

Human Security in Retreat: The Resurgence of Realpolitik and the Crisis of People-Centred Security

Philip ATTUQUAYEFIO Ph.D.¹ & Roland Yeboah MIREKU Ph.D.²

To Cite this Article

Attuquayefio, P., & Mireku, R. Y. (2026). Human Security in Retreat: The Resurgence of Realpolitik and the Crisis of People-Centred Security. *African Solutions (AfSol) Journal* 7(1), pp.29. <https://doi.org/10.63990/afsol.v7i1.13891>

Manuscript History

Received: 15 March 2026

Accepted: 19 July 2026

Published: 29 July 2026

Copyright © 2026 The Author. *African Solutions Journal (AfSol Journal)* published by the Institute for Peace and Security Studies (IPSS)

This is an Open Access article which permits anyone to share, use, reproduce and redistribute in any medium, provided the original author and publisher are credited.

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.63990/afsol.v7i1.13891>

Editor-In-Chief: Dr. Andrew E. Yaw Tchie

Managing Editor: Cynthia Happi

ISSN: 2518-8135

¹Philip Attuquayefio, Legon Centre for International Affairs and Diplomacy, University of Ghana. pattuquayefio@ug.edu.gh **ORCID ID:** <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9654-2140>

²Roland Yeboah Mireku, National College of Defense Studies, Ghana. mireku@ncdsmil.edu.gh
nanayaw.mireku@aya.yale.edu **ORCID ID:** <https://orcid.org/0009-0008-0232-1541>

Abstract

Since its formal introduction in the 1994 Human Development Report, the concept of human security has represented the global imperative to promoting the wellbeing and dignity of people worldwide. With both states and non-state actors recognising and endorsing its utility, there has been little doubt about the relevance of human security in driving population-centred security until now. Recent events with geopolitical implications, such as the Russia-Ukraine and Israel-Palestine conflicts and the fallouts from nationalist turns in the global North, appear to have challenged the relevance of the concept vis-à-vis Realpolitik and the dominance of state-centricity in global politics. With the contemporary geopolitical space set to witness many more of these trends, the future of human security may be in jeopardy as the concept stands to be relegated to the realm of political convenience. This paper assesses the sustained viability of human security in an evolving geopolitical landscape largely shaped by Realpolitik.

Keywords: Human Security, Realpolitik, Geopolitics, Nationalism, Global North.

Introduction

The concept of human security has generated debate and concern among security experts since its introduction over three decades ago (Persaud, 2022). Emerging in a space heavily saturated with conventional notions of security that revolved around the state as the referent object, there were early contestations and pushback regarding the policy relevance and applicability of human security (Fukuda-Parr & Messineao, 2012). For advocates of orthodox state-centric security, the dominant position of the state as a rational *homo economicus* meant that in pursuit of its national interest, the state always endeavoured to protect its manifest boundaries and political sovereignty against external threats. Once this was achieved, persons living within the state were assured of security (Buzan et al., 1998). The emergence of a concept that sought to ascribe referent object status to people living within states was, to such critics, unnecessary and an attempt to fix what was not broken. These early criticisms of human security, some of which resonate with contemporary challenges regarding its relevance, were further deepened by concerns about analytical utility and definitional clarity, especially the debate between narrow and broad interpretations of the concept (Tadjbakhsh, 2005).

These challenges notwithstanding, the 1994 Human Development Report (HDR), the Millennium Report of the Secretary General of the United Nations (UN) in 2000 and the setting up of the UN Commission for Human Security in 2001 undoubtedly deployed strong advocacy collateral regarding the importance of the concept (MacFarlane & Khong, 2006). The result was a gradual co-optation of the concept into global, regional and national norms and practices. A few cases in point include the international level, regulated bodies and regimes such as the creation of the International Criminal Court, the Kimberly Process and the Ottawa Process (Attuquayefio, 2012). States like Japan, Canada and Norway have deployed human security and invested in it as cardinal foreign policy initiatives (Fell, 2006), including the Responsibility to Protect (Bellamy, 2008). Human security has also been championed and co-opted within mainstream security approaches at the levels of the UN, the African Union and non-state actors (Hutchful, 2008).

While it is true that human security remains crucial in security discourse, it is also true that the realities of current global politics and the consequences of Realpolitik therein have engendered toxicity that is counterproductive to the nurturing and consolidation of human security. The Russia-Ukraine War has, for instance, seen the prioritisation of state-centric military responses relative to people-centred support systems (The Guardian 2025). Given the wide disparity between military aid and

humanitarian responses, it seems certain that the traditional argument that the security of people is assured when states secure their boundaries is the current playbook. The Israel-Palestine conflict similarly offers challenges to the relevance of human security, particularly as regards the subordination of civilian protection to state security.

Nationalist turns in the politics of the Global North are also challenging aspects of the continued relevance of human security in contemporary geopolitics. Nationalist-inspired populist governments have implemented and failed to implement policies and initiatives that, in the long run, chip away at the longevity and relevance of human security. The US, for instance, has withdrawn from multilateral institutions, regimes and agencies deemed central to Human Security. Populist governments in Western Europe continue to undermine EU-wide policies on the protection of refugees, humanitarian assistance, among others. The void left by the dismantling of USAID has only been exacerbated by the recent redirection of aid to Ukraine and an increase in national defence spending, even by known adherents of the liberal international order and their commitment around the world within the EU (The Guardian 2025). In this development, some African states such as Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Tanzania, Nigeria, and South Africa, among others, have been significantly hit by cuts in critical areas such as public health, with dire consequences looming (*Ibid*). These geopolitical trends promise significant setbacks to the gains of human security since its inception in 1994.

The above developments raise questions regarding the continuous viability of human security in the current geopolitical landscape. Exploring the apparent tensions between human security and strategic imperatives in Realpolitik should enable a determination of human security's future relevance. This constitutes the thrust of this paper. This paper draws mainly on a qualitative research approach. It adopts a thematic analysis of secondary literature to examine the utility of human security and how it is undermined by contemporary geopolitical trends with a primary focus on the Russia-Ukraine and Israel-Palestine conflicts as well as nationalist trends in the Global North. The aim is to assess the continuous viability of human security in an evolving geopolitical space largely influenced by Realpolitik. To do this, the paper would be divided into five sections. A context of the emergence of human security and its policy relevance would constitute the first section. The second section would examine the immutable dynamics of Realpolitik and its theoretical connections to realism. This section would focus on the manifestation of Realpolitik in the Russo-Ukrainian and Israeli-Palestine conflicts. The third section explores nationalist trends in global politics, focusing on the US and the EU, and their implications for human security. It briefly states the impact of these nationalist politics on the vectors of human security in some African states. The fourth section explores the agency or

complicity of states and leaders in sub-Saharan Africa in undermining human security. The fifth section explores pathways for maintaining the relevance of human security.

Historical Relevance of Human Security in Geopolitics Since 1994

The introduction of *human security* into global policy discourse through the 1994 *Human Development Report* (HDR) by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) marked a significant shift away from traditional, state-centric security paradigms (Burgess & Gräns, 2012). For the first time, contestations over the utility of state-centric notions of security were offered in a structured and meaningful manner. The traditional notion of security, which positioned the *state* as the primary referent object insofar as security is concerned, came under a microscopic view.

This state-centric view of security emerged from the dynamics surrounding the creation of the modern state system in the 17th Century. With the conceptualisation of the international system as a platform for interaction among sovereign states—lacking a central authority to enforce rules—anarchy was identified as the defining characteristic of this system (Buzan et al, 1993). In such a context, states acted rationally by pursuing *self-help* strategies to ensure their survival. Since threats were predominantly military, responses were likewise military in nature, aimed at safeguarding territorial integrity and national sovereignty (Walt, 2010). According to Attuquayefio, this traditional paradigm was founded on a triad of assumptions: One, that the state is the primary provider of security for individuals within its borders; two, that threats are directed at the state rather than at the people; and three, that ensuring the security of the state automatically ensures the security of its citizens (Attuquayefio, 2012).

These basic ideas have been tested by the changes in geopolitics since the Cold War. For example, as transnational problems increasingly affect more and more people across states, even though national borders remain strong, focusing on military threats as the main source of danger is no longer possible. Moreover, the state is no longer seen as the sole provider of security—indeed, in some cases, states and their agents have become sources of insecurity themselves (Ibid). In response to these challenges, the concept of human security offers a complementary framework. It broadens the understanding of security to include non-military threats and emphasises the security of individuals rather than just states. Human security recognises that people can face threats even in ostensibly “secure” states and

that other actors beyond the state can play important roles in addressing the diverse and interconnected risks confronting individuals today (Liotta & Owen, 2006).

At inception, one of the primary criticisms of human security was its lack of analytical acuity. Buzan notably described human security as a reductionist, idealistic notion that adds little analytical value (Buzan & Hansen, 2010). Between 1994 and the early 2000s, however, the geopolitical relevance of human security became more pronounced as it was gradually co-opted within multilateral frameworks. The Millennium Report of the UN Secretary-General, published in 2000, reasserted the urgency of people-centred development and peace, setting the stage for the establishment of the Commission on Human Security in 2001 (Macfarlane & Khong, 2006). During this period, countries such as Japan and Canada also emerged as champions of the concept. Japan integrated human security into its foreign policy and Official Development Assistance (ODA) strategies. At the same time, Canada played a leading role in promoting the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) doctrine—perhaps the most robust normative expression of human security principles (Bookmiller & Bookmiller, 2010). Simultaneously, global instruments such as the International Criminal Court (ICC), the Ottawa Treaty on the prohibition of landmines, and the Kimberley Process for curbing conflict diamonds were either inspired by or aligned with the tenets of human security (Attoquayefio, 2012). These were notable indicators of a global recognition of the value of human-centred norms, particularly in times of conflict or crisis.

From the mid-2000s to 2015, the concept of human security underwent significant co-optation into global instruments and the agendas of international institutions. The United Nations, for instance, began adopting multidimensional peacekeeping mandates that incorporated civilian protection, humanitarian access, and rebuilding societal institutions—hallmarks of human security practice. Agencies such as the UNDP, OCHA, and UN Women adopted human security principles in their programming to address post-conflict recovery, gender-based violence, and climate-induced vulnerability (Veliyeva, 2021). Regionally, the African Union (AU) and sub-regional bodies such as ECOWAS also embraced human security in early warning mechanisms and peace and security frameworks, with the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) of the African Union incorporating aspects of civilian protection and human development into its mandate (Sharamo et al., 2012).

This period also saw civil society actors, international NGOs, and think tanks deploy human security as an analytical and operational tool to influence peacebuilding and development interventions in

fragile and conflict-affected states (Shaw & MacLean, 2019). Human security assessed risks in conflict zones, shaped transitional justice processes, and framed the humanitarian-development-peace nexus. Even though there were still arguments about what it meant, the idea's normative appeal made it easy to include in discussions about development aid, foreign policy, and global governance. The endorsement of the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) norm in 2005 reinforced international consensus around the ethical and strategic dimensions of human security (Axworthy, 2013). However, by the end of this period, signs of strain on the global consensus around human security began to emerge. The selective application of R2P, especially during the Syrian civil war, similarly exposed the controversial application of the concept as a geopolitical interest that determined whether human lives warranted international protection.

As migration became more secure, especially in Europe, refugees were seen not as people who needed help but as threats to national borders and identities. In the same way, changes in donor priorities, from human development to counterterrorism and state stabilisation, showed a slow return to state-centred approaches. From the 2010s to the early 2020s, there was an even more profound downward spiral in the centrality of human security in global politics. As would be further explained in the next chapter, the downward spiral appears to be linked to the resurgence of nationalist ideologies, protectionist policies, and militarised responses to crises. The hit taken by the normative appeal of human security also appears attributable to waning support for multilateral arrangements. It is within this context that the subsequent sections will examine the geopolitical dynamics that challenge the continued viability of human security in today's landscape.

Theorising Realpolitik and Its Impact on Contemporary Application of Human Security

One of the immutable concepts in geopolitics is Realpolitik. In its basic rendition, it refers to the consideration of practical realities relating to who gets what, when and how in a geopolitical space that is inherently anarchic and the deployment of measures to obtain the most favourable outcome for states. As a term, Realpolitik has German origins that literally mean “realistic politics” (Fiedler, 2011). It was originally deployed by the 19th-century German writer and politician Ludwig von Rochau to depict the diplomatic approach of Klemens von Metternich, a German-Austrian politician and statesman considered the foremost pragmatic diplomat of his time (Bew, 2014; Humphrey, 2014). It should be noted that Realpolitik stems from a longer tradition of thought about the actions of states,

pre-eminently associated with Niccolò Machiavelli in his book *The Prince* (*Ibid*). Though its origins are widely thought to be German, as Emery notably observed, Realpolitik has been a fact throughout history and, when properly understood, must remain a fact for every conscientious statesman (Emery, 1915).

From its earliest conception, there has been a marked distinction between its pragmatism and the perceived idealism of other political dictums (Bew, 2014). Emery (1915) conceptualises a realpolitiker as a “statesman who in his dealings allows himself to be influenced only by existing circumstances and needs, in contrast to doctrinaire and phrase-making politicians” (p. 450). Put another way, Realpolitik is politics or diplomacy based primarily on power and practical, material considerations, rather than on ideological notions or moralistic or ethical premises (Ong, 2014; Sarim, 2025). This and many succeeding reflections on the concept establish a fundamental dissonance between Realpolitik and ideological perspectives that advocate values other than state power and advantage. In direct reference to state primacy as a cardinal principle of Realpolitik, Humphrey indicated that the relevance of Realpolitik lies in the primacy of the sovereign state, whose interests are defined in terms of power and the enhancement of the state’s international position (Humphrey, 2014). Humphrey observed that, as the practical counterpart to the realist school of International Relations theory, Realpolitik is rooted in the preservation of states and the promotion of their national interests (*Ibid*).

As an ideological by-product and manifestation of realism, there is an instructive effect that Realpolitik has on state primacy and how that portends well or not for human security. The point is that embedded in the broader understanding of Realpolitik is the characterisation of the international political system as anarchic, comprising states with military capabilities and distinguished by inter-state power competition (Pearson, 2015). The anarchic nature of the international system makes state primacy even more pronounced, as states are perpetually preoccupied with survival, which manifests as self-help and the ultimate pursuit of their national interest. These defining features of realism and Realpolitik continually punctuate the 21st-century international system and, by this calculus, squarely place state primacy and survival at the centre of international political discourse. The consequence of this is the evocation of the Westphalian state structure, while incrementally silencing the premium placed on humans caught in realpolitik-motivated inter-state competition and state survival. It can therefore be conveniently stated that the human-centred ideological norms underlying the concept of human security put it in a natural ideological conflict with Realpolitik, hence a glaring ontological disparity between the two.

States with comparatively robust military capabilities remain the predominant actors in the international system, and they are engaged in interstate power competition. It is within the remit of Realpolitik and state reproduction that one can begin, for instance, to unpack Russia's invasion of Georgia in 2008, the Ukrainian Crimea in 2014, the latter of which has escalated into an ongoing war (2022 to the time of writing this paper in 2026). Russia has waged this war under the pretext of securing its borders, sovereignty and ultimately spheres of influence from what it considers to be hostile NATO forces. The exigencies of Realpolitik as a defining characteristic of 21st-century international politics are potent explanatory tools for appreciating the Israel-Palestinian crisis and, quite recently, the US/Israel coordinated unprovoked strikes against Iran, yet as already intimated, the resurgence or continued presence of Realpolitik and its heavy focus on state survival provide adversarial countermeasures to the global germination of human security. The next sections examine the Russian-Ukraine and Israel-Palestinian Wars and the nationalist trends in the global North – three distinct geopolitical developments that have manifested Realpolitik, thereby raising questions regarding the continued relevance of human security. While there have been other devastating wars or conflicts that equally compromise the survival chances of human security, the Russo-Ukraine and Israel-Palestinian Wars have clear manifestations of proven intent to consolidate state primacy and security above all else at the negligible cost of human lives, let alone human security; an identifiable pattern this paper carefully explores.

The Russia–Ukraine War

The Russia–Ukraine conflict has become one of the most obvious examples of the contemporary tension between state-centric Realpolitik and human security. On February 24, 2022, Russia invaded Ukraine, commencing a full-scale war on its Eastern neighbour. The antecedents of this action, dating back to 2014, manifest both deep state-centric concerns and nationalist sentiments, thus making the invasion somewhat of a last stage in a Realpolitik continuum on which both Russia and Ukraine had played since 2014. In his statement prior to the invasion, Putin notably emphasised Russian Security, citing fundamental threats to Russia resulting from the expansion of NATO to the east, thereby bringing its military infrastructure closer to Russian borders (Maitra, 2021; Marten, 2020). Putin's references to instances where the US had supposedly disregarded international law, including Belgrade, Libya, Syria and Iraq (Al Jazeera, 2022), not only proclaimed the frailty of international law and norms in the face of state interest but indicated a reconnection to the basic instinct of states – Realpolitik – noting that it would be irresponsible not to act—a grim resonance to Emery's

description of a conscientious statesman (Emery, 1915). Russia's focus on national interest, sovereignty and territoriality, all central to the conversation of Realpolitik, set the tone for conflict with Ukraine and for what would become one of the most challenging theatres for human security.

If Russia's invasion ignored human security, Ukraine's Western allies have responded by putting military defence ahead of civilian safety, even though they are supportive. At Ukraine's request, the US and EU focused heavily on arms deliveries and deterrence, assuming that a safe state would naturally mean safe citizens (Trebesch, 2023). It should be emphasised that the overwhelming attention given to the kinetic preparation, either for offensive or defensive incursion, ultimately undermines human security. However, this approach has sometimes overlooked the immediate humanitarian toll—the civilians trapped in war zones, the families displaced, and the communities shattered by prolonged fighting.

There are reports of spiralling numbers of internally displaced persons (IDPs), refugees, and civilian casualties caught between the two sides, with infrastructure critical to human survival—such as hospitals, schools, and water systems—being systematically destroyed (Poberezhets, 2022). While the long-term Russian military aggression against Ukraine has had a debilitating impact on human lives, since 2014, it is Russia's large-scale military incursion into Ukraine from 2022 that has had the most impact with respect to impact on human security. Between February and August 2022, more than 12.65 million people were directly affected by the war; 16.9 million Ukrainians were displaced – 10.3 million refugees have fled the country, and 6.6 million have been displaced internally (Poberezhets, 2022). On August 1, 2022, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights reported that there were 12,584 civilian casualties, including 5327 killed (4975 adults and 352 children). Hundreds of thousands of people are still trapped and faced with a shortage of food, water, and medicines. The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights reported that there have been about 12,584 civilian casualties since the war started, including 5327 killed (4975 adults and 352 children, according to Poberezhets (2022). This notwithstanding, global narratives mainly driven by Western news agencies remain largely centred on strategic posturing, military victories, and alliance solidarity, rather than the lived experiences of those caught in the crossfire.

Furthermore, the conflict has exposed how humanitarian concerns are subordinated to geopolitical alignment. Ukraine's appeals for humanitarian corridors, reconstruction support and interventions for war-affected populations are frequently overshadowed by summit-level discussions on security guarantees and military coalitions. The heavy military support and financial aid injected into Ukraine by its western allies in the hopes of safeguarding that country's borders and political sovereignty are instructive to appreciating the extent to which state reproduction and survival are prioritised as the ultimate means to protecting human lives and security rather than at the same time, securing the latter as part of the considerations in any wholesome security architecture. The Council on Foreign Relations reports that since the Russo-Ukraine War started in 2022, Ukraine has become the largest recipient of US foreign aid in Europe, surpassing that of the unmatched financial assistance the US provided to the Israeli government on an annual basis. It is the largest financial aid to a European state from the US, aside from President Truman's famous Marshal Plan (Masters & Wills, 2025). So far, a staggering amount to the tune of 175 billion dollars in financial and military aid from the US has been made available to Ukraine.

The fact that state military capabilities and competition have taken centre-stage in this crisis shows how much the Realpolitik logic of state survival has blinded stakeholders to the dimensions of human security, even among democratic and liberal states. In effect, the war reinforces the traditional security maxim: that the protection of people is presumed to follow the securing of state interests—a notion that human security was meant to challenge. This fundamental neglect of human security imperatives has notably contributed to a decline in the concept's utility.

Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is one of the hardest to solve in modern geopolitics. Its roots can be found in the Balfour Declaration of 1917 and the Arab-Israeli War of 1948. These events show that both Israelis and Palestinians want their own country. This struggle has been marked by events that have altered the geopolitical landscape in the region, caused widespread displacement, economic and personal insecurity and profoundly disrupted the livelihoods of people living in the region. Notable among these events is the 1967 Six-Day War, the aftermath of which saw Israel's occupation of the West Bank, Gaza Strip, East Jerusalem, the Golan Heights and the Sinai Peninsula and the 1973 Yom Kippur War (Chomsky, 1999).

Contemporary manifestations of the conflict—including attacks by Hamas, Israel's military operations in Gaza and expansion of settlements in the West Bank—highlight the persistent prioritisation of strategic interests and territorial control over human rights and civilian protection. These dynamics have created structural barriers to human security, with the fallout including limited access to basic services, assaults on the liberty of movement, and prolonged economic insecurity for people living in the region. As geopolitical calculations, Israel, regional and global powers overshadow efforts to address the humanitarian needs and aspirations of affected populations, Realpolitik and its dominance over human security are reinforced. In the wake of recent escalations—particularly following the October 7, 2023, attack by Hamas and Israel's response- Palestinian communities, notably in Gaza, have endured unprecedented levels of devastation, with over 50000 reported deaths (UNWRA 2025).

Consequently, in the wake of the Hamas attacks, entire neighbourhoods in Gaza have been obliterated, medical facilities have been targeted or destroyed, and critical infrastructure such as water and electricity systems have been severely damaged or rendered inoperable. Notwithstanding the human toll, efforts to address the conflict have been influenced largely by strategic alliances and geopolitical interests. Consequently, initiatives aimed at safeguarding civilian lives, such as establishing humanitarian corridors or immediately ceasing hostilities, are frequently delayed, blocked, or rendered ineffective. Even in instances where other actors within the international community have sought to advocate for the enforcement of these initiatives, these efforts have been subject to the strategic use of vetoes and the promotion of geopolitical priorities by the permanent members of the Security Council. Even though the United Nations and other international humanitarian groups have repeatedly written about and condemned these actions, saying they breach the Geneva Conventions and customary international law, there has not been much real enforcement or accountability.

In addition to the above, the Israeli-Palestine conflict has also seen the militarisation of humanitarian aid. To avoid the use of aid as sustenance pools for Hamas, Israel has effectively weaponised and securitised aid, ensuring that it retains full control over the distribution of aid within affected communities (Iqtait, 2025). Humanitarian aid such as food has been weaponised into trapping people in Gaza to death, and mass casualties sustained among people queuing for food continue to be reported. The words of the Commissioner-General of UNRWA, Philippe Lazzarini, posted on X (previously known as Twitter) on June 17 2025, are crucially summoned here as follows:

It is now the new routine to shoot and kill desperate and starving people while they try to collect little food from a company made of mercenaries”, adding that “Inviting people to their death is a war crime (UNRWA 2025).

By linking the distribution of humanitarian aid to strategic political factors, human security assumes marginal relevance to the primacy of the survival of states within the realist practical milieu of realpolitik.

In a different but related analysis, it has been argued that the Hamas October attack on Israel was a blowback from the Abraham Accords, whose premise was the normalisation of relationships between Israel and Arab states of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) while ignoring the human security concerns of the Palestinian people. The consequential by-product of the Accords was the sacrifice of the long-held Arab cause and support for a Palestinian state as a condition for normalising relations with Israel. MENA states therefore entered the Accords with a strong focus on regional stability and national security rather than human security. This choice was laced with future global ramifications, as are now manifesting.

Nationalist Trends in the Politics of the Global North

In the last few years, the rise of nationalist governments in North America and parts of Europe has had dire implications for human security, with the consequences including a retreat from multilateral agreements that have provided global guarantees for human security. Countries traditionally considered as guarantors of the human security agenda are increasingly withdrawing from such arrangements or downgrading their participation ostensibly for national security concerns. Consequently, global normative and institutional foundations that have sustained human security since the 1990s have been undermined. The United States, under the Trump administration (2017–2021) and from 2025 to date, epitomises this nationalist turn.

The Trump administration's abrogation of the Climate Accord typifies this orientation. The US's withdrawal from the Climate Accord was intended to prevent it from being impeded by a climate regime that would prevent it from exploring energy or fuel sources considered inimical to the environment but perceived as highly beneficial to the US economy (Ward & Cowen, 2020). The United States government, under the second Trump administration, announced it would withdraw from the Paris Agreement on Climate Change in January 2025, weeks after assuming office. The COP21 Paris Climate Change Agreement is a multilateral arrangement and a climate change regime that seeks to limit "the increase in the global average temperature to well below 2 °C by primarily limiting greenhouse gas emissions (Chevallier, 2022). The US under President Obama became a signatory to it and in April 2016 accepted it by executive order. Obama also committed the US to about 3 billion dollars for the Green Climate Fund, dedicated to assisting poor and developing countries in coping with the impacts of climate change, to raise 100 billion dollars annually by 2020 (Rhodes, 2015). The actions of the United States did not occur in a vacuum. The point is that the US is one of the largest carbon emitters because it heavily relies on fossil fuels, which are considered hazardous to the environment. The economic might of the US certainly comes at a cost, and that cost is that it makes it one of the largest greenhouse gas emitters, largely contributing to global warming, the effects of which are devastating and even fatal. Livelihoods have been shattered, lives lost, and people displaced because of global warming (Wallace-Wells, 2018; Wallace, 2017). The effects of global warming span across the varied vectors of human security, including environmental, economic and even personal security.

The Paris Climate Accord was perhaps the most ambitious plan to mitigate the impacts of global warming by committing states to better practices to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. It was only a step in the right direction, given the profile of greenhouse gas emissions; it stayed loyal to the arrangement by ditching fossil fuel and leading the way to a zero-carbon economy. Innocent lives depended on the US ideological and financial commitment to the Paris Accord. The Trump administration, though, thinks otherwise. President Trump is convinced that the regime on climate change and the multilateral arrangement are a hoax designed to impede US economic interests by preventing it from maximising the exploration of its coal industry, which he sought to revamp (Rhodes, 2015). He has criticised the US financial commitment to the Climate Fund as a wealth redistribution scheme from rich to poor countries. Consequently, pulling the US out of the Climate Accord allows the US to fully revamp the coal industry and effectively halt the transfer of US funds. The decision to withdraw the US from the Paris Accord has dire consequences for personal, economic, food, and environmental security and, quite frankly, is a threat to human security. Paul

O'Brien, the Executive Director of Amnesty International, summarises the impact of the Trump 2.0 decision to leave the Climate Arrangements as follows:

The climate crisis is one of the most pervasive threats to human rights today, leading to famine, refugee and other humanitarian crises, poverty and homelessness across the globe. President Trump's decision to withdraw the United States from the Paris Agreement will cause harm to communities across the globe. While the world's most marginalised people will continue to be the hardest hit, we do not need to look farther than the fires in California or the flooding in North Carolina to understand that the climate crisis is here and is directly harming all of us (Amnesty International, 2025).

President Trump has had diplomatic brawls with world leaders over his immigration policies and particularly his mass deportation policies. Some of these illegal immigration crackdowns have flown in the face of basic human rights values and due process (Villarreal, 2025). The immigration initiative of the current Trump administration involves mass arrests, detention and removals of both long-standing and recently arrived migrants under gruesome circumstances. Images abound of illegal Indian immigrants shackled in chains on both feet and hands as though they were criminals. While the immigration policies of states should align with their national interest, such policies must also be in congruence with best practices possible and within the ambit of human rights and humanity in general. Trump 2.0 has ended the right to asylum-seeking at the US-Mexico border for hundreds of asylum-seekers and migrants whose safety may be at risk as they are thrown into detention, returned to harm in their home country. Families have been separated; communities have been torn apart, thereby undermining human security (Amnesty International, 2025). The US government has not only targeted criminal immigrants, but also illegal migrants, many of whom have no criminal records, and has bundled them offshore to Guantanamo Bay, where prisoners face inhumane treatment. Not even children who, by no fault of their own, found themselves entangled in this immigration crackdown have been spared. Trump's immigration policy openly compromises human rights, personal, community and economic security, yet President Trump considers mass deportation to be in the national interest of America. As if to distance the Trump administration from the blame connected to such violations and for the administration to forge ahead with its mass deportation, the US revoked its membership with the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC). This leaves cracks in the collective and global efforts at human rights and humanitarian roles played by the US since the post-WWII international system.

The United States has, for decades, played a leadership role within the liberal order in protecting human rights as the leader of the free world. In fact, its progressive values around the world have earned it the title of the “world's policeman” (Etzioni, 2016). One, therefore, wonders what becomes of the international efforts to improve human rights if one of its guarantors is unwilling to play the custodial role. The United States has the economic muscle and political leverage to shape international human rights practices worldwide (Edwards, 2018). Extensively, this role by the US added to existing frameworks on human security, such as R2P and the Rome Statute, which together bolster human security. The absence of the US, therefore, creates a significant vacuum among repressive regimes who may now be emboldened to be more creative with coercive leadership styles. To add to the long list of US rescissions of UN agencies, the Trump administration's notification to the UN that emergency food aid would be cut is worth mentioning. According to the UN World Food Program (UNWFP), this would shut down food availability to 14 countries (Warner, 2025). This could spell doom for millions of people facing extreme hunger and starvation, as these people literally depend on the food aid program for survival.

The Trump 2.0 administration's formal withdrawal from the World Health Organisation (WHO) marks a significant rupture in global health governance. As the leading international institution mandated by its constitution to direct and coordinate global health efforts, the WHO has historically played a vital role in public health response, disease surveillance, and crisis coordination (Stolberg, 2025). The decision by the United States—traditionally the largest single contributor to the WHO's budget—to revoke its membership represents both a financial and symbolic blow to multilateral health cooperation.

Historically, the United States has contributed approximately 13–15% of the WHO's total budget, underscoring its outsized role in sustaining the organisation's operations. According to estimates reported by the Associated Press (2025), the US is expected to withhold nearly \$1 billion from the WHO's \$6.5 billion biennial budget for 2024–2025 (Lederer, 2025). The administration justified this decision by asserting that the financial burden of sustaining the WHO and other United Nations (UN) agencies had disproportionately fallen on the United States. At the same time, the perceived benefits to US national interests remained minimal. Furthermore, officials argued that the political direction of the WHO and other UN agencies had increasingly diverged from US policy preferences, rendering continued engagement untenable (Ibid).

This withdrawal has far-reaching implications for the WHO's operational capacity and for international cooperation on public health. The loss of the WHO's largest donor is likely to significantly constrain its ability to respond to health emergencies, particularly in fragile and resource-constrained settings. It also raises concerns about the politicisation of global health and the sustainability of multilateralism in an era of resurgent nationalism. The gap left by US disengagement may prompt other actors—such as China or the European Union—to expand their influence within the organisation, potentially reshaping global health norms and priorities.

UN Secretary-General António Guterres has repeatedly warned of the broader implications of the United States' funding cuts and disengagement from multilateral institutions, emphasising that such actions risk undermining collective efforts to address transnational challenges. In the context of ongoing global health threats—including pandemics, emerging diseases, and humanitarian crises—the US withdrawal from the WHO has a consequential impact. Reflecting on the gravity of these developments, Guterres stated:

We have been extremely grateful for the leading role the United States has provided over the decades. For example, thanks to the generosity of donors, led by the United States, the UN assists and protects more than 100 million people every year through our humanitarian programming... Now, going through with these cuts will make the world less healthy, less safe and less prosperous. The reduction of America's humanitarian role and influence will run counter to American interests globally... (Guterres 2025).

His remarks underscore the far-reaching consequences of the US withdrawal, not only for the WHO but for the broader multilateral system tasked with responding to global crises. The erosion of US support weakens institutional capacity, compromises the timeliness and coordination of responses to public health emergencies, and threatens to politicise humanitarian and development agendas further. The funding cuts by the Trump administration would affect human security and its delivery, which are embedded in a wide range of critical programs run by UN agencies, such as lifesaving humanitarian aid, helping vulnerable communities rebuild after war or natural disasters, and counter-terrorism and drug trafficking, among others. The situation is exacerbated by the termination of USAID for vulnerable populations who depended on it for health care and food security, among other consequential benefits (Mbah et al., 2025).

In Europe, right-wing populist governments in Hungary, Poland, and Italy, among others, have opposed EU-wide refugee resettlement programs, erected physical and legal barriers against asylum seekers, and challenged the authority of supranational institutions. These actions undermine the collective mechanisms designed to uphold human dignity in times of displacement and crisis—mechanisms that are core to the human security framework. Western Europe has a plethora of political parties with nationalist and populist inspired ideologies, which project identity protection and the sole interest of states- and with it a distaste towards a rule-based order-over regimes such as human security norms. Germany's most manifest rise of an alt-right nationalist party, the Alternative für Germany Party (AfD), the largest opposition party and the second-largest political party in that country, is a case in point (Wodak & Krzyżanowski, 2017). The French Far-right National Rally (RN) Party has gained popularity for its populist approach under the leadership of Marie Le Pen. The United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) in the United Kingdom and the Dutch Party for Independence have similarly toed this line. Parties with populist and nationalist ideologies have entered government coalitions in eleven Western democracies, including Austria, Italy and Switzerland (Inglehart & Norris, 2016).

Threat to Human Security and African States

The realpolitik exigencies of the day have pushed even more liberal states within the EU, known for their commitment to humanitarian aid around the world, to significantly cut back crucial aid budgets to volatile states in Africa to instead focus on financial support to Ukraine in its war with Russia and to bolster their own defence (Alemayehou & McNair, 2024). Regrettably, expectations and hopes that perhaps the EU would step in to replace the void in the absence of USAID have been dashed. The recent announcement by Canada, the UK and some members of the EU, notably Germany, France, Sweden and Norway to significantly cut aid to some African states in order to focus on boosting their own state security and providing kinetic resources to Ukraine (Khalifa, 2025; Ahmed, 2025) has dire consequences for states in Africa who crucially rely on such humanitarian assistance. Sweden announced in December 2025 that it would cut £800 million worth of development funding to Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Liberia, Tanzania and Bolivia (Ahmed, 2025). Similarly, Germany's humanitarian budget for 2026 (£920 million) is less than half of its 2025 budget. The UK has also announced that it will cut aid to fund defence spending.

France and Norway, like their EU counterparts, have done the same by increasing their own defence spending and to support Ukraine in its war with Russia (Ibid). The result is a reduction in committed funding to humanitarian projects in Africa. Consequently, Germany's aid budgetary cuts target traditional development and poverty-reduction programmes, with a whopping 20% cut to the World Food Programme and 33% to the Gavi vaccine alliance (Ahmed, 2025). The aid cuts primarily affect health care, food availability, education and climate change in the impacted states. Among African states most affected by this realignment in the geopolitical decisions of donor states in the global north are Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Tanzania, Nigeria, South Africa, Zambia, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (Kent, 2025; Ahmed, 2025). These aforementioned African states will have a public health crisis to deal with as experts warn that states in this sub-region will suffer the risk of reversing gains made in fighting HIV/AIDS (Ahmed, 2025).

Democratic Recession, Militarism and Nationalism in Sub-Saharan Africa

While the realpolitik moves of the Global North have a deleterious impact on human security in Africa, an analysis that underplays Africa's agency in the decline of human security risks being lopsided. The last few years, to be precise, the last two decades, have united scholarship on democracy from both public policy think tanks and traditional scholars (Diamond, 2008; Carothers, 2014; Diamond, 2016) in a unidirectional path. The predominant view from both angles is that, during this period, there has been a global democratic recession, partly as a by-product of cracks in the liberal world order (Nord et al., 2024). The sub-Saharan region is no exception, as there has been a reversal of democratic gains due to waning commitment to democratic projects among political elites (Gyimah-Boadi, 2015; Desrosiers et al., 2025, p. 20). The pervasiveness of the democratic decline has emboldened autocratic regimes and encouraged repression, even among the region's stable democracies, as basic freedoms have been curtailed and electoral violence has increased due to the purported illiberal impulses of incumbents (Arriola et al., 2023, p. 1). The sub-Saharan region, for instance, has witnessed nine successful military coups since 2020, alongside at least as many failed attempts, all centred in what commentators have termed a Sahelian coup belt. Military coups in particular and unconstitutional changes of government in Africa have contributed to democratic regression and stunted economic growth (Akinyetun, 2022) and have ultimately been counterproductive to the consolidation of human security. This is because the political mechanics of

these military regimes are wired to curtail essential human rights and broad access to freedoms in the glorification of security regimes and survival.

In a related analysis, some African states and leaders have hidden behind the Western-backed global War on Terror (GWOT) and counter terrorism operations of the US and West African Sahel that became ever popular post 9/11 to adopt repressive strategies to silence critics and opposition (Agwanda, 2025). These leaders have adopted the *Putschist Playbook* and have securitised and militarised responses (Vines, 2024) to what are essentially socio-economic and political grievances by drawing international support from the US and Western Europe in the name of fighting terrorism while, in fact, the militarised approaches are strategies of state survival and reproduction (Agwanda, 2025; Roberts, 2022). To put it bluntly, the war on terror has provided support and security assistance to authoritarian leaders of Sahel states involved in the US-led GWOT, while overlooking human rights violations, anti-democratic practices, and widespread repression by such states, ultimately serving as counterproductive to the regime of human security.

The rise of populist nationalism that seems to have gained ascendancy in the politics of the Global North seems to have surreptitiously crept into the politics of the Global South and, in particular, some sub-Saharan African states. This has manifested selectively in the recent violent xenophobic attacks in South Africa, which, as of July 20, 2026, claimed nine lives of nationals from Mozambique, Nigeria, Ghana and Uganda, while properties have been ransacked or looted (Al Jazeera, 2026). The xenophobic sentiment from the South African protestors against African migrants in that country is a marked feature of populist nationalism which maligns basic principles of human rights and security (Carmody, 2017). It is a feature of populist and nationalist politics aimed at the preservation of national identity and the first right of indigenes while lashing out at foreigners whose right to life, survival and dignity-human security- are collaterally damaged in such a nationalist endeavour. This does not bode well for the continent's broader efforts to strengthen human security at a time and in a space where the concept is already under duress.

This growing nationalist trends in politics as demonstrated in both Global North and South threatens the continuity of human security investments and undermines the legitimacy of the institutions that once operationalized the concept at the international level. In place of this is the entrenchment of the Westphalian realist paradigm in which state primacy, including state interest and security, trump the international liberal order, which oxygenates human security. This ultimately pushes discourses, norms and narratives not directly linked to threats to state sovereignty and territorial integrity to the fringes.

Exploring Potential Pathways for Continued Relevance of Human Security

Human security is not completely irrelevant in the future, nor has it outlived its usefulness even though the rise of Realpolitik and nationalist ideologies present many challenges. The paradox that cannot be understated is that in the midst of the nationalist trends and realpolitik that accentuate geopolitics, human security becomes a necessary practical tool to emancipatory humanity. Put differently, it appears that the exigencies of nationalist politics that seem to cloak and overshadow the current and future state of human security rather put a lustre on the imperatives of human security. For one thing, too much focus on realpolitik as the dominant feature of global politics returns the discourse and narrative on security to the incipient stage of the national-human security nexus. This amplifies the loopholes and inadequacies of state-centric security that engendered the discourse on a holistic approach to security and, for that matter, human security considerations. Secondly, human vulnerabilities as a direct consequence of a realpolitik-defined geopolitics would recentre the conversation on the need for human security, particularly for states in the global South.

It suffices to note that, despite this paradox, the challenges to human security necessitate a re-evaluation of its framework and operational methods. To retain its normative and policy utility in an increasingly state-centric world, human security must evolve strategically by anchoring itself more firmly within multilevel governance structures, building coalitions among state and non-state actors, and articulating its value through pragmatic, context-specific interventions.

First, embedding human security within national development and security strategies could enable it to circumvent geopolitical constraints. Many states and regional organisations, particularly in the Global South, continue to grapple with multidimensional insecurities, ranging from environmental degradation and food scarcity to armed violence and weak health systems. Aligning human security with current national policy frameworks, such as plans to reduce poverty, build resilience, and support post-conflict reconstruction, can shift the idea from a competing normative agenda to a pragmatic and useful tool for national development. This strategic domestication of human security enables a more context-responsive application, increasing its relevance at the ground level while maintaining coherence with broader development goals, such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Second, the African Union (AU), ASEAN, ECOWAS, and other regional groups must work hard to keep the idea alive and useful. These groups can help find a balance between multilateral norms and the need for national sovereignty. For instance, the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) is already built with ideas about human security in mind. These structures can be made even stronger to put people-centred, proactive approaches at the top of the list for preventing crises, resolving conflicts, and recovering from them. The AU should advocate for the observance of human security values even in authoritarian or military regime states as well as states whose citizens have reached and imbibed unbridled levels of populist politics inimical to the lives of other people or migrants. By fostering regional ownership and harmonising efforts across borders, human security can be operationalised even when the global liberal order falters.

Third, the reactivation of civil society coalitions and transnational advocacy networks can provide vital support in holding states accountable to human security commitments. Civil society groups played a big role in the campaigns for the Ottawa Treaty and the creation of the International Criminal Court in the early 2000s. Today, similar groups can call for a renewed commitment to protecting refugees, climate justice, economic rights, and international humanitarian law. These actors are uniquely positioned to bridge normative ideals and grassroots realities, especially when intergovernmental channels are gridlocked by geopolitical rivalry.

Fourth, the fact that climate change, migration, and conflict are becoming more and more connected makes a strong case for improving human security. The climate-security connection naturally highlights how weak people and communities are, creating a space where human security can show its practical value. As environmental problems worsen, people lose their jobs, are compelled to relocate, and compete more for resources (Ruppel & Wyk, 2013). These developments make the clarion call to adopt policies that put people first ever more urgent and imminent. Governments and international organisations can thus be encouraged to adopt human security as an analytical and operational lens for integrated responses to climate-induced crises.

Finally, there is a need for epistemic resilience and innovation. Human security scholars and practitioners must refine the concept to respond to criticisms of vagueness and idealism. Rather than abandoning its holistic vision, human security can adopt modular approaches—focusing on specific vectors such as food security, health, or protection of civilians in conflict—to demonstrate impact and gain policy traction. Also, its ideas can be integrated into the current conversation about global

governance by incorporating human security into frameworks for peacebuilding and the humanitarian-development-peace nexus.

In the end, the future of human security will depend on how well it can adapt while remaining focused on people. This adaptation will entail modifying its instruments, establishing new coalitions for assistance between domestic and foreign players, and aligning with new global priorities.

Conclusion

The wars in Gaza and Ukraine and the withdrawal of powerful countries from international organisations show that the world is going back to a way of thinking where state power and national interests are more important than people's safety and dignity. Human security risks being viewed as an abstract idea in this shifting environment, something discussed at conferences and in donor reports but rarely taken into account when making decisions that affect people's lives. Still, this decline does not mean the end of human security. Instead, it is a call to rethink and reposition it more strategically within today's changing global landscape. If the post–Cold War period was about norm-setting and conceptual diffusion, the present demands tactical consolidation and pragmatic institutionalisation. Human security can become more relevant and impactful by connecting more closely with national and regional priorities, drawing on the urgency of climate and humanitarian challenges, and involving a wider range of voices. In doing so, it has the potential to push back against the harsher edges of Realpolitik and put people back at the centre of policy.

The choice confronting the global community is therefore not between human security and state security, but how both can be integrated into a comprehensive security paradigm. To make human security a meaningful guide for today's complex challenges, we need a fresh approach—one that trusts local solutions, adapts quickly to change, and puts people at the heart of every decision. In a world facing constant upheaval, protecting the dignity and wellbeing of individuals is not just the right thing to do—it is essential for building lasting peace and stability. The idea of human security must keep evolving because, without it, any real hope for global peace, justice, and sustainable development falls short.

Acknowledgments

We are grateful to the reviewers of this paper for painstakingly going through the manuscript and providing such in-depth insights and suggestions that in the end enriched the quality and rigorousness of this article.

Declaration of Interest Statement

The authors have reported no potential conflict of interest.

Biographical Note

Philip Attuquayefio is an Associate Professor at the Legon Centre for International Affairs and Diplomacy (LECIAD), University of Ghana. He holds a PhD in Political Science, specializing in institutions and human security, and a master's degree in International Affairs. As an academic practitioner, his work spans human security, political stabilization, and conflict transformation. He also engages critically with the nexus between climate change, peace and security in Africa. Philip Attuquayefio has held substantive and advisory roles with the African Union, ECOWAS, and other regional and international bodies, and has facilitated training programmes for a range of institutions in Africa and beyond. He currently serves on the Technical Committee of the High-Level Forum on Peace and Security in Africa.

Roland Yeboah Mireku is a Research Fellow at the National College of Defense Studies, Ghana. He has a PhD in International Affairs, specializing in the politics of secession, self-determination and democracy in Africa, MPhil in African Studies (history and politics), and MA in International Affairs from the University of Ghana. He is an alumnus of the McMillan Centre for International and Area Studies at Yale University. Mireku was a visiting scholar at the Arnold Bergstraesser Institute at the University of Freiburg in Germany. His research interests straddle international relations and security, democracy and African politics, US foreign policy initiatives in Africa, and Black internationalism. He has authored several publications on these themes in reputable journals and continues to render expert analysis on similar issues through various media appearances nationally and internationally.

ORCID ID:

Philip Attuquayefio - <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9654-2140>

Roland Yeboah Mireku - <https://orcid.org/0009-0008-0232-1541>

References

- Ahmed, K. (2025, December 21). Sweden and Germany Slash Aid Budgets to Focus on Ukraine and Defence Spending. *The Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2025/dec/21/sweden-and-germany-slash-aid-budgets-to-focus-on-ukraine-and-defence-spending>
- Akinyetun, T. S. (2022). The state of democracy in Africa: Democratic decline or autocracy? *Političke perspektive*, 12(2), 89-115. <https://doi.org/10.20901/pp.12.2.04>
- Alemayehou, M., & McNair. (2024, February 28). False Economy: Why Europeans Should Stop Slashing Development Aid to Africa. *European Council on Foreign Relations*. <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2025/dec/21/sweden-and-germany-slash-aid-budgets-to-focus-on-ukraine-and-defence-spending>
- Aljazeera. (2022, February 22) 'No other option': Excerpts of Putin's speech declaring war. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/2/24/putins-speech-declaring-war-on-ukraine-translated-excerpts>
- Arriola, L. R., & Rakner, L. (2023). Democratic Backsliding in Africa? Autocratization, Resilience, and Contention (p. 320). Oxford University Press
- Attuquayefio, P. K. (2012). Co-opting human security and deductions for security policy making in Ghana. *Ghana Journal of Development Studies*, 9(1), 88-100. <https://doi.org/10.4314/gjd.s.v9i1.7>
- Bellamy, A. J. (2008). The responsibility to protect and the problem of military intervention. *International Affairs*, 84(4), 615-639. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.14682346.2008.00729.x>
- Bew, J. (2014). The Real Origins of Realpolitik. *The National Interest*, (130), 40–52. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/44153278>
- Billy, A. (2025). A Critique of the U.S. Global War on Terror in the Sahel. *African Security*, 18(4), 376–398. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19392206.2025.2552094>

- Burgess, P., & Gräns, J. (2012). Human Security. *Contemporary Security and Strategy*, 3, 89-104. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-137-32713-0_5
- Buzan, B., & Hansen, L. (2010). Defining–redefining security. In *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of International Studies*.
- Buzan, B., Jones, C. A., & Little, R. (1993). *The logic of anarchy: neorealism to structural realism*. Columbia University Press.
- Buzan, B., Wæver, O., & De Wilde, J. (1998). *Security: A new framework for analysis*. Lynne Rienner Publishers.
- Carmody, P. R. (2017). *The new scramble for Africa*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Chevallier, R. (2022). Climate Change Progress, The US Withdrawal and What We Can Expect from Cop23. South African Institute of International Affairs. <https://saiia.org.za/research/climate-change-progress-the-us-withdrawal-and-what-we-can-expect-from-cop23/>
- Chomsky, N. (1999). *Fateful Triangle: The United States, Israel, And The Palestinians*. South End Press.
- Desrosiers, M. E., Cheeseman, N., Beardsworth, N., Gyimah-Boadi, E., & Hassan, M. (2025). Effectively supporting democratic resilience and resistance. <https://idl-bnc-idrc.dspacedirect.org/items/ffd0c561-e057-46e9-abee-904089f7bcd7>
- Diamond, L. (2016). Democracy in decline: how Washington can reverse the tide. *Foreign Affairs*. <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/world/2016-06-13/democracy-decline>
- Diamond, L. (2015). Is democracy in decline? 1. In *In Search of Democracy* (pp. 76-100). Routledge. https://www.journalofdemocracy.org/wpcontent/uploads/2015/01/Plattner_26-1.pdf
- Diamond, L. (2008). The state of democracy in Africa. *Democratization in Africa: What progress toward institutionalization?* National Intelligence Council. https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/49381/african_democ_2008.pdf
- Etzioni, A. (2016). Freedom of Navigation Assertions: The United States as The World's Policeman. *Armed Forces & Society*, 42(3), 501-517. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0095327X15599635>
- Emery, H. C. (1915). What is Realpolitik? *The International Journal of Ethics*, 25(4), 448-468. <https://doi.org/10.1086/intejethi.25.4.2376875>
- Fell, M. (2006). Is Human Security our Main Concern in the 21st Century? *Journal of Security Sector Management*, 4(3), 1-11. https://ciaotest.cc.columbia.edu/olj/jssm/jssm_4_3/jssm_4_3b.pdf
- Fukuda-Parr, S., & Messineo, C. (2012). Human Security: A Critical Review of the Literature. Centre for Research On Peace and Development (CRPD) Working Paper, 11, 1-19. <https://soc.kuleuven.be/crpd/files/working-papers/wp11.pdf>
- Galbraith, J. (Ed.). (2018). United States Withdraws from the UN Human Rights Council, Shortly After Receiving Criticism About Its Border Policy. *American Journal of International Law*. 2018;112(4):745-751. <https://doi.org/10.1017/ajil.2018.92>

- Gyimah-Boadi, E. (2015). Africa's Waning Democratic Commitment. *Journal of Democracy* 26(1), 101-113. <https://dx.doi.org/10.1353/jod.2015.0000>.
- Hampson, F. O. (2012). Human Security. In *Security Studies* (Pp. 301-316). Routledge.
- Heywood, A. (2014). *Global politics* (Vol. 19). Bloomsbury Publishing.
- Humphreys, A. (2014) Realpolitik. *The Encyclopedia of Political Thought*.
- Hutchful, E. (2008). From Military Security to Human Security. In Akokpari J., Ndinga Muvumba A., & Murithi T. (ed) *The African Union and Its Institutions*. Cape Town: Centre for Conflict Resolution. Hutchful, E. (2008). <https://opac.african court.org/bib/2106>
- Inglehart, R. F., & Norris, P. (2016). Trump, Brexit, and the Rise of Populism: Economic Have-Nots and Cultural Backlash. <https://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2818659>
- Iqtait, A. (2025). From Conditionality to Weaponisation: The Transformation of Aid in Palestine Post-October 2023. *Third World Quarterly*, 1-21. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2025.2532005>
- Kalili-Tari, D. (2026, July 9). South African protesters intimidate migrants as aid group issues warning. ALJAZEERA. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2026/7/9/south-african-protesters-intimidate-migrants-as-aid-group-issues-warning>
- Kent, L. (2025, June 12). The UK, Germany and Canada Have Slashed Foreign Aid This Year, Deepening Damage Done by US Cuts, Analysis Shows. *CNN*. <https://edition.cnn.com/2025/06/12/europe/foreign-aid-cuts-uk-germany-canada-intl>
- Khalifa, F. (2025, September 29). From Aid to Arms: The UK's Shifting Footprint in Africa. AOAV. https://aoav.org.uk/2025/from-aid-to-arms-the-uks-shifting-footprint-in_africa/
- Lederer, E (2025, February 5). "Trump announces withdrawal from the UN human rights body and a halt to funding for Palestinian refugees." *Associated Press*. https://apnews.com/article/trump-un-human-rights-palestinian-refugees-israel_05e1d57bbb41df38771d1ab69adb21a3
- Liotta, P. H., & Owen, T. (2006). Why Human Security. Whitehead J. Dipl. & Int'l Rel., 7, 37. https://ciaotest.cc.columbia.edu/olj/shjdir/v7n1/v7n1_04.pdf
- Shaw, T. M., & Maclean, S. J. (2019). The Emergence of Regional Civil Society: Contributions to A New Human Security Agenda. In *The New Agenda for Peace Research* (Pp. 289-308). Routledge.
- Mbah, R. E., Hardgrave, C. M., Mbah, D. E., Nutt, A., & Russell, J. G. (2025). The impact of USAID budget cuts on global development initiatives: a review of challenges, responses, and implications. *Advances in Social Sciences Research Journal*, 12(4), 219232. <https://doi.org/10.14738/assrj.1204.18681>

Masters, J., & Merrow, W. (2025). Here's How Much Aid the United States Has Sent Ukraine. *Council on Foreign Relations, March, 11*. <https://www.cfr.org/articles/how-much-us-aid-going-ukraine>

Macfarlane, S. N., & Khong, Y. F. (2006). *Human Security and The UN: A Critical History*. Indiana University Press.

Marcetic, B. (2023, October 20). Forget 'Peace,' Did the Abraham Accords Set Stage for Israel Gaza Conflict? Responsible State Craft. <https://responsiblestatecraft.org/abraham-accords-peace-middle-east/>

Muguruza, C. C. (2007). Human Security as a policy framework: Critics and Challenges. *Anuario de acción humanitaria y derechos humanos= Yearbook of humanitarian action and human rights*, (4), 15-35. <https://doi.org/10.18543/aahdh-4-2007pp15-35>

Nord, M., Angiolillo, F., Lundstedt, M., Wiebrecht, F., & Lindberg, S. I. (2024). When autocratization is reversed: episodes of democratic turnarounds since 1900. V-Dem Working Paper, (147). https://v-dem.net/media/publications/wp_147_yvOYnKU.pdf

Ong, D. M. L. (2014). *Realpolitik in The Age of Nationalism: The Influence of Cavour and Bismarck's Realpolitik on the Development of the European State System from 1871 to 1914*.

Persaud, R. B. (2022). Human Security. *Contemporary security studies*, 6, 144-158. In Alan Collins *Contemporary Security Studies*. Oxford university press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/hepl/9780198862192.003.0010>

Poberezhets, V. (2022). Healthcare crisis in Ukraine—worrying consequences of the Russian Ukrainian war. *Croatian medical journal*, 63(4), 315-316. <https://doi.org/10.3325/cmj.2022.63.315>

Ruppel, O. C., & Van Wyk, S. (2013). Climate-change-induced movement of persons in Africa: Human rights responses to aspects of human security. *Climate Change: International Law and Global Governance* (2013). https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=5284092

Sarim, M. (2025). *Realpolitik: The Pragmatic Approach to Politics*. Available at SSRN 5282289.

Sharamo, R. D., Dersso, S. A., Ayangafac, C., Addo, P., Jagne, B. B. I., Bosco, V. & Sheriff, A. (2012). The state of human security in Africa-an assessment of institutional preparedness. *Institute for Security Studies Monographs*, 2012(185), 276. <https://issafrica.org/research/monographs/the-state-of-human-security-in-africa-an-assessment-of-institutional-preparedness>

Stolberg, S. G. (2025). Trump Withdraws, US from World Health Organization. *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/01/20/us/politics/trump-world-health-organization.html>

Trump, D. (2025). *Withdrawing the United States from and Ending Funding to Certain United Nations Organizations and Reviewing United States Support to all International Organizations*". *The White House*, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/02/withdrawing-the->

[united-states-from-and-ending-funding-to-certain-united-nations-organizations-and-reviewing-united-states-support-to-all-international-organizations/](#)

Tadjbakhsh, S. (2005). Human security: concepts and implications with an application to post intervention challenges in Afghanistan. *Les etudes du ceri*, (117-118), 77-pages.
https://www.sciencespo.fr/ceri/sites/sciencespo.fr/ceri/files/etude117_118.pdf

US Funding of the UN: UN Chief Expresses Concern (2025). April. United Nations
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JUblv7M_Nxo

UNRWA. (2025). UNRWA Situation Report #176 on the Humanitarian Crisis in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, Including East Jerusalem. <https://www.unrwa.org/resources/reports/unrwa-situation-report-176-situation-gaza-strip-and-west-bank-including-east-jerusalem>

Villarreal, A. (2025). Trump's Attacks on Immigrants Threaten the Fundamental Right to due Process. The Guardian. <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2025/apr/13/trump-immigration-due-process-legal-rights>

Wallace-Wells, D. (2022). Beyond catastrophe: A new climate reality is coming into view. The New York Times, 26. <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2022/10/26/magazine/climate-change-warming-world.html>

Wallace, D. (2017). The Uninhabitable Earth. New York Magazine, July, 7.
<https://nymag.com/intelligencer/2017/07/climate-change-earth-too-hot-for-humans.html>

Walt, S. M. (2010). Realism and security. In *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of International Studies*.

Whiteson, S.L. (2024, December 4) It's Time to Scrap the Abraham Accords. *Time*.
<https://time.com/6339889/cancel-abraham-accords/>

Amnesty International. (2025, January 20). Withdrawing United States from Paris Agreement is Reckless and Short-Sighted. <https://www.amnestyusa.org/press-releases/withdrawing-united-states-from-paris-agreement-is-reckless-and-short-sighted/>

Wodak, R., & Krzyżanowski, M. (2017). Right-Wing Populism in Europe & USA: Contesting Politics & Discourse Beyond 'Orbanism' and 'Trumpism'. *Journal of Language and Politics*, 16(4), 471-484. <https://doi.org/10.1075/jlp.16.4>