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<u>United States Foreign Policy and Terrorism as Human Security</u>

Though U.S. foreign policy post-9/11 has primarily focused on military action to protect national security interests, USAID's (United States Agency for International Development) humanitarian efforts which happen to address the root causes of instability via development and conflict resolution, complement American national security by promoting long term stability and reducing threats such as terrorism throughout the world. This aligns with the idea that human security is national security because they promote long-term American interests in national security in ensuring instable regions are stable. The United States has made multiple efforts to address human security through humanitarian interventions with USAID and post-conflict nation building as seen in Iraq and Afghanistan. However, most of the American national security strategy has been largely revolving around the idea of using military force to protect against external threats. Military action while not necessarily in itself is a negative, it often overlooks the underlying factors of human displacement, poverty in impoverished countries, and lack of access to basic services and needs; elements which are intrinsically tied to human security. Up until January of 2025 prior to President Donald Trump taking office, that has been the primary mission of USAID. USAID's mission focuses on the 'soft' power of US foreign policy. USAID plays an important role in promoting human security as an arm of US foreign policy through various initiatives.

This involves and includes humanitarian aid, health programs, education, socio-economic development, and conflict resolution. USAID addresses human security needs such as food security, access to clean water, and reduction of poverty. Programs like disaster relief, disease prevention, and governance support, USAID works to address the root causes of instability and conflict in unstable regions – root causes of why terrorism exists in many places around the world. These efforts instead focus on long-term human development and stability, aligning closely with the concept of human security, which prioritizes individuals' safety, dignity, and access to basic resources. All that said, USAID's focus on human security addresses the underlying causes of regional instability it complements national security by promoting long-term stability and reducing the likelihood of conflict that could threaten both individuals and states. By improving conditions in vulnerable regions prone to instability, USAID's work helps prevent the spread of terrorism and other threats that can undermine American national security.

It is important for us to first define exactly what human security versus national security are. According to the UNDP the definition of human security as paraphrased is as follows – throughout history the idea of security has been viewed through the lenses of military action. This includes violation of another nation's sovereignty, genocide of an entire people, protection from nuclear war etc. However, the UNDP in 1994 also argues about a new concept of human security, one that is often forgotten and looked over. The main idea of human security as stated by the UN Human Security Commission, is defined by prioritizing protection of people and communities from threats like poverty, disease, environmental degradation, and political violence. It broadens the definition of security beyond state borders to narrow a lens on basic human freedoms and well-being, including economic, health, food, and personal security. This broad, interpretative scope takes the view that human security a more holistic framework for addressing why insecurity in

unstable regions exist and occur. In the context of terrorism and US National Security, for example, human security looks beyond the perpetrators of terrorism and focuses on the 'why'. The 'why' include factors such as social, economic, and political environments that allow extremism to rise in unstable regions throughout the world. Reveron and Mahoney-Norris specifically argues that "security concerns over the past thirty years have been increasingly focusing on human-centered security issues such as disease, poverty, and crime." The authors emphasize that "the national security of states cannot be achieved without first achieving the security of individuals."

On the other hand, national security as defined by Reveron & Mahoney-Norris is defined by prioritizing safeguarding the state itself. This means protection of its borders, institutions, and political stability of any given nation. It is "measured by military power, economic productivity, control of borders, and appeal of values" and emphasizes on "national sovereignty, territorial integrity, and the vitality of government and institutions" as stated by Reveron & Mahoney-Norris. The threats in this dynamic typically include armed conflict, nuclear proliferation, and foreign invasion. States measured in this metric typically are classified as primary actors, and the survival of the state is achieved through military strength, economic power, and various international alliances.

The behavior of nations and states in geopolitics is primarily shaped by their underlying security doctrine. National Security paradigms, rooted in realism, assumes that the state is the central actor and acts in a self-help system of anarchy where survival depends on military strength and strategic alliance-making. In sharp contrast, the human security paradigm reinterprets the idea of security from the state to the individual, emphasizing that the safety and flourishing of humans is a prerequisite for lasting peace and stability in any given region. Let's first examine the human security paradigm. As Reveron and Mahoney-Norris noted, "Instead of protecting against the most

catastrophic possibilities, we think it is important to think about the most likely threats." As the authors note, human security expands the scope of threats to include those that emerge within human societies which are not found in traditional national security paradigms. Again, they include matters such as poverty, disease, oppression, and statelessness. In this model – the state, they argue; becomes a guarantor of rights and provider of essential services for people. Human security asserts that a multifaceted approach to security is needed, extending beyond military might to include social programs and policies that address the needs of individuals and communities who are in unstable regions. In sharp contrast, the national security paradigm is viewed very differently. Under the traditional national security way of thinking, state behavior is defined by the pursuit of military hegemony, economic dominance, and geopolitical supremacy. Threats are usually thought of as external and beyond domestic borders. These include geopolitical rivalries, territorial incursions and border disputes, nuclear proliferation, or peer-to-peer competition between nations. National strength is measured by the size and capability of any given nation's armed forces, defense budgets, and internation or interregional alliances such as NATO or the CSTO.

USAID is a prime example of how the United States – which is a world hegemon; engages in human security practices by using international aid in its foreign policy. Its mission is explicitly people-centered as stated by the mission statement to "promote and demonstrate democratic values abroad, and advance a free, peaceful, and prosperous world." In extremely volatile nations USAID's Countering Violent Extremism programs are designed not to confront rebels and terrorists head-on, but to create an environment which reduces their appeal via improving the living conditions and political participation of people living in these unstable regions. These efforts by the United States directly correlates to the broader human security paradigm because they treat the conditions that lead to radicalization and terrorism. As Reveron and Mahoney-Norris noted,

"Instead of focusing on the enemy outside, the focus shifts to human beings and the internal conditions that foster insecurity." In summary, the U.S. government engages in behaviors from both paradigms to advance its foreign policy throughout the world. While it still uses traditional national security like the American military and covert intelligence operations, human security behaviors through USAID demonstrate a complementary approach to its traditional national security approach.

Following the 9/11 terrorist attacks on American soil, U.S. foreign policy has adopted an overwhelmingly national security paradigm to combat against terrorism. This includes the invasions of both Afghanistan and Iraq under the Bush Administration, an extensive drone strike campaigns under the Obama Administration – continuing into the current era, and expanded global surveillance networks which started also under the Bush Administration in the years after 9/11. These responses were grounded in the traditional national security paradigm which emphasized focusing on defeating enemies and projecting power. Over time though, lawmakers on both sides began to slowly acknowledge that military force alone cannot eliminate the core causes of violent extremism. This shift in strategic thinking creates space for agencies like USAID to take on an influential role in American foreign policy. USAID's development programs are the core tennets a human security approach. These initiatives seek to address societal conditions that are often the breeding grounds and the core causes of violent extremism in unstable regions throughout the world. USAID does not respond to terrorist attacks militarily, but rather – preventatively. As Reveron and Mahoney-Norris noted, "militaries that were once trained and equipped solely to defend their countries' borders are increasingly used in ways to promote peace, provide disaster relief, and improve human development." This fusion between human and national security in recent years gave more influence to USAID to become a core part of the American

counterterrorism campaign. For example, in Afghanistan even amid active conflict between Al-Qaeda, the Taliban and the US Military, USAID has helped greatly and improved the lives of my Afghans within the region. From public health initiatives to woman empowerment programs, to economic aid – these measures helped to curb the role that extremism has played in the region as a whole. Girl's schools enrollment and the rate at which woman graduated rose significantly under US-backed initiatives. However, it's very important to note that the impact of USAID's work was largely mixed. While there were real improvements that helped, challenges like corruption, security issues, and sustainability affected long-term outcomes prior to the US withdrawal in 2022. USAID's work marks a growing awareness in U.S. foreign policy that human development in impoverished regions is not separate from national security. By targeting the reasons why terrorist groups exist, USAID's initiatives align with the view that **"human security is national security."**

While the United States has mixed elements of human security into its foreign policy especially with agencies and organizations like USAID and limited international collaboration, the central tenant of US counterterrorism strategy is still heavily reliant on the national security paradigm. The United States since 9/11 has maintained a permanent presence in the Middle East and has emphasized targeted strikes on key terrorist leaders and governments supportive of terrorism. The United States has directly funded counterinsurgencies and surveillance within the Middle East and furthermore, the United States as of writing this has axed USAID entirely – as Secretary of State Marco Rubio stated in paraphrasing – "USAID is not going anywhere, it's instead being consolidated into the State Department." So while the United States does still value societal development, it is more of a supportive role than one central to US foreign policy.

The evolving nature of terrorism and international security needs a shift from reactionary to preventative. As Reveron and Mahoney-Norris noted, "subnational and transnational challenges such as terrorism, organized crime, and poor governance stymie government efforts to improve international peace and security". These security threats and challenges cannot be solved through the traditional military force alone and national security paradigm, they require a deep investment to secure vulnerable societies from the pull of extremism and terrorism via human security. USAID's results prove that the human security paradigms work and are beneficial. Something that helps the community grow and prosper to shield them from extremism may not be as an 'instant' elimination of a terrorist, but it is a long-term investment that can outlast any military action. By using soft power to help communities grow, the influence of the United States on these regions still can be felt. In this way of looking at it, societal development is no longer a form of charity but rather it is a strategic investment in foreign policy and national security strategy. A rebalanced foreign policy that makes human security its centerpiece will allow the United States to prevent threats from emerging entirely. Admiral James Stavridis reinforces this as he put it, "it offers the only sensible way forward for states and communities to protect and promote security in our globalized world."