

Rethinking Human Security in Southeast (SE) Asia^{*}

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Abstract

Globalization has provided new opportunities to many of the states around the world, including countries in Southeast Asia. The spread of democracy and capitalism, as well as advanced technology, has been some of the important aspects of globalization. However, globalization also has brought with it many new challenges. Globalization has helped to accelerate the spread of transnational organized crime, especially the growth of illegal trafficking and smuggling of drugs and people, with all the related economic and social ills that are attached to those activities. Globalization also has contributed to the worsening of environmental conditions, the spread of infectious diseases, and many other world problems. Thus, it has contributed to the insecurity of the people, a fact which in turn threatens the overall security of each state and of the region as a whole. Despite the fact that these growing transnational threats spread without regard for national borders, the region has generally continued to define and design their security in traditional border-defined ways. This article invites readers (both academics and policymakers, as well as the general public) to rethink national security concepts, approaches and debates in Southeast Asia, especially among the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) member countries. The central theme of the paper is that although human security appears as a relatively new concept in the

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region, SE Asia has long been influenced by the notion that "security begins at home." Political stability, economic development and social harmony have been usually considered as elements important to ensuring any country's national security. Likewise, the increasing incidence of natural disasters (due to climate change) have provided extra reason for us to rethink the concept, bringing it to the individual level of analysis. For that purpose, first, the article reassesses human security debates in a global context as well as within the context of Southeast Asia; second, it examines both security and insecurity issues within SE Asia; and third, it concludes and suggests the human security approach as an alternative for the region. The article concludes that peace and security must be sought by state entities concurrently with efforts to improve the security of the individual human beings within their states. By designing policies based on human needs, the region has a chance to counter the unintended negative side effects of globalization and climate change, while also strengthening their countries and reducing specific security threats common to all.

Keywords: climate change, globalization, human security, insecurity, Southeast Asia.

1. Introduction

The topics that we are going to discuss are related to security--a concept that most of us agree is of basic importance to our existence. However, we live in a time when the meaning of that concept is undergoing considerable change. The end of the Cold War (1989); the Gulf Wars of 1991 & 2003, the Asian Financial Crisis of 1997-1998, the Asian tsunami of 2004, and many other events are among the changes that have brought an impact on all our lives, whether directly or indirectly. But the two most important developments demanding that we pay special attention are: (1) globalization, and (2) global warming. There is a need for more debate on our way to reaching new understandings and a new consensus about how we can best act to create and maintain security--especially in this time when we search for peace even when we tell ourselves that we are secure. This article is divided into three major parts: First, it reassesses human security debates in a global context as well as within the context of Southeast Asia; second, it examines both security and insecurity issues within SE Asia; and third, it concludes and suggests the human security approach as an alternative for the region.

SE Asia is an important region that needs to be studied. During the past three decades, except for a brief period when the SE Asian region was hit by a severe financial and economic crisis, most countries in the region have witnessed impressive economic growth. The region has become more important as it improved its standard of living. A global banking system has integrated Asian countries' flow of money with that of big cities around the globe such as London and New York. SE Asia is also a region rich in natural resources, including petroleum and natural gas, tin, gold, and tropical rain-forests. This richness has contributed to its fast economic growth.

Today, we grant that the economic success story of Asia has been partly due to free trade.¹ Associated with free trade is the phenomenon we call *globalization*,

¹ Theodore H. Cohn. 2005. *Global Political Economy*. (New York: Pearson), pp.: 222-223.

which is continuing to bring change to many parts of the world—some of which is welcomed, and some not. For the purpose of this article, I would like to define globalization as having three important components, as follows: (1) Democratization; (2) Expansion of capitalism, with increasingly liberal economic policies being adopted by countries such as Vietnam; and (3) information "warfare" and advanced technology.² As states scramble to find new ways to remain competitive, free trade is becoming the basis for a new regionalism, which in turn acts as an important spur to regional economic development. In our region, the ASEAN Free Trade Area (AFTA) was established in 1992 and ASEAN states agreed to liberalize their trade within their region.³ While the cooperative regional arrangements have been slowly evolving, ASEAN member states have also made bilateral free trade agreements with countries like Japan, forming trading partnerships such as Singapore-Japan, Thailand-Japan, and Malaysia-Japan. Moreover, its geo-strategic location also makes it important because of its sea-lanes that connect the Middle East, Europe, the Pacific and North America, making our region one of the busiest and most important areas of trade in the world.

During the same period of growth and prosperity, however, the region faces numerous transnational threats. Not only goods and services, and people, can now move faster and easier; crime, corruption, and disease also are crossing borders at a rate and amount greater than we could have imagined previously. For example, Myanmar is a leading producer of opium. Thailand has one of the highest rates of abuse and addiction to amphetamine-type stimulants (ATS). Nearby Phnom Penh in Cambodia is identified as one of the main money-laundering centers in the region, and the Philippines is a major marijuana exporter and producer. Malaysia has one of the highest rates of drug abuse despite the fact that it is not a drug-producing country. SE Asia as a whole has become one of the largest and fastest growing markets for illicit drugs. As stated in the *Far Eastern Economic Review* in 1998, "In the midst of an Asian

² Maryann Cusimano. *Beyond Sovereignty: Issues for Global Agenda*. (Belmon, Ca.: Thomson & Wadsworth, 2003).

³ <http://www.aseansec.org> (visited 20/8/05)

financial crisis, at least one business is still booming: the trade in narcotics from the Golden Triangle.”⁴ Interwoven with the illegal drug trafficking is the trafficking in human beings, in which women and children (and sometimes men) are forced to become beggars, prostitutes, and drug addicts at the mercy of the minions of transnational organized crime.

In addition, most of the countries are multi-ethnic, having populations composed of a mixture of different cultures, religions, languages and ethnic groups. Hence, internal issues such as political discrimination, economic inequality and social disharmony, continue to plague the leadership of the respective countries. Finally, unresolved conflicts within the region, such as the following, add to the vulnerability of SE Asia.

Some of the Ongoing Unresolved Conflicts in Southeast Asia

- The claim of the Philippines to the Malaysian states of Sabah and its adjacent waters
- Conflicting claims by China, Vietnam, Brunei, Malaysia, Taiwan and the Philippines to the Spratly Islands in the South China Sea
- Border disputes between China and Vietnam
- Boundary dispute between Indonesia and Vietnam over their demarcation line on the continental shelf near Natuna Island, in the South China Sea
- Boundary dispute between Vietnam and Malaysia over their offshore demarcation line
- The pro-democracy rebellions and armed separatist movements in Myanmar
- Muslim unrest in Southern Thailand and the Philippines

⁴ Bertil Lintner. “The Dream Merchants: While Other Asian Business Falter, the Golden Triangle’s Narcotics Trade Flourishes.” *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 16, (April 1998), 16: p. 26.

Source: Compiled by the author

In short, we can see that the region has both a growing economy and growing problems. Therefore, it is not difficult to see the importance of SE Asian security, because whatever happens in the region in the near future is likely to have a spillover impact on the surrounding regions, with international repercussions—a serious impact on overall global security. Hence, it is imperative that the rest of the world take notice of the situation and understand the problems.

It is not the intention of this article to debate whether globalization has brought more negative impact, or more positive changes. Rather, we just accept the on-going process of globalization in the region, and acknowledge that it is not likely to reverse itself any time soon, if ever. However, we do believe that it presents an opportunity to rethink and redesign the approach to human security. Many might question our concern about security issues in the region when the people of the region have seen such significant improvement in the quality of life. I would submit that even though a liberal economy and free trade have contributed to an improved for most of the people, it also increased the insecurity of the people in the region. They may not be totally aware of their insecurities, mainly because the impacts may not be immediately apparent. However, there are long-term consequences to the overall well-being of the people.

2. Background

We may say that globalization is partly related to the end of the Cold War. We recall that the fall of the Berlin Wall on 9th November 1989, as one of the events that marked the beginning of the end of the Cold War. It was one event that greatly accelerated the shift in understanding of the concept of security. It reverberated throughout the international community, showing that a country cannot endure as isolated and apart from the rest. Building a wall does not ensure security, but rather

ensures unrest from within that eventually puts the country at risk.⁵ This was followed shortly by another important world event, the disintegration of the Soviet Union in December 1991, which initiated the so-called “new world order.” Consequently, the world was rapidly becoming “one big global village,” connected into one economic system. Our planet was becoming “smaller.” Today, increasing numbers of us are able to communicate instantly with people around the world. More of us know what’s going on in North Korea, Cuba or Lesotho (Africa) within seconds. Despite our imagined national borders, we are connected with those faraway places by today’s advanced technology, trade, investment, tourism, as well as financial flow. Thereby, national borders become less meaningful all the time. Although globalization as a concept has been around at least since the 1960s, it now is used with new understanding by many more people around the world.

In their effort to compete with the rest of the world, many countries began to adopt policies that will benefit them in the long term. One of the grand strategies designed by the government of Malaysia for example, is “Vision 2020,” focusing on the goal that Malaysia will be a fully developed nation by the year 2020. Part of that vision is to strengthen the country’s security within. While Malaysia and numerous other countries are working hard to keep up—or catch up—with the advance of globalization and the accelerated development that it fosters, we also need to be fully aware of how some of the changes brought by that globalization have been working against us—e.g., how globalization driven by capitalism affects human security through inequalities of power and resources, resulting in poverty and more inequality.⁶ We are thus led to see how security cannot be pursued at the expense of others. Likewise, technological

⁵ In our country—Malaysia and Thailand—we also witnessed the signing of the peace accord with Communist Party of Malaya that ended the armed guerilla conflict on 2nd December 1989, and later between Malaysian government with North Kalimantan Communist Party in the following year on 17th October 1990.

⁶ Caroline Thomas and Peter Wilkins, eds. *Globalization, Human Security and the African Experience*. (Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner, 1999).

developments made possible by the expansion of capitalism, have helped to contribute to the growth of inequalities between states and may cause insecurity not only for state but also for people within the state. Observing this, we are forced to conclude that security refers not only to peace and stability; more important, it means the preservation of the quality of life of the people.

While we, the people, as well as states are struggling to survive in the process of globalization, our planet is also in danger. Global warming--a term sometimes used to refer specifically to climate change caused by human activity--continues to increase. For example, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change defines climate change as "... a change of climate which is attributed directly or indirectly to human activity that alters the composition of the global atmosphere and which is in addition to natural climate variability observed over comparable time periods."⁷ The environmental degradation due to multinational corporations and others also continues to increase in many countries, including those in our region. Especially noteworthy in this regard are Cambodia, Vietnam, Thailand, and Indonesia.⁸ Car manufacturers are producing cheap cars without thinking of the side effects from their use of fossil fuel and how its pollution will impact on future generations. Deforestation in many countries such as the one in Indonesia, is another example of something that directly or indirectly contributes to global warming. It seems that profits for multinational corporations are believed to be more important than the future of a life-sustaining planetary environment. The list of problems that beset today's world is very long indeed. At the very core of the concept of human security is that from our people will come our future leaders, workers, thinkers and innovators, at all levels of the society. Therefore, the health, safety, and security of our children, and of the families in which they are born and nurtured, will ultimately determine the strength--and probably the fate--of one's country as we travel into the unknowns of the future. When we rethink 'national security' in these terms, we

⁷ United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (<http://unfccc.int>) (Visited 20/06/2010)

⁸ Carolina G. Hernandez and David B. Dewitt, eds. *Development and Security in SE Asia*. (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003).

begin to understand the many implications that this concept has for the policies of our governments and their agencies, businesses and NGOs, as well as for community leaders and anyone who cares about the quality of life in their country. We cannot stop the development that is going on right now, with both the good and the not-so-good of globalization--but we must discover the best ways to deal with these problems, the ways that best fit our country and our people.

So how can we be part of finding the solutions? First of all, most of the problems we struggle with today are not unique to our region. All of humanity faces the fact that we are connected in ways and to a degree that has never been seen before. Therefore what happens in one place has repercussions everywhere. Second, there are external threats and internal security threats for the home and family, just as for the state itself. To lay the groundwork for a better understanding of this subject, we need to look at the parallels between the individual residents of a country and this abstract entity we call "the state," which is of course also held together by individual human beings. The following overview of human security concepts and approaches may provide some insights into such a link.

3. Human Security Revisited

To begin with, the concept of security itself has no agreed upon definition among security and international relations scholars. In general it has been considered to be about protection of a state from external threat, and as such it is usually referred to as "national security." The threat mainly refers to military attack. So, if there is no military attack, a state is assumed to be secure, and it is assumed that the citizens within that state are also safe. In international relations disciplines, national security is the most important entity. It involves what they refer to as "high politics." Nevertheless, for developing countries, like many in our region, national security does not necessarily mean military attack from outside of the country's borders. Insurgents, criminals, and politically motivated terrorists may also launch attacks on the government or its agents. Poverty is also considered a threat to the stability of the state. To add to the confusion,

some scholars refer to the survival of the regime in power as a threat to the national security of certain developing countries.⁹

Over the years, especially towards the end of the Cold War, “international security” began to become a popular concept. Issues that had been neglected are now attracting scholars. One such issue is population movements or migration of people. Some are legal, while some are not. Some are voluntary, while others are being forced. Suddenly, these movements underscore the need that people have for protection from forces beyond their direct control. It is the survival of people (“the human race”) that requires serious attention from states and policymakers. In countries that have become favorite destinations for migration of people, we cannot deny the fact that foreign workers—both legal and illegal—have contributed to the economic prosperity of their countries. It is reported that there are about 160,000 registered refugees in Malaysia.¹⁰ Likewise, in the year 2009 alone, the Thai government attempted to register about 4,000,000 foreign workers in the country.¹¹

In the academic discipline of international relations, the UN has been credited with helping to popularize the concept of human security as something essential for the survival of the people of a country. In one of its annual reports, *Human Development 1994*, the concept was first introduced. “Human security” refers to a kind of security that does not focus first on either the traditional “national security” nor even on an expanded “comprehensive security,” both of which are concerned first with the entity of the state. It focuses instead on the importance of protecting the safety, health, and well-being of the human race—not just the security of one’s own people, but of all people, cutting across distinctions and boundaries of nationality and ethnicity, class and culture, gender, religion, etc. Such is the nature of an interconnected world, that both threats and security from threats must take on this broadened focus.

⁹ Zarina Othman 1996 (Unpublished MA Thesis, University of Denver, Denver, Colo.: USA)

¹⁰ UBHCR cited in Kiranjit Kaur, *Media Reporting on Refugees in Malaysia*, <http://www.une.edu.au> (visited 1/8/2010).

¹¹ (*The Irrawaddy* <http://irrawaddy.org> (visited 1/8/2010)).

The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) definition of human security included seven categories of security and well-being that are necessary to ensure that people have “freedom from fear” and “freedom from want.” They are: 1) *food security* (where all people at all times have access to safe and nutritious food to maintain a healthy and active life); 2) *health security* (protection from events that threaten the overall health, safety and well-being of the people); 3) *economic security* (protection from loss of income, or from opportunities to produce enough income sufficient to sustain life and well-being); 4) *environmental security* (protection from adverse impacts on the environment, caused by human activities that negatively affect the survival of future generations; the environmental changes (e.g., water and air pollution, global warming, and loss of habitats from many different causes) that can affect overall human security; the effects of environmental change (e.g., overall degradation and the resulting scarcity of natural resources), resulting in widespread conflict and instability; *sustainable development*) 6) *personal and community security* (the protection of people of any one group from physical violence, crime, manipulation, torture and domestic abuse from another group or groups, or from state and non-state actors; and 7) *political security* (the granting and protection of basic human rights).¹²

Nevertheless, the idea of human security does not ignore the importance of state entities. Rather, it holds the perspective that in the long run human security is essential to the well-being of the state itself, and vice versa. One entity cannot exist in a sustainably secure state of being without the other. When the people of a country suffer from a lack of safety, health, and overall well-being—in other words, when as individuals and groups they do not experience a state of being secure-- then the country as a whole, including its sovereignty and ability to protect against outside threats, is put at risk. When there is poor health among the populace--not only their physical and mental health, but also poor economic and social health-- then the health

¹² UNDP. *Human Development Report 1994*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995)

of the nation itself is also threatened. Providing protection and security to the people is thus seen as an essential means of providing security to the state.¹³

Several countries have adopted an emphasis on human security in conducting their foreign policies. One of them is Canada. That country refers to human security as "an acceptable quality of life and guaranteed fundamental human rights."¹⁴ In Asia, it was Japan which adopted the human security approach in its foreign policy formulations. Unlike Canada, which has focused on human rights as important elements of human security, Japan's approach to human security has been focused more on development--which has been exemplified in its Official Development Assistance (ODA) as well as its providing help for displaced people and refugees. In 1999, Japan's initiatives also helped to launch the United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security, where the funding goes to developing areas to help with such items as education, health, and small scale infrastructure development.¹⁵ In the following year, at the UN Millennium Summit, the Commission of Human Security was established. Their aim is to address critical and pervasive threats to human security, among other things. Interestingly, although envisioning a world where human beings are more secure, Japan is not a member of the Human Security Network (HSN).

In 2003, the Commission on Human Security submitted its report, "Human Security Now." It emphasized " ... protecting people from critical and pervasive threats and situations, building on their strengths and aspirations." Further, the report said, "[Human security] also means creating systems that give people the building blocks of survival, dignity and livelihood. Human security connects different types of freedoms-- freedom from want, freedom from fear, and freedom to take action on one's own behalf.

¹³ Zarina Othman. Human Security Concepts, Approaches and Debates in Southeast Asia. In Hans Gunter Brauch, et. al. (eds). *Facing Global Environmental Change: Environmental, Human, Energy, Food, Health and Water Security Concepts*. (Germany: Springer, 2009).

¹⁴ Ibid

¹⁵ (<http://ochaonline.un.org/webpage.asp?MenuID=9432&Page=1505>) (visited 5/7/2007).

To do this, it offers two general strategies: protection and empowerment.”¹⁶ Thus the Commission shows its concern for future generations as well as the current population. Other than the UNDP, UNESCO (the UN Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization) also has been proactive when it comes to human security. Its approach to human security has added one more important element, "*cultural security*." This is consistent with UNESCO's Culture of Peace, which is focused on fostering a culture of peace through education: 1) promoting sustainable economic and social development; 2) promoting respect for all human rights; 3) ensuring equality between men and women; 4) fostering democratic participation; 5) advancing understanding, tolerance and solidarity; 6) supporting participatory communication and the free flow of information and knowledge; and 7) promoting international peace and security.¹⁷ Cultural security is not only about protecting certain ethnic groups or minorities, but it is also about protecting gender equality.

Gender equality is central to the sustainable development of societies in which each member of society respects others and is able to play a role in which they can fulfill their potential. The broader goal of gender equality is a societal goal to which education, along with all other social institutions, must contribute. Discrimination based on gender is often structurally embedded in our societies. Women often bear the major burden of responsibility for food production and child-rearing, as well as household management, but then are excluded from family and community decisions affecting them. As presented, not only states, but also international organizations, have made serious efforts to promote human security by acknowledging the value of every human life, and creating ways to improve the standard of living and quality of life for all.¹⁸

¹⁶ (http://www.humansecurity_chs.org/finalreport/Outlines/outline.pdf) (visited 5/7/2007).

¹⁷ UNESCO Culture of Peace, <http://www.unesco.org> (visited 20/10/2009)

¹⁸ Ibid.

4. Human Security in SE Asia: The ASEAN Way

I would argue that overall, SE Asia is moving along, but still slow in applying the concept of human security. This is partly due to the understanding that human security is not common to many of the states in the region, and it may also be due to the Global War on Terrorism that was launched by the US in 2001. The focus of security has shifted from human to state.¹⁹ It is also hampered by the fact that what is considered to be a threat by Malaysia may not be considered as threat by Singapore, and vice-versa. This is especially true of the non-military issues such as weapons trafficking or the illegal drug trade.

Nevertheless, Thailand has led the countries of the region by becoming the first to adopt the approach of human security. Following the Asian Economic Crisis of 1997-1998, Thailand established what is known as the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security, which is in charge of Thailand's social well-being. One of their goals is the eradication of poverty.

ASEAN had also moved towards promoting human security in 1998, when it created an ASEAN-PMC (Post Ministerial Conference) Caucus on Human Security. Later another ASEAN-PMC Caucus was established on Social Safety Nets. ASEAN further took a proactive approach when it announced the ASEAN Vision 2020, focusing on human security within a context of societal security.²⁰ ASEAN continued to assimilate the approach of human security when it included it in the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) meeting in Bangkok, in 2003.²¹

¹⁹ Zarina Othman. Human Security Concepts, Approaches and Debates in Southeast Asia.

²⁰ ASEAN Secretariat. (<http://www.aseansec.org/184.htm>) (visited 20/6/2006).

²¹ Sity Daud and Zarina Othman. Keselamatan Insan dan Jaringan Keselamatan Sosial. In Sity Daud and Zarina Othman, eds. *Politik dan Keselamatan*. (Bangi: UKM, 2005).

Theoretically, in SE Asia human security discourse appears mostly to be a critique of "comprehensive security."²² States in Southeast Asia adopted the concept to defend their national boundaries from both military and non-military threats. Closer assessment also revealed that while many non-traditional issues, including HIV-AIDS, are considered as threats, there still appears to be no common understanding of what human security is all about. In reality, I would argue that SE Asia has long been influenced by the notion that "security begins at home." Political Stability, economic development and social harmony have been considered important elements to ensure national security of the countries in the region, although the increasing incidence of natural disasters has provided reason for scholars to rethink the concept. Rather than focusing on human security per se, the region is slowly accepting and adopting the concept of "comprehensive security." With the concept, the region has acknowledged that nonmilitary issues, such as maritime piracy and drug trafficking are also considered as security issues.

SE Asian leaders have begun to understand that we have to be strong on the inside in order to be stronger on the outside. Malaysia, for example, has realized the importance of domestic security issues and in fact officially declared illicit drug [trafficking], as one domestic threat to national security, as early as 1983-- at a time when most other countries were still struggling to understand how illicit drugs and related issues really affect a nation as a whole, not just the individuals who are directly involved. Although we do see here a major shift from the most traditional concept of security to a more comprehensive one, focus has largely remained on the state as the main entity to be protected. What we seem to be having trouble understanding is the growing interconnectedness in the world--the growing interdependence between and among states, both poor and rich, developed and developing countries. Issues that are important for one country so often have a spillover impact onto other countries.

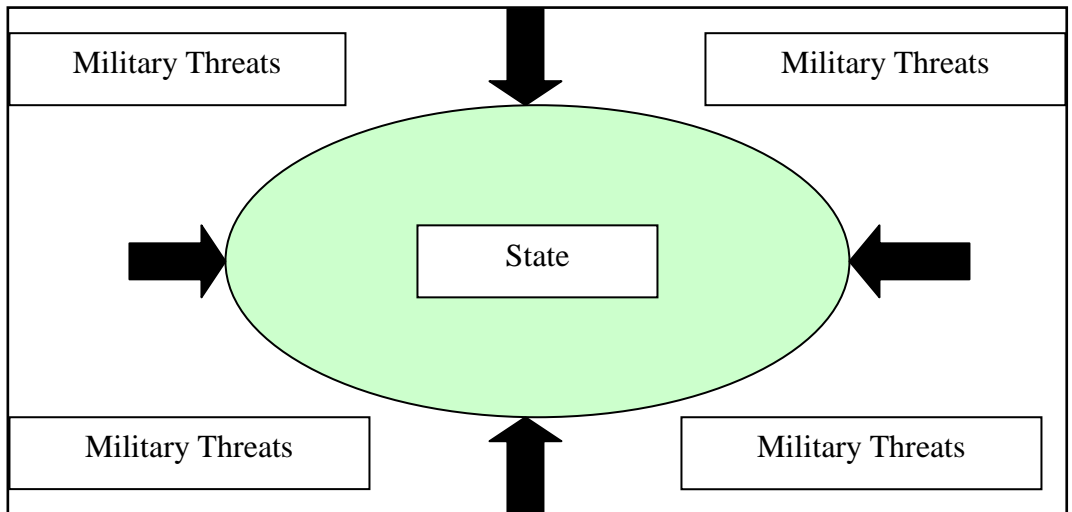
²² Amitav Acharya. Human Security: East versus West. (Working paper, Institute of Defense and Strategic Studies, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore, 2001) <http://dr.ntu.edu> (visited 23/04/2005).

Another major event that has shaped human security in the region was the Asian tsunami of 2004. Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar all were partly affected by it. It killed people more than 2000km away, and the death toll was about 300,000.²³ Even if we were not hit by tsunamis, the region is prone to other natural disasters--volcanic eruptions, floods, earthquakes, landslides, etc. This is because the location of the region is in a volcano belt and it is believed that there are about 90 active volcanoes in the region. We have witnessed slightly changing roles of the military when they perform their duties. They now give humanitarian assistance (as did Malaysian and Australian military forces in Indonesia). Although the Indonesian government at one time was very cautious about it, because tsunamis hit Aceh (Northern Sumatera), an area where separatism was at its height at that time, it is generally understood in ASEAN and in the region as a whole that “ human security... along with economic development, is a precondition for political stability. Human rights issues are still usually considered to be domestic problems best left to individual states, and should be discussed only at the regional level.”²⁴ The above discussion can best explained by the model below.

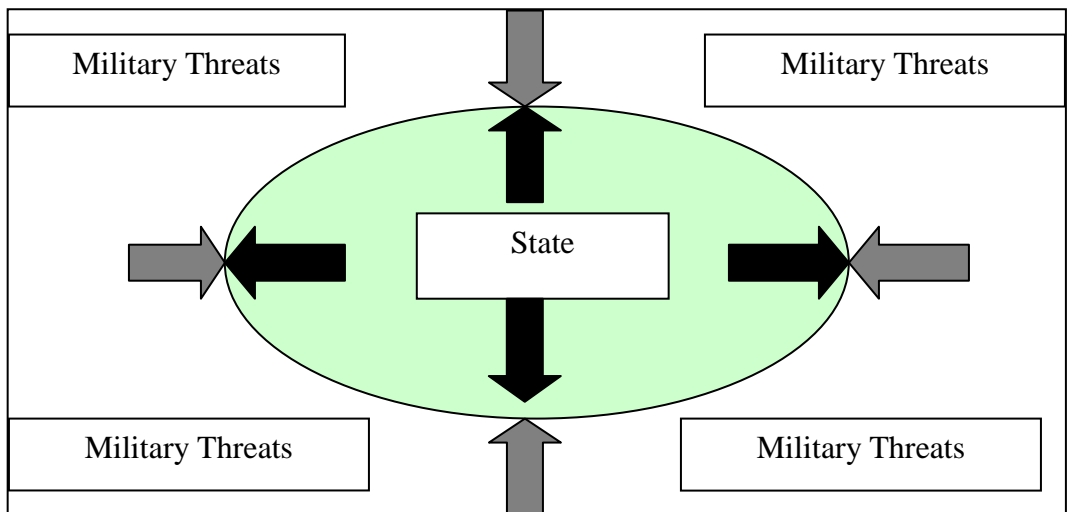
²³ Jin Sato. Matching Goods and People: Aid and Human Security after the 2004 Tsunami. *Development in Practice*. 20 (Feb. 2010), 1: 70-84.

²⁴ Zarian Othman. Human Security Concepts, Approaches and Debates in Southeast Asia, p. 1039.

Figure 1: Security Models



National Security (Traditional)



Human Security (Nontraditional)

Source: Sity Daud and Zarina. *Politik dan Keselamatan*. Bangi: (UKM Publishers, 2005).

The above diagram demonstrates how the understanding of security has shifted from state to the people within the state. The first, shows how it is assumed that if the state is secured, the people will also be secured. The second, shows that while threats from outside of the borders may be decreasing in number due to the end of the Cold War, threats coming from inside are increasing. Even more important, the internal threats also have the potential to destabilize the state and therefore create more insecurity. Many of these threats may come from human insecurity—economic, political and social factors that negatively affect the people, plus perhaps weaknesses in the way the states themselves carry out their functions of governing and protecting.

5."Security-Insecurity" Issues in Southeast Asia

Map of Southeast Asia



Source: http://www.nationsonline.org/oworld/map_of_southeast_asia.htm

(visited 16th August 2010)

The above map of SE Asia shows that most of the states in the region are maritime nations. Maritime trade has been a major activity in the region as far back as anyone remembers. The region can be seen as vulnerable if we look only at the maritime borders. There were many conflicts during the early years after many of the states in the region gained independence and finally, after several failed attempts, ASEAN²⁵ was established in 1967. This was at the height of the Cold War, in which a bipolar world was led by the democratic nation of the US on one hand and the communist Soviets on the other. Among the objectives of ASEAN was an acceleration of economic growth among members and the fostering of regional peace and stability.²⁶ At that time, communism was viewed as the major threat to national, regional and international security throughout the world, including in Southeast Asia. Although ASEAN has been heavily criticized due to its non-interference principles and the so-called ASEAN Way, it nevertheless has become an effective tool to manage conflicts so that they do not erupt into war.²⁷

Today, after almost four decades and being faced with new transnational threats, there is a need for ASEAN to move one step further, to re-look at some of its common issues. Similarly, cooperation should move beyond meetings of the heads of governments to include the common people of the countries involved. More important, there should be a focus on highlighting and promoting our common values, and solving common problems--especially those that arise from, or are exacerbated by, globalization (such as inequities, injustices, poverty, and crime.) In other words, cooperation should include a major focus on issues of human security. While such cooperation is not necessarily easy to bring about, for some time international relations scholars have pointed to how cooperation usually brings advantages to both sides of

²⁵ There are eleven states in SE Asia. ASEAN refers to ten states, except the newly independence Timor Leste.

²⁶ [http:// www.aseansec.org](http://www.aseansec.org) (visited 20/8/05)

²⁷ Zarina Othman, "War and Peace from Neorealism and Institutionalism Perspective." In Gazali Mayudin, et. al. *Malaysia: Politics, Leadership and Democracy*. (Bangi: UKM Publishers, 2006).

any issue involving some conflict.²⁸ Many such issues have blocked our prosperity, development, and security, even though we do not exactly define them as “threats.” The following are among those of major concern.

5.1 Human Trafficking

In Southeast Asia, Indonesia is one of the main "sending" countries for human trafficking and a source country for domestic and internationally-trafficked persons, especially young women and girls. The fact that their young women and girls become victims, being trafficked involuntarily, should be a great concern to any community. It is estimated that there are as many as 1.3 million registered prostitutes in Indonesia, and 30% are below the age of 16.²⁹ The Indonesian government further estimated that there are about 71,281 registered prostitutes between 15 and 20 years of age. Such is the vulnerability of our youth. The figures show that the highest numbers of prostitutes arrested in Malaysia are from China, Indonesia and the Philippines, in that order. In Semarang, Indonesia, for example, 30% of the girls are “forced” into prostitution in order to live. Malaysia, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Japan and the Middle East countries have been the favorite destinations for these forced prostitutes.³⁰ They often have been cheated and manipulated by crime syndicates into these situations, if they were not kidnapped outright.

²⁸ See the debate in David Baldwin, ed. *Neorealism and Neoliberalism: The Contemporary Debate*. (New York: Colombia University Press, 1993).

²⁹ International Labor Organization. *Report on the Worst Form of Child Labour*. <http://www.ilo.org>. (Visited 22/10/2009)

³⁰ *ibid*

Table1: Number of Arrests of Foreign Prostitutes in Malaysia: 1996-2008

County/Year	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
CHINA	96	196	368	1230	1971	1821	2824	2621	4379	3711
INDONESIA	2077	2191	2451	2155	2112	2204	1606	1284	1181	1170
THAILAND	626	642	785	946	1131	1124	910	971	900	892
PHILIPPINES	402	413	312	189	142	314	742	706	796	950
TOTAL	3201	3442	3916	4517	5356	5463	6082	5582	7256	6723

Source: Malaysia Royal Police, Kuala Lumpur, 2004, 2006 & 2009³¹

The criminal activities of the syndicates, or transnational organized crime (TOC), including trafficking in human beings, have become a serious international security problem. These criminal activities, carried out by people who do not hold allegiance to any states and thus who largely ignore national laws and borders, threaten the personal and community security of every country by undermining safety in the local environment.³² Nevertheless, most trafficked victims are considered by the destination countries to be simply illegal immigrants, and are assumed to deserve punishment just for being in the country, much less for engaging in other illegal activities. Therefore, it follows that if and when they are discovered by the authorities, they are treated as criminals themselves instead of victims of crime.

Although certain groups of people may be more vulnerable to becoming victims of the activity, there are several factors that are associated with that vulnerability. The "push factors" in the source countries include unemployment, overpopulation, poverty, armed conflict, limited economic resources, and surplus labor.

³¹ Other arrested prostitutes in 2008 included Vietnamese (470), Uzbekistan (32), Indians (200), Cambodians (4), Myanmarese (58) and Laos (11).

³² Zarina Othman. *Human (In)Security, Human Trafficking and Security*. In Karen Beeks and Delila Amir. *Trafficking and the Global Sex Industry* (Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, 2006).

The "pull factors" include higher wages resulting from economic growth and a shortage of labor in the host, or receiving, countries. Some victims of human trafficking have also been fraudulently recruited as mail-order brides for men in Hong Kong and Taiwan. The Philippines is much involved in human trafficking activities, being transit and destination country all at the same time. Women usually count as one third of the migrant population. As a source country, Filipinos who migrate to work abroad are often later coerced into exploitative conditions. Another emerging example of human trafficking is known as "China dolls." Chinese girls come as students to Malaysia, using a student visa, and then are lured or coerced into illegal activities instead of attending school.³³

5.2 The Illegal Drug Trade

Among all, illicit drug (*dadah*) trafficking and drug abuse has continued to be one of the worst social problems in Malaysia (see Table 2). The severity of the problem has resulted in the government introducing a mandatory death penalty to drug traffickers. The problem of illicit drugs has no immediate threat to political security, however its connection to arms smuggling, terrorism, corruption, and international crime networks—in addition to the obvious impact on the health of individuals—forms a very complex web of activities that threaten the security of the country. It is not difficult to see how these activities undermine the political stability, economic development, and social harmony, on a broad scale.³⁴ Most important of all may be the way these activities affect the human security, and even survival, of future generations.

³³ *The Star*-various issues.

³⁴ Sity Daud, Zarina Othman and Rashila Ramli. *Human Security and Peace in Archipelagic Southeast Asia*. (Bangi: UKM, 2010-Forthcoming).

Table 2: The Profile of Drug Addicts by Age

Age	< 13	13-19	20-29	30-39	40-49	50-60	>60	No. Info	TOTAL
New Cases	0	1303	7635	3981	1424	353	24	669	15389
Relapse Cases	0	54	3958	6850	4942	1411	57	147	17419
Total	0	1357	11593	10831	6366	1764	81	816	32808

Source: PEMADAM 2005 & 2008.

5.3 Economic Cooperation and Integration

To lay the groundwork for a better understanding of this discussion, two concepts need to be defined--regionalism and regionalization. *Regionalism* as a concept is defined as "that network of relationships which is characterized by several kinds of cohesiveness: 1) *social cohesiveness* (which refers to ethnicity, race, language, religion, culture, history and consciousness of a common language); 2) *economic cohesiveness* (trade patterns, economic complementarity and interdependence); 3) *political cohesiveness* (regime type, and basic ideology); and 4) *organizational cohesiveness* (existence of formal regional institutions)".³⁵ Regionalism must also include a political *process* by which a group of states agree to reduce barriers—e.g., trade barriers—within the group. Thus, the underlying idea of regionalism is "interdependence." (However, at least one scholar, Andrew Hurrell, has argued that in reality there are no absolute indicators of regionalism, since the degree of cooperation and interdependence varies according to which particular problem is under investigation.³⁶)

³⁵ Andrew Hurrell, "Regionalism in Theoretical Perspectives." In Louise Fawcett and Andrew Hurrell, eds. 1996. *Regionalism in World Politics*. (New York: University Press), p. 38.

³⁶ Ibid.

If regionalism is about cohesiveness, regionalization refers to the growth of societal integration within a region--an undirected process of social and economic integration.³⁷ Because it is primarily an economic process, it is determined by elements of markets, private trade, investment flows, and such. But of course the regionalization process is also an important factor in creating the cohesiveness of regionalism. In the case of SE Asia, we may observe that the economic process has been driven especially by the growth and behavior of foreign investors, especially Japanese firms.

Interestingly, regionalization also involves increasing flows of people in and out of neighboring countries; the development of multiple channels and complex social networks by which ideas, political attitudes, and ways of thinking spread from one area to another; and the creation of a transnational regional civil society.³⁸ Thus we can sum up that regionalization is about flows, complexity, networks, interconnectedness and interaction—all of which contributes to an emerging cohesiveness we can call regionalism.

Regional economic co-operation is widely regarded as an important vehicle for stimulating economic growth and enriching the lives of peoples, especially in smaller economies. In its effort to raise the standard of living, the region has initiated "sub-regionalism" aiming to create prosperity for the region as a whole by creating closer partnerships between or among the following particular countries: the Indonesia-Malaysia-Thailand (IMT) Growth Triangle; the Indonesia-Malaysia-Singapore (IMS) Growth Triangle; the Brunei-Indonesia-Malaysia-Philippines (BIMP) East Asian Growth Area; and the Greater Mekong Sub-region, comprised of six countries (or, in one case, a part of a country): the Yunnan Province of the People's Republic of China, Myanmar, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Thailand, Cambodia and Vietnam. This strategy has created jobs, skills, productivity, and an economic infrastructure, as well as a reduction in poverty and crime. However, the city of Riau in Indonesia, for instance,

³⁷ Ibid., p. 39.

³⁸ Ibid., p 40.

which is part of the IMS Growth Triangle, has been identified as one of the hot spots for human trafficking.³⁹

It was estimated between 200,000 and 450,000 people, mainly women and children, have been trafficked.⁴⁰ As economies transition from centrally planned to market economies, Cambodia, Myanmar, Laos and Vietnam face common problems. Poverty and crime, although somewhat reduced, continue to be major challenges to these countries. The economies of the Greater Mekong Sub-region (GMS) are becoming more open and people are able to move across borders more freely. Nevertheless, child labor, human trafficking, and other illegal activities continue, and the victims continue to come from the most vulnerable groups--women, children and the poor. "Global integrative trends have resulted in a sex industry in which increasing numbers of women and girls are virtually sold across national borders."⁴¹ Thousands of young women from Thailand and the Philippines are being exported to Japan. Movement of people to Malaysia and Singapore, from the Philippines, Indonesia and Thailand is common, and not all come willingly. Many have been misled or lied to, in order to get them to go to another country. Many become domestic workers, and many work under appalling conditions, with no way to return home.

5.4 HIV-AIDS

One of the most serious health and human security-related issues in this region is HIV-AIDS, which in part is related to illicit drug and human trafficking issues. Rapid development, urbanization and the increase in national incomes in have transformed healthcare systems. In some fast developing countries, a medical tourist industry has

³⁹ Stephanie Lawson. Regional Integration, Development and Social Change in the Asia-Pacific: Implications for Human Security and State Responsibility. *Global Change, Peace and Security*. 17 (June 2005), 2: 107-122. (p. 121)

⁴⁰ International Organization for Migration (IOM). <http://www.iom-seasia> (visited 7/08/2010)

⁴¹ Cited in Stephanie Lawson. Regional Integration, Development and Social Change in the Asia-Pacific: Implications for Human Security and State responsibility, p. 117.

emerged as a major player in the economy. Life expectancy has increased and the child mortality rate has been reduced. Hospitals and clinics, maternal and child health care, health care of mental patients, the control of dangerous drugs, and the general transformation of the medical profession have certainly improved greatly since the 1970s and 1980s.⁴² More private healthcare facilities are being built because they are in great demand. However, there is still an issue concerning whether the health care system is more efficient or more affordable for the majority of the people, compared to two or three decades ago.

5.5 Child Labor

Child labor is defined as the regular participation of school-aged children in the labor market, either to earn a living for themselves or to supplement a family's household income.⁴³ Child labor has become an issue again in Indonesia and the Philippines, as well as in the Mekong countries such as Cambodia and Laos. In Indonesia, child labor started to be used again during the economic crisis, in mid-1997. As Indonesian households were forced to adjust to the substantial fall in real income, some parents were forced to withdraw their children from schools and send them to work to supplement family income. According to the 1990 Population Census of Indonesia, 2.2 million children between the ages of 10 and 14, representing about three percent of the total labor force, were economically active. The United Nations Commission on Human Rights in 1994 reported that there were 2.7 million working children aged 10 to 14 in Indonesia, which means that the numbers were increasing, although the percentage might remain the same as the population grew. It was reported that children worked for long hours, often under unsafe conditions, and were paid only 8,000 Indonesian Rupiahs (approximately US\$4.53) per week for an 8-hour daily shift.

⁴² Sity Daud, Zarina Othman and Rashila Ramli. *Human Security and Peace in Archipelagic Southeast Asia*. (Bangi: UKM, 2010-Forthcoming).

⁴³ <http://www.globalmarch/resourcecentre/world/indonesia.pdf>. (Visited 23/10/2009)

(However, overall they worked an average of 7 to 13 hours per day, seven days per week.)⁴⁴

5.6 Climate Change

An important question that needs to be examined is the vulnerability of the people due to the many manifestations of climate change. Increasingly, climate change has become a subject of international security discourse. "There is every reason to believe that as the 21st century unfolds, the security story will be bound together with climate change."⁴⁵ Human activities such as combustion of fossil fuels have significantly affected our planet, and now threaten the conditions needed to sustain human life, which pretty much makes it a security issue.⁴⁶ As climate change brings about an increasing number of natural disasters, extreme weather events, such as prolonged drought, floods, hurricanes and typhoons, there will be less access to resources essential to life and livelihood, as well as damage to critical infrastructure. Indirectly, it can affect the way societies function, as they struggle to adapt quickly to the changes.⁴⁷ It is also important to note that climate change is likely to cause increased human migration and conflict, as competition for scarce resources and the weakening of social systems are influenced by climate change.

Climate change has the potential to help reduce state capacities and human security by creating failing or failed states and/or environments conducive to the production of non-state threats and conflict. It may act as a further destabilizing force in

⁴⁴ Sity Daud, Zarina Othman and Rashila Ramli, 2010 (forthcoming). Development has brought another good news. More people live longer but unattended ageing society as well as unattended kids at home are two emerging issues in the region now.

⁴⁵ John Ashton (UK Foreign Secretary's Special representative for climate Change), cited in Christopher Jasparo and Jonathan Taylor. Climate Change and Regional Vulnerability to Transnational Security Threats in Southeast Asia. *Geopolitics*. 13 (April 2008) 2: p. 235.

⁴⁶ Uwe Wissenbach. Climate Change as a Human-Security Threat or a development Issue. *Korean Journal of Defense Analysis*. 22 (March 2010) 1: p. 29.

⁴⁷ Ibid. 30

some of the most volatile regions of the world.⁴⁸ In SE Asia, climate change is likely to increasingly have effects in the realm of counter-terrorism, because in some countries the increased poverty and reduced state capacity related to predicted climate change may contribute to the creation of space which may allow terrorism to grow.⁴⁹ Among major areas already facing difficulties due to climate change are: Mekong, Chao Phraya and Mahakam.⁵⁰ The worry is that agricultural productivity is likely to decline drastically due to higher temperatures, severe drought, flood conditions and soil degradation. Thus, food security for many in the region would be threatened. In addition, fish and other marine life are likely to be affected by changes in water temperature, which will have serious impact on those countries in the region that depend on seafood as a main staple of their diet. The 1982-1983 the "el-nino" that affects both Indonesia and the Philippines cost about US\$5000. In 1998, water supplies were decreased by 60% in Manila, while cocoa production was reduced by 12% in Malaysia, and rice production was cut in Indonesia, which led to higher prices and famine in some areas. Together, the economic crisis of 1997-1998 and the effect of el-nino led to devaluation of the rupiah by 84% and pushed 60 million people into poverty. High prices triggered riots and helped to bring -down the Suharto regime in Indonesia. According to an Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report, coastal areas in Southeast Asia are already vulnerable to sea-level rise from both geological processes and anthropogenic manipulation. It estimated that SE Asia is near the top of the list of regions most threatened by flooding due to sea-level rise. The Irrawady River delta in Myanmar, the Chao Phraya in Thailand, the Mekong in Vietnam, and the Song Hing that is shared by both China and Vietnam, are among the key river deltas most vulnerable to sea-level rise.⁵¹

⁴⁸ Christopher Jasparo and Jonathan Taylor. Climate Change and Regional Vulnerability to Transnational Security Threats in Southeast Asia. *Geopolitics*. 13 (April 2008) 2: 232-256 (p. 234).

⁴⁹ Ibid, p. 235.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

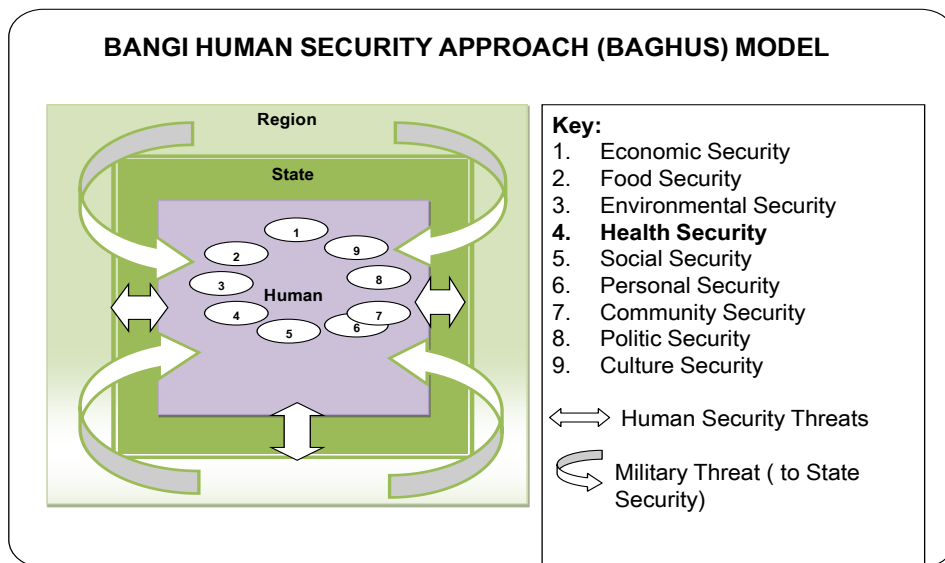
⁵¹ Ibid.

It is estimated that a one meter rise in sea level could lead to land loss in Indonesia, Malaysia, and Vietnam of nearly 34,000km², 7,000km², and 40,000km² respectively, affecting over 19 million people. It may also have a severe adverse economic impact on agriculture because of loss of crop land, drought, flooding and effects on infrastructure and tourism. More important, it may increase vulnerability by displacing people, creating disorder that may be manipulated by traffickers and other criminals for their own illicit activities. The most vulnerable groups are women and children. Likewise, should climate change contribute to overall decline in SE Asia fish stocks, there is a strong probability that the incidence of piracy will increase as most pirates and sea robbers in the area are poor fishermen and unemployed labor migrants. As with all of these pressing problems, dealing with climate change needs the cooperation of all countries. They cannot afford to further reduce their capacity to address urgent needs by squabbling among themselves, and it is obvious that no one of them is capable of handling the problems alone.

6. Rethinking Human Security

In their book, *Peace and Human Security in Asia Pacific*, Sity Daud, Zarina Othman, and Rashila Ramli (2010, forthcoming) provided an alternative approach to understanding human security. A model that was named as Bangi Human Security Approach (BAGHUS), was indeed an improvement to criticized human security issues in the region. The authors creation of BAGHUS was based on several elements, including the following:

Figure 2: BAGHUS



Source: Sity Daud, Zarina Othman and Rashila Ramli (2010, Forthcoming)

“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 impact of colonization left a legacy in many of the institutions of these countries.... Second, ... being made up of maritime states, the "porousness" of the borders and cultures of the Southeast Asian Archipelago present special circumstances not found in and among all nations. Third, A belief 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. The BAGHUS Research Group has recognized that human security and national security must complement one another. Fourth, the security dimension in BAGHUS focuses on man-made problems or "disasters," rather than natural disasters. Fifth, BAGHUS recognizes that for Southeast Asia, the individual is intricately linked to the community (or communities) in which they live, work, go to school, etc. This is because "personal security is considered in the context of being a member of a

community." 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 programs that would empower all its citizens. 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. Eighth, like the UNDP model, 'freedom from fear' and 'freedom from want,' remain the cornerstones of BAGHUS" Finally, but the most important element, is the inclusion of social security. In Southeast Asia, there is a high expectation placed by the elders upon their children, for old age care and especially financial support. The informal support network is very much prevalent in the region (Rashila, Zarina, Nor Azizan and Sity 2010). In short, while BAGHUS may have introduced an alternative approach of human security, it is still lacking because it has ignored the climate change which, as discussed, may challenge human security everywhere.

7. Concluding Remarks

SE Asia is vulnerable to non-state transnational threats due to its location as a crossroads for trade, transport, and finance; and because its rapid economic growth has led in some cases to more poverty and inequalities, to severe environmental degradation, to more organized crime, including illicit drug trafficking. Its ethnic diversity as well as its location near to the major hazard belts, including flooding, tsunamis, earthquakes, drought, volcanoes eruption and forest fires, presents other problems. Disease pandemics, as well as competition for scarce resources, are also on the list of threats in the region. As discussed, it is time for scholars and practitioners to design a new, more sustainable approach to human security in the region. So far, human security in the region continues to be a state approach. Both globalization and increasing global warming further signal and require us to take immediate action for the future of human security. While the new model called BAGHUS may provide a starting point for the SE Asian human security, it appears to have neglected the global warming

challenges that threaten that security, and so what *seems* to be insufficient, appears to be insufficient still. Globalization and global warming are not new, but the increasing magnitude and the fact that it is caused mainly by human beings," is new to most people. It poses a threat to the people of the region more than to security of the political region as defined by geopolitical borders. Human security cannot be gained by one group at the expense of another. We have to rethink and redesign a "newer sustainable human security approach" due to globalization as well as climate change. Security-insecurity issues in the region are no longer internal *or* external; they are "transnational." Because victims of insecurity are human, therefore human rights must be given priority. It is also common among states to establish policies based on human needs, and the region has a chance to counter the unintended negative side effects of both globalization and global warming.

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