Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 BACKGROUND

The concept of human security stands at the intersection of the evolving trajectories of two important strands of foreign policy—economic development and military security.¹ Since the publication of *Human Development Report 1994*² by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the concept has been attracting increasing attention on the part of scholars as well as practitioners in development, security and human rights issues. While it is regarded as a reflection of the new security environment of the post-Cold War era, the debate on the utility or relevance of human security is still continuing.³ Some scholars are sceptical about the validity and/or utility of the concept.⁴ Some argue that it is too vague to be examined academically or say that it should not blur the importance of the traditional security agenda.⁵ Others, however, brushing aside such scepticism, are moving ahead in articulating theoretical conceptions of and practitioners’ guide to human security.⁶

---


In the process, some are trying to reconcile traditional and human security.\(^7\)

In the ongoing debate, the security of the individual and people, as against the security of the state, has emerged as the prime concern of all analysts and practitioners dealing with human security. In this regard, the issues involved are as diverse as intra-state conflict, ethno-religious violence, landmine, terrorism, democracy, human rights, gender, crime, consequences of underdevelopment, poverty, hunger, deprivation, inequality, diseases and health hazards, human development, economic security, market, water, energy, migration, environmental degradation and so on. The whole gamut of security needs of the individual and people is encapsulated in two fundamental concerns: ‘freedom from want’ and ‘freedom from fear’. The first one emphasises on remedies to all sorts of deprivation-socio-economic, politico-cultural, health, environmental and so on, while the second one emphasises on the safety from violence, violent conflicts and their consequences. While both concerns are important, analysts continue to disagree on whether preference should be given to ‘freedom from want’ or ‘freedom from fear’. Depending on the answer, human security analysts are divided into two camps.\(^8\) A third approach, however, makes attempts to synthesise the two views.\(^9\)

---

\(^7\) See for example, William T Tow, Ramesh Chandra Thakur and In-Taek Hyun (eds.), *Asia’s emerging regional order reconciling traditional and human security*, (Tokyo: United Nations University Press, 2000).

\(^8\) See, Hideaki Shinoda, op.cit.

Thus, by now, a process of intense debate regarding human security and pertinent issues among disparate schools of thoughts has been initiated. In the process, a sizable body of literature on human security has been created. However, the articulation of a succinct theoretical conception on the subject is far from being complete and discussions on some of the pertinent issues have just begun. In the ongoing discourse on human security, one of the most pertinent and, perhaps, most complex issues is the quantification of human security, though the issue has remained on the agenda right from the first attempt at articulation of human security conducted by the UNDP in its Human Development Report 1994. While asserting the need for a set of indicators for measuring possible or eminent threats to human security and their magnitude, the Report also concedes that the precise quantification of human security may not be possible. Nonetheless, the Report strongly advocates quantifying human security in order to identify potential crisis countries as “an essential part of preventive diplomacy and an active peace policy”. Citing concrete cases, the Report further argues that “preventive action can also avoid larger costs for the world community at a later stage.”

Thus, the concept of human security, even in its initial period of articulation, has clearly recognised the need for a kind of an index that would facilitate the understanding of eminent threats to human security and their magnitude, and thus, provide early warning signals so as to mobilise preventive action with a view to thwarting possible disaster or unacceptable costs at a later stage.

1.2 THE LARGER CONTEXT OF HUMAN SECURITY

While the concept of human security came into parlance in development lexicon with the UNDP publication of Human Development Report 1994, the concept was no longer confined to academic and, for that matter, advocacy domains. It has made successful inroads into the political and foreign policy domains as a policy tool. The concept has been employed directly as a foreign policy tool by national governments. It has been the rallying point of a number of like-minded

11 Ibid.
12 Ibid.
countries across Asia, Africa and Europe. Human security related issues also have become subject matter of global conventions.

It is interesting that the concept found its expression in one of the UN forums, e.g., the UNDP in 1994, and by the beginning of the new century, it has come to the centre stage of the UN through the institution of the Human Security Commission in January 2001 with the joint chairpersonship of Sadako Ogata, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, and Professor Amartya Sen, Nobel Laureate in Economics. The Commission was set up through the initiative of the Government of Japan and in response to the UN Secretary General's call at the Millennium Summit for a world 'free from want' and 'free from fear'. During its two-year tenure, the Commission held five official meetings, commissioned two major research projects focusing on conflict and development, and held various outreach activities to listen to the concerns of people in direct situations of insecurity. The Commission submitted its final report Human Security Now in May 2003. Since then, an Advisory Board on Human Security has been established, among others, to carry forward the recommendations of the Commissions. Follow-up activities mainly consisted of dissemination lectures by co-chairs and members. However, the report also spawned a lot of related activities within the UN system.

For example, the 60th Session of General Assembly adopted a major document, titled 2005 World Summit Outcome to deal with integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in economic, social and related fields. Para 143 of this document states:

We stress the right of people to live in freedom and dignity, free from poverty and despair. We recognise that all individuals, in particular vulnerable people, are entitled to freedom from fear and freedom from want, with an equal opportunity to enjoy all their rights and fully develop their human potential. To this end, we commit ourselves to discussing and defining the notion of human security in the General Assembly. [emphasis added] 14

Several important action-oriented projects on related fields have been initiated in the UN forum. Mention may be made of advocacy for responsibility to protect (R2P), promoting and supporting newly


established Human Rights Council (HRC) and Peace-Building Commission (PBC).

Human security has rapidly moved to the centre-stage of foreign policy of a number of important global players. For example, the G8 Foreign Ministers declared in June 1999 that these countries were "determined to fight the underlying causes of multiple threats to human security ..."15 Mention may be made of middle power countries like Canada, Norway and Japan, which have incorporated the concept of human security in their official foreign policies. A cardinal aspect of Canadian foreign policy has been the strengthening of legal norms and building capacity to enforce international conventions and institutions like the Ottawa Convention on Anti-personnel Landmines and the Rome Treaty leading to the creation of the International Criminal Court. Japan has articulated a foreign policy with human security playing a central role.16 Austria, Canada, Chile, Ireland, Jordan, Mali, the Netherlands, Slovenia, Switzerland, Thailand, Norway and South Africa have forged what they call Human Security Network (HSN). It is designed to evolve as a credible and effective force for providing political impetus to the cause of human security.17 The political support and visibility of human security-based foreign policy is also evident from the UN Security Council deciding, for the first time, to take on such a vital health issue as AIDS in Africa.

1.3 RATIONALE FOR CONSTRUCTING A HUMAN SECURITY INDEX

The practical application of the concept of human security, in different forms, has already covered greater length than conceptual and theoretical discourses. A pertinent question arises in this context: why to create a human security index for South Asia? In the process of justifying the case for the creation of a human security index, considerable attention has been paid by academia as well as practitioners in the field to questions like, why do we need a human security index and what use do we have for such an index? In this regard, significant emphasis has been given to the type of problems one

15 Gary King and Christopher Murray, op. cit., p.585.
would encounter in the absence of such an index. Secondly, it is also been posed whether and how far a human security index would facilitate our quest for acquiring scientific knowledge in related fields. Thirdly, will such an index be a tool in formulating/implementing appropriate policy towards the prevailing challenges in the field of human security? As the review of the relevant literature suggests, the proposed human security index could have a wide range of usage. Let us examine, at least, some of the uses such an index could have.

First of all, a human security index is expected to generate new social scientific knowledge on the subject\textsuperscript{18} that is an essential prerequisite for dealing with the problem both from scholarly as well as practitioner’s perspectives. A human security index would help identify and locate human insecurities\textsuperscript{19} and contribute to our understanding of the problem,\textsuperscript{20} particularly, the risk assessment,\textsuperscript{21} thereby, focusing attention on problem areas.\textsuperscript{22} It will help increase our ability to identify and locate precisely threats and vulnerabilities.\textsuperscript{23} Studying the relationships between multiple insecurities based on an index could reveal chains of causality and cumulative impacts not currently recognised, articulated or quantified. This would further facilitate comparative analyses of multiple insecurities.\textsuperscript{24} All these would, thus, provide an early warning system regarding imminent danger.\textsuperscript{25}


\textsuperscript{21} Sara Edson, ibid.

\textsuperscript{22} Kanti Bajpai, op.cit.


\textsuperscript{24} Taylor Owen, "Body Count: Rationale and Methodologies for Measuring Human Security," op.cit.

In the process of providing an early warning system, the proposed human security index would also provide information regarding the nature and magnitude of the threats posed to individual and groups. This, in turn, would help in devising appropriate means and ways to deal with the ensuing danger. Exploration of policy options would also lead to the exploration of the capabilities required to implement those policies. Therefore, there is powerful argument that a human security index would contribute to or, at least, facilitate, the creation of appropriate capabilities to prevent events and crises. Thus, a human security index would ultimately contribute not only to the process of policymaking but also to capacity building for the implementation of policy options.

Furthermore, an index would allow constant reviewing and redefining national and international policy priorities in the field of human security. It could be relied upon in developing the operational tools for policy formulation and implementation. One of the functions of such indices is to set standards for comparative analysis. A Human Security Index could perform this comparative function at national, regional and international levels.

In positivist social sciences—that have the goal of determining causal and correlative relationship—measurement is seen as an essential exercise. It may be pointed out that the world has become accustomed to the use of measures and composite indices since the UN first introduced the Human Development Index (HDI) in 1993. Tracking progress in key aggregate social and economic areas, the composite index has been used to rank countries and follow trends in human development since the HDI was introduced. In 1997, the UN introduced the Human Poverty Index (HPI) in order to measure deprivations. Even non-government organisations have been developing highly authoritative composite indices. Reference could be made to Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index.

27 Kanti Bajpai, op.cit.
(CPI) introduced in 1995, Freedom House’s Democracy Index and Mahbub ul Haq Centre’s Humane Governance Index (HGI) introduced in 1997. From this perspective, a human security index, in addition to the practical usages discussed above, would also promote public understanding, engagement, and support of human security and uphold its underlying imperatives.31

Thus, the growing interest among academic and policymaking circles around the world in human security, among others, have already led to the development of a human security index similar to the well-respected indices mentioned above as an important item in the agenda of international community.

1.4 OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY: PARALLELISM OR VALUE ADDITION?

In the light of the academic and practical challenges facing the construction of a human security index coupled with the wide range of prospective actors, enormity of effort and time that is required to meet these challenges, any individual researcher would have to be quite cautious in terms of making commitment regarding the construction of a human security index. While varying degrees of efforts have been made in exploring issues pertaining to the construction of a human security index, these still remain far short of creating such an index. In the circumstances, the overarching challenge for the individual researcher is how to make value addition while averting a sheer parallelism to/or even duplication of the existing body of knowledge on the subject.

Keeping this in mind, the work sets out to deal with the challenging task of creating a human security index with a focus on the exploration of the relevant issues with a view to contributing to the ongoing discourse on the human security index.

1.5 STRUCTURE OF THE STUDY
This study is divided into six parts, including this introductory chapter. Chapter 2 offers a conceptual discussion on human security. Chapter 3 is an attempt at profiling human security in South Asia based on recent studies on human security, including the BIISS-Ford collaborative research project on human security, of which, the present work is a

31 Ibid.; Sara Edson, op.cit.
piece. Chapter 4 is devoted to the evaluation of the progress in constructing a human security index which can allow us to review the existing literature on the subject. Chapter 5 will constitute the core of the present exercise in terms of outlining the approach, variables and the methodological issues of constructing a human security index. Chapter 6 assesses the expected outputs and application of the proposed human security index.