

Book Review:

Human Security in the Asia Pacific Region: Security Challenges, Regional Integration, and Representative Case Studies.

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Introduction

This is a collection of research papers using the “Human Security Paradigm” to highlight and discuss a series of issues relating to conflict, politics and social standing in selected areas of the Asia Pacific region. As this is the case, the summary at the beginning of each chapter acts as an abstract and there are comprehensive references at the end for further reading. It is the first volume of a much larger project dealing with human security in the Asia Pacific region, which hopes to take into account North-east Asia and the role of education in the next volume.

Human security is defined in this book as both protective and developmental. Protective in that individuals need to be protected from physical threats (natural, political and arising from the abuses of human rights) and developmental which includes repression, hunger and disease. In these abstract forms they are too simplistic in

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nature as in reality they are interwoven with each other, making definitions and resolution complex tasks. In addition, there is some doubt as to whether human security can be used to make significant changes to security internationally (Christie 2010).

Three main areas are covered by this book; the first being Regional Trends: Normative Contestation, Regional Integration and Regional Security. The next part concerns The Two Chinas and Costa Rica: Asia Pacific Diplomacy and the Struggle between *emic* and *etic* International Norms and finally, the last section deals with Thailand's Socio-political Unrest and Southern Insurgency from a Human Security Perspective.

The author has written the book from a local and individualised viewpoint, rather than from the more traditional one of central government in the hope that it will stimulate action research in this area. Interdisciplinary in nature, this book gives the reader a more holistic outline of the case studies discussed and delves into the notions of "Freedom From Want" and "Freedom From Fear" from the standpoint of the individual, rather than for the state.

Regional trends: Normative Contestation, Regional Integration, and Regional Security

In the first section, three case studies are reviewed to give the reader a taste of the types of conflict that persist in South-east Asia. The areas covered are Indonesia, The Philippines and Southern Thailand (Rüland 2005 and San Juan 2006) detailing how there are many factors that affect the status quo in these regions and that violent conflict (Toros 2008) can only be resolved through a more holistic approach rather than the methods adopted by the "War on Terror" (Tujan, Gaughran and Mollett 2004), for example, counterinsurgency. By looking to resolve the problems using "mediation and consultation" the author believes that it is possible to appease those who use violence to promote their cause.

There is an interesting comparison between the "ASEAN Way" (Nishikawa 2009) and a more hard nosed

human security approach adopted by Canada to explain the differences in positions taken by organisations and countries. Whilst the ASEAN Way focuses on the independence of the member states free from external interference, Canada as a “middle power” (Behringer 2005) on the other hand, focuses on the responsibility to protect which includes humanitarian intervention resulting in the weakening of a country’s sovereignty in favour of the individual by using external interference if necessary.

Using Japan’s version of human security in conjunction with the ASEAN way, it is possible to see how Japan is able to have a more holistic approach to human security than the normative protective and developmental human securities already mentioned. This is due mainly to the country including western concepts of human security as well as focusing on long term developmental goals, as seen in Japanese projects in Myanmar and Cambodia. Examples of microfinance are used to illustrate how projects can look like simple economic development but in fact have a structure that promotes democracy with the potential to change the fabric of society.

Human security and the ASEAN way are well illustrated by the author using a river metaphor. The dangerous eddies that form when two currents converge are used to explain how these two concepts are at odds with each other when it comes to what is proposed by donor countries and the negotiations that have to take place with “regional elites.” The mixing of salt and fresh water in the calm waters is an illustration of how agreements can be reached.

The Two Chinas and Costa Rica: Asia Pacific Diplomacy and the Struggle between *emic* and *etic* International Norms

The second section starts by explaining the foreign policy of Costa Rica. With a small population and no army, this country has a degree of “soft power” which enables it to punch above its weight in the international arena. This is due to a belief that as a country, Costa Rica is “commitment

to truth” and “non-violence” (satyagraha and ahimsa). This “Gandhian approach” has led to international goodwill and involves taking a lead in international norms when dealing with other countries in the region. In this case, the author eludes that “right can and does become might.”

Recent studies by Jackiewicz (2006), Smith (2004) and Horton (2009) give added insight into Costa Rica and its rural development, local government and eco-tourism with Shin and Hytrek (2002) detailing an Asia-Pacific perspective with South Korea showing another example of comparisons in the region.

When looking at the chapter concerning the Chinese emic paradigms of international relations, our focus is cleverly turned to two very popular films starring Jet Li that deal with similar Chinese issues concerning their involvement in the international arena (Bhalla 2005). In the movie *Hero*, Jet Li accepts his own death rather than carry out his revenge by killing the Emperor, who has persuaded our hero not to kill him in order for China to be unified and a sense of order imposed. To this end, Jet Li sacrifices himself for the whole of China.

In *The Return of the Dragon Emperor*, Jet Li plays an Emperor who is not just satisfied with unifying China, he also wants immortality. The ending of this film is very different from *Hero* in that there is an involvement of westerners and that the rebel army are using farming implements as weapons as opposed to the Emperor’s army which is more conventional in nature. The cry of “Freedom” by the rebel army is seen by the author as depicting individual rights, as is the occurrence of the Chinese heroine marrying a western archaeologist. “Collectivism versus Individualism.”

The issues addressed in these films are being addressed by those in and out of China with a lack of agreement within the country as to the direction that China will take in the future. An amended version of the concept of Tianxia is addressed as being the possible way forward maintaining the view of the world being led by the elite, reflecting a possible rise in nationalism, in turn, leading to a change in the interpretation of Chinese history.

The next chapter concerns Costa Rica and its dealings with the People’s Republic of China and the Republic of

China (Taiwan). Having supported Taiwan for so long and then switching its allegiance to mainland China, the details behind this occurrence made interesting reading. Using The Spiral Model of Norm Socialisation and the Parallel Cycles Model of Norm Socialisation, the author takes us through the events surrounding the change in Costa Rica's foreign policy and finishes with a critical discourse analysis of these events. Similar studies are encouraged for other Latin American countries in order to "harness the diplomatic energy" of the region whilst spreading democracy to the developing world.

Thailand's Socio-political Unrest and Southern Insurgency from a Human Security Perspective

Having completed a brief description of the situation in Southern Thailand from the perspective of human security, what follows is an analysis of the social and political unrest in Thailand from the 1930s to the present day using a critical approach to cultural conflict. Gramsci's cultural harmony and Jan Nederveen Pieterse's model of ethnic relations are tools used to display the ethno-cultural conflict taking place in Thailand today. Using simplified models, the reader is taken through the Three Pillars of Thai Elite Civic Culture Ethnocracy in relation to education, the media, use of public spaces, the economy and foreign policy.

The defence of ethnocracy by the elite in Thailand and the movement towards enclave ethnicity and ethnic competition illustrate that the "Dialectical Relationship Between Culture and Policymaking" show that all sides understand the importance of national culture and the role it plays over the control of resources and political influence in the area. This shift in power demonstrates the polarisation taking place and the emergence of red-shirts and yellow-shirts as groups with little in common except for the desire to have a say in policy and how the country should be run.

The author suggests using Singapore as a model to solve the current problems in the country, as Singapore is "defined around the diversity of its population and most importantly by the ideals of tolerance and hard work." The

elite in Thailand are encouraged to take the lead in this transition.

Moving on to the specific problem of Muslim Malays in Southern Thailand, we are introduced to the concept of “small peoples” and how the south’s independent history has been omitted from official historical accounts, which is reflected in one of the most important areas, education (Maxcy, Sungtong, and Nguyen 2010). The Muslim communities feel that their way of life is under threat due to perceived propaganda pointing the way towards assimilation. The author takes us through many examples and more importantly, highlights how Pattani-Malay is not used in the public school system in the south, which means in theory that children would find it difficult to learn their ethnic language unless they went to private schools or undertook evening classes.

A comparison with Israel follows as this is seen by the author as a similar example of a group of people who are under physical threats to their existence. The comparison with the south is based on the assumption that there is not a rule of law at this time, but a permanent state of emergency, giving the police and military wide powers to arrest without court orders and the right to keep suspects for long periods without access to a lawyer. The military have been accused of tactics that involve intimidating the local population and internment, resulting in many Muslim men having to leave their homes for long periods of time producing severe economic problems for those families left behind.

Confidence building measures are seen as the way forward in order to build trust between the Thai government and the Muslim south. The author suggests that the objective reality as well as the perceptions of that reality have to be addressed. Second track diplomacy may be able to help reduce suspicion and assist with the communication between all interested parties of this conflict, as well as an understanding of the civil-military relationship for human security (Beeson 2008).

An interesting comparison is made in the next chapter between the best practices from the governance of Sarawak under the White Rajahs one hundred and fifty years ago and the problems facing southern Thailand today. It is suggested

that a policy of applying “local capacities for peace, self-determination and sustainable development” as seen in Sarawak at that time, could be the way forward for developing peace and stability in Thailand’s southern provinces. The author suggests that if the Rajahs were alive today, they would suggest measures such as a greater respect for local customs, more religious freedom and the empowerment of local institutions.

The penultimate chapter of this book puts forward the idea of some kind of autonomous economic and administrative region as seen in Macau and Hong Kong. This solution is seen as benefiting not just the region but the whole of Thailand as the economic benefits would filter through as tax revenue. A theoretical/analytical framework is discussed as an elite theory model of public policymaking as well as the establishment of a Ministry for the South and a kind of “feudal tenure” in the South of Thailand based on the “co-option of the Malay nobility into the administration of the region.” In conclusion, the establishment of the Greater Pattani Autonomous Administrative and Economic Region is the preferred choice, as it proposes to integrate the region with the rest of Thailand through economic interdependence and also gives the area greater self determination, thus reducing the amount of resistance to change because of a greater understanding of what is taking place (Lohmann 2008).

Conclusion

The final chapter points forward to the way ahead, in that research and policymakers should concentrate on the well-being of the individual and the local communities they live in. Thailand is a complex country (Glassman 2010); however, by using the Human Security approach as part of theoretical frameworks, the author suggests that areas such as global warming and terrorism could also be tackled as it would give scholars and academics greater understanding which in turn would lead to better choices and finally, peace and human security.

This collection of research papers challenges the reader to look at the selected case studies from a human security perspective and puts forward theoretical solutions to

several problem areas. Putting that theory into practice takes commitment and courage by all sides of the equation and this is where stalemates exist. Some human security commentators (Nishikawa 2009) ask, after having used this concept of human security (Maclean 2008) to identify the problem areas, if it is at all possible to resolve them considering the existing relationships between the different groups and governments involved.

Scholars and academics must continue to investigate and research in order to offer possible solutions and guidance in the hope that one day we are free from want and fear, with domestic stability (Nathan 2006) within each other's borders. This book offers a series of solutions that lays a sound foundation for further investigation into the security challenges and the possibilities for regional integration facing the Asia-Pacific region and beyond using the human security paradigm.

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