Introduction:
Conflict, Human Security and Peace-building

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The concept of human security emerged as a tool for coordinating various activities of international aid and peace operations in a comprehensive manner. The purpose of this study is to examine critical issues in handling armed conflict from the perspective of human security and explore the possibility of new practical approaches of peace-building.

This study does not recognize human security as contradictory to national security. The latter originally meant the security of nationals and should be included in the former. The reason why a new concept like human security is required is that serious problems in the contemporary world make it imperative to construct a strategic framework beyond national boundaries. Human security as a comprehensive and integrative perspective is crucial, since various contemporary problems ought to be understood to make effective use of limited resources of international society.

The study of human security should, like that of traditional national security, provide strategies for security. The difference between human security and national security is that the former identifies human beings as the objects to be secured and seeks to find more comprehensive approaches for security. Accordingly, those who implement security measures are not only national governments but also international organizations, local groups, NGOs, and so on. As this study focuses on the issues related to armed conflict, it assumes that the objects to be secured are directly or indirectly suffering people in or after armed conflict and the achievements should be addressed to those who are engaged in international aid and peace operations.

In so doing, this study seeks to set priorities among multiple tasks. Human security makes it possible to prioritize appropriate human needs. As traditional national security
determines priorities for securing national safety, human security determines priorities for securing fundamental needs of individuals beyond national boundaries. Of course, this does not mean that human security is a master concept over any other values and political considerations. Still, we expect human security to help contribute to peace-building because we understand that such a perspective is crucial to meeting challenges in new forms of armed conflict.

The relationship between traditional national security and human security is similar to that of “negative peace” and “positive peace.” In each relationship two distinct concepts relate to each other and the lack of one leads to that of the other. The importance of the elimination of structural violence is relevant to the recent trend of peace operations that emphasize aspects of peace-building. National security may strengthen human security and human security may prepare for national security. The agendas of human security including poverty, environmental degradation, drug trafficking, organized crimes, infectious diseases, refugees, arms transfers, land mines and terrorism are all relevant to armed conflict. In order to tackle these contemporary problems effectively, national security perspectives are not simply sufficient. Human security does not oppose national security, but will broaden the scope of strategies for overall security.

Armed conflict in the contemporary world cannot be understood as war between nations; most were intra-state conflicts. Civilian populations constitute a majority of victims in contemporary armed conflict. For instance, the reason why two million people are said to have died as a result of the conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo is that civilian populations became targets of armed groups, were recruited by them, and suffered from the impact of conflict in the form of starvation, malnutrition, infectious diseases, and so on. Comprehensive strategies of peace-building to meet various needs of human security are needed.

The need for integrated approaches has become evident in the ongoing “war” of international society against terrorism: traditional national security is relevant, but a more comprehensive view is desperately needed to contain terrorism. Even the war in Iraq shows a need for the perspective of human security. The world’s strongest country can easily win a conventional war or a “major combat,” but it can neither prevail in unconventional combats nor win peace without implementing effective peace-building.
Human security is also key to how to settle a military conflict in a responsible manner.

This is the reason why we emphasize the importance of peace-building in pursuing human security. It is sometimes asserted that military measures constitute one crucial means to achieve human security. While it is true that while human security cannot categorically exclude such measures, how to resort to coercive measures is always a difficult choice and should not be decided in a hasty manner. Peace-building must be incorporated into an overall strategy of human security. Human security incorporates short- and long-term perspectives. Unless sustainable peace-building follows coercive measures, human security including individual security and social stability will not be achieved.

Considering the nature of this study as a joint project of Japanese and American scholars with help from others, we take into account possible measures for human security that could be taken by Japan and the United States. We do not exclude from our scope the impact of military and police operations for human security that are conducted by national governments. The assessment of international agencies in the fields of humanitarian aid, development, and peace operations is also expected to help the Japanese and US governments work with them. We are aware that while the Japanese government is keen to mention human security, the US government has been indifferent to the concept. However, this does not mean that activities of the United States are irrelevant to human security, or that strategies for human security have no implications for US policies. Given that the two governments are the major donors of international agencies, it is imperative to assess how they contribute to human security.

In short, this study attempts to identify and prioritize measures for human security in and after armed conflict. Considering available human and material resources realistically, the project team seeks to provide strategic guidelines for human security in armed conflict and new approaches of peace-building.

Notes

Developmental Programmes) intensively discussed the concept of human security, it was apparent that the concept was used to divert resources from the area of traditional national security to that of developmental aid. It was a reflection of the time in the initial stage of the post-Cold War era. See United Nations Development Program (UNDP), Human Development Report (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994).

