

As the world enters the 21st century, a new category of security threats materializes in the global arena: transnational security threats. Of the many issues that stock this new arena, a foreboding piece of history remains in the foreground: human trafficking. One would believe that through the struggles of the oppressed, violations of human rights would be commonly understood as a thing of the past; but with the surfacing of a new breed of security threat comes the evolved species of an age old problem: again, human trafficking. Human trafficking is the most significant transnational security threat because its consequences reach countries far from the initial site where the crime was committed, it has rapidly evolved from involving only a few countries into a multibillion dollar business that reaches the four corners of the globe, there is a diversified pool of actors who are seldom punished for their crimes and it threatens the value of the human life that the world has worked so hard to instill in its citizens. In this paper, I will evaluate human trafficking, why it is the most significant transnational threat of the 21st century, the actors involved and their interests, how this compares to a more traditional security threat and possible solutions to the problem of human trafficking.

“[Human trafficking] involves an act of recruiting, transporting, transferring, harboring or receiving a person through a use of force, coercion or other means, for the purpose of exploiting them” (United Nations 2010). Once an individual has been recruited, transferred, harbored, received through force, coercion or other means, they can either be trafficked into sex trade, labor trade, drug smugglers and other paths. These all stem from the exploitation of vulnerable men, women and children. Human trafficking can involve actors who are individuals, or states, and the actors can be antagonists or victims. The variety of actors accounts for why human trafficking is becoming more prevalent in countries around the world; the more people who instigate human trafficking increases the number of countries who are tied to some of the most

prominent rings in the world. The countries themselves may not be tied directly to human trafficking, but their passé approach at combating the horrors of human trafficking makes them just as guilty as the perpetrators running the show.

There are many actors in the business of human trafficking. There are recruiters, transporters, safe house operators, enforcers, debt collectors, coordinators and victims (Zhang 2007, 96-97). The actor may also be the country or countries where the individuals do business. There may also be some smaller actors whose jobs are tiny compared to those who are running the operation, but important nonetheless. The main actors' interests are specific to their roles in the overall scheme, but one interest they all have in common is this: to make money. Humans are a special kind of good; they are almost non-perishable when treated well, and in some instances even when treated poorly. Humans yield such high profits because they can be resold many times unlike drugs and arms. When vulnerable parties are taken advantage of, they can be huge assets to a specific industry. People with few to no options to better their lives will take any opportunity to try and make a better life for themselves; they will subject themselves to cheap labor or involuntary servitude, which becomes a huge benefit to the labor industry. For example, "Unemployed women often become desperate and fall prey to criminals who promise fictitious jobs in other countries, which actually turn into sexual slavery" (Parrot/Cummings 2008, 12). In the case of the states being actors, their interests may not be *supporting* human trafficking, but it isn't in their interests to prohibit it. The states "interests in international human rights are usually not sufficient to compel countries to pay high costs to protect individuals and groups outside their own borders" (Frieden/Lake/Schultz 2010, 442). The reason the business of human trafficking is growing so rapidly is because traffickers often go unpunished for their crimes, which makes human trafficking a business of high profit and low risk. As stated above, the

interests of the victims in these situations are to better their lives for their families and/or themselves. False promises are usually the premise upon which men and women make the decision for themselves or their children to follow a possibly harmful stranger. The interests of the actors involved in human trafficking are important because these are their motivations for devaluing human life. Their greed, disregard for morals and ethics and what they see as “filling a niche” are more important to them than the value of a human being. This single thought fuels the trafficking of millions of people against their will every year, leading them to exploitation, abuse and sometimes even death.

There are four main reasons why human trafficking is the most significant transnational security threat of the 21st century. One: its consequences reach countries far from the initial site where the crime was committed. Two: it has rapidly evolved from involving only a few countries to a multibillion-dollar business that reaches the four corners of the globe. Three: there is a diversified pool of actors who are seldom punished for their crimes. Four: it threatens the value of the human life that the world has worked so hard to instill in its citizens. The first is basically the definition of a transnational organization. Human trafficking can begin in, let’s say, Russia, with people being picked up and moved to another country, which in this case, could be America. The borders that were crossed to get from Russia to America; the warehouses, boats or cars that held the victims hostage, wherever those holding places were left a mark in that country. People in countries other than Russia and America are profiting from the unwilling transport of people, which makes this business transnational. Second, although slavery and human trafficking have been around for hundreds of years, the increase in exploitation and number of people being exported and imported has been large. In 2001, the U.S. State Department submitted a Trafficking in Persons Report that stated, “It is estimated that 45,000 to

50,000 people, primarily women and children, are trafficked to the U.S. annually” (TIP Report 2001, US State Dept.), as well as only including around 50 countries suspected to be “involved” in the trafficking. In 2010, the 10th annual Trafficking in Persons Report was published estimating a staggering 12.3 million individuals were being trafficked currently (TIP Report 2010, US State Dept.), and there had been such a large increase in countries that the state department had to organize them into three tiers. It is clear that in the mere ten years that we can call the 21st century, human trafficking has increased exponentially, and is currently resting on a number that is roughly 3% of our current global population, which is sickening. The third reason that human trafficking is the most significant transnational security threat of the 21st century is that the pool of actors is so diverse that they span across countries and jurisdictions; it is almost impossible to catch the head of the operation. Even if the person in charge of the operation is caught, even if a middleman is caught, there is no world government to punish them for each of their crimes in every different country. Many countries don’t even have a way to punish human trafficking criminals, and if they do, the punishments hardly fit the crime. Finally, the 2005 TIP Report stated, “More than 140 years ago, the United States fought a devastating war to rid our country of slavery, and to prevent those who supported it from dividing the nation. Although the vast majority of nations succeeded in eliminating the state-sanctioned practice, a modern form of human slavery has emerged as a growing global threat to the lives and freedom of millions of men, women, and children...human trafficking often involves organized crime groups who make huge sums of money at the expense of trafficking victims” (TIP Report 2005, US State Dept.). America worked hard to establish themselves as a role model for other countries, but greedy individuals have taken it upon themselves to adhere to a new code of ethics; one that disregards the value of a human life and uses money as a tool to euthanize the guilt associated with their

business. The textbook explains, “States that violate human rights reason that in their interactions with other states they will likely not face serious consequences for their behavior and, therefore, can freely abuse individuals and groups. Unfortunately, these states are most likely correct” (Frieden/Lake/Schultz, 411). In a book titled *Trafficking in Women and Children*, the author states, “[Human trafficking] will be a defining issue of the 21st century as the cold war was for the 20th century and that colonialism was for the 19th century” (Kilercioglu 2001, 7). He goes on to explain that human trafficking has proliferated “because crime groves are the major beneficiaries of globalization” (Kilercioglu 2001, 7).

When talking about new security threats, one must also remember the more traditional security threats in order to fully understand why the 21st century is defined by the emergence of transnational security threats. Traditional security threats are things like state security and interstate war. Terrorism can also be defined as a traditional security threat, but it is considered under state security. Before the 21st century, technology was not a silver thread through the many facets of peoples’ lives. Also, before the 21st century, the security of state borders was more important than the security of foreign and domestic, individuals. Through the development of technology, advancements have been made that allow many powerful countries to step back from their offensive or defensive stances in order to focus on human rights around the world.

In the 1950s, the world was engulfed by the Cold War, even if the United States and Russia were the main actors. The security of the state was more important than individual securities and liberties, and the securities and liberties of oppressed foreigners were definitely not on US or Russian agenda. The interests of the actors involved were to keep global war at a minimum to preserve developed and powerful nations. Traditional security threats are based off a sense of isolationism – countries want to stay out of other countries’ human rights affairs. Today,

global war is (more) at bay and developed and powerful countries have the resources to focus on the rights of individuals and preserving morals and ethics all over the world. The ability to do so has become a recent phenomenon (when looking through the TIP Reports posted on the U.S. State Department website, each year's TIP Report became increasingly more detailed).

As a brief, yet important, added note to the previous paragraph, I would like to insert a little about the schools of thought that help us analyze transnational and traditional security threats. The first is realism, which puts an emphasis on national security and national interests over ideology. Constructivism is the next, and its foundation is based on ideas and social changes rather than force and security. Realism can help us understand traditional security threats because it expects that conflict is normal and traditional security threats are based in conflict. Constructivism, on the other hand, can help us understand transnational security threats because it predicts that social ideals, such as ways to either prohibit or ignore human trafficking violations, influence international relations.

When analyzing transnational security threats, there are a few degrees of analysis one can utilize. Though transnational security threats are transnational, they can also be international as well as domestic. Human trafficking is a transnational problem because the problem transcends national borders. The consequences affect more than just the state where the crime was committed, and many unconnected groups are committing the same crime all over the world. Transnational is much like international, as the crimes are committed between states; the difference is that transnational crimes offend values of the states the crimes were committed in, whereas international crimes break the laws that are established in said states. Transnational crimes can also take part in a single state, rather than between states. To analyze human trafficking (a transnational security threat) domestically seems like a contradiction. This analysis,

however, is essential to understanding *how* problems like this arise and become transnational. Human trafficking begins on a domestic level, and depends on a state's level of domestic sovereignty. Domestic sovereignty "refers to authority structures within states and the ability of these structures to effectively regulate behavior" (Krasner 2001, 4). When a state has a low level of domestic sovereignty, criminals, whether citizens of the country or not, take advantage of the government's weaknesses. For example, Haiti is one of the poorest, worst structured, weakest governed countries in the entire world. It has little to no domestic sovereignty, and it is also one of the biggest sites of human trafficking. Haiti first lacks domestic sovereignty, which means they have lost the ability to control what goes on in their country, which has in turn affected their interdependence sovereignty, which makes Haiti unable to control what comes in and out of their borders. The absence of these two sovereignties makes Haiti a prime target for criminals to exploit human beings who have nowhere else to turn to. Haiti is said to have 80% of its citizens living below the poverty line (Patt 2009), which is another ingredient in the recipe for human trafficking. The inability to control their domestic issues, as well as having these issues evolve into international issues, which in turn develop into transnational issues (which may possibly be the most severe security threat there is because of the lack of many states' abilities to combat these threats) ends up leading the country (and countries associated with it) into even harsher poverty, turmoil and exploitation.

As stated before, some states don't have policies or laws that punish offenders. To states that have attempted at passing legislation that protects victims and punishes those who violate this legislation, states that refuse to cooperate pose a dangerous and almost annoying threat to the progress achieved. While countries like the United States wish they could mandate those that violate to follow certain rules and procedures, the fact of the matter is, there is no world

authority; the world is in a constant state of anarchy, and one state cannot tell another how to treat their citizens. Author Stephen Krasner states, “Sovereign states... have de facto autonomy. Although the power and preferences of foreign actors will limit the feasible options for any state, sovereign states are not constrained because external actors have penetrated or controlled their domestic authority structures” (Krasner 2001, 3). Krasner goes on to say, “An implication of de facto autonomy is the admonition that states should not intervene in each other’s internal affairs” (Krasner 2001, 3). Sovereignty is important in keeping world peace; states just want to be able to decide what is best for their citizens, but one law may be more suited for a certain state than another, and this is a difficult pill to swallow for headstrong countries whose main agenda is to combat the exploitation of vulnerable individuals.

In David Feingold’s Article “Human Trafficking”, he takes what people (and those who hold power in the government) think are solutions to stop human trafficking, and explains why they may or may not be appropriate and effective resolutions to this endemic problem. His first myth of a solution is that if countries tighten their borders, this will stop or limit the number of individuals being trafficked. Feingold says no. He says, “for example, Burmese law precludes women under the age of 26 from visiting border areas unless accompanied by a husband or parent” (Feingold 2005, 27). Laws like these encourage women to seek out smugglers, which leads to desperate women being more vulnerable to exploitation, which in turn increases the numbers of women, and in other countries men, being trafficked across borders illegally. Another solution myth is that prosecuting those responsible for human trafficking will stop them from continuing actions. As explained on page 2, violators go unpunished for their crimes, and if they are prosecuted, it is likely that the state doing the prosecuting doesn’t have a very harsh law on those caught for this crime. Feingold explains, “in fact, between 2001 and 2003 only 110

were prosecuted by the Justice Department. Of these, only 77 were convicted or pled guilty” (Feingold 2005, 29). A third, and my final example from Feingold’s article, is the thought that once trafficked persons are discovered, they should be sent home, and the “lesson” they learned from their experiences will serve as an example to others not to behave in the same manner, as to avoid being trafficked themselves. Feingold disagrees strongly, “Sending victims home may simply place them back in the same conditions that endangered them in the first place, particularly in situations of armed conflict or political unrest” (Feingold 2005, 30). It is likely that conditions have not changed in their home country, and they will still be desperate to find a better life for themselves rather than educate their fellow citizens on the dangers of trying to escape.

According to Humantrafficking.org, there are four categories to combating human trafficking. These categories are prevention, protection, prosecution and reintegration. An example of an NGO that adopts all four categories in its education program is the National Commission on Women’s Affairs. “Through the impetus and lobbying of the National Commission on Women's Affairs (NCWA), Thailand is the first country in the region to pass laws that impose greater penalties on customers than on sellers for involvement in commercial sex with underage partners” (Humantrafficking 2001). Another example of NGOs working towards progress in human trafficking was the ARIAT convention. “In the Asian Regional Initiative Against Trafficking (ARIAT) meeting in 2000, and in other international initiatives... It was suggested that countries should build regional cooperation networks, including cooperation through the Internet, to combat the issue of human trafficking” (Humantrafficking 2001). These are just two examples of the thousands of “NGOs, international organizations,

private sector, and civil society organizations in prevention, protection, reintegration and prosecution aspects of trafficking in persons” (Humantrafficking 2001).

Throughout this paper, I have addressed the many reasons why human trafficking, and possibly even transnational security threats as a whole, is becoming a security issue that has surpassed traditional security threats such as national security and war. It is clear that human trafficking is so dangerous because its consequences are more widespread and more harmful to the core values of countries, its has evolved from a minor problem to a booming business worth billions of dollars, actors are so diverse and rarely ever prosecuted, it threatens the values of human life, and it expands through countries that lack sovereignty and power to compete with the strength of the actors. I am not quite sure what exactly needs to be done in order to wipe this heinous crime off the face of the earth, but with a lineage so embedded in our world’s history, I am not sure if anything *can* be done. I am hopeful that with the evolution and renaissance of education, the leaders of this world can work together to encumber another crime that tints the humanity’s beauty and makes our globe a safer, better place to call home.

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