Consequence of Norm Localization:

Achievements and Challenges of Localized Human Security in Southeast Asia

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Abstract

This paper seeks to examine how the concept of human security has been localized in Southeast Asia. After summarizing the emergence and spread of the concept of human security, this paper examines why the concept of human security was localized in Southeast Asia in a certain way. Clarifying the commonalities and differences between human security and the localized version of human security in Southeast Asia, this paper analyzes the effects of applying the localized human security concept to address human security challenges. This work attempts to provide the foundations for re-examining the concept and practice of human security, as well as contributing to a deeper understanding of norm localization.

Keywords:

Human Security, Non-traditional Security, Norm Localization

INTRODUCTION

Twenty-five years has passed since the concept of human security was first introduced in the *Human Development Report 1994*, published by the

United Nations Development Programme. This concept focuses not on the security of states but on the security of individual human beings. Despite being criticized for its vagueness, the concept has gradually spread internationally and become influential in many countries.

Partly due to policies to improve human security by protecting people from wars and conflicts (freedom from fear) or from poverty and diseases (freedom from want), the number of people suffering from immediate human security challenges has decreased dramatically. For example, the percentage of people living under the poverty line (1.9 USD/day using 2011 PPP) declined from 34.0% in 1993 to 9.9% in 2015.[1]

However, even after wars and conflicts end and health conditions improve, people may still face various kinds of human security challenges. First, as the gap between the rich and the poor widens (Dabla-Norris et al., 2015, p. 10), the human security of the poor may get worse even as the percentage of the poor decreases. Second, different kinds of human security challenges may arise even after the immediate human security challenges from wars and conflicts or poverty and diseases are alleviated. This is why it is important to re-examine human security challenges now. What kind of human security challenges are people suffering from now? Are they different from human security challenges 25 years ago? How should we deal with them? These are the questions this paper and this special edition as a whole seek to answer.

The way the concept of human security is understood and the measures to improve human security differ substantially from country to country. Thus, in addition to grasping human security challenges in the 21st century, it is important to examine how the concept of human security has been interpreted in each country. An often-used analytical framework to grasp the way each country interprets and accepts globally spread ideas or norms is 'localization'. Localization is defined as the 'active construction of foreign ideas by local actors which results in the former developing significant congruence with local beliefs and practices' (Acharya, 2004, p. 245). One problem with 'localization' studies is that scholars focus mainly on how local agents reconstruct foreign ideas to ensure the norms fit with the agents' cognitive priors and identities. Not much research has been con-

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1) World Bank 'Regional aggregation using 2011 PPP and $1.9/day poverty line', http://iresearch.worldbank.org/PovcalNet/povDuplicateWB.aspx, accessed 25 September 2019.

ducted on what consequences the localized idea or norm has brought about. This paper seeks to address this gap not only by examining how the concept of human security has been localized, but also by analyzing the consequences brought about by localized human security.

These analyses will be conducted by focusing on Southeast Asia. Southeast Asia is a good region on which to focus. Economic development as well as the extension of life expectancy at birth in Southeast Asia has been great in the last 25 years (Figure 1 and 2[2]). It is safe to say that the average standard of living and the average level of health and hygiene have dramatically improved in Southeast Asia. On the other hand, Southeast Asia has not successfully reduced inequalities and is the only sub-region in Asia and the Pacific with widening inequalities (ESCAP, 2018, p. 15). Examining the human security challenges in Southeast Asia now will allow us to analyze the human security challenges that remain after improvements in the standard of living as well as health and hygiene. In addition, the concept of human security has been localized in a very unique way in Southeast Asia, as will be described in detail later.

This paper will first briefly summarize the emergence and spread of the concept of human security in order to understand the context. After examining why the concept of human security was localized in Southeast Asia in a certain way, the paper clarifies the commonalities and differences between human security and the localized version of human security in Southeast Asia. Then the paper analyzes the effects of applying the localized human security concept to address human security challenges. This work can be expected to provide the foundations for re-examining the concept and practice of human security in the 21st century, as well as contributing to a deeper understanding of norm localization.

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2) Data for Figures 1, 2, 4, 5, and 6 are from Human Development Data on the United Nations Development Programme website. http://hdr.undp.org/en/data.

Figure 1: GDP per Capita[3]
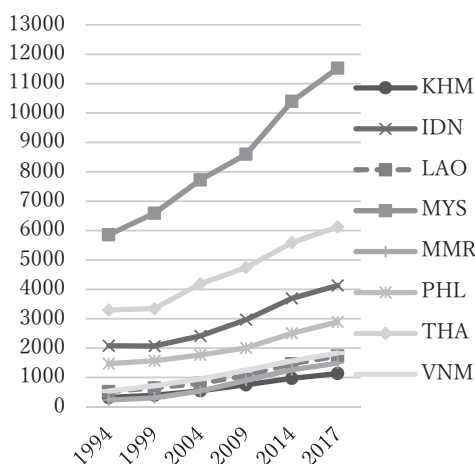
(Source) Human Development Data

Figure 2: Life Expectancy at Birth
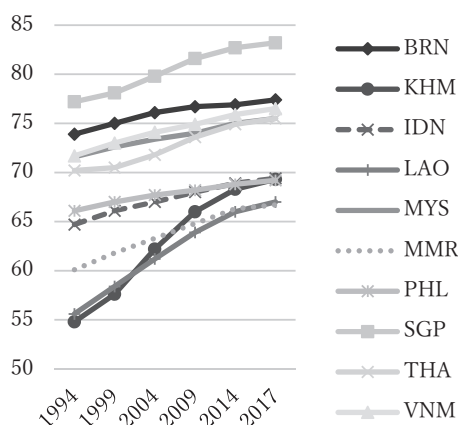
(Source) Human Development Data

EMERGENCE AND SPREAD OF THE CONCEPT OF HUMAN SECURITY

After the end of the Cold War, the concept of security came under reconsideration (Lipshutz, 1995; Krause and Williams, 1997; Buzan et al., 1998). So-called 'traditional security',[4] often referred to as national security, seeks to defend states from external military aggression by military measures. However, after the end of the Cold War, it became more evident that the source of threats was not limited to military aggression by other countries (Stares, 1998). As the threat of being invaded by other countries decreased, threats of non-military issues, such as environmental degradation, energy shortage, and infectious diseases, came to attract more attention. Many of these non-military threats are transnational in nature, which often implies a larger human impact. A perceived increase in the frequency and impact of such non-military threats led scholars to begin re-

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3) Data of Singapore and Brunei Darussalam were excluded, as they were already developed before 1994. The GDP per capita of Singapore was 27,940 USD (constant 2010 USD) in 1994, and that of Brunei Darussalam was 37,043 USD (constant 2010 USD).

4) The concept of security as defending states from external military aggression by military measures is not necessarily traditional. Such a concept of security was rather a product of an exceptionally confrontational international environment during the Cold War era. But since security studies developed mainly during the Cold War era, it is common to refer to such a concept as 'traditional security'.

defining the concept of 'traditional security'.

Some proposed to broaden the scope of security to incorporate some non-military threats (Buzan, 1991). Others maintained that the scope of security should be limited to military issues (Walt, 1991; Baldwin, 1995, p. 119). For them, environmental issues or energy issues could be regarded as security issues only when these led to military conflicts. The concept of human security was bold in that it challenged not only the scope of security, but also its referent. Proponents of the concept of human security insisted that the proper referent of security should be at the human rather than the national level. They criticized the traditional security concept's disproportionate emphasis on states as the referent of security and on military aspects as the threats and the means of security. They attempted to redress such bias by emphasizing the importance of the life and dignity of individual human beings.

As a variety of issues can endanger the security of individual human beings, human security considers threats as not being limited to military aggression by other states. The means of providing security are not limited to military measures by states, either. Not only states but also non-state actors may provide security through various means. Above all, the referent of security is individual human beings, not states.

After the concept of human security was first publicly introduced by the UNDP's *Human Development Report 1994*, attention to the concept gradually grew among scholars and practitioners. In 1999, the Japanese government took the initiative to establish the United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security (UNTFHS). In 2000, referring to 'freedom from want' and 'freedom from fear', then UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan emphasized the need to 'put people at the center of everything we do' (Annan, 2000, p. 7)[5]. This so-called 'Millennium Report' further focused attention on the concept of human security.

The Commission of Human Security, co-chaired by Amartya Sen and Sadako Ogata, was established in January 2001 under the initiative of the government of Japan and UN Secretary-General Annan. The Commission presented a report to Annan on 1 May, 2003, proposing that, as there were many cases where states were unable to adequately ensure the security of

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5) This report was prepared ahead of the Millennium Summit, a special session of the 55th session of the UN General Assembly in 2000, and it became widely known by its unofficial name.

their citizens, various comprehensive measures should be taken in response to both conflict and development. Focusing specifically on individuals and communities, it emphasized the need to protect and empower individuals.

The Advisory Board on Human Security was established in 2003 to carry forward the recommendations of the Commission on Human Security and to advise the UN Secretary-General on the strategic orientation of the UNTFHS as well as on ways to promote and disseminate the concept of human security. The importance and necessity of defining the concept of human security was emphasized in the 2005 World Summit Outcome Document,[6] and endeavors to discuss the definition of the concept of human security and disseminate it continued. In 2012, the UN General Assembly reached a common understanding of the concept of human security.[7]

LOCALIZING HUMAN SECURITY

While the concept of human security had gradually been disseminated internationally, policy makers in some countries, such as some in Southeast Asia, indicated wariness of the spread of such a concept. Yet Southeast Asian countries were familiar with the idea of widening the scope of security to include non-military threats. By the end of the 1970s, Southeast Asian countries adopted the concept of comprehensive security, which incorporated non-military threats into security issues. Regardless of the labels and the varied interpretations that came with the term, comprehensive security implied that security 'goes beyond (but does not exclude) the military to embrace the political, economic, and socio-cultural dimensions' (Alagappa, 1998, p. 624).

The concept of comprehensive security is similar to that of human security in that it sees non-military issues as security issues. However, it is different in that the referent of security in comprehensive security is exclusively states, not individual human beings. Comprehensive security puts national security before individual human rights or democracy. On the other hand, human security advocates focusing on the security of indi-

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6) This document was adopted by the UN General Assembly on September 16, 2005. A/RES/60/1, para143.

7) A/RES/66/290.

vidual human beings. This difference is of critical importance for policy makers in Southeast Asian countries. While agreeing to include non-military threats in security issues, they hesitate to recognize individual human beings as the referent of security. They worry that the concept of human security might clash with state sovereignty or the principle of non-intervention.

However, policy makers in Southeast Asia could not ignore the fact that transnational issues had gained prominence in Southeast Asia, effectively obligating them to reconsider the concept of security. The Asian Financial Crisis of 1997 was one event that put strong pressure on policy makers in Southeast Asia to reexamine the concept of security. Most of the Southeast Asian countries could not escape from the influence of the Thai Baht plunge. Following this currency crisis, the governments in Thailand and Indonesia collapsed. It became clear that the currency issue could endanger the survival of governments.

When discussing how to redefine the concept of security in the wake of new challenges in Southeast Asia, some policy makers did refer to the increasingly popular concept of human security. For example, then Foreign Minister of Thailand Surin Pitsuwan proposed establishing a meeting on human security at the 1998 ASEAN Post Ministerial Conference. Governments in Southeast Asia had been emphasizing that state stability and economic development would lead to the improvement of the life of the individual. This logic lost its credibility, however, when many faced distress due to the Asian Financial Crisis. Nevertheless, Pitsuwan's proposal was not widely supported by the policy makers in Southeast Asia.

In the wake of the September 11th terrorist attacks, pressures from the Western states to protect human rights and accept the concept of human security diminished. In the 'War on Terror', it became acceptable to explicitly or implicitly prioritize national security over human rights. The momentum to pay attention to individual security and human rights started to dissipate. On the other hand, the threat of terrorism was transnational and required multilateral cooperation to counter. Transnational threats hit Southeast Asia one after another in the early 2000s. A Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) outbreak in China spread to Southeast Asia in 2003. A massive tsunami caused by an earthquake off Sumatra affected most of the Southeast Asian countries in 2004.

In this context, scholars in Southeast Asia, led by the S. Rajaratnam

School of International Studies (RSIS) at Nanyang Technological University in Singapore, proposed the concept of non-traditional security. The author argues that this concept of non-traditional security can be regarded as a localized version of human security. Facing the spread of the concept of human security and the pressure to accept it, proponents of the concept of non-traditional security tried to maintain states as the referent of security in order to fit the local context in Southeast Asia while recognizing non-military transnational threats as security issues. Actually, there have been many other attempts to localize the concept of human security in Southeast Asia.[8] But non-traditional security has been one of the most influential localized versions of the human security concept.

Non-traditional security is a concept that refers to 'challenges and threats to the survival and well-being of peoples and states that arise primarily out of non-military sources, such as climate change, resources scarcity, infectious diseases, natural disasters, irregular migration, food shortages, people smuggling, drug trafficking, and transnational crime. These dangers are often transnational in scope, defying unilateral remedies and requiring comprehensive – political, economic, social – responses, as well as humanitarian use of military force' (Caballero-Anthony, 2016, p. 6).

NON-TRADITIONAL SECURITY AND HUMAN SECURITY

The concept of non-traditional security has a lot in common with the concept of human security, as it is a localized concept of it. Non-traditional security sees non-military threats, which are not within the scope of security for 'traditional security', as security issues. This departure from the concept of 'traditional security' is in line with the concept of human security. Since most of these non-military threats are transnational in nature, non-traditional security emphasizes the inadequacy of individual states' unilateral measures to deal with such threats. However, there are some

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8) For example, the government of Thailand set up a Ministry of Social Development and Human Security in 2002. Though the name of the ministry includes human security, this ministry only focuses on the social welfare of people. The Philippines introduced the 'Human Security Act' in 2007, but despite the law's name, it did not directly deal with issues related to human security. This law, which is an anti-terrorism law, could even endanger human security, as it gives the government more power to confront the threats posed by international terrorism. For a detailed survey on how the concept of human security has been localized in East Asian countries, see Mine et al., 2019.

important differences between non-traditional security and human security.

First, non-traditional security assumes only non-military measures as the means to provide security from threats, while human security assumes both non-military and military measures as means to provide security. Non-traditional security does not exclude the use of military in operations such as disaster relief missions. However, the use of military is considered as exceptional and is limited to operations not involving force. Second, while human security considers individual human beings as the referent of security, non-traditional security mainly regards states as the referent of security, though it refers to individual human beings and communities as well. Third, non-traditional security assumes mainly states as the providers of security, while human security expects non-state actors to play roles in providing security with and sometimes without states.

**Figure 3: Traditional Security (TS), Non-Traditional Security (NTS),
and Human Security (HS)**

	TS	NTS	HS
Threat	Military	Non-military	Military and Non-military
Measures	Military	Mainly Non-military	Military and Non-military
Whom (Security Referent)	State	State, Individual, and Community	Individual
Who (Security Provider)	State	State	State and Non-State Actors

(Source) Author

One of the important features of non-traditional security is its assumption that states are responsible for providing security from non-military threats. It is hard to deny that these non-military issues are threatening the security of states as well as communities and individual human beings. As most of these non-military threats are transnational in nature, they require different responses from 'traditional security' issues. However, policy makers in Southeast Asia do not want to expand the concept of security as broadly as human security does. If the concept of security were expanded to see individual human beings as the referent of security and to assume that non-state actors provide security, the prominence of the states would be reduced.

The concept of human security started to diffuse internationally, and

the pressure to accept it became stronger. When the pressure to respect human rights and accept the concept of human security diminished some in the wake of the War on Terror, scholars proposed the localized human security concept – that is, non-traditional security – to avoid accepting the concept of human security *per se*. Unlike human security, which criticizes and challenges 'traditional security', non-traditional security attempts to complement it while accepting the reality that non-military issues could feasibly pose a threat to states, communities, and human beings.

Emphasizing the prominence of states, non-traditional security tries to deal with non-military and transnational issues using national and international measures. While human security emphasizes the importance of empowering individuals to tackle with a variety of threats, non-traditional security aims to build states' capacity to deal with these threats. According to Caballero-Anthony, the leading scholar on non-traditional security, while the concept of non-traditional security shares the conceptual space of human security, non-traditional security does not privilege a singular security referent. As a concept and as an approach to security, non-traditional security recognizes the role of the state in addressing human security threats (Caballero-Anthony 2018, p. 8). Non-traditional security fits well in the context of Southeast Asia, where respect for sovereignty and non-interference are still very strong.

IMPROVEMENT OF HUMAN SECURITY BY NON-TRADITIONAL SECURITY POLICIES

Once something is framed as a security issue, be it 'traditional security' or non-traditional security or even human security, the issue starts attracting more attention and more policy resources (Buzan et al., 1998). If policies to address various 'non-traditional' threats had been proposed from a human security perspective, policy makers might not have adopted them. Policy makers in Southeast Asia have found it easier to accept non-traditional security than human security, as non-traditional security does not clash with the principles of sovereignty and non-interference, which they hold dear. A variety of non-traditional security policies could improve both non-traditional security and human security to a certain extent.

According to the Consortium on Non-traditional Security Studies in Asia (NTS-Asia), which was established at the RSIS in 2007 as a network

of think tanks and research organizations working on non-traditional security, non-traditional security issues include: conflict and community security, poverty and economic security, environmental security and climate change, food security, energy security, water security, health security, irregular migration and the movements of people, transnational crime, gender and human security, and political transitions.[9] While the referent of security and the provider of the security are different in non-traditional security from human security, all the non-traditional security issues are closely related to human security.

Consequently, many human security issues can be addressed by states under non-traditional security policies. For example, the spread of infectious diseases has not been regarded as a 'traditional security' issue. However, after the SARS outbreak in Southeast Asia, coupled with the concerns about avian flu, infectious diseases became recognized as threats to the states and the region as a whole in Southeast Asia. Being framed as a non-traditional security issue, infectious diseases started to be seen as an issue where closer regional cooperation was urgently needed and to dominate the agenda of security cooperation during the ASEAN summits and ministerial meetings (Caballero-Anthony, 2008, p. 516). There have been a series of national and regional measures to tackle infectious diseases. Capacity building efforts at the national level to fight against infectious diseases as well as regional cooperation to tackle this issue can also benefit individual human beings facing the threat of infectious diseases and thus help to improve human security.

Another example is human trafficking. Human trafficking is not regarded as a 'traditional security' issue. However, it has been identified as a threat to economic, political, and societal stability since the 1990s. Southeast Asia is sometimes referred to as a human trafficking 'hotspot' (IOM, 2018, p. 114). The International Organization for Migration estimates that 25% of the victims of the global trafficking trade were from Southeast Asia in 2015 (IOM, 2015). While each country has tried to deal with this issue individually, Southeast Asian countries have strived to promote regional cooperation as a non-traditional security issue. Southeast Asian countries adopted various non-binding instruments to deal with human trafficking issues in the region (Yusran 2018, p. 268). Such endeavors culminated in


9）　NTS-Asia website. https://rsis-ntsasia.org/non-traditional-security-themes-research-areas/
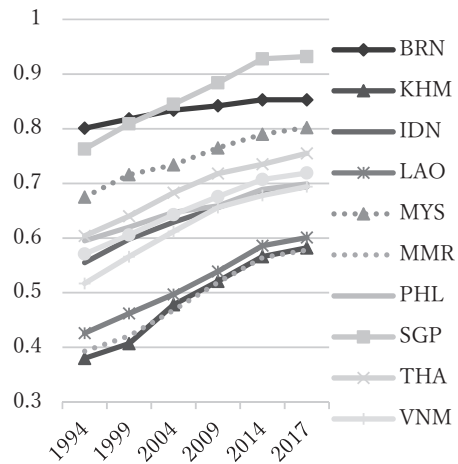
the ASEAN Convention against Trafficking in Persons Especially Women and Children. This legally binding instrument gives new impetus for much needed multilateral coordination and cooperation in anti-trafficking efforts. It calls for closer government-to-government cooperation to improve on a spectrum of anti-trafficking efforts – information and intelligence sharing, victim identification, protection and repatriation, law enforcement, and confiscation and seizure of trafficking proceeds (Yen Ne Foo, 2017, p. 13). Improvement of non-traditional security through this sort of multilateral cooperation would be expected to improve human security in terms of human trafficking as well.

WIDENING GAP BETWEEN NON-TRADITIONAL SECURITY AND HUMAN SECURITY

When a state is poor or in conflict or a state has not taken many measures to tackle 'non-traditional' threats, policies to ensure non-traditional security are not that different from those to ensure human security. Without economic development and the settlement of conflicts, neither non-traditional security nor human security can be provided. As seen in Figures 1 and 2 in the introduction section, both economic development and the extension of life expectancy at birth in Southeast Asia have been great in the last quarter century. These improvements in the standard of living and health dimensions have been accompanied by dramatic increases in expected years of schooling (Figure 4). That means all three dimensions used to measure the Human Development Index – a decent standard of living, a long and healthy life, and knowledge – have improved greatly in Southeast Asia. Considering that the Human Development Index was created to emphasize that people and their capabilities should be the ultimate criteria for assessing the development of a country, one can safely say that the remarkable progress in this index (Figure 5) suggests that the human security situation in Southeast Asia has also improved to a great extent.

Figure 4: Expected Years of Schooling

BRN	◆
KHM	✳
IDN	━
LAO	╋
MYS	✕
MMR	●●●
PHL	⋯
SGP	▪
THA	▲
VNM	●
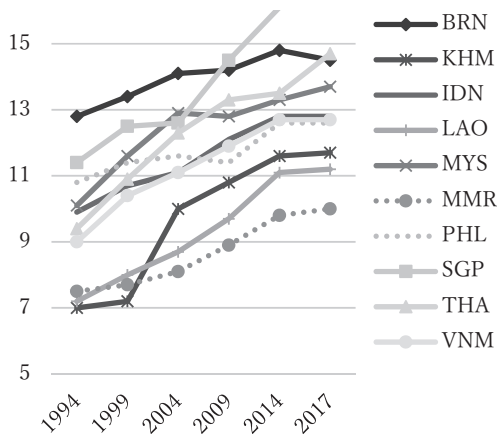
(Source) Human Development Data

Figure 5: Human Development Index

BRN	◆
KHM	▲
IDN	━
LAO	✳
MYS	▲⋯
MMR	●●●
PHL	━
SGP	▪
THA	✕
VNM	╋

(Source) Human Development Data

Non-traditional security policies can improve human security, as described in the previous section. A common comment that arises when discussing the concept of human security with practitioners is 'We already do human security; we just don't call it that' (Kaldor et al., 2007, p. 274). However, even if the policies and the results are similar, the implication differs greatly depending on whether such policies are conducted from a non-traditional security perspective or a human security perspective. And this difference and the implications of it expand after the state has attained a certain level of economic and political development.

Under non-traditional security, which sees states as the main referent of security, economic development or public safety can be prioritized over the security of individual. For example, the percentage of urban population keeps increasing in most of the Southeast Asian countries (Figure 6). High population density in urban areas could create various threats such as flooding, pollution, slum creation, and crime, in addition to causing inadequate infrastructure, lack of affordable housing, and congestion. From a non-traditional security point of view, slum clearance can be justified and actually is conducted quite commonly in Southeast Asia in the name of public health, prevention of crime, and public safety. However, mass forced evictions drive slum dwellers even deeper into poverty and violate their right to housing. Such measures cannot be justified from a human security point of view.

Figure 6: Urban Population[10]
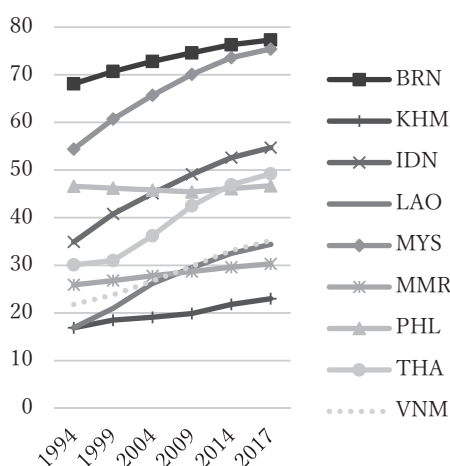
(Source) Human Development Data

The concept of non-traditional security guides policy makers to tackle various non-military threats through national and/or multilateral regional measures seeing states as the referent of security. On the other hand, human security guides policy makers to tackle these issues to improve the situation of individual human beings. As mentioned above, to tackle infectious diseases, individual states as well as ASEAN as a region have been trying hard to build capacity in disease surveillance and control. This includes building laboratory facilities, hospital preparedness capacity, pharmaceutical manufacturing capacity, and institutional capacity for risk assessment and communication (Unikrishnan pp. 39-40). Though these measures are not directly related to improving human security, they could help improve human security to a certain extent. However, as non-traditional security prioritizes the security of states over individual human beings, measures to seclude, marginalize, or even ostracize infected people are sometimes taken to 'protect' the society or the state from the spread of disease.

Likewise, the human trafficking issue has been tackled by individual states as well as through multilateral cooperation in Southeast Asia from a non-traditional security point of view. These efforts tend to focus on protecting states from political, economic, and societal instability caused by

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10） Data excludes Singapore, as it has been 100% since 1994.

human trafficking. And measures to tackle it tend to focus on punishing traffickers rather than restoring the lives of victims. These measures could improve the human security situation to a certain extent. However, such measures often lack understanding about the needs of victims. Though there is a clear consensus that laws to address trafficking should focus on the traffickers and not treat the victims as perpetrators, few countries in Southeast Asia have adopted legislation and measures to protect and assist victims of trafficking (Derks, 2000, p. 64). Many victims of human trafficking do not have legal status as migrants and engage in illegal or informal sectors such as prostitution. Their human security can be seriously undermined by policies that are based on non-traditional security and do not pay enough attention to the victim. Similar gaps between human security and non-traditional security could be observed in many other issues such as drugs, refugees, and terrorism. Because transnational interactions increase as the economy develops and as economic integration and globalization expand, such gaps between human security and non-traditional security may gain greater significance in Southeast Asia.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

This paper has examined how scholars in Southeast Asia endeavored to localize the concept of human security to fit the local context as the concept of human security spread. It became clear that non-military issues were a threat as globalization expanded, especially after the end of the Cold War. While agreeing to expand the scope of security to include non-military security issues, they tried to maintain states as the referent of security. Such a localized concept of human security, called non-traditional security, maintains the view of states as the main referent of security. While expanding the scope of security to include non-military and transnational issues, it emphasizes that states should play the central role in providing security. It attempts to promote international cooperation, but not the role of non-state actors. This respect for states' sovereignty and the principle of non-interference was the key to the wide acceptance of the non-traditional security concept in Southeast Asia.

Non-traditional security aims to build states' capacity rather than to empower individuals to deal with non-military as well as transnational threats. When a state is poor or in conflict, measures to provide non-tradi-

tional security are not that different from measures to provide human security. Most Southeast Asian countries can successfully improve their human security situation as they develop economically. However, after states achieve a certain degree of economic and political development, the gaps between the policies guided by non-traditional security and human security become noticeable. Such gaps become clearer as transnational interactions increase. As briefly seen above, policies taken from a non-traditional security perspective could have negative effects on human security. That is why it is important to examine the human security situation in Southeast Asia now. It is high time to consider how to better provide human security in Southeast Asia.

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