

Further Reading: Development, Risk, and Human Security

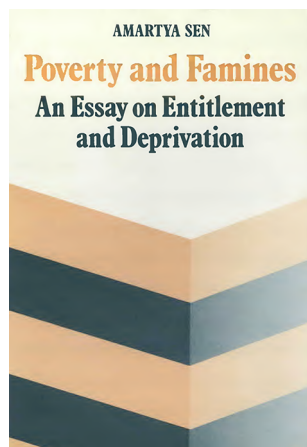
Yoichi Mine

Executive Director, JICA Ogata Sadako Research Institute for Peace and Development

At the foundation of the concept of human security lies the theory of Amartya Sen. The idea of human development—the parent framework of human security—was born out of Sen’s capability approach. Sen also played a leading role in producing the 2003 report of the Commission on Human Security, which he co-chaired with Sadako Ogata. The approach to measurement referenced throughout the present report, *Human Security Today*, was originally proposed in the so-called Stiglitz-Sen-Fitoussi Commission report of 2009. Sen’s influence has been overarching in this process of intellectual endeavor.

It is widely recognized that his capability approach provides the basis of human development thinking. What, then, is Sen’s theoretical approach that underlies human security?

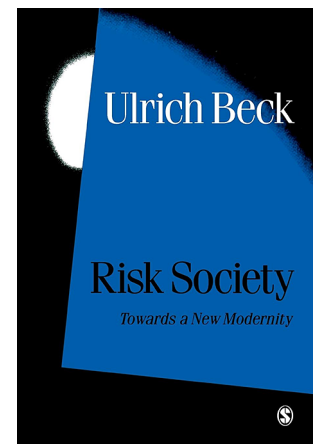
I would argue that this is the entitlement approach. He analyzed the dynamics of famines in South Asia and Africa in one of his early masterpieces, ***Poverty and Famines: An Essay on Entitlement and Deprivation*, by Amartya Sen (Oxford University Press, 1981)**. Taking examples of life conditions of vulnerable people, such as agricultural laborers, he showed that even in the same famine crisis, the degree of suffering varied enormously depending on social classes and other attributes of people.



The realities of poverty and daily life cannot be understood in terms of national averages. In many countries, famines broke out in years when food supply exceeded the annual average. By disaggregating statistics compiled at the national level down to the community level and further to the individual level, it becomes possible to see who is being left behind, where, and in what ways. This analysis of famines anticipated the SDGs’ principle of “leaving no one behind.”

In this book, Sen defined “entitlements” as the commodities that an individual can legitimately claim under given social conditions. Extending this approach, which analyzed famines in Asia and Africa as crises of food entitlements, into a more general theory of crisis and risk could open new avenues for the study of human security as a form of grounded political economy, moving beyond the political analysis of international norms.

It therefore becomes necessary to examine a more general theory of risk. In the late 1980s, after the publication of ***Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity*, by Ulrich Beck, translated by Mark Ritter (Sage, 1992)**, a broad range of global threats affecting people regardless of East-West ideology came to be widely recognized.



Around the time when Beck wrote *Risk Society*, anti-nuclear movements by European citizens were gaining

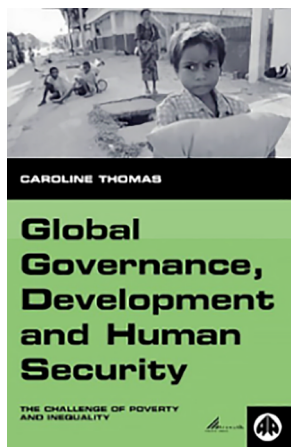
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momentum, driven by concerns over the deployment of intermediate-range nuclear missiles by the US and the USSR. When floods occur, it is low-income people living in dangerous lowland areas whose homes are washed away. However, in the event of nuclear war, the rich and the poor would perish alike. In our contemporary crises—climate change, infectious disease, economic collapse, violent conflict, etc.—the logics of class and risk are intricately intertwined. Beck's polemical argument, put forward in the twilight of the Cold War era, anticipated the birth of the human security idea.

Global crises impose hardship on people throughout the world in both the Global South and the Global North. Nevertheless, we cannot assume that the specific challenges historically faced by the Global South have been adequately understood by the rest of the world. The greatest transformation in 20th-century world history was perhaps the collapse of the Western empires, accompanied by the independence of Asian and African colonies and the subsequent spread of the Westphalian system of sovereign, equal nation-states across the entire globe. Nation-building became a historical task for the emerging nations, and in response, developed nations were called upon to support their self-help efforts.

In this context, though they are largely forgotten today, a group of scholars known as the “Third World Security School” once attempted to broaden the scope of security studies. For example, following the publication of the *Human Development Report 1994*, a British dissident scholar of international relations advanced arguments that are close to today's concept of human security, in ***Global Governance, Development and Human Security: The Challenge of Poverty and Inequality***, by Caroline Thomas (Pluto Press, 2000).

Thomas argued that a framework discussing security only in military terms was too narrow. In order to protect the security of individuals from poverty intensified by globalization,



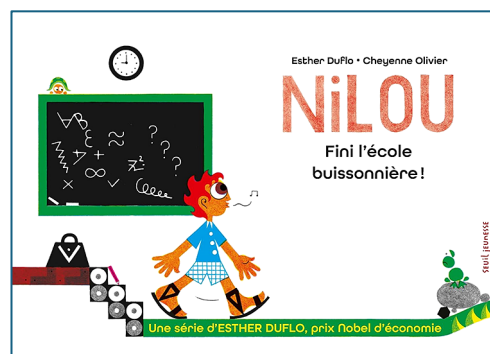
it was necessary to overhaul international development pathways and reform international financial institutions. She maintained that human security would be needed precisely for those people suffering from international and domestic inequality.

Now that a group of emerging nations is rapidly catching up, the era in which scholars of international relations from developed countries championed the cause of the Third World may have come to an end. However, the underlying reality has not changed dramatically: human insecurities continue to disproportionately burden those living on the periphery of the Global South. This is likely to be a major discussion point on the post-SDG agenda.

Roads are being built into rural areas, and schools and clinics are opening in villages and urban slums. People gain the ability to sell agricultural products at markets and to commute to factories for work. Such changes gradually expand people's choices, and these efforts are realizing human development.

In practice, however, the path of human development is full of ups and downs. People move forward by overcoming human security challenges that threaten human development. How can we capture this dynamic?

In addition to objective evidence, people's narrative is likely to play a significant part. It is in this spirit that a bold experiment was made in the form of a picture book series, ***La pauvreté expliquée aux enfants***, by Esther Duflo and Cheyenne Olivier (Seuil Jeunesse, 2022-2023).



In these books, primary school children in a fictional village in a developing country encounter various challenges (what economists refer to as risks) and work together with friends and adults to solve the problems they face. The children tackle serious issues such as school absenteeism, infectious diseases, the isolation of the elderly, deforestation,

and gender inequality, guiding the adults confidently, sometimes quarreling along the way.

Duflo, who won the Nobel Prize in Economics in 2019 alongside Abhijit Banerjee and Michael Kremer, is renowned for her pioneering research into development challenges using randomized controlled trials (RCTs). But Duflo is far from a cold scientist. In this series, she transforms evidence-

based findings into stories that are at times poignant and at times heartwarming, passing them on to future generations.

The illustrations by Cheyenne Olivier are equally distinctive. The character designs are lively yet geometric, evoking the Russian avant-garde art movement that was suppressed under Stalin.