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Human Security: East Versus West?

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ABSTRACT

The paper examines different and competing understandings of human security and stresses the task of reconciling these differences as an important challenge for the advocates of this emerging global norm. It focuses on the perceived tensions between its two salient aspects: “freedom from fear” (more favoured in the West) and “freedom from want” (more favoured in Asia). The main argument of the paper is that debates about human security do not fall within an East-West faultline, there are also significant differences over its meaning within each camp. It refutes the view that human security is a “Western” concept, and identifies the Asian contributions to the development of the idea in both its respects. At the same time, the paper argues that human security is not simply “new wine in old bottle”. It represents a significant broadening of the notion of “comprehensive security”, which privileged regime security. It also departs from the idea of “cooperative security” which did not address the possible tension between individual and state security. In discussing the barriers to human security in its political (freedom from fear) aspects, the paper examines the difficulties in linking human security with humanitarian intervention, whether hard or soft, given concerns about state sovereignty. The paper concludes by highlighting the futility of pursuing human security as freedom from want in the absence of freedom from fear, and pleads for scholars and policy-makers to view the two understandings of human security as being complimentary and mutually-reinforcing. Promoting human security through a need-based approach does not negate the case for pursuing human security as freedom from fear, and a way of reducing the costs of violent conflict, especially in regions such as the Asia Pacific where the danger of conflict, both internal and inter-state, remains very, very real.

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HUMAN SECURITY: EAST VERSUS WEST?¹

“We need to fashion a new concept of human security that is reflected in the lives of our people, not in the weapons of our country.” Mabbub ul Haq²

Introduction

The idea of “human security” has rekindled the debate over what “security” means and how best to achieve it. Much of this debate concerns the different ways in which the concept has been defined and pursued by its various national and transnational advocates. Although presented as a global template on which to fundamentally recast the security philosophies and policies of countries to reflect the changing conditions and principles of world order, human security has also been an instrument of national strategic priorities that often have strong domestic roots. As such, human security has been presented variously as a means of reducing the human costs of violent conflict, as a strategy to enable governments to address basic human needs and offset the inequities of globalization, and as a framework for providing social safety nets to people impoverished and marginalized by sudden and severe economic crises.

While the different interpretations of human security are not necessarily incompatible, they do create ground for controversy and suspicion in multilateral settings. Reconciling the different meanings of, and approaches to, human security is thus crucial to any meaningful effort to operationalize the concept and make it into a potent instrument of a just and secure world.

For the advocates of human security in the West, a powerful challenge to the idea comes from the “East” (Asia), a challenge that draws upon the East’s traditional understandings of security, claims of cultural specificity, and relative abundance of illiberal polities. To be sure, Asia hosts some of the strongest advocates of the human security idea. But the understanding of human security now prevalent in much of Asia differs in important respects from its meaning in the Western countries. Some Asian governments and analysts see human security as yet another attempt by the West to impose its liberal values and political institutions on non-Western societies. Others question the alleged newness of the concept, claiming that the emphasis of the human security idea

¹ An earlier version of this paper was presented to the 15th Asia Pacific Roundtable, Kuala Lumpur, 4-7 June, 2001.

² Cited in Kanti Bajpai, “Human Security: Concept and Measurement,” 2000, Manuscript.

on a broad range of non-military threats mirrors many regional governments' earlier, home-grown notion of "comprehensive security".

This paper argues that human security is a distinctive notion which goes well beyond all earlier attempts by Asian government to "redefine" and broaden their own traditional understanding of security as protection of sovereignty and territorial integrity against military threats. At the same time, the development of this notion has strong roots within the Asian region, which could provide an important foundation for promoting a collective human security agenda. To identify a common conceptual ground between the East and the West remains a challenge for scholars and policy-makers concerned with the promotion of human security in both arenas.

The paper proceeds in three parts. The first part examines the various understandings of human security, especially the perceived tension between "freedom from want" and "freedom from fear". This will be followed by an analysis of the similarities and differences between human security and existing security concepts in the region, specifically comprehensive security and cooperative security. The extent to which a new idea like human security could find acceptance in the region depends very much on how it resonates with existing ideas and practices concerning security. Here, human security does pose some challenges to existing notions which need to be understood and reconciled if human security is to advance through national and regional channels in the region. Finally, the paper looks at the relationship between human security and humanitarian intervention with a view to assess what kind of multilateral action might be feasible to promote human security in the region in the event of most serious dangers to regional order. The paper concludes that promoting human security as freedom from want, which seems to be the current emphasis of regional governments, must be supplemented with more effort to develop human security as freedom from fear.

The Asian Roots of Human Security

Most understandings of human security trace it to the 1994 Human Development Report of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP).³ But the origin of the notion is rooted in debates about the meaning of security that predated the end of the Cold War. One important source of human security was the debate over the disarmament-development nexus that took

³ United Nations, *Human Development Report* (New York: United Nations Development Programme, 1994).

place in various UN forums in response to the Cold War arms race.⁴ The work of several independent commissions, such as the Brandt Commission, the Brundtland Commission and later the Commission on Global Governance, helped shift the focus of security analysis from national and state security to security for the people.⁵ This was followed by a growing recognition of non-military threats in global security debates. The UNDP approach to human development represented a synthesis between these earlier representations of human security. While adopting a people oriented notion of security, it also invoked the “guns versus butter” debate in critiquing states such as India and Pakistan, for spending too much on the military sector at the expense of development efforts.

The UNDP’s work was the result of innovative scholarship by an Asian scholar, Mahbub ul Haq. It listed seven separate components of human security: economic security (assured basic income), food security (physical and economic access to food), health security (relative freedom from disease and infection), environmental security (access to sanitary water supply, clean air and

⁴ An important multilateral meeting that focused on human security was a UN-sponsored International Conference on the Relationship Between Disarmament and Development, held from Jul 15 to 2 Aug 1986 in Paris. A media preview of the meeting appearing in Toronto’s *Financial Post* described it as “an opportunity to enlarge world understanding that human security demands more resources for development and fewer for arms.” Preceding the conference was a three-year study by 27 experts “from every area of the world”, headed by Inga Thorsson of Sweden, which concluded: “The world has a choice. It can continue to pursue the arms race, or it can move with deliberate speed toward a more sustainable economic and political order. It cannot do both . . . the arms race and development are in a competitive relationship.” (Douglas Roche, “Balance out of kilter in arms/society needs”, *The Financial Post* (Toronto), 18 Jan 1986, p.8.)

The fact that this was a UN meeting based on a report authored by a world-wide panel and which took up a cause already advocated by the developing countries through forums such as the Non-Aligned Movement is significant in considering the current human security debate. Indeed, the concept of human security was also invoked in a Xinhua News Agency report of a world disarmament conference held in Beijing in June 1988 at which the President of the Conference, Zhou Peiyuan, who was also president of the Chinese people’s association for peace and disarmament, “stressed the peaceful utilization of new scientific inventions for mankind, but not for military purposes”, and stressed “growing concern from the international community for disarmament, which is connected with world peace and human security.” (“Beijing hosts disarmament conference,” *The Xinhua General Overseas News Service*, 14 Jun 1988.)

While the disarmament –development nexus served as one of the bases for the human security concept, the concept was also used in conjunction with developing multilateral capabilities to deal with non-military threats. A 1987 report by a 23-member panel, chaired by former U.S. attorney-general Elliot Richardson, and including former World Bank president Robert McNamara, former West German chancellor Helmut Schmidt, former U.S. secretary of state Cyrus Vance and former Nigerian president Olusegun Obasanjo, proposed a “global watch” council under UN auspices which could serve as “a small political centre for high-level consultations on urgent matters of human security and welfare.” According to this report, while the UN Security Council dealt with direct military threats to world order, the global watch council consisting of up to 25 member states could deal with non-military threats, which would include world debt repayments, environmental hazards, natural disasters, disease, drug trafficking, urban growth, refugees and special Third World problems such as capital flight. (Gordon Barthos, “U.N. urged to set up council to deal with crises,” *The Toronto Star*, 30 Sep 1987, p.A28.)

⁵ K. Bajpai, *op. cit.*

a non-degraded land system), personal security (security from physical violence and threats), community security (security of cultural identity), and political security (protection of basic human rights and freedoms).⁶

One of the obvious criticisms of the UNDP definition was that it left the definition and scope of human security too broad. Defenders of the report, however, believe that a broad definition is both necessary and desirable given the wider constituency of the UN. Other definitions of human security linked it even more explicitly to human rights and humanitarian law. This reflected a new international climate marked by changing norms of state sovereignty with particular regard to human rights protection.

One critic of the UNDP report was the Canadian Government under the foreign policy leadership of Lloyd Axworthy.⁷ While acknowledging the Report as the source of the “specific phrase” human security, Canada critiqued it for focusing too much on threats associated with underdevelopment and ignoring “human insecurity resulting from violent conflict.”⁸ In the Canadian view, human security is “security of the people” and the UN Charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Geneva Conventions are the “core elements” of the doctrine of human security. “The concept of human security has increasingly centered on the human costs of violent conflict.”⁹ This understanding of human security was shared by a few other like-minded middle powers, such as Norway, which joined hands with Ottawa in establishing a Human Security Partnership. The partnership identified a nine-point agenda of human security focused on land-mines, formation of an International Criminal Court, human rights, international humanitarian law, women and children in armed conflict, small arms proliferation, child soldiers, child labour and northern (arctic) co-operation.¹⁰

⁶ United Nations, *Human Development Report* (New York: United Nations Development Programme, 1994); Sverre Lodgaard, “Human Security: Concept and Operationalization,” Paper presented to the Expert Seminar on Human Rights and Peace 2000, Palais Wilson, Geneva, 8-9 Dec 2000, PD/HR/11.1, United Nations/Naciones Unidas, University of Peace, Universidad Para La Paz.

⁷ On the origins of the Canadian use of human security, see Jennifer Ross, “Is Canada's Human Security Policy Really the 'Axworthy' Doctrine?” *Canadian Foreign Policy* 8 (Winter 2001): 75-93.

⁸ Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT), “Human Security: Safety for People in a Changing World,” (Ottawa: DFAIT, Apr 1999).

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ “Canada, Norway change their ways: New approach bases foreign policy on human issues,” *The Ottawa Citizen*, 28 May 1998, p. A18.

A different understanding of human security, predating the Canadian formulation, was developed by Tokyo. In a speech to the 50th anniversary special session of the UN General Assembly in October 1995, Prime Minister Tomiichi Murayama advocated human security as a new strategy for the UN. Although he provided few specifics as to the measures to implement it, Japanese media reports viewed the concept as “a new approach intended to redefine the concept of security, which so far has been understood largely in terms of individual states, as a way of further protecting the security and rights of each person.” Striking a similar tone to the subsequent Canadian formulation, the editorial viewed human security as a conceptual tool for addressing the growing incidence of civil conflicts around the world, and the human costs, such as starvation and genocide, associated with it.¹¹

But official statements by Japan on human security came to reveal important areas of disagreement with the Canadian formulation.¹² While acknowledging that “[t]here are two basic aspects to human security – freedom from fear and freedom from want,” the Japanese Foreign Ministry criticized those who “focus solely” on the first aspect, and related initiatives such as control of small arms and prosecution of war crimes. While the latter is important:

In Japan’s view, however, human security is a much broader concept. We believe that freedom from want is no less critical than freedom from fear. So long as its objectives are to ensure the survival and dignity of individuals as human beings, it is necessary to go beyond thinking of human security solely in terms of protecting human life in conflict situations.

It is tempting to see the divergent perspectives on human security, such as those held by Japan and Canada, as symptomatic of a familiar schism between Western liberalism and “Asian values”. But this would be misleading. Disagreements about human security are as much West-West and East-East as East-West. They reflect genuine differences on philosophical and practical grounds. Broadly stated, the debate about human security concerns the separation of direct physical violence from “structural violence”. Astrid Suhrke has advocated a notion of human security that stresses “vulnerability” as its defining feature, which in turn is understood with reference to three categories of victims: those of war and internal conflict; those living at or

¹¹ “Premier's U.N. speech out of focus,” Editorial, *The Daily Yomiuri* Oct 24, 1995, p.7.

¹² Statement by Director-General (of the Foreign Ministry of Japan) in the *International Conference on Human Security in a Globalized World*, Ulan Bator, 8 May 2000, posted on UNDP Mongolia Website at WWW.un-mongolia.mn/undp.

below subsistence levels and victims of natural disaster.¹³ Dr. Sverre Lodgaard of the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs, on the other hand, has pleaded for a narrower definition of human security. In his view, human security should not be mixed with human development. Nor should it be about natural disasters, or “precarious human conditions” such as hunger, disease and environmental contamination. The key defining criteria of human security is “vulnerability to physical violence during conflict”. His rationale for a narrower definition is important to note. Security concerns arise when the threat of violence is present, but not all cases of socio-economic disaster lead to violent action; hence they should not be placed under the rubric of human security. Second, security questions are always “political” in the sense that they involve a degree of human agency and control. Natural disasters are rarely preventable, they remain outside human control. Humanitarian aid, on the other hand, is best pursued in a “depoliticised” manner, “cutting clear of political objectives and security concerns”, and offered “under the banner of impartiality and neutrality”. In this sense, “the concept of human security had better be confined to freedom from fear of *man-made* physical violence, also referred to as direct, personal violence.” A broader understanding of human security as freedom from structural violence will undermine the clarity of the notion and make it difficult to develop priorities and devise effective policy responses.¹⁴

Many countries in Asia have embraced a broader conception of human security¹⁵, rather than the Canadian/Norwegian formulation. This accords with existing conceptions of comprehensive security in Asia, although there are, as will be seen later, some important differences between the two. The Japanese formulation also renders the concept of human

¹³ Astrid Suhrke, “Human Security and the Interests of States,” *Security Dialogue* 30, no. 3 (Sep 1999): 265-76.

¹⁴ Lodgaard, *op. cit.*.

¹⁵ For discussions on human security in an Asian context, see the following collection of essays: Tatsuro Matsumae and Lincoln Chen, eds., *Common Security in Asia: The New Concept of Human Security* (Tokyo: Tokai University Press, 1995), William T. Tow, Ramesh Thakur, and In-Taek Hyun, eds., *Asia's Emerging Regional Order: Reconciling Traditional and Human Security* (Tokyo ; New York : United Nations University Press, 2000); *International Conference on Human Security in a Globalized World*, *op. cit.*; Pranee Thiparat, ed., *The Quest for Human Security: The Next Phase of ASEAN?* (Bangkok: Institute of Security and International Studies, 2001). See also Tadashi Yamamoto, “Human Security: What It Means and What It Entails,” in Mely Anthony and Mohamed Jawhar Hassan, eds., *The Asia Pacific in the New Millennium: Political and Security Challenges* (Kuala Lumpur: Institute of Strategic and International Studies, 2001): 573-82; Mei Zhao-rung, “Human Security and the State,” *The Asia-Australia Papers*, no.2 (Sep 1999); Hans van Ginkel and Edward Newman, “In Quest for Human Security,” *Japan Review of International Affairs* (Spring 2000): 59-82. For a skeptical view on human security presented to an Asian audience, see: Barry Buzan, “Human Security in International Perspective”, in Mely Anthony and Mohamed Jawhar Hassan, eds., *The Asia Pacific in the New Millennium: Political and Security Challenges* (Kuala Lumpur: Institute of Strategic and International Studies, 2001): 583-96.

security less controversial for Asia Pacific governments suspicious of, and uncomfortable with, the close association between human security and human rights promotion and humanitarian intervention.

Indeed, the “human need” aspect of human security has been especially salient in the Asia Pacific context in the aftermath of the regional economic crisis. The crisis dramatically increased the incidence of poverty, undermined the fruits of decades of development, caused widespread political instability (the most dramatic case being Indonesia), and aggravated economic competition and inter-state tensions over refugees and illegal migration. It also underscored the need for good governance (to the extent that corruption, nepotism and cronyism were blamed for the crisis) and environmentally sustainable development (especially in the wake of the forest fires in the region attributed to reckless development and corruption). Moreover, the crisis underscored the crucial need for social safety nets for the poor, something ignored in the heady days of growth. In fact, a major advocate of human security in Asia, former Foreign Minister Surin Pitsuwan of Thailand, has explicitly linked the concept to the need for social safety nets in the wake of the regional economic downturn.¹⁶

While Asian governments generally prefer a need-oriented human security approach differences remain over the extent to which human security should be defined primarily as such, without incorporating those rights-protective elements that speak to freedom from fear. Countries such as Japan and Thailand do not see the two as being mutually exclusive; in fact Thailand in its domestic arena has made a clear attempt to reconcile freedom from want (in the sense of its stress on social safety nets) with freedom from fear (in the sense of developing a more rights-protective political system). While human security must be geared first and foremost to human need, the Thai approach under the Chuan Leekpai government at least did not see a contradiction between this and the safety and dignity of the individual protected through a political system geared to human rights and democracy.

A good deal of the controversy about human security today arises from a perception that the notion, at least in its Western usage, reflects the individualistic ethos of liberal democracy. Thus,

¹⁶ Surin Pitsuwan, “Keynote Address: ASEAN Vision 2020. Strengthening Human Security in the Aftermath of the Economic Crisis”, in Pranee Thiparat, ed., *The Quest for Human Security*, op. cit. See also, *The Asian Crisis and Human Security: An Intellectual Dialogue on Building Asia’s Tomorrow* (Tokyo: Japan Centre for International Exchange, 1999); *Sustainable Development and Human Security: Second Intellectual Dialogue on Building Asia’s Tomorrow* (Tokyo: Japan Centre for International Exchange, and Singapore, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1999).

some understandings of human security see it as integral to the West's campaign for human rights and liberal democracy. This, at least to a certain Asian mindset, conflicts with the old "Asian approach to human rights" developed in the heydays of the "universalism versus cultural relativism" debates about human rights in Asia.

In the early 1990s, in response to a perceived Western onslaught on human rights and democratisation, some Asian governments argued that the definition and promotion of human rights should be subjected to the different cultural contexts and historical experiences of Asia. Moreover, they championed the principle of "non-selectivity", or that human rights should not selectively focus on political rights, and maintained that the promotion of human rights should respect the communitarian ethos of Asian societies, founded upon an allegedly "society-before-the-self" tradition.¹⁷ Does the contemporary notion of human security undermine "non-selectivity" and "communitarian ethic"?

Strictly speaking, human security calls for a shift of security thinking from state security to security of the people, which includes both individuals and communities. The distinction between "people" and "individual" is not unimportant. A quick review of recent responses by the international community to human security challenges shows that they have addressed crisis situations in which the survival and well-being of entire societies or communities have been at risk. Human security protects the existence of entire social groups (including children, civilians in a war zone, ethnic minorities, etc.) from persecution and violence. This understanding of human security is eminently compatible with the alleged communitarian ethos of certain non-Western societies. Governments seriously believing in the society-above-the-self principle should have good reason to welcome the notion of human security as a prop to their cause, rather than as a threat to their belief and approach.

Neither is human security "Western" in the sense that it ignores the issue of economic rights, or the "right to development" that was once put forward as a counter to the Western emphasis on political rights during the heydays of the "Asian view on human rights." The "development as freedom" perspective of Amartya Sen (1999), a Nobel Laureate in economics and a member of the International Commission on Human Security, further underscores the crucial link

¹⁷ Amitav Acharya, *Human Rights in Southeast Asia: Dilemmas for Foreign Policy*, Eastern Asia Policy Papers, no.11 (Toronto: University of Toronto – York University Joint Centre for Asia Pacific Studies, 1995).

between freedom from fear and freedom from want.

While not ignoring the rights of societies and non-political rights, human security does place a premium on human dignity. No serious advocate of human security would condone the pursuit of economic and communitarian approaches at the expense of the safety and dignity of individuals and peoples. The tolerance of human rights violations for the sake of economic development or social stability has no place in the human security paradigm.

This emphasis on human dignity should not be surprising; for it owes to four major developments which have converged behind the emergence of the human security idea. These are: (1) the growing incidence of civil wars and intra-state conflicts which now far outnumber conventional inter-state conflicts (with the former more likely to cause civilian suffering than the latter); (2) the spread of democratization (democracies constitute a majority of state actors in the international system today); (3) the advent of humanitarian intervention, or the principle that the international community is justified in intervening in the internal affairs of states accused of gross violation of human rights; and (4) the widespread poverty, unemployment and social dislocation caused by the economic crises of the 1990s which have been blamed on the dynamics of globalization. Indeed, appreciating these developments as four related but different sources of the human security idea helps our understanding of the existing variations in the interpretation of the concept by its advocates. For example, the Canadian notion is inspired by, and pays more attention to the first and the second developments, while the fourth development motivates Japan and Thailand in their approach to human security. These approaches should thus not be seen as mutually-exclusive, but as complementary and evolving understandings of a complex and larger paradigm of human security in response to emerging challenges, responses which collectively shift the focus of security analysis from national, state and regime security to the society and the individual.

In short, while differences in the understanding of human security and the relative emphasis on its key principles persist, these are not totally irreconcilable. The extent of such reconciliation, and the prospects for human security becoming the dominant security paradigm in the Asia Pacific region depends substantially on how human security as an emerging norm interacts with and impacts on existing beliefs and practices concerning security in the region. The acceptance and institutionalisation of emerging norms depend very much on how they resonate with existing norms and social identities. Thus, any consideration of human security in the Asia Pacific must examine its

relationship with two prior ideas which have had a considerable impact on security beliefs and practices in the region: the ideas of Comprehensive Security and Cooperative Security.

Human Security, Comprehensive Security and Cooperative Security

At least in terms of a wider spectrum of security threats, the concept that comes closest to human security is comprehensive security. The latter can claim even more of an Asian root, having been developed by Japan. During the Cold War, several Southeast Asian governments also formulated their own versions of comprehensive security. Comprehensive security in Japan reflected a concern with economic issues, including the supply of international energy and food.¹⁸ It also reflected Japan's vulnerability to "major threats to economic livelihood and standard of living of the Japanese people from the denial of access to markets for Japanese goods, the expropriation of Japanese property and exclusion of Japanese investment projects abroad, and from a withholding of vital supplies of goods, materials and services to Japanese enterprises home and abroad."¹⁹ In ASEAN, comprehensive security doctrines similarly focused on economic insecurities, but added important political dimensions related to domestic stability and regime survival.

For comparison, economic and food security are the first two elements of the UNDP's seven elements of human security. Ironically, few doctrines of comprehensive security in Asia have been more comprehensive than the UNDP's seven elements. Asian formulations of the concept during the Cold War period accorded little space to personal, community, and political security, the latter in the sense of protection of basic human rights and freedom. This underscores a key variation between comprehensive security and human security.

Comprehensive security in Asia Pacific was a fundamentally statist notion despite claiming to proffer an alternative to conventional national security. Moreover, while it went beyond military threats, military defence remained a core component of comprehensive security. The Japanese idea of comprehensive security was widely criticised for rationalising its defence spending. Its strategic rationale were clear from the official *Report on Comprehensive National Security* submitted to Prime Minister Zenko Suzuki in July 1980. The report enumerated six objectives of comprehensive security: (1) closer military and general cooperation with the US; (2) increasing Japan's own capacity

¹⁸ Yukio Satoh, *The Evolution of Japan's Security Policy*. Adelphi Paper no. 178 (London: IISS, 1982): 7.

¹⁹ J.W.M. Chapman, R. Drifte and I.T.M. Gow, *Japan's Quest for Comprehensive Security* (London: Frances Pinter, 1983): 149.

to defend its own territory; (3) improvement in relations with China and the USSR; (4) attainment of energy security; (5) achievement of food security; and (6) measures for coping with major earthquakes.²⁰ Similarly, comprehensive security in various ASEAN member states put a premium on state security. A key variation, as hinted earlier, was that unlike in Japan, state security in many ASEAN countries masked a concern with regime survival and legitimation, reflecting differences in their domestic political systems. Thus, *national resilience* in Indonesia represented, among other things, its “military-dominated...regime's quest for legitimacy and survival in the face of domestic competition for political power.”²¹ Though comprehensive security was not used by ASEAN governments to justify higher defence spending in the manner of Japan, achieving military strength remained one of its core priorities. Thus, Malaysia’s defence minister proclaimed in 1992 that a comprehensively secure country had “to be politically stable, economically strong and resilient...and last, but not the least...militarily sufficient.”²² Singapore developed its own doctrine of “Total Defence”, in which several non-military instruments, such as psychological defence, augmented military deterrence and defensive capabilities as part of the overall national security strategy. In the case of Indonesia, *national resilience* consisted of “ideological, political, economic, socio-cultural and security-cum-defence aspects.”²³

In an important sense, the existence of a prior notion of comprehensive security facilitates the acceptance of the emerging idea of human security in Asia. Comprehensive security has laid the groundwork for a security concept that goes beyond defending against external military threats. But human security is certainly not new wine in old bottle. Comprehensive security answered to the question: which threats to state security. The core question of human security is “whose security”? The political element of comprehensive security focused on “order” and “stability”. Human security, on the other hand, is geared more to justice and emancipation.²⁴ Thus, an important challenge for regional policy-makers is to redefine comprehensive security in ways that go beyond a simple *horizontal* broadening of the threat

²⁰ Ibid., xvii.

²¹ Muthiah Alagappa, “Comprehensive Security: Interpretations in ASEAN Countries,” in *Asian Security Issues: Regional and Global*, eds. Robert A. Scalapino, et al., (Berkeley: University of California, Institute of East Asian Studies, 1988): 58.

²² Najib Tun Razak, Address to the Chief of Staff Conference, Darwin, Australia, 1992.

²³ Alagappa, op. cit., 62.

²⁴ Amitav Acharya and Arabinda Acharya. “Human Security in the Asia Pacific: Puzzle, Panacea or Peril?” *CANCAPS Bulletin*, (Dec 2000).

spectrum, or “what the state should be protected from”. To secure greater synergy with human security, the comprehensive security framework also needs to be reworked and extended *vertically* - “who should be protected against such threats”, with individuals and communities placed at the heart of this extended framework.

Indeed, recent attempts by some of the Asia Pacific region’s think tanks to reformulate comprehensive security have sought to dilute its statist bias. The Council for Security Cooperation in Asia Pacific (CSCAP), a non-governmental grouping that includes both Asian and Western policy think tanks, says that “...a problem may be regarded as a comprehensive security problem when it is perceived as threatening, or having the potential to threaten, the security of the vital interests or core values of the person, the community, or the state.”²⁵ But this effort still falls short, and important ambiguities remain. If the values of the person conflicts with the values of the state, who prevails? And who defines what the values of the community are?²⁶

Unlike comprehensive security, the idea of cooperative security emerged from the ashes of the Cold War. It represented an adaptation from the notion of common security developed in Europe through the institutional mechanism of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE).²⁷

²⁵ Council for Security Cooperation in Asia Pacific, *The Concepts of Comprehensive and Cooperative Security*, CSCAP Memorandum no. 3 (Kuala Lumpur, CSCAP Secretariat at the Institute of Strategic and International Studies, 1996). See also Mohamed Jawhar Hassan, “The Concept of Comprehensive Security,” in *Conceptualising Asia-Pacific Security*, eds., Mohamed Jawhar Hassan and Thangam Ramnath. Kuala Lumpur: (Institute of Strategic and International Studies Malaysia, 1996).

²⁶ The CSCAP Memorandum defines comprehensive security as “pursuit of sustainable security in all fields (personal, political, economic, social, cultural, military, environmental) in both the domestic and external spheres, essentially through cooperative means”. The inclusion of “personal security” notwithstanding, it is hard to accept that even this reformulation of comprehensive security captures the post-statist, if not anti-statist, orientation of the human security idea. While the “security of person” is placed alongside security of “community” and “state”, with all the three elements viewed to be “multifaceted and multidimensional”, there is little question as to the relative salience of the three elements. A notion of comprehensive security is warranted “because...[T]he vital interests or core values of states are varied and comprehensive, as are the instruments and processes used to protect them and the capabilities required to assure them.” CSCAP, *op. cit.*, p.3. This formulation hardly appears to be a people-oriented notion of security. To say that individual, community, and state each matter and have their place in the security paradigm is not the same as saying that it is people who matter most – which is the essence of human security.

²⁷ On the concepts of Common and Cooperative Security in the Asia Pacific context, see: Kevin P. Clements, “Common Security in the Asia-Pacific Region: Problems and Prospects,” *Alternatives* XIV (Jan 1989): 49-76; Geoffrey Wiseman, “Common Security in the Asia-Pacific Region,” *Pacific Review* 5, no.1 (1992): 42-59; David B. Dewitt, “Common, Comprehensive, and Cooperative Security,” *Pacific Review* 7, no.1 (1994): 1-15; Pauline Kerr, “The Security Dialogue in the Asia-Pacific,” *Pacific Review* 7, no.4 (1994), pp.397-409; Pauline Kerr, Andrew Mack and Paul Evans, “The Evolving Security Discourse in Asia-Pacific,” in Andrew Mack and

Cooperative security stipulates that security should be pursued multilaterally based on the principle of inclusiveness. Security policies should promote reassurance, rather than deterrence. Cooperative security also envisages a broad agenda of cooperation, encompassing military confidence-building, political dialogue and other forms of functional cooperation.

In a previous study, David Dewitt and myself defined the concept in the following terms:

There are three principal themes which form the core of cooperative security. The first is the acceptance and practice of inclusivity, referring both to participants - the non-like-minded as well as the like-minded - and to subject matter, thereby broadening the security discourse beyond direct and traditional military threat to encompass nonconventional security challenges such as environmental, ecological, and demographic phenomena that can exacerbate inter-state relations and even promote the application of armed force. The second is the promotion of "habits of dialogue" whereby the regional actors acknowledge the long-term benefits of undertaking regular consultations with the possibilities of establishing more formal and even official decision-making multilateral meetings on a regular schedule. The third is the premise that many - perhaps most - questions of security no longer are amenable to unilateral action but require cooperative approaches across actors within a country and as well as cross-national and intergovernmental.²⁸

Thus defined, cooperative security repudiates approaches to security that rely exclusively or predominantly on balance of power mechanisms. It emphasizes transparency over secrecy and dialogue over confrontation. While a balance of power approach is ultimately reliant upon an ability to wage war, cooperative security relies on techniques and processes of conflict-prevention, management and resolution. It views security in broader terms than just defence against military threats, although it does not ignore or minimise the importance of military-related issues in domestic and inter-state relations.

John Ravenhill, eds., *Pacific Cooperation: Building Economic and Security Regimes in the Asia-Pacific Region* (St. Leonards, NSW: Allen and Unwin Australia, 1994): 233-55; Andrew Mack, "Concepts of Security in the Post-Cold War Era," Working Paper No.1993/8 (Canberra: Department of International Relations, Australian National University, 1993); Mohamed Jawhar Hassan and Thangam Ramnath, eds., op. cit.; David Dickens, *No Better Alternative: Towards Comprehensive and Cooperative in the Asia-Pacific* (Wellington, Centre for Strategic Studies, New Zealand, for the Council on Security Cooperation in the Asia Pacific 1997). For a scholarly overview of security concepts and approaches in Asia, both traditional and new, see: Muthiah Alagappa, ed., *Asian Security Practice: Material and Ideational Influences* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998).

²⁸ David B. Dewitt and Amitav Acharya, "Cooperative Security and Development Assistance: The Relationship Between Security and Development With Reference to Eastern Asia," Eastern Asia Policy Papers no. 16 (Toronto: Joint Centre for Asia Pacific Studies. 1996): 9-10.

Chart 1: Four Images of Security

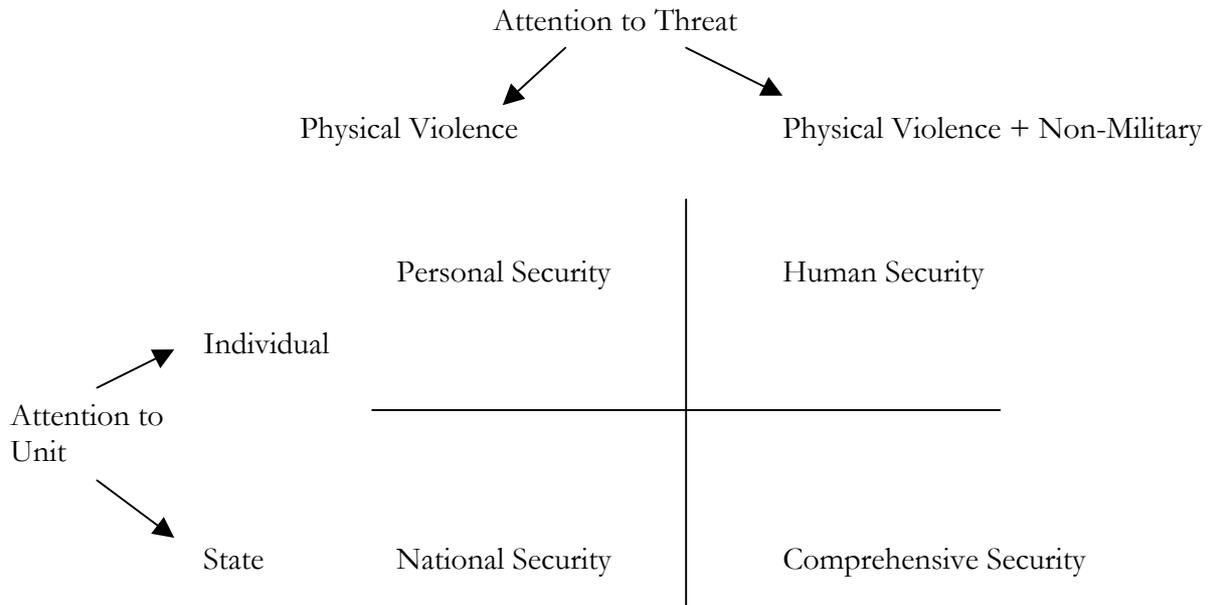
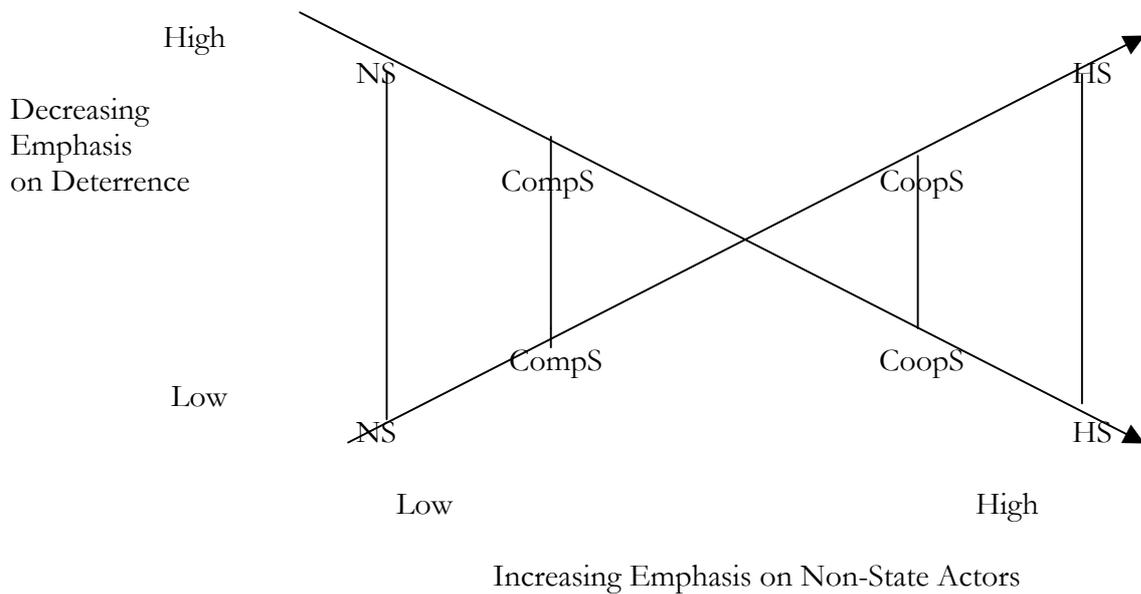


Chart 2: The Evolution of Human Security



NS: National Security
 CompS: Comprehensive Security
 CoopS: Cooperative Security
 HS: Human Security

What are the implications of the human security idea for the pursuit of cooperative security in the Asia Pacific? Unlike cooperative security, human security is not an essentially *multilateral*

notion. Although human security can be and has been multilaterally pursued, including the UN and potentially through regional groupings like ASEAN, ARF and APEC, there are aspects of human security which may undermine the unabashed emphasis of cooperative security on the core multilateral principle of “inclusiveness”. Unlike cooperative security, human security is often a vision of the “like-minded”. While cooperative security is *non-ideological*, in certain hands, human security could become a potent and divisive ideological instrument.

The precursor to cooperative security, the common security idea in Europe, stressed human rights as an important condition of inter-state confidence within an inclusive multilateral framework. The CSCE to an unprecedented extent linked the participation of member states in regional multilateral security cooperation with their domestic political behaviour. This linkage caused anxieties in the minds of some Asia Pacific governments about endorsing a OSCE-like multilateral security arrangement for Asia, and was therefore dropped when cooperative security was adapted from the European common security experience. As a consequence, the ARF has not developed anything like the CSCE/OCSE’s “human dimension”, which deals with issues related to human rights, democratisation and self-determination.

Thus, a key challenge for Asia Pacific policymakers is how to reconcile the inclusiveness principle of cooperative security and the like-mindedness criteria evident in the promotion of human security. In the absence of a common ground, attempts to push human security could conflict with the work of institutions whose ostensible goal has been to achieve “security with the adversary, rather than against them”.

Human Security and Humanitarian Intervention

Should the promotion of human security allow for collective action even if such action compromises the doctrine of non-interference in the internal affairs of states? This has proven to be a most daunting question for the Asia Pacific region.

Most advocates of human security desire and expect it to be pursued through peaceful, diplomatic and non-coercive means, such as the negotiations and agreement to ban land mines, or the creation of social safety nets. But recent events, including Asia Pacific events (East Timor in particular) have demonstrated that the pursuit of human security in all its aspects cannot be realistically separated from the question of intervention, especially if our understanding of human

security is to emphasize measures that reduce the human costs of violent conflict, such as genocide, massive refugee flows, and massacres of the civilian population in the hands of governments and armed groups...

Humanitarian intervention redefines the old interventionist paradigm in fundamental ways. Old intervention, a major characteristic of the Cold War order, was rooted in "geopolitical mind-sets" and interests, including access to raw materials, the desire of the superpowers to spread their respective ideologies, and their need to protect their reputation and credibility.²⁹ Humanitarian intervention on the other hand, repudiates narrow geopolitics in favour of more high-minded objectives.³⁰ Most interventions during the Cold War were closely tied to the national interests of the intervener. Humanitarian intervention as conceived today is deemed warranted even in the absence of any clear dangers to the national interest.

Countries such as China, Malaysia and others have spoken out against the concept and practice of humanitarian intervention, especially in the context of its recent application in Kosovo. But the biggest obstacle to any sort of collective interventionist action, even in its most diluted, non-coercive, and non-military form, is the salience of state sovereignty in the region. As the East Timor episode demonstrated, regional countries are too deferential to the principle of state sovereignty to seriously contemplate direct and intrusive multilateral action through regional institutions even in the face of very severe human tragedies.

Much milder forms of regional intervention in Asia Pacific have been proposed from time to time. Foremost among them were the notions of "constructive intervention" proposed by Anwar Ibrahim (to deal with internal conflicts in weaker regional states such as Cambodia) and the idea of "flexible engagement" mooted by Surin Pitsuwan (to deal with the fallout of the regional economic crisis and the situation in Myanmar), while they served the governments of Malaysia and Thailand respectively.³¹ The flexible engagement idea, partly inspired by Anwar's "constructive intervention" proposal, sought to address those security challenges – including non-traditional

²⁹ Robert Jervis, "Will the New World Be Better," in *Soviet-American Relations after the Cold War*, eds., Robert Jervis and Seweryn Bialer (Durham: Duke University Press, 1991).

³⁰ Morton H. Halperin and David J. Scheffer, *Self-Determination in the New World Order* (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1992): 107.

³¹ Amitav Acharya, *Constructing a Security Community in Southeast Asia: ASEAN and the Problem of Regional Order* (London and New York: Routledge, 2001).

security issues such as drugs and refugees – that are domestic in origin but have a clear regional or transnational impact. Both concepts maintained a healthy respect for state sovereignty, requiring the regime’s consent as a prerequisite for collective action. But even these limited initiatives could not be institutionalised. Asia Pacific regional institutions, such as ASEAN and the ASEAN regional Forum remain divided over the issue, with many of their members refusing to depart from established principles and approaches which put a premium on the doctrine of non-interference.³²

ASEAN and the ARF have moved towards even more limited forms of collective regional action. Such action include the provision of a diplomatic Troika (as yet untested, despite escalating tensions in Indonesia and on the Thai-Myanmese border) and a regional financial surveillance process by ASEAN, and the ARF’s development of a preventive diplomacy mechanism through the enhanced role of the ARF chair. But overall, multilateral approaches to human security in the Asia Pacific that require even the mildest form of humanitarian intervention appear to enjoy little constituency.

Conclusion

The foregoing discussion has identified several obstacles to the promotion of human security in the Asia Pacific region. These include misgivings that the notion masks a “Western” political agenda not suitable, perhaps even detrimental, to the region. A second source of scepticism relates to a belief that existing concepts of security, such as comprehensive security, have addressed the same range of challenges that are highlighted by the human security framework. A third barrier is the fear that pursuit of human security – with its perceived association with humanitarian intervention - through regional collective action would undermine state sovereignty and the doctrine of non-interference, which continues to be the guiding principle of international relations in the region.

This paper has shown that some of these concerns are misplaced. Unlike other security concepts of the post-Cold War era, human security can claim a significant Asian pedigree. Moreover, the belief that human security offers nothing new to a region which might have invented the notion of comprehensive security is flawed. Despite sharing some attributes with existing Asian

³² For an overview of the debate on non-intervention in the Asia Pacific, see Amitav Acharya, *Sovereignty, Non-Intervention and Regionalism*, CANCEPS Paper no. 15 (Toronto: Canadian Consortium for Asia Pacific Security, 1997); David Dickens and Guy Wilson Roberts, eds., *Non-Intervention and State Sovereignty in the Asia-Pacific* (Wellington: Centre for Strategic Studies, 2000).

security concepts such as comprehensive and cooperative security, human security should be seen as a broader notion which goes the furthest in stressing human freedom as the core element of security. Human security demands a much more people-centred approach than the old notion of comprehensive security which privileged state and regime security. As such, whether governments in the region will shift towards such a people-oriented approach will depend very much on their domestic political agenda; greater democratisation will make the region more receptive to human security defined as freedom from fear as much as freedom from want.

Not all responses to human insecurity require intervention against the sovereign state. Collective action is more acceptable when it is viewed as a matter of pooling sovereignty than diluting it. Concerns with sovereignty are likely to be strongest, however, when dealing with situations of violent conflict. And it is precisely in this area that the Asian region urgently needs to develop policies and resources to respond to threats to human security.

The Canadian approach has been found to have fewer adherents in Asia than the Japanese perspective. But there is now a real need to view the two understandings as being complimentary and mutually-reinforcing. Promoting human security through a need-based approach does not negate the case for pursuing human security as a way of reducing the costs of violent conflict, especially in a region where the danger of conflict, both internal and inter-state, remains very, very real. There has been increasing Asian acceptance of some of the measures that ameliorate the human costs of violent conflict, such as the international norms and agreements concerning land mines, small arms and child soldiers. But thus far in the Asia Pacific, freedom from want has outweighed freedom from fear in the understanding and promotion of human security. Some Asian governments and analysts were right in criticizing the initial Canadian approach as being too narrow, and in stressing the understanding of human security as freedom from want. But they should also bear in mind that efforts to pursue the latter dimension could not succeed if violent eruptions of the region's conflict zones were to extract a severe human cost which could spill over to their own domestic arenas and immediate neighbourhoods. Pursuing freedom from want in the absence of freedom from fear is bound to be of limited utility.

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