Review Article

Towards a Modified Approach to Human Security in Southeast Asia - A Perspective from Bangi

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ABSTRACT

The concept of "security" has spurred the imagination of people for as long as there has been a need to overcome fear. Traditionally in the field of International Relations, the issue of security has been discussed from the "realist" perspective. With the end of the Cold War, security has been recast to include issues such obvious threats as organized criminal activities, (including trafficking in humans, drugs, and weapons), plus threats to human rights, health and safety, and opportunities for education and economic well-being. Concurrently, this shifting paradigm has signalled an increasing interdependence and the importance of non-military issues; it also demonstrates the influence of a "neo-liberal" approach, in which security concerns are increasingly focused on human well-being and less on the state. Human security literature can be traced way back at least to 1994, when the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) published the "Human Security Framework." It had seven dimensions, namely, environmental, economic, health, personal, community, political and food. Three years later, the dimension of "cultural security" was added in a refined version created by the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). In this article, the authors provide a critique of that resulting model. The models emanating from the UN agencies are useful and comprehensive, but since they are intended to be universally applicable to all countries, they need to be modified when applied to specific regions or countries by taking into account the specificities of the region. Thus, we offer the rationale for a modified and extended model based on UNDP and UNESCO models, which we call, "The Bangi Approach to Human Security," or "BAGHUS." We analyzed that human security issues fell

into two major categories, namely, "man-made issues" and "natural disasters." In this article, the focus is on the former. Preliminary findings suggest that BAGHUS provides a complementary platform that is useful for analyzing the security needs of a country. It involves two new dimensions, social security, other than it recognizes the link between personal security and community security.   It is hoped that, as a new approach, BAGHUS will contribute to a better understanding of human security issues in the SE Asian region and elsewhere.

Keywords: BAGHUS, human security, Southeast Asia, realist, neo-liberal

INTRODUCTION

The notion of Human Security stems partly from the development theory put forward by Amartya Sen, the Indian-born Nobel Laureate in Economics and a Cambridge University professor (HDR, 1994). His research led to the United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP) promotion of "human security" as a new approach to human development problems. Among other things, Sen listed threats to sustainable development, including population explosion, economic inequities, population movements (e.g., refugees), environmental deterioration, as well as illicit drug trafficking and international terrorism. Consequently, in order to counter these threats, the UN grouped seven kinds of human security as priority target areas, namely, Economic, Environmental, Political, Food, Personal, Health and Community.

Although human security as an approach to general security was originally intended to be considered as universally applicable, both uneven development in different parts of the world and the variances of different cultures contribute to the variety of human security issues that have emerged (UNDP, 2005, 2010). The models emanating from the UN agencies are useful and comprehensive, but since they are intended to be universally applicable to all countries, they need to be modified when applied to specific regions or countries, by taking into account the specificities of the region. Thus, we offer the rationale for a modified and extended model based on UNDP and UNESCO models. It is the purpose of this article to offer a complementary framework, an approach that is tailored to conditions on human security of South East Asia (SE Asia) by taking into account the specificities of the region. The framework will provide a modified and extended model based on UNDP and UNESCO models to better explain human security. The UNESCO model, for instance, added cultural security, signalling the importance of culture in a globalized world (UNESCO, 2008, 2003). This article will address the specificities of human security in the Southeast Asian Archipelago,[1] and the reasons that the nature and circumstances of this region calls for a local approach, to security in general and to human security in particular. This modified and extended model is called "the Bangi

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[1]SE Asia archipelago is made up of eleven sovereign states, namely, Brunei, Cambodia, Laos, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Thailand, Timur Leste, Singapore and Vietnam.

Approach to Human Security" or BAGHUS (see reasons below).

We suggest nine core elements of BAGHUS, and intend to highlight the practical usage of the model as human security issues over the past two decades have been beset with controversy regarding conceptions of peace and human security once thought to be universal. This controversy has been further complicated by the fact that so many of these concepts have been applied along with the related issues. The imposition of such conceptions of human security is often rejected in the local communities of the Southeast Asian archipelago, whose beliefs and day-to-day practices differ in so many ways from those of the West. Nevertheless, the differences are sometimes accommodated through various forms of structural and institutional assimilation or integration.[2] The ultimate aim of this article is to contribute to a better understanding of human security issues that are specifically associated with this region of the world.

WHY BAGHUS?

The creation of BAGHUS was based on specific characteristics associated with SE Asia. First, all countries that make up the region, except Thailand, were once colonies of either the British, the Dutch, the Portuguese or the Americans (the Philippines were initially colonized by

[2]For the significance of the SE Asian region, please refer to Solvay Gerke, Hans-Dieter Evers and Anna-Katharina Hornidge (eds.). (The Straits of Malacca: Knowledge and Diversity. Berlin: LIT VERLAG, 2008).

Spain before being "won" by the Americans in a war). The legacy of colonization can be seen in many of the institutions of these countries, particularly in laws and legislative procedures, the education systems, land ownership policies, and labour policies, among others. Therefore, it is imperative to consider both the native heritage and the later history of these peoples, especially in terms of culture, since both have been reshaped by these countries' periods of colonization and other key episodes in their history.

Second, one has to acknowledge the fact that the UN models of human security implies a rather universal view of the peoples of the world, and the issue of universality versus specificity is usually a contentious matter. Thus, the UN model needs to be modified when applied to specific regions or countries by taking into account the specificities of the region. Third, the idea of a Bangi "school of thought" has been mooted and debated by scholars of Social Science since early 1990s, especially under the leadership of Professor Sham Sani when he was the Deputy Vice Chancellor (academic) and subsequently as the Vice Chancellor. In the editorial of *Akademika* Vol. 53, 1998, Abdul Rahman Embong said that Bangi (a small town about 40 km south of Kuala Lumpur and where Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia is located) has been blessed with many scholars who had their academic roots fully planted in the fertile ground of Bangi and through interactions and dialogue with academe from other parts of the country and elsewhere in the

region and the world. The works of the late Ishak Shari (1999) were on poverty and development, whereas the late H. M. Dahlan (1997) on a multi-disciplinary approach in Development Science, Sham Sani on the environment (1990, 1987), Anuwar Ali (1998, 1995) on industrialisation, Samad Hadi (1989) on urbanisation and liveable cities, Hood Salleh (2004) on the orang Asli, and Shamsul A. B. (1993) on identity. For the works of Rahman (2010, 2006, 2005, 1998) the big corpus he engaged in is development, while the works on the middle class and integrity were a reflection of that focus - all are some of the pioneering works in the development of what has become known as "the Bangi school of thought." Similarly, collective work by well-known research institutes have made a name for themselves; these are the works of a group of scholars around the Institute of Malaysian and International Studies (IKMAS) who focus on globalisation and social transformation, the Institute for Environment and Development (LESTARI) on environment and development, the Institute of Ethnic Studies (KITA) on ethnic studies, and the Institute of the Malay World and Civilisation (ATMA)[3] on the Malay world and civilisation.

Human security is not only from international relations but very importantly from the field of development (namely human-centred development), which is

a distinctive contribution of the Bangi school to the corpus of knowledge and policy. Up to now, however, no one has purposely used the word "Bangi" in these intellectual enterprises. In our humble offering here, following the tradition set by our mentors, the Bangi Approach to Human Security embodies the collective effort of a group of researchers who profess-to a constructivist leaning in their understanding of international politics. This group believes that the emergence of the concept of human security, as a broad, multifaceted, and evolving concept of security, reflects the impact of values and norms on international relations. Human security also embraces a range of actors, alliances, and agendas that have taken us beyond the traditional scope of international politics. As a demonstration of change in international politics of evolving identities and interests, this seems to be best explained with reference to a "social constructivist" perspective, in contrast to the traditional "realist" mainstream. Clearly, structural realism would not be sympathetic to the concept of human security. Human security relies upon key agent-oriented processes, the emergence of non-state forces, and the impact of ideas and values. Constructivism, however, helps to explain these phenomena and the emergence of human security as an ideational force (Newman, 2001; Sweney, 1999).

The underlying argument of constructivism is that behaviour, interests, and relationships are socially constructed, and can therefore change. Meanwhile, values and ideas can have an impact

[3]For an indirect insight about works by Malaysian scholars, including those from Bangi, please see Abdul Rahman Embong. Research in the Social Sciences and Humanities in Malaysia: A Historical Overview (UKM: IKMAS Keynote Series, 2010).

upon international relations, and norms, systems, and relationships can change. Constructivism thus helps explain a phenomenon in which realism is blind or indifferent. Moreover, constructivism shares fundamental assumptions with human security approaches – the assumption, for example, that threats are constructed, not inevitable, and can be altered or mitigated (Nor Azizan *et al.,* 2011). The acknowledgements by states that certain forms of economic and political organization facilitate domestic peace and stability, and that domestic condition affects the international system, are characteristically constructivist insights (Hampson, 2008, p. 241-242). Constructivism highlights the critical subjective and intersubjective dimensions of security. Cosmopolitanism, as exemplified in the human security or critical security approaches, is essential for reminding us the sufferings of the poor, the excluded and the marginalized, and the multiple ways in which state behaviour has often been a principal source of global insecurity (Dannreuther, 2007, p. 36). Similarly, by focusing on human rather than on state, exemplified the strong influence of the neoliberal idea, in particular, on how the non-military threats and the non-state actors have negative implication on people (Sity & Zarina, 2005).

The BAGHUS Research Group has recognized that human security and national security must complement one another, not just for short-term survival but for a quality of life leading to long-term survival and thriving as well. They believe that each person should be "free from fear" and "free from want." Moreover, embedded in this perspective is the understanding that the local context must be taken into consideration--that identity and culture should be part and parcel of the people's survival (Rashila & Nor Azizan, 2008; Rashila, 2009).

Fourth, the security dimension in BAGHUS focuses on man-made problems or "disasters," rather than "natural disasters" (Zarina, 2006). Natural disasters are important as they affect human security directly. At the same time, man-made problems are also very critical at times, and more important in terms of consequences, and that both should be taken together. While it is acknowledged that natural disasters can bring about initial chaos, the possibility of violent conflict is usually less. It is thought that which is caused by human has a better chance of being understood and brought under control by humans.

Fifth, while human security proponents believe in centring on the individual, BAGHUS recognizes that for SE Asia, the individual is intricately linked to the community (or communities) where they live in, work for, and socialize, etc. This is because an individual is considered as a member of a community." Thus, the personal security of an individual is usually intricately linked to the community security. That link is strengthened by the influences of religion and culture in the daily lives of the people. Therefore, in reformulating the dimensions of human security, this personal-community dimension is given a special

consideration by treating it as one integrated dimension of security. This is also closely related to the Islamic concept of *ummah,* in which community is seen as a group or a society as a whole. This is significant in a region where more than 50% of the people are Muslims (Zarina, 2007).

Sixth, BAGHUS emphasizes protection and empowerment. In this case, the community is seen as agents of change and not as passive receivers of fate. While the state has a responsibility to protect its citizens from internal and external harm, it also has a responsibility to provide strategies and programmes that would empower all its citizens. This will strengthen the state from within. This acts as a deterrent to man–made issues (Zarina & Sity, 2009). Seventh, recognition of diverse identities gives special mention to the rights of the very old and the very young (children), thus giving a new dimension in examining cultural security. Moreover, cultural security gives prominence to gender as a category of analysis, highlighting the importance of the previously peripheral group, mainly the elderly, children, women, and the disadvantage group, such as the handicapped.

Eighth, like the UNDP model, 'freedom from fear' and 'freedom from want,' remain the cornerstones of BAGHUS. This premise remains essential in the formulation of BAGHUS because there is a need to recognize the fundamentals underlying all models of human security. In BAGHUS, it is assumed that human security precedes peace. This is because states need to be strong enough to provide security for their people in order for their country to develop, and development is necessary in order to protect the state and the people against both internal and external threats to the peace.

Finally, the inclusion of social security is the most important element. In SE Asia, there is a high expectation placed upon their children by the elders, for old age care and especially financial support. The informal support network is very much prevalent in the region. As such, the informal support system is given due recognition in BAGHUS, unlike in the other models of human security, in which informal social safety nets are taken for granted. This informal support system is indeed complementary to what have already been provided by the state, particularly social assistance to displaced groups in society (Sity, 2004; Sity & Zarina, 2005).

THE NINE SECURITY DIMENSIONS OF BAGHUS

There are nine dimensions of BAGHUS, as follows:

Social Security

Social security refers to having access to economic and social safety nets that provide for basic survival needs via public programmes. These programmes are designed to provide some help in the forms of financial, physical or social resources to those who are unable to provide for themselves. The recipients may need help to cope with economic crisis or losses, forced retirement or unemployment, serious

illness and chronic disease, temporary or permanent injury or disability, pregnancy, childbirth and child care, general health, medical and dental care, food, shelter, and clothing subsidies for families and children, life transitions such as a death in the family, widowhood or divorce, as well as parks and recreational facilities which serve health, fitness and social needs. From the BAGHUS perspective, social security can be defined as having reasonable assurance of being helped by the society to live on, when faced with any circumstances of dire need. The concept is often used interchangeably with economic security, but social security in BAGHUS takes into account not only an organized support system provided by the government and NGOs, but also the informal support systems that exist within a community.

Economic Security

Economic security may be addressed in the following ways. One is through ideological disputation, and the other is through examining theoretical considerations. Ideological disputation includes debates about the international political economy and the relationship between the presumed political structure of anarchy and the economic structure of the market. There are questions concerning whether politics or the market should receive priority attention in international relations, about which economic theory and practices should be allowed to dominate, and what consequences for security theory and policy will be hoped for or expected to occur as a result of our choices. Other topics concern what limits we may encounter in our attempts to relate security to the economic and social aspects of life, and what ethical issues arise as we seek economic security, and what its links are with other aspects of human security (Sity *et al.,* 2011).

Food Security

Food security may be envisioned as a state of affairs in which all people have sufficient access to safe and nutritious food at all times, and sufficient to maintain a healthy and active life. Food security also means that all people have ongoing, sustainable, and adequate food supplies at all times, sufficient not only to be healthy and active, but also to ultimately not have to live in fear that the situation could change for the worse at any time. Food security is related to food availability - sources of food supplies, distribution systems, general access, and affordability of the food. It also is concerned with the quality of the food—including safety and sanitation standards, such as quality of the soil, use of pesticides and fertilizers, sources and quality of water, uses of safe and healthy chemicals and additives, adequate storage and transportation facilities, and adequate "shelf life" for some food. In contrast, food insecurity usually correlates with poverty, large-scale health problems, high mortality rates, and stagnant economic growth, due in part to a labour force that is not able to be sufficiently strong and productive.

Health Security

Health security is the core aspect of human security; it is the backbone of the peace and sustainability of our planet and all life living on it, which is the ultimate security. Health security may be defined as the conditions necessary for human survival and overall well-being, including having adequate means of livelihood, human dignity and self-respect, and an assurance of adequate care when there is illness or injury, as well as the means to prevent illness, disease and injury as much as possible. Poor health, in contrast, may result from any critical threats to one's security, including threats to the environment or community in which one lives. In addition, the most urgent threats are often those that arise out of widespread conflicts or natural disasters and other emergencies. Humanitarian crises threaten the conditions considered most vital to human health, such as infectious diseases, hunger, malnutrition, and lack of sanitation, safe water, and shelter. More insidious threats may be those that persist over the long term, such as the health problems resulting from entrenched poverty and inequities in one's society. In this article, health security is defined as the conditions necessary to counter all the threats to general public health and well-being, as well as to reduce or deal with threats that arise from the impact of events causing humanitarian crises. Recognizing the long-run negative effects that poor health security can have on all other components of human security, it is imperative to put a high priority on maintaining as high a level of health security as possible.

Environmental Security

Environmental security refers to the preventing, countering, controlling, or eliminating a variety of human activities that adversely impact the environment, and thereby threaten the survival of future generations. Specific effects of environmental degradation may include conflicts and instability among peoples, caused by scarcity or reduced quality of the resources required for life. Other negative effects may block sustainable development or cause extinction of species, which may in turn impact on other aspects of human security. In short, environmental security exists when human individuals and systems interact with ecological systems in sustainable ways; when individuals and nations have fair and reasonable access to environmental resources; when there are systems in place to peacefully address the inevitable environmental conflicts and crises that arise; and when there is an ongoing effective effort to educate everyone about, and enforce, sustainable practices that maintain security (Zarina, 2009).

Personal-Community Security

Personal-community security aims to protect people who are identifiable members of a particular group from physical violence, crime, manipulation, torture, domestic abuse and harassment, from both state and non-state actors. In particular, personal-

community security involves protecting members of the society who are especially vulnerable—including women, children, people who are frail, elderly, disabled, and/or suffering from disease or illness, or any other state/condition that places them in some kind of at-risk minority group, regardless of the cause. It also includes people in any community who are suffering from the negative impacts of uneven development, discrimination and inequitable treatment, modernization, globalization, corruption, and organized criminal activity.

Political Security

Political security is protection against threats originate from state authorities and are applied against the people in general, or against particular groups. Political security is based on the premise that people should be able to live in a society that honours their basic human rights. It involves a relationship between the state (government) on one hand, as the coordinator of the state's activities, and the citizens as stakeholders who benefit (or not) from the state's actions and policies on the other. Thus, political security is concerned with the right of individuals and groups to participate in the political life of the society, and in the governance of the country, the right for power to be shared among the existing ethnic groups. At the same time, individuals should also be free from harassment and threats by non-state actors who profess different ideologies/political beliefs, and that the state should protect individuals from threats by such groups.
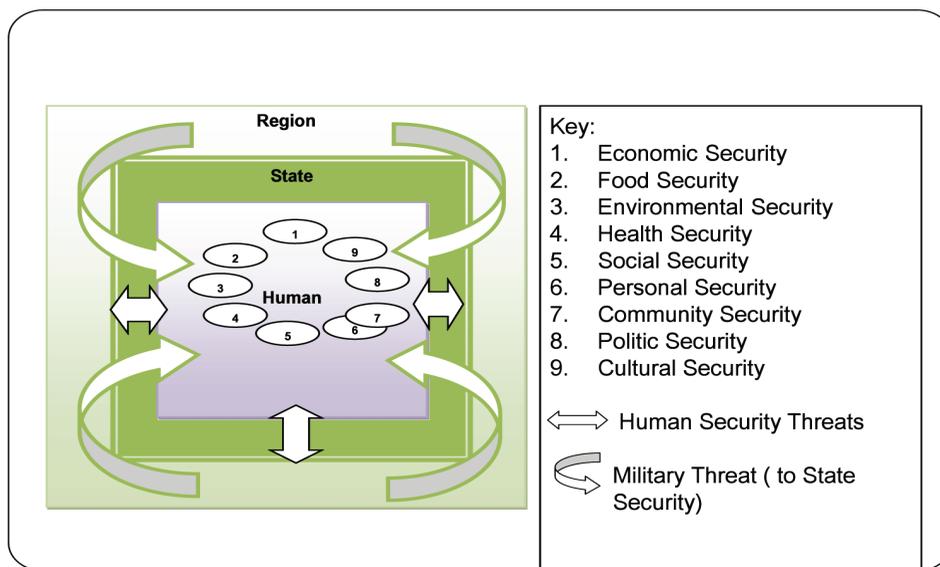
(Source: Adapted from Sity Daud & Zarina Othman, 2005; Keselamatan insan dan jaringan keselamatan sosial. In Sity Daud and Zarina Othman (Eds.). *Politik dan Keselamatan.* Bangi: UKM Publishers)

Fig.1: The BAGHUS model demonstrates the nine security dimensions

Cultural Security

In the countries of the Southeast Asian Archipelago, cultural security focuses on the need for respect in life, equality between women and men, and the celebration of diversity in terms of belief systems, language, lifestyle, tradition, value systems and religion. Cultural security is not only about protecting certain ethnic groups or minorities, but also protecting gender equality. Gender equality and equity are central to sustainable development, in which each member of the society respects others and plays a role in which they can fulfil their potential.

CONCLUSION

BAGHUS encompasses economic development, social justice, environmental protection, democratization, and respect for human and community rights, norms and the rule of law. It places importance on governance within a civil society in ensuring that each individual has opportunities and choices to fulfil his or her potential, within his or her community or beyond. In other words, human security for the SE Asian Archipelago encompasses security from within (freedom from fear) and the needs for human development (freedom from want). Thus, BAGHUS provides a complementary model for the analysis of human security in Southeast Asia. Although it was designed based on the case of SE Asia, BAGHUS is not a model just for SE Asia but for any developing regions, including the Middle East, Central America and others. In the

Southeast Asian Archipelago, BAGHUS assumes that human security and peace can only be achieved and maintained when there is a high level of security in all the nine dimensions. All the nine elements are integral within all dimensions in the sense that they all complement one another. Each element provides a possible focus of analysis for a researcher. Meanwhile, a combination of the elements will allow for a more holistic analysis of human security, as well as an explanation for the presence, absence, or continuance of peace. As the models emanating from the UN Agencies tend to be universal, BAGHUS argues that these models have to be modified by taking into account the specificities of the region. Other regions may have different conditions than SE Asia, so the model has to be applied creatively by taking into account their specificities. In short, BAGHUS was designed to be a living framework that can be further refined in the future.

ENDNOTE

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