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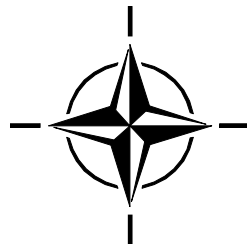
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STO TECHNICAL REPORT

TR-HFM-ET-201

# Human Security – Frameworks, Concepts, Actors and Challenges in Relevance to NATO

This technical report documents the findings of HFM Exploratory Team 201.



# Human Security – Frameworks, Concepts, Actors and Challenges in Relevance to NATO

## Executive Summary

Human security was written into the NATO strategic concept for the first time in 2022. Shortly after, NATO produced its “Approach and Guiding Principles for Human Security”. Evidently, human security has been put on the Alliance’s agenda. Conducting research on the concept is of utmost timely relevance as several questions remains unanswered when it comes to what human security will mean for the Alliance. The Exploratory Team (ET) 201 on Human Security (HFM-ET-201) has in the period of 2022-2023 discussed the relevance and development of human security in NATO. This report documents these discussions.

The report covers why human security matters for NATO, by briefly laying out how NATO thus far has used the human security concept. We also identify how defence is increasingly understood as a whole of government approach, making human security matter to NATO.

Thereafter, the human security concept’s roots in security studies is laid out as well as criticism towards human security, especially within this field political science academic literature. The legal framework for human security in international law is also explained before we address four different approaches NATO may take when using the human security concept.

Human security is often discussed in relation to other key concepts. We therefore address the relationship between human security and climate change as well as human security and the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda in a NATO context. The relevance of addressing the population when thinking about climate change is highlighted. It also becomes evident that implementing human security and WPS together may be a source of problems.

Different actors have taken different approaches when it comes to the human security concept. We briefly explain these different approaches by first presenting the United Nations approach, followed by the European Union, the United Kingdom, CIMIC and lastly, NATO’s own approach. In this section we highlight that while the different actors use the same concept, the approach they take is different.

In the penultimate section of this report we point to operational challenges for human security in NATO. We address barriers for change and lessons identified from previous military operations.

Lastly, we lay out four paths for future research on human security. These four paths are 1) critical examination of the concept 2) human security and other concepts 3) the strategic relevance of human security and 4) operationalising human security.

## Abstract

Human security was written into the NATO strategic concept for the first time in 2022. Shortly after, NATO produced its “Approach and Guiding Principles for Human Security”. As such, human security has been put on the Alliance’s agenda. Conducting sound research on the concept is of outmost timely relevance as several questions remains unanswered when it comes to what human security will mean for the Alliance. The Exploratory Team (ET) 201 on Human Security (HFM-ET-201) has in the period of 2022-2023 discussed the relevance and development of human security in NATO. This report documents these discussions. The report covers why human security matters for NATO, legal and theoretical frameworks, human security and other concepts such as climate change and Women, Peace and Security (WPS), and human security and other actors such as the United Nations, European Union, United Kingdom, CIMIC and NATO itself. Lastly, the report addresses barriers for change before making suggestions for further research on human security in a NATO context.

**Key words:** Human security, security studies, international law, WPS Agenda, CIMIC, civilians, climate change, United Nations, European Union, United Kingdom.

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### 5.1 HUMAN SECURITY AND INTERNATIONAL LAW

Public international law regulates the relationship between actors within the international community and is “state-centric” by nature [47]. In regulating these interconnected relationships international law provides both a framework that is intended to ensure security for both individuals and states. Yet the relationship between human security and international law remains under-explored. This lack of curiosity has been evident since human security’s formal origins. The 1994 UNDP Human Development Report does not make a single reference to international law or situate the then nascent concept of human security within existing legal frameworks. Conversely, the term ‘human security’ does not appear in a single binding international legal document [45].

### 5.2 THE DEVELOPMENT OF HUMAN SECURITY AND THE HUMANIZATION OF INTERNATIONAL LAW

Human security’s theoretical foundations predate its formal articulation within the 1994 Human Development Report. Myriad international factors—enactment of the UN Charter, the advent of the human rights system, humanitarian focused interventions and resolutions by the Security Council, the establishment of UN and other agencies to advance global economic and development goals—have contributed to a shifting notion of security that situates the individual as the referent object [46]. Christine Chinkin and Mary Kaldor trace the development of what would be termed ‘human security’ to the preamble of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights [43]. In laying out the purposes of the then emerging HR system, this early preambular expression succinctly provides what would become human security’s normative orientation: a commitment to and affirmation of ‘fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person and in the equal rights of men and women...to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom’[51].

As with traditional notions of security, international law developed through a state-centric framework. The state was understood to be the primary international actor with legal standing, the entity empowered to make international law through its consent or actions, and the source and recipient of legal obligations and rights. However, following the Second World War and through the advent of the UN system, emerging international law began embracing frameworks that recognized a plurality of international actors and sought to protect individuals and communities from numerous harms. What is often termed the humanization of international law is most poignantly expressed through the development of the individual and protection-focused fields of international human rights law (IHRL), international humanitarian law (IHL), and international refugee law [48][50].

In pre-dating human security’s formal recognition, these earlier legal developments have spurred commentators to note that, at least conceptually, human security is rooted in IHRL [49]. Yet despite



familiar origins and objectives, human security and the vision of international law that developed throughout the latter half of the twentieth century have pursued separate paths.

### **5.3 WHY THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN HUMAN SECURITY AND INTERNATIONAL LAW MATTERS**

However, conceived, human security and international law both bear implications for the other. When the General Assembly sought to provide a common definition of human security, it cited numerous legal concepts and themes that had long attracted significant legal attention (UNGA, Res. 64/291) [52]. But the only direct reference to international law came when the Secretary General, at the behest of several states, noted that the development of human security did not impose ‘additional legal obligations’ and that ‘assigning a legal definition to human security would be counterproductive’ [45][53]. While the advancement of a human security agenda may not impose *new* legal obligations, it certainly poses numerous questions that carry direct legal implications.

This is because law is both the primary framework through which security is sought and the provision of security is a central purpose of any legal system [44][54]. Accordingly, and at the highest level of abstraction, human security can impact how international law functions as a normative system [49]. The transformative nature of the human security agenda seeks to shift international priorities. But as these priorities are currently articulated and codified through international law, the successful advancement of a human security agenda will impact how international law is understood and practiced. Whether the successful advancement of a human security framework can be developed upon or in accordance with the existing international legal system or if such advancement will require a fundamental reorganization of this system remains an open question that demands increased attention.

### **5.4 ENHANCING UNDERSTANDINGS OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN HUMAN SECURITY AND INTERNATIONAL LAW**

Human security remains the subject of competing understandings. Efforts to more fully comprehend the symbiotic relationship between human security and international law will be influenced by the particular vision of human security that is advanced. Chinkin and Kaldor describe three notions of human security—a narrow view grounded in human rights; a humanitarian approach that views human security as a means of responding to atrocity crimes; and a broad approach that emphasizes economic development[43]. Each notion displays a clear nexus with international law and regardless of the understanding of human security that is embraced, specific and general questions demand attention. Any consideration of human security—whether scholarly or policy-driven—will confront questions that implicate the current structure of the rules-based international order. They will influence considerations of sovereignty and the bedrock principle of non-interference. These questions will require contemplation of the positive and negative obligations of international actors and whether the formalization of human security requires reconsideration of previously acknowledged duties. And they will require new insights into how human security can influence the development and interpretation of international law, what these developments mean, and, conversely, how international law facilitates the actualization of a human security approach. Enhancing understandings of the relationship between human security and international law will begin by identifying and formulating these and other

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questions, the answers to which will help achieve a complementary approach to realize the common goals shared by both fields.

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