Human Security: From Concept to Practice

Case Studies from Northeast India and Orissa

Asian Dialogue Society

This book is a project of the Asian Dialogue Society

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 *edited by Amitav Acharya (American University, USA),
 Subrat K Singhdeo (Madhyam Foundation, India) &
 M Rajaretnam (Asian Dialogue Society, Singapore)*

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HUMAN SECURITY: FROM CONCEPT TO PRACTICE

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Foreword

Surin Pitsuwan

*Secretary-General, Association of Southeast Asian
Nations (ASEAN)*

The concept of human security was developed by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in 1994. The Commission on Human Security, co-chaired by Dr. Sadako Ogata and Professor Amartya Sen, developed this concept further, and offered proposals to facilitate the wider dissemination of the concept to the international community at large. Now, the Asian Dialogue Society — with generous support from The Sasakawa Peace Foundation of Japan, and working closely with think tanks and non-governmental organizations in India — has completed an ambitious study that takes the idea of human security to the next stage in its development.

Appropriately entitled *Human Security: From Concept to Practice*, this landmark book introduces, for the first time, three very important tools that will be indispensable for policymakers and scholars alike as they consider how best to realize the idea of human security in the practical domain of governance. These three tools are (1) a human security governance index and ranking, (2) human security mapping in conflict zones and (3) human security impact assessment. Each of these tools offers a methodology and practical guidance to policymakers in developing programs that advance sustainable economic development

with social justice, and that protect the security, safety and dignity of individuals from challenges in an era of rapid globalization.

For example, the human security governance index will complement the UNDP's famed Human Development Index by focusing on issues and developing indicators that are more specific to the notion of human security. The human security impact assessment template and methodology developed in this book will help national governments as well as international investors and donors to devise new ways of anticipating the social and political consequences of large-scale investment and infrastructure projects, thus mitigating social protests and political conflicts which often lurk beneath such projects. Human security mapping in conflict zones will enable researchers and policymakers to more accurately measure the scale of violence in conflict zones and the human costs of such conflicts, especially internal conflicts that often act as a breeding ground for insurgency and terrorism.

The relevance of human security is growing, as globalization presents Asia and the world with new and ever-more powerful challenges. Not only do wars and internal conflicts persist, but they also claim increasingly higher civilian casualties. Despite the impressive achievements made by Asian countries in fostering economic growth, poverty, inequality and social injustice remain major challenges in many countries. There is a vicious cycle between conflict and underdevelopment: while underdevelopment and economic injustice act as root causes of violence, chronic violence reduces the ability of states to promote economic development and reduce inequality. The case studies in this book, from Northeast India and the state of Orissa, are microcosms of this cycle.

Although this book deals with case studies from India, the concepts and methodologies it presents will be very useful to other parts of Asia and the world. The ASEAN countries, India's eastern neighbors, have made impressive economic strides in recent decades; however, they also face many threats to human security, such as internal conflict, insurgency, economic crises, pandemics, environmental degradation, people smuggling, etc. — threats that respect no national or subregional boundaries. Addressing such challenges to human security is, therefore, an important challenge to ASEAN. As

policymakers and non-governmental organizations in the ASEAN region confront these challenges, the tools and lessons offered in this book will be useful and relevant to them. This book is thus a milestone in the wider application of human security in the development and international relations of South Asia, ASEAN and the world.

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Foreword

Sadako Ogata

President, Japan International Cooperation Agency

The concept of human security has come a long way since first gaining international attention with the publication of the 1994 United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) *Human Development Report*. The relevance of the concept is now widely recognized. We observe a broad range of activities to realize the human security concept not only by the United Nations agencies but also by governments, non-governmental organizations and international and regional organizations. Research institutes and universities have also played a vital role in advocating and further developing the concept. I believe that this book, which explores and suggests new practical applications of the concept, will contribute to enhancing all of these efforts.

As shown in the case studies of Northeast India and Orissa presented in this book, the threats people confront are indeed complicated and diversified in the complexity of historical, political, social and cultural backgrounds. In 2001–2003, as the co-chair of the Commission on Human Security, whose mandate is to formulate the concept of human security as an operational tool for policy formulation and implementation, I organized and attended public hearings, consultations and seminars across the world to examine a broad range of related issues and situations. Asking people in the United States about their concept of threats, their answer — fresh from the memories of September 11, 2001 — was terrorism. On the other hand, for

the people in South Africa, their primary concern was related to the availability of basic needs of life such as health care, education and access to food and water. In Turkmenistan, we noticed that people in Central Asia were calling for a renewed coverage of state services and national identity; they were suffering from the confusion brought by the transition to a market economy, a democratic political system, and use of their traditional local language following independence from the USSR.

In the last 30 years, the Asian economy has grown tremendously in speed and scale — more than in any other region. In spite of such advancement, however, there are still elements of fragility. Population increase and industrialization have caused extreme environmental degradation. The disparity between the rich and the poor, particularly in relation to the urban and rural divide, has grown. About 40% of the world's population who live in poverty are in Asia, and one third of the population of Asian cities live in slums or squatter areas. It is recalled that during the 1997–1998 Asian economic crisis, the then-Prime Minister of Japan, Keizo Obuchi, suggested that economic progress was inextricably linked with stable social conditions and proposed the concept of “human security” as a way to provide social safety nets for vulnerable populations. Since then, new safety nets, governing structures and systems have been developed to cover the well-being of the widest range of people.

The concept of human security, with its focus on the security and prosperity of human beings, can address a variety of threats currently faced by the rapidly globalizing world. It takes a more inclusive and holistic approach, bringing together actions relating to all areas of human well-being, such as education, health, agriculture and security. In pursuing the realization of human security, the Commission on Human Security has proposed a framework for action based on the protection and empowerment of people. The more traditional “top-down” approach to governance, by which laws and public institutions are expected to protect the basic rights and freedom of people, is to be complemented by a new “bottom-up” approach that empowers people through education, information and provision of social safety measures. The two approaches should mutually reinforce each other

and, by solving conflicts and ensuring their security, enable people to better manage their lives.

This book offers tools for measuring human security in terms of a governance index, impact assessment, and mapping in conflict zones. It indicates helpful guidance to enhance inclusive and holistic approaches to attain human security. It provides a useful reference, particularly for people involved in the policymaking, planning and operations of human well-being projects. I hope that all endeavors to implement human security will be strengthened by the lessons and recommendations contained in this book.

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Preface

There is little doubt that many of the security threats facing the world in the 21st century revolve around issues such as poverty, underdevelopment, inequality, environmental degradation, climate change, pandemics, illegal migration, people smuggling, drug trafficking and conflicts arising from poor governance leading to state failure. While these threats are not new, in an era of advancing globalization, they are increasingly transnational and interlinked in nature. Moreover, these threats directly and deeply affect the safety and well-being of people, even when the system of states that comprise the contemporary international order may remain superficially stable. The international community therefore needs to rethink the concept of what security means and how best to realize it. A comprehensive people-centric understanding of security is warranted, as a more appropriate framework of reference and action for today's world than the traditional notion of national security.

The idea of human security, which stresses security for the people and their core institutions, is challenging to both scholars and practitioners. For scholars, the challenge is to develop this concept in a broad and meaningful manner so that it has appeal beyond the narrow academic community and becomes a tool for advancing the safety and well-being of individuals, states and the international community. The concept is still relatively new; and it needs to be expanded, explored, debated and disseminated as widely as possible so that it becomes permanently enshrined in the lexicon of academic disciplines including governance studies, security studies and development studies. While most existing studies have dealt with the concept at a

theoretical or conceptual level, it is important now to apply it and examine its relevance with the help of case studies at local, national and international levels.

For practitioners, including governments, civil society and media, the challenge is one of drawing upon the normative potential of the human security concept and finding the space and resources for implementing this concept into concrete policy action. Policymakers may find the concept appealing as a slogan, but in the absence of implementation mechanisms, human security will remain a pipe dream.

This book on human security — and the series in general — is aimed at meeting these challenges. We hope to bring new and innovative research that incorporates theoretical insights into policy action and offers practical suggestions to advance human security. Using case studies of human security challenges and responses, we will highlight issues of governance that are central to the management of human security. We hope that the series will contribute to the promotion of human security in Asia and the world, as a new paradigm for advancing the security and welfare of people in the global village of the 21st century.

Amitav Acharya
Series Editor

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This book was the product of a generous grant from The Sasakawa Peace Foundation of Japan to the Asian Dialogue Society. His Excellency Surin Pitsuwan, Secretary-General of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and a member of the Commission on Human Security, has been a central inspiration behind this project. We also thank the various research centers and individuals in India who participated in the project, including the Madhyam Foundation in Bhubaneswar, Orissa; the Omeo Kumar Das Institute of Social Change and Development in Guwahati, Assam; the Centre for Humanistic Development in Guwahati, Assam; and the Center for Health and Human Security (headed by Dr. L. K. Mishra and comprising a team of nearly 20 doctors) in Cuttack, Orissa, which itself was an offshoot of this project. Sanjoy Hazarika, one of the leading experts on the Northeast Indian region, and Shahrbanou Tadjbakhsh, a world-renowned authority on human security, offered invaluable advice and guidance during different stages of the project. Last but not least, we thank the editors at World Scientific Publishing, Sandhya Venkatesh and Wanda Tan, for expertly managing the publication of this book.

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Chief Executive of the International Centre Goa, India; and was also a Research Fellow at the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Singapore. His achievements include, among others, establishing the Information and Resource Center (a private think tank and consultancy firm focused on Asia-Pacific affairs) in 1985, and convening the Asian Dialogue Society (which is committed to the pan-Asian idea of “building a better Asia”) in 2003. With an early focus on Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam and Myanmar, he has expanded his work over the last decade to include Central and South Asia, and has worked on issues ranging from the media and disabilities to human security in Northeast India. His primary activities are directed toward the building of a greater Asian community.

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