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The concept of "human security" extended: "Asianizing" the paradigm

Withaya Sucharithanarugse

The international security environment and human society in general have been subject to rapid, widening, and deepening change since the end of the Cold War. This process has been encouraged by the trend towards globalization, and particularly by the spread of both information and information technology. It has also been facilitated by the forces of international capitalism in their rush to spread trade, investment, and financial sector liberalization to developing states. No recent example of these factors at work is more illustrative than the East Asian economic crisis. This event started off as a monetary crisis, became a financial crisis, broadened into an economic crisis, and subsequently transformed itself into a socio-political and even regional security crisis. This economic downfall caused widespread tensions between various sectors within international society, intensified economic insecurity, and raised considerable doubts about the prospects for the future.

A pervasive sense of insecurity with political, economic, social, and cultural dimensions thus spread across the Asia-Pacific region. Dealing with this phenomenon and seeking to engineer a financial recovery has become the primary focus of most governments in the region. State and private financial institutions are being drastically reorganized. This development, in turn, has precipitated large-scale job lay-offs, which, coming as they have on top of already high regional levels of unemployment (created by the general economic contraction), have created an intolerable political climate. This situation has been made even worse by an

understandable collapse in consumer confidence across the region and a corresponding reduction in consumer spending. As a result, the length of time needed to make a significant economic recovery in East Asia will only be prolonged. In this environment, confusing and uncertain predictions have heightened the general feeling of insecurity amongst the peoples of the region. Furthermore, this insecurity has spread to a number of levels, passing from individuals to groups and sectors until finally assuming a state-wide and even international dimension.

The uncaring legacy

It is worth noting, however, that this expanded set of uncertainties is, in fact, building upon a legacy of pre-existing insecurities in East Asia. In the region, economic development through industrialization has been the cause of bitter and prolonged conflicts. These have largely defied resolution because state organs have never fully appreciated the need to develop effective policies for providing adequate sustenance for populations.

Natural forest reserves, for example, have been sacrificed in an unsustainable manner in order to produce agricultural products that will satisfy domestic and international markets. This has led, in turn, to ecological degradation. When coupled with severe drought and flood, this shortsightedness has created a vicious cycle of human tragedy. In addition, the pull of the market economy has promoted a pervasive culture of ''racketeering'' based on the cross-border smuggling of goods, drugs, labour, and prostitutes (the last two serving also to spread disease). The involuntary migration that has in fact occurred in the region is, therefore, better understood in terms of a reallocation of labour by economic forces that have entailed considerable human exploitation and suffering.

Above all else it must be recognized that no state is capable of dealing with all of these problems on its own; cooperation with other states, particularly at the regional level, is essential if these trends are to be permanently reversed. Insecurity can be seen, therefore, as being shared regionally. Although the state remains as a tangible and key unit or actor in international relations, it must be recognized that, as an effective agent for solution, it has been eclipsed by the severity of the problems that it now confronts. It is also apparent that the traditional way many Asian states have used police and/or military force as instruments for maintaining security has become increasingly ineffective. Today's ''security'' issues overwhelm traditional states' capacities to manage the challenges they project. These types of multidimensional problems require multi-

lateral collaboration to generate sufficiently creative and comprehensive solutions.

Security that "cares"

Since the end of the Cold War there has, therefore, been an emphasis on "rethinking" the basic assumptions that define the boundaries of the security studies paradigm. This development has been mirrored elsewhere in the social sciences. Part of the debate that this has generated has been recorded in the "Open the Social Science" paper that was produced following a forum organized by the Gulbenkian Commission chaired by Emmanuel Wallerstein.[1] Apart from attempting to demystify the Western-biased construct of social science that has become more and more segmented, rigid, and remote from people's actual needs and concerns, this chapter goes on to suggest that the discipline should pursue an expansive and inclusive agenda. This agenda would be society based and encourage cross-disciplinary cooperation as well as a level of integration with the non-social sciences. When examining contemporary "new thinking on security," it is important to recognize that these types of factors underwrite it.

The "new thinking on security" has been pursued by scholars trying to broaden the neo-realist conception of security so that it includes a wider range of issue areas. The issues that they would prefer to see integrated into the paradigm range from economic and environmental problems to human rights and migration. From a slightly different perspective, this represents an attempt to expand the scope of security studies into three main levels of analysis. These levels would facilitate movement either down to the tier of individual or human security or up to the plane of international or global security, with regional and societal security as a possible intermediate level.

At the same time, other scholars have sought to address emerging security dilemmas while still remaining within the confines of a state-centric approach. They have done so by using diverse terms such as "common," "cooperative," "collective," and "comprehensive" security to advocate different multilateral forms of inter-state security cooperation. Neo-realists have criticized these approaches on the grounds that they are drawing security studies away from their traditional focus and methods for little reason. They suggest that these approaches lack a clear explanation or theoretical foundation and that they have failed to show any true value in terms of concrete research.[2]

The idea of "desecuritization" has also been recently developed in

academia. The discussion has, however, revolved primarily around this concept's utility as a long-range political goal and not around detaching and freeing other sectors from the use of force, thus reducing and marginalizing the military sector. An advantage enjoyed by the desecuritization approach is that it reminds policy-makers, analysts, or campaigners of their responsibilities to the people-at-large when they start talking about security.

Studies incorporating consideration of the "international economy" have probably presented the strongest arguments to support a broadening of the security agenda post Cold War. These have pointed to the dangers of global liberalization causing widespread and uncontrollable system instability, especially in financial markets. They have also illuminated the darker side of trade liberalization, including the negative crossover effects that pursuing a global economy can have on environmental issues, domestic political autonomy and stability, and military self-reliance.[3]

To a degree, recent arms races in South-East Asia can also be linked to economic considerations; it has been noted that they have been largely inspired by conditions of high economic growth (see chapter 2). On that point, it is worth noting that traditional ideas about threat perceptions have had little to do with these developments. They have been driven more by causal factors such as self-confidence, self-reliance, and prestige (Myanmar may be the only exception, for its recent arms acquisitions are clearly intended to facilitate the destruction of minority resistance forces). The argument supporting this economic–security nexus is further reinforced when the dynamics of the recent financial crisis in Asia are considered.

The onset of the economic crisis has in effect curtailed the arms build-up in the region. It is worth noting that this has occurred without a great deal of misgiving and this testifies to the fact that the arms acquisition policies pursued until recently by most countries in the region were not based on real or even perceived security threats. On the contrary, it has now become apparent that the economic crisis has itself become a major security problem. In a sense it may be better to call what has occurred an outbreak of insecurity – a pervasive feeling of uncertainty amongst the general populace of the region that has been fuelled by not knowing whether economic conditions will further deteriorate, what will happen next, and when the recovery will start. In this environment, the severity of the problem has been worsened by the fact that most countries have been subjected to abrupt changes in their financial circumstances largely at the whim of international financial markets.

Governmental policy responses have further exacerbated this pervasive uncertainty. Budget cuts have drastically slowed public spending, leading to high levels of unemployment in urban areas. Cut-backs in the

private sector have forced white-collar workers to seek alternative employment and, together, these pressures have led to the widespread migration of large numbers of blue-collar workers back to the countryside in several South-East Asian countries. Additional problems have flowed from the general insecurity surrounding employment prospects. There have been protests and agitation over compensation and the levels of public spending on welfare. Crime rates have increased significantly, particularly in relation to drug trafficking. Social and cultural tensions based on ethnic, religious, and even racial grounds have surfaced, and the urban destitute have resorted to looting shops and plantations.

The downfall of the Suharto regime's New Order in Indonesia on 21 May 1998 provides a stark signpost to the depth and extent of political discontent being experienced throughout South-East Asia. It has also served to highlight a secondary crisis that has arisen in the wake of the economic collapse – a lack of confidence in public leaders. In many countries the public are questioning their leaders' abilities to manage the situation either because they are incapable of doing so or because they are unwilling to do so (the suggestion being that they may be working to protect personal or commercial interests to the detriment of the general public). At the same time, several governments have shown that confidence can be restored by adopting policies of accountability and transparency. This has largely been the case in Thailand and South Korea. It is also apparent in the continuing support enjoyed by the Philippines' current president, Joseph Estrada, because he is seen to be the "people's president." The situation in Myanmar stands in stark contrast to the relative stability now being enjoyed in the Philippines. In the former country, Aung San Suu Kyi's stand-offs with the ruling State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) have introduced a new phase in a succession of crises linked directly to the worsening economic situation in the country. Collectively all of these developments reinforce the contention that economic crises must be taken very seriously lest they degenerate into other types of crisis and insecurity.

Redefining the security paradigm

From this point, our attention is naturally drawn to the issue of just where we should start the process of rethinking the whole paradigm of security. The state has traditionally been the key unit of analysis, but it is clear that the security of the "state" in developing areas is more often than not at odds with the security of the "nation." Frequently one finds that the nation is victimized for the sole cause of state maintenance. The state therefore often becomes the cause of national insecurity.

A number of specific cases in South-East Asia immediately come to mind. For example, the state of Myanmar is a compilation of nations of different ethnicity, as are the East Malaysian states of Sabah and Sarawak and Mindanao in the Philippines. In these cases, the nation not the state should be the focus of concern, but nation-building in South-East Asia has traditionally been framed in terms that encompass the development of the nation-state. This has largely been taken for granted and forced upon the people as a *fait accompli*. However, it is important to recognize that ''traditional'' territorial configurations in South-East Asia are orientated more towards the concept of the ''nation'' and not that of the ''state.'' The ''state'' is primarily a Western idea that penetrated South-East Asia in order provide a legal basis for the political constructs that emerged following the disintegration of the Western empires following World War II.

To an extent, this trend has been mirrored by the security problems in Eastern Europe. This suggests that the conflict between the construct of the state and the nation is not a problem that is unique to South-East Asia. However, it would require a complete reorientation of the international system to elevate the nation to a position of ascendancy over the state. Such a process might well result in chaos. Clearly, the state-centric system, as it now exists, appears incapable of resolving such conflicts as those raging in Eastern Europe. Infusing greater sensitivity toward the idea of ''nationhood'' may be an interim step for addressing ongoing ethno-national disputes.

This is not to say that the idea of nation is completely free of conceptual anomalies. People of the so-called ''Malay world'' in South-East Asia, the Chinese diaspora, the Indians in the Maldives and Mauritius, the Muslims in southern Thailand, for example, all represent less than clear-cut ethnic or religious identities in the international community. Moreover, a number of analysts would argue that ethnicity is predominantly a social construction rather than a biological phenomenon. They contend that attention to human security problems intensified by ethnic differences would be best addressed by de-politicizing ethnicity rather than by looking at all political issues through a narrow ethnic lens.

Yet about 2,000 nationalities now inhabit the international community. Because of this tremendous ethnic diversity, we are witnessing unsuccessful accommodation between nations and states that endeavours (futilely) to integrate such socio-cultural disparities into often arbitrarily drawn state boundaries. Complicating the process even more is that the state so created is thought of as either the government, the élite, the bureaucracy, or ideology. As such the concept of ''state'' is bereft of people. The best we can say is that people exist for the state, not vice versa.

Our concern with the nation here is not therefore with "the nation" per se, but rather with the human beings that constitute it. Although every state aspires to become a proper "nation-state," this cannot be achieved if the people of the state cannot be protected, nurtured, and cared for. This is where human security enters in. The basic argument supporting human security rests on the realization that we all have a common duty to be concerned with all of the human beings that make up the world community, and that this sense of duty brings with it a responsibility to act or intervene on their behalf. The pursuit of "human rights" is the best-known example of this realization at work.[4]

The divisions of power politics

By focusing on people, "human security" renders meaningless the consideration of traditional territorial boundaries; even the nation and the state cannot be accorded a high priority. Human grievances are multifaceted and the chances are that, if there is one, there will be many. On closer examination such grievances may well have a political dimension that typically sees a ruling class or élite discriminating against other political groups on either racial, ethnic, historical, cultural, religious, or economic grounds (or a combination of these). This has been the case with the Chinese in Malaysia, Indonesia, and pre-1980 Thailand, and with the Vietnamese in Cambodia. It can also be seen in the relative treatment of the Javanese and non-Javanese peoples in Indonesia, the northeasterners in pre-1957 Thailand, the minorities in Myanmar, and the Singhalese and the Tamils in Sri Lanka.

Throughout history there have been examples of one ruling group weakening other groups by orchestrating political conflicts between them: typically the military against a civilian population, bureaucrats against politicians, and vice versa. There has also been a cultural dimension to discrimination: a central élite suppressing a regional élite, the high-born pitched against the *mestizo*, and the educated dominating the uneducated. Another aspect has been religious conflict: Hindus against Muslims (or the reverse), Buddhists against Christians, or Muslims against Buddhists. Finally, there has been ample evidence of economic exploitation: the case of the very rich against the poor masses, urban dwellers against the rural populace, and big business against small. Taken collectively these examples indicate that addressing human security concerns is an extremely complex matter.

On another level, the nature of and future prospects for human security rely on political systems. Politics is afforded a reasonably high priority in human affairs because the application of political power commonly

defines the boundaries of human behaviour. As an extension of this, the political system of a society reflects the way that political power is being exercised. When looking at East Asia from this perspective it is worth noting that the ''democratic'' political systems that exist were mainly established by *force majeure* during the initial post-colonial stage of development in the region. They were not a natural outgrowth of social development but more an artificial construct. Externally, the states that embodied these political systems were crafted and tolerated fundamentally to preserve the balance of power in the international system. Internally, they drew legitimacy from claims and desires to do better than the colonial administrations or usurped regimes. Taken collectively these reasons largely explain why the principles of democracy were not embedded in the social fabric of many South-East Asian states at their birth.

The adoption of democratic systems was further stymied at the height of the Cold War by rationalizing authoritarian regimes in Asia and other developing regions as a necessary means for pursuing economic development. The fervour with which this approach was pursued succeeded in most cases in relegating the growth of democracy to the penumbra if not into the umbra. The new states of East Asia were charting unfamiliar waters when they sought to achieve their goals of development and modernity. As things turned out, authoritarian regimes led the way as East Asia launched into its revolutionary period of economic growth. In the case of Korea it was the ruling élite allied to big business that held sway, in Indonesia the coterie of Chinese entrepreneurs, in Thailand mainly the bankers and businessmen, and in Singapore and Taiwan the deftly guided hand of state regulation. However, the relentless pursuit of economic development by authoritarian regimes has also produced a legacy of economic disparity, social inequity, poor quality of life, ecological degradation, and environmental hazards. This has now created a political environment that cries for the emergence of democratization as a means of addressing these accumulated problems.

The democratization movement has been further strengthened in recent times by the increasing penetration of globalization and information technology into traditional societies. Local citizens or nationals who were pushed into the background in the past by the processes and force of development can now get assistance and support from an emerging civil service and from non-governmental organizations (both domestic and international). Human rights groups have now been joined by a host of ''humanitarian'' friendly societies or organizations in their pursuit of a common international agenda. Their activities, condemned by authoritarian regimes, have nevertheless succeeded in placing the issue of human suffering high on the international community's agenda.

Conceptualizing human security

Against this background, human security becomes increasingly relevant. Emma Rothschild, in her address to the Common Security Forum in Tokyo in December 1994, made it clear that the whole idea emanated from concern about the human suffering caused by the devastating catastrophe of Hiroshima. She linked common security directly to human security.[5] Others have developed this line of reasoning further, arguing that human security represents a focus on human survival, well-being, and freedom. Lincoln Chen argues, for example, that it should also be seen as the objective of all security concerns. Other forms of "security" should be seen as the means to achieve these ends, which, together, constitute human security. Applying economic, political, and environmental means to realize human security is a fairly straightforward proposition. Incorporating the means of military security does not necessarily lead to the other three ends, especially if one is conquered in battle and subjugated economically and politically in defeat. This relationship is illustrated in table 3.1.[6]

Chen has designated three key strategies for achieving human security: protection, promotion, and prevention. In situations of acute insecurity, he recommends the progressive utilization of protection measures for relief, establishing a safety-net, and supporting peace-keeping. For chronic insecurity, he believes that poverty should be the focus of concern and development the likely cure. To protect established human security regimes and to provide a warning against future challenges he suggests a preventative course of action based on information, diplomacy, and sanctions.[7]

Table 3.1 Human security

Instrumental security (means)		Security objective (ends)
Military	[Traditional security or strategy]	[?]
Economic Political Environmental	Human security	Survival Well-being Freedom

Source: Lincoln C. Chen, "Human Security: Concepts and Approaches," in Tatsuro Matsumae and Lincoln C. Chen, eds., *Common Security in Asia* (Tokyo: Tokai University Press, 1995), p. 139, with additions (in square brackets).

Asianizing the paradigm?

If the human security approach is to attain relevance in modern Asian societies it needs to be promoted and explained to the actors who frame security policy in the region. An important element in this process would be to ensure that the concept is distinct from, and not confused with, humanitarian relief activities (although these do fall within the broad scope of the human security approach). At the same time it would also need to be explained to those benefiting from the application of human security policies that it is not a single-ended charity process and that the beneficiaries need to play an active role. Unfortunately, people in developing countries are accustomed to receiving donations that are typically one-way, one-off handouts. The manner in which help is given will also be important. Experience indicates that, if people are unwilling to participate in the process because they do not believe or accept the underlying motivation, then the effort is unlikely to succeed. There is also an element of trust that needs to be taken into consideration. Politicians in South-East Asia, if not the whole of East Asia, have often been insincere and lacking in a genuine desire to help the people. It would be problematic to leave the pursuit of human security in their hands at this time.

Chen proposes that human security should address survival, well-being, and freedom of the people. To this, dignity should be added because it is a critical dimension that has always been neglected by the state and authoritarian powers. It should be acknowledged that it is not enough to recognize that all humans are born equal; rather we need to go one step further to accept that their role in society must also be equally valued. This approach reflects the traditional Eastern wisdom that rulers must seek advice from their people regardless of their social status. The cultural heritage of East Asia includes numerous stories of rulers disguising themselves and mixing with the populace so that they could listen to them and act with greater wisdom. The East Asian concept of dignity, of accepting the role of the people in society, reflects this. Besides, in traditional East Asian political thought, no matter how power is derived – be it from the mandate of heaven as is the case in Sinicized culture, through the repersonification of God as is the case with Hinduism, or through the popular election of a king as is the case with Buddhism – the power-holder is closely linked to the people.

Chen's three approaches to human security encompassing protection, promotion, and prevention deserve support. However, facilitating these processes is an issue that requires further attention. State and state organs are normally the agent and actor facilitating such processes. However, we know from experience that the state and its apparatus can

produce adverse effects. Whereas in the past there was no alternative but to rely on the state for this type of support, we are now in the fortunate position of being able to access a number of "alternative" groups. These alternative groups are primarily NGOs that cover national and international areas. They possess broad networks that can be invaluable when it comes to coordinating and mounting the types of international operation that the human security approach embraces. These are groups such as the Alternative ASEAN Network, the International Network of Political Leaders Promoting Democracy in Burma, the Alternative Asia–Europe Meeting, and the Asian Network for Free Election. These international and regional groups have been very active and possess two great advantages: they have their own sources of funding and they are recognized by state authorities. These two factors suggest that it would be advisable to let them play a major role, not an auxiliary one, in promoting human security in the region. As part of any such engagement it would also be preferable to posit NGOs as bodies capable of monitoring the performance of state instrumentalities with similar tasks.

At first glance, the scope of the human security problem can appear overwhelming. Considerations of how to implement such an approach can intensify that feeling. Yet it may not be that difficult if we can first articulate the concept and then move forward steadily to reorient our perceptions towards it and to bring it to the attention of the world community. In a similar fashion, the task of actualizing human security could be achieved if it was done incrementally and according to priorities. Unlike traditional security arrangements, human security undertakings are not contingent upon the occurrence of precipitating events in order to trigger a response (as is the case with direct conflicts, confrontations, challenges, or outright invasions). To a degree, this would greatly facilitate the application of the human security approach.

On the other hand, problems would undoubtedly arise in relation to charges of interfering or intervening in the domestic affairs of states. This would be particularly prevalent in developing countries where the principle of non-interference is highly guarded. An example of this type of intercession recently occurred within the Association of South East Asian Nations when Thailand, supported by the Philippines, proposed moving from a policy of "constructive engagement" with Myanmar to one of "constructive intervention" or "flexible engagement." Indonesia came out strongly against the idea, arguing that it ran counter to ASEAN's basic principle of respecting the sovereignty of the state. Malaysia then weighed in to the argument by reportedly suggesting that Thailand would not like it if Malaysia started commenting on the treatment of Muslims in southern Thailand.[8] All in all, the exchanges on this issue and simi-

lar developments appear at times to be an almost incomprehensible defence of the state in an age characterized by growing accountability and transparency.

Another prominent example of this mode of behaviour surfaced at the ASEAN summit in Kuala Lumpur in December 1997. On that occasion, Thailand's suggestion of using the words ''open society'' in the final statement was blocked. In the end, the Thais had to settle for the concept of ''enhanced interaction'' and the brief prospect that a genuine improvement in Thai–Burmese relations would occur was lost.[9] This case brings our attention back to the observation made at the beginning of this section that articulating the case for human security may well face opposition from those who believe too strongly in the non-interventionist/non-interference philosophy. Ironically, the intervention by invitation of the International Monetary Fund in the restructuring of a number of East Asian economies has somewhat reinforced the anti-interventionists' position. The IMF's prescriptions have caused many problems for various groups of people. Therefore, we see the conflict between state and society again at play.

Conclusion

Although a number of approaches can be incorporated to advance human security, an immediate step is for East Asian governments to embrace this concept more seriously. The presence of a strong civil society will help to facilitate the adoption of policy approaches oriented to human security. Unfortunately, in most developing countries such societies are only just beginning to emerge. International organizations and international and regional NGOs have a special responsibility, therefore, to help condition developing states and their governments to accept the premises and pursue the mechanisms of the human security ethos more readily. This is the special challenge related to advancing a more egalitarian international society in an East Asian context.

In concluding it is worth reiterating the proposition presented earlier in this chapter that the approach to human security must be multidimensional in character in order to wrestle with the complexities of the real world. It is in fact this characteristic – the very complexity of the world – that commends the approach to us in the first instance. Actualizing human security, more often than not, will require regional cooperation and commitment. It will also require the concerted efforts of both public and private groups as well as individuals to be successful.

Notes

1. V. Y. Mudimbe, ed., *Open the Social Science: Report of the Gulbenkian Commission on the Restructuring of the Social Sciences* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1996).
2. Keith Krause and Michael C. Williams, "Broadening the Agenda of Security Studies Politics and Methods," *Mershon International Studies Review* 40 (1996), pp. 229–230.
3. Barry Buzan, "Rethinking Security after the Cold War," *Cooperation and Conflict* 32, no. 1 (1997), pp. 23–25.
4. Ramesh Thakur, "From National to Human Security," in Stuart Harris and Andrew Mack, eds., *Asia-Pacific Security: The Economics–Politics Nexus* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1997), p. 67.
5. Emma Rothschild, "Introduction," in Tatsuro Matsumae and Lincoln C. Chen, eds., *Common Security in Asia: New Concepts of Human Security* (Tokyo: Tokai University Press, 1995), pp. 3–5.
6. Lincoln C. Chen, "Human Security: Concepts and Approaches," in Matsumae and Chen, *Common Security in Asia*, p. 139.
7. Ibid., p. 145.
8. This process is described aptly by Jeannie Henderson, *Reassessing ASEAN*, Adelphi Paper 328 (London: Oxford University Press for the International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1999), pp. 48–55.
9. See *The Bangkok Post*, 12 December 1997, p. 3, and *The Nation* (Bangkok), 19 December 1997, p. A-3.