Session 5: Assessing Collaboration and Governance in the Asia Pacific, III: Reconceptualising Security
Human Security and the Role of the State in the Asia-Pacific

Although much effort has been expended on promoting the concept of human security in the Asia-Pacific region, its potential to promote well-being and act as a ‘unifying concept’ in policy implementation, has arguably not been fully realised. Regional scholars including Acharya have argued this is primarily because its definition has been contested and to some extent controversial, to the point of diverting attention away from implementation; and because states in Asia are preoccupied by traditional notions of security and their associated mechanisms of security cooperation, which are in tension with many aspects at the core of human security. This paper aims to reflect on recent critiques of human security’s implementation and adoption by regional organisations in order to assess the role of the state in the evolution of security ideas in the region. In particular it draws upon the author’s recent work on regional cooperation in the area of health and pandemic disease, and illegal migration, to illustrate that regional states maintain powerful mechanisms through which to control policy over areas central to human security. While regional forums provide important avenues for discussion over how to better implement the human security agenda, barriers remain at the state level where vested interests, and lack of bureaucratic capacity and coordination, can function to impede policy implementation on the ground. Recognition of the disjuncture between regional goals and rhetoric, and state interest/capacities, can advance critical perspectives on ways to promote the human security agenda via Asia-Pacific institutions in tangible ways.

Key words: Human Security, East Asia, infectious disease, securitisation

Introduction

Although much effort has been expended on promoting the concept of human security in the Asia-Pacific region, its potential to promote well-being and act as a ‘unifying concept’ in policy implementation, has arguably not been fully realised. Regional scholars including Acharya (2007) have argued this is primarily because its definition has been contested and to some extent controversial, to the point of diverting attention away from implementation; and because states in Asia are preoccupied by traditional notions of security and their associated mechanisms of security cooperation, which are in tension with many aspects at the core of human security. This is not to say
that Human security and related conceptual frameworks, such as Non-traditional Security, have not made considerable inroads into the agenda of regional cooperation dialogues, and to some extent become an accepted part of the security ‘speak’ of Asia-Pacific scholars and elites. Nevertheless, disagreement over its utility, conceptual worth and value as a ‘coordinating’ or ‘bridging’ concept between other cogent areas primarily human rights, development and security result in Human Security having acquired a somewhat anxious status in contemporary Asia-Pacific dialogue.

This paper aims to reflect on recent critiques of human security’s implementation and adoption by regional organisations in order to assess the role of the state in the evolution of security ideas in the region. In particular it draws upon the author’s recent work on regional cooperation in the area of health and pandemic disease, and illegal migration, to illustrate that regional states maintain powerful mechanisms through which to control policy over areas central to Human Security. While regional forums provide important avenues for discussion over how to better implement the human Security agenda, barriers remain at the state level where vested interests, and lack of bureaucratic capacity and coordination, can function to impede policy implementation on the ground.

Recognition of the disjuncture between regional goals and rhetoric, and state interest/capacities, can advance thinking on ways to promote the human security agenda via Asia-Pacific institutions in tangible ways. Arguably its most promising role can be to play an integrating and coordinating role between areas of relevance, in order that, as Stephen James has recently argued, ‘it can draw upon, make sense of and enhance a whole range of existing values, norms and regulations in the human rights, development and security sectors’ (James 2010, p. 23).

The paper proceeds in three sections. The first briefly reviews the most salient themes from recent debate to conceptualise the discussion around whether human security can be said to have affected policy thinking and behaviour among Asia-Pacific states, and if such broader perceptions of security enhance or diminish the prospects for regional governance and cooperation amongst states.
One recent commentator noted that once an artist has a retrospective, their work can be considered to have ‘come of age’. With the publication of a number of recent histories of human security (MacFarlane and Khong 2006; Peou ? Human Security Unit 2009; Martin and Owen 2010), one can ponder whether Human Security as a concept has acquired enough institutional, ideological and arguably normative worth so as it keep its salience alive. The literature on Human Security has burgeoned since it was championed in the 1994 United Nations Development Report (UNDP) Human Development Report, and a number of very useful literature reviews and critiques exist. For the purposes of this paper, one can group this considerable literature into a number of categorisations: along temporal lines; its conceptual definition and problems therein; and recently, a debate which wants to move beyond these to ask how can the Human Security concept be better operationalised and institutionalised. Before I move on to discuss the latter in more detail in relation to the Asia-Pacific, some general comments about the themes of the above literature are useful to broadly understand how Human Security as a concept has emerged since the mid-1990s.

The 1994 UNDP report arguably mainstreamed Human Security into the language of both development and security literatures, as institutions, scholars and policy markers alike were faced with solving complex problems facing them in the post Cold War world. It criticised traditional notions of security as being interpreted too narrowly as ‘security of territory from external aggression, or as protection of national interest in foreign policy’. (p. 22). The UNDP report’s definition of Human Security unabashedly placed the human being as the central unit of security analysis, placing it in juxtaposition against traditional realist dominated and influenced notions of security. The definition forwarded in the report also established grounds for the future division of the concept into the categories of the ‘Freedom from Fear’ and ‘Freedom from Want’ approach:

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1 Comments made by Stephen James in opening discussion of Human Security Workshop at La Trobe University, 8 May, 2010.
Human security is people-centred...It can be said to have two main aspects. It means, first, safely from such chronic threats as hunger, disease and repression. And secondly, it means protection from sudden and hurtful disruptions in the patterns of daily life – whether in homes, in jobs, or in communities. Such threats can exist at all levels of national income and development. (UNDP 1994, p. 23).

Human Security was part of a wider movement within international relations at the time to both deepen and broaden the security concept (Mathews 1989; Kolodziej 2005), which had indeed predated the end of the cold war (see Buzan 1983). Reviews of the concept’s development are well known, but for purposes of analysing Asian policies and responses to it, policy driven analyses and academic literature adopted the dichotomy raised in the report between the dual approaches of ‘Freedom from Fear’ and ‘Freedom from Want’ approach.

The former referred to a somewhat narrow interpretation of the Human Security agenda, and focussed on the impact of violence and war on the individual as it’s normative and policy focus. As James notes, even though the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS) adopted a broad definition of human security, it became associated with the ‘Freedom From Fear’ agenda. The FFF agenda, therefore also became associated with concepts tackled by the ICISS, particularly humanitarian intervention, which made its agenda contentious amongst many Asia-Pacific states (Evans 2004, 272-274). The latter ‘Freedom from Want’ approach emphasised the broad definition developed by the UNDP and later the Commission on Human Security’s(CHS) 2003 report Human Security Now, which was influenced by the capabilities approach of its co-Chair Amartya Sen. In sum, although there was much nuance and interconnection between these dual themes of Human Security, the FFW agenda was adopted broadly by Asia-Pacific states as more palatable for discussion and dialogue, and indeed countries such as China for some time did not formally use the term Human Security, but the more state-focussed term of Non-traditional Security,
in order to incorporate non-traditional security issues onto their regional dialogue agenda (Chu 2002; Evans 2004, 276).²

On whether human security has impact policy-think and behaviour among Asia Pacific states, a number of prominent examples have been noted in most of the literature. The onset of the 1997 Asian Financial Crisis (AFC) has been noted as one catalyst that allowed Human Security to gain ground in the thinking and behaviours of regional states – at least in the ways they expressed their overseas development aid and foreign policy initiatives. Japan’s adoption of Human Security as a component of its ODA and as a component of its international foreign policy agenda can also linked to the United Nations as one of the pillar of Japanese post 1945 foreign policy. Keizo Obuchi’s leadership in promoting Human Security before his timely death in 2000 was a prominent part of Japan’s post 1997 response to the AFC (Obuchi 1998). The China –ASEAN bilateral agreement on Non-traditional Security issues signed in 2002 at the ASEAN Summit in Phnom Penh was another early example where regional states consciously used the language to frame their cooperation (ASEAN 2002). Although the 2002 agreement wasn’t human-centred in the spirit of Human Security per se, its NTS ‘branding’ was significant in developing a regional profile for cooperation on issues which impacted citizens more directly than traditional threats. While it names some prime candidates incorporated in the human security agenda, such as people-smuggling including trafficking in women and children, the text of the declaration leaves no doubt that state, regional and international peace and stability were the referent objects of security (ASEAN 2002).³

While there were drivers of the human security concept at an intellectual and ‘global’ level, such as disciplinary expansion and globalisation (Camilleri 2005), there were other factors specific to the

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² It is important to note that even though the FFF agenda was more broadly recognised and adopted in the region dialogue in the Asia-Pacific, informal and Track 2 forums offered the opportunity for all aspects of the Human Security agenda to be discussed. See for example (Chu 2002; Evans 2005).

³ Indeed the document describes how non-traditional security issues are causality related to increasing uncertainty and instability, noting they ‘have become important factors of uncertainty affection regional an international security and are posing new challenges to regional and international peace and stability.’ The document doesn’t refer to humans or citizens, and focuses on building existing capacities and dialogue on areas of mutual concern.
Asia-Pacific that were significant in the way the concept was introduced, debated and contested in the region. The ICISS consultation process, which saw committee members participate in dialogue and feedback session in the region, highlighted countries’ apprehension over the concept of humanitarian intervention (Evans 2004; Capie and Evans ?)

Track Two forums in the Asia Pacific, such as the Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia Pacific (CSCAP) also provided important opportunities in the first phase of the human security debate in the region. A theme of these discussions was the need for reconciliation between traditional and human-centric versions of security, finding common ground between existing approaches, such as the synergies between regional confidence building measures and human security’s emphasis on individual safety and personal security (Tow and Trood 2000, p. 28.), or between comprehensive security which had its own regional roots (Camilleri ?; James 2010). As Tow and Trood argued in 2000, CSCAP was a potential conduit ‘between grass-roots movements and official policy-making circles for exploring how strategic reassurance and human security can be integrated to move innovatively to achieve regional stability and individual welfare (p. 29).

Other research-orientated programmes aimed to educate, disseminate and mainstream the idea that security issues other than military ones, had an important place at the regional dialogue table. One such example was the Ford Foundation’s program to promote Non-traditional Security in the Asia-Pacific. Its initial funding initiative in 1999 commissioned sub-regional universities and institute to coordinate and commission regional scholars to discuss the role and relevance of non-traditional security issues in East and South Asia. Northeast, Southeast and South Asian groupings for example, conducted their own sub-regional projects from 1999-2001, also coming together in regional workshops to cross-compare views and perspectives on issue areas. Inevitably discussions focussed on the challenges of breaking down military-related, ‘hard’ notions of security that were overwhelmingly dominated by what threatened the state in traditional ways. Ford subsequently funded a second and third phase of this programme and noting its activities and achievements is
testament to the evolving interest scholars displayed in exchanging ideas and research on common regional themes. The second phase saw comparative regional research theoretically organised by securitisation theory, and based on issue areas, such as migration, poverty, piracy, environmental degradation, disease and pandemics. Research that emerged from this phase provided empirical case study analysis of what and how states in the Asia-Pacific were viewing as ‘security’ issues, and the ways in which non-traditional security concerns were being incorporated into the state’s security agenda. While it highlighted the growing importance of trans-boundary and region-wide problems such as transnational organised crime, trafficking and smuggling in people, drug smuggling and environmental pollution – which undoubtedly required greater regional cooperation - it also highlighted the ongoing dominance of the state in the securitisation process, and political elite’s continued understanding of security as primarily, albeit not exclusively, related to the state (Caballero-Anthony 2006 and 2006a; Curley and Wong 2008). It also generated useful Asia-Pacific based case study material on the process of securitisation in non-democratic and non-western contexts, allowing for greater interrogation of key western orientated assumptions in securitisation theory, and one how state power and capacity play vital roles in being able - or not - to securitize issues (Curley and Herrington, forthcoming), not to mentioned their humanitarian or moral worth.

The third phase of funding (2006 -2011) established the Non-Traditional Security Studies Centre at Nanyang Technological University in Singapore, which disseminated funds to other regional projects, facilitated a network of partner institutions that gather regularly to discuss and present research on key programme areas of internal and cross-border conflict, energy and human security, climate change, environmental security and natural disasters, and health and human security. It is interesting to note that recently analysis covers areas that focus directly on issues related to human-centred security, and where state inaction is directly to blame for human suffering and human rights abuses (such as statelessness). Such interventions from the region are significant considering that scholarly research on state-implicated instances of violence and human rights abuses is an area where the literature in security studies in International Relations of the Asia-Pacific has received
limited mileage. As Hamilton-Hart has argued in this regard, issues such as the region’s civil wars, communal conflicts and secession movements, failing states, foreign interventions and the state making process are ‘vastly understudied’:

*Even more understudied – and not just in security studies of Asia, but in the wider security studies field as well – are the threats to security emanating from the state and directed against its own citizens or civilians of another nation: state-led massacres, coercion, torture, intimidation and other acts of state terrorism. There is no lack of potential case material based on Asian experiences.* (2009, p. 64)

The wider point relates to a retrospective analysis of the nature and content of how the agenda to ‘broaden’ security studies in the Asia-Pacific has proceeded. While much has been achieved to widen the security debate via the non-traditional security rubric, including important aspects of the human security agenda, connections between individual security and state-sponsored violence remain marginalised. Furthermore, while the intervention of critical security studies into the context of Asia-Pacific security discourse is welcome and valuable (McDonald and Burke 2007), some of that literature lacks meaningful engagement with other disciplinary areas (history and political science) which pertain directly to the broad arguments made about ‘advancing’ the critical security for Asia-Pacific peoples. For example, suggestions that democratisation and empowerment will assist this process may be true at the abstract level, but discussion of advancement strategies without reference to democratisation trends both country-specific, and regionally derived variables (Case 2009; Chu et. Al. 2008), seems dislocated from actual regional trends. Dalby is correct in drawing our attention to the compatibility of the analytical approaches of critical security studies and human security, particularly when one considers the difference between the critical enterprise to ‘see the larger contexts, to understand how things came to be as they are, rather than to work with things as they are to manipulate them for immediate ends,’ and the general perspective of academic advisors
and policy makers in contrast that ‘takes the context as given rather than that which is to be investigated. (Dalby 2007, p. 261).

For CSS to move from analysis to advocacy, ongoing dialogue and engagement with cognisant disciplinary and country-specific literature will be helpful. The benefit could work both ways as Dalby suggests ‘policy-makers and civil servants charged with long-term thinking for their states, could benefit considerable by working with critical intellectuals to think about how human security agendas can be facilitated by ensuring that there is much more to policy-making than the short-term priorities of political elites (p. 262). While this is a difficult task, the promotion and evolution of the Human Security concept, via the leaders, organisation and mechanisms noted above has certainly helped facilitate that possibility. Here one could argue the global Responsibility to Protect agenda is contributing to this now, via its Asia-Pacific Centre’s country outreach programme, as they develop ideas and build constituencies in Asia-Pacific states around state obligations and associated human rights, something that back in 2000 seemed quite radical (RTP Centre 2009).

As Paul Evans noted in reflecting on East Asian responses to Human security, while there was some evidence of changing views on regional norms of sovereignty, non-interference and institution building, political elites have been reluctant to include discussion of the dynamics of intra-state war at the regional or global level. In comparison to the concept of preventative diplomacy, there was more acceptance ‘that domestic instabilities and vulnerabilities needed special attention by the state in which they are occurring (that) even a bad government can do this better than no government or a government imposed though outside intervention’ (Evans 2004, p. ?). In that sense, both Evans (2004) and Acharya (2001) noted some time ago the compatibilities between Human Security and domestic conditions in Asian states, including insecurity, vulnerabilities and development needs in many East Asian states, as well its utility in adapting to indigenous traditions of human dignity, and being flexible enough to incorporate both individual and communities as referents of security analysis. This certainly adds reasoning to why non-traditional security, with its
emphasis on state-based responses to transnational problems, and non-state responses to both humanitarian and transnational issues, has gained popularity amongst regional elites.

In sum, while one can find evidence of both outright rejection and warm reception to the Human Security concept amongst various governments and non-state actors in East Asia, the reality is more complex and fluid. Human security has arguably impacted policy-thinking by provoking debate and response via Track Two forums and research-led advocacy, to areas which were previously off the agenda. As Evan’s argues:

*The re-framing of issues related to intervention, non-traditional security and transnational problems appear to have opened a new chapter in regional discussions. The conversation includes not only less controversial aspects of human security related to human welfare raised by the Commission on Human Security but even the more divisive ones on the responsibility to protect raised in the ICISS. Rather than poisoning the human security well, ideas like the R2P may be oxygenating it by opening up a range of issues that were previously seen as too sensitive and by catalysing the activities of a new generation of civil society-based actors.* (Evans 2004, p. 279-80)

Has Human Security affected the ‘behaviour among states’? Here the evidence is less clear, and far more complex, depending upon your criteria of evaluation. Certainly if one considers the overarching drivers or factors impacting on regional stability and security, the argument that traditional security structures, such as the US-Japan and US-ROK alliances and hegemonic role of US power in the Asia-Pacific, act as the major stabilising force in maintain a balance of power in the region hold sway (Goh 2008). However, there is evidence to suggest that regional states have become far more cognisant of the challenges of transnational and trans-boundary threats, such as transnational organised crime, trafficking and smuggling, and infectious disease. As a result, greater state and attention and resources have been directed to areas which have arguably benefited the ‘human security’ of certain citizens. Of course, with all generalisations, the greater scrutiny needs to
be placed on the detail. The paper now turns to a brief examination of regional cooperation around human trafficking and smuggling, and pandemic preparedness, to examine the tension present between (1) state interests to protect national and regime interest, (2) regional and global institutions’ aims in their cooperation strategies. I tentatively suggest that while regional cooperation has certainly advanced the awareness of and plight of the human dimension, strategies adopted and the difficulty in implementing at the state and regional/local level can diminish their utility. Furthermore, state-based strategies in areas such as trafficking often aim to eliminate the practice, and fail to address the root causes of the problem. The root causes of poverty, victim rights and re-integration, the *human-centred* nature of the problem, is less emphasised. In the area of health cooperation and pandemic preparedness, the regional literature on the Asia-Pacific illustrates that much has been done to prepare for a pandemic outbreak. Nevertheless, state capacities and vested domestic interests, have been shown to hamper efforts of states to follow securitising motives of organisations such as the World Health Organisation (WHO). While regional cooperation in health can be said to have advanced regional state preparedness for an influenza pandemic, two things can be noted regarding human security. First, it does not follow that preparedness plans will be implemented unproblematically, posing questions for how well such planning will impact people’s health and well-being. Second, questions have been raised as to whether securitising of health diverts resources (state and international) away from other humanitarian related areas, such as primary, and maternal and child health. The paper reviews these arguments to conclude that ....

**Prospects for Regional Governance and Cooperation: A concept with or without a role?**

What role can Human Security play in the future prospects for regional governance and cooperation?

**Implementation and Adoption**
There exist both “Areas of Opportunity” and “Problems for coordination and integration” in regional cooperation.

Areas of mutual interest exist (i.e. health governance and pandemic preparedness; trafficking in women and children)

- Evidence here that coordination and integration has achieved successes
- (1) ASEAN’s role in SARS, H5N1; (2) Coordination processes on trafficking....
- BUT state interests also can hinder and impede implementation:
  - Example of securitisation of infectious diseases in Southeast Asia
  - Indonesia’s reaction to H5N1 illustrated role of national interest and difficulties of implementing policy re resource capacity and administrative challenges
  - Virus Sharing dispute between Indonesia and WHO protocols.
  - Trafficking – problems of multi-jurisdictional policing and enforcement (Broadhurst 2008), corruption and resource constraint which arguable regional dialogue will struggle to assist.

Achievements and challenges facing the Responsibility To Protect agenda.

- Review recent progress of RTP in ARF Dialogue process (document analysis)
- Building RTP constituencies in Southeast Asia via the work of Asia Pacific Responsibility to Protect Centre (APRTPC) @ UQ (review Country programmes in Philippines and Cambodia).
- Can play role of capacity building and building constituencies of ideas where previously they have been non-existent or contentious.
- RTP progress at least shows a degree of engagement with regional thinkers and elites on RTP ideals to foster debate and connect with local histories (i.e. Cambodia and past genocide).
- Analysis.....future scenarios.
Human Security and the State in Asia

- Human security as component part of regional civil society advocacy network
  - Concept of ‘localising human security in regional organisations’ (Acharya 2007)
  - Operationalising greater dialogue between regional civil society organisations (RCSOs) and regional organisations
    - The challenge of institutionalising meaningful policy outcomes?
    - Democratic progress has stagnated in some countries (Thailand, Phillipones and Cambodia)...
    - Environment remains challenging for RCSOs

Conclusions

Reasons for Hope?

- More development and coordination with civil society and Track Two processes

Challenges for the Future?

- The State in East Asia remains powerful and generally most capable ‘securitising’ actor
- Despite dialogue and engagement, HS concept faces formidable challenges in policy arena due to its:
  - Dominance of traditional notions of ‘security’ amongst elites
  - ‘conceptual greyness’
  - Cooperation at regional level can be characterised by rhetoric with little meaningful reality
References


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International Commission on Intervention and Sovereignty (ICISS)


