Chapter 30: Human security

- In its broader sense, human security is distinguished by three elements: (1) its focus on the individual/people as the referent object of security; (2) its multidimensional nature; (3) its universal or global scope, applying to states and societies of both the North and the South.

- The concept of human security has been influenced by the rejection of economic growth as the main indicator of development and by the accompanying notion of 'human development' as empowerment of people.

- It also reflects the rising incidence of internal conflicts and civil wars and the impact of globalization in spreading transnational challenges such as environmental degradation, pandemics, forced migration, and the post-cold war emphasis on human rights and humanitarian intervention.

- The concept of human security offers a powerful example of how concepts and approaches developed from non-Western contexts and by non-Western scholars can have significant global impact and enrich the theory and practice of international relations, development, and security, laying the basis for a Global International Relations (Global IR).

- The concept of human security has been criticized: (1) for being too broad; (2) for creating false expectations about assistance to victims of violence which the international community cannot deliver; and (3) for ignoring the role of the state in providing security to the people.

- Differences exist as to whether human security is about 'freedom from fear' or 'freedom from want'.

- The former stresses protecting people from violent conflicts through measures such as a ban on landmines and child soldiers.

- For the latter, human security is a broader notion involving the reduction of threats to the well-being of people, such as poverty and disease.

- Ultimately, however, both sides agree that human security is about security of people rather than just of states, and that protecting people requires going beyond traditional principles of state sovereignty.

- Although there was a noticeable decline in the number of armed conflicts and battle deaths caused by conflicts during the 1990s until about 2003, these numbers have increased since then.

- In considering these mixed trends, one should take into account conflict mitigating factors, such as economic interdependence, and the growing role of international institutions and the international community in peace operations.

- There is an interactive relationship between armed conflict and non-violent threats to human security such as poverty and disease. Wars and internal conflicts can lead to impoverishment, disease outbreaks, and environmental destruction. Conversely, poverty, inequality, and environmental degradation can lead to the weakening and even collapse of states.

- Women feature in armed conflicts both as victims and actors (in combat and support roles). Rape and other forms of sexual violence against them are increasingly an instrument of war, and are now recognized as crimes against humanity. The international community is seeking

ways to increase the participation of women in UN peace operations and conflict-resolution functions.

- Among the most important multilateral actions to date to promote human security include the International Criminal Court and the Anti-Personnel Landmines Treaty.
- UN agencies such as the UNHCR, UNICEF, and UNIFEM have been crucial in addressing human security issues such as the plight of refugees and the rights of children.
- Non-governmental organizations promote human security by supplying information and early warning about conflicts, providing a channel for relief operations, supporting government or UN-sponsored peacebuilding and rehabilitation missions, and promoting sustainable development.
- The 9/11 attacks and the flow of migrants and refugees to Europe from the Middle East and Africa have revived the traditional state-centric approach to national security at the expense of civil liberties and human security.