

# International Intellectual Property Law and Human Security

Robin Ramcharan

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*“A major objective will be to have intellectual property rights systems that advance human security through the efficient development of appropriate drugs and the facilitation of their extensive use. Any resolution of the current impasse should favor flexibility and overcome import and export controls on the drugs and vaccines needed for emergencies. A balance must be crafted to provide incentives for research and development for both profitable products and technologies to fight diseases of the poor. That balance should also provide equitable access to life-saving essential drugs and vaccines for people unable to purchase technologies from the global marketplace. The balance should recognize the very large public investments in basic research that underlie product development by all manufacturers, including private ones”*

Human Security Now  
Commission on Human Security, 2003

# Foreword

With this book Professor Robin Ramcharan has made a distinct contribution to the literature on international intellectual property law. As former Chairman of the Advisory Board of the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) Worldwide Academy (WWA), and as former Director of the Raoul Wallenberg Institute of Human Rights and Humanitarian Law (RWI) when an LL.M program on international intellectual property rights law and human rights law was established in cooperation with the WWA at the University of Lund, I had the occasion to witness at first hand the debate about, and the need for, the modernization of the regime of international intellectual property law.

The perspectives of human security and human rights provide a helpful framework from which to approach this modernization, and Professor Ramcharan has helped to identify new vistas to that end. His proposal to set up an international equity panel within the WIPO is timely and innovative, and the intellectual property community should welcome his effort to make the case for this policy option.

I have known Robin for a long time and have enjoyed the opportunity to follow closely his educational, research, and professional endeavors. When he worked at the WWA I had the pleasure of cooperating with him. I am particularly pleased that his consistent pursuit of learning and research, his service with the WWA and his other academic undertakings have led to this highly creative book. I congratulate him warmly and commend his book to the intellectual property community.

Gudmundur Alfredsson  
Professor at the Universities of Akureyri and Strasbourg  
Former Chair, Advisory Board of the WIPO Worldwide Academy

# Preface

This book looks at the regime of international intellectual property law from the perspectives of human security. The concept of human security, we believe, provides a good framework for a contemporary reassessment of international intellectual property laws and for their modernization.

The concept of human security, though not directly labeled as such, received initial attention in theoretical works such as Barry Buzan's *People States and Fear*, which argued that national and international security must be anchored in individual security.<sup>1</sup> Subsequently, as the concept received express affirmation and prominence in the 1990s, it came to signify that the rationale of human endeavors nationally, regionally, and internationally should be to advance the security of human beings as individuals, as groups, and as constituent elements of humanity as a whole.

Professors McFarlane and Khong in their authoritative work on the intellectual history of human security at the United Nations, discuss how the concept of human security came about, how it came to refer to the individual as the subject in need of security, and how the concept has fared in its development dimensions and its protection dimensions (human rights).<sup>2</sup>

Seen in broad terms the regime of international intellectual property laws can be said to have had a core rationale from the outset of advancing human security by fostering and protecting the creativity of human beings so that it can help advance human progress and development. The literature on the regime of international intellectual property law has many examples of scholars and practitioners arguing that it helps to promote economic and social development. At the same time it is contended more and more that due to power imbalances in the world and the differing stages of economic development of many countries the regime of international intellectual property law operates often to the detriment of human security and welfare. The debate over access to drugs needed for the protection of human life is a case in point. There is well-documented evidence that, in practice, international intellectual property laws operate to the detriment of protection

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<sup>1</sup> Barry Buzan 1985.

<sup>2</sup> MacFarlane and Khong 2006, 10.

of the rights to life, to health, and to food in many situations. There are also many claims that the traditional knowledge of societies in Asia, Africa, and Latin America, which is their birthright, has been appropriated by the allocation of patents to corporations in western, developed countries.

A contemporary reassessment and modernization of international intellectual property laws must strive for reconciliation between the approach that intellectual property laws help promote economic growth and development and the countervailing contentions that they often operate to the detriment of people in developing countries. The ongoing 'Development Agenda' deliberations<sup>3</sup> within the WIPO seek to examine how WIPO as an institution, and its programmes and operations, could help advance the Millennium Development Goals articulated by the United Nations General Assembly. That is a broader debate which has many political ramifications. In this book we take as our starting point the perspective of the enhancement of human security and we seek to inquire how such an approach might help attenuate international intellectual property laws. The human security framework can help the international community arrive at equitable balances between the regime of international intellectual property law and the needs of developing countries and indigenous peoples on the ground.

Recent publications in countries such as India and South Africa help to bring out the need for new perspectives poignantly. A recent publication on *Indian Patents Law*, based on a conference organized by the Goa Institute of Management, highlighted the strains on Indian patent law as a result of India's having to bring its legislation in conformity with the requirement of the TRIPS Agreement. Opening the Conference, Dr. Anil Kakodkar, remarked that the question of patents and intellectual property rights had become a very crucial and important matter, particularly for India, which, he said, was going through a civilizational transition: India needed to bring about a synergistic impact of modern knowledge and traditional knowledge which was its heritage.<sup>4</sup> The need was to preserve old knowledge and build on it with the new. The book highlighted the case of the patenting of turmeric in the USA, which had required the Indian Government to initiate legal proceedings to get the patent revoked.

As changes were taking place in the management of knowledge, he continued, there was corresponding need for a transition of the people from weaker economies to stronger economies. The intellectual property system needed to be sensitive to the requirements of the poor and the less endowed and to requirements of national importance.<sup>5</sup> He highlighted concerns regarding access to medicines for the poor and the weak. As a nuclear scientist himself, he gave the example of a plumbing valve that could have helped filter radioactivity and better protect people in their water supplies. He said that when he and his colleagues thought of getting

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<sup>3</sup> See <http://www.wipo.int>. Accessed 1 June 2012.

<sup>4</sup> Kakodkar 2009, 3.

<sup>5</sup> Id., 3.

the valve from the market they had been told that it had been built under technology license from a foreign manufacturer and could not be used for the nuclear industry. He complained, “We cannot copy that valve because it is protected under IPR-Patent regime. I would object to granting of patent in such a case. If the product cannot be used in a program of national importance what is the wisdom in granting it?”<sup>6</sup>

In a powerful presentation in the book, Professor N.R. Madhava Menon pleaded that because India had to comply with the TRIPS regime and modify its patent laws, Indian society was suddenly moving from a culture of openness and sharing to a culture in which information was considered a commercial product to be “encashed” in the international market without concern for the disadvantaged sections of the people. He stressed the need for an integrated approach to knowledge in order to promote creativity, innovation, and development.<sup>7</sup> He highlighted problems for Indian society stemming from the TRIPS Agreement. The revised Indian Patents Act, he complained, “was adopted not particularly to meet the immediate needs and aspirations of the people of India; it was adopted because of the compulsions of TRIPS and to be able to discharge the obligations that India has undertaken under the WTO.”<sup>8</sup> He added plaintively: “Very few people to my mind in the developing world consider the TRIPS Agreement as a fair arrangement for all the trading nations because it imposes unbearable burden on technologically backward countries.”<sup>9</sup> He noted that developing countries, struggling to fulfill the basic needs of their people in relation to health, nutrition, and food, were encountering problems in having to deal with an IPR regime developed in the west during their industrialization:

...if an IPR regime developed in the west during industrialization were to be applied across the board to all products and processes regardless of the social cost and benefit, we may end up jeopardizing the livelihood of millions of people and exposing them to the risk of loss of livelihood, malnutrition and ill-health. Biodiversity, agriculture, traditional systems of medicines, folklore and similar common property assets today subserve the health of Indians. They are not owned by any single person. It is a community resource, a shared resource which cannot be monopolized or appropriated to the common detriment. Now we are suddenly told that these knowledge systems are to be put into the IPR route if they are to be saved by its legitimate owners, the communities to which they belong. It is an impossible task and will take a long time and expense. However, that seems to be the only way which western countries will recognize this wealth which we have been enjoying for hundreds of years and sharing it with non-Indians as well. We are suddenly faced with the situation in which neem or turmeric will be patented elsewhere and we will have to spend hard-earned dollars to fight the cases against it in foreign courts. Is this the only way in which intellectual property rights can be so organized to give the inventor his due and at the same time make it available for public good?<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Menon 2009, 7.

<sup>8</sup> Id., 9. WTO refers to the World Trade Organization.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Id., 10.



Professor Menon made a powerful argument for fairness and equity in the regime of intellectual property law:

The rules of the game are to be fair and equitable to both sides. Fresh negotiations to change the rules appropriately seem to be the only suitable option available to countries like India seeking to increase their share in global trade...There is no doubt of the possible conflict of private rights and public interests when it comes to patenting of food, drugs and pharmaceuticals as it concerns the basic necessities of life of a large number of people living below the poverty line.<sup>11</sup>

Professor Menon went on to point out potential threats to bio-diversity and traditional knowledge in the TRIPS regime: “In my view a separate treaty like the TRIPS Agreement would be also necessary for the purpose” of protecting biodiversity and traditional knowledge.<sup>12</sup> “Developing countries like India having rich unexplored biodiversity and a wealth of traditional knowledge have to realize that they are in risk of losing heavily under the TRIPS regime if they fail to persuade the TRIPS Council to establish effective mechanisms within TRIPS or parallel to it to protect these sources of wealth of developing countries.”<sup>13</sup>

Professor Menon recognized that the originators of innovations should get their just reward by way of suitable royalties and that there should be no grudge in providing the same. Simultaneously the door should be open for obligatory licensing involving the domestic enterprises in the production of patented drugs. The profit-driven model of the TRIPS was not suited to the health needs of the developing and poor countries.<sup>14</sup>

We see similar arguments in Africa generally and South Africa in particular. Armstrong et al., have advanced the view that the beginning of the twenty-first century foreshadowed a new phase in global intellectual property governance, characterized neither by universal expansion nor reduction of standards, but rather by contextual ‘calibration’. They considered that a systemic calibration was taking

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<sup>11</sup> Keayla 2009, 39. The argument for equity was made as follows by Dr. Yusuf K. Hamied, then Chairman and Managing Director of Cipla Limited and a leading scientist, who is quoted in Kealya as follows: “[T]he patent regime in this country should be devised so that the utmost priority is granted to securing people’s rights of access to affordable and quality healthcare, without monopoly.” *Id.*, 32–33.

<sup>12</sup> Menon (2009), 15.

<sup>13</sup> *Id.*, 16.

<sup>14</sup> *Id.*, 39. The need for equity regarding price control was made as follows: “TRIPS Agreement is silent about the price control of patented products. The products protected under patents would enjoy monopoly in the market place and would command high prices. Appropriate law should be strengthened to deal with the prices of the patented products at least for the initial period of 5 years. The importance of this aspect can be understood on the basis of examples of prices of similar products sold in India, Pakistan and India. A pack of ten 500 mg tablets of Ciprofloxacin costs Rs 29 in India whereas the prices in Pakistan is Rs 424 and in Indonesia it is Rs 393 (converted to Indian rupees). The prices of other pharmaceutical products are almost in the similar proportion.” Keayla 2009, “The Amendment Patents Act of 1970: A Critique,” in Parulekar and D’Souza 2009, 38.

place, based on an understanding of the positive *and* negative implications of intellectual property for broad areas of public policy:

In essence, a newly emerging intellectual property paradigm is based on a richer understanding of the concept of development. While development was once defined as mainly an issue of economic growth, there is now a more nuanced view, a view that emphasizes the connections between development and human freedom... WIPO's new 'development agenda', formally adopted in 2007, is premised on promoting a more holistic appreciation of the real relationships among intellectual property and economic, social, cultural, and human development.<sup>15</sup>

In similar vein, as we shall see later, Brazil has taken a leading role in pushing for a development agenda within WIPO. All three IBSA countries (India, Brazil, and South Africa) are thus in the vanguard of efforts for a more equitable regime of international intellectual property laws.

In this book, we shall argue that the underlying rationale of the regime for the international protection of intellectual property rights needs to change so as to strike a balance between the rights of authors and the requirements of human security. At the beginning of the twenty-first century it is increasingly recognized that international protection regimes must be mindful of the need to do justice to those in dire need.

Until now one can say that the rationale of the regime of international protection of intellectual property rights has been premised primarily, if not exclusively, on protection of the creativity and the rights of authors/inventors so as to foster innovation.

However, authors and inventors do not create in a vacuum. They create in a national environment that has been shaped by intellectual currents from different parts of the world, and it must be recognized that creativity and authorship need to advance the interests and rights of humanity. In this book, it will be suggested that the rights of access of poor people to medicines and to the basic means of survival must influence the future evolution of the regime of international intellectual property law.

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<sup>15</sup> Armstrong et al., 2010, 4.

# Contents

<b>1</b>	<b>Introduction</b> . . . . .	1
1.1	IPR and Economic Development . . . . .	1
1.1.1	Copyright and Economic Development . . . . .	2
1.1.2	Industrial Property and Economic Development . . . . .	7
1.2	Utilitarian v. Natural Rights Approaches to IPRs. . . . .	13
1.3	Calls for a More Equitable and Modernized Regime of International Intellectual Property Law . . . . .	15
1.4	IPRs and Humanity Security . . . . .	23
1.5	Outline of the Book . . . . .	25
<b>Part I IP and Human Security</b>		
<b>2</b>	<b>Intellectual Property and Human Security</b> . . . . .	29
2.1	The Nature of “Security”: Individual, National and International . . . . .	29
2.2	Major Intellectual Property Treaties and Security . . . . .	36
2.3	Balancing Public and Private Rights: Intellectual Property and Human Security . . . . .	38
2.4	IP Linkages with National and Global Security . . . . .	41
2.5	Conclusion . . . . .	43
<b>3</b>	<b>The International Intellectual Property Regime</b> . . . . .	45
3.1	The International IPR Regime . . . . .	45
3.2	Copyright . . . . .	46
3.3	Related Rights . . . . .	51
3.4	Patents . . . . .	52
3.5	Utility Models . . . . .	53
3.6	Trade Secrets (Confidential Information). . . . .	53
3.7	Trademarks . . . . .	56
3.8	Industrial Design . . . . .	57
3.9	Geographical Indications . . . . .	57

- 3.10 *Sui Generis* Systems. . . . . 58
  - 3.10.1 Integrated Computer Circuits . . . . . 58
  - 3.10.2 Plant Variety Protection (PVP). . . . . 59
  - 3.10.3 Database Protection . . . . . 61
  - 3.10.4 Traditional Knowledge (TK) and Traditional Cultural Expressions (TCE). . . . . 61
- 3.11 Conclusion . . . . . 62
- 4 Human Security Aspects of the Intellectual Property Regime . . . . . 63**
  - 4.1 IP, Human Security and Development . . . . . 63
  - 4.2 Copyright and Development. . . . . 64
  - 4.3 Copyright and Education . . . . . 65
  - 4.4 Patents and Technology Transfer . . . . . 71
  - 4.5 Patents and the Environment . . . . . 73
  - 4.6 Patents and Health . . . . . 74
  - 4.7 Patents, Plant Varieties and Food Security . . . . . 81
  - 4.8 The IP Regime and the Survival of Indigenous Communities. . . . . 94
  - 4.9 Conclusion . . . . . 95

**Part II IP, Development and Human Rights**

- 5 Imperatives of the Right to Development . . . . . 99**
  - 5.1 Calls for a Development-Oriented IP Regime . . . . . 99
  - 5.2 The Right to Development . . . . . 102
  - 5.3 The Committee on Economic Social and Cultural Rights and the Right to Development . . . . . 107
  - 5.4 The Millennium Declaration and Development Goals. . . . . 109
  - 5.5 High-Level Task Force on the RTD . . . . . 111
  - 5.6 Conclusion . . . . . 115
- 6 IP, Human Rights, and Human Security. . . . . 117**
  - 6.1 IP, Human Rights, and Human Security. . . . . 117
  - 6.2 Linkage Between Human Rights and Intellectual Property . . . . . 121
  - 6.3 Separate Evolution of IP and HR Regimes . . . . . 121
  - 6.4 IP as “Property” Right . . . . . 123
  - 6.5 Reconciliation and the Myth of ‘Conflict’ Between IPR and Human Rights . . . . . 129
  - 6.6 Human Rights Primacy Over Intellectual Property Rights?. . . . . 141
  - 6.7 Lacuna in General Comment 17 of the ESCR. . . . . 146
  - 6.8 Conclusion . . . . . 150
- 7 A Human Security Perspective for International Business Organizations. . . . . 151**
  - 7.1 International Business Organizations (IBO) and the IP Regime . . . . . 151

7.2	IBO's, IP and Human Security . . . . .	155
7.3	The International Chamber of Commerce and Intellectual Property Issues . . . . .	157
7.4	The 'Ruggie Principles' on Business and Human Rights. . . . .	162
7.5	The OECD Guidelines . . . . .	163
7.6	IBOs and Human Rights . . . . .	165
7.7	Elements for a Set of Principles on Business, Intellectual Property and Human Rights . . . . .	172
7.8	Conclusion . . . . .	173
<b>8</b>	<b>The Protection of Traditional Knowledge in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. . . . .</b>	<b>177</b>
8.1	Indigenous Peoples and Knowledge in International Affairs . . . . .	177
8.2	Recognition of the Rights of Indigenous People Under International Law . . . . .	178
8.3	Developing Country and Indigenous Perspectives on IP and Traditional Knowledge . . . . .	183
8.4	Traditional Medicine: Enhancing the Health and Wealth of Indigenous Communities . . . . .	195
8.5	Non-Applicability, Adaption, or <i>Sui Generis</i> System? . . . . .	199
8.6	TK and TM at the International Level . . . . .	201
8.7	Key Legal Issues for the Protection of TK/TM . . . . .	203
	8.7.1 Core Principles . . . . .	203
	8.7.2 Legal Doctrines and Policy Tools . . . . .	205
	8.7.3 Strategies and Interim Measures . . . . .	206
8.8	Conclusion . . . . .	214
 <b>Part III WIPO and Human Security</b>		
<b>9</b>	<b>The Development Agenda of WIPO. . . . .</b>	<b>217</b>
9.1	WIPO, Development, and Human Security . . . . .	217
9.2	WIPO and Global IP Governance . . . . .	218
	9.2.1 Origins and Evolution of WIPO . . . . .	219
	9.2.2 Socialization Role . . . . .	221
	9.2.3 Political Role . . . . .	222
9.3	The Development Agenda . . . . .	225
9.4	WIPO's Strategic Development Vision . . . . .	233
	9.4.1 Balanced Evolution of the International Normative Framework for IP . . . . .	234
	9.4.2 Provision of Premier Global IP Services . . . . .	237
	9.4.3 Facilitating the Use of IP for Development . . . . .	238
	9.4.4 Addressing IP in Relation to Global Policy Issues. . . . .	239
	9.4.5 International Cooperation on Building Respect for IP. . . . .	242
9.5	Conclusion . . . . .	242

- 10 Proposal for an International Equity Panel in WIPO** . . . . . 245
  - 10.1 The Right to Benefit from Scientific and Technological Progress. . . 245
  - 10.2 Human Rights Imperatives: Life, Food, Health, Education. . . . . 249
  - 10.3 Treaty Rights . . . . . 250
  - 10.4 The Case for an International Equity Panel . . . . . 251
  - 10.5 The Possible Need for a WIPO Committee of Experts  
on the Application of Norms . . . . . 257
  - 10.6 Conclusion . . . . . 257
  
- 11 Conclusion.** . . . . . 259
  
- Annex A: Declaration on the Right to Development.** . . . . . 263
  
- Annex B: Millennium Development Goals** . . . . . 269
  
- Annex C: United Nations Declaration on the Rights  
of Indigenous Peoples** . . . . . 271
  
- Annex D: The Protection of Traditional Knowledge: Draft Articles  
of the Intergovernmental Committee on Intellectual Property  
and Genetic Resources, Traditional Knowledge  
and Folklore** . . . . . 283
  
- Annex E: Development Agenda of WIPO.** . . . . . 299
  
- References** . . . . . 305
  
- Table of Cases** . . . . . 319
  
- Index.** . . . . . 321

# Abbreviations

ABS	Access and Benefit Sharing
APEC	Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation
ARV	Anti Retro Viral
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
BIRPI	<i>Bureau international reuni pour la propriete intellectuelle</i> (WIPO)
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
CISA	Indian Council of South America
CDIP	Commission on Intellectual Property and Development
CL	Compulsory Licenses (see NVL)
DAG	Development Agenda Group
ECOSOC	Economic and Social Council
EDV	Essentially Derived Variety
EPO	European Patent Organization
EST	Environmentally Sound Technology
FAIRA	Foundation for Aboriginal and Islander Research Action
FFM	Fact Finding Mission
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FTA	Free Trade Agreement
GATT	General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs
GNP	Gross National Product
GRTKF	Genetic Resources, Traditional Knowledge and Folklore
GRULAC	<i>Grupo Latin America y Caribe</i> (Latin America and Caribbean Group)
HIV/AIDS	Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immune-Deficiency Syndrome
IBO	International Business Organization
IBSA	India, Brazil, and South Africa
ICC	International Chamber of Commerce
ICT	Information Communication Technology
IFPMA	International Federation of Pharmaceutical Manufacturers Associations

IGC	Intergovernmental Committee (on GRTKF)
IGO	Intergovernmental Organization
ILO	International Labour Organization
IPEG	Intellectual Property Expert Group (ICC)
IWG	Intersessional Working Group (of the IGC–GRTKF)
JPO	Japan Patent Office
LDC	Least Developed Country
MAT	Mutually Agreed Terms
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
MERCOSUR	Mercado del Sur
NVL	Non-Voluntary Licenses (see CL)
NTD	Neglected Tropical Diseases
PCT	Patent Cooperation Treaty
SCCR	Standing Committee on Copyright and Related Rights
SCP	Standing Committee on Patents
TK	Traditional Knowledge
TM	Traditional Medicine
TPM	Technological Protection Measure
TRIPS	Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property
UN	United Nations
UNCTAD	UN Conference on Trade and Development
UNDP	UN Development Program
UNESCO	UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNIDO	UN Industrial Development Organization
UNSC	UN Security Council
US	United States
WCT	WIPO Copyright Treaty
WEF	World Economic Forum
WHO	World Health Organization
WIPO	World Intellectual Property Organization
WPPT	WIPO Performances and Phonograms Treaty
WTO	World Trade Organization
WWA	WIPO Worldwide Academy