Transcending traditional security (in Asia)

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A. Introduction.

Once upon a time there was a country where everyone played rugby. The people had played rugby for so long that they not only became comfortable with this game but many developed an attachment to it as well. One day a visitor came from a land far away and told the people of this country that the civilized people of the world no longer play rugby but now are playing football. So the people decided to change the name of their game to "football", but continued to play rugby. Then more visitors came and said that even though the name of the game is now "football", it is not football because the goal posts are rugby goalposts. So the people changed the goal posts to football goal posts, but continued to play rugby. Then other visitors came and said even if you call the game "football", and have football goal posts, it still is not football because the ball is a rugby ball. So the people changed the ball to a football, but continued to play rugby. Then more visitors came and said in real football there are 11 players to a team, but here there are 15 players. So the people changed the number of players on a team to 11. Now this country played a game they called "football", with 11 players on a team, with a football for a ball and football goal posts, but still using rugby rules, because it was just too much of a psychological difficulty to leave rugby entirely and begin playing football.

Often when new ways of understanding come to a society, the pressure to change is greater than the belief that the particular change is good, and so we can have situations like the above, and no real change takes place. In Asia I think we can see this phenomenon in many countries with respect to democratization and, relevant to the purposes of this conference, to the idea of "human security". To truly transcend traditional understandings of security and move towards a "human security" framework requires an in depth and honest attempt to see why we want to make this transition, and a careful analysis of how to do this.

B. Transcending traditional security aims.

The first question we need to answer is, "Why should we care about the well-being of people we do not know?" It is understandable why we are

concerned about family and friends, and see the importance of working for security in their lives. Sometimes when this concern runs into conflict with how we might understand the security of the "nation", it can lead to some deep soul searching. However, the transition to a "human security" framework in general requires that these tensions be dealt with even when it involves the security and well-being of citizens we do not know or have ever had contact with. In some cases, maybe even of those we do not like. Here is where we have to begin asking questions at a much deeper level, almost a metaphysical level, where we have to confront the question of what it is to be a human being. This will then be the position and belief on which the notion of human security can be based.

   There are a number of approaches that can be used. Some societies have a view of human rights woven into their culture. In such cases, then, the idea of human rights and all the accompanying structures can be used as the context for universal concern of human beings. For societies where this is not the case, what is needed is a deep look into its cultural/value systems which support the idea of a common humanity. For example, in Buddhist societies it might be the idea of "friends in the cycle of birth-aging-sickness-death". In mono-theistic based cultures it might be the idea that all human beings are "children of God". The cultural base for the concept of human security need not be the same in each society, there just needs to be some base. Then we can really play "football", and not just "rugby, in football clothing".

C. Transcending traditional security mechanisms and policies.
        Here there is the problem of what kind of change must come first. Do we first change the mechanism of security decisions (e.g. the make-up of national security councils), which will then lead to new ideas concerning security policies, or, do we first have a change in security policies brought about by the failure of current policies (e.g. white papers on new counter-terrorism policies) and then by necessity change the decision making mechanisms so that the new policies can be successful. This is a difficult question because the argument to change traditional security decision making mechanisms must rely on the need for new policies, but the fact that there is such a need is often not accepted by the existing traditional mechanisms. This is very similar to the problem of paradigm change. It is very difficult to get people of an existing paradigm to change over to a new one since all paradigms have built in justifications and rationales. The only

way is to offer alternatives and compete on the basis of how far each brings a sense of well-being to all of society.   In different societies, the appropriate strategies very likely will vary on this matter.

D. Last resort.
What if we do all the cultural value analysis needed, create new paradigms of security to compete with the old ones, try to show the urgency of accepting a human security framework, and still the necessary changes do not take place. How do we proceed then? Once we reach this situation I think we might need to take a clue from the past, a clue that is talked about in the song, "Have you been to jail for justice?" One of the verses of this song goes like this:

> *"Once unions were against the law*
> *And slavery was fine.*
> *Women were denied the vote,*
> *And children worked the mines."*

This verse talks about four important situations in the past where people's security was threatened. These were situations where violations of 'labor rights', 'civil rights', 'women's rights', and children's rights' were the norm. In all of these cases change was not brought about by debate or creative constructions. Rather, old laws were replaced by new laws because people put their conviction in support of human security on the line and carried out protests against the old laws, even if it led to being imprisoned due to violation of the old "unjust" laws. The chorus of this song is as follows:

> *"Have you been to jail for justice, let me shake your hand*
> *For sitting in and lying down are ways to make a stand.*
> *Have you sung a song for freedom, or marched that picket line*
> *If you've been to jail for justice, then you're a friend of mine."*

In the final analysis, we must do what is necessary.