A Framework for Human Security Index in South Asia

We propose a framework that will lead to the creation of two sets of reports for South Asia—an Annual Human Security Report and Human Security Index. The question may be raised as to why we need two such sets. The answer is that the efforts must be considered to be complementary. The annual report will give a systematic but descriptive picture of different categories and indicators of human security in the context of South Asia while the human security index will present a synthesised and customised version of the data base. The advantage of preparing two set is that the data base in the annual human security report could be used for multiple purposes. For this purpose, we will use a single set of categories and indicators of insecurity. In what follows, the framework of the annual human security report and the methodology of constructing human security index for South Asia are outlined.

5.1 ANNUAL REPORT ON HUMAN SECURITY IN SOUTH ASIA

Table 5.1 gives a schema of the categories and indicators of human insecurity viewed in a broader perspective to include the both “want” and “fear” dimensions. Based on the profile of insecurity in South Asia, we propose that seven categories of insecurities be considered: (i) Systemic Insecurity from Politics; (ii) Systemic Insecurity from Governance—Administration, Law Enforcement and Judiciary; (iii) Structural Insecurity of Gender; (iv) Structural Insecurity of Minorities; (v) Structural Insecurity resulting in poor access to natural resources; (vi) Environmental and Health Insecurity; (vii) Livelihood Insecurity; and (viii) Personal Insecurity. For each of the categories of insecurity, the drivers and impact areas or indicators of insecurity have been identified. It is assumed that the indicators or the impact areas...
Table 5.1 Categories, Drivers and Indicators of Human Insecurity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SI</th>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Drivers of Insecurity</th>
<th>Impact Areas/Indicators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Systemic Insecurity from Politics</td>
<td>1.1 Patron-client Relations</td>
<td>1.1.1-1.3.1 Extortion/Rent seeking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1.2 Confrontational Politics</td>
<td>1.2.1 Deaths and injuries in political conflicts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1.3 Criminalisation of Politics</td>
<td>1.2.2 Arbitrary arrests through influence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Systemic Insecurity from Governance</td>
<td>2.1 Corruption in Administration, Law Enforcement &amp; Judiciary</td>
<td>2.1.1 Harassment/Delay</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2.2 Politicisation of Administration, Law Enforcement &amp; Judiciary</td>
<td>2.1.2 Bribery/Corruption</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2.3 Lack of Good Governance in Administration, Law Enforcement and Judiciary</td>
<td>2.1.3 Arbitrary arrests</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Structural Insecurity - Gender Discrimination and Violence</td>
<td>3.1 Culture/Social Values</td>
<td>3.1.1 Domestic violence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3.2 Societal/Family Greed/Moral Values</td>
<td>3.2.1-3.3.1 Dowry-related violence</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3.3 Discriminatory/Inadequate Law and Enforcement</td>
<td>3.2.2 Rape</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3.4 Limited Economic Opportunities</td>
<td>3.2.3 Acid violence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Structural Insecurity - Ethnic and Religious Groups</td>
<td>4.1 Majoritarian Psyche Balance of Power</td>
<td>4.1.1-4.3.1 Inter-communal violence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4.2 Social and Political Absence of or Weak Rule of Law</td>
<td>-Land grabbing</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4.4 Opportunities Created by Politics and Politicisation</td>
<td>-Attacks on place of worship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Structural Insecurity - Access to Resources</td>
<td>5.1 Landlessness</td>
<td>5.1.1 Ownership/Occupancy Conflicts</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5.2 Politicisation of Lease/Allotment</td>
<td>5.2.1 Grabbing/Forcible Occupation/Extraction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5.3 Opportunities for Political Accumulation</td>
<td>5.3.1 Rent seeking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Environmental &amp; Health Insecurity</td>
<td>6.1 Natural Disaster</td>
<td>6.1.1 Deaths and injuries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6.2 Climate Change</td>
<td>6.1.2 Displacement/Loss of homestead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6.3 Health-Related Issues</td>
<td>6.2.1 Loss of livelihood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Livelihood Security</td>
<td>7.1 Access to Food, Employment, Natural Resources</td>
<td>7.1.1 Food security</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>7.2 Institutional-Market Forces System</td>
<td>7.1.2 Unemployment</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>7.3 Institutional-Distribution System</td>
<td>7.1.3 Customary access to natural resource bases</td>
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<td>7.1.4 Over-exploitation of natural resource bases</td>
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(contd.)
are the results of the drivers operating on specific situations. That is to say:

Potential or Existing Situation of Insecurity x Drivers = Indicators

5.1.1 Structure of the Annual Report

We propose that the Annual Report contains two levels of data base and analysis: regional and national. Eight country reports on Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka—will constitute the building blocks. However, further disaggregated in-country picture or case studies may provide inputs to the country reports. The regional level aggregative analysis will constitute the first part followed by individual country reports.

It is partly adapted from Bangladesh Human Security Assessment 2007, a field based report done by Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BIISS), Dhaka, for Department for International Development (DFID), Bangladesh. The present authors were Team Leader and Core Researcher respectively of the study.

5.1.2 Thematic Variables in the Annual Report

The thematic delineation of the report was based on an extensive review of the country reports on human security in South Asia under the present “Human Security in South Asia” Series.1 However, in case studies, in-country regional study or in individual country study, the order of the categories mentioned in Table 5.1 will vary depending on the severity of certain issues or lack of it thereof. Indeed, new

1 The present authors' involvement in an empirical study titled Bangladesh Human Security Assessment 2007 (BHSA 2007) with assistance from the Department for International Development (DFID), United Kingdom in Bangladesh was also highly instructive.
categories may come up in any of the segments before the regional report is drawn up. Similarly, one or a couple of issues may not even be relevant to a particular country. If the new entries could be accommodated within broad existing categories like, systemic, structural or endemic ones, they could retain the validity of the structure suggested here. However, if the new entries fail to be accommodated within the structure suggested in Table 5.1, the structure itself could be restructured. There is nothing sacrosanct about it. Such a structure could only be finalised through extensive and intensive discussions and debate at the regional level with the participation of academics, the media, government officials, business circles, representatives from civil society and NGOs as well as all other concerned professionals and practitioners. Nevertheless, the structure would remain under constant modification and improvement in the light of the changing context of concrete challenges and the development of new concepts, techniques and technology to face such challenges.

Keeping all these issues in mind, an attempt is made below to present a short account of the thematic variables outlined above in Table 5.1. This is a general descriptive account proposed in the context of South Asia and it aims at invigorating the exploration of relevant issues and context that may guide the preparation of a human security report on an annual basis within the framework of situation, drivers and indicators.

Systemic Insecurity from Politics

SITUATION: The politics of a country is possibly the key issue in human security or its opposite, insecurity. As may be seen in Table 5.1, politics is a cross-cutting variable impacting on most other categories. Whatever may be the political system of a country, the politics of the country shapes not only who gets what and why but also, who lives/survives and how. Ideally in an accountable, competitive political system, politics is expected to play a benign or helpful role in ensuring human security. When politics is played in a healthy competitive and democratic framework including a free media and rule of law, incidents of human insecurity come into view in the public domain and get redressed. But these are expectations common in an ideal type

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2 The descriptive benefited from Mustaq H. Khan, Bangladesh Human Security Assessment (2005), Department for International Development (DFID), United Kingdom in Bangladesh, 2007.
democracy and is possibly not to be found in South Asia, including in India.

DRIVERS: Politics in South Asia is largely shaped by patron-client relations, factional politics and confrontational politics. Some recent trends as drivers of political insecurity are criminalisation and commercialisation of politics. Even competitive mobilisation in politics in South Asia takes place within the dominant political culture of patron-clientelism and factional politics. Another recent feature, observed mainly in Bangladesh is the non-functioning of the parliament because of the boycott of the parliament by the Opposition. This situation keeps alive confrontational politics and generates authoritarian tendencies.

A second additional feature of politics in developing societies, including those in South Asia, is the swelling ranks of the middle class, more precisely, the intermediate class, thanks to economic liberalisation and circulation of educated youths through rapid upward and horizontal mobility. According to Khan, “The growing group of individuals with organisational abilities who are not able to find or create productive positions or achieve fiscal redistribution are the raw materials for patron-client faction building and political competition”.

INDICATORS: From the point of view of human security, the point that should be stressed is that the consequence of factional and confrontational politics eventually impacts on the poorer and weaker segments of the society, directly as well as indirectly. A large segment of the poor are dependent on rich and strong political patrons for survival and sustenance.

The indicators of human insecurities resulting from malfunctioning political systems in most South Asian countries could be death, injury or deprivation resulting from factional politics, abduction, killings, manipulation by the administration, leading to arbitrary arrests, corruption cases on political consideration, extortion or rent-seeking activities, attacks on journalists, and extreme and organised manifestation of violence such as bombing, shoot outs and other forms of terrorism.

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3 Ibid.
4 Ibid.
Systemic Insecurity from Governance

Situation: The significance of governance as a systemic variable in human security emanates primarily from its links with politics and secondly, from its own workings. Governance includes the role of civil bureaucracy, law-enforcing agencies and judiciary. Although much remains to be done in terms of the development of a political culture and political institutions in most of the post-colonial societies, the state in these societies happen to be over-developed, to use Hamza Alavi's thesis. What an over-developed state means here is that compared to other segments like political institutions and civil society, the bureaucracy in most of the post-colonial societies is more advanced. Usually this is a colonial legacy in outward and mental make-ups. The net effect is that administration, law enforcement and judiciary in the developing countries have an anti-people image—corrupt, inefficient, self-serving and repressive.

INDICATORS: The administrative wings of the government in post-colonial societies are usually corrupt. The malaise has become all-pervasive and rampant in recent times. Costs of services and access to justice have gone up and the sufferings and harassment of common people have multiplied. Access to most common and essential services—health, education, credits, and inputs—from public agencies have become problematic. Harassments of the common people at the hands of law-enforcement personnel are proverbially high. Arbitrary arrests and extra-judicial killings have increased in frequency. Extraordinary delays and costly legal proceedings make justice literally inaccessible to people. Corruption is rampant in the lower courts in South Asian countries. Examples of disinvestment of property including landlessness because of persistent litigation are numerous.

DRIVERS: Mechanisms to enforce accountability and transparency on the part of the administration are weak. Laws and rules of business are outdated and weak, and therefore, easy to flout. Good governance in all branches of government remains a far cry, although World Bank sponsored anti-corruption programmes are being increasingly implemented by government agencies. Innovations like government-non-government

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organisations (GO-NGO) and public-private partnership do not seem to have ameliorated development, deployment and delivery of public goods. Rather, anecdotal reports on massive corruption that eats up the lion share of the projected investment have become more frequent. In terms of human security, access to services, deprivation, suffering, harassment, and even safety and security of common people are at stake.

As far as drivers of insecurity on count of governance is concerned, a strategic role is played by 'pressures and incentives created by political accumulation strategies' or the politicisation of administration, law enforcement and judiciary. Large scale corruption usually takes place with the politics-bureaucracy nexus where bureaucracy plays the role of the junior partner. Besides, bureaucrats, judges and police officials often enjoy political protection and extract from people with impunity. In the process of give and take, local politicians use bureaucracy, police officials and judiciary to settle scores with political rivals through measures that include arbitrary arrests, custodial deaths and other harassments.

**Structural Insecurity: Gender Violence and Discrimination**

**SITUATION:** Culture, religion and social practices usually restrict space for women in South Asian societies. The girl child is perceived to be a source of bad omen, misery and liability. Even if unintentionally, the girl child is subject to discrimination and lower status in the family because she does not promise to be an income earner. Once married, she is subjected to all kinds of mental and physical repression because of dowry and inter-family mismatch. In public places, women are subjected to teasing, taunting and sexual harassment. In work places, discrimination and sexual harassment are also commonplace.

**DRIVERS:** It is said that social, cultural and religious values shape attitudes towards women. But if one search deep into the true values of any culture, religion or social norms, the rationale for discrimination will not be found. Actually, most discrimination is an outcome of illiteracy, superstition, patriarchy, male chauvinism, greed and moral degradation. Overall poverty and limited economic opportunities are also responsible. To a great extent, societal structures shape these prejudiced values and moral degradation.

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6 Mustaq H. Khan, op.cit.
INDICATORS: The indicators that may be used in assessing gender security could include domestic violence, dowry-related violence, rape, sexual harassment and eve teasing, acid violence, kidnapping/abduction, trafficking and discrimination in employment/wages.

Structural Insecurity of Minority Communities

SITUATION: South Asia consists of multicultural pluralist societies that consist of several ethnic, religious and linguistic groups. This pluralism should have been an asset and could have been perceived as social capital for the concerned countries. However, ethnic, religious and linguistic identities have turned out to be major sources of conflicts and reflected fissiparous tendencies because of competing interpretation of identity, competing claims to territories, and the scramble for dwindling natural resource bases.

Members of ethnic, religious and other minority communities face additional disadvantages and insecurities because of vulnerabilities arising out of minority status. South Asia happens to be a place where normally peaceful and coexistent community landscape can be punctuated by festering and protracted conflicts on ethnic, religious and sectarian grounds. It is often not clear if violence and other forms of insecurities suffered by minority communities are caused because of their minority status or on political and economic grounds of class, economic conflicts or rent seeking behaviour of influentials which cut across religious, ethnic or sectarian lines.

DRIVERS: Certainly, the added vulnerabilities of minority communities increase their insecurities. Adjacent majority communities or even powerful groups would like to grab land, property and other common property resources, disregarding counter-claims of minorities. Majoritarian psyche is compounded by imbalances in the social and political balance of power which usually swings against minority communities.

Absence of or weak rule of law is a contributing factor to the failure of law-enforcing agencies to protect the life and property of minority communities. And then of course, extension of factional politics in inter-community relations creates fractures, exacerbating the sense of insecurity of minorities.
INDICATORS: Insecurity resulting from the minority status of different communities are reflected in harassment, discrimination and manifestation of inter-communal violence such as land grabbing, attacks on place of worship, economic discrimination, political and social discrimination, arbitrary arrests and custodial deaths.

**Structural Insecurity Resulting in Lack of Access to Natural Resources**

**Situation:** The key point of interest here is access to natural resource base—land, water, forestry—which are either publicly owned or which have customary common access. While access to and redistribution of these resources should have a pro-poor bias, and the poor are supposed to have customary access to these resources, there has been a trend of gradual eviction of the poor from these resources. Redistribution of the resources often leads to litigation, eviction, harassment and arbitrary arrests of the poor.

**Drivers:** Massive poverty and landlessness are an important driver of this category of insecurity. Increasing political accumulation and politicisation of lease and allotment processes exacerbate these insecurities.

**Indicators:** Insecurities resulting in lack of access to natural resource base of a locality or a country are reflected in ownership and occupancy conflicts, forcible occupation, extraction, and rent-seeking activities.

**Environmental and Health Insecurity**

**Situation:** South Asia is known for recurrent natural disasters. As evidences suggest, the region is also highly vulnerable to the ongoing process of climate change and consequential environmental degradation. In addition, an endemic source of insecurity to the people is health-related problems such as diseases. Disasters create havoc and lead to loss of life and property. Climate changes result in incipient but perceptible changes in farming and other economic activities.

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Drivers: Disasters and other forms of natural calamities are important drivers of environmental insecurities. Perceptible and long term changes in climatic variables also lead to environmental degradation with concomitant changes in the life and livelihood of the people.

Indicators: The relevant indicators on this count are deaths and injuries from disasters, displacement from property, loss of livelihood and diseases and epidemics.

Livelihood Security

Situation: Livelihood security is the backbone of economic security. Because of massive poverty, landlessness and distributive injustice, the bulk of the people of South Asian countries do not have livelihood security. They lack gainful employment and work harder than other segments of the labour force, but fail to eke out a decent living. In recent decades, there has been significant improvement in the poverty situation in South Asian countries, although the rate of poverty reduction among the hardcore poor and among the rural population has been slower than that in the urban areas. However, the recent global meltdown preceded by unprecedented international and domestic price hike has shown that poverty reduction has been rather fragile because significant segments of the ‘graduated poor’ or marginal population have slid back into poverty.

Drivers: A host of factors—endemic and institutional—are responsible for livelihood insecurity in South Asian societies. Among them, lack of access to food, lack of employment resulting in disguised unemployment, lack of or restricted access to natural resources, institutional factors like imperfect or manipulated market forces and ineffective and inadequate public food distribution systems are responsible.

Indicators: Livelihood insecurity are reflected in food insecurity; unemployment; restricted customary access to natural resource base; over-exploitation of natural resource bases; galloping inflation; and absence of public food distribution.

Personal Security

Situation: Personal insecurity from both unorganised and organised crimes reflects the fear dimension of human insecurity. It is a paradox
that though instruments and institutions for fighting crimes and ensuring personal security have increased in recent times compared to earlier decades, the level of personal insecurity from both unorganised and organised sources have multiplied many times over. Moreover, societies are getting habituated to increased brutalisation, and the level of tolerance of violence has also increased. But the ability of helpless individuals to cope with crimes and violence has not increased correspondingly. Consequently, fear psychosis, mistrust, apprehension and lack of self-confidence have increased among individuals and groups.

DRIVERS: Poverty, lack of employment opportunities, moral degradation, drug addiction, inadequate rule of law and the likes are responsible for unorganised violence. In addition, political accumulation, rent-seeking activities and evidence that violence pays also contribute to increased level of crimes. The downside of globalisation facilitates increased networking among trans-national criminal groups leading to increased smuggling, drug and narcotic trafficking and the recent addition of human trafficking.

INDICATORS: Theft, robbery, mugging, social violence, rape, sexual harassment, acid throwing and increased brutalisation of society are indicators of unorganised crimes. On the other hand, trafficking and use of drugs, small arms and improvised explosive devices (IED) and human trafficking are indicators of organised crimes.

5.2 HUMAN SECURITY INDEX

The first step toward constructing a human security index in the context of South Asia, once an annual report is in place, would be to standardise the indicators and collect data on them. The formidable hurdle will no doubt be availability of data. Several multilateral development agencies and research centres on security, development, human rights and environment have their own data base. Of course, the data generated by UNDP in the context of social and human development are enormous. Centre for Human Security within Liu Centre for Global Studies, University of British Columbia, Canada produce data sets on human security. In South Asia itself, Mahbub ul Haq Centre for Human Development has been playing a pioneering role in human development in South Asia. Yet, critical gaps in data sets may
emerge and improvisation and estimating data to fill in the gaps may be required.

Once the data have been compiled, the next task is to standardise those data by using a scale. Since there are 8 countries in South Asia, we propose a scale of 1 to 8 in descending order, meaning 1 for the best performance, for example, least gender violence, or best access to services without harassment, meaning prevalence of good governance. Such ranking will facilitate comparison as well as aggregation.

However, a major problem remains in terms of the enormous number of variables for which data have to be sourced and compiled. This may be solved by taking fewer number of proxy variables against each category of insecurity as shown in Table 5.1. However, this would depend on the availability of data.