“This volume sheds indispensable light on the recent human security policy agenda in East Asia. It offers us a cutting-edge assessment of the conceptual debates and empirical cases that the region has experienced so far. On that basis, it provides us with a balanced and realistic framework that we need in overcoming the ongoing challenge we face: achieving policy collaboration among various stakeholders interested or involved in human security activities. This is a must read for academics and practitioners alike.”

Dr. Tsuyoshi Kawasaki, Assistant Professor Department of Political Science, Simon Fraser University, Vancouver, Canada

“… a significant and indeed timely contribution to a better understanding of Human Security both in terms of providing different theoretical perspectives and practical findings. A must reading for anyone who cares deeply about how to advance effective cooperation on this issue.”

Pranee Thiparat, Ph.D., Department of International Relations, Faculty of Political Science, Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok, Thailand

“… Human security has become a popular theme for students, scholars and – at least rhetorically – in some policy circles, but it has not yet found full acceptance within academic security studies. This collection of chapters – written by prominent academics in the field – takes the debate forward in new directions, applying the concept to new areas and new theoretical enquiries. It attempts – with some success – to resolve some of the remaining analytical conundrums found in the human security movement, and is well-written. It will be of interest to all those who seek to follow this fast moving debate.”

Dr. Edward Newman, Senior Lecturer, Department of Political Science and International Studies, University of Birmingham
Since the end of the Cold War, the number of interstate wars has remained relatively low, although while states may be more secure than ever, this does not mean individual human beings are too. This has led to a growing recognition of the importance of human security, in contrast to the traditional realist focus on state security. This book explores human security in East Asia, focusing in particular on the challenges to collaboration among actors involved in the process of human security promotion. It examines the theoretical complexities of conceptual arguments about human security, drawing on the ideas of scholars from Asia and the West, to provide a global perspective on what causes human insecurity and how security can best be achieved. It considers in detail case studies of military interventions in East Asia, in particular East Timor (later called Timor-Leste), and assesses how successful collaborative efforts have been in providing human security. It also explores case studies of non-military intervention, including international criminal justice in Cambodia and Timor-Leste. It discusses the relationship of regional great powers such as China and Japan to human security promotion, arguing that it will be better served if these powers engage less in the traditional game of geopolitics, and if human security objectives do not work against actors’ interests. It shows how interventions to uphold human security have not always succeeded to the extent that was hoped, despite the best of intentions, and considers how improved collaboration can be achieved, so that future interventions enjoy more consistent success.

Sorpong Peou is Professor of International Security and on the Graduate Programme in Global Studies, Sophia University, Tokyo, Japan. Security and democracy studies are his main areas of expertise. His most recent book is *International Democracy Assistance for Peacebuilding: Cambodia and Beyond* (2007).
Security issues have become more prominent in the Asia Pacific region because of the presence of global players, rising great powers, and confident middle powers, which intersect in complicated ways. This series puts forward important new work on key security issues in the region. It embraces the roles of the major actors, their defense policies and postures and their security interaction over the key issues of the region. It includes coverage of the United States, China, Japan, Russia, the Koreas, as well as the middle powers of ASEAN and South Asia. It also covers issues relating to environmental and economic security as well as transnational actors and regional groupings.

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Challenges for collaborative action

Edited by Sorpong Peou
To my wife Chola
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Introduction
Collaborative action problems in human security

Sorpong Peou

This study investigates challenges to collaboration among actors in the field of human security. We focus on the reality that global efforts to promote this type of security have not always succeeded to the extent that we might have hoped. This introduction briefly considers a normative commitment to human security with some policy implications, justifies East Asia as a major region in the world in need of further investigation, defends the need for theoretical eclecticism, and sketches the volume’s structure.

As a normative concept, human security remains highly contested, as is evidenced throughout this volume, but it seems to have staying power. First, the concept has an enduring legacy, which can be traced back to the classical era of ancient Greece, whereas the concept of national security was formally adopted only after World War II. Ramesh Thakur points out that ‘We tend to assume that the phrase “national security” has been around forever. In fact, it was only in 1945 that Secretary of Defense James Forrestal invoked the concept as a guiding principle of US foreign policy’. Self-protection against endemic violence has always been part of human history.

Second, although it was eclipsed by the concept of collective defense as the international system began to evolve from the medieval to Westphalian eras, the ancient idea of human survival regained strength over time. The individual fear of death gave rise to the Hobbesian and Lockean concepts of a social contract requiring state (illiberal or liberal) protection of individuals by way of keeping anarchy at bay. MacFarlane and Khong note: ‘What we now consider to be human security concerns grew significantly stronger in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, despite the primacy of the sovereignty state.’ European norms, associated with human security, became universalized then. In their words, ‘By the end of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, we see an unmistakable move toward the universalization of such norms [as those on the conduct of war, the treatment of minorities, and individual rights]’.

Third, the concept of collective defense/national security has been increasingly challenged, especially since the end of the Cold War. Although some leading realists see continuity in international politics, others believe that national security is no longer the most pressing problem in the affairs of states. Stephen van Evera, for instance, observes that ‘the number of interstate wars has remained relatively
low’, and further contends that ‘States are seldom as insecure as they think they are …’. The rarity of real insecurity is suggested by the low death rate of modern great powers. In ancient times great powers often disappeared, but in modern times (since 1789) no great powers have permanently lost sovereignty. Personal insecurity remains, though; states – big and small – have become more secure than ever, but human beings have not. Other political realists have now taken note of security problems within states. Some advocate peace through partition, others reject the strategy of peacekeeping neutrality, and still others support rearmament of ethnic groups, or even argue that ‘nation building’ in failed states ‘is not such a bad idea after all’. Earlier, classical realists regarded the need to ensure personal security as a key condition for, or component of, international security. One may revisit Hans Morgenthau, who spoke of ‘individual frustrations’ and ‘anxieties’ and saw the great dangers of ‘personal insecurity’ within unstable societies. He hypothesized that ‘The greater the stability of society and the sense of security of its members, the smaller are the chances for collective emotions to seek an outlet in aggressive nationalism’. When induced by social instability and disintegration, personal and mass insecurity can lead to ‘emotional outbursts’ and to aggressive foreign policies or wars.

Humans will not soon become as secure as states. The number of civil wars rose after World War II and then declined after the end of the Cold War, but human beings remain insecure. According to The Human Security Report, ‘The risk of new wars breaking out – or old ones resuming – is very real in the absence of a sustained and strengthened commitment to conflict prevention and post-conflict peacebuilding’. The Report warns that ‘The post-Cold War decline in conflict numbers was not inevitable – and it is certain not irreversible’. Michael Barnett and his associates underline this reality: ‘Nearly 50 percent of all countries receiving assistance slide back into conflict within five years, and 72 percent of peacebuilding operations leave in place authoritarian regimes’. If more states do not become more stable or liberal and democratic, some realists and Kantian internationalists can say with certainty that human insecurity will remain. To Hans Morgenthau, totalitarian regimes are capable of projecting individual frustrations and fears, not identified with nations, onto the international scene.

Last, but not least, even the concept of collective security has also been challenged. The UN system has become less of a ‘collective security’ and more of a ‘human security’ system. According to Joseph Nye, collective security ‘was a miserable failure in the 1930s, was put on ice during the Cold War, and then, like Lazarus, rose from the dead in the Persian Gulf in 1990. But it was only a minor miracle’. If there is a greater miracle that can now be observed, it is that the ancient idea of human survival has made a comeback and seeks to overshadow modern ideas. What the UN has done since the end of the Cold War falls more comfortably within the realm of human security.

Overall, there has been general consensus among both scholars and policymakers that human security as a normative concept takes the individual as the referent object of security. Because it differs from collective defense and collective security, human security also rests on the assumption that states are not the only
actors in global politics. International and non-state actors are just as important, if not more so: they include intergovernmental organizations, epistemic communities, civil society groups (including non-governmental organizations), and market forces. The concept of human security also differs from that of neoliberal institutionalism, which tends to define international cooperation as collaboration for mutual advantage. Actors in human security are supposed to act in the interest of human beings everywhere, including ‘strangers’ in every corner of the world. This shared sense of neo-idealism relies on a degree of altruism based on a set of common values embedded in the logic of ‘other-help’.

Still, there are at least three challenges to the study of human security. Critics find the concept itself problematic in analytical and policy terms. First is the question of where we should place human security in security studies. A powerful critic of human security, Roland Paris (who developed a two-by-two ‘matrix of security studies’) argues that human security should be one of four subfields in security studies. In his view, human security should be placed in cell 4 (the bottom right-hand corner) because of its exclusive focus on non-military threats to groups and individuals. Second, even proponents of human security have quarreled among themselves over what constitutes human security. There are two competing approaches to this type of security, as noted throughout this volume: the so-called broad and narrow approaches.

In my view, the third challenge to human security lies in whether actors involved in human security activities can ever hope to achieve collaborative action. Much of the literature widely acknowledges the difficulties associated with the limits of collaboration among numerous actors actively involved in efforts to promote human security. Global efforts to promote this type of security by various actors have not yet succeeded as they should. To my knowledge, even advocates of human security very often fail to collaborate with each other. This poses an empirical challenge to the concept.

These challenges remain serious, but can be somewhat minimized. On the first and perhaps easiest challenge, regarding where human security should be placed in contemporary security studies, I prefer to regard it as inclusive of national security (see Chapter 1). Paris’s taxonomical effort overlooks the fact that threats to human security can also be of a military nature. His exclusion of human security from cells 1, 2 and 3 overlooks the historical reality that military threats to the national security of sovereign states (cell 1, top left-hand corner) also pose a military threat to humans identified with their nations. States can still provide security for their peoples at the national level: they defend their national sovereignty and territorial integrity because they regard these principles as the best available national means to protect the institutions, lives and values of their citizens. Proponents of human security do not ignore the need for defending national security, but seek to broaden it. In many countries, military forces also do not always defend their states as they should, but instead engage in violence against their own peoples.

On the second challenge for human security studies, this volume seeks to find a concept that is neither too broad nor too narrow. If human security is to stay analytically useful as a concept that can be operationalized and relevant in policy
Human Security in East Asia

terms, we need to prioritize policy commitment, motivate policy action, and assess policy outcomes. We must thus capture some eclectic middle ground between the broad and narrow approaches: the broad approach has become too elastic; the narrow one remains too restrictive.

Regarding the third challenge to human security, the existing literature pays scant attention to the problem of collaborative action among various actors, yet this is an old problem afflicting globalism that seems to grow bigger rather than diminish. Realists do not deny that international collaboration is possible, but regard such behavior in the context of fear shared by a group of state actors working together in the form of collective defense. Such collaboration among states ends as soon as their common fears disappear. Rational-choice institutionalists have sought to solve collective action problems by making an appeal for cooperation among self-interested egoistic actors on the premise that cooperation helps maximize their gains. Such cooperation ends when their institutional creatures no longer serve their self-interest. Human security defies the logics of self-help and mutual help, but rests on the logic of other-help.

The question raised in this volume is whether actors in the West and East can collaborate to ensure better human security. East Asia has witnessed severe human security problems. Cambodia, East Timor and North Korea provide good examples. East Timor illustrates the point that the Indonesian invasion of this state in 1975 posed a direct military threat not only to its territorial integrity, but also to its population. The atrocities committed under the Khmer Rouge regime, and under the Suharto regime in East Timor and Indonesia, also constituted a form of direct violent action against humans: they involved the actual use of force by armed forces (including militia) to destroy individuals. Cambodia and East Timor demonstrate political violence: the Pol Pot leadership and the Indonesian occupiers, respectively, caused Cambodians and Timorese to fear the threat of violence. These peoples lived in great fear when they lost the right to determine their political futures, and still experience extreme poverty and criminal violence.

We focus our attention on East Asia also because it is a complex region that has emerged as a major center in world politics. Russia was part of a former superpower. Some regarded Japan in the 1970s to be the world’s economic superpower. Most observers agree that China is on the rise as a world power, although we still do not know if it will ever become a regional hegemon pushing the USA out of East Asia, eventually emerging as a global hegemon. Nevertheless, Russia, Japan and China are still major powers in East Asia. If we want to promote human security in this region and around the world, it is important that major regional powers such as China, Japan and Russia be counted as part of this collective endeavor. Without their collaboration, human security is likely to have its limits. During the Cold War, East and West remained divided ideologically (capitalism versus communism), but the immediate end of the Cold War has witnessed the rise of a cultural division (universalism versus relativism). The post-Cold War ‘East-Asian challenge’ to ‘Western human rights’ comes readily to mind. The concept of human security – increasingly advocated in East Asia – reveals the region’s continued resistance to the Western approach. According to Amitav Acharya, ‘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. East Asia ‘remains a tightly sovereignty-oriented region’. East Asian nations tend to promote freedom from want, rather than the freedom from fear associated with the ideas of human rights and humanitarian intervention, as the narrow approach emphasizes.

Japan, China and Russia have challenged the Western liberal concept of human security in different ways. Japan, the champion of human security in East Asia, has not collaborated with Canada, the champion of human security in the West. Tokyo insists on the need for sustainable human development. Its human security agenda – driven by ‘developmentalism’ – reveals its ‘discomfort with the seemingly interventionist thrust of the evolving discourse on human security’ and its ‘unhappiness … exacerbated by the emerging consensus of the International Commission and State Sovereignty on “the responsibility to protect”’ as promoted by Canada and others in the West. China is reported to have hindered the peace process in Sudan. When the military government in Myanmar conducted a series of violent crackdowns on protesters in September 2007, many governments (especially those in the West) urged the UN Security Council to take stern action against the junta’s leadership, but both China and Russia objected.

Is there any hope for effective collaboration in the field of human security among actors in the West and East, especially those in East Asia? Liberal scholars put their faith in democratization. Collaboration improves when states in East Asia become democratic. Constructivists tell us that norms are not fixed. States in East Asia have defended national security and non-intervention, but these norms have their European roots in the 1648 Westphalian Peace Treaty. The Westphalian principle of state sovereignty and the norms of equality and non-intervention were first accepted by European states after a series of wars among them, but were not immediately and voluntarily adopted in East Asia. Modern European norms have never been part of China’s cultural framework; hierarchy and domination have been part of a Confucian system that had ‘no role for international cooperation or law’. These cultural norms (manifest in its claim to higher culture and universal kingship) were undermined by the Qing dynasty’s internal weakness, the rise of Japan as a great power, and the Western powers’ rejection of Chinese cultural superiority. Japan traditionally shared the same principles and norms, but it was ‘[c]olonial rule and the struggle against it’ that ‘contributed to the rise of the norms of nation, nation-state, and sovereignty in Asia’. It was also the experiences of Western colonial domination and exploitation and the Asian struggle for independence that helped ‘strengthen their [the Asian people’s] attachment to the principles of sovereignty, territorial integrity, and non-interference in domestic affairs’. For some, historical shocks are a major source of normative change: new norms will not become acceptable to states in a particular region unless they experience immense destruction or until more states disintegrate into anarchy, chaos and violence, as some in Africa have experienced. Cultures of antimilitarism can take root in events and ideas or through collective memories. Still others emphasize the need for socialization.
Some contend that actors in the West no longer seriously object to the East Asian understanding of human security, while those in East Asia appear to be softening in their objection to the Western approach. This volume reveals that a growing number of states in this region are at least learning to tolerate ideas of human security when this does not seriously affect their regime or personal security. For instance, three methods for the promotion of human security – humanitarian intervention, intrastate peacekeeping and international criminal justice – are no longer regarded as strict taboos in East Asia.

Overall, whether proponents of human security in the East and West will reach normative consensus on human security and act upon it collaboratively and effectively, or whether actors in East Asia will take more effective collaborative action for human security, remains uncertain. The literature offers a long list of complex challenges to collaborative action in the region, including political isolation from formal international institutions (Taiwan), national sovereignty, past humiliations, fear of potential intervention into states’ domestic affairs, non-democratic ideologies, and so on.

I have thus mounted an effort to draw insights from theoretical eclecticism, by inviting some scholars to reflect on the possibility of effective collaboration among actors working on human security. By no mean do I suggest that the concept of national security found in the age-old wisdom of realism has now been relegated to the dustbin of history, but I feel the need to suggest that we ‘soften’ it by learning to listen to critical voices, without accepting anything at face value or questioning anything that puzzles us.

We must listen to each other more often and more closely and learn from the strengths and weaknesses of each other’s thinking, if we hope to enhance collaborative action for human security. How scholars can reconcile national and human security remains a challenge. William Tow and Russel Trood suggest that ‘the best that may be accomplished is to sharpen and refine both agendas in ways that they complement each other more effectively’. They make the case that ‘both the traditionalists and human security proponents must be prepared to concede that they need each other’s support and expertise if their common objective of a better and more stable world is to be realized and if their ‘mutual intellectual disdain’ is to be effectively overcome.

In my view, scholars from different theoretical traditions may be unable to ‘concede that they need each other’s support and expertise’, but they need to at least moderate their expectations regarding the conceptual boundaries of human security. National security can still be enhanced without arming states to the teeth so that more resources can be allocated for non-military purposes. At the same time, human security should not simply be about undermining the concept of national security, promoting egalitarian development, and eliminating all existing structural inequalities.

I define human security within what I call the MPCE framework (military, political, criminal and economic): human freedom from the fear of direct and indirect physical harm resulting from military, political, criminal and economic violence (not only the realist fear of foreign aggression against states, military
defeat, political submission or subjugation to foreign forces, and the loss of political and economic independence in the form of either colonialism or imperialism). My hope is that the concept, which remains highly contested, can be better accepted and applied if we succeed in building a concept that is neither too elastic nor too restrictive, combining theoretical insights into one that is neither too parochial nor too eclectic.

This volume contains several theoretical perspectives on human security drawn from different intellectual traditions, mainly realism, liberalism, constructivism and critical theory (including neo-Marxism and postmodernism). The work is more of a dialogue among scholars than the imposition of one theoretical perspective on the rest. Theoretical eclecticism, therefore, does not mean that we engage in an intellectual imperialism, nor does it mean that we embrace mindless empiricism or naive methodological pluralism.

Scholars are free to follow in the footsteps of their theoretical traditions, but must be open-minded enough to examine the results that competing perspectives have produced. From an ontological and epistemological viewpoint, we may not be able to fuse the different positions we take as we like, but we can draw insights from each other in a mutually beneficial way. Realism proves unable to offer us a helpful prescription for the promotion of human security at the global level, but it can offer us some insight into power, diplomacy and the perils of anarchy. Liberalism has much to say about political violence against groups and individuals under dictatorial regimes. Constructivism offers useful insights on the crucial role of cultural norms and social identity in democratic statebuilding. Critical theory that includes postmodernism and neo-Marxism may be too critical of realism and liberalism, and not prone to giving policymakers a clear direction, but it can be usefully critical and creative in terms of telling us more about the nature of socioeconomic violence, and can help shed further light on the need to reduce it. Realists and liberals may not agree with their critical theorist colleagues, who see evil in the Leviathan or capitalist state, but they can learn from the latter how socioeconomic injustices and inequalities give rise to violence that threatens state and human security. In a nutshell, theoretical eclecticism requires that we become more interactive or communicative than isolative, more pragmatic than ideological, and thus generally more eclectic than parochial.  

A word of caution is necessary, though; just as we must not make the concept of human security too elastic and amorphous, so also we must not carelessly combine competing insights from different theoretical perspectives, rendering our arguments unintelligible. There are limits to eclecticism or pluralism. If possible, clear theoretical statements should be made to allow us to test our theoretical insights against empirical evidence or to keep critically evaluating our normative commitment to human security.

This volume adds expansiveness to a growing body of scholarly work on human security in East Asia that tends to focus on a few actors and non-military security issues, and does not give serious consideration to democratic and human rights issues (as pointed out in this volume, especially Chapter 5, and by other scholars). One of the staunchest defenders of non-liberal Asian values, Kishore Mahbubani,
Human Security in East Asia

considers democracy ‘evil’.\(^39\) Perhaps the best known book on human security is *Asia’s Emerging Regional Order: Reconciling Traditional and Human Security*, published in 2000.\(^40\) It is excellent in terms of its comprehensive inclusion of non-traditional security issues and its focus on one regional institution (the ASEAN Regional Forum) and one country case (Indonesia).

I felt the need to produce an additional volume that would remain theoretically eclectic, but more inclusive in terms of both the methods used for human security promotion and the various actors involved. This volume includes Asian and Western perspectives on human security, highlighting the theoretical debates and fleshing out the nuances that are embedded in the so-called East–West divide. It also focuses on Cambodia and Timor-Leste, where human insecurity remains intense, and on actors such as states and regional institutional actors (such as ASEAN, ASEAN + 3 and Asia–Pacifi c Economic Cooperation) and civil society. Moreover, this volume covers specifi c methods for promotion of human security: military peace operations, international criminal justice, democracy-building and economic development. This volume thus distinguishes itself from much of the existing literature by placing more emphasis on the need to investigate the collaborative action problems in human security, examining the role of more and different actors in East Asia, and paying more attention to the countries that have experienced serious human security problems in Southeast Asia.

The volume is divided into two major parts. Part I covers four chapters. Chapter 1 elaborates on the MPCE conceptual framework, outlining the four types of human insecurity, and contends that globalism (as the theoretical challenger to political realism) and liberal internationalism face some obstacles in terms of different actors’ willingness and abilities to take collaborative action for human security. Chapter 2 shows that the liberal norms of human security rooted in Western tradition have never been fi xed, but have changed over time. The Western roots of human security continue to evolve, from liberalism to something inspired by postmodernism. Influenced by critical theory advocating the politics of emancipation, the chapter shows the limits of liberalism and seeks to advance an argument that goes beyond the need for protection of the individual to include the urgent task of empowering the individual. Chapter 3 discusses the competing approaches to human security, especially between states in Northeast Asia and those in Europe. The gap between the two camps remains wide, but it has narrowed. The time for debate over the concept is over; what matters more is how to operationalize human security. Chapter 4 shares the constructivist optimism that Southeast Asian actors have moved in the policy direction of intervention, but contends that they tend to accept a type of international intervention defi ned in more comprehensive terms.

Part II contains an additional four chapters dealing with human security issues in East Asia. Chapter 5 takes note of the region’s resistance to the Western idea of human security, especially in the context of ‘responsibility to protect’. The author fi nds reason for optimism that the level of regional resistance has weakened. In fact, thinking on human security, especially in the context of military intervention, is more complex than has been realized. Even China, still leading in the defense of state sovereignty, has in recent years proved less resistant to the
need for intervention in war-torn societies. Chapter 6 examines the case of East Timor, revealing the limits of collaborative action on the humanitarian crisis on this territory. States and other actors in the region have shown a greater degree of willingness to collaborate on military intervention. However, various regional and domestic factors still inhibit regional states and actors from taking the lead in human security efforts. Chapter 7 assesses the normative and empirical merits and policy utility of international criminal justice as it applies to East Asia, and whether actors in the region have increasingly conformed to this UN-driven and Western-based method for the promotion of human security. Chapter 8 attempts to reconcile the structural approach of Marxism with postmodernism’s concern for agency. The author questions the need for collaborative action in the context of neoliberalization, as the dominating interests of capital have been promoted at the expense of human security.

The conclusion demonstrates some of the progress in and the limits of collaborative action for human security, and offers concrete directions for policy action to promote more effective collaboration. Some perspectives are prescriptively more explicit than others. When it comes to humanitarian intervention and peacekeeping, UN leadership, led by big powers in the Security Council, remains essential to ending military violence. Regional states can do their part by strengthening their regional institutions. But the collective exercise of coercive military power alone, even when possible, may prove counterproductive and costly. International peacekeeping looks far more promising. The best way to promote human security through criminal justice is to build and sustain institutions in a forward-looking fashion by reforming judiciaries and other legal bodies capable of deterring political and criminal activities that threaten human security. Moreover, if human security is to be fully enhanced and sustained, economic development must become more equitable or more favorable to non-elite individuals. Capitalism may hinder this prospect, but some East Asian capitalist policies, such as those adopted by Japan, have helped promote more equitable development.41
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