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An excuse for common goods: the multipurposelessness of the “human security” concept in Japan’s foreign policy

Teewin Suputtikun

Abstract

This article examines the functions of the concept of human security in Japan’s foreign policy. Tracing the process by which Japan internalized the idea into policy formation and public discourse, the article shows that human security as a concept has served multiple purposes in the national quest for appropriate international roles. On one hand, the concept is used to resist the twin forces pulling Japanese roles away from the desirable status quo. These forces are the external pressure for a more active military contribution from Japan; and the domestic constraint against contribution policy in general. On the other hand, the concept of human security also serves as a principled guideline in enhancing Japan’s contribution in a way that suits its national identity.

“Human security” has become one of the popular catchphrases in contemporary international affairs and discourses. That the phrase has become ubiquitous may be explained partly by the fact that “human security” has been accepted as a generic description encompassing every aspect of concerns and efforts to solve problems plaguing human being at the global and local levels. Partly, this is also due to the ongoing efforts worldwide to redefine the relations between states’ right and authority on one hand and their roles and responsibility in addressing the common problems of humanity on the other. In other words, there are conscious unfinished attempts in enforcing the

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cognitive transition in how governments and global citizens think about sovereignty, global governance, and universal common goods. It is not inappropriate to say that the term has come to represent the spirit of the age. However, the path taken by human security before it entered into common use in contemporary conversations as we see today has been marked by reluctance among practitioners and doubt in academia.

The term is truly the product of the post-Cold War era. The fact that this initiative grew out of an international organization—the United Nations Development Program (UNDP)—made it more remarkable in terms of its opposition to the conventional state-centric conceptualization of world affairs. Its appearance marked a concern about the increasing inefficiency of traditional beliefs and mechanisms to cope with the complexity of global interdependence.

Despite the lack of controversy in identifying when exactly "human security" first appeared as a new concept in global governance—since there is a consensus in crediting the UNDP’s 1994 Human Development Report for first broaching the word—its obscure definition and practical implications made the term only sporadically mentioned by policy-makers and academic figures. This was true even after the 1995 Copenhagen Social Development Summit which was said to be organized to promote this particular notion. To be sure, the vagueness of the term drew constructive attention from scholars who tried to provide it with an appropriate meaning and to list a range of issues counted as human security. Not surprisingly the discrepancy and lack of consensus in such works of definition drew doubts and criticisms from others who questioned the concept's practical use, especially as a research guideline. This frustration was summarized in the oft-cited work by Roland Paris who was skeptical about the usefulness of the concept as an analytical tool. However, Paris acknowledged the practical advantage derived from this unintended vagueness; that is, the concept has the potential to be strategically utilized as a general banner under which a broad range of relevant actors, resources, and activities can be brought together to address problems affecting global citizens.

At the beginning of the 2010s, “human security” has become a concept with substantial influence beyond being merely a temporary fad or catchphrase. Following the 2003 report of the UN Commission on Human Security (CHS) that attempted to clearly define the
term along with its purposes and guidelines for action, human security has gained greater substance and acquired a more or less common meaning and interpretation. Although there is no set of criteria to precisely gauge whether the degree of its influence deserves the status of an international norm, the concept has undoubtedly become the basis for developing practical policy guidelines in the form of both the international agenda advocated by the UN, e.g. the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the Responsibility to Protect (RtoP), and the national policies of some countries which have endorsed the concept as a principle for their engagement with the outside world.

Japan and human security

Among these countries, Japan has been one of the most active in endorsing the term. It has shown activism and leadership not only in adopting human security into its foreign policy formation and its vision for global roles, but also in reinforcing and disseminating the notion on the international stage. In fact, the development of international mechanisms regarding human security owes much to Japanese initiatives. Especially, from the period of prime minister Keizo Obuchi onward, Japan has been contributing to the progress of the concept by adding frameworks and mechanisms for action into what would otherwise be an abstract idea. One remarkable input from Japan was the establishment of the UN Trust Fund for Human Security. This initiative first appeared with Obuchi’s pledge to provide 500 million yen to help revive Asian economies after the 1998 crisis. The fund was then extended to subsidize various UN projects to improve human security in general beyond the region. Also, the formation in 2001 of CHS, whose works greatly contributed to the institutionalization of this relatively new idea, was first broached by the Japanese prime minister Yoshiro Mori in a speech at the UN Millennium Summit. Credit was also given to Japan for being a key advocate of this concept outside the UN. Through lobbying efforts by Japanese leaders, human security, as both concept and agenda, became part of many international declarations issued at various intergovernmental venues. The release of the 2003 CHS Report, Human Security Now, provided another catalyst for Japan’s activism in this field; the compilation of the new ODA Charter (2003) and the attempt at ODA reform were
viewed as substantive responses to that report. These efforts helped substantiate the Japanese position as a leading nation in the agenda. They also showed the Japanese commitment to contribute to international common goods using human security as a flagship. It has been repeatedly emphasized by the Japanese government that the concept has become an important pillar of Japan's diplomacy.¹²

The aim of this article is to investigate the functions and meaning of human security as a slogan and principle for Japanese foreign policy. More specifically, I focus on the following questions. What is the general purpose of the concept in Japan's foreign policy, making it worth the government's effort to promote it abroad and reshape the national policy accordingly? How does human security work, or more precisely, how is it consciously utilized by policy-makers and policy advocates to achieve Japan's diplomatic goals? As suggested by the main title, this work will emphasize the raison d'être of the concept specifically in Japan's policy of international contribution and its role as an active, responsible power on the world stage. Recognizing that the problem of evaluation always plagues works that try to give accounts or analyses of a specific state's policy and action, I cannot pretend that this work is completely free from such evaluative assumptions, although I do not intend to give an evaluative account of what Japan has achieved in terms of human security.

Academic writings on the question of Japan's international roles or activism can be divided into those that praise Japan and those that press Japan to do more. To use more cynical terms, the debate has been between the Japan-sympathizing (nihon biiki) and the Japan-bashing (nihon tataki). This work leans somewhat to the former. It contends that the key concern behind Japan's international championing and domestic introduction of the concept has revolved around the recognition of the country's obligation to provide international public goods (kokusai kokyosai). This concern involves a recognition of the country's international status as one of the world powers, and a consideration of the responsibilities, obligations, and expectations that other nations have toward it. This concern is also “other-directed” in the sense that it aims to address the welfare of others or solve common problems beyond immediate self-interests. Put more simply, human security functions with the good intention to promote international welfare and to reinforce the international contribution aspect of Japan's foreign
policy rather than to search for narrow national interest as traditionally defined.

The multipurposeness of human security

A policy orientation toward international common goods and the welfare of others, as encapsulated in the slogan "international contribution ( kokusai kōken) or cooperation ( kokusai kyōryoku)", is not a new phenomenon in Japan. It has been established as one of the important foreign policy aspects prior to the advent of human security. In fact, it can be traced back to the 1980s when Japan was forced to address the problem of becoming more powerful and meeting the expectations of others on its behavior as an economic power and a responsible member of the liberal world. How the new slogan of human security came to be part of this long-practiced policy and how it has changed the nature of this policy are questions this article tries to answer. I argue that human security plays multiple functions in both developing and constraining Japan's role as an international contributor. These functions are crucial for Japan to strike a balance in its unique international position, namely as a state compliant to global norms and obligations, and simultaneously as a non-military, civilian state.

By multipurposeness, I mean that human security serves both instrumental means and principled ends at the same time. As a means, the concept provides rationales and justifications, or excuses, for external as well as domestic audiences. Externally, the emphasis on human security injects meaningfulness, and even significance, to the continuity of Japan's contribution to the low-political agenda—or indirect roles in global peace and security—using largely non-military methods of development. Thus, the concept makes what Japan has been doing and is good at, yet formerly seemed "too little" for foreigners, more justified and worthy. It in turn provides Japan with a tool of defense against international criticisms and demands for an active military contribution which is forbidden by Japan's domestic institutions. Besides this external demand for Japan's more "normal" international roles, Japan's domestic public constitutes an opposite force calling for a less active, limited contribution policy. Japanese elites view that the domestic audiences always need solid justification for dedicating the country's surplus wealth to address the welfare of
foreigners without any concrete material return. Although the political and intellectual elites, especially the so-called “internationalists,” have continuously made efforts to educate the Japanese people (especially since the late 1980s onward) to come to terms with the country’s international role, this opposition to a more active contribution remains quite strong. Human security as a principle provides a motivational force or sense of mission for domestic audiences who were otherwise skeptical of such a charitable policy. In terms of strategic means, thus, human security functions as a bulwark against the forces driving Japan’s contribution policy away from the status quo. These forces are, on one hand, the external pressure for Japan to assume more high political, military roles and, on the other hand, the domestic demands for less contributive roles.

I also argue that human security is not merely used by the Japanese as a strategic instrument to maintain the status quo of contribution policy. It is also used as a principled guideline to set an appropriate goal favorable for Japan’s normative condition and identity. In this sense human security has not lacked substantive content in the process of foreign policy formulation; in fact, it provides important inputs for gradual change in Japan’s international role. In short, the concept gives meaning to what Japan has been well-versed at contributing and, importantly, to the goal Japan tries to achieve in its own terms. As will be shown below, human security is utilized to improve the quality and efficiency of the country’s contributions. Concretely, the concept has the following functions: to set the policy agenda; to provide guidelines, philosophy, and vision for Japan’s foreign policy; to expand the country’s roles and leadership in the wider field; and to incorporate various actors into the policy of contribution.

**Human security and its implications for state practices**

Before examining in detail the purposes and functions of human security in Japan’s contribution policy, this section provides a brief background on the impacts and expectations of the concept on state behavior in general. It may seem that human security is a concept that came to challenge traditional thought about the state as the primary actor in international relations. This is because the concept originated from a non-state actor. Also, it advocates an anti-thesis of how we
regard the state as the center of our thinking about security whether as the main concern for insecurity or the principal entity to provide for our security. However, the 2003 CHS Report fully recognizes that the new concept of security centering on individual human beings is complementary to traditional thought about security centering on states. It also provides guidelines to states for achieving human security. This means that rather than questioning the function of the state, the new concept not only reconfirms the state’s primary role but also entrusts it with new expectations and obligations, expanding beyond its traditional role of security provider.

Human security may appear to compromise the status of sovereignty as the overarching principle guiding world affairs (as the effective means to deal with state security or with the welfare and safety of people). This is partly true in the sense that in the globally interdependent world, states and their populations have to face security problems from various transnational forces which cannot be effectively dealt with by each state on its own. The need for multilateral efforts to supplement the state’s “diminished competence” brings into question the state autonomy which is at the heart of sovereignty. This doubt, however, does not amount to a rejection of the state as a means to deal with the broader concept of threats ingrained in human security. In fact, the new concept calls for a modified principle of sovereignty to match security problems that are different forms from those faced before. It stresses the need for cooperation among states as well as collaboration between states and non-state actors, especially civil societies. Human security thus should not be understood as a substitute for the traditional focus of security centering on states, but as an extension of the concern of the community of states to new fields of security centering on humanity and human beings.

As the concept of human security developed, two practical implications for states were gradually established. These can be conceptualized as two types of responsibility expected from states apart from the exercise of absolute authority: the responsibility to protect and the responsibility to cooperate. It is appropriate to view the former as the modern-day version of the state’s main duty under the Westphalian system. Protecting its citizen from serious harm and guaranteeing their livelihood are the traditional raison d’état. On the one hand, the advocacy of the responsibility to protect can be viewed as a recon-
firmation of state sovereignty: sovereign states look after the security of their citizens and decide what is best for their domestic affairs. On the other hand, as this concept has been invented and accepted internationally, it also embodies communal expectations about state behavior: states must perform their protective role without fail. They are monitored by the international community, including not only fellow states but also other non-state entities. Human security has created a global atmosphere that is less tolerant of state oppression or indifference towards people's human rights, poverty, or humanitarian conditions. Whenever a sovereign state is unable or unwilling to provide its citizens with the necessary means of security, the responsibility then shifts to the international community to address such a situation. The traditional concept of sovereignty comes into question in this sense of international intervention. From the standpoint of human security, the responsibility to protect can be considered a crystallization of how international society responds to threats to human beings that have changed in nature from aggressive inter-state wars to intra-state violence.\(^\text{17}\) Despite the lack of clear principle and prescription, the concept of responsibility to protect can be considered a way of bridging the divide between the traditional idea of sovereignty and human security.\(^\text{18}\)

Another responsibility for states is to fulfill international roles of cooperation and contribution. Transnational problems affecting countries and citizens in more than one territory constitute common threats to humanity. These problems—whether economic crises, refugee movements, international crimes, terrorism, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, ecological problems, pandemics, or instability caused by regional or ethnic conflicts—all require multilateral approaches.\(^\text{19}\) Apart from providing human security for their own populations, states are increasingly expected to contribute to the maintenance of order and stability and the promotion of common international agendas. This unconventional role, oriented to the outside community and common goods rather than narrow self-interest, is not a completely new ideology but has become strengthened and given significant rationale by the advent of human security. This new role is required to cope with the complexities of the post-Cold War world and new types of threat.

The contribution envisaged by human security also encompasses
one aspect that intrudes further on the long-established norm of sovereignty. If a sovereign state fails to protect basic human security, the international community steps in to address the situation. Thus, the welfare of foreign populations that previously fell outside the national interest as traditionally conceived has been brought into mainstream focus. And this prescription for the international community to take action in place of any incapable or unwilling state leads to the notion of interference or intervention into domestic affairs. To respond to intrastate violence or violation of human rights by a state's authority, other states representing the international community may seek to intervene by military means under the principle of minimum use of force whether in the form of peace making or peacekeeping operations (PKO). This constitutes what is called "humanitarian intervention" and it directly addresses the ideal of "freedom from fear" ingrained in the concept of human security. Another type of intervention that is less coercive and controversial involves the provision of resources in low-political issues for other states. The contribution and assistance in this socio-economic field, the so-called "development intervention," seeks to serve the ideal of "freedom from want." Although different in target and method, the two types of intervention are inseparably intertwined and together they constitute a comprehensive and integrated approach to achieve human security. Eimi Watanabe, a Japanese UNDP officer, emphasized: "unless there is peace, it is impossible for development; simultaneously, peace without concern for development is not sustainable."

A negative excuse against high-political roles

Japan has been an active player in "development intervention" long before the invention of the concept of human security. Since it regained autonomy from the American occupation, Japan had been contributing to so-called North-South agendas. Starting from technical cooperation under the Colombo Plan since 1954 and economic assistances in the name of war reparations to former victims of its aggression, this economic contribution developed into one of the most important policy pillars, Official Development Assistance (ODA). As the Japanese government became increasingly conscious of the country's growing economic power, the importance of ODA increased.
Despite criticisms that Japanese ODA lacked a clear vision or philosophy and was used as a "predatory commercial tool" to achieve narrow self-interests, ODA has always been the main item claimed by Japan as its contribution to global public goods. In fact, because Article 9 of the Peace Constitution and anti-military public sentiment constrained any assertive high-political roles abroad, economic assistance and cooperation seemed to be the best of the few choices that Japan had. And it served as a fortification, however fragile, against external reproaches that, for all its wealth, Japan was a free-rider in the liberal order, avoiding any burden in dealing with Cold War threats and never assuming roles proportionate to its power. Even when it had replaced the US as the world's biggest ODA provider in the late 1980s, Japan was still widely disdained for its "check-book diplomacy." After the Gulf Crisis, which served as the turning point in its involvement in global peace and security, Japan in the 1990s remained highly reluctant and restricted in its overseas military roles. Despite the fact that Japan consciously played indirect high-political roles—by using ODA to influence the political behavior of recipient states, or by funding and selectively engaging in PKOs—Japanese elites were strongly aware of the insufficiency of Japan's roles as a main player in constructing the post-Cold War order.

Japan's adoption of human security as a diplomatic slogan should be understood in the context of the country's concern or even obsession about outsiders' expectations of Japan's role in the new environment brought about by the end of the Cold War. The concept serves two purposes that taken together preserve the status quo of Japan's international role. On one hand, it is used to legitimize and emphasize the importance of the contributions to civil, low-political agendas which Japan has made, but which until the early post-Cold War years were seen as peripheral or irrelevant to the management of the liberal world order. Thus, it acts as a defense against calls from outside for more activism in high-political agendas. On the other hand, the concept is used in domestic discourses to justify the contribution policy to the Japanese public whose insensitivity to external affairs is viewed by internationalist elites as an impeding force. To this audience, human security is stressed as a norm recognized by the UN and worldwide so that it serves as a catalyst, or a positive excuse, to maintain the country's traditional role of contributor in an excuse for common goods
areas regarded as appropriate to its economic power.

In the first aspect, human security helps address the external pressures, especially from a key ally like the US, for more burden-sharing in global security, which is likely to involve military cooperation and the exercise of force overseas. This constitutes one of the major problems long plaguing Japan's foreign policy. In fact, the Japanese awareness of its international responsibility as a developed country has gradually heightened since the 1960s and peaked in the 1980s. This occurred through constant exposure to outside expectations. The events that increased Japan's awareness of the international role included the 1964 entry into the OECD that required member states to give aid, the participation in G7 conferences since 1975, dialogues with the US during the 1980s to address bilateral trade friction caused by Japan's economic power, and the involvement in the Gulf Crisis, the first international crisis after the end of the Cold War. The evolution of its contribution occurred step by step, slowly bringing Japan to become involved more in matters contradictory to its initial postwar pacifism. Beginning with economic assistance, Japan's role gradually embraced human resource contributions in the field of peace and security, beginning reluctantly with the dispatch of civilian officials to PKOs in the late 1980s and then the limited engagement of the Self Defense Force (SDF) in PKOs in the early 1990s.

The 1992 decision to allow the SDF to be dispatched abroad on peacekeeping missions was a compromise in response to the pressure for Japan to contribute force rather than provide only money in the Gulf military operations. The decision was made in the light of three important issues: that regional conflict (funso) would be endemic in the post-Cold War world with the Gulf Crisis representing what was to come; that Japan was expected by others to engage more in the collective leadership to build and manage a new world order; and that sending the SDF only to PKOs when conflicts came to an end was "too little, too late" and failed to meet demands for Japan to make a timely provision of force for multinational military operations during times of crisis. After the 9/11 incident Japan responded adeptly to the requirement of circumstance with temporary measures to send forces to join the US-led military operations in areas of conflict. But throughout the 1990s many Japanese policy makers and observers feared that Japan would suffer from policy paralysis in the event of
another Gulf-like international crisis. This was because the PKO Law
did not provide a legal basis for that type of military operation and the
turmoil during the long parliamentary debates on Japan’s appropriate
posture during the Gulf Crisis clearly revealed the psychological limit
and tolerance of the Japanese public in this matter. However, recog-
nizing that it had to share burden in creating a world order and address
the post-Cold War funso problem, Japan needed a new policy vision to
navigate these troubled waters.

Apart from contributing financially and physically to PKOs while
playing the conventional role of developer, some policy orientations to
guide the country’s new post-Cold War role as a civilian power were
proposed in domestic discourses. They were, among others, humani-
tarian roles and roles involving human rights. Before human security
became widely recognized in the second half of the 1990s, Japan had
been toying with the idea of playing a substantive role in promoting
human rights, especially when intra-state conflicts were widely seen by
policymaking and academic circles as the essence of the post-Cold War
world and the major source of human rights abuse. However, Japa-
nese policy and opinion makers later identified the problems involved
in this policy orientation.

The first problem was that the method to solve issues of human
rights in conflicting states might involve the use of force. This necessity
of force was recognized by the 1992 UN report, An Agenda for Peace,
which was intended to reconsider UN peace mechanisms to meet the
post-Cold War condition. This report advocated an assertive and pro-
active strategy for bringing peace to troubled zones and proposed to
revise the traditional understanding of the minimum use of force to
include the use of force to compel compliance necessary to accomplish
a peacekeeping mission. When the idea of peace and human rights was
translated into that military-related practical prescription, it was not
the place for Japan to play a leading role. The second problem was that
human rights were often used by Western powers as a convenient justi-
fication for humanitarian intervention in undemocratic states. As a
result, Third World countries felt victimized by this action. They were
skeptical about the principle involved and usually reasoned that such
interventions were highly politicized and susceptible to abuse by the
West, and that the meaning and priority given to individual rights
should be varied depending on society, culture, and degree of develop-
ment. This concern among developing countries was acknowledged by many Japanese opinion makers. Taken together, these two problems made it problematic to commit Japan to any role under the banner of human rights and humanitarian intervention.

The emergence of human security provided a comprehensive and integrated framework to conceptualize a variety of complex post-Cold War global issues, including human rights but not focusing uniquely on this single item. Japanese leaders and intellectuals usually emphasize the multifaceted priorities that this concept gives to conflict resolution, human rights, post-conflict reconstruction, and development. They also stress the interconnectedness of these elements to achieve the related goal of "freedom from fear" and "freedom from want," and acknowledge the equal importance of humanitarian and development intervention. In this way, human security opened a "window of opportunity" for Japan to amplify the significance of development intervention and in turn legitimize its role in low-political agendas beyond the narrow conception of human rights protection.

Akihiko Ueda, the head of the Global Issue Department of MOFA, opined that Canada's approach to human security, which focused narrowly on the aspect of humanitarian intervention to protect human rights, could be counter-productive in the long run because it drew distrust from developing countries. He stressed that the Japanese approach was to build partnerships with developing countries to help alleviate low-political, development-related agendas such as poverty, refugees, and environmental problems. This reflects the expedient advantage provided by the broadness and vagueness of the concept, which, as recognized by Ueda, allows different interpretations by developed and developing states and a myriad of possibilities for selective engagement. In this sense, human security provides Japan with a space capacious enough to incorporate its long-acustomed role of developer on an equal footing with high-political roles. Since both low-political, non-military elements—or the so-called "soft threats"—and high-political, security matters are now regarded as equally necessary components to take into account under the new concept of human security, it is therefore not surprising that many human security advocates in Japan see the swift endorsement of the concept as natural, especially for Japan with its unique national identity. This is largely due to its function in justifying Japan's existing roles and in shielding
against external pressures forcing Japan into roles that the country is uncomfortable to play.

The positive excuse for common goods

Despite the compatibility between human security and Japan's desirable role, the introduction of human security as a key principle into Japan's diplomacy took some time. This can be explained partly by the novelty of the term itself and partly by the timing of its first appearance in a 1994 UNDP report, not long after the settlement of a divisive debate in Japanese society about its post-Cold War role. As mentioned, this debate was driven by the Gulf Crisis and its outcome was the PKO Law. The advent of this law meant that, despite the remaining limitation, the Japanese had successfully carved out a certain role and claimed their share of responsibility in building a new world order. To be sure, during the mid-1990s, Japanese authorities made sporadic and superficial references to human security, but it took strong political leadership and a new context for the concept to penetrate all aspects of foreign policy. Prime Minister Obuchi is credited for his vision and political entrepreneurship in seizing the window of opportunity to reframe Japan's international commitment in the light of human security. Generally speaking, at the end of every decade, Japanese society would brainstorm a vision of the future; Obuchi's initiative came amid uncertainty about the new millennium and an intellectual mobilization to again review the country's external role. By declaring its commitment to revive the Asian economy in line with the ideal of human security, Japan seemed to make clear its stance to stick with its development role but now with better grounds for self-justification. That Japan's introduction of human security happened in this context of an Asian economic crisis also confirmed the country's low-political orientation in the division of labor of global human security issues.41

Obuchi was a representative of norm entrepreneurs who promoted human security as a universal value on the world stage. A norm entrepreneur refers to an agent who actively advocates, disseminates, and tries to make institutionalized certain ideas and practices. Inside Japan, Japanese norm entrepreneurs also utilized this new concept to frame their advocacy of greater international contribution to the
domestic audience. One of the lessons learnt by Japanese internationalists from their past advocacy was that the Japanese public needed perpetual reminders that contributions to global common goods were not just a question of optional altruism but also an indispensable means for their own survival.⁴² Even though the attempt to inculcate this attitude was under way since the 1980s, in the 2000s many political and opinion elites still believed that insensitivity and passivism largely defined the characteristics of the Japanese people regarding the country's international role.⁴³ Political entrepreneurs still sought to inform the public that active contributions were needed to make Japan a well-accepted member of the world order and to avoid being isolated or becoming “an orphan from the world” (sekai no koji). This was a life-and-death question considering Japan's high-level dependency on the openness and stability of the current international system. For its own peace and prosperity, Japan needed not only to avoid isolation from the system, but also to contribute to the maintenance of an international order favorable to the country's interests. In recent decades, this argument was renewed by international-role advocates as they perceived that long economic stagnation risked creating doubt among the Japanese public about the rationale for Japan's generosity, and heightened domestic skepticism about the effectiveness and return benefits of ODA.⁴⁴

Human security can be viewed as riding on this trend set by political entrepreneurs since the 1980s. It strengthened those rationales within the new post-Cold War context. Advocates used two types of framing strategy to make human security a reason for the domestic audience to support Japan's policy on international contribution. The first strategy took the form of what Amitav Acharya calls “norm localization” which means a conscious attempt to stress the coherence or congruity between a norm imported from outside and an existing norm in a society; and to “graft” the foreign norm onto the existing one to make it easily institutionalized.⁴⁵ In Japan, the congruity between human security and long-entrenched domestic principles was consciously emphasized, especially by drawing several parallels between the spirit of the Peace Constitution and the concept of human security.⁴⁶

As analyzed by Toshiyuki Nasukawa, these parallels included a reference to “the positive concept of peace” ingrained in both.⁴⁷ As opposed to negative peace, meaning a mere absence of physical violence, posi-
tive peace is more comprehensive and multifaceted. It includes the peace which results from the freedom from fear and freedom from want. The preamble of Japan’s constitution makes clear that creating such conditions internationally constitutes one of the “high ideals” for the nation. It states that “we recognize that all peoples of the world have the right to live in peace, free from fear and want.” In addition, the idea that this high ideal must be achieved by peaceful, non-military means, as prescribed by Article 9, is also congruent with human security’s strong attention to low-political agendas such as development and peace-building that contribute to the prevention of violence and the sustainable maintenance of peace. That the Peace Constitution and human security shared the same ideological roots was also emphasized to make the new principle agreeable internally.

It is well-known that the two freedoms of human security originated from US President Franklin D. Roosevelt’s 1941 speech on the four freedoms—freedom of speech, of worship, from fear, and from want—which also animated the New Deal vision. Japan’s postwar constitution was also founded on this ideal. Although this charter was initially viewed as an ideological imposition by the American occupiers, it became the nation’s core document guiding politics and society. Grafting an imported norm onto such a widely accepted institution made international cooperation under human security a mere extension of Japanese national identity, thereby justifying the normative value of Japan’s international contribution in the eyes of the domestic audience.

The more practical idea of comprehensive security enjoyed the same treatment. The recognition that low-political, non-military issues were as important as traditional security concerns had found its place in Japan well before in international politics. The idea of comprehensive security which took into consideration traditional security such as external military threats to the state, as well as non-military threats such as food and energy security, internal safety, and environmental crises, was formally endorsed by the Japanese government since 1980. Arguably, this concept was not translated in a significant way into consistent policy guidelines, but it reflected an attempt to re-conceptualize how Japan perceived its national security. Comprehensive security reflected the acute awareness of Japan’s vulnerability caused by its lack of self-sufficiency in terms of natural resources and means of force, and hence its dependence on international cooperation.
The prior existence of this security conceptualization, which avoided the conventional hierarchic view of national threats, made human security, which shared the same sensibility in discerning humanity’s threats, not absolutely foreign to Japanese society; and made it relatively easy for norm entrepreneurs to describe the imported concept in terms of comprehensive security. Human security in essence was emphasized as compatible to this long-acknowledged indigenous view of security. Human security was also explained as a version of comprehensive security modified to match the post-Cold War world in which there is a diversity of threats, especially threats beyond the control of a single state.  

Another framing strategy was to shape the perception of national interest in terms of “systemic thinking.” The logic of human security helped rationalize this view in the post-Cold War context which in turn justified Japan’s contribution more on the basis of (indirect) self-interest. Systemic thinking was aimed to mitigate the Japanese public’s doubt about the true value of international contributions—doubt which arose because the provision of global public goods did not bring a visible or direct benefit. The policy of ODA, despite the long-practice, had not won public trust and had to be traded off with other budget purposes that served more immediate interests.

Systemic thinking of national interest means an understanding that the national welfare hinges upon the health and welfare of the whole system of which it is part. To be sure, this type of framing was not new in Japan. Successive governments and internationalist norm entrepreneurs have been disseminating this view since the 1980s to prepare the public for an open and internationalized Japan. The view basically emphasized Japan’s dependence on the system for peace and prosperity as well as the increasingly interdependent nature of the world. The argument went on to present Japan’s contribution to global common goods as a long-term investment designed to shape or manage an international environment favorable to Japan.

To reinforce this view, human security was introduced to emphasize the intensifying degree of interconnectedness in the post-Cold War system. As mentioned, the basic concern for human security is that complex interdependence and transnational forces are now affecting countries and people beyond geographical regions and that humanity now faces a variety of global-scale threats that are inter-related and
that require multilateral cooperation more than ever before. The narrative depicts Japan as a concerned party—a stakeholder—in dealing with such global threats. Japan cannot consider itself a bystander in the management of problems or crises outside its own territory since they can potentially affect Japan; and at the same time Japan’s positive role can affect the course of international events. Thus, contributing to global welfare is akin to working indirectly for Japan’s national interests.57 This logic has been included in several official documents including the Diplomatic Blue Book and the 2003 ODA Charter. In an attempt to portray ODA as serving the interests of others as well as self-interest, Toshihiko Kinoshita, a Japanese scholar, argued that “the eradication of poverty, at one glance, seems to be a question of humanitarian aid. But the poverty problem can unsettle a regime which can in turn de-stabilize a whole region. And that can potentially affect Japan.”58 Also, “environmental problems may seem irrelevant to Japan. But the earth is interconnected; if we think of this problem as potentially affecting our posterity and see the issue as the extension of our own interest, it is reasonable to devote money to it.”59 In this way, Kinoshita emphasized the necessity of shifting the Japanese people’s perception of national interest to take account of global interconnectedness.

Hajime Furuta, the head of MOFA’s Economic Cooperation Bureau, also used a similar systemic logic to link the contribution to global human security with Japan’s own national interest. In a 2004 opinion piece, he reasoned that “Japan has been benefiting from global interdependence as its acquisition of resources, energy, and food depends on imports from outside. Also, several Japanese businesses have gone overseas to reap profit from international trade. The contribution to the stability and development of the developing nations through ODA can secure for Japan not only the status as an honored member of the international society, but also national safety and prosperity. It is, thus, an indispensable investment in order to advance the interest of the Japanese people.”60

Human security as a goal in its own right

So far, this article has presented human security as a strategic argument for deflecting external and domestic pressures and for reorienting
contribution policy. Beyond its function as an excuse for the status quo, the concept also serves as a new directive for Japan's contribution to common goods. Human security is involved in foreign policy formation in three ways that shape the characteristics of the contribution.

First, human security functions as a framework for agenda-setting. Japan had suffered from, and had been self-conscious about, the fact that its contribution lacked a clear vision or philosophy. Several rounds of debate on what should be a philosophical basis for developmental aid took place in Japan. Despite the eventual stipulation of principles for aid policy in the form of the 1992 ODA Charter, Japan still felt that its contributions to various fields—development, poverty reduction, post-conflict reconstruction, refugee and environmental problems—had no broad guidelines and seemed to serve scattered purposes in separate issue areas. Human security was a broad concept that drew these seemingly unorganized objectives into one overarching theme with a common goal of solving the multiplicity of problems threatening the lives of world citizens. The concept, thus, works as a vision for agenda-setting that gives greater meaning to Japan's contribution to various low-political issues and provides a theme to incorporate different actors. As the concept has been sponsored from the start by UN agencies, reference to it helps emphasize the role of UN-centered diplomacy in Japan's postwar foreign policy. The concept also serves as a new stance and direction that Japan had been seeking to define its role in the post-Cold War context. In short, the concept both lends some consistency to Japan's past actions and justifies an expansion of its future role.

Second, human security functions to strengthen cooperation between various sectors, including different government agencies, NGOs, and private businesses, which each have different potentials and resources. As recognized by the UN, to deal effectively with problems of human security, cooperation among different public, private, and civil society entities is essential. Under the theme of human security, the Japanese government has made greater use of Japanese NGOs to contribute to international public goods such as sustainable development and post-conflict reconstruction.

Third, human security as a universal principle is seen by some government officials and opinion leaders as a potential area for Japan
to promote international norms or rules guiding the global order. Japan's activism in this field can boost its global share of leadership in rule-setting, apart from being an active rule-follower. This activism helps expand Japan's political role in building a world order that is rule-based and that prioritizes the welfare of individual human beings.

**Conclusion**

This article seeks to explain the purpose and function of the human security concept in Japan's foreign policy, and to understand why the Japanese government displayed rare enthusiasm to advocate this new and vague principle as a universal value and to make it a main pillar of its foreign policy. I argue that the adoption of the human security concept has mainly been driven by Japan's search for appropriate post-Cold War roles. As the 20th century drew to a close, Japanese society felt uncertain about future circumstances and the direction of its shared responsibility. This concern was not something new in Japanese politics and society; in fact, the obsession about what role Japan should play was shaped by its unique position due to its postwar anti-militarism, its new status as an economic power, and the accompanying external expectations.

Human security serves several functions in foreign policy concerning Japan's contribution to public goods. On the one hand, it strategically serves as a justification or excuse to maintain the status quo of its low-political, development role. The concept is consciously used as the key principle to strike a fine balance between the external pressure forcing Japan to do more and the domestic inertia to do less. Japan found that its attempts to meet outside expectations, especially from America (i.e., that Japan should share the burden in peace, security and conflict resolution by means that involves some use of force), had come to the end of the road. While Japan could at best slowly expand its military role in global peace and conflict resolution due to its institutional constraints and public antimilitary attitude, initiatives by the UN and the Western powers in this area had progressed in a way inconvenient to Japan's position. The concept of human security justifies Japan continuing its traditional contribution in civilian, low-political, development fields because the concept avoids the old hierarchy of issues and gives priority to the management of "soft threats."
Bringing the new concept into Japan’s policy formulation also helped justify the contribution policy in the eyes of the domestic public—often perceived by internationalist role-advocates as insensitive or unaware of international affairs. Human security was framed as congruent with the core values and identity of postwar Japan, and was used to emphasize the interconnectedness of the post-Cold War globalized world, thereby strengthening the “systemic thinking” of national interest that had been promoted for some time. Human security served as an excuse for maintaining the country’s activism in such fields as ODA and economic cooperation. In short, human security served both negative and positive reasons that, taken together, worked against forces pushing for change in the status quo of Japan’s contribution. In addition to its strategic framing function, human security also serves as a goal guiding Japan’s foreign policy in three ways—as an agenda-setting theme, as a concept to incorporate different entities, and as an area where Japan can perform a leading role in building a rule-based international order.

Notes

7 See Shoji Mariko, “Kokuren ni okeru ningen no anzenhoshō gainen no igi: kihan toshite no ichizuke wo megutte” (The implication of the concepts of human
9 Canada and Norway have also been active in promoting the concept. This was reflected by the publication of article about human security co-authored by the foreign ministers of both nations in International Herald Tribune. See Lloyd Axworth and Knut Vollebaek, “Now for a new diplomacy to fashion a humane world,” International Herald Tribune, 21 October 1998. This was acknowledged by a Japanese policy maker like Hideaki Ueda. See Hideaki Ueda, “Ima, naze ‘ningen no anzenhōshō’ nanoka” (Why ‘human security’ now?), Gaiko Forum, February 2000, p. 70.
12 Ueda, “Ima, naze ‘ningen no anzenhōshō’ nanoka,” p. 69.
15 Ueda, “Ima, naze ‘ningen no anzenhōshō’ nanoka,” p. 72.
17 Watanabe, Ueda, and Yokota, “Kokka no anzenhōshō kara ningen no anzenhōshō e,” p. 22.
25 See Isami Takeda, “Nihon gaikō no atarashī furontia: nammin • PKO • ODA no seisaku intāfusu” (A new frontier for Japanese diplomacy: the interface among


30 See for example Hideaki Asahi, “Jinken gaikō koso nihon no ikiru michi” (Human rights diplomacy is the way for Japan), *Shokun*, September 1994; Yōzō Yokota, “Jinken wo meguru saikin no ugoki to nihon no gaikō” (The recent development of human rights and Japan’s diplomacy), *Gaiko Forum*, September 1994.


33 Andō, “Jinken mondai no ‘hiseijika’ ni okeru nihon no yakuwari,” p. 35.


37 Ueda, “Ima, naze ‘ningen no anzenhoshō’ nanoka,” p. 71.

38 Ueda, “Ima, naze ‘ningen no anzenhoshō’ nanoka,” p. 72.


40 See for example, Ueda, “Ima, naze ‘ningen no anzenhoshō’ nanoka,” p. 73; Watanabe, Ueda and Yokota, “Kokka no anzenhoshō kara ningen no anzenhoshō e,” p. 26; Andō, “Jinken mondai no ‘hiseijika’ ni okeru nihon no yakuwari,” p. 35.

41 Akiyama, “Kiro ni tatsu ningen no anzenhoshō,” p. 258.

43 Makoto Sunagawa, Sakutarō Tanino, Keiko Chino, and Toshio Watanabe, “Nihon ni totte ODA ga jūyō na riyū” (Why ODA is important for Japan), Gaiko Forum, May 2002, p. 32.

44 Furuta, “Gaikō senryaku toshite no keizai kyōryoku: nihon no ODA wa nani wo mezashiteiru no ka,” p. 27.


46 Masato Noda, “ODA to NGO no pātonāshippu kyōka ni mukite: ningen no anzenhoshō no kanten kara” (Toward strengthening ODA-NGO partnerships: the human security viewpoint), Gaiko Forum, December 2006, p. 34.


52 Nasukawa, The History and Development of “Human Security” in Japanese Foreign Policy, p. 73.

53 Uchida, Kinoshita, Kohama, and Ōshima, “ODA wa gaikō sono mono de aru,” p. 27.

54 Watanabe, Ueda, and Yokota, “Kokka no anzenhoshō kara ningen no anzenhoshō e,” p. 21; Akiyama, “Kiro ni tatsu ningen no anzenhoshō,” p. 251.


56 Ueda, “Ima, naze ‘ningen no anzenhoshō’ nanoka,” p. 67.

57 Uchida et al, “ODA wa gaikō sono mono de aru,” p. 27.

58 Uchida et al, “ODA wa gaikō sono mono de aru,” p. 28.

59 Uchida et al, “ODA wa gaikō sono mono de aru,” p. 27.

60 Furuta, “Gaikō senryaku toshite no keizai kyōryoku: nihon no ODA wa nani wo mezashiteiru no ka,” p. 29.

61 Ueda, “Ima, naze ‘ningen no anzenhoshō’ nanoka,” pp. 67, 72.

62 Uchida et al, “ODA wa gaikō sono mono de aru,” pp. 27–8; see also Oshidari et al, “21 seiki no kokuren wa ningen no anzenhoshō wo mezasu.”

63 Ueda, “Ima, naze ‘ningen no anzenhoshō’ nanoka,” p. 72.

64 See Noda, “ODA to NGO no pātonāshippu kyōka ni mukite.”
