

JAPAN–KOREAN PENINSULA: HUMAN SECURITY ISSUES

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Abstract

This research article deals with non-traditional security issues, also known as human security, in general and towards the Korean Peninsula and Japan, in particular. It is not possible that security be viewed in military terms alone. World faces the challenge of tackling non-military threats such as, growing food and water scarcity, environmental degradation, growing population, HIV, AID, Malaria etc. These issues have to be tackled through a cooperative approach. Japan is one of the leading advocates of the concept of human security in the world. Japan provides official development assistance to developing countries for human security – related issues. On the Korean Peninsula, North Korea faces a number of human security issues, such as food and energy scarcity, violation of human rights, environmental degradation etc. on the other hand, South Korea is facing different types of human security – related issues such as rural – urban migration and drug trafficking. In addition to non-traditional security issues traditional security still remains the main concern on the Peninsula.

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Introduction

At this pivotal juncture in history, a sea – change is occurring in international affairs moving, though slowly, from the traditional focus on national security towards a concern with human safety and development and economic matters. In the opinion of the Ambassador Ogata Sadako the former Co-Chair UN Commission on Human Security, the “real security is more than keeping strong military forces. It has to be based on overall human security to ensure the livelihood of individual”.¹

The traditional approach to security studies is focused on protecting states from external threats. Whereas the non-traditional or human security concerns directly threaten significant number of people, especially in the developing world. The human security concerns also known as “new security challenges”, which were over-shadowed by the Cold War competition between the United States and the former Soviet Union, have emerged on the political agenda of the world in the post – Cold War era.

The UN *Human Development Report 1994* defines the components of human security as environmental scarcity and degradation, the spread of diseases, ethnic and sectarian conflict, over population, refugee movements, water and food scarcity, drug trafficking, human trafficking and organized crime. In addition, the emergence of non-state actors with ideologies of extremism is also posing a biggest threat to human security, especially after September 11, 2001.

This paper will focus on human security – related issues in three East Asian countries namely: Japan, North-Korea and South-Korea. Though Japan is not facing human security – related concerns, it is very much involved in human security – related issues in the developing world. Japan has declared the 21st century a “human centered” century.

The end of the Cold War has not brought peace and tranquility on the Korean Peninsula. It still remains tense and militarized, as it used to be during the Cold War period. North Korea is a garrison state ruled by National Defence Commission headed by Kim Jong IL. Most of the non-traditional security challenges faced by North Koreans such as, food and energy scarcity, violation of basic human rights, growing population, unemployment, migration, environmental degradation etc stem largely from the failure of North Korea state to guarantee the welfare of her citizens.

In addition to traditional military – related concerns, South Korea faces a host of human security – related issues such as fast growing population, urban migration, food, energy and environmental scarcities.

Definition

We are still witnessing the emergence of the concept of security. In the opinion of Ann M. Florini and P.J. Simmons, “the most fundamental disagreement in the ‘re-defining security’ literature is over whose security should be the object of the security policy: that of the state or that of the individual”.²

Even defining the concept of human security there is little agreement on where to draw a line. Alessandro Politi writes that the “...issues that involve the use or threat of violence (civil conflict, transnational terrorism and organized crime)

can be accommodated in an expanded definition of security. Politi is of the opinion that issues such as, environmental degradation; population growth and migration are not necessarily being considered as security issues.³

The UN *Human Development Report 1994* “proposes a profound transition in thinking from nuclear security to human security, or from the narrow concept of national security to the all encompassing concept of human security”.⁴

In the opinion of Professor Akiku Fukushima, non-traditional security threats or risk are those which are not militarily *per se*, such as energy and human rights, may ultimately lead to armed conflicts.⁵

The UN Commission on Human Security, launched in June 2001, defines human security, “to protect the vital core of all human lives in ways that enhance human freedoms and human fulfillment”. The Commission further elaborates that human security complements “state security” in four respects: first, its concern is individual and community rather than the state. Second, menaces include / more than / threats to state security. Third, the range of actors is expanded beyond the state alone. Finally, achieving human security includes – empowering people.

The First writers on the subject human security who made the conceptual threats and security were Laster Brown in his 1977 world watch paper entitled “Redefining National Security” which talked about the environmental threats to the planet and to human wellbeing. Richard Ullman’s article “Redefining Security” 1983, Norman Myres’ article entitled “Environment and Security 1989 and Jessica Methew’s article “Redefining Security” 1989. Probably, Jessica Methew’s paper was the best paper written on the subject

re-defining security at the time of the collapse of the Berlin Wall in 1989.

In the post-Cold War period the attitudes towards the meaning of security are changing rapidly in the world. The UN Human Development Report 1994 and the establishment of the UN Commission on Human Security in June 2001 are the best examples of changing attitudes towards the concept and meaning of security.

Human Security Concerns and Japan

Today, Japan is one of the leading advocates of the concept of human security and it attaches great respect to human security in the world. Japan introduced a new concept of 'comprehensive security' in the 1970s, which included military and non-military threats ranging from military attack, economic wellbeing, pollution, national disaster, crime and terrorism. In this context security was broadly defined 'as the protection of life and core values of people'.⁶ In today's Japan four groups are taking positions regarding Japanese security policy: the pro-alliance Realists, the pro-alliance Liberals, the independence – oriented nationalists, and believer in global or human security.⁷ The main advocates of human security school or the "peace research school" in Japan are, Professor Kuniko Inoguchi, Professor Sakamoto Yoshikazu, Professor Asai Motofumi and Ambassador Ogata Sadako.

The human security dimension became one of the important foreign policy goals of successive Japanese governments since the end of the 1990s. In his speech in Hanoi in December 1998, the Japanese Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi declared human security as an important element of his country's foreign policy. He also announced the establishment of Human Security Fund in the United

Nations. Since its establishment Japan has contributed more than 100 million U.S. dollars in the Fund for human security.

Almost all the successive governments since Obuchi were of the opinion that human security in all its dimensions requires a political order. Therefore, the spread of democracy and justice in the society and economic wellbeing are necessary for building human security within and between national borders and globally. "Human Security", says Professor Isezaki Kenji "is a matter in which human life and death hangs in the balance".⁸

On June 24, 1999, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Government of Japan, and the United Nations University, Tokyo, jointly organized an international symposium on the theme of human security. In his keynote address, the state secretary of Foreign Affairs, Keizo Takemi noted that, "In order to explore the concept of human security as a policy idea, which Japan is conveying to the international community as one of the essential principles for the conduct of Japanese foreign policy in the twenty first century."⁹

In addition, the Japanese government and many Japanese people believe that in developing countries with a limited budget, greater military expenditure often leads to less investment in the economic infrastructure, thus further restricting improvements in living standards, creating social instability, and potentially triggering internecine conflict.¹⁰ It is in this context that Japan's Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) and cooperation policies are very much linked with human security dimension. The ODA Charter of 1992 says that all the recipient countries of ODA are bound to curtail military expenditure and to help arms control and arms reduction. The Charter underlines that the basic philosophy of economic cooperation, which is based on

(i) humanitarian consideration (ii) recognition of interdependence among nations of international community (iii) environmental conservation and (iv) support of self help efforts of recipient countries. Recipient countries cannot use Japanese ODA money for military purposes at all. The basic philosophy of ODA Charter 1992 was to provide “assistance to the basic human needs sector and humanitarian aid” in the developing countries to overcome human security – related issues.

Under the new ODA Charter of 2003, the Japanese government renewed its commitment to making the best use of ODA to address the human security – related issues such as poverty, famine, refugee displacement, natural disasters the environment, infectious diseases, gender, democracy, human rights, ethnic and religious conflict and terrorism.¹¹

Japan is number one provider of ODA in the world. The nature of Japanese ODA is to promote social sector, economic infrastructure, agricultural development and environmental conservation in the developing world. Japan's aid and assistance to developing countries is not politically – oriented or for strategic purposes. On the other hand, for example, US extends one third of its total bilateral aid to Israel, France extends 80 percent of its ODA to former colonies in Asia, Africa and Latin America, and the United Kingdom directs over 60 percent of its bilateral ODA to British Commonwealth countries.¹²

Today, according to some estimates, 1.3 billion people continue to live in extreme poverty; 1.1 billion people do not have access to safe and clean water; more than 800 million people are suffering the effects of malnutrition and starvation, some 12 million children under the age of five continue to die every year from preventable diseases.

Human kind is also being threatened by emerging and re-emerging infectious diseases such as AIDs, Malaria, and Tuberculosis etc. The environmental, energy, water and food scarcities are causing social conflicts in the developing world. According to the UN Population Fund, the world population is projected to grow from about six billion to more than 8 billion by 2025, and as much as 9.8 billion in 2050. About one half of the entire human population has no access to even the most basic medicines.

For the maintenance of world peace and stability through economic and assistance, Japan provided 500 billion Yen to developing world in the year 2002. Approximately, 30% of the total Japanese ODA to developing countries goes to environmental projects. Japan's 1992 ODA charter indicate the "development and the environment are two sides of the same coin". The population growth, increased consumption of resources, and greater pollution has all contributed to environmental damage. In many developing countries environmental problems are jeopardizing the foundations of development.

Environment

Japan is engaged in international cooperation in five environmental fields: measures against air and water pollution as a result of the process of economic growth, global warming which threaten the very existence of mankind, water issues, conserving the natural environment degrading as a result of population growth and poverty, and to promote environmental education.¹³ In this regard, Japan has established a forest and Environment Division which is responsible to dispatch engineers, researchers and other experts and inviting counterpart, personnel from developing countries to Japan to participate in training programs. In 2003, 13 technical cooperation

projects were implemented in Asia and Oceania, 5 in Central and South America and two in Africa, for the purpose of planting forests, developing basic technologies, for breeding native plants, improving soil quality, and developing technologies for creating farm forests in semi arid areas.¹⁴

In June 2001 Japan's government overhauled decades old Forestry Basic Law to better emphasize the country's concern for global environmental protection. In January 2001, a new Forest and Environment Division was established which is responsible to dispatch engineers, researchers and other experts and inviting counterpart personnel from developing countries to Japan to participate in training programmes.

Other areas where Japan is providing aid and assistance in the field of human security to the developing world are: population and food, human rights and democracy and Antipas and laundries.

Population and Food

In many developing countries population growth is directly linked to the problems of poverty, unemployment, and starvation, lack of education and deterioration of the environment. On the other hand, a slowdown in the growth of food production has been noted.¹⁵ Within twenty years the world population would increase from 6 billion to more than 8 billion. Most of this population increase is taking place in developing countries, where, a lack of adequate food is already among the various types of social and economic problems these countries face.¹⁶

The Japanese government announced its Global Issues Initiative on Population and AIDS in February 1994 to provide effective assistance to developing countries. The total amount of ODA which Japan provided to developing countries in the first five years (1994-99) under this programmes was \$ U.S. 3 billion.¹⁷

As for food issues, the Japanese government has been cooperating with developing countries in providing grant aid in the form of food, assistance for increasing food production, and technical assistance for the development of farming communities.¹⁸

Human Rights and Democracy

For the promotion of human rights in the developing world Japan has adopted a two-pronged strategy: to provide support to the office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and other UN organizations; and regular exchanges concerning human rights through bilateral dialogues with ODA recipient countries in the developing world. Japan has long promoted cooperation for the strengthening of democracy in developing countries under the basic policy of Partnership for Democratic Development (PDD).¹⁹

The ODA Charter of 1992 states that in “providing assistance to developing countries attention to be paid to the degree to which human rights are supported and protected”.

Landmines

The third area where Japan is providing aid and assistance is landmine. An estimated 85 million to 110 million uncleared landmines are thought to remain in soil of 60 countries. Each month some 2500 civilian are killed, wounded and maimed by landmines and many more are driven from homes and agricultural fields. The United Nations calculates that it will take 1100 years and 33 billion dollars to clear landmines currently in the ground.

Japan has been taking positive action on the anti-personnel landmine issue. In March 1997 Japan hosted Tokyo Conference on Anti-personal Landmines. In the Tokyo Conference members drafted the Tokyo Guidelines, establishing "zero victims" as the ultimate goal of international effort in regard to anti-personal landmines issue. Between 1999 and 2001 Japan provided 10 billion Yen in the field of mine clearance and of helping landmine victims. Between 1990 – 2000 Japan had extended \$ U.S 30.59 million through UN Voluntary Trust Fund for Assistance in Mine Clearance and other agencies as an assistance for demining.²⁰

Japan is the leading advocate of human security – related issues in the world. The issue of human security is a key aspect in implementing Japanese aid to developing countries as it is also the key perspective in developing Japan's foreign policy.

Korean Peninsula

On the Korean Peninsula divided political structure of the Cold War era remains and tensions continue unresolved. The situation has become more complex after North Korea's nuclear test in October 2006. The East Asian security

agenda in the early 21st century does not differ the security agenda of the Cold War era. North Korea is a garrison state ruled by the National Defence Commission headed by Kim Jongil. Most of the non-traditional security challenged such as food and energy scarcity violation of basis human right, growing population, unemployment, and migration are the result of an authoritarian regime in Pyongyang.

Most of the non-traditional security challenges stem largely from the failure of North Korean state to guarantee the basic welfare of her citizens. The North Korean domestic problems can have regional repercussions. The international community is increasingly concerned about the human security concerns in North Korea.

At the end of the Second World War, the Japanese in Korea surrendered, but the occupying forces at the ceasefire—the USSR North of 38th parallel, and the USA South of it—resulted in a lasting division of the country as North and South Korea.

North Korea was declared a People's Republic in 1948 under the leadership of the Worker's Party with Kim Il Sung as President. In the following year the remaining Soviet forces withdrew from North Korea. Kim Il Sung died in 1994 and was replaced by his son Kim Jong Il as President and head of the National Defence Commission of North Korea. Despite its serious economic hardships since the mid 1990s North Korea has beefed up its military spending. North Korea's "Military First Policy" is a threat to human security not only for North Korea, but for the Peninsula and beyond. Instead of the collapse of the North, South Korea and Japan seeks the gradual transformation of the North Korean system. North Korea suffered severe economic shocks due to the collapse of communism in USSR in 1991 followed by a famine in the mid 1990s. Pyongyang had formally issued an emergency appeal for international humanitarian food aid in

1995.

According to the joint report of Seoul Forum and New York Council on Foreign Relations, “the human security concerns will remain there until North Korean regime make some structural economic changes, allow adequate monitoring, and address other humanitarian concerns.

Food shortages continue to persist in North Korea. In addition to South Korea, Japan and other countries and international agencies, such as World Food Programme, NGOs, Red Cross and individual governmental organizations have been providing assistance to North Korea since the famine of the mid 1990s. In response to North Korea’s formal requests UN agencies such as, United Nations Department of Humanitarian Affairs (UNDHA) FAO, UNICEF, UNDP were able to collect \$ US 1.2 billion from the second half of 1995 through 2002.²¹ It has been estimated that anywhere between 200,000 and 3 million people died of starvation during North Korea’s great famine of 1995 – 1999.²² As has been mentioned earlier North Korea has been suffering from severe food shortage, following Table gives clear picture of supply and demand of food in North Korea.

Table 1**North Korea's Food Supply and Demand**

(Unit: 10,000 tons)

Year	Demand	Supply
1992	650	443
1993	658	427
1994	667	388
1995	672	413
1996	673	345
1997	670	369
1998	639	349
1999	650	389
2000	606	422
2001	613	359
2002	626	359
2003	632	413
2004	639	425

Source: *Understanding North Korea, 2004*, Institute of Political Education for Unification, Ministry of Unification, South Korea, p. 151, quoted in Woo Scongji, "North Korea's Food Crisis" *Korea Focus*, Vol 12, No. 3, May - June, 2004, p.67.

Above figures show that North Korea still cannot cope with food demand. The South Korean Ministry of Unification has published in early 2004 a shocking picture of daily food rations in North Korea.

Table 2**Daily Food Rations**

Category	Daily Food Rations	
1	900g	Workers with jobs requiring much physical exertion
2	800g	Miners, heavy machinery operators
3	700g	Regular works
4	600g	University students and hospital patients
5	500g	Middle school students
6.	400g	Primary school students
7	300g	Elderly pensioners and house wives
8	200g	Children 2-4 years old and Prisoners
9	100g	Infants less than one year

Source: *Understanding North Korea, 2004*, Institute of Political Education for Unification, Ministry of Unification, South Korea, p. 279, quoted in Woo Seongji, "North Korea's Food Crisis" *Korea Focus*, Vol 12, No. 3, May – June, 2004, p. 70

In the opinion of South Korean Professor of Food and Nutrition, Chang Namsoo, "this amount of food ration is far below what Korean received under Japanese colonial rule (1910-1945) when the overall food supply was extremely poor. At that time per capita grain consumption was 419 grams per person per day."²³

As a result of food shortages, infectious diseases such as tuberculosis are rapidly spreading in North Korea. Due to the lack of basic services people are being increasingly exposed to serious health risks. In addition, people are

fleeing to China and South Korea because of acute food shortages there. According to one estimate, the number of North Korean defectors in China is between 100,000 and 300,000.

The international community is increasingly concerned about the human rights situation in North Korea. The main sources of information on North Korea's human rights situation are: the UN Commission on Human Rights, Human Rights Watch Asia, and Minnesota Association of Lawyers for Human Rights and Amnesty International. These human rights organizations publish regular reports about the North Korean human rights record. They indicate that "human rights abuses in North Korea have become institutionalized as an inevitable outcome of the country's political and social structure."²⁴ The North Koreans current poverty and misery are the result of the authoritarian nature of regime.

It is noteworthy that by threatening mass destruction Pyongyang succeeded in extorting benefits from the rest of the world, especially from Japan, South Korea and China in its efforts to prop-up its regime.

Despite its serious economic hardship, North Korea has beefed up its military, especially since the mid 1990s. The regime is abusing its own people and threatens South Korea. It is difficult to predict the future of North Korea. Its quick collapse especially after its nuclear test would not be in favour of South Korea, Japan and China, and would destabilize the whole region. Instead of the collapse of the North, these countries seek the gradual transformation of the North Korean system.

South Korea

The Cold War legacy continues to linger on the Korean Peninsula. The traditional military concerns are at the top other security concerns can in no way overshadow or replace it. The military expenditure in East Asia increased by approximately 5 percent in real terms in 2002. Following is the military expenditure of North and South Korea between 1995 and 2005:

North Korea		South Korea	
	Billion Won		Billion Won
1995	n.a	1995	11.074
1996	n.a	1996	12.243
1997	n.a	1997	13.102
1998	2.9	1998	13.594
1999	2.9	1999	13.337
2000	3.0	2000	14.477
2001	3.1	2001	15.388
2002	3.2	2002	16.364
2003	3.62	2003	17.04
2004	3.93	2004	18.09
2005	4.19	2005	20.08

Source: SIPRI Yearbook: *Armaments Disarmament and International Security*, 2003 Oxford University Press, London, p.342, and International Institute for strategic studies, *the Military Balance 2005-2006*, Routledge, London, 2005 and 2006.

In the post-Cold War period South Korea has been trying to reduce tensions in the peninsula through economic aid and assistance to and trade with North Korea. South Korea

remains committed in providing food, medical supplies, fruit, and electric power, and equipment, fertilizer to North Korea as a humanitarian and mutual aid. The outside world is divided on the issue of providing aid and assistance to North Korea. Most of the observers are of the opinion that aid and assistance to North Korea is increasing the security dangers rather than peace and stability in the Peninsula. Their main argument is that the outside aid and assistance is further strengthening and stabilizing the repressive North Korean regime, therefore aid and assistance should not be provided to North Korean government.

In the opinion of Professor Moon Chung-in, "for South Korea, however, the enduring military threat from North Korea manifested by the tense confrontation along the demilitarized zone (DMZ) still remains the primary existential security problem. Other security concerns [non-traditional] can in no way overshadow or replace it".²⁵

The major non-traditional security issues that concern South Korean government officials and scholars are food and energy securities. South Korea used to be an agrarian society. "By the 1990s, the agriculture sector accounted for less than 10 percent of GDP, a decline that has generated considerable public debate."²⁶

Another problem South Korea is facing is population dynamics and migration from rural to urban areas. About 25 million people, more than half of the Korea's total population resides in greater Seoul metropolitan area, causing urban congestion and deteriorating quality of life. Given the military situation in the Peninsula the large concentration of population in Seoul also causes concern for military reasons as well.²⁷

Like other developed and developing countries in the world, South Korea also faces the problem of drug trafficking such as, "Hong Kong Triads, Japanese *Yakuza*, and the Russian mafia,"²⁸ connections with their South Korean partners.

Conclusion

Despite the fundamental disagreements regarding the definition of security in the post – Cold War era, the non-traditional security concerns or human security issues can be accommodated in an expended definition of security. We will have to find the ways in solving the problems of individuals and "distancing ourselves from the traditional idea of nation".

It has been noted in this paper that world population is growing rapidly, especially in the developing countries, and there is slow-down in the growth of food production. The water scarcity, abnormal weather conditions and growing menace of international terrorism have also been noted. In order to tackle these issues, there is a need of multilateral approach of cooperative framework rather than "zero-sum" game. Japan is the best example in providing assistance to basic human needs in the world. The other developed countries should follow the Japanese approach in this regard. Their aid and assistance should be for basic human needs rather than for the political and strategic considerations.

Japan is vulnerable to energy security. It does not have any significant sources of energy. The peace and stability in the developing world is very much linked with the economic security of Japan. Therefore, in order to achieve world peace and stability through economic aid and assistance, Japan would continue to provide humanitarian aid and assistance to developing countries, at least for the foreseeable future.

On the Korean Peninsula, military security still remains the top security concern. The U.S. military presence in South Korea and Japan is stabilizing force in the region. Even China is 'recognizing' the importance of the presence of U.S. troops in the region. In some quarters in China, the U.S. military presence in the region is being considered as a deterrent to Japan's militarization.

The North Koreans are facing severe problems because of the repressive regime there. Their miseries have also been compounded by U.S economic sanctions. After North Korea conducted its nuclear test in October 2006, the United Nations Security Council has imposed comprehensive sanctions against North Korea. The sanctions would further aggravate human suffering there. Instead of punishing the North Koreans, the nuclear issue should be resolved through six-party negotiations.

In sum human security requires a democratic order in the world. Today more than 140 countries have established multiparty electoral system of government. The spread of democracy is a hallmark of human progress and a necessary pillar for building human security in the world.

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