



Faculty of Political Science and Sociology

Bachelor Thesis
Executive Summary

Title: New Threats to Human Security in the European Union:
Emerging Technologies as Tools in Human Trafficking

Author: Aina Arqué Pascual

Tutor: Juan Pablo Soriano Gatica

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Human trafficking is the third largest criminal enterprise in the world, with a \$150 billion annual revenue, and \$46.9 billion in developed economies and the European Union (EU) (International Labor Office, 2014). During 2017 and 2018, there were 14.145 trafficked victims reported by EU Member States (MS), a higher number than the previous period (13.461 between 2015 and 2016), not counting that many remained undetected (European Commission, 2020). Technologies increase the ability of criminals to traffic persons for different types of exploitation (EUROPOL, 2014; Latonero et al., 2011; UNODC, 2021), by accelerating and hiding illegal operations, expanding the transnational nature of human trafficking and moving the crime to the digital domain.

The United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP) *Human Development Report 1994* introduced the concept of human security, which criticizes State-centered approaches to security and places individuals, their rights, needs, welfare and development, at the centre of the study. Human security is "to protect the vital core of all human lives in ways that enhance human freedoms and human fulfilment" (UNCHS, 2003). In this light, this paper aims to provide recommendations to EU law enforcement agencies by answering the central question: how does the use of new technologies in the human trafficking business threaten human security in the European Union?

The human security approach allows an analysis of the ways in which human rights are violated throughout the trafficking cycle. If the misuse of technologies facilitate the violation of rights, they must also be understood as a threat to human security. Using human security as heuristic tool in the case study permits identifying the threats that the use of technologies in human trafficking poses to the well-being, rights and needs of people. There is no operationalization with indicators of human security, since it is a dynamic concept that depends on beliefs (UNCHS, 2003). However, there is consensus in the UN system that human security consists of: freedom from fear, freedom from want, and freedom from indignity (UNDP, 1994, 2022; UNCHS, 2003). The study employs these three aspirations as analysis dimensions of human security.

Regarding the methodology, the study relies on an extensive qualitative review of reports of international organizations, especially UN and EUROPOL, policy papers and academic articles. It was first identified which technologies are used

in the phases of recruitment, control, advertisement, and exploitation of victims, and movement of illicit proceeds, how they are used and which implications their use has. Possible future roles of certain emerging technologies were also shortly discussed. The results of this first discussion show that the use of technologies in human trafficking does not create a new crime, but rather transforms it, as they are used to facilitate and hide the processes that traditionally and legally constitute the crime. This transformation of the crime has three impacts: the facilitation of recruitment and control of victims, the expansion of the market and profits, and the reduction of the risk of detection by police forces.

The second part of the analysis discusses whether these three impacts qualitatively affect the three pillars of human security. Findings show that the impacts of human trafficking's technological transformation trigger the emergence and intensification of a series of fears and wants, and the facilitation of the violation of rights and freedoms that prevent people from living in dignity. Moreover, the interlinkages between the three aspirations of human security have been demonstrated: one “freedom” is not realized without the other two.

To complete the study, the paper briefly outlines that the digital transformation and the online crime are priorities for the EU, which is developing policies in line with its traditional values, centered on people’s rights and their empowerment, adopting a perspective close to human security.

All things considered, results demonstrate that the human security concept is very relevant to the case study, as it has been successful to broaden it to identify the threats that the use of technologies in human trafficking poses to people's welfare, rights and needs, complementing the national security perspective. Therefore, human security implications of technologies as enablers of established crimes need further exploration. Similarly, the presence of a human security approach in the EU's instruments for combating technological threats should be matter of future research.

The study concludes with the following recommendations for law enforcement agencies of EU MS to adopt a human security policy framework to combat the use of technologies in human trafficking: clearly understand the problem of technology-facilitated human trafficking and the purpose of technology-based

solutions; keep abreast of changes and consider victims' experience; establish formalized communication channels with stakeholders; develop partnerships with online platforms providers to implement solutions; collect representative statistical data; provide hotlines for emergencies; improve online victims identification capabilities; organize prevention campaigns; use digital evidences to prevent victims from difficult experiences; include initiatives to remove victims' fear of technologies.

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