

Human Security and East Asia: In the Beginning

Paul M. Evans

Security is the absence of anxiety upon which the fulfilled life depends.

—*Cicero*

In the pantheon of new security concepts debated in East Asia in the past decade, human security is perhaps the most controversial. It is based on the idea that the individual or community must be at least one of the referent points in answering the eternal questions of security for whom, from what, and by what means.

Asian reactions to human security have been divided and fluid in the past decade, initially somewhere between cool and hostile and recently more positive in civil society, academic, and governmental circles. The conventional wisdom is that East Asia is resistant to concepts of security that, in normative terms, have the potential to erode traditional conceptions of sovereignty and, in policy terms, demand a new allocation of resources to manage an array of nontraditional security challenges well beyond military threats to territorial integrity. Especially in Northeast Asia, a neighborhood where the Cold War is unended, where memories of history and historical legacies are unresolved, where there are divided states, where defense spending is high, and where there is little experience with regional institutions or cooperative security, human security appears to many as an alien and even dangerous transplant.

The case for skepticism is reinforced by the illiberal thrust of U.S. foreign policy in the era of George W. Bush, especially since September 11. The antiterrorism agenda has produced an unprecedented level of state-to-state cooperation, seen in the constructive interactions of the United States and China and the other major powers. Indeed, some see the prospect for a renewed Concert of Powers emerging in response to the North Korean nuclear issue. But U.S. opposition to the major inter-

national initiatives to promote human security, especially the antipersonnel landmine campaign and the International Criminal Court, and the diminution of support for human rights in East Asia are sobering for human security advocates.

I focus here on how ideas about human security are being interpreted and addressed by governments and wider policy communities in Asia, especially in Northeast Asia and Southeast Asia, two regions that I define together as East Asia.¹ The basic argument is that after facing initial opposition, human security is now finding a place in regional discussion and some policy areas. While the preference is for the broader approach to human security that looks at multiple new threats to human well-being, there has been a subtle shift toward acceptance—or at least serious debate—concerning the narrower understanding of human security related to protection of individuals in situations of violent conflict. The most important embodiment of this logic is the idea of the *responsibility to protect*. At this point, individual states and regional institutions remain hesitant to embrace human security, but the concept is affecting state practice and playing a catalytic role in changing the normative framework related to state obligations and the principles of sovereignty and noninterference.

I present the argument mindful that human security has a precarious perch in the theory and practice of international relations not only within East Asia but also globally. It operates on the margins rather than in the mainstream except in a handful of countries such as Canada and Norway. The concept has been widely criticized as analytically problematic, morally risky, unsustainable, counterproductive, and “so vague that it verges on the meaningless.”² In the academic world, human security has a growing number of adherents. A 2003 survey of Canadian academics listed more than 145 at thirty-three universities who self-identified as having a research or teaching interest in human security.³ Yet even a cursory skim of titles and subjects in mainstream security journals in North America and Europe indicates that the phrase still is used rarely.⁴ The impact in East Asia appears even smaller.

The Meanings of Human Security

The phrase *human security* surfaced occasionally in the first nine decades of the twentieth century, but only after its formulation in the UN Development Programme (UNDP) Human Development Report in 1994 did it begin to penetrate academic and policy discourse.⁵ Por-

trayed alternatively as a new theory, concept, paradigm, analytic starting point, worldview, political agenda, normative benchmark, and policy framework, it has inspired a shelf of books, scores of journal articles, several governmental reports, and dozens of new seminars and teaching programs. It is much less a product of theoretical reflection than changing ground-level realities, and its main advocates have until recently been politicians, diplomats, and NGO activists, not academics and pundits who have tended to be critical or dismissive.

There are frequent disagreements about the nature and meaning of human security—its what and how—but far fewer on its why and when. Advocates regularly point to changes in the post-Cold War security environment; the increasing significance of intrastate as compared to interstate conflict; the emergence of a new form of diplomacy that connects states, international institutions, and civil society actors; and, more fundamentally, the deepening of globalization that brings with it new information networks and media capacity, which have exacerbated the problems faced by failed and failing states, and which have produced new forces for democratization.

It is customary to point out that at the core of human security are specific answers to security for whom, from what, and by what means. Its fundamental assumptions are: (1) that the individual (or the individual in a group or community, say, ethnic Serbs in Bosnia) is *one of* the referent points (or in some formulations *the* referent point) for security; (2) that the security of the individual or the group is subject to a variety of threats of which military threats from outside the state are only one and usually not the most significant; and (3) that there is a possible tension between the security of the individual and that of the nation, the state, and the regime (Hampson 2002a).

Framed this way, human security raises a challenge to traditional conceptions of national security by changing the referent point and introducing issues and means that extend beyond conventional security strategies. Philosophically, it raises fundamental issues related to conscience, obligations beyond borders, development, and domestic legitimacy. Politically, it raises questions about sovereignty, intervention, the role of regional and global institutions, and the relationship between state and citizen.⁶ Insecure states almost certainly produce insecure citizens. But more to the point: secure states do not necessarily mean secure citizens.

Beyond this, human security fragments into a variety of different approaches on how broadly to define the threats, how to prioritize them, and whether to emphasize the complementarity or tension between the state and the individual. If security is the absence of anxi-

ety upon which the fulfilled life depends, how many human anxieties need to be assuaged? And by what means?

The answers to these questions have been bundled in many ways. Indeed, human security has been in a period of a hundred schools of thought regarding definition, measurement, and prescription. One survey has identified three main approaches: those growing out of human rights and the rule of law traditions, those featuring safety of peoples, and those focusing on sustainable human development (Hampson 2002b).

For purposes of analyzing the debates in East Asia, the hundred flowers can be separated into two main gardens. The first emphasizes a broad approach to the definition and scope of human security, treating human security as a variant of human well-being. Echoing the initial formulation of the UNDP 1994 Human Development Report (HDR) in responding to the freedom from fear and the freedom from want, it identifies both as important. The ensuing catalog of threats can be very wide indeed. In some formulations violence is not included at all, as for example in the definition of human security as “the number of days lived outside a state of generalized poverty.”⁷

The most developed variant of the broad or holistic approach can be found in the recent work of the Commission on Human Security (CHS), supported by the Japanese government and cochaired by Sadako Ogata and Amartya Sen. Its final report states:

The aim of human security is to protect the vital core of all human lives in ways that enhance human freedoms and human fulfilment. Human security means protecting fundamental freedoms—freedoms that are the essence of life. It means protecting people from critical (severe) and pervasive (widespread) threats and situations. It means using processes that build on people’s strengths and aspirations. It means creating political, social, environmental, economic, military and cultural systems that together give people the building blocks of survival, livelihood and dignity.

The vital core of life is a set of elementary rights and freedoms people enjoy. What people consider to be “vital”—what they consider to be “of the essence of life” and “crucially important”—varies across individuals and societies. That is why any concept of human security must be dynamic. And that is why we refrain from proposing an itemized list of what makes up human security.⁸

The substantive chapters deal with situations of violent conflict, refugees and internally displaced persons, recovery from violent con-

flict, economic security, health and human security, knowledge, skills, and values for human security. The report explicitly aims to connect issues of protection, rights, development, and governance. And it conceives of human security in a comprehensive sense of dealing with situations of both violence and deprivation.

The flowers in the second garden present a narrower and more pointed view of the scope of human security, focusing on protection of individuals and communities in situations of violent conflict. Sometimes labeled the freedom-from-fear approach, the focus is on extreme vulnerability, usually in the context of intrastate war. Adherents do not deny that there are multiple threats to human well-being but for reasons of analytical clarity and operational focus want to concentrate on one species of threat. Analytically, Andrew Mack, the progenitor of the new Human Security Report, has contended:

Conflating a very broad range of disparate harms under the rubric of “insecurity” is an exercise in re-labelling that serves no apparent analytic purpose. If the term “insecurity” embraces almost all forms of harm—from affronts to dignity to genocide—its descriptive power is extremely low. . . . To examine relationships between—say—poverty and violence requires that, for the purpose of analysis, each be treated separately. Any definition that has the consequence of conflating dependent and independent variables makes causal analysis virtually impossible.⁹

Operationally, its adherents claim that there already exist a variety of institutions and networks for addressing issues of development and that what is needed is a concentration on a specific set of threats and the creation of political will and practical instruments for addressing them. Human security, it is claimed, can make the biggest difference if it keeps squarely focused on protection of refugees, women and children in conflict zones, humanitarian intervention, peacekeeping, postconflict peacebuilding, and conflict management, prevention, and resolution.

The most influential expression of the logic of the narrow approach was outlined by the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS) in its final report, *The Responsibility to Protect*¹⁰ (sometimes cited as R2P). Against the background of contested humanitarian interventions (and noninterventions) in Somalia, Sierra Leone, Rwanda, Bosnia, and East Timor, the ICISS was a response to the request by Kofi Annan for the international community to forge a consensus on the principles and processes for using coercive action to protect people at risk. Created in September 2000, cochaired by Gareth

Evans and Mohamed Sahnoun, and supported by the Canadian government and several private foundations, the ICISS carried out extensive research and consultations before issuing its report in October 2001.

The ICISS report explicitly eschewed the vocabulary of “humanitarian intervention” and “the right to intervene” and instead focused on the needs of people requiring assistance by framing the issues of sovereignty and intervention in terms of the responsibility to protect. It identified a series of core principles that connected state sovereignty, obligations under the UN Charter, existing legal obligations under international law, and the developing practice of states, regional organizations, and the Security Council. It extended the responsibility to protect to include the responsibility to prevent, to react, and to rebuild when faced with human protection claims in states that are either unable or unwilling to discharge their responsibility. And it provided a precise definition of the just cause threshold as well as precautionary principles, right authority, and operational principles.

The report makes a direct connection between the responsibility to protect and the broader conception of human security defined as “the security of people—their physical safety, their economic and social well being, respect for their dignity and worth as human beings, and the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms.”¹¹ Treating human security as “indivisible,” it argues that

issues of sovereignty and intervention are not just matters affecting the rights or prerogatives of states, but they deeply affect and involve individual human beings in fundamental ways. One of the virtues of expressing the key issue in this debate as “the responsibility to protect” is that it focuses attention where it should be most concentrated, on the human needs of those seeking protection or assistance. . . . The fundamental components of human security—the security of *people* against threats to life, health, livelihood, personal safety and human dignity—can be put at risk by external aggression but also by factors within a country, including “security” forces. Being wedded still to too narrow a concept of “national security” may be one reason why many governments spend more to protect their citizens against undefined external military attack than to guard them against the omnipresent enemies of good health and other real threats to human security on a daily basis.¹²

The list of insecurities from which states should protect their citizens includes hunger, inadequate shelter, disease, crime, unemployment, social conflict, and environmental hazard as well as rape as an

instrument of war, ethnic cleansing, genocide, and citizens killed by their own security forces.¹³ What is innovative about the report is that it moves from the broad conception of threats and indivisibility to a specific focus on two types of threat that might warrant outside *military* intervention: large-scale loss of life and ethnic cleansing.

Asian Reactions and Formulations

While human security has a significant Asian pedigree—the initial UNDP report was written by a Pakistani with an Asian audience in mind—it initially appeared to be seeds scattered on barren rock. Human security, as Amitav Acharya correctly notes, is “a distinctive notion, which goes well beyond all earlier attempts by Asian governments to ‘redefine’ and broaden their own traditional understanding of security as protection of sovereignty and territory against military threats.”¹⁴ Few Asian governments or intellectuals showed immediate interest in the idea and several commentators immediately concluded that its fundamental premises and action agenda would not find support in a continent where governments felt that states were the best (and perhaps only) providers of security and where they ferociously guarded the principles of absolute sovereignty and noninterference in domestic affairs. The first reactions among some Taiwanese academics were hesitant, skeptical, and cautious.¹⁵

With the Asian financial crisis of 1997, the pattern of discussion began to shift.¹⁶ The idea was not as intensely debated as in Europe, Africa, and Latin America, but at least the broader approach to human security began receiving a warmer welcome and was championed by several Asian intellectual leaders, among them Tadashi Yamamoto of the Japan Center for International Exchange, some of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Institute of Strategic and International Studies (ISIS) group, and political figures including Obuchi Keizo, Surin Pitsuwan, and Kim Dae-jung. Beyond being a nice-sounding phrase, human security provided a tool for acknowledging that even two decades of economic growth and state-building had not eliminated severe vulnerabilities for large numbers of Asians. And it at least hinted at the growing role of nonstate actors as (1) alternative service providers when states were unable to provide social welfare and protection for their own citizens, and (2) participants in the policy process.

Viewed a decade after human security entered the Asian security lexicon, it is evolving in complex ways. In the context of regional gov-

ernmental institutions, the phrase has been used intermittently by political leaders and bureaucrats and is slowly entering the vocabulary of regional institutions, albeit with several different formulations of what the phrase means. The senior officials in the East Asia Study Group and the ASEAN+3 heads of government have used it since 2001, mainly in the context of the need to address a range of nontraditional security issues, including environmental degradation, illegal migration, piracy, communicable diseases, and transnational crime. After considerable debate, the term was used in APEC, first in official meetings in 2002 and then as part of the Leaders' Declaration on October 21, 2003, which pledged APEC "not only to advancing the prosperity of our economies, but also to the complementary mission of ensuring the security of our people." APEC's prescriptions for enhancing human security concentrated on dismantling terrorist groups, eliminating the danger of weapons of mass destruction, and confronting other direct threats to security including communicable diseases (especially SARS), protection of air travelers, and energy security.¹⁷ The use of the term merged conventional understandings of human security in its broadest sense and the U.S.-promoted antiterrorist agenda, producing a politically compelling if conceptually confusing new variant.

Support of East Asian governments for the main global initiatives directly tied to human security—the campaign to ban antipersonnel landmines, the International Criminal Court, humanitarian interventions in Kosovo, Haiti, Rwanda, Somalia, and East Timor—has been mixed.

A variety of track-two regional processes including ASEAN ISIS and the Council on Security Cooperation in the Asia Pacific have used the phrase in both its narrower and broader formulations. The East Asia Vision Group introduced it into several sections of its final report in 2000. And there were some thirty track-two meetings from 1998 to 2002 that had human security as the principal focus or a major theme.¹⁸

The two countries that have promoted the concept most vigorously in East Asia have been Japan and Thailand. Japanese leaders at the prime ministerial and foreign minister levels have used the phrase frequently and devoted considerable financial and human resources to promoting the broad version of the concept. This has been reinforced by the appointment of Sadako Ogata as the head of the Japanese International Cooperation Agency and the establishment of the \$200 million Trust Fund for Security for promoting human security, mainly through projects implemented by UN agencies.¹⁹ Several Thai officials and academics were attracted to the idea, principally during the previous

democratic government, though with partial support from its successor. The government created the Department of Social Development Human Security to focus on domestic social safety issues and has been an active member of the Human Security Network.

It is an interesting question why Japan and Thailand have been more receptive to human security thinking than many of their neighbors. It may largely be the product of specific individuals in the right place at the right time, especially Surin Pitsuwan, the Thai foreign minister from 1998 to 2002, and Obuchi Keizo, the Japanese foreign minister, then prime minister from 1996 to 2000. Looking more structurally, in the case of Thailand, the democratic transition brought to power an elected government closely connected to liberally minded NGOs and academics and very nervous about repeated border incidents and the stream of refugees and illegal drugs flowing out of Myanmar. In the case of Japan, human security opened up a more proactive role in international security that was independent of the United States but not threatening to the alliance or its constitution. It provided a foreign policy tool that permitted Tokyo to put a more compassionate face on its aid programs and address humanitarian issues that were on the global and regional agenda, especially in the wake of the Asian economic crisis.

It is not surprising that the interest in human security has been strongest in some of the new democracies in Asia, especially Thailand, South Korea, and the Philippines. And it is not surprising that the most negative reactions have come from North Korea and Myanmar. But the correlation with regime type is far from perfect. Some of the most vehement criticisms of human security, at least in its narrower formulations, have come from Indian officials. In Taiwan, where there is a strong civil society and functioning democratic institutions, the concept is only just beginning to get attention and faces some serious constraints considering Taiwan's exclusion from most of the international institutions where human security is being discussed in a multilateral format.²⁰

Sovereignty and Noninterference in Flux

In any formulation, human security raises significant questions about the relationship between citizens and states. Even the softest prescriptions for dealing with nontraditional security raise new issues that the state must address in protecting citizens. Some of the more robust ones call for

the broader participation of civil society groups in priority-setting and action to deal with a myriad of transnational issues. In the long run, it may be that citizen participation in addressing nontraditional issues will be the most powerful factor in widening support for human security.

In the short run, it is the issue of humanitarian intervention that is the most pointed and vexed aspect of the human security agenda. Even phrased as a “responsibility to protect,” the call for viewing security issues through the lenses of individuals and victims and establishing rights and duties that justify and compel states and citizens to intervene in the affairs of neighbors is a hard sell in many parts of the world. Although two of the ten commissioners on the ICISS were from Asia (Fidel Ramos and Ramesh Thakur) and the commission held two of its ten consultative meetings in Asia (Delhi and Beijing) while preparing the draft, Asian reactions to the report have been mixed.

In the context of the UN, some member states have stated support for the principles and recommendations of the report, though to date the Security Council has not been moved to endorse the report as a set of guidelines for the Council, nor has the General Assembly passed even a declaratory resolution of support. Several Asian countries, including Myanmar, North Korea, and India, have encouraged the G77 to reject the report on the grounds that it provides a pretext for developed countries to meddle in the domestic affairs of the developing world.²¹ None of the regional governmental institutions, including ASEAN, ASEAN+3, APEC, ARF, and ASEM, have made any comment on the report, reflecting the internal debate within these organizations and their formal, if softening, commitment to noninterference principles.

Governmental institutions may not be ready to react, but the underlying issues and principles are so significant and complex that they have been an increasingly frequent topic at academic and track-two policy discussions. The report has been a featured subject topic at meetings, including the Asia Pacific Roundtable and the ASEAN People’s Assembly. It has also been the principal focus of conferences and workshops in Beijing, Shanghai, and Nanjing (January 2002); Tokyo (December 2002); Bangkok (March 2003); Singapore (March 2003); Jakarta (April 2003); and Manila (July 2003). The discussions at these meetings have been lively, constructive, and generally supportive of at least the intentions of the report.

One of the remarkable changes in East Asia has been the dramatic reduction in battle deaths and war-related deaths resulting from civil conflicts. According to figures collected for the Human Security Report by the University of Uppsala and the International Peace Research

Institute in Oslo, from 1946 until 1980, East Asia was the site of the three largest internal conflicts in the world (the Chinese civil war, the Korean War, and the Vietnam War) with battle deaths of more than 4.5 million and war-related deaths somewhere in the vicinity of two and a half times that number. But since 1980, the number of battle deaths has been considerably less than 5,000 annually for the entire region.²²

Yet memories of the killing fields in Cambodia in the 1970s, East Timor in the late 1990s, and recurring armed conflicts inside Myanmar, the Philippines, and Indonesia indicate that intrastate conflict is still part of the regional situation, albeit on a substantially lower scale than earlier. One clear indicator of changing attitudes about intervention is to compare regional reactions to the genocide in Cambodia in the 1970s with the large-scale killings in East Timor in 1998–1999. In the context of Cambodia, there was virtually no discussion within ASEAN of the need for external intervention and virtually no sympathy for occasional Vietnamese pretexts that its intervention was motivated by humanitarian impulses. In the context of East Timor, while Indonesia and ASEAN insisted upon Indonesian consent before authorizing a military intervention, there were frequent demands for swift international action, including the use of military force, by citizens and top political leaders in several Southeast Asian capitals. While formal institutional responses and doctrinal principles have remained relatively rigid, the normative framework has clearly shifted on humanitarian intervention. As East Asian countries respond to the challenges of modernization and globalization by liberalizing their economies, opening their societies, and deepening their interconnections, issues of interactions with neighbors are more numerous, more public, and more complex than in the past.

Critics of the report have made several arguments: that it is an insidious new form of interventionist doctrine that misunderstands and erodes the concept of sovereignty; that military intervention under any circumstances is not the best option; that it is too dependent on the Security Council as the preferred mechanism for action; that the threshold criteria are too narrow and too demanding such that they rule out action against a country like Myanmar, where the level of killing is low on an annual basis but persistent; that it may give false hopes to those suffering injury that external forces will come to their rescue when this is in fact an unlikely prospect; and that, in the end, the report depends upon the powerful being willing to act and that this will occur only when it suits specific national interests in ways that no guidelines or moral principles can affect, reducing a debate about humanitarian obligations to an exercise in power politics.

Most commentators read the report as state-enhancing rather than state-threatening. After looking carefully at the just cause threshold and the precautionary principles, they conclude that the R2P framework actually makes military intervention less likely and provides safeguards for developing countries against unilateral intervention.²³

Those supportive of the basic aspects of the report are aware that the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq has produced a backlash against even well-intentioned efforts to delineate the proper grounds for humanitarian intervention. Despite the fact that the Bush administration did not endorse the report and that Gareth Evans, the chair of the ICISS, has adamantly denied that the Iraq case meets the conditions for intervention outlined in the report,²⁴ it is seen by many as the slippery slope to legitimating great-power intervention and doctrines of preemption. These anxieties will be hard to assuage. Ironically, it may be that the Bush administration's muscular neoconservative policies on regime change and nation-building in Iraq will do more to harm the case for multilateral efforts to promote human security than have direct administration criticisms of initiatives like the ban on antipersonnel landmines and the International Criminal Court.

Yet overall, the discussion about various forms of intervention for protection purposes, sovereignty, and noninterference is becoming more complex and pragmatic in East Asia. In almost every capital there has been a shift from an argument based on first principles and philosophy to a much more contingent one that takes account of specific situations, circumstances, and instruments. In the context of Southeast Asia, the primacy of norms of sovereignty and noninterference has been challenged by the deepening interest in a more intrusive flexible engagement and enhanced interaction. Awaiting the next test case, East Asian leaders are not likely to lead the discussion or specific interventions, at least in the short term.²⁵ Using the criteria set out in the report, it is difficult to imagine any scenarios in which outside intervention is conceivable in Northeast Asia. But Asian leaders are likely to become more deeply involved in prevention and reconstruction activities and to support externally led and endorsed multilateral interventions in conflict situations that meet ICISS-recommended thresholds inside Southeast Asia and in other parts of the world. In Amitav Acharya's words, "A regional capacity for military prevention would be difficult to operationalize due to concerns about sovereignty. For Asian regional institutions, the key task would thus be to engage in conflict prevention, or responsibility to prevent, while leaving it to the UN to undertake military protection."²⁶ It is now at least imagina-

ble that in the near future Asian countries would join in a regionally built coalition if the leadership came from outside the region but was not mandated by the UN.

Perhaps the most complex evolution in thinking about human security has occurred in China. Until the late 1990s the phrase was virtually unknown to Chinese academics and is still only rarely used by officials in formal meetings or by the media. The situation is changing in two main respects. First, some of the domestic aspects of human security—the threats from within—are receiving governmental and academic attention. These include environmental concerns, poverty, and social security. Second, human security overlaps with some of the key elements of China's new security concept, especially the emphasis on cooperative action to address pressing transnational issues. Preferring the idea of non-traditional security²⁷ to human security, Chinese officials in November 2002 cosigned The Joint Declaration of ASEAN and China on Cooperation in the Field of Non-Traditional Security Issues related to illegal drugs, people smuggling, trafficking in women and children, piracy, terrorism, arms smuggling, money laundering, international economic crime, and cybercrime.²⁸

Turning to the pointy end of human security—protection of individuals in situations of violent conflict—directly tied to the concepts of sovereignty and intervention, Chinese responses since 1997 have been more fluid than often portrayed. There remain vocal proponents of a strict interpretation of the principles of sovereignty and noninterference, stressing the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, emphasizing article 3(4) of the UN Charter, preferring humanitarian assistance to humanitarian intervention, advocating strict neutrality in peacekeeping, and seeing ulterior motives in the practice of intervention. They echo deeply embedded views in China about past humiliations; fears of potential interventions in Taiwan, Tibet, and Xinjiang; and a political philosophy that focuses on the nation rather than the individual and that separates human safety from what now is called human security.²⁹

It is a mistake to see these views as static. Chu Shulong points out that “the Chinese leadership will continue to defend fundamental national sovereignty rights, but at the same time, the pressure of global trends means they will become more flexible and accepting toward relatively new concepts of security, including human security,” adding that “the Chinese recognize that in times of integration and globalization, nations and peoples around the world will gain more than they will lose from changing their traditional positions on national security.”³⁰

Allen Carlson's report on recent discussions in China (January 2002, *after* the release of the Responsibility to Protect Report) is an insightful assessment of the historical evolution of Chinese thinking and practice on sovereignty and intervention issues. Demonstrating that thinking has changed since the mid-1990s, he points to a "heterogeneity" of approaches and narratives in policy circles. Despite "deeply embedded misgivings," a combination of rational calculation of interests, concern about image and reputation, and an embrace of new normative principles has produced a more diverse debate. He concludes that "many Chinese elites have now come to accept the general legitimacy of multilateral intervention to resolve particularly prominent humanitarian crises" and that "China has become a reluctant participant in the international trend toward questioning the sanctity of state sovereignty and expanding the international community's right to intervene."³¹ Tracing Chinese reactions to recent cases of multilateral interventions for protection purposes and China's role in various peacekeeping missions, he explains the opposition to Kosovo and the acceptance of East Timor, arguing that the internal debates were not so much about principles as about the looseness with which some in the West referred to humanitarian crises, the selection of targets, and the specifics of implementation.

Seven Characteristics

These brief glimpses into human security thinking and practice in East Asian countries and institutions are nothing more than glimpses. But they do suggest seven features of the regional response.

First, at the level of security thinking, human security connects fairly well to local conditions. As Acharya argues, it is compatible with most formulations of comprehensive security, resonates with the needs-oriented approach of many Asian governments, is flexible in including both individuals and communities as the referent of security, connects well to developmental issues, and is easily adapted to indigenous traditions of human dignity. He adds that the shift from ideological or nationalist foundations for regime legitimacy to performance-based legitimacy also put more pressures on governments to meet basic human needs and protection.³² The fall of Indonesia's Suharto government in the aftermath of the Asian economic crisis was emblematic of the costs of not doing so. As argued by Rizal Sukma, "While it might be presumptuous to argue that the emphasis on human security will

automatically ensure political and economic stability, one can make a reasonably strong claim that ignoring it will definitely serve as a recipe for disaster.”³³

Second, the broader conception has been easier to embrace, if only as aspiration. This can be seen in a range of publications since 1995,³⁴ much of which aims to connect human security to developmental issues such as poverty and inequality and a new brand of transnational issues such as climate change, cross-border pollution, trafficking in drugs and people, cross-border criminal activity, and communicable disease. Combining a sensitivity to the developmental and transnational issues, the idea of nontraditional security has been a growth industry in regional security studies. The resistance to connecting nontraditional security to human security is declining, though some remain worried that at least the narrow conception of human security is either inappropriate to Asia or will slow progress in getting state action in addressing the nontraditional security agenda. What is distinctive about many of the approaches to nontraditional security is (1) that they are ambiguous about whether the referent of security is the state or the individual and do not dwell on tensions between the two; and (2) that its advocates normally emphasize the state and state-centric means as the best ways of responding to these threats, normally preferring to address these issues within their own states rather than on a regional basis. The threats may be new, but the instruments prescribed for dealing with them usually are not.³⁵

Third, the constituency for human security remains limited, initially centered on officials and political leaders involved in multilateral diplomacy, then academics and only recently civil society organizations. But it is increasingly vocal. NGOs and political activists in Southeast Asia have begun to use the term in contexts like the ASEAN People’s Assembly and other track-three settings. Pierre Lizée argues that it is emerging as “something of a rallying cry for civil society organizations in Southeast Asia because it provides them with a powerful argument against the state-centred model of economic and political development at the heart of the region in recent decades.”³⁶ By delinking state and society, the concept

leads quite immediately to the contention that groups and individuals in Southeast Asian societies could well want to define their hopes and priorities in terms of human rights or social welfare, and not in terms set by the states, but through closer reference to global standards . . . it invites the idea that the state might be called upon to account for its actions on the basis of these supra-national standards.³⁷

This emphasis on the agency of nonstate actors fits very well with the idea of the new diplomacy that connects international institutions, sympathetic governments, and networks of NGOs and policy experts in advancing initiatives like the International Campaign to Ban Landmines and the creation of the International Criminal Court.³⁸

Fourth, while the economic crisis that began in 1997 attracted attention in Asia to the broader concept of human security, the current antiterrorism agenda has complicated the discussion. At one level, the fight against terror has focused new attention on the root causes of violence and the intrastate conflicts that have regional and global consequences. The postinvasion efforts at nation-building and reconstruction in Afghanistan and Iraq have already involved the direct participation of Japan and South Korea, and if the United Nations plays a larger role, one can expect several other East Asian countries to become involved. At the same time, the strategies for responding to terrorism have generally been framed as strengthening states and regimes and using traditional coercive instruments (the military, police, intelligence agencies) as the main means for achieving the objective.

Fifth, while there is some evidence of change in regional norms related to sovereignty, noninterference, and institution-building, most Asian states have been very reluctant to focus regional and global attention on the dynamics of intrastate war. Concepts like preventive diplomacy have been slow to find acceptance. What has been accepted is that domestic instabilities and vulnerabilities need special attention by the states in which they are occurring. For many analysts, even a bad government can do this better than no government or a government imposed through outside intervention.

Sixth, deep-seated differences in doctrine, instruments, and discourse continue to distinguish Southeast Asia from Northeast Asia. Despite the efforts of individuals in Japan, South Korea, and China to open the discussion on human security, even ideas about regional responses to nontraditional security issues are making only very slow progress. The level of discussion and tentative governmental and NGO action in Southeast Asia is better developed. These differences, however, appear to be narrowing, in part because of the emergence of East Asian multilateral institutions. And they appear to be narrowing in the direction of increased support for at least the rhetoric of human security.

Seventh, very few advocates of human security have argued that its application in East Asia should go beyond well-being and protection to demand democratization as the logical extension of human security. R2P itself does not comment on the form of governance within a state,

only that it provides protection of a narrow range of basic human rights pertaining to physical safety. Though there are a few academics and NGO activists who feel that the real issues are widening the scope of human rights and creating democracies, most of the advocates of the broad and narrow approaches to human security have restricted themselves to basic protection issues and not tried to use the concept to make the case for new forms of intervention against undemocratic regimes or to argue for regime transformation.³⁹ In crude terms, the first generation of human security thinking in East Asia has taken a Hobbesian turn, much more focused on the dangers posed by chaos and the breakdown of social order than by tyranny.

Conclusion: Human Security in an Illiberal Era and a Tough Neighborhood

Postcolonial proclivities in East Asia for admiring strong states, resisting external interference, and embracing nineteenth-century conceptions of hard-shell sovereignty seem at one level to reinforce the current U.S. thrust for using state-centric instruments for fighting terror. On the surface, these twin forces appear to be defining an illiberal era in East Asia. There may be new grounds for state-to-state cooperation in responding to terrorist threats, or even for dealing with the North Korean nuclear crisis, but it is not an easy moment for advocates of human rights⁴⁰ or human security.

These forces, however, confront other trends in regional affairs. If China and other countries in East Asia are supportive of a selective unbundling of sovereignty and noninterference, why is this so? In part this is because of deepening interdependence, regional integration, the opening of Asian societies and economies, and new information and communication technologies. A retreat into ossified Westphalianism is tempting for some but unrealistic. An alternative prospect is that fear of U.S. power and its potentially revolutionary agenda may be spurring efforts to design a rule-based framework that will endorse collective action on a multilateral basis and that will serve as a constraint, albeit a thin one, on unilateral intervention. Fear and necessity rather than hope might be the path to a regional multilateralism supportive of the objectives of human security.

The reframing of issues related to intervention, nontraditional security, and transnational problems appear to have opened a new chapter in regional discussions. The conversation includes not only the less

controversial aspects of human security related to human welfare raised by the Commission on Human Security but even the more divisive ones on the responsibility to protect raised in the ICISS. Rather than poisoning the human security well, ideas like the responsibility to protect may be oxygenating it by opening up a range of issues that were previously seen as too sensitive and intrusive and by catalyzing the activities of a new generation of civil society-based actors.

In its next phase, East Asian leaders may not just be responding to the international debate on human security but shaping it. Certainly this is a major objective of the Japanese government and think tanks in promoting a holistic approach to human security. Underpinning ideas like human security and the responsibility to protect is a purportedly universal approach to conflict resolution and the management of violence. Despite the Hobbesian turn and the state-enhancing thrust of much thinking about nontraditional and human security, all of the prescriptions for conflict prevention, intervention, and postconflict reconstruction are based on ideas about governance, democracy, and the control of violence that grow out of Western experience. When applied in Eastern Asia, for example during the UNTAC period in Cambodia or INTERFET in East Timor, the results have been less than perfect. Thus the questions on an East Asian agenda may well focus on past experiences, lessons drawn, and current circumstances. What are the risks and advantages of delegating leadership of multilateral action outside the region? How does the R2P framework need to be adjusted to take account of Asian realities and priorities? How should developmental assistance programs be altered to take account of human security objectives in both sustainable development and mitigation of conflict? How does counterterrorism fit with human security? What is the right mix of military responses and developmental ones? Above all, how can national security and human security be reconciled?⁴¹

While the emerging debate on these issues does not ensure that a new era of human security is on the horizon, it does suggest that it has a beginning.

Paul M. Evans is professor and acting director of the Liu Institute for Global Issues at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver. A specialist on international relations in Asia Pacific, he was the founding director of the Canadian Consortium on Human Security in 2001–2002. His most recent book, coauthored with David Capie, is *The Asia-Pacific Security Lexicon* (2002).

Notes

This article was initially prepared for the Conference on Peace, Development, and Regionalization in East Asia, organized by the East Asia Institute and the Gorbachev Foundation of North America, Seoul, September 2–4, 2003. My thanks to the conference organizers and participants for comments on the original draft and to two anonymous referees for comments on the revised one.

1. “East Asia” is used in two different ways in regional discussions. One refers to an area including mainland China, Taiwan, Japan, Korea, and possibly portions of Vietnam, something that John Fairbank and Edwin Reischauer referred to as the sinic culture area. The second expands the region to include the countries of Southeast Asia. For current purposes I’m using the second meaning because the discussion of security terms and regional institution building is, at least for the moment, primarily centered on the wider concept of the region as seen for example in the ASEAN+3 process and the supporting track-two activities.

2. Barry Buzan, “Human Security in International Perspective,” in Mely Anthony and Mohamed Jawhar Hassan, eds., *The Asia Pacific in the New Millennium* (Kuala Lumpur: ISIS Malaysia, 2001); Michael Ignatieff, “The Seductiveness of Moral Disgust,” in Ignatieff, *The Warrior’s Honour: Ethnic War and the Modern Conscience*, chap. 3 (New York: Viking, 1998); William W. Bain, “Against Crusading: The Ethic of Human Security and Canadian Foreign Policy,” *Canadian Foreign Policy* 6, no. 3 (Spring 1999); Edward Luttwak, “Give War a Chance,” *Foreign Affairs* 78, no. 4 (July–August 1999); Roland Paris, “Human Security: Paradigm Shift or Hot Air?” *International Security* 26, no. 2 (Fall 2001): 102.

3. The list and a selection of syllabi from courses they offer are available online at www.humansecurity.info.

4. And it has scarcely registered on the screen of the international media. A Google search assessing the frequency of different adjectives for modifying security (e.g., national security, regime security, comprehensive security, cooperative security, homeland security) in English-language newspapers in 2002 revealed that less than 0.3 percent of the references were to “human security.”

5. David Capie and Paul Evans, *The Asia-Pacific Security Lexicon* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2002), pp. 139–147.

6. It also appears to be something of a syndrome or value signifier. A person interested in human security is also likely ambivalent about globalization, liberalization, and unfettered markets; is committed to international development and more equal distribution of resources; uses words like “social justice” and “root causes”; supports multilateral institutions including the UN, ICC, and the new diplomacy of coalitions of the willing (in the sense used in the anti-personnel landmines campaign, not the war in Iraq); and is apoplectic about U.S. unilateralism and exceptionalism.

7. Gary King and Christopher Murray, “Rethinking Human Security,” *Political Science Quarterly* 116, no. 4 (Winter 2002).

8. Commission on Human Security, *Human Security Now: Protecting and Empowering People*, (New York: CHS, 2003), www.humansecurity-chs.org, p. 4.
9. Andrew Mack, "The Human Security Report Project," typescript, November 2002. The first edition of the Human Security Report was scheduled for release in December 2003.
10. International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty, *The Responsibility to Protect* (Ottawa, November 2001). The report and the supplementary volume, *Research, Bibliography, and Background*, are available online at www.idrc.ca and www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca/iciss-ciise/report2. In addition to the English version, it is available in French, Spanish, Russian, and Chinese. A Thai translation has just been completed by a group of scholars at Chulalongkorn University Bangkok.
11. *The Responsibility to Protect*, p. 15.
12. Ibid.
13. Ibid.
14. Amitav Acharya, "Human Security: East Versus West," *International Journal* (Summer 2001), p. 459.
15. Song Yann-huei, "The Concepts of Human Security and Non-Traditional Security: A Comparison," paper presented at the Human Security Conference, Taipei, December 16, 2002.
16. Mely Anthony, "Human Security in the Asia-Pacific: Current Trends and Prospects," in David Dickens, ed., *The Human Face of Security: Asia-Pacific Perspectives* (Canberra: Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, Australian National University, 2002).
17. APEC Leaders' Declaration, "Bangkok Declaration on Partnership for the Future," October 21, 2003, www.apec.org.
18. Dialogue and Research Monitor: An Inventory and Analysis of Multilateral Meetings on Asia Pacific Security, 1994–2002, www.jcie.or.jp.
19. On the academic side, there are now several research projects and teaching programs focusing on human security, including at Ritsumeikan University (led by Sato Makoto), Tokyo University (led by Yamamoto Yoshinobu), and Sophia University (led by Sorpong Peou).
20. Lee Chyungly, "Human Security: Implications for Taiwan's International Roles," www.humansecurity.info.
21. Manoranjan Mohanty, "Humanitarian Intervention in an Unequal World—A View from Below," paper presented at the International Seminar on Humanitarian Intervention, Beijing, August 27–28, 2002.
22. *Human Security Report 2004*, Centre for Human Security, University of British Columbia, forthcoming July 2004.
23. Ramesh Thakur, "Intervention Could Bring Safeguards in Asia," *Daily Yomiuri*, January 3, 2003.
24. Gareth Evans, "Humanity Did Not Justify This War," *Financial Times*, May 14, 2003.
25. Singapore Institute of International Affairs, "Sovereignty and Intervention: Special Report," June 2001, www.siaaonline.org.

26. Amitav Acharya, "Redefining the Dilemmas of Humanitarian Intervention," *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 56, no. 3 (2002): 379; Derek McDougall, "Regional Institutions and Security: Implications of the 1999 East Timor Crisis," in Andrew Tan and Kenneth Boutin, eds., *Non-Traditional Security Issues in Southeast Asia* (Singapore: Select Publishing, 2001), p. 169.

27. Chu Shulong, "China, Asia, and Issues of Sovereignty and Intervention," China Institute of International Relations, November 2000.

28. Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Beijing, "China's Position Paper on Cooperation in the Field of Non-Traditional Security Issues," May 29, 2002, www.fmprc.gov.cn.

29. International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty, "Rapporteur's Report on Beijing Roundtable Consultations," June 14, 2001, http://web.gc.cuny.edu/icissresearch/Reports/Beijing_Rapporteur_Report.html. Mao Yuxi, "'Human Intervention' Dubious," *China Daily*, February 25, 2002.

30. Chu Shulong, *China and Human Security* (Vancouver: Program on Canada-Asia Policy Studies, North Pacific Policy Paper no. 8, 2002), p. 25, www.pcaps.iar.ubc.ca.

31. Allen Carlson, *Protecting Sovereignty, Accepting Intervention: The Dilemma of Chinese Foreign Relations in the 1990s* (New York: National Committee on United States-China Relations, China Policy Series no. 18, September 2002), pp. 3, 32, 29.

32. Amitav Acharya, "Human Security: East Versus West," *International Journal* (Summer 2001), pp. 444-451. Amitav Acharya, "Human Security: East Versus West," *International Journal* (Summer 2001).

33. Pranee Thiparat, ed., *The Quest for Human Security: The Next Phase of ASEAN?* (Bangkok: Institute of Security and International Studies, 2001), p. 62.

34. Lincoln Chen, "Human Security: Concepts and Approaches," in Tatsuhiro Matsumae and Lincoln Chen, eds., *Common Security in Asia: New Concepts of Human Security* (Tokyo: Tokai, 1995); Japan Center for International Exchange, *The Asian Crisis and Human Security: An Intellectual Dialogue on Building Asia's Tomorrow* (Tokyo: Japan Center for International Exchange, 1999); Japan Center for International Exchange, *Sustainable Development and Human Security: Second Intellectual Dialogue on Building Asia's Tomorrow* (Tokyo and Singapore: Japan Center for International Exchange/Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1999); Japan Center for International Exchange, *Health and Human Security: Moving from Concept to Action* (Tokyo: Japan Center for International Exchange, 2002).

35. It is instructive that of the roughly sixty papers completed from 1999 to 2002 by authors in Northeast Asia, Southeast Asia, and South Asia in the first phase of a Ford Foundation research and conference project on nontraditional and human security, only seven dealt directly with issues of violence and intervention. And only ten paid attention to nonstate actors as policy players and not just the targets of policy. See Abdur Rob Khan, ed., *Globalization and*

Non-Traditional Security in South Asia (Colombo: Regional Centre for Strategic Studies, 2001); P. R. Chari, ed., *Security and Governance in South Asia* (Colombo: Regional Centre for Strategic Studies, 2001); Zhang Yunling, ed., *Stability and Security of Socio-Economic Development in East Asia* (Beijing: China Social Sciences Press, 2001); and Andrew Tan and Kenneth Boutin, eds., *Non-Traditional Security Issues in Southeast Asia* (Singapore: Select Publishing, 2001).

36. Pierre Lizee, "Human Security in Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia," *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 24, no. 3 (December 2002): 509

37. *Ibid.*, p. 513.

38. Rob McRae and Don Hubert, eds., *Human Security and the New Diplomacy: Protecting People, Promoting Peace* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001).

39. Pranee Thiparat, ed., *The Quest for Human Security: The Next Phase of ASEAN?* (Bangkok: Institute of Security and International Studies, 2001).

40. In a carefully researched and argued essay, Rosemary Foot concludes that "the US has compromised its stance in the sphere of human rights promotion, as it searches for military bases, intelligence cooperation and political support in the struggle against terrorism. The US has moved closer to governments with poor human rights records which it once shunned, has reversed or modified policies that were introduced in order to signal displeasure with a country's human rights record, and has downgraded attention to human rights conditions in some other nations. . . . Moreover, these compromises have run in parallel with a serious curtailment of fundamental civil liberties at home. . . . These trends have undermined the international authority of the US stance in this issue area and imply that there has been a trade-off between the imperatives of security in the 'age of terror' and human-rights protection." Rosemary Foot, *Human Rights and Counter-terrorism in America's Asia Policy*, Adelphi Paper 363 (London: IISS, 2004), p. 6.

41. P. H. Liotta, "Boomerang Effect: The Convergence of National and Human Security," *Security Dialogue* 33, no. 4 (December 2002).