahl-Eriksen 2007). To writers like Bajpai, Dahl-Eriksen’s broadening of the parameter of the concept produces difficulty in terms of formulation of policies meant to realise ‘human security’ but it is unavoidable. Critical theories on the other hand are highly sceptical of the human security approach. They view it as a problem-solving approach, not much dissimilar to the mainstream theories on security. Then there is the danger of co-optation of the

concept of human security by state-centric theories. The problem with this is that the scholarly writings on human security wishes to be policy-relevant. When policy relevance is present, it has to modify its language according to the wishes of the state. Here, again there arises the need to prioritise the issues as ‘not everything is a matter of national importance’ (Paris 2004).

Critical approaches, like human security, challenge most of the key features of (neo) realism: its emphasis upon parsimony and coherence; its privileging of a rational, state centric worldview based upon the primacy of military power in an anarchic environment; ‘its emphasis upon order and its structural, ahistorical, recurrent, and non-contextual character’ (Newman 2010). It could also be said that there is an agenda in trying to hide the issues highlighted by human security approach. It serves the purpose of the state to give importance to those issues that ensures its superior position and maintains a hierarchy in the political scenario. Questions of internal security, local violence and food security of the masses are not accorded position higher up the ladder of the processes of policy-formulations. Many scholars see this as an attempt to regulate and order the globe on behalf of the hegemonic power. What is needed is the de-politicisation of the issues. Human security approach that is promoted by the contemporary academic literature is flawed. The basic premise of human security is ‘freedom from want’ and ‘freedom from fear’.

Critical approaches towards human security could answer the questions left unanswered by the human security approach that is propagated by the contemporary discourse. Alternative approaches could only be brought into existence if ‘emancipation of the species’ is taken to be the aim of academic endeavour. Associated with this idea is the view that being unable to meet the basic needs can be potentially dangerous for the society as it weakens the base of the society. Little attention has been paid to the subjective understanding of the actor. ‘International Relations theory has almost been defined by its worship of the state-as-actor, and the consequent downplaying of the role, or fate, of individuals or other actors’ (Smith 2004).

Scholars such as Jean Dreze and Amartya Sen also discuss the historical antecedents of the political and social neglects, including the distortion of policy priorities arising from inequalities of political power (Dreze and Sen 1996). This is mentioned in the context of an assessment of India's failure to eliminate basic deprivations. The authors also discuss the historical antecedents of political and social neglects, including the distortion of policy priorities arising from inequalities of political power. All these highlights a fact that a country strong in militaristic terms does not necessarily mean it is secured.

A theoretical and academic initiative wedded to emancipatory criticism is needed to fill the gap that exists between what exists in the name of human security and what is needed to be practised if security of the individual is to be ensured.

The following section provides definition, rationale and scope of this dissertation:

Mainstream security studies provide a state-centric definition of security which considers state as the referent object of security studies. However, this conceptualisation of security is contradictory in nature. Security, when conceptualised in this way, breeds insecurity. The state is privileged whose existence is not questioned. The individual is considered less important than the state.

The notion of security has not been conceptualised by taking into account its various implications. The rationale of the study is to explore the reasons behind this and to locate human security in critical security studies. The aim of the study is meant to draw focus on the conceptualisation of human security in the mainstream international relations theory and to draw a link between human security and emancipation. Emancipation, here, does not mean freeing of the species only. It also means freeing the discipline of security studies from the grip of militaristic, state centrism and to highlight the possibility of the conceptualising security in such a way so as to rid of the dominant, deterministic

theoretical paradigm. However, human security does not guarantee security. It only opens up ways through which security of the individual could be realised.

This study is theoretical in nature. Case studies are not a part of this study. This study would focus on mainstream conceptualisation of human security and to draw the link between human security and emancipation.

The study aims to raise these following questions through the successive chapters:

1. How is security conceptualised in International Relations?
2. What explains the limited conceptualisation of security in mainstream International Relations theory?
3. To what extent is the conception of human security related to the notion of emancipation?

At the beginning of the study, the following hypotheses were stated:

1. The assumptions of fear and insecurity have led to a conception of security, which is framed in terms of othering in mainstream International Relations.
2. The human security perspective, in spite of considering the individual as the referent object, privileges the state, which in turn hinders the prospects for emancipation.

At the end of the study, the hypotheses have been proved and strengthened. Following are the inferences that have been drawn:

1. The assumptions of fear and insecurity have led to a conception of security, which is framed in terms of othering in mainstream International Relations.

2. Othering in mainstream International Relations can be attributed to exclusion of the notion of difference and a perpetual preoccupation with objectivity.
3. The human security perspective, in spite of considering the individual as the referent object, privileges the state, which in turn hinders the prospects for emancipation.
4. The theoretical tendency of privileging the state rationalises its dominant and deterministic character which obstructs the scope for emancipation.

Inferences (2) and (4) have been derived during the course of the study and added accordingly.

The study primarily uses the qualitative method. As the nature of the study is conceptual and theoretical, qualitative method is deemed appropriate and useful. The study is structured into two parts; the first deals with the conceptualisation of security in mainstream international relations theory and the second examines the link between human security and emancipation. Conceptualisation of security is the dependent variable, which has been attributed to 'othering' which in turn flows from the assumptions of fear and insecurity. It could be argued that the assumptions of fear and insecurity constitute the independent variable. In the second part of the study, the notion of emancipation could be considered as the dependent variable. An important finding of this study is that the state has a profound impact on emancipation considerably reducing its scope and prospects. The study has made use of major writings of theorists in International Relations. Secondary sources have been consulted extensively in this regard.

#### Organisation of the dissertation

Chapter II deals with the conceptualisation of security in mainstream international relations theory. Chapter III is an attempt at locating human security in critical security studies. Chapter IV discusses the link between human security and emancipation, one of the cornerstones of the critical theory.

Chapter II throws light on the limitations of conceptualisation of the notion of security in mainstream international relations. Starting with the Cold War days, the discipline concerned itself with issues exclusively related to the security of the state. The state was the unit of analysis. Thus the discipline privileged the position of the state and considered it as the main focus. The positivist paradigm is used to theorise the state and consequently security also as any discussion of the latter is dominated by state only. What has emerged is the generalised notion of the term security laden with orthodoxy. The theoretical formulations on security demonstrated an attempt at homogenisation. In the process what is ignored is the possibility that security could have multiple extensions also. Haftendorn (1991: 15) argues that the field of security studies 'suffers from the absence of a common understanding of what security is, how it can be conceptualised, and what its most relevant research questions are'. The security studies that had evolved by the middle of the twentieth century had essentially a top-down approach. The entire vocabularies on security were drawn up as a part of the formulations of the department of defence in respective states. Realism, neorealism and neo-liberalism highlight the anarchic nature of international politics and thus highlight survival as the main concern of the state.

The discipline of security studies, as described by the dominant theories like realism, neorealism and rational choice have shown a tendency to divorce facts from values. These theories are constructed about the political situation of a given time period. After tracing the growth of the discipline in the earlier times, the chapter discusses the challenges posed to it by the changing scenario of international politics. Safeguarding the 'sovereignty' of the state was not the sole issue anymore. There are now different notions of security seen and defined through different perspectives. These notions have brought to the fore many assumptions that accompanied the various notions of security. Now, security becomes a hollow concept if it does not ensure individual security. However, intra-state politics is still considered to be an area where the national government has exclusive right to make and enforce laws. The unit of analysis is the state. Though there are disputes regarding this but there is no contention that state centrism is a dominant feature in the discourse on international security.

Chapter III locates human security in Critical Security Studies. Human security places emphasis on the transformation of the goals of the security policies. Critical security studies also challenges the traditional definitions of security and attempts to arrive at a broader definition of security that encompasses the role of different actors and different threats. This concern is addressed by the human security approach also. Human security tries to give space to threats that are human/individual-centric rather than only focusing on the state.

Chapter IV examines the link between human security and emancipation. There is a scope for broadening the notion of security in order to incorporate various forms of threats, actors and responses. There has been an attempt all along to formulate threats as that arising out from exclusively state centric perspective. Human security, at the very outset, places human beings at the centre of the security debate. The concept of human security is consistent with the concept of emancipation – both engage in normative enquiry. Human security by highlighting the ‘freedom’ of the individual becomes closer to the approaches of critical theory. Critical theory challenges the positivist, problem-solving nature of the traditional theoretical formulations. Security, if conceptualised in this manner, involves few actors and becomes deterministic in nature.

Chapter V is conclusion that summarises the findings of the study.

The aim of this dissertation is to emphasise the state-centric nature of the mainstream literature on security studies and to provide a link between human security and emancipation. The subsequent chapters will substantiate the aforementioned aim.

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## EXPLAINING THE CONCEPTUALISATION OF SECURITY IN MAINSTREAM INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS THEORY

This chapter would focus on the way the notion of security has been formulated and conceptualised in mainstream international relations theory. In doing so, this chapter would dwell on the nature of such conceptualisation and the limitations inherent in it. Security studies has long been concerned only with war and the means to prevent war. During the Cold War, this was accompanied by thinking on nuclear strategy, nuclear deterrence, arms control and grand strategy. Issues affecting the individual were thought fit to be relegated to the background of any discussion on international security.

Security, in its simplest definition, has always been explained as the absence of threat. Conceptualisation of security in International Relations has given rise to various paradigms thereby triggering a seemingly never ending debate. These paradigms could broadly be divided into two groups: that of the mainstream theories and their critics. The former considers state as the referent object of security studies and the latter opines that security studies cannot consider the state as the referent object as it leads to trivialisation of the individual and gives rise to insecurity. Mainstream theories privilege the state and thus a common vision of security is shared. Critics of mainstream theories are of the opinion there can never be a universally valid definition of security.

What constitutes security? Why are some issues 'securitised' in this way, while others are not? Despite the numerous efforts by scholars of security studies to conceptualise 'security' in a coherent and systematic way, no single, generally accepted definition of security has been produced. 'Security is a contested concept which defies the pursuit of an agreed general definition' (Buzan 1991: 15-16). The most common perception of security is held to be the security of the states. Survival of the state is given prime importance in the prevailing literature on international security. Traditionally, security is seen exclusively the prism of military and defined at level of the state. This is a resultant

of the dichotomy between 'high politics' and 'low politics'. Issues that are considered as worth fighting for are the focus of high politics. This worth is determined by the extent to which it holds significance for the survival of the state.

The state is the unit of analysis and continues to be a privileged entity. The discipline of International Relations considers discussions on the state as its main focus. Deterministic theorisation of the state resulted in the conception of the 'grand theories' explaining the nature and role of the state. This theorisation has been dominated by a notion of orthodoxy. Adhering to a positivist paradigm while theorising about the state is the discerning feature of this orthodoxy. The fetish for positivism has resulted in the conjuring up of a concept of security that is dictated by a notion of generality (generalising the observation of a particular phenomenon). The main folly of the positivist paradigm is that it has no regard for subjectivity. Differences are not appreciated by this paradigm. Phenomenons are homogenised and are grouped under a single definition. Security, for long, was dominated by this paradigm. The major theoretical formulations on security demonstrated an attempt at homogenisation. Thus state as the rational actor was the main focus of the major theories of international relations. As a consequence many issues were not taken into consideration while formulating postulates of international security.

What was ignored was that security is a concept that could have multiple extensions also. This has resulted in a one-sided explanation of the notion of security. Issues that threaten security in terms of well-being of individuals have been ignored. Moreover, security has always been associated with the nation's security and durability. Wolfers (1952: 483) has characterised national security as an 'ambiguous symbol' which, if used without specifications, 'leaves room for more confusion than sound political counsel or scientific usage can afford'. This segregates an area exclusively dominated by a version of security that cannot be touched by anything not related to the 'national security'. 'Because national security issues are highly politicised and the resources at stake are enormous, works on these topics is often written for political rather than scientific goals' (Walt

1987). This works in favour of the dominance of the state-centric theories of international relations. Haftendorn (1991: 15) argues that the field of security studies 'suffers from the absence of a common understanding of what security is, how it can be conceptualised, and what its most relevant research questions are'. This echoes Wolfers' thought on security that 'they may not mean the same thing to different people. They may not have any precise meaning at all'. (Wolfers 1952: 481). This reflects what has been stated earlier which is that an attempt at homogenization cannot possibly result in the genesis of a definition of security that is understood by all because many factors gets excluded while formulating such a definition.

The perception of threat is also an important dimension here. Threat is also perceived differently by different entities; entities imply states in this context. Consequently, the problem arises as to when the notion of security is used or mentioned in the literature on international relations. Security is mainly used in relation to the state. The state is given the sole responsibility in the task of systematising the idea of security.

'As a result, scholarship tends to concentrate on manipulable variable, on relationships that can be altered by deliberate acts of policy. Given the military power is the central focus of the field and is subject to political control, this tendency is appropriate' (Walt 1991: 212).

The earlier literature on security had a very general demeanor. 'Security studies may be defined as the study of the threat, use, and control of military force' (Nye and Lynn-Jones, 1988). Security, when conceived in this way gives an undue privilege to the institution of war and conflict. However, the literature on security in the inter-war period was concerned itself with churning out a rich scholarship on security studies. It was devoid of the stress that was given on anarchy and suspicion that was prevalent in the literature produced in the Cold War days as was evident in the works of Kenneth Waltz (1979), Joseph Grieco (1988) and Robert Jervis (1978). The second decade after the Second World War, 1955-65 has been described as the 'golden age' of security studies (Walt 1991: 213). However, in spite of striving to project a rational and unbiased image of the discipline of

International Relations, it failed to do so. It was coloured by the same suspicion and competition that stimulated the policy formulations of the states during the Cold War. There remained no distinction between the defence policies of a country and the scholarships produced by security studies. Also, not to be forgotten is the fact that the two major powers that dominated the Cold War politics were the USSR and the USA. Thus any security measure prescribed by any of the above mentioned states found its way into the arena of security studies.

The sphere of security studies was narrowly defined by politics at the level of the state. During this time, the discipline of International Relations was heavily tilted towards security studies which in turn was tilted heavily towards military and defence studies (e.g. Bernard Brodie's *Strategy in the Missile Age*). Bernard Brodie in yet another article considers security as 'a derivative value, being meaningful only in so far as it promotes and maintains other values' (Brodie 1949: 477).

Ignored in the process were the many causes of the conflict that may have genesis outside the conventional perception of threat originating from the territorial threat to a state. Domestic issues were completely ignored by the discipline. It was considered solely a concern of the respective national government. That domestic issues could also play an important role in the domain of international relations was not acknowledged. As Colin Gray points out, the leading strategists knew 'next to nothing' about 'peasant nationalism in Southeast Asia or about the mechanics of a counterrevolutionary war' (Gray 1982). The security studies that had evolved by the middle of the twentieth century had essentially a top-down approach. The entire vocabulary on security was drawn up as a part of the formulations of the Department of Defence. Although many doctrines were promoted as projecting the reality of the international politics at that time, it did not provide a clear understanding of the situation. The event of war was widely discussed and ample reasons were given as to why states fight with each other. But no significant study was proposed to suggest alternatives to war for resolving crises. The causes of the war were also ignored in the prevailing literature.

International Security studies were concerned with foreign policies, East-West relations, deterrence, force postures and military threats. Military security is the main referent point of security studies. Notions such as trust were absent in the mainstream literature on international relations. This could have come about only if the political atmosphere had been conducive for such thoughts to flourish.

States are surely concerned about prosperity, and thus economic calculations are not trivial for them. However, states operate in both an international political environment and an international economic environment, and the former dominates the latter in cases where the two come into conflict. The reason is simple: the international political system is anarchic, which means that each state must always be concerned to ensure its own survival. 'A state can have no higher goal than survival, since profits matter little when the enemy is occupying your country and slaughtering your citizens' (Mearsheimer 2002: 222).

'Security studies has traditionally devoted less attention to the goal of security than to the means by which it is pursued' (Baldwin 1995: 107). This explains the neglect of the other dimensions of security like economic security. Statecraft gives its assent only to the military security as securing control over this would ensure its survival and continuance. The international political climate enables states to do exactly this. With an increasing emphasis given to the anarchic nature of the international political system, the nature of security studies transforms accordingly. The actions and speeches of the statesmen were taken very seriously. However, here also discrepancy is noted here as well. It was always motivated by the East-West rivalry but seldom did any action taken by the states other than the two superpowers found their way into mainstream literature on security studies.

The end of the Cold War presented theorists with new challenges in terms of providing an appropriate term to the conundrum that was taking place in international politics. The world has been witnessing many changes. The changes that took place transformed the political situation that had given rise to an era of suspicion, arm-race and arms-build up.

With the apparent rivalry between the East-West gone, there are new variables and determinants dictating world politics. The erstwhile constituents of the Soviet Union were in the process of giving up their stock of nuclear weapons; these include Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Ukraine. The constant threat to US hegemony was gone. Acceleration of globalization was emerging as the new social and political reality. Cooperation and interdependence became the new catch-phrase. The violent ethnic conflicts in the Balkans and the questions pertaining to the merging of nations with the national boundaries were not ignored by political commentators. However, it was kept at the periphery. The international community tried to stop the conflict that was raging in Somalia. However, this show of concern was missing when the Hutu-Tutsi conflict in Rwanda led to the killing of over 500000 and left millions homeless (Des Forges 1999). One major folly of the cold war security studies was to neglect the domestic politics within the states. However, after the end of the Cold War, it became impossible to do so anymore. The doctrine of containment could not have been followed. The regions were not as pronounced politically as it was in the decades preceding 1990s when the two ideologies separated them. There was the danger of spilling of one conflict from one country to another. The threats to security had by now taken different forms and proportions. Armed conflicts were not the only threats.

Security, in the post cold war era, was not seen through the lens of national security only. There was the danger of developing an ethnocentric (culturally biased) notion of security which could only push the notion towards a narrow domain. The dimension of 'societal security' has been neglected by many eminent theorists of International Relations in the Cold War days. What should be the focus or the main referent point for the discussions on security? In terms of what was being witnessed, there was a large scale regional integration in Europe, strengthening of the regional organisations and the outbreak of conflicts leading to tensions in many regions of the world. The political order based on the state system was still a viable concept and a reality. However, the safeguarding of the 'sovereignty' of the state was not the sole issue anymore. The current era of globalisation has brought with it several risks such as an increased use of environmental resources which has resulted in a process of environmental degradation. There exists a global

economic system wherein the financial market of one country is linked to another. It is clear that conceptualisation of security cannot take place only at the level of the state. The above-mentioned factors have made international security really fragile. The presence of a global community or a global society can effectively deal with these issues and maintain order in the world and amongst states.

Moreover, the importance that is given to the maintenance of order in international politics undermines many other factors that the notion of security could ensure. The notion of justice is one such concept that the discipline of International Relations has quite often neglected. Security becomes a hollow concept if it does not ensure individual security. However, this security has to be ensured by a collective entity. This entity or enterprise is responsible for the well being of the individual. The state is such an enterprise that could do this. Security, if it is to be ensured by military or diplomatic means, must always possess this element of justice. Security, which is provided by the state, has only one dimension *i.e.* military security. The prevalent literature has mostly given stress on this dimension. That the state in order to ensure order and security must not neglect the notion of justice has not been highlighted by many theorists. Hence what has come out of the literature is a one-sided picture of the enterprise called state. The nature of the state that is portrayed is one which is oppressive. Its most important function is to ensure justice for individuals. Condorcet wrote before the French Revolution, 'of all the words which console and reassure men, justice is the only one which the oppressor does not dare to pronounce, while humanity is on the lips of all tyrants' (Condorcet 1776: 167).

In the opinion of Emma Rothschild (1995: 6) 'the ideas of the individual security was present in seventeenth century political thought as well'. The initiatives to include elements of individual security taken by various reports and commissions are nothing new. It was intentionally kept out of the purview of the mainstream literature on security as giving it importance would take away the focus from state – the main referent point. The Brundtland Commission Report, the Palme Commission, and the Human

Development Report – all these have highlighted the need to ensure individual security. The primary question now is to ascertain the importance of the goal of military security as against and in relation to other forms of security. Moreover, these other forms of security cannot be managed by conventional military means. State-centrism which is evident in international relations theories seems to have been challenged by many thinkers.

The centrality of states, military force and balance of power – these were the prime movers of the Cold War politics. Needless to say, these were also derivatives of the realist paradigm. Realism has always provided the theoretical foundation for the elaboration of the above mentioned concepts and also for the neorealist formulations. Realism as a concept originated in the 1930s and intensified during the Cold War when the competition between two superpowers gained momentum. The state is the key actor in international relations. Other actors do exist but they do not count. The key realist of the period was Hans J. Morgenthau. He postulated that political realism has its roots in objective laws and this objectivity, is based on the assumption that human nature is unchangeable. Morgenthau's idea of human nature resonates with the Hobbesian notion of the nature of human beings in the state of nature *i.e.* 'solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short' (Hobbes 1968 [1651]). The actions of human beings are motivated by interest and this interest is driven by human nature. The action of a state is actually the action of the statesman in a given time period. Thus the state pursues interest according to its own will. In Realism, interest is always defined in terms of power.

'The main signpost that helps political realism to find its way through the landscape of international politics is the concept of interest defined in terms of power...we assume that statesmen think and act in terms of interest defined as power and the evidence of history bears that assumption out' (Morgenthau 1962: 5).

It is observed that realist theory of international politics will also avoid the other popular fallacy of equating the foreign policies of a statesman with his philosophic or political sympathies, and of deducing the former from the latter' (Morgenthau 1948). This view

was always promoted during the days of the Cold War. There was the dispassionate promotion of the foreign policy objectives of the dominant powers and the subsequent effort to make the people believe that these objectives should be followed to bring order to the international politics. Along with it, there was the assumption that reason will always accompany the interest of the statesman. This reason is not shadowed by the subjectivity of the thinker; it is calculated and objective reason.

According to realism, international relations concerns only states. States pursue their interests defined in terms of power. There is a need to accumulate power and it stems from the fact that the international system is anarchic in nature. It is a 'self-help' system; states have to look after themselves. Realists argue that, we still live in a nasty and brutish world where the great powers compete with each other for power. The only possible threat to realism is likely to come from inside academia, where it is frequently reviled. However, 'any attempt to silence realism within the academia is likely to fail, simply because it is so difficult to repress or exclude compelling arguments' (Mearsheimer 2002: 25).

The influence of realist paradigm within the mainstream literature could be gauged from the above-mentioned account. Domination, aggression are features that characterise the state behaviour. These are considered to be natural as they drive human behaviour. The concern for survival is the primary aim of the state; it will always try to increase the capacity to be in a dominating position in international politics. Increasing the capacity necessarily means having a strong army, arsenal and possessing sophisticated weapons. Needless to say, this results in an arms race which adds to the insecurity that prevails in the relations amongst states. This is a clear analogy to the Hobbesian state of nature. The scope of cooperation is almost negated in the realist vision of international politics. The account of international relations according to the realist school of thought is essentially state-centric.

Upholding the importance of realism by highlighting its accurate and scientific character is curbed to a great extent when it is seen that Morgenthau conceded that the meaning of the concept of interest gets its real meaning when seen in relation to the political and cultural context in the foreign policy is being formulated. He contradicts the claim of realism being universally valid by saying that ‘universal moral principles cannot be applied to the action of states in their abstract universal formulation, but...must be filtered through the concrete circumstances of time and place’ (Morgenthau 1948: 9). The rise of realism was seen as a victory against the idealist aspirations of establishing peace through the creation of the League of Nations and formulation of principles of ‘collective security’ and open diplomacy. However, the change in the political and social milieu ushered by the end of the Cold War challenged the core assumptions on which realism is based upon – balance of power and hegemonic stability. Realism’s main folly lies in its failure to consider changes taking place in the international politics. The stability created by balance of power was only a product of politics in the post-war world. Power cannot be the only driving force behind statesmen and that of state behaviour.

This state centric vision of world politics is evident in neo realism also. The main determinant of state behaviour is international structure. In the neorealist framework, states are motivated by their self-interest only. This is what drives them to compete with each other in the race for survival. States are rational actors with the sole aim to maximise benefits and minimise losses. States interact with each other in an anarchic political environment where there is no central authority imposing rules and regulations on their behaviour. States see each other as only adversaries and this adds to fear and distrust amongst them. ‘States are concerned with how much power and influence other states might achieve (relative gains) in any cooperative endeavour’ (Grieco 1988). This race to grab more and more power keeps the race for survival alive amongst the states and keeps the international system stable and hence it is more likely to persist. Order and stability are valued more *vis-à-vis* other goals. The more the system is stable, the better the chance for the powerful states to maintain their dominance over other states. Differential capabilities of the state define the system (Waltz 1979). And the state with more capabilities would be able to dominate the other states and the system too. This

explanation is too deterministic and one-sided. It fails to take into account the historical processes which brings into effect the changes in the 'system' and that in turn determines state behaviour. International system is not an entity which exists independent of contemporary changes in the world. States are part of the international system and not entities existing on their own. They are a creation of the historical processes only.

Neoliberalism also agrees that the states have to survive in an anarchic international system. It believes that states are concerned about absolute gains and it is the main aim of any cooperative behaviour. Neoliberals place stress on the mutual interest of states. Actors with common interest cooperate with each other so as to maximise their absolute gains. They give emphasis to the preferences and intentions of the actors (Keohane and Martin 1995). Mitigating the effects of anarchy by cooperating through the international institutions is important for neorealists. Though neorealism and neoliberalism both give stress on the anarchic nature of the international system, the former highlights anarchy as a permanent feature of the international system. Security dilemma cannot be diminished by cooperation as the states are always suspicious of each other's intentions and thus would give military security the most important tool for statecraft. A state will always have to be in a position to defend itself. Increasing the effectiveness of the armed forces could be seen by another state as a hostile act. Another way of looking at international security is through the democratic peace theory which propagates that wars between democracies do not take place. This is not to reject realism but it is only a means to achieve greater security. Democratic peace theory has been associated with the writings of scholars such as Bruce Russett and Michael Doyle (Russett and Doyle 1995).

Rational choice theory is not interested in the internal workings of the actor. Like realism, rational choice theory treats actors as rational and self-interested maximisers of utility (Snidel 1986). When this notion is applied in the field of security studies, security threats are universalised. The common factor that ties up rational choice theory and realism is that some forms of threats are always given more importance than others. These schools

of thought view states as the rational actors seeking to maximise their benefits in a world where zero-sum game (loss of one leads to gain of others) prevails.

Social constructivism, like neorealism, assumes that the international political system is anarchic in which the key concern for the states is to find means to survive. However the difference with the latter is that the international structure is the product of social relationships, practices, ideas and not the material capabilities of the states. According to Alexander Wendt (1992:73) argues that 'the security dilemma is a construction of the inter-subjective understandings which makes the states to be distrustful of each other and make worst-case assumption about each other's intentions'. Ideas and notions emanating from a self-help system make the states behave in such a way. It's not the system itself that defines state behaviour. However, the centrality of the role of the state is never denied by social constructivists. They share a commitment to seek and discover the truth and believe that generalised constructions of facts and theories can be created which will help in bridging the gap between 'rationalist' and 'reflectivist' theories. However, all constructivists do not adhere to these ideas uniformly. The view stated above is largely held by the 'conventional constructivists' (Hopf 1998). They are represented by scholars like Alexander Wendt (1999), Peter Katzenstein (1996), John Ruggie (1998), Emmanuel Adler (1997), and Ted Hopf (2002). This urge to seek truth and make an attempt at forming such notions makes it resemble the problem-solving theories which try to arrive at generalised theories. Thus, Steve Smith sees constructivism to be 'far more "rationalist" than "reflectivist"' (Smith 1999: 683). Critical theorists do not place the state at the centre of the security debate. According to them, security can be best assured through 'human emancipation' wherein individuals and not the state would be the main referent.

The discipline of security studies, as described by the dominant theories like realism, neorealism and rational choice theory have shown a tendency to divorce facts from values. These theories are constructed keeping in mind, the political situation of a given time period. However, they cannot be applied uniformly to explain any phenomenon in

any part of the world. They have to be supported by specific social forces to interpret them. No theory on world politics can be wholly parsimonious. Security concerns of a state are bound to be different from that of any other state. Moreover, there can be no neutral explanation of politics. These realities are not acknowledged by the dominant theories of security studies.

What is security? Several debates about the concept have not yielded any concrete result. The subject of security has received significant importance from the scholars of International Relations. In the Cold War as well as in the post-Cold War era, this subject has been considered as pivotal by the discipline. It is a widely used term. Issues like arms race, disarmament, balance of power, war, peace, environmental issues, migration, gender, terrorism, humanitarian crises – everything falls under the ambit of security studies. The concept of security has proven to be an extraordinarily powerful one: ‘no other concept in international relations packs the metaphysical punch, nor commands the disciplinary power of “security”’ (Der Derian 1995: 24–25).

The boundary of the discipline of security studies is blurred. According to Buzan, the concept of security is, in much of its prevailing usage, ‘so weakly developed as to be inadequate for the task’ (1991: 1). Buzan suggests five possible explanations for what he calls ‘the persistent underdevelopment of thinking about security’. The first explanation is that the concept of security has simply proved too complex to attract analysts, and has therefore been neglected in favour of more tractable concepts. A second, and in Buzan's view more convincing explanation lies in the real scope for overlap between it and the concept of power as developed by realists. Security was often viewed as a derivative of power, especially military power. A third reason for the conceptual underdevelopment of security concerns the nature of the various objections to the realist paradigm up to the late 1970s. A fourth explanation for the underdevelopment of the concept of security is that, for the practitioners of state policy, compelling reasons exist for maintaining its symbolic ambiguity. The fifth explanation considered by Buzan is that policy-makers find the

ambiguity of 'national security' useful, which does not explain why scholars have neglected the concept.

There is a sense of ambiguity associated with the notion of security. 'Security has been a banner to be flown, a label to be applied, but not a concept to be used by most security studies specialists' (Baldwin 1997: 9). No genuine attempt has been made to give this notion a concrete shape. Barry Buzan has argued that 'security' falls within the category of an 'essentially contested concept' characterised by 'unsolvable debates about [its] meaning and application' (Buzan 1991: 7). The academic debates during the 1980s and 1990s concerning the rapid changes taking place in the international political sphere made the concept of security to engage with the processes of widening and deepening. It included exploration of its meaning and application to a broader range of areas. Barry Buzan and the Copenhagen School pioneered the widening aspect, in terms of identifying a number of new domains which could have implications for the domain of security studies, such as the economic and environmental realms. Domestic politics is also an area where research is taking place. That there could be domestic source to an international conflict is widely acknowledged now.<sup>1</sup> Earlier the realist version ignored this facet of international politics. The peace and cooperation, security in the developing world, economics and security and nationalism are some of the themes and issue-areas that should be made a part of security studies. The significance of domestic politics has been reiterated by Walt as well (Walt 1991: 224).

Now there are various notions of security which are defined through different perspectives. These notions have brought to the fore many assumptions that accompanied various notions of security. One of them being ethnocentricity that seems to have dominated the traditional concept of security. Considering a specific cultural context as a determinant while defining security has resulted in a lopsided definition of security. The definitions provided by the modernised and democratic West were projected as universal.

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<sup>1</sup> De Mesquita, Bruce Bueno De (2002), "Domestic Politics and International Relations", *International Studies Quarterly*, 46(1): 1-9; Fearon, James D. (1998), "Domestic Politics, Foreign Policy and Theories of International Relations", *Annual Review of Political Science*, 1: 289-313.

Moreover, the process of securitisation involves the construction of threat by the dominant actors and promoting it as an existential threat which requires attention. 'Security is the move that takes politics beyond the established rules of the game and frames the issue either as a special kind of politics or as above politics' (Buzan et al. 1998: 23). The questions that are left unanswered by the traditional thinking on security seem to be answered by the Copenhagen School. According to Copenhagen School, by 'labelling an issue as a threat, the speech act becomes an act in itself. Treating something as a security issue is always a matter of choice – political choice' (Waever 2000: 251). This is done through the discursive practice of labelling an issue as threat as mentioned above. However it needs to be internalised by the subjective perception of the receiver. Securitisation of an issue leads to the breakdown of the normal political processes and privileges one issue over another. These theorists suggest desecuritisation process by which the negative impacts of the securitisation process could be minimised. The issues that have been securitized could be returned to the public sphere so that the sense of urgency associated with the securitisation gets deconstructed. However, this also excludes a focus on other forms of representations, such as images or 'material practices' (McDonald 2008: 564).

The debate for the 'broadening' and 'deepening' of the concept of security has highlighted the 'essentially contested nature' of the term security. Extending the concept of the security is the aim of the 'broadening' debate. The 'deepening' debate focuses on the referent object of security essentially shifting the focus from state-centric politics and including threats to which not only states but human beings could be vulnerable to. These trends indicate a systematic attempt at widening the debate but incorporating newer and innovative dimensions of security could render 'security' conceptually incoherent. As mentioned earlier there is no 'generally agreed definition' of security and it necessitates inclusion of different concepts, connotations and values that the concept refers to. However this means that the attempt to define security only reveals its conflicting nature. There remain doubts about the analytical usefulness of these alternative concepts.

The debate on conceptualising security is not only limited to the world of academia. There have been attempts by the policy makers and commentators to articulate the level of analysis and the scope of the study of security. The focus of the security studies has evolved considerably over the years. The understanding of security during the pre-Cold War days was relatively broad. In the Cold War period, the concept of security became narrower preoccupied with deterrence and nuclear weapons. The role of historical continuity was ignored in the study of security studies. Thus there developed a huge gap between the security studies prior to the Cold War and Cold War era. The literature on security as developed in this period made many scholars to investigate the multifaceted dimension of the concept in the post-Cold War days. The agenda for research has become broader. The era of globalisation can also be said to have altered the relations amongst the states, amongst non-state actor and amongst the state and the non-state actors. Transnationally organised networks of non-state actors pose a significant threat to national and international security. Moreover, this agenda now constitutes a variety of economic, social and demographic issues. Environmental degradation, migration and transnational terrorism are not new phenomena; now they do pose considerable threat to security, both at the 'national' and 'international' level.

Security studies as a sub discipline faces a dilemma. International system is generally thought to be anarchic in nature. There is no world government over and above the sovereign state. Intra-state politics is still considered to be an area where the government of a state has exclusive right to make and enforce laws. The unit of analysis is the state. Though there are disagreements regarding this, there are no contentions that state centrism is a dominant feature in the discourse on international security. However, this dilemma also springs from the 'level-of-analysis' problem'. The problem is to whether to account for the behaviour of the international system in terms of behaviour of the nation states comprising it or vice-versa (Singer 1961). This problem is more acute now with the inclusion of diverse issues into the ambit of security studies.

Conceptualising security involves a prolonged and seemingly never-ending debate. What is discernible is that there are two broad strands of thought. One is that which supports predominance of the state in the matters of security and considers the military threat to be the most important, if not the only, issue that the state should be concerned about. The other one is that which in critique to the former view says that there are different actors, different means to determine threats to security and most importantly different dimensions of security along with military security. These efforts to arrive at a clear definition of security are a confirmation of the effect and impact of the role of historical continuity of national and international events. The mainstream theories in international relations have attempted to explain the events and political phenomena. However, these theories did not succeed entirely as the changes were not explained nor were they predicted e.g. the end of the Cold War. Dominant state centric theories project the state as the most important entity in the international society. This singular explanation draws a picture of international politics that is too simple, linear and deterministic. It presents certain facts as reality and projects other facts as aberrations and divergent.

The narrower definition of security proves to be inadequate to accommodate varied actors and factors that comprise international security in modern times. Theoretical developments on security in international relations now try to attempt at encompassing the dominant debates and issues as there is consensus in some academic quarters that the issues that dominate the national and international security are interwoven and overlapping.

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## LOCATING HUMAN SECURITY IN CRITICAL SECURITY STUDIES

This chapter seeks to address the following question (a) what constitutes critical security studies? (b) What explains the emergence and acceptance of critical security studies? (c) Why is human security significant? (d) To what extent does human security fit into the concern of critical security studies?

The academic literature on international security or rather security is replete with theories on traditional security and threats to that security. The aim of this chapter is to explain inconsistencies in the doctrines on security which has resulted from an obsession with external military threat to national security. Under the rubric of human security, there is a transformation of the goals and approaches concerning policies of security. Similarly the paradigm of critical security studies also challenges traditional definitions of security and emphasises on the need to arrive at a broader definition of security that encompasses the roles of different actors and different threats.

Critical Security Studies challenges traditional definitions of 'security' and emphasises on the socially-constructed nature of state identities and the international system. It stands against the positivist, problem solving theories such as realism, neorealism and aims at reconceptualisation of the theories about security. It also seeks to investigate and assess whether the mainstream and state centric theories provide a concrete answer to the question – what is security? It seeks to introduce post positivist perspectives in order to broaden the scope of debate within security studies. Various theoretical perspectives such as feminism, Neo-Marxism, post-structuralism and post colonialism also project this view. These constitute the theoretical alternative to the mainstream theories. Critical security studies recognise that theory cannot take an impartial, neutral stand on phenomena it is investigating. The theorist is a social being who cannot ignore the circumstances in which the phenomenon is embedded. Social science cannot become

value free and predictive like natural science, economics. Critical security studies make an attempt at recovering the emancipatory potential of the theoretical discourses that has been dominated and overshadowed by the state-centric and rationalist mainstream theories. Through the method of immanent critique, it questions the prescriptive and predictive political discourses and attempts to decipher the possibilities for change present in it. It is the works of Max Horkheimer (1982), Walter Benjamin (2004), Herbert Marcuse (2007), Theodor Adorno (2002) and Jurgen Habermas (1986) that provided the foundation for critical theory as well as critical security studies.

The four broad strands of critical theory in International Relations are: 'Frankfurt School critical theory, neo-Gramscian theory, feminism and various strands of post-structuralism' (Rengger and Thirkell-White 2007: 5). The concern of Frankfurt School's critical theory is to understand the development of the contemporary society and to trace the source of contradictions present in it. The aim of Frankfurt School's critical theory can be summed up in the words of Andrew Linklater. In his view,

'judges social arrangements by their capacity to embrace open dialogue with all others and envisages new forms of political community which break with unjustified exclusion...[it] envisages the use of an unconstrained discourse to determine the moral significance of national boundaries and to examine the possibility of post-sovereign forms of national life' (Linklater 1996: 280).

Neo-Gramscian theorists apply critical theory to the study of international political economy and governance and engage in shaping the society and the state. Mainstream theories in International Relations are heavily influenced by economics and the generalised laws that it propagates. Feminism that is influenced by critical theory sets out to uncover the exclusionary nature of contemporary politics. Cynthia Enloe's *Bananas, Beaches and Bases*, J. Ann Tickner's *Gender in International Relations* deserve special mention (Enloe 1989; Tickner 1992). Post structuralists claim that the individual is shaped by the linguistic, social and political structures. There are no objective means by which this can be studied. The two major thinkers on post-structuralism are Michel

Foucault and Jacques Derrida. In *International Relations*, Richard Ashley (1986) was perhaps the first scholar to develop a post-structuralist position (Rengger and Thirkell-White 2007: 9).

The concerns pertaining to widening and deepening of the research agenda is addressed by the concept of human security. Traditionally, the discourse on security studies has had threat to military security as the focus. However, human security shifts the focus from the state to the individual. Thus, as Nicholas Thomas and William T. Tow (2002) point out, 'the state is the primary focus of analysis and action; a state faces a threat from another state, and it is the state that primarily responds'. Yet the purpose of state security is, at its basic level, intended to protect the *people* within that state. The nature and scope of the traditional notion of security was inadequate to accommodate the various threats that went beyond the boundary of any particular state. Traditional notions of security, inspite of coming in various guises, can be generally understood as the 'military defence of state interests and territory' (Paris 2001: 87). Human security tries to provide space to threats that are human/individual-centric rather than only focusing on the state. Though it has gained popularity in recent times, the idea or notion of people-centric security has found mention in many documents and reports. The report published by the the United Nations Development Programme in 1994 'contained seven security elements that endangered the lives of people: economic, food, health, environmental, physical harm, community, and political' (Paris 2001: 89-90).

Richard H. Ullman provides a broad definition, stating that a threat is an 'action... threatens drastically and over a relatively brief span of time to degrade the quality of life for the inhabitants of a state' (Ullman 1983: 133). Though the definition of human security varies and this notion is always contested, the referent object of the security discourse ought to be individual security is generally accepted by almost all scholars.

Security, as a concept, is elusive. Moreover, it has always been viewed through the lenses of policy-making and execution. Any policy or plan to be effective needs to be promoted

and pursued by the different channels of government. However, once an issue is viewed and articulated by the policy makers, the issue becomes securitised. Hence, all the issues that are deemed unimportant or unfit to be categorised as a 'security concern' are relegated to the background of any discussion pertaining to security, be it national or international. As Adrian Hyde-Price points out, securitising an issue means removing it from the regular political discourse and 'signal [ling] a need for it to be addressed urgently and with exceptional means' (Hyde-Price 2001: 38). This was evident in descriptions of threat, security (between states) and war. It would not be wrong to add here that this was true for much of contemporary history. The state centric nature of a neo-realist approach is perhaps best captured by Walt (1991: 212) when he defines security as being 'the study of the threat and use and control of military force' and of course the state is the only legitimate user of military force. Ken Booth (1991: 318) writes,

'Traditional security thinking, which has dominated the subject for half a century, has been associated with the intellectual hegemony of realism ... emphas[izing] military threats and the need for strong counters; it has been status quo orientated; and it has centred on states'.

Economic security is also important but only to buy arms and build a powerful military. Threats to survival are dealt with an 'appropriate' response. Such threats are seen as 'existential threats' to the state. Carl Schmitt argues that such a situation legitimises the suspension of rules that govern the lives of subjects as the sovereign assumes 'unlimited authority' to meet 'a danger to the existence of the state' (Schmitt 1985: 5). Since the Second World War, the concepts, definitions and ideas regarding the study of international security have revolved around states and threat to their security, and war between them. As Hyde-Price (2001) points out, 'this makes the field of security studies entirely reactive to what policy makers deem a security threat, removing any independent analytical value'. Such definitions of international security cannot, therefore, help in terms of guiding policy making. International security is only concerned about the territorial integrity of the state and the threats to it posed by inter state rivalries and war.

The historical evolution of the notion of security was quite frequently forgotten. Issues such as deterrence, border conflicts, nuclear security, and conventional warfare were only discussed under the rubric of 'security'. Many commentators have agreed that meanings of security were rarely addressed or contested during these decades (Booth 1997; Krause and Williams 1996).

Knowledge production regarding security and what could be termed as the institutions of security were done, controlled and managed through the channels of government, bureaucracy and military. What came out of these processes was a view on security that was taken to be the only version of threats, perception of threat and the means of tackling them. This has made the task of theorising about security appear as a natural process and has succeeded for a long time in keeping the discourse on security solely focused on 'national security'. Security had no meaning if it was divorced from the state. It served the status-quoist policies of the superpowers and thus helped to maintain a large number of issues from entering the 'mainstream' discussion on threats to security. As Waever argues, 'traditionally, by saying "security", a state representative declares an emergency condition, thus claiming a right to use whatever means are necessary to block a threatening development' (Waever, et al. 1998: 21). What is deeply problematic is that 'emergency condition' is a matter of subjective judgement. In this case, the statesman will categorize a situation to be emergent according to his/her own judgement. Many popularly elected governments have done this. For e.g., the approach of the Bush administration towards the 'war on terror' enabled the government to detain and interrogate anyone whom the authorities thought fit to be a 'terrorist'.

'As concepts, neither individual nor international security exists' (Waever 1995: 48). The fact that the concept of security is essentially contested and it contains several components is forgotten. However, 'the more naturalised an object becomes, the more unquestionable the relationship of the community to it; the more invisible the contingent circumstances of its birth, the more it sinks into the community's routinely forgotten memory' (Bowker and Star 1999: 299). Inconsistencies in this view appear when

questions in terms of whom or what should be secured and from what types of threat and what should be the responses meant to minimise or mitigate the dangers posed by the threats. This necessitates that the definition or the characterisation of the 'international security' be expanded and characterised by a change in the thinking in the identification of the referent object of the threat. Consequently an attempt at answering the 'what' and 'who' aspect of the discourses on security also becomes necessary. There is contention as to who are the subjects of security. The view that the state is the main subject is contested by the rise of the various regional organisations.

Throughout the Cold War era, several different approaches to security were developed in relation to the conflict between the 'East' and the 'West'. The driving force in this debate was the advent of nuclear weapons which altered international relations and security studies fundamentally because of its destructive force. The end of the Cold War offered scholars of international relations and security studies, an opportunity to focus on subjects other than deterrence theory and balance of power. Many developing countries appear to emphasise the domestic as well as the economic and social dimensions of security. Scholars of security studies have long neglected the security situation in the Third World, wherein most members of the international system are located and conflicts are concentrated (Ayoob 1997: 123).

The growing influence of scholars seeking to broaden the notion of security has important implications for both academic and policy discourses. From the late 1980s onwards, there has been a tendency among academics, law enforcement agencies and political thinkers to develop a concept of security that links together a range of security issues as diverse as terrorism, drug trafficking, transnational organised crime, and illegal migration and asylum seekers. This entails an evaluation as to what constitutes the human security approach to security. It could be variously termed as human needs approach or human development approach etc. Human beings, by definition, need a number of essentials to survive. They include both physical and non-physical elements needed for human growth and development, as well as all those things that humans are innately

driven to attain. Unable to meet these needs could be potentially dangerous for the society as it weakens the base of the society. The need to broaden the notion of security was also related to the need to reconsider the manner in which the concept of security was defined, explained and elaborated by the traditional theories. Harm to human, material, and natural resources on a potentially large and disruptive scale is also an issue of concern. These ‘harms’, even if they did not lead to violence, could produce extensive disruption and thus imply ramifications for security (Del Rosso Jr., 1995).

Conceptualisation of threat in contemporary political literature is derived from the neo-realist tradition which formulates a zero-sum approach to the resolution of any conflict. In the neo-realist view, the response to a physical attack is the deployment of a counter-attack. Here violence is also defined in terms of physical threat. A policy that does not involve the use of force or threat of use of force, security specialists would argue, falls outside the scope of security altogether. Realism’s appropriation of the term security rests on the assumption that interstate war is the greatest threat to personal safety and freedom. ‘The Hobbesian attitude that realists take towards security in International Relations was particularly popular in the bi-polar world of the Cold War, which was considered as an era of arms racing and zero sum politics’ (Rudolph 2003: 5).

State centrism which flows from neorealism is ill-equipped to effectively deal with security issues like food security, energy security, health security and environmental security. It is inadequate to deal with security on a multi-level basis. The dynamic of security and conflict is not confined to the traditional inter-state model anymore.

Roland Paris provides a basic but nevertheless useful definition of security threat ‘a “security threat” connotes some type of menace to survival’ (Paris 2001: 98). The question that arises here is simple: survival of whom? What are the threats? In the view of Caroline Thomas (1999: 3), human security refers to the provision of ‘basic material needs’ and the realisation of ‘human dignity’, including ‘emancipation from oppressive power structures—be they global, national, or local in origin and scope’.

In order to understand what forms of threats should be taken into consideration it should be understood that there are several forms of threats; all of them cannot be always divided under categories and subcategories. The construction of these threats is supportive of the policies that are status-quoists. The focus should be to broaden the boundaries of the discipline in order to accommodate the circumstances that do not qualify as 'threats' in the literature on international security. Mahbub ul Haq, the former finance minister of Pakistan gave an idea on what constitutes human security. He provides a theoretical explanation of human security in *New Imperatives of Human Security* which has gained global acceptance (1994). According to Haq, human security underlines the security of individuals and not that of the state. More normatively, he writes, 'we need to fashion a new concept of human security that is reflected in the lives of our people, not in the weapons of our country' (Haq 1994: 2). The essence of human security is outlined below:

'With human security [the individual 'qua person', rather than 'qua citizen'] becomes the ultimate actor taken into account. His/her security is the ultimate goal, to which all instruments and political actors are subordinated. Elevating the person as the ultimate end is made possible by defining this new actor in terms of his/her vulnerabilities on the one hand, and his/her capacity to affect change on the other' (Tadjbakhsh & Chenoy 2007: 13).

Critical theory offers an approach which is concerned with distinctly normative issues. According to Horkheimer's well-known distinction, critical theory may be distinguished from traditional theory according to a specific practical purpose: 'a theory is critical to the extent that it seeks human emancipation to liberate human beings from the circumstances that enslave them' (Horkheimer 1982: 244). Its domain is inquiry into the normative dimension of social activity in particular 'how actors' employ their practical knowledge and normative attitudes from complex perspectives in various sorts of contexts. The way to reformulate the manner in which security has been conceptualised is to challenge the positivist paradigm of enquiry and by applying post positivist approaches

of enquiry thus emancipating the discourse on security. In this context ‘emancipation’ is defined as freeing individuals from, ‘war and the threat of war ... poverty, poor education, and political oppression and so on’ (Booth 1991: 319). This view denounces fixation with objectivity and the endeavour to arrive at a decision that could be applied to all. Ideas are the contents of the discourse. The politics that underlies such a discourse gives emphasis on realities which are ‘objective’, ‘natural’ – these are in fact constructed by the mainstream theories and serves the purpose of the dominant forces of the society. Envisioning a thought to be objective categorises phenomena, the dominant forces establishes hegemony. This leads to a creation of sphere of thought and ideas. Ideas emanating from outside the jurisdiction of such a sphere are considered as anomalous and inconsistent with objectivity. For instance, former U.S. President George W. Bush’s rhetoric of ‘axis of evil’ sought to project North Korea and Iran as the states operating against humanity. The creation of such a system of thought tries to impose discipline by establishing hegemony.

For Booth and the Welsh School, the concept of ‘emancipation’ should be privileged over power and order (Booth 2007). Security can only be achieved by people if they do not deprive others of it. Some of the main elements of Welsh School thinking are that ‘emancipation’ should be the primary purpose of Critical Security Studies, and that research is a form of political practice with normative elements. Thus their research aims to denaturalise the dominant security discourse and investigate opportunities for social transformation (Booth 1991). Justice should prevail while categorising the threats. Their knowledge of security is very much similar to what human security tries hard to project – an empathetic understanding of the word ‘security’ and to extricate it from the shackles of the literature dealing with international security. Individuals and society are bound by a standard definition or code of conduct the practice of which is expected of everyone. It invariably places a constraint on the behavior of individual and that of the society. The Welsh school conceives security as emancipation of individuals and society from structural constraints. Ken Booth argues that the ‘notion of security must not be always viewed from the perspective of a state and hence should adopt a non-statist approach’

(Booth 1991: 319). The process of emancipation would remove artificial constraints imposed on the choices and lives of the individuals and it involves the following:

‘The freeing of people (as individuals and groups) from those physical and human constraints which stop them carrying out what they would freely choose to do. War and the threat of war is one of those constraints, together with poverty, poor education, [and] political oppression’ (Booth 1991: 319).

There should be no discrimination regarding the classification of threats. Maintaining that certain forms of threats should be given precedence over some other forms is tantamount to saying that the system of exclusion be continued. The system of securitisation is done by the state and the actors associated with the state apparatus. A newer, broader concept of security will have to be based on notions of social justice and human progress – a claim that the concept of human security also propagates. The notion of security should be holistic in nature. It should strive to eradicate the factors that gives rise to and facilitates inequality and injustice in the societal fabric. The insecurity of the individual must be addressed by theories of security. There are several factors which give rise to varying proportion of insecurity amongst people – poor governance, political repression, gender discrimination, failing law and order system, destruction of environmental resources etc. Herein, yet another factor which must be addressed pertains to forms of dominations which affect the lives of men and women thus prevent them from thinking freely and in turn makes the choices of the individuals restricted. An existent system of thought dominates the thinking of men and women that predicts the knowledge and behaviour of men and determines their actions.

No doubt, post-positivism has been established against the system of positivist thinking. Nonetheless, it has the potential to fall into the same trap. The paradigm of thought that critical theory propagates could also depict an image of having determinacy and problem-solving nature. Ideas and thinking are not entirely owned by the actor. It is shaped by the existent discourses and institutions. There are always possibilities that the emancipatory efforts of the post positivist critical theory to adopt an image ceases to be consistent with

the true purpose of the critical project. Wyn Jones states that proposals for political transformation must be based on an identification of 'immanent possibilities' for change in the present order:

'Description of a more emancipated order must focus on realizable utopias...If [critical theorists] succumb to the temptation of suggesting a blueprint for an emancipated order that is unrelated to the possibilities inherent in the present...[they] have no way of justifying their arguments epistemologically. Furthermore, it is highly unlikely that a vision of an emancipated order that is not based on immanent potential will be politically efficacious' ( Wyn Jones 2005: 230).

The ability to critique and engage with a radical thinking in terms of the possibilities of emancipation must shape all the aspects of political and social life. The aim is to project security as a means to achieve emancipation. Ways must be kept open to usher in the possibilities of emancipation. Such a notion of emancipation will enable the individual to make his or her own choices. For Booth, 'human agency is a concern of individuals who are constrained and repressed by power, who, if freed, be more fully human' (Booth 2004: 183).

Human security as a concept, if it has to gain foothold in the theoretical domain of international relations, has to navigate a path so that it could reach wider audience. An attempt would have to be made in order to make it relevant. Policy relevance, though how much the word is abhorred by the critics of mainstream theories, is a criterion that the concept must meet. The 'Social safety nets' in Japan and 'Human Security Programme' in Canada and Norway, originated from within the policymaking world. In the context of the Association of the South East Asian Nations (ASEAN), the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) has clubbed all forms of non-state threats under the broad category of 'comprehensive security'. It would suffice to add here, that the recognition of threats other than those that face the territory is being recognised in the above-mentioned cases.

It remains to be seen as to how far these efforts undertaken by the state to secure the objectives of human security would be effective. However, it cannot be denied that they do endorse a statist agenda as all these efforts are aimed at strengthening the state security. The state is the part of the machinery that poses significant hurdles in the way of realising the tenets of human security. Co-option of human security into the policy framework of the state is fraught with the risk of pursuing a half hearted approach to human security and securitizing the issue. But such criticisms notwithstanding, these are the few of the steps that have been taken to ensure that the ideal of the concept of the human security are upheld.

The academic endeavour to challenge the realist hegemony in the formulation of the nature and scope of security is being reflected in the normative arguments presented in the Human Development Report of UNDP or the above mentioned steps taken by ASEAN. Conflict prevention, security of women, local law and order, environmental security, economic security – these are issues that human security seeks to address. The insecurity of individual must be addressed. Human security remains vulnerable to the strategies of policy makers and conventional, state-centric concepts of security which they represent. It could be seen as too idealised when it is compared to the realist paradigm. There is also no standard definition for the concept of human security. However, it is consistent with the attempt of ‘broadening and deepening’ of the paradigm of security. Human security emerged as a response to the failure of the traditional notion of security in addressing insecurities of various kinds. Human security marks a departure from understanding security studies from the standpoint of state to the vantage point of the individual. Traditional notion of security was rooted in the view that the actors involved always act rationally and are interest-maximisers. Critical theory, on the other hand, goes against the meta-narrative that the traditional theories have as their foundation. The politics of security dilemma is ignored by critical theory for the interest of the genesis of a paradigm which does not give importance to objectivity. Subjectivity is highlighted and the individual human being becomes the subject of enquiry.

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## EXAMINING THE LINK BETWEEN HUMAN SECURITY AND EMANCIPATION

This chapter states that there is a perceived shortcoming in the prevailing conceptualisation of security. The traditional view on security advocates the providing of security to the territory of the state from threats of war. It is rooted in the belief that survival of state in the anarchic international system provides peace and stability. However, interstate rivalry and war are not the only threats. This notion comes into view when the referent object of the security studies shifts from the state to the individual. Human security, by addressing these concerns, seeks to emancipate the lives of individuals from the threat of violence, war and disease. There is a scope of broadening the purview of the term in order to incorporate various forms of threats, actors and responses.

According to human security, a definition of security taking the individual as the referent object is necessary in order to achieve security and stability. The purpose of the critical theory is to provide normative basis for conducting social enquiry aimed at achieving emancipation of all human beings from the situations which curbs their freedom. The state is the means and the individual is the end. The conceptualisation of security in mainstream literature has happened in such a way which gives precedence to the state. However, the theories on human security often do not reveal their assumptions. The advocate of this paradigm projects human security as an emancipatory. However, instead of the paradigm of human security posing as an ethical and normative challenge to the realist tradition, it has rather been co-opted by mainstream theories on security. This study, by drawing a link between human security and emancipation, highlights the possibility of articulating critical approaches to the understanding of human security.

Since different analytical perspectives suggest different definitions of security, such disagreements are probably unavoidable. Those interested in the state and in traditional

issues of national security tend to favour the established realist and liberal approaches developed during the last decades. In contrast, those interested in unconventional and broader definitions of security such as economic competitiveness, human rights, or human welfare tend to favour alternative analytical perspectives. What scholars and policy makers consider to be national security issues is a matter of debate. In the nineteenth century, the concept covered economic and social dimensions of the political life that, for a variety of reasons, were no longer considered relevant when national security acquired a narrower military definition in the first half of the twentieth century, especially during the Cold War (Katzenstein 1996: 10).

The end of the Cold War necessitated a change in conceptualisation of the values that were held to be threatened in the name of security threat. There arose a need to broaden that purview in order to accommodate newer forms of threat to security and to create a new awareness of the prevalence of threats that has been insufficiently taken into account: intra-state conflicts, ethnic confrontations, forced displacement, extreme poverty, HIV/AIDS etc. These threats were borderless, closely connected, and potentially crippling in their effects on societies worldwide. This is not to suggest that these forms of threats were not present before but it only drew large scale academic attention and scholarship only after the end of the Cold War when the discourse on international security came out of the shadows of a narrow definition of security.

In the opinion of David Baldwin (1995: 122), security has not always been the primary goal of the state but one among several values. Importance given to these values varied across time. However with time the policies related to military affairs also were also adopted by the policy makers and became a part of the discourse of security so much so that the most discerning feature of national security became defence and military policies. Emma Rothschild traces the genesis of 'extended security' (of which human security is one) to the ancient European political thought. Security now has different connotations, involves lot of actors, and extends in all directions as given below....

‘from national states, including upwards to international institutions, downwards to regional or local governments, and sideways to non-governmental organisations, to public opinion and the press, and to the abstract forces of nature or of the market’ (Rothschild 1995: 55).

This relatively broad notion of security reflects in certain respects, the contemporary debate in security studies on the ‘broadening’ and the ‘deepening’ of security. Considering these overlaps, a question could be raised as to why the work of scholars prior to 1955 has been almost entirely ignored. As Baldwin (1995: 122) points out, ‘these early years were no longer considered to belong to the field of security studies.’ It was only the end of the Cold War that brought the change in the discipline. It was realised that security cannot be restricted to the well being of the state alone. The neorealist version of the international political arena fell short in terms of explaining the phenomena after the end of the Cold War. Analysis of the concept of security was based on a ‘simple minded’ view of security (Buzan 1991: 2). Factors such as culture and identity were not taken into account either by the political, military elites or by academics. The military aspect of the security is still studied with great vigour but with the inclusion of other factors the area of studies has become ‘essentially contested’. Theories have their own purposes. They are explanatory and descriptive in nature and seek to further their own self interest. In the garb of explaining ‘reality’, theories simply promote the dominant view. It cannot be neutral.

The subjects residing within the boundary of the state should be the main referent object of the security discourse. What is required is to take into account a wide range of threats. Human security, at the very outset, places human beings at the centre of the security debate. One of the great frontrunners for the promotion of the concept of human security was the United Nations Development Report of 1994 which had roughly identified seven categories of human security, *i.e.*, economic security, food security, health security, environmental security, personal security, community security and political security (UNDP 1994: 24). ‘It also assumes that all human beings irrespective of which states they belong to are entitled to these forms security. Are they free from hunger and mal-

nutrition? Do they enjoy emancipation and freedom?’ (Anand and Sen 1996). Human security issues are changing the agenda of state and non-state actors in that they are creating a link between security and sustainability. ‘Another interesting characteristic of human security is that its agenda is led primarily by non-state actors, such as non-governmental organisations and supra-state actors, such as the United Nations, European Union, etc’ (Sens, 2004, 141).

There has been a major economic and political shift caused by the end of the Cold War and the consequent wave of globalisation. The domestic conflicts, earlier ignored by the international community as long as it did not harm the interests of the superpowers, started to get into limelight and brought attention along with it the complaints and grievances of a substantive section of the global population to the fore. These sprouted from poverty, malnutrition, economic disparity, environmental degradation, drug trafficking, epidemics and natural disasters, etc. The concept of human security is based on the assumption that the threats are inter-linked. Unless a comprehensive discourse on security is drawn no substantial change could be brought about. Apart from UNDP, Geneva Conventions with its additional protocols (1977), the Club of Rome, North-South Report (1980), Brundtland Commission report (1987), Stockholm Initiative on Global Security and Governance (1991) – all these highlighted the need to reformulate the field of security studies. In 1999, with the Canadian and Norwegian initiative, a network of thirteen states was formed known as the Human Security Network. The network had the goal of promoting human security through a project starting with the international campaign to ban landmines which led to the Ottawa Convention of 1997. These initiatives invoked interest on the part of the international community. Terms such as non-traditional security, non-military security, comprehensive security, global security, and sustainable security are all taken to be related to human security conceptually. Closely similar to the concept of the human security is the concept of social security, as it developed in Western Europe. Though the concept is viewed from the perspective of the state yet the motivation behind the formulation of the concept is human security as both are aimed at attaining the *freedom from want*. Moreover human security enables the working of a variety of actors at multiple levels. Governmental, inter-governmental

organisations and non-state actors could work efficiently towards the realisation of the objectives that this concept projects.

However, there is no consensus amongst the scholars as to what are relatively more important threats. The concept of human security is quite broad and it encompasses a wide range of issues and actors. Threats from diseases, unemployment, hunger and repression are capable of disrupting and destroying human lives. This is related to the concepts – *freedom from fear* and *freedom from want*.<sup>1</sup> This approach, in a way, draws attention to the fact that problems or threats that human beings face in different parts of the world cannot be always brought under one definition or seen from one perspective and categorised into water-tight compartments. Security threats are not only faced by the states alone. Human beings face them too. The *Commission on Human Security* formed in 2001 with 12 members, directed by the former UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Sadako Ogata and Amartya Sen, define human security as follows: ‘protecting the vital core of all human lives in ways that enhance human freedoms and human fulfilment’.<sup>2</sup> King and Murray (2001) suggest a way to measure human security by using five key indicators of ‘well-being’ namely, income, health, education, political freedom, and democracy. In their view, a true definition of human security will result in ‘[a]n agenda for research and action to enhance human security [which] follows logically from this definition in the areas of risk assessment, prevention, protection, and compensation’ (King and Murray 2001: 586).

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<sup>1</sup> Freedom from fear and freedom from want were first articulated by President Franklin D. Roosevelt in his Congressional address in 1941. Thereafter, freedom from want and freedom from fear were enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948 along with freedom of speech and belief (Roosevelt 1941).

<sup>2</sup> The “vital core” is a non-technical term for the concerns that lie behind human security. It may be defined in the space of capabilities, the freedom people have to do and to be. Elements of the vital core are fundamental human rights which all persons and institutions are obliged to respect or provide, even if the obligations are not perfectly specifiable. The rights and freedoms in the vital core pertain to survival, to livelihood, and to basic dignity (Alkire 2003).

However, questions related to the usability of such a concept in the area of policy-formulation do arise as there is no definitional boundary and clarity; there is no concrete shape to the aims and objectives of the concept as well. However, this is not to nullify the scope and prospect that the concept of human security provides in terms of giving a much needed fluidity which is required. Many schools of thought have also contributed towards the creation of a strong theoretical formulation that has been used by the advocates of the concept of the human security to create a strong case in support of it.

One advantage of the academic writing in support of traditional security is that they provide us with a more or less a concrete definition of security. The concept of threat, the source of threat and the ways to deal with it are spelt out. It is restricted in many ways but it is not vague or undefined. It is a unilateralist view to subscribe to the notion that physical threat is what endangers security. According to many, the lack of any concrete definitional boundary of the concept of human security has rendered it weak in the face of criticisms emanating from the traditional quarters. Roland Paris is of the view that human security as a concept is 'sprawling and ambiguous', 'a hodgepodge of principles and objectives', and 'so vague that it verged on the meaningless' (Paris 2001: 92, 101 and 102). In order to translate such concepts into reality, the help of the policy-makers is needed. Human security provides an umbrella term.

Though the concept of human security does not offer a clear definition of security or what constitutes 'security' it steers the debate on security towards a new direction and adds a new dimension as well. It introduces a debate on the referent object of security. It is a debate which earlier was not discussed within the field of security studies. All the states did introduce certain developmental plans in their election manifesto, projects etc. it never entered the mainstream security debates. No substantive theorisation was done on the issue. 'States are still the main actors on the world stage and are likely to remain so for the foreseeable future' (Mearsheimer 2005: 139-140). Such views have been criticised by many scholars and theorists who consequently talked about giving lesser focus on the state-centric view of security, claiming that 'any attempt to rethink security in the post-

Cold War era must move beyond the traditional focus on the state as the referent object for security discourse' (Wyn Jones 1996: 197).

The more the concept of security is multidimensional in character, the more it embraces variety of actors, issues, regions and problems concerned with human beings. The issues which were earlier kept outside the purview of security discourse are given an outlet. It is not a new concept. It is testimony to the fact that 'security' could have multiple extensions. The security concerns associated with the traditional version of security continue to remain relevant but what is done in the name of human security is to broaden the scope of the paradigm of security and in this way the traditional concept is reshaped. In essence, a more diffused understanding of the security is presented. Implicit in the newer meaning of security is the Kantian notion of 'state' which should always be treated as means to an end and not the end. The well being of the people is the end. The state exists only to serve a purpose. Booth (1991: 320) is of the opinion that 'states are obviously important features of world politics, but they are unreliable, illogical and too diverse in their character to use as the primary referent objects for a comprehensive theory of security'.

'It is illogical to place states at the centre of our thinking about security because even those which are producers of security (internal and external) represent the means and not the ends. It is illogical to privilege the security of the means as opposed to the security of the ends. An analogy can be drawn with a house and its inhabitants. A house requires upkeep, but it is illogical to spend excessive amounts of money and effort to protect the house against flood, dry rot and burglars if this is at the cost of the well-being of the inhabitants. There is obviously a relationship between the well-being of the sheltered and the state of the shelter, but can there be any question as to whose security is primary?'  
(Booth 1991: 320)

The notion of security goes beyond the concept of mere physical security in the traditional sense. It becomes responsible for people's welfare. Amnesty International, one of the pioneering organisations regarding human security, states that the 'real source of insecurity is corruption, repression, discrimination, extreme poverty and preventable

diseases' (Dunne and Wheeler 2004: 12). More than the threat the source of the threat is more important. In this way it addresses the insecurities that cripple human lives and not just the physical insecurities, the latter being also taken into account. It keeps the debate on security open-ended. Releasing human lives from fear, insecurities and malaise is the aim of human security. The main contribution of human security to security studies lies in the fact that it introduces individual as an analytical and normative category. It provides the human beings with an opportunity to attain basic freedom. It thus has an element of emancipation which the traditional doctrines on security ignored and thus were not theorised enough. An attempt at explaining this element is needed in order to delve deeper into the possibilities of redefining security that the notion of human security offers.

Both the concepts of human security and emancipation engage with normative enquiry. The term 'security' is entrenched in social milieu. To give shape to a holistic notion of security, there is a need to ponder upon all the dimensions of the term 'security'. The notion of emancipation gives a reflective understanding of any event. Explanation of any kind develops a multi-dimensional character as the given paradigms of any understandings are questioned again and again. This element of emancipation is not new to the world of theories. Immanuel Kant, Karl Marx etc had earlier mentioned the importance of emancipation in their works [Kant 1970 (1795)]; [Marx 1978 (1843)]. Frankfurt School was one of the main contributors to this notion of emancipation (Held 1980). Its concern was to understand the features and workings of the contemporary society by tracing its historical and sociological development. The assumption was that the effect of the dominating forces in the society could be surpassed in this way only.

Immanuel Kant answered the question 'what is enlightenment?' by the proposition that 'Enlightenment is humanity's emergence from its self-incurred immaturity' (Reiss 1970: 54). For Kant, in his essay *Perpetual Peace* (1795) and elsewhere,

'the answer is that what is needful is a political/legal arrangement which is based on (a) the *civil rights* of individuals within a nation (*jus civatis*), (b) the *international rights* of

states in their relationships with one another (*jus gentium*) and (c) *cosmopolitan right* in so far as individuals and states, coexisting in an external relationship of mutual influences may be regarded as citizens of a universal state of mankind (*jus cosmopolitanum*)' [Kant 1970 (1795)].

Hegel also emphasised political liberation taking the Kantian argument further about wherein he says that the state is based on the consent of the citizens (Beiser 2005). The state is the institution within which individuals come to realise that constraints which appear to be externally imposed are actually the product of their own will. However, the state is not constitutive of the individuals but of the estates. Moreover he admits that despite the wealth produced by the bourgeois society, excessive poverty remains and that political freedom can only mitigate the ill-effects of the society but cannot abolish it. The Hegelian notion suffered from shortcomings. It talked of political liberation alone. During his time the ideals of democracy and individual freedom were yet to take a proper shape.

The processes which created wealth and freedom created at the same time a new class of repressed, exploited people who were responsible for the capitalistic production but themselves were deprived. Basic political and civil freedoms were available but the same were unable to free the exploited class – an argument put forward by Karl Marx. For him, the realisation of freedom and morality should be the main concern.

'Every emancipation is a *restoration* of the human world and of human relationships to man himself. Human emancipation will only be complete when the real individual man has absorbed into himself the abstract citizen; when as an individual man, in his everyday life, in his work, and in his relationships, he has become a species-being; and when he has recognized and organized his own powers (*forces propres*) as social powers so that he no longer separated his social power from himself as political power' [Marx 1978 (1843)].

Emancipation can only be realised only where the social contradictions and class antagonisms produced by capitalistic production methods are overcome. *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* of 1844 and *Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy*

focuses on the basic contradictions inherent in the capitalistic production methods which act as the obstacle in the realisation of the goal of human emancipation from the repressive society. The building of a society of free individuals is the goal. Concepts of Marx also go against any notion of society being a determined and fixed fact. Moreover, the role played by the individual in the social production is also highlighted by Marx in *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*: 'just as society itself produces man as man, so is society produced by him' [Marx 1978 (1844)]. Social production lies at the centre of the dialectic of human beings and nature. By being a part of the social production, human beings engage in a constant struggle with the nature and thus secure their material subsistence. However it is this process of production and the reproduction which keeps the social life alive. This process is the basis of history as mentioned in *Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy*:

'Not only do the objective conditions change in the act of reproduction, e.g. the village becomes a town, the wilderness a cleared field etc., but the producers change, too, in that they bring out new qualities in themselves, develop themselves in production, transform themselves, develop new powers and ideas, new modes of intercourse, new needs and new language' [Marx 1981 (1859)].

Continuity of events, when acknowledged, makes the process of reasoning less rigid. Every act or event – whether political, social, economic – has an underlying reason, a social basis and a structure which dictates the event to take place. This perspective had opened up a barrage of criticisms against the positivist theories which until then had claimed to describe and explain the events of the world and likewise had predicted and drawn up an image of the world which was no different from what existed. For critical theory, the objections to positivism were two fold.

- (a) Treating facts as 'given', meant abstracting them from the wider historical totality that shaped them, thus producing a distorted picture of reality.
- (b) Positivism was an unreflective doctrine because it failed to recognise the interest it had in the control of things and that this was built into its own assumptions (How 2003: 3).

The basic folly that the positivist paradigm makes is to mould explanations of every phenomenon in terms of causal mechanisms. The mainstream theories concerned with conceptualising international security follows this perspective too as they are broadly categorised under this positivist paradigm. An event which is portrayed as a threat has to be dealt with immediately. In this process, a particular form of explanation and reasoning is privileged over the others. The other forms of interpretation are silenced and other forms of threat trivialised. 'Treating something as a security issue is always a matter of choice – political choice' (Waever 2000: 251). Treating an issue as important and requiring action in comparison to others restricts fluidity. The whole process becomes deterministic in nature and character. When knowledge and information gathering on security gets conceptualised in this manner, the level of analysis gets restricted to few actors and situations. The ways and means to deal with them becomes constricted.

Habermas argues in *Knowledge and Human Interests* that knowledge is not one thing but several. Different kinds of knowledge were governed by what he called 'cognitive interests', each with its own in-built assumptions that determine the kind of knowledge it produces. Habermas identifies three broad types of knowledge;

- (a) Empirical- analytic disciplines (essentially the natural sciences) which were guided by an interest in manipulation and control.
- (b) The hermeneutic or interpretive disciplines (essentially the humanities) which were guided by practical interests in reaching an intersubjective understanding, rather than control.
- (c) The emancipatory disciplines (essentially Marxism and psychoanalysis) were guided by a reflexive interest that enabled human beings to have greater autonomy and self determination (Habermas 1968).

Major theories on international relations and security have their roots in such positivist paradigms that are presumed to be as universal, analytical and causally testable. In this

way the existing social and political structures are buttressed and legitimised. So long as this is done the discipline will not come out of the bondage of the deterministic and overtly-analytical positivism. It is probably true that application of rigour and logical reasoning that is associated with natural sciences is what many theorists in the social sciences and also in International Relations hope to replicate and this tendency has its share of advantages also. Nonetheless, what is termed as rationalist methodology is usually tampered with 'observer bias' which is unavoidable. Making the notion of 'security' dependent and defined by the rationalist outlook makes it less receptive to the changes that are taking place all around. The problem with positivist epistemology is that it can only offer an extremely limited view of international politics. 'Relying solely on empirically observable 'facts' precludes the possibility of analysing "unobservable" such as cross-border structures that are socially created' (Smith 1996: 19). Perceiving an event as an example of determining causal connections between several events and concocting general rules possessing predictive capacity deters the knower from knowing many things. Yet it is projected that what is being perceived is truth. Social science can never be equated with natural science. 'Observation' cannot exist independent of the observer. Notions of security that has been projected over the years suffered from these flaws. Thus events or issues that did not strictly fall within the rigid boundaries of the discipline of security studies are never appreciated.

The notion of emancipation that is associated with critical theory takes the discipline away from such rigidity. Employing an emancipatory outlook will rectify the existing flaws in the discipline. Consequently, creation of new modes of political thinking will also take place. Critical theory may be distinguished from a traditional theory according to a specific practical purpose: 'a theory is critical to the extent that it seeks human emancipation to liberate human beings from the circumstances that enslave them' (Horkheimer 1982: 244). Critical theory brings attention to the unequal and unjust structure of the current international order. Critical theorists seek to analyse critically the sources of inequality, injustice and domination that shape global power relations, and they find the answer to their search in the skewed discourse wherein the state is the privileged actor. Critical theorists think that peoples, individuals, international

organisations and non-governmental organisations must also be represented in the international system as well as the states to provide global justice and equality. Linklater (1999: 473) argues that 'justice considerations have moved to the centre of the discipline as questions about transnational justice (justice between individuals within world society) have become as important as international justice (justice between the societies within the system of states)', The idea of 'emancipation as security' has been described by Neufeld as a critical and liberating strategy, 'which focuses on the more "empirical" question of how security issues are framed in political discourse' (Neufeld 2004: 109).

Consistent with the above mentioned arguments is the reality that the presence of threats places constraints on the freedom of human beings. Fear, want, need and the threat of physical violence oppresses human beings. These constraints produce insecurity. The real intent of providing security can never be the removal of few forms of threat. What the notion of emancipation suggests is that there are faults in the existing state-centric international political structure which must be eliminated in order to make it more accessible to individuals. Human security also speaks the same language.

Similarly an emphasis on 'emancipation' would inevitably lead to the regeneration of the security studies which for long has been under the shadows of realism and later neorealism. Realism did provide the theoretical foundation for much of the theories of international relations and security studies too of the Cold War era. Security studies was largely defined by its tendency to formulate theoretical models upholding the supremacy of the system of states. Moreover, security studies was commonly conceived and misunderstood as strategic studies also. With its stress on game theory, deterrence and role of offense-defense balance the field of security studies developed sophistication and precision and a positivist methodology. However, this resulted in the emergence of a discipline which is divorced from the social reality and limited to politics at the level of state only. Security studies was only concerned about the perception and removal of threats amongst the states. In a sense, the fault flows from the labeling of the field also. To that extent, the scope of the field was restricted at the very outset. Subsequently, many

issues which are not linked to the military got sidelined. Labels such as ‘defence studies’ or ‘military affairs’ would exclude nonmilitary dimensions of security (Nye, Jr. and Lynn-Jones 1988: 7).

Issues such as human rights, migration, cross-border terrorism, labour relations, and ethnic conflicts could no longer be considered outside the purview of the security studies. They threaten the individuals as well as the states. In this globalised world, these threats faced by one state could be faced by another also. The once sharp dividing line between foreign and domestic policy is blurred, forcing states to grapple with issues that were contentious enough in the domestic arena (Matthews 1989: 1). These issues were not completely non-existent earlier. It was convenient for the academic world to overlook these issues as it simplified the theoretical formulations and enhanced the predictive capacity which only made the mainstream theories look more viable. Ashley argues that the positivist influences in Waltz, for example, appears in his ‘practice of spatialization’ (Ashley 1989: 290). Morgenthau, the classical realist, adheres to an approach which assumes that it is possible for the IR scholar to be detached from the object of study, thus presenting a neutral and objectively verifiable study. Such conceptualisation delimits the boundary of the subject in a way that disregards the arbitrary and unstable nature of national and international politics.

Two problems complicate the usefulness of the concept of human security. First, the concept of human security lacks a precise definition. The second problem is that the most ardent supporters of human security appear to have an interest in keeping the term expansive and vague. The concept includes many ideas and notions related to security which was not done earlier. However, no clear idea is given as to what constitutes ‘human security’. It is the vagueness of the concept which makes it less appealing to the policymakers. The idea of human security holds together a jumbled coalition of states, development agencies, and NGO – all of which seek to shift attention and resources away from conventional security issues.

What is being stated above is true to a large extent but it cannot be denied that the concept of human security raises crucial questions pertaining to the welfare of the subjects. Such questions earlier were seldom raised. There have been documents which spoke in favour of broader usage and applicability of concept of human security such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948. Other initiatives include the World Order Models Project (WOMP), the Club of Rome Group, and Willy Brandt Commission. In the post Cold-War era, *Global Human Development Report* published by the UNDP in 1994 was the first document which clearly and explicitly articulated human security as a concept for future vision and agenda for action.

Scholars such as Amartya Sen (2000: 3) have emphasised the need to foster democratisation in the political processes in order to enhance security of the subjects who need it in the real sense of the term. The existing political doctrines on which the current political formulations and practices depend curb the freedom of the subjects. The traditional thinking on security, as it derives its source from such doctrines essentially fails to answer the following three vital questions satisfactorily:

- (a) Who or what threatens security?
- (b) Who has the prerogative to provide security?
- (c) What methods are appropriate, or inappropriate, in providing security?

The answers to each of these questions cannot be clubbed together. There will be different answers depending on the perspective from which it is being asked. The historical development of each country, its social milieu and economic environment is different from others. There can be no acceptance of universal standards. Accordingly, the notion of security will also vary. The manner in which security has been understood when seen through the realist and neorealist vision portrays one side of the picture only. Nonetheless, security conceived by these notions serves the state well. It embodies military objective only. Other issues of security do not find any space. Thus there is a

desire on the part of the governing elite in sustaining the status quo which implies the continuation of the state-centric framework of security. Security studies is not merely about strategic designs, nuclear proliferation, and war. It is as much about education, health and empowerment. It is this view that has problematised the notion of state which has remained sacrosanct and uncontested.

Human security has as its aim multiple objectives. It does not downplay the importance of the military security but it takes into cognisance other forms of threats as well. These threats cripple the lives of the subjects in many ways. The concept is emancipatory in this regard. It is a significant departure from the earlier framework of security which was less about the subjects and more about the state and thus not focused on emancipation.

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## CONCLUSION

The purpose of the study is to explain the trajectory that the discipline of international relations has taken with regard to the conceptualisation of one of its important area of studies – security. Theories, concepts and assumptions that are applied to study security are scrutinised. The usefulness of military security has not been made less important but has only been reviewed critically. Military security as a tool of statecraft has been re-examined, keeping in mind, the changed nature of international politics in the post-Cold War world. National security defined in terms of military security is not synonymous with the entire discourse of security. This implies that a broader view of national security is also needed.

There is no simple definition of the term, security. Concepts such as collective security, national security, human security, war, peace, migration and cross-border threat etc. – have added a puzzling dimension to the term. Several issues have also made the traditional concept of security inadequate in terms of its capacity to give satisfactory explanations of what is happening resulting in an obscured and static view of the discipline plagued by rigidity. For a long time, the scholars associated with the field were concerned only with causes of conflict and war, arms control, grand strategy, nuclear strategy, deterrence and the working of the military institutions. Such issues had policy relevance also.

Though it is difficult to delimit the boundaries of the discipline of security studies, it is important to accommodate the various issues that have arisen as a result of the complex nature of the international political system. It is absolutely necessary to not exclusively focus on national security, war, military organisations and nuclear strategy as core issue-areas. In recent years, several writers have called for the broadening of the security studies so that it embraces many new global issues, including environmental threats, economic welfare, and population growth (Matthews 1989; Ullman 1983; Brown 1989; Sarkesian 1989; Buzan 1991).

One of the initial questions that were raised at the beginning of the study focused on the limited conceptualisation of security in mainstream International Relations. The concept of security that was prevalent earlier in international relations was dominated by the narrow and militaristic notions which exclusively focused on national security and the survival of the state. The focus of the security studies was not the individual.

The referent object of the security studies was the state. What in actuality has happened is that the discourses on security in international relations are, in many quarters, being framed from the perspective of a paradigm which excludes the notion of difference and instead focuses on the need to formulate a structure of security studies which is framed in terms of othering in mainstream International Relations. At the beginning of the study the hypothesis reiterates the above mentioned point. The assumptions of fear and insecurity have led to a conception of security, which is framed in terms of othering in mainstream International Relations. This has led to the inference which is othering in mainstream International Relations can be attributed to exclusion of the notion of difference and a perpetual preoccupation with objectivity. The ideas, views, opinion which are considered divergent are co-opted by this discourse.

The concept of human security, in principle, is committed to the attainment of emancipation of the individual. The notion of emancipation is important in the concept of human security. It projects a more humanistic approach to the discourse of security which was erstwhile taken to be only as driven and determined by the interests of the state. The notion of human security addresses the question of insecurity and seeks to achieve emancipation. A critical perspective to the notion of emancipation implies infusing the academics of security studies with the capacity to question the dominant and established line of reasoning which is also hegemonic in nature. The concept of human security poses a radical challenge to the state-based mainstream theories on security. The concept of emancipation dwells on the removal of politics of exclusion. The insecurity of the individual must be addressed in order to achieve emancipation. Critical approaches

highlight the need to do away with the fixation with objectivity and problem-solving approach. It is the critical approach that delves deeper into mainstream theories and uncovers the real intent of these theories. The mainstream theories impose the importance of the state and thus reinforce domination of the state. Human security marks a departure from the state-centric description of security. Development, freedom, betterment – these concepts are seen from the perspective of the individual.

The other hypothesis states that the human security perspective, in spite of considering the individual as the referent object, privileges the state, which in turn hinders the prospects for emancipation. At the end of the study, this hypothesis is proved and strengthened. The theoretical tendency of privileging the state rationalises its dominant and deterministic character which obstructs the scope for emancipation. Merely token support is given for the realisation of the aims of human security. The role played by the non-state actors such as non-governmental organisations in advancing the aim of the human security is appreciated and acknowledged. However, these networks of non-governmental organisations have to work by abiding the rule prescribed by the states.

The problem with the contemporary discourse on human security is that it has not been able to effectively challenge the dominance of the state-centric mainstream theories in International Relations. The concept of human security highlighted the sufferings of the people. These sufferings of the people are de-territorialised in nature. Critical approaches, by giving importance to the normative and subjective dimension while formulating theories, free the theories from the shackles of meta-narrative and problem-solving approaches. This approach questions the basis of hegemonic theories on security. The concept of human security, in its formative phase seems to have followed this path but now it has deviated considerably.

An alternative to the positivist mainstream security studies is provided by the critical approaches. Human security, when aligned with this approach, could provide much of the

practical grounding that is needed to establish an alternative discourse to the mainstream security studies.

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