

Preface

There is little doubt that many of the security threats facing the world in the 21st century revolve around issues such as poverty, underdevelopment, inequality, environmental degradation, climate change, pandemics, illegal migration, people smuggling, drug trafficking and conflicts arising from poor governance leading to state failure. While these threats are not new, in an era of advancing globalization, they are increasingly transnational and interlinked in nature. Moreover, these threats directly and deeply affect the safety and well-being of people, even when the system of states that comprise the contemporary international order may remain superficially stable. The international community therefore needs to rethink the concept of what security means and how best to realize it. A comprehensive people-centric understanding of security is warranted, as a more appropriate framework of reference and action for today's world than the traditional notion of national security.

The idea of human security, which stresses security for the people and their core institutions, is challenging to both scholars and practitioners. For scholars, the challenge is to develop this concept in a broad and meaningful manner so that it has appeal beyond the narrow academic community and becomes a tool for advancing the safety and well-being of individuals, states and the international community. The concept is still relatively new; and it needs to be expanded, explored, debated and disseminated as widely as possible so that it becomes permanently enshrined in the lexicon of academic disciplines including governance studies, security studies and development studies. While most existing studies have dealt with the concept at a

theoretical or conceptual level, it is important now to apply it and examine its relevance with the help of case studies at local, national and international levels.

For practitioners, including governments, civil society and media, the challenge is one of drawing upon the normative potential of the human security concept and finding the space and resources for implementing this concept into concrete policy action. Policymakers may find the concept appealing as a slogan, but in the absence of implementation mechanisms, human security will remain a pipe dream.

This book on human security — and the series in general — is aimed at meeting these challenges. We hope to bring new and innovative research that incorporates theoretical insights into policy action and offers practical suggestions to advance human security. Using case studies of human security challenges and responses, we will highlight issues of governance that are central to the management of human security. We hope that the series will contribute to the promotion of human security in Asia and the world, as a new paradigm for advancing the security and welfare of people in the global village of the 21st century.

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