

Human Security in the Context of Violence and Conflict
Sub Session I: Southern Thailand
Discussion

Dr. Chaiwat Satha-anand:

“Thank you so much for making me the father of something though I’m not quite sure what it means. May peace be with you all, and my apology for being a little bit late but we’re in Bangkok and if you are not late you are not in Bangkok. Since everyone seems to allude to drinking or eating or something like. I think that would be very auspicious since we are now in the holy month of Ramadan and I begin something about eating. There is a saying that you are what you eat, and if you listen to these three papers it’s not what they eat or what they are that make them write the papers that they did. Who they are is quite interesting if I may list them: Alisa for example is an anthropologist, Omar Farouk is a political scientist and Mr. Yusuf is a professor of religious studies. It goes without saying that the way they approach the same problem from very different angles, from the kind of things that they eat, meaning the books they read, and the research that they have been doing in the past. If that is the case then the type of things they provide us, with your permission, I would like to reorder what they said. I will not go along in the order that the moderator has suggested.

Let me begin with Alisa. What Alisa has given us the face of the problems. She did it in a much more powerful way by inviting us to look at the visuals of violence on the ground. I’m sure that the visuals of violence have certain effects on the way you will perceive or the way you will theorize on the issue of human security that you deal with. And she comes from the social sciences side of study, meaning Anthropology. And so she gives you the story. The most powerful aspect of her paper, in my view, are the two cases. The two cases will tell you what it means to be in the middle of crossfire. It will tell you what it means to be someone whose loved ones were taken away by violence. It will tell you how people negotiate their lives in the middle of what my journalist friends call crossfire. The look of Abdullah, for example, will tell you how incomprehensible all this is. On the one hand, you have faces like that, the victim. On the other, you have the side of the government that comes in with new methodology in detecting violence. So I speak to some of my friends within the security community who are very proud of their new machines. They are called bomb detectors that I go through every time I travel. In Australia, they pick me up and wanted to snatch some little objects in my briefcase to see if there were small things of bomb extracts in my stuff. I tried to tell the officer that I am in peace studies – of course, it doesn’t work. They think peace studies have something to do with bombs. [Laughter]. I ask also “you’re doing this to me on purpose, right?” and he says “no, this is random”. When you do this to me it’s one thing when you do this to villagers living in crossfire, it’s a completely different story. You see what I mean. On the one hand, the government and security community could be proud of this new technology but it has infused within it an element of fear. And if anyone is interested remotely in human security, you know, one should be very cognizant of these types of tools used. This is where fear can be produced and reproduced.

If you look at Omar’s work, I think it reflects the way the Thai government comes up with policies and the way it tried to deal with the South, using all kinds of measures. He also reviews suggestions made by different agencies including the national

reconciliation commission, among others. One other thing that he also says is that there's a discrepancy between those policies suggested by organizations such as Human Rights Watch and the policies doctored by governments at the same time. But Omar is still a little optimistic. He thinks that we have not reached the point of no return. This is something to which grabs our attention in Conflict Studies. We look at certain cases. The question asked is whether or not we have reached the point of no return? I think people who ask this question are very much fond of Marilyn Monroe songs, you know those from thirty or forty years ago, the river of no return. If that's the case, there are some issues that Omar has proposed that suggest that there are no other ways except to use human securities as an approach for the government.

Imtiyaz was talking about what I would call the cultural dimension of problems, focusing on the two Islams. As he said, I have lots of disagreements with him about these terms, but this is no place to quarrel him on that. Let's go along with him: what he's saying is that there are two groups of Muslims, broadly painted. One is the group of Muslims in the South [of Thailand], the other being Muslims from elsewhere. And then he said that Muslims elsewhere are in for integration and the Muslims in the South more or less reject integration because of their ethno-religious identity. One could term it that way or the other way. I would like to put before you an alternative reading of the problem in Thailand. When people ask why is there are very few problems in terms of Muslims vis-à-vis the state elsewhere in Thailand, my answer is very simple; my answer is that Muslims in Thailand elsewhere, I mean Cambodian Muslims in the center part, Chinese Muslims in the north. Omar Farouk here has identified nine groups of ethnic Muslims... Indian Muslims, Arab Muslims, all of them came to this country at different moments in Thai history. All but the Malay Muslims in the south of the country. The Malay Muslims did not come to Siam. It was Siam that came to them in the form of domestic colonization. And that history needs to be put on the table to understand why this problem is so persistent in Thai society. Of course, Imtiyaz went on to talk about the cultural differences in Islam and also use the [inaudible] Islam office, which dates back until the 10th century. But in Thailand, up to the Ayudhaya regime or Ayudhaya period. What he's saying is that there is an office and this office has done preciously little about the South. Actually he used two case studies – one is the Gruse incident and the other is the Tak Bai incident. I like the conclusion he gave for the Tak Bai incident best. He said at the Gruse incident on April 28th 2004 there was insurgent attacks against different government posts in three provinces. I think 300 or so attacked different posts in different locations. 106 insurgents were killed. Five security officers were also killed on that day. And then they found a little booklet near a dead body and the booklet was titled the Jihad of Patani, and there are some discussions of this elsewhere in the literature you can certainly find them. But Imtiyaz pointed out that Chularachamontri office, in its function as adviser to the Thai government, came up with a booklet to renounce that. So they did a very loyal job in denouncing that, and what happened was, their denunciation appears in the context of violence seen in the visual of the Gruse mosque being attacked by the military where 32 insurgents were killed inside the mosque. Now imagine this: you look at the ancient mosque, you look at the security forces surrounding the mosque, you look at the proposal from Bangkok saying don't attack the mosque, you look at the field officer who decided 'let's attack the mosque'. And so the attack took place. And so killings also took place. 32 of them were killed. And then the next day the visual again of

soldiers with guns, boots, and everything walking in the mosque, in front of that. Given that visual, when the Chularachamontri cannot be with or without the Jihad of Patani, when you come out and you say that 'you know, this is uncalled for, the Jihad of Patani is senseless, this is the wrong reading of Islam'. I don't think it fares very well in the minds of people who have been framed by the visual that I have just outlined before you. Therefore I like the second case best. Imtiyaz also talked about the Tak Bai incident where 1300 people were arrested after a demonstration. When these people were arrested and transported to the army camp, 78 of them were found dead in trucks. To me it is a very simple case of death in custody. And there is no way that government officials can avoid this responsibility. And yet the government from top down almost did not want to talk about this, did not accept this responsibility or accountability. So what did Shaku Islam do? According to Imtiyaz paper, they did the most wonderful thing – they did nothing. [Speaking to Imtiyaz] Is that right? You used that term, so that's why I like that sentence the best. So they did nothing and maybe learned from the first case how that went. The third point is about the answers. Although these people [paper presenters] are very different, you have to take into consideration that all of them are Muslims, but very strange Muslims. Strange because Omar Farouk is actually perhaps one of Malaysian experts on Thai studies for a long time. But he couldn't stay in Malaysia. He's now working in Japan, on top of that in Hiroshima, bombed years ago. Then you have Imtiyaz Yusuf, I think born in Tanzania and educated in India, but I think he uses a British passport and he stays in Thailand. And then you have Alisa Hassamoh. She sounds very Patanian. But she's not from Patani. Or maybe she is, but she is from Bangkok actually. Now she is trying to go back into Patani. So retrace her steps. Given their different identities, I think it gives a marvelous kaleidoscopic picture of what the South is and how complex Muslims are in the world as well as in this case. So the way in which you approach this is quite amazing. But they all are united in arguing that 'yes, there is a structural coarseness', 'yes there is a need to deal at the policy level', 'yes, you need to adopt a new approach', meaning human security approach. The thing that unites them is the fact that they come to terms with the structural condition of the South and they are trying to say that there is a need to come up with policies that will deal with the problems at the structural level.

Now the questions I have. Actually these questions can be put into three words. First is expectation. Or rather, misplaced expectation. Second one is theory. And the third one is cost. Let me elaborate.

I think that when I read professor Yusuf's paper on Shaikh al-Islam or the Chularajmontri, I have a feeling that there is a misplaced expectation – what really do you expect out of the Shaikh al-Islam office? Or for that matter, how could anyone in their right minds expect anything from the Shaikh al-Islam office as an agency that is bureaucratically designed to assist the state, especially in the context of a conflict between the state and the people. What can you expect? And I think Imtiyaz went so far as to expect them to come to term with the notion of human security – maybe it will work in Tanzania but not in Thailand [laughter]. And I say that because what they're interested in is more on the kind of law that will provide them with some bureaucratic space within the plethora of different agencies within Thai society. I think they are after some of that. They are after some of the kind of Islamic act that will specify the territory of different agencies within this society more than anything. Maybe with good intention I understand.

But I don't think they have even thought about human security as an approach to deal with this. I might be dead wrong here but reading about it from the outside it appears that way. Also, Imtiyaz is looking for some kind of moral independence of agencies like Shaikh al-Islam. But then, I think it goes without saying that moral independence is a result of the proximity between your agency and state power. The closer you are to state power, the much more difficult it will become to have some kind of moral independence. Therefore the question of proximity becomes important. As long as the structure of the Chularajmontri office is too close to the state, it cannot go very far in forwarding any other approach other than the state approach.

For Alisa, I think when you come up with these six points about human security, this is part of the problem. With human security studies, I will have more to say about it in the second part of the critique that comes with the other three papers. But the question for me, and perhaps for you as well, is the weight of all of these different things. From the diagram that you put in your paper, you seem to believe or assume that policy-related [inaudible] are the same. You understand what I'm saying? How can it be possible to provide housing facilities in a situation where explosions happen? Maybe the more important or urgent thing is to stop the explosions. You see what I mean. In a human security approach, different things cannot be weighed equally because of the emergency of time that dictates the weight of different valuables. So, at certain points in time, certain valuables are more important. I'll give you an example. I talked to a journalist yesterday and we were discussing what kind of program we could devise to help people who are victims in the South. One of the things she said was that what they want now is to find a way to be able to live in the middle of crossfire. It's not much to ask for, but how to live in the middle of crossfire is not even a demand for housing but a demand for some kind of security where guns are not around. These two things might not be weighted equally, particularly from your perspective when you are talking about human security from the bottom up. Therefore, you have to weigh these aspects differently and realize they may change over time. So, for example, if you think in terms of conflict studies then we have post-conflict situations. In post-conflict situations, this weight shifts. So that I think needs to be taken into consideration. What that means is you need a better theory, Alisa, to put this all together in a much more comprehensible way. This would shed a much more powerful light on the visuals you gave us.

And then for Omar I have one question. That question is about cost. Omar is proposing that the Thai state take a human security approach. When I listen to him I ask myself what is the cost for the government to take this described human security approach? Have we every thought about that? Do we really think that there is no cost in using the human security approach? How do we define those costs? Maybe the definition of the cost of implementing the human security approach depends on some other type of definition, namely how you define the situation. And I can tell you right now that, according to the security community, the situation in the South is something very close to war. And so what is predominant? The military approach and nothing else. Whatever they talk about, in terms of propaganda, in terms of psychological warfare, are secondary. Why is that the case? Because what they are trying to do is reinsert state power in a situation where things have become almost ungovernable. So if the issue is ungovernability what they want to do is reinsert state power. And if that is the case, defining the situation as close to war rather than through human security approach will

have a lot of costs in their eyes. With that, I raise my three basic questions, the question of misplaced expectations, the question of the theoretical perspective in using human security, and the question of the cost in the human security approach. Thank you.”

Professor Kinhide Mushakoji:

“Thank you very much, I have additional questions based on Dr. Chaiwat’s remark about cost. My question is about the cost of having a military security approach and, in that connection, my question is addressed to Dr. Imtiyaz about the horizontal religious aspect. If there is the Shaikh al-Islam on the Muslim side, there is also the Buddhist side and my question is about the whether the Sanghra, Buddhist side will have the possibility to develop problems for the military solution? In the Philippines, you have a model Island, a model region, Christian-Muslim dialogue and this is playing a certain role to restrain the government. My question is about the role of the Sanghra in restraining the military solution?”

Dr. Farouk:

“Thank you very much I enjoyed Dr. Chaiwat’s summary, evaluation, of our presentation. And I also like the question that he raised about cost. What would be the cost for the military, for the state to undertake the human security option. My very quick reaction would be: consider this – what would be the cost for *not* doing or undertaking the human security approach? There are many problems in the south, but the situation although described as nearing war, are still controllable. They are still under control. It has not gone beyond this point of no return. But is it possible that the situation could degenerate? Yes. The situation could degenerate if certain things are not put in place. I will not expand on that but, the point is, it could get worse. Your question about external rule and the rule of external factors...this is one of the main things that I tried to highlight in my paper. I think because I’m naturally an optimist things are changing structurally in the global environment or scenario. Maybe we don’t realize it. But I think it is going to be very difficult. Sure people might refer to Burma – look at Burma, what Burma has been doing. But I remember, I recall the remarks made by Prime Minister [Gordon] Brown of the UK that they will not get away with impunity. They will be called to account. I think we are moving into an era where people have to be aware, regimes have to be aware, leaders have to be aware, it is a matter of time before they are called into account. Even [President George] Bush has been called to account, maybe you’re not aware. There was a trial in Hiroshima regarding Bush’s role in the war and you know he has been deemed guilty. No action is taken of course. Who wants to challenge, who could challenge...But then this is the changing profile of the international dynamics. Civil society, external organizations like OIC. The OIC has been playing a very important role here in southern Thailand trying to mediate the political socialization of Muslims. Although I think it can be argued that perhaps they are addressing the wrong sort of crowd, the OIC is still there. And Thailand is a permanent observer of the OIC so it is going to be very difficult for this country if it wants to retain that very special recognition and status within the OIC. It cannot ignore its obligations.

ASEAN is moving and this is something that we need to take note of as a regional organization. I think Dr. Surin said yesterday it may be far behind the EU but still we are the number two in the world in terms of moving towards integration. Economic integration in ASEAN is something very real. Thailand is a major player. And we are moving toward that. We cannot afford to have instability anywhere in ASEAN because it is going to affect everybody. So because of that I think the role ASEAN has been playing, although on the quiet side without much fanfare, is still very important. The other thing is the international obligations which Thailand has. To this end, let us look at the United Nations charter or the 1948 UN Declaration of Human Rights. They are all there, but they have not really been faithfully observed. So this is an era where people are going to point this out; you have all these international obligations, the problem is that you have not addressed them. And I think this is the tenor and tone of the demands by Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International as well as many other international NGOs on the Thai state. This means there are external pressures, which have now become a factor in this contest for power in the south. The Thai state cannot afford to ignore it just as no other state in this world can. Even though we might want to argue “oh, look at Darfur”...No! Things are happening. I hope it will be sooner rather than later that this realization sinks in. Thank you.”

Dr. Chantana:

“Question on Sangha...I’m not sure whether this is the area of Professor Yusuf or not but I ask him first.”

Dr. Imtiyaz Yusuf:

“First of all thanks to Chaiwat for his comments but I know why Thai Muslims don’t like the Chularajmontri – because he is a Thai Muslim – they like the Chularajmontri only when he announces the beginning and the end of Ramadan. Otherwise they’re not interested in Chularajmontri. But, being an outsider, I think the office of the Chularajmontri can be dynamized. And there is a need to reform the office. Because this is the only mechanism available for the Muslims to express their own identity and deal with the issues they’re facing themselves. There is also a need for intra-Muslim recognition of cultural diversity within the community.

In regards to the question on the Sangha, actually I teach a course in interfered dialogue at my university...the sad situation is that some groups that come to talk about dialogue in Thailand have a hidden agenda to convert Thais to other religions. This is because the Sangha are not officially recognized in the dialogue process. But there have been attempts in light of the conflict in the South for Muslims with this dialogue. There were several attempts. But those dialogue sessions were not frank enough because of national security reasons. I think there is a need to combine both dialogue and the human security approach. If this can be done, I think the discussion would be more fruitful. Thank you”

Dr. Chantana: “I think Sangha is even more part of the state than the Chularajmontri.
Ajarn Alisa would you like to give some weight to particular variables?.”

Alisa Hassamoh: “Thank you Ajarn Chaiwat, I need to do more homework.”

[Session breaks for tea]