Introduction: Human Security
Development and the Future of East Asia

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The security of states is essential, but not sufficient, to fully ensure the safety and well-being of the world’s peoples.

(Lloyd Axworthy 2001)

The international relations of East Asia have, for too long, been dominated by inter-state politics. Regional security has been, and unfortunately continues to be, understood within the traditional framework of preserving territorial sovereignty and regime survival. In line with the Western notion of states as the prevailing actor, discussions on security issues in East Asia have focused largely on states’ interactions and behaviors.

While this has led to a wealth of knowledge on East Asian politics, such understandings are obviously biased and fail to capture the broader fundamentals of issues and challenges facing the peoples of East Asia. Part of the reason for this failure is the idea that humans are less important than states. This reason derives from the conventional understanding that the welfare of the people is subsumed under the concept of state security and that the existence of the former is contingent upon the success of the latter.

Though traditional security plays a significant role in nation building, it does not necessarily correlate positively with human security. There have been numerous cases ranging from cross-border human trafficking activities and organized crimes to environmental and health disasters that greatly threaten the security of individuals and communities rather than the survival of states. Cases of women trafficking for the sex industry from the Philippines to Malaysia, for example, have been well reported (Ciralsky and Hansen 2007a, b). In Japan, 95% of victims identified in trafficking for sexual exploitation originated from East Asia.1 Regarding communicable

1The UNODC (2009a) reported that out of the 175 victims identified from 2005 to 2006, 70 were from the Philippines, 58 from Indonesia, 24 from Thailand and 14 from China (including Taiwan).

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diseases, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared in mid June 2010 that Southeast Asia had reached Phase 6 pandemic (widespread human infection) due to the continuous reporting of new cases of the Influenza A (H1N1) virus in all six WHO reporting regions (WHO 2010). The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime recently published a report on the globalization of crime highlighting East Asia as a source for the trafficking of wildlife, timber and drugs to places as far as Europe (UNODC 2010). Recent news reports on seizures of drugs fashionable with club-goers such as ketamine and methamphetamine from South Asia and the Middle East suggest that demand for these substances is increasing in popular destinations such as Thailand, Indonesia and Malaysia. Since such cases are clearly transnational in nature and directly affect individuals, it would be improper to categorize them as secondary to state security or to simply view them as domestic concerns.

This however does not imply that comparable cases did not exist previously. Although these are not new to human history, they are becoming more profound and noteworthy and deserve not only the attention but also the cooperation of state and non-state actors. The United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon expressed at a Security Council debate that, “With transnational threats, States have no choice but to work together. We are all affected – whether as countries of supply, trafficking or demand. Therefore we have a shared responsibility to act” (Department of Public Information 2010). The same would apply to non-governmental organizations (NGOs), multinational corporations and civic groups.

Indeed, the advent of globalization has shrunk the regional and global spaces and time that used to separate human beings and limit their ability to interact. This has further contributed to the process of economic regionalization leading to higher interdependence of the East Asian region as evidence by the 1997 Asian financial crisis, which in turn led to the development of civil societies that are much more aware of universal human rights and critical of their governments’ policies. The change of governments in Indonesia and more recently in Japan, the prolonged political crisis in Thailand and the strengthening of the opposition parties in Malaysia reflect to various degrees the maturation of societies and their concerns in the region.

The integration of East Asian economies into the global economic system through the implementation of progressive trade liberalization policies in the last three decades has led to a rise in the insecurity of people. On one hand, globalization has contributed to the economic growth and prosperity of nations but on the other hand, it has provided opportunities for shadow economies to thrive. In Malaysia, underground economy has been growing and is reported to be worth approximately USD3.1 billion (The Star Online 2010c). Cases of victims losing their hard earned

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See The Star Online, 2009a,b,c, 2010a,b; The Straits Times, 2010. UNODC’s 2009 report on Patterns and Trends of Amphetamine-Type Stimulants and Other Drugs in East and South-East Asia have also indicated the increasing role played by Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, Vietnam and the Greater Mekong Subregion as either markets or locations for production of such illicit drugs.
savings and retirement funds through unscrupulous ideas such as the Ponzi scheme, pyramid selling schemes or remittance scams have too often been heard.\(^3\)

Situations are made worse when there is an economic crisis. Nothing could be more palpable than the extent of anxiety caused by the 2008 global economic crisis. Not only did it intensify income insecurity due to pay cuts and layoffs but it also presented long term effects owing to the erosion of savings, the disruption of social safety nets and the rise in food prices.\(^4\) Food insecurity is further exacerbated by environmental disasters brought about by climate change. This will have a direct impact on the poor and the vulnerable. It is without doubt that economic crises can transmit between economically integrated countries and “wipe out years of poverty reduction” efforts (FAO 2009). The Asia Pacific still remains the highest undernourished region compared to Latin America and Africa, with a steady rise in number of people from over 500 million in 1995 to 642 million in 2009 (FAO 2009: 9–11). This can only suggest that the integration of Asian countries into the world economy does not assure the sustainability of human livelihoods.

Thus, the demand for greater consideration and solution of non-traditional problems illustrates the complexities and challenges of societal progress that inescapably require a more constructive approach, one that is different from the common, cooperative and comprehensive security approaches associated with traditional state security.

### The Concept of Human Security

The development of human security can best be understood as a progression of international efforts to refine and broaden the definition of traditional security. However, it also represents a contradiction from and challenge to the more conventional forms.

One of the earliest forms was the common security idea that called for international cooperation to prevent the escalation of arms that has characterized most parts of the Cold War period. The successful formation of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) in the early 1970s and the subsequent 1975 Helsinki Accords revealed the strong determination of the European states to prevent Europe from becoming a theatre of nuclear war and replace nuclear deterrence – increasingly seen as unsustainable – with a common process of cooperation. In 1982, The Independent Commission on Disarmament and Security Issues, in support of the CSCE, called for the development of a common security to overcome

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\(^3\) The Ponzi scheme refers to the infamous investment fraud by Bernard Madoff that robbed investors of their lifetime savings. In Japan, a ringleader was sentenced to 20 years for masterminding the well known “Ore, ore” (Hey, it’s me!) remittance scam, raking in 146 million yen (approx. USD1.6 million) from victims. (The Japan Times 2010).

\(^4\) For an interesting account of the impacts of the economic crisis in East Asia, see Turk and Mason (2009).
the unrealistic build up of armaments in international politics based on the balance of power principle. Partly seen as a critique of realism it warned that stability anchored in an arms race is too fragile and “a more effective way to ensure security is to create positive processes that can lead to peace and disarmament” (1982: 7). The report of the Commission provided the impetus to expand the narrow understanding of traditional military threats by highlighting developmental issues pertaining to the Third World.

In 1986, Mikhail Gorbachev proposed that the Asia Pacific region too should have its own security conference and once again broached the same idea in September 1988, reflecting the relevance of the report and the CSCE concept. In December, Gorbachev (1988) delivered an important speech (below) at the United Nations that not only led to the end of the Cold War but bolstered the common security model.

We are talking first and foremost about consistent progress toward concluding a treaty on a 50 percent reduction in strategic offensive weapons, …about elaborating a convention on the elimination of chemical weapons …and about talks on reducing conventional weapons and armed forces in Europe. We are also talking about economic, ecological and humanitarian problems in the widest possible sense.

...One would like to believe that our joint efforts to put an end to the era of wars, confrontation and regional conflicts, aggression against nature, the terror of hunger and poverty, as well as political terrorism, will be comparable with our hopes. This is our common goal, and it is only by acting together that we may attain it.

The speech provided a clear indication for a number of things: First, the reduction of offensive weapons resonated with the call for disarmament under the common security framework. Second, it acknowledged that a superpower arms race leads to destruction. Finally, it explained the need to move beyond militarism by embracing economic and social development strategies through cooperative measures.

‘Cooperative’ became the keyword for security cooperation as the world moved into the post-Cold War era. Seen as an adaptation of common security, it emphasizes more the importance of multilateralism rather than unilateral action and stresses more the use of diplomatic tools such as political dialogues, confidence building measures and conflict resolution as means to establish a stable world order (Acharya 2001). Cooperative security, thus, connotes an incremental approach centered on joint efforts among states (Butfoy 1995).

However, a security concept with a slightly different emphasis was being developed in East Asia during the Cold War. Traced back to the early 1980s, the formulation of a comprehensive security framework was undertaken by Japan. Apart from preserving the military dimension, the framework also emphasized economic security. The importance placed on the latter can be explained by the ‘hostility’ that Japan was experiencing in its rise to become an economic power and the changing security environment compelling Japan to play a more proactive role than

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5For more details, see Fukushima (1999). Interestingly, she wrote that Japan and others saw the Soviet Union’s proposals as “mere propaganda”.

to remain fully dependent on the United States.\(^6\) Leveraging on its economic strength, Japan sought a framework that would allow it to justify its role in contributing to international peace through the use of its official development assistance (ODA) program and in safeguarding stable supplies of food and energy resources (Akaha 1991).

By incorporating non-military rudiments in the understanding of post-Cold War security, Japan has been seen by some scholars, primarily Amitav Acharya (2001) and Christopher Hughes (2005), as playing an important role in the articulation and subsequent acceptance of the human security concept by Asian countries. Japan’s penchant for human security became more profound at the turn of the twenty-first century. Lam Peng Er’s article on *Japan’s Human Security Role in Southeast Asia* (2006) clearly identified elements of human security in Japan’s foreign policy. Working in tandem with Japanese NGOs and business groups, the Japanese government has played an active role in providing financial, medical and armed forces assistances to several Southeast Asian countries stricken by humanitarian disasters such as the SARS outbreak, the Aceh tsunami and the cyclone Nargis. Throughout 2009, Japan provided a series of its Grassroots Grant Assistance (GGA) to assist Myanmar in its post-Nargis reconstruction projects.

At this point, it is best to provide a brief historical background on the idea of human security that originated from the United Nations and a number of interpretations and approaches that resulted from it.

**Defining Human Security**

The genesis of human security can be traced back to the Human Development Report titled “New Dimensions of Human Security” under the United Nations Development Program (UNDP 1994). Led by the late Mahbub ul Haq, the report introduces human security as a new concept that equates security with people rather than with territorial states. It is a move to inject distinctiveness and separation into how the notion of security should be perceived. By collectively pushing for a wide arrangement of people-centered projects, it is meant to be an ‘integrative’ concept as opposed to a ‘defensive’ one.

The idea behind human security stemmed from the over attention placed on securing states’ interests at times at the expense of human lives. Historical wars were mainly about the survival of states and regimes rather than the protection of the people from threats. Thus, lives were sacrificed in the name of country and

\(^6\)According to Akaha (1991: 325), the need to look at economic security was due to “a series of unsettling international developments in the 1970s and early 1980s: the superpower strategic parity and short-lived detente, the Sino-American rapprochement, the collapse of the Bretton Woods system, the deepening Sino-Soviet rift, the two oil crises, and the U.S. defeat in the Vietnam War. Of the major developments during that period, none exposed Japan’s vulnerability as acutely as the 1973–1974 oil crisis”.


nation. Even then, it has not resolved the many conflicts that continue to occur within states and among societies such as the South Thailand conflict, the Rohingyas issue and the Xinjiang unrest. The problem lies in the delineation of territories either fought through wars or colonialism that failed to properly capture the composition of various ethnic groups. In short, the arrangement of the international system was based primarily on states rather than on societies. In many instances, societies were required to organize themselves within the boundaries that had been predetermined and pledge allegiance to their respective states even if they found it difficult to accept. Cases that have led to unfortunate bloodshed such as in the Balkans clearly showed what happens when there is a grave mismatch between nation building and societal make-up. Irredentist hegemony and migration across borders further complicate matters and generate international concern in a globalized world.

Thus, the conventional argument that human security can only be advanced if there is state security no longer holds since it clearly implies prioritizing the latter over the former. For decades, North Korea’s paranoia with national security has brought about widespread suffering and refugee outflow of its people (see Chap. 1). As the world emerged from the ashes of the Cold War and as globalization becomes manifested in every layer and spectrum of the global society, the meaning of security has to be broadened beyond the typical narrative. This means putting in the human dimension that has been lost in oblivion. To do so, the 1994 report explicitly defined the term as having two important components: the freedom from want and the freedom from fear. The former focuses on the “…safety from such chronic threats as hunger, disease and repression” that reflects a slow and silent process and the latter on the “…protection from sudden and hurtful disruptions in the patterns of daily life” that reflect “an abrupt, loud emergency” (UNDP 1994: 23–24). Furthermore, the report identified seven key areas of the human security concept deemed important: economic security, food security, health security, environmental security, personal security, community security and political security. Many of these areas are in fact touched upon by the contributors of this book.

In the following years, Canada, under the leadership of Foreign Minister Lloyd Axworthy (1996–2000), began to consider human security as part of its foreign policy, seeing the concept as a new measure of global security. It defined the term along the lines of the UNDP report but put a greater stress on threats such as human rights abuse and terrorism that directly affect individual’s rights and safety (Bajpai 2000: 36). Together with Norway, a Human Security Partnership was established in May 1998 to address landmine and child soldier issues, among others. A year later, Canada led a group of like-minded countries, who gathered in Lysøen, Norway, to push for the concept as a policy agenda, defining it as “freedom from pervasive threats to people’s rights, the safety or even their lives”. Furthermore, that year saw

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7 Abad (2000) argues that state security is “an essential prerequisite” of human security.
8 For more details, see UNDP (1994: 24–33).
9 “A Perspective on Human Security: Chairman’s Summary” (1999).
the launching of human security under the United Nations Centre for Regional Development (UNCRD) that sought to integrate the concept into sustainable development strategies at the regional and local levels.

In 2000, UN Secretary General Kofi Annan strongly called for the building of a world “free of want” and “free of fear” at the Millennium Summit. In response, the Government of Japan initiated the establishment of the Commission on Human Security (CHS) in 2001, which lasted for 2 years. Co-chaired by former UN High Commissioner for Refugees Sadako Ogata and Nobel Laureate Amartya Sen, the CHS took on the task of defining and developing the concept as an operational tool for policy implementation. Its 2003 report, *Human Security Now*, incorporates two approaches – bottom-up and top-down. The former “concentrates on empowering people” through development programs that “can best attained in a community context” while the latter puts the onus on the state to protect the people’s well-being through sound “rule of law and judicial institutions” (Ogata 2006: 2–3). Despite some shortcomings, the combination of the two approaches is thought to provide the framework for human security.

The 2003 report demonstrated Japan’s stance on human security, which differs from those pursued by Canada and Norway. For the latter two, human security ought to be defined in a narrower form based particularly on the ‘freedom from fear’ and should thus focus on the two areas of political and personal securities – protection from political oppression and physical violence. The remaining five areas (economic, food, health, environmental, and community securities) are considered more suited to human development, which the two countries felt were already being pursued under various UN programs, and therefore a clear distinction should be made between human security and human development (Alkire 2003). Instead of prioritizing one over the other, Japan, on the other hand, followed the 1994 UNDP report that saw a need to pursue human security in its broadest sense, arguing that access to food and clean water as well as freedom from diseases and natural disasters affects the survival of individuals and are therefore of equal importance.

Since 2003, there have been further efforts taken by the UN to move away from the fixation on state security towards human security by drawing up a new security consensus that would legitimize international interventions in places that undermine human security (Alkire 2003: 4). Therein lies the difficult challenge of addressing the issue of humanitarian intervention due to the overarching principles of sovereignty and non-interference in domestic affairs. One of the earliest efforts to address this concern was the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty,

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10To be certain, Japan had been advocating human security as a new strategy as early as 1995 through Prime Minister Murayama’s speech to the UN (Acharya 2001).

11Muthien and Bunch argue that there are limitations in the CHS report for what they see as a failure to address women insecurities due to what they alleged to be a male-centered reporting (Schwartz 2004).

12Fukushima (2009) notes that there is now less focus on debating the concept of human security and more focus on operationalizing it.
set up in 2000 and largely sponsored by Canada. In their 2001 report, the Commission sought to emphasize that sovereignty is not about “control” but about “responsibility”. Sovereignty does not only mean respect for the territorial integrity of other states but the responsibility to respect and protect the dignity and safety of citizens. This dual meaning showed resoluteness to hold national authorities accountable for their actions within their geographical borders and signified that the international community through the UN has a responsibility to act collectively should states fail to uphold their basic duties. The meaning of sovereignty and intervention is thus broadened to cover individuals – the core focus of human security. It also strengthened the notion of human rights as being universal.

Building on the report and in line with the development of human security, a High Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change that was created by Kofi Annan to review the new security landscape endorsed in their 2004 report the idea of ‘responsibility to protect’ (R2P) and the importance of development in building security. This endorsement was again reiterated under the three freedoms – freedom from want, freedom from fear and freedom to live in dignity – that formed the UN Secretary-General’s proposed agenda for the High-level Plenary Meeting of the General Assembly (World Summit) in September 2005. At the Summit, the world leaders came to consensus that “[e]ach individual State has the responsibility to protect its populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity” (UN 2005b: 31). This was a momentous breakthrough particularly for the enhancement of freedom from extreme fear and reflected the changing tide of politico-security values.

In early 2009, the R2P was further refined with the introduction of the three pillars by Secretary-General Ban namely “the protection responsibilities of the State; the international assistance and capacity-building; and the timely and decisive response” to arrest crimes against the human race as a strategy to operationalize and transform the concept into a policy. The first pillar reinforces the 2005 endorsement that places the responsibility to protect civilians from harm squarely on the state. The message was clear – the UN opposes atrocities, unlawful killings and systematic attacks by states on their vulnerable populations. In 2010, the Secretary-General took the R2P a step further by addressing early warning and assessment capabilities. While efforts appeared to have been made, the practice of the R2P remains limited and its capacity to prevent crimes debatable.

Human Security for East Asia

The UN has played a major role in refocusing the debate on security by recognizing individual human beings as worthy of protection from threats, including those originating from states’ actions. However, the UN has yet to provide an exact and legal

13 Following the Summit, two bodies were created – the Human Rights Council and the Peacebuilding Commission – in March and June 2006 respectively.
definition of human security and as such the term remains contested. The difficulty of providing a precise definition stems from the different approach that human security takes in comparison to state-focused security such as the common, cooperative and comprehensive securities previously discussed. In critically asking “[i]f the values of the person conflict with the values of the state, which prevail?”, Acharya argued that human security “is certainly not new wine in an old bottle. Comprehensive security answered the question: which threats to state security? Human security answers ‘whose security’?” (2001: 453–454).

Human security in its strictest sense is about the security of the people and therefore prioritizes individuals over states. Therein lies the distinction. The UN is a representation of its members and any conceptual and operational development of the term would hence entail states’ input and commitment. For human security to take a stronger hold there is a need for greater recognition of the values of individuals and communities vis-à-vis the states. This does not necessarily imply that human and state securities are stacked on opposite ends but more needs to be done to bring human security issues to the forefront of international attention. This is where efforts should be made to enable the UN to function as an inter-societal organization representing the world citizens apart from its traditional role as an intergovernmental institution.

For the purpose of this study, human security is defined along the lines of the 1994 UNDP and the 2003 CHS reports and so without doubt puts people at the heart of the security lexicon. The study does not only see the protection from pervasive threats as instrumental, but it also sees sustainable development as essential to the enhancement of human freedom and fulfillment. This provides a single framework to address and highlight the various issues pertaining to the safety and wellbeing of individuals living in East Asia. Home to nations with high economy and population growth rates, the region has observed various human insecurities including income disparities made worse by globalization and the lack of safety measures to cushion and rescue those who fall. Human security is indispensable if ever globalization is to have a human and ethical face.

The interdependence of states and societies in East Asia further illustrates the increasingly multifaceted and transnational nature of people-related problems that require regional cooperation and swift solution. Just like traditional security, human security necessitates coordinated responses and collective efforts. It is within these understandings that the study aims to provide valuable insights into the complex relationships between the different levels of people, state and region, and to examine the extent of human security being mainstreamed into state and regional activities.

The future of East Asia and its people lies not in military buildup for the protection of sovereignty but in human development for the protection of human lives and the realization of human potential. After all, shouldn’t that be the focus of East Asian regionalism? Is the effort to build an ASEAN community and subsequently an East Asian community through the ASEAN+3 and the East Asia Summit frameworks for states or for the people? For too long, ASEAN has been criticized for being an organization catering solely to the interest of its member states. This is perhaps best reflected in former Thai Foreign Minister Surin Pitsuwan’s speech in 2002 when he said,
In 1998, at the time the idea of flexible engagement was proposed at the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) ministerial meeting, I proposed the creation of a “caucus for social safety nets.” None of my ASEAN colleagues supported me. Most of the support came from outside ASEAN, particularly the West—Australia, the United States, Russia, and even India. I proposed a caucus of social safety nets because all of a sudden millions of our people had slid back into poverty and they needed help to sustain them through the crisis. My colleagues thought the idea was another Western idea and another way of coming through the back door in order to interfere with the internal affairs of member states. So we should not underestimate the problems, the resistance, the doubt that could occur as we work to shift from the supremacy of the state to a focus on individuals (2002: 56; emphasis added).

Hence it is not too difficult to see that while ASEAN identified Socio-Cultural Community as one of the three important pillars of its community it is by far the weakest primarily because bottom-up processes played by civic groups and NGOs have yet to be given ample attention and support. According to the ASEAN Charter, the purposes of ASEAN, among many, are “to alleviate poverty…; to enhance the well-being and livelihood of the peoples of ASEAN…; to strengthen cooperation in building a safe, secure and drug-free environment for the peoples of ASEAN; to promote a people-oriented ASEAN…” (2008: 4–5). If these aims are what ASEAN sets out to achieve, then the significance of human security to the future of Southeast Asia is obvious. Coupled with the role that Japan has been playing in promoting human security, such similar purposes as outlined by ASEAN should aptly apply to the wider regional agenda in securing the future of East Asia as well. In fact, the East Asia Vision Group report that was produced in 2001 for the ASEAN+3 cooperation identified “people focus” as one of the guiding principles, explaining that “their security, welfare and happiness are our ultimate goal” (2001: 8). Therefore, regional security frameworks such as the ASEAN Regional Forum, which has been disparaged for its inability to move beyond the first phase of confidence building, should be reconfigured into a body for the championing of human security concerns (Teh 2009).

The lack of thrust of Asian regional organizations in championing the causes of human security lies less in their intergovernmental structures and more in the deficiency of spaces for civic groups to voice their concerns and lobby for greater attention on human related issues, particularly on the freedoms from fear and want. A more dynamic relationship between states and societies with substantial amount of bottom-up pressures are necessary to reorient the elitist image of regional institutions considering the fact that many of the issues such as food scarcity, illicit drugs and organized crimes increasingly demand a multilevel approach.

**Chapters in This Volume**

This book is divided into two parts and consists of a total of twelve chapters. Part I has five chapters that discuss the problems of human security within the conundrum of state-society relations. Chapter 1 provides an in-depth analysis into the problems...
of North Korean refugees as a critical case study. The author argues that the refugee issue highlights the ineffectiveness of the human security paradigm in transcending the deep-rooted traditional security agenda and views ethics and morality as indispensable in creating a sustainable security culture of reconciliation. Chapter 2 takes up the issue of health security, focusing on the vulnerability of women to HIV transmission in mainland China. Chinese women, due to the patriarchal nature of the society, will continue to suffer from the lack of empowerment and remain highly insecure unless a gendered response to HIV based on international best practices is appropriately enforced. Empowerment is undeniably the key to forestalling the spread of communicable diseases. Chapter 3 looks at the historical trend of population policy in Vietnam and its relations to human security. In discussing Vietnam’s demographic changes, the author shows that the level of transition from state to human security approaches in the four important areas of migration, reproductive rights, food supply and the environment, and minority rights has remained unclear due to various internal and external developments.

Thailand’s migration situation and anti-trafficking initiatives are carefully explored in Chap. 4. Though the Thai government has infused certain international practices to stem human trafficking, the author finds that such development is still ineffective in addressing the wider range of exploitations especially on unforced migrants and street children unless collaboration between anti-trafficking and development efforts are properly established. In contrast to the previous chapter that looks at migrants in the country, Chap. 5 discusses the dynamics of interaction between the state and society in the Philippines concerning Filipino labor migrants abroad. Employing both top-down and bottom-up approaches, the author examines the concept of human security as viewed by the government and by the people and reveals that while the state concerns itself with the protection of its citizens working abroad, it fails to provide protection for the migrants’ families at home from insecurities that are seen as the reason for migrants to emigrate in the first place.

Part II covers the remaining seven chapters. This part deals with the broader regional issues in the key areas of health, environmental, economic and political securities and implications for policy consideration. Chapter 6 anchors its discussion on the environmental problems affecting the lower Mekong region that covers parts of the territory of Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam. Looking at intra- and extra-regional factors the author points out that addressing insecurity is a complex process that depends on dynamic interactions of actors at various levels and can only be fully tackled if ample space is created for the voices of those directly affected to be heard. Chapter 7 takes issue with the environment as well but fixes squarely on the inability of ASEAN to mitigate the ill effects of climate change due to its outdated diplomatic culture. Seeing a need to unlock the traditional mindset, the authors believe that continuous pressure from Indonesia and civil societies inside and outside of the region is needed to help develop a common policy with effective measures in line with international practices.

One of the hurdles for ASEAN is the removal of its overzealousness on the principle of non-interference. Chapter 8 attempts to provide a solution by discussing the issue of natural disasters. It elaborates that collaborative measures including more
sophisticated mechanisms can be taken on issues that are considered politically neutral citing the example of what the author sees as an encouraging regional response carried out by ASEAN in the 2008 Nargis cyclone aftermath.

However, environmental security is not independent from the other areas of security as outlined in the UNDP report. In fact, they are clearly interrelated and interconnected. In Chap. 9, the interrelatedness and the dangers of other human security threats primarily on the food supply and safety to health security are examined and highlighted. Providing a number of case studies as support and seeing multi-sectoral cooperation as compulsory to sustainable solution, the author argues that health security is crucial. The failure of governments to protect their citizens risks exposing them to extremism and threatens the security of states. It clearly illustrates and strengthens the point that human security is not inferior to traditional security as conventionally thought.

Chapter 10 assesses the extent of economic security being considered in the process of proliferating free trade agreements (FTAs). Engaged in competition to outdo each other in the number of FTAs signed, governments have largely centered attention on national economic interests rather than giving sufficient consideration to long-term effects and structural transformations that could negatively impact peoples’ economic wellbeing. Turning to political security, Chap. 11 discusses one of the major issues on the international human rights agenda – the death penalty. Despite democratic progress, the death penalty continues to exist in most parts of East Asia. Contrasting the experiences of South Korea and Japan, the author shows that the former has achieved great progress in abolishing capital punishment because of reform-minded leaders’ ability to generate change regardless of public opinion while the latter has been incapacitated by its own enjoyment of political stability to take bold and unfavorable initiatives to enact reforms. Lastly, Chap. 12 sets the course for an examination into the principle of sovereignty and the legal-political and ecological impacts of sea level change affecting small island states (SISs). Sovereignty as traditionally defined, argues the author, is a hindrance to resolving environmental threats to SISs. Legal and political consensus among the international community is a necessity to address and prevent human misery due to the perils of inundation.

While there have been some efforts in implementing human security in East Asia, there is still a considerable lack of awareness, recognition and political will particularly among state actors to deal with the vast array of human-related transnational issues and to seek collective actions across traditional boundaries especially in cooperation with non-state actors, which are pertinent in securing a peaceful sustainable future for the region and its inhabitants.

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