

Disaster, risk and conducting human security research in Southeast Asia

Southeast Asia: A
Multidisciplinary
Journal

185

Paul J. Carnegie
*Institute of Asian Studies, Universiti Brunei Darussalam,
Bandar Seri Begawan, Brunei Darussalam*

Received 6 February 2024
Revised 24 May 2024
Accepted 12 June 2024

Abstract

Purpose – Typhoons, storm surges and sea-level rise pose major risks to life and livelihoods in Southeast Asia and demand state-level action. However, the prominence and frequency of these symptomatic disasters often divert attention from underlying systemic and situational issues. The purpose of this paper is a normative and conceptual one. It makes the case for a grounded and disaggregated human security approach for decoding complex relationships of risk, power, politics, inequality and mistrust that underpin problems we seek to address.

Design/methodology/approach – This paper's approach situates the emergence of the human security paradigm and its connections to human development, sustainable economic growth and rights-based protections in historical context. It then draws on observations across the region over a number of years combined with a review of relevant research to detail how the vulnerability and exposure to disaster of at-risk communities extend beyond random or natural events. Having established that a focus on the immediate characteristics of disaster limits our frames of reference and the utility of subsequent responses, it proceeds to analyse the political, environmental and economic drivers amplifying exposure to disaster in Southeast Asia.

Findings – The findings reveal that the vulnerability and insecurity experienced by at-risk communities are not wholly random or exclusively the result of natural, unavoidable events. Exposure to disasters is also shaped by various situational factors, including habitat loss, dispossession, displacement, marginalisation and limited opportunities. Incorporating a more holistic human security perspective can bring into focus the less visible forces and interests that amplify vulnerability to hazard risk for affected individuals and communities in the region.

Originality/value – This is an original paper that underscores the conceptual and methodological importance of a grounded and disaggregated human security approach to grasp the disaster-prone territories of risk in contemporary Southeast Asia and for advancing appropriate responses.

Keywords Disasters, Human security, Marginality, Risk, Vulnerability, Southeast Asia

Paper type Conceptual paper

Introduction

Southeast Asia's total population is forecast to grow from around 640 m to over 800 m by 2050 (United Nations, 2019). The region is witnessing profound changes in patterns and types of work, rapid urbanisation, alongside social inequality and environmental degradation (Rosario & Rigg, 2019). At the same time, it faces significant disaster threats from typhoons, storm surges and rising sea levels. All of which necessitate proactive state-level responses. If the seas of the region warm at a rate even below current conservative estimates, it will seriously impact coral reefs, mangroves and low-lying coastal and delta basin areas (Prakash, 2018; Hijioka, Lasco, Surjan, & Pereira, 2014). Shifts in monsoonal precipitation patterns will



© Paul J. Carnegie. Published in *Southeast Asia: A Multidisciplinary Journal*. Published by Emerald Publishing Limited. This article is published under the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY 4.0) licence. Anyone may reproduce, distribute, translate and create derivative works of this article (for both commercial and non-commercial purposes), subject to full attribution to the original publication and authors. The full terms of this licence may be seen at <http://creativecommons.org/licences/by/4.0/legalcode>

Southeast Asia: A
Multidisciplinary Journal
Vol. 24 No. 3, 2024
pp. 185-197
Emerald Publishing Limited
e-ISSN: 2948-0426
p-ISSN: 1819-5091
DOI 10.1108/SEAMJ-02-2024-0015

also amplify the frequency and intensity of typhoons. Rising sea levels, forced displacements, degradation of aquatic ecosystems, declining fish stocks from ocean temperature rises, the contamination of freshwater and land degradation through saltwater inundation will further impact food security and livelihoods. Add on overwhelming plastic pollution and the increased potential of waterborne and vector-borne diseases such as dengue, chikungunya, malaria and typhoid and the prognosis for the region is deeply troubling (Carnegie, King, & Knudsen, 2021).

Although Kelman (2019) identifies over 30 lexical definitions of disaster, the United Nations (2009, p. 9) defines it as “a serious disruption of the functioning of a community or a society involving widespread human, material, economic or environmental losses and impacts, which exceeds the ability of the affected community or society to cope using its own resources.” This denotes the scale of the event, its impact on human life, property damage, environmental disruption and societal upheaval. Nonetheless, the visible characteristics of “disaster” events are not the only reason that calamities eventuate. The ground-breaking work of Quarantelli and Dynes (1977) alerted us to the importance of studying disasters as social phenomena and how natural and human systems interact to place communities of different sizes and at different stages of economic development at risk. They defined disasters in ways that highlighted societal and community-level impacts more than the technical aspects of the events. This involved looking at disasters from a sociological perspective that focused more on how they affect people and communities before, during and after the event. As various other scholars have noted, a sole focus on the immediate precursors and individual decision-making during disasters can limit our understanding of the broader undercurrents of risk and vulnerability at play (Remes & Horowitz, 2021; Watson & Moran, 2005; Zinn, 2008). The interdisciplinary nature of disaster studies further reflects the importance of recognizing that disasters are complex and multifaceted phenomena (Smith, 2013). In short, they defy simple categorization. There are issues of risk, vulnerability and marginality to consider. How these issues condition exposure to hazard in specific settings is part of the socially constructed aspect of “disaster” (Kelman, 2020; Lizarralde, 2021).

ASEAN does acknowledge the threat to life and livelihoods that typhoons, storm surges and rising sea levels pose. It formally endorsed a people-oriented agenda for regional development in 2003 [1]. Yet, it is reasonably fair to say that state-business investment agendas, policies and practices continue to prioritise attracting foreign direct investment, promoting agricultural and aquaculture modernisation, initiating major infrastructure projects and licensing commercial plantations and logging and resource extraction activities ahead of protecting individual and community well-being (Endres & Six-Hohenbalken, 2014; Elinoff & Vaughan, 2021). State-business-investment agendas, policies and practices regularly downplay issues of marginality, vulnerability and disadvantage in the making of disasters (van Voorst, 2016; Uson, 2017). The high visibility and frequency of the region’s “natural” disasters often overshadow the less than visible forces, processes and interests shaping their contemporary iterations and impact.

Gaillard (2022) further notes that the domination of western knowledge in disaster scholarship has promulgated certain standardized policies and practices of disaster management and reduction globally. Although communities across Southeast Asia confront different contexts of disaster and sets of specific challenges, various scholars point out that the undercurrents of the disasters they face get disregarded in official state-led responses in favour of more generic responses (Padawangi, 2019b; Campbell, 2018; Nootboom, 2016; Endo, 2014). Localised issues of power, politics and inequality are largely overlooked as the contextual range of disasters on the ground becomes aggregated within standardized framings of vulnerability and risk exposure (Lizarralde, 2021; Rebotier, 2012).

The above matters raise concerns about how disasters are framed, the levels of analysis engaged and the attention paid to the underlying conditions of disaster events embedded

in people's daily lived experiences. While we should not lose sight of broader perspectives, there is a worrisome tendency that at the state-level in Southeast Asia, issues remain framed not so much in human terms but rather by the preoccupations and focus of national and regional concerns (Padawangi, 2019a; Calvan, 2015; Yee, 2017). Given that disasters are not singular, uniform phenomena but rather heterogeneous, contested and marked by multiple layers of formation, this raises a serious question for the region: which audiences and peoples do state-led disaster management responses address and serve in Southeast Asia?

The provocation of the above question is the basis from which the following reflections proceed. Drawing on observations across the region over a number of years combined with a review of relevant research, the paper details how the vulnerability and exposure to disaster of at-risk communities extend beyond random or natural events. Various situational factors, including habitat loss, dispossession, displacement, marginalisation, disadvantage and limited opportunities, shape exposure to hazards. This establishes that disasters contain multiple layers of formation and that a focus on the immediate characteristics of disaster events limits frames of reference and the utility of subsequent responses. The paper makes the case for a grounded and disaggregated human security approach for decoding complex relationships of power, politics, risk, disadvantage and mistrust that underpin many of the calamities we seek to prevent. Incorporating a more holistic human security perspective can bring greater awareness to the less visible forces and interests that amplify risk and vulnerability to hazard. This is arguably crucial for the countries in Southeast Asia to take onboard in order to deal effectively with the manifold spectre of disaster in the 21st century. If states continue to overlook the intricate relationship of politics, commercial interests and development activities with disadvantage and marginalisation in exposure to hazards, then the likelihood is the perpetuation of rather contextless and standardized responses to disaster mitigation and management.

This paper begins with a historically situated discussion on the emergence of the human security paradigm and its connections to concepts of human development, sustainable economic growth and rights-based protections. Subsequently, it delves into the political, environmental and economic drivers intensifying exposure to disasters in the region. This is followed by a consideration of efforts to manage diverse risks and the tensions those efforts can elicit. To conclude the discourse on disaster, risk, marginality and vulnerability, the paper returns to why a grounded and disaggregated human security perspective is important for understanding exposure to disaster-prone territories of risk in contemporary Southeast Asia and advancing appropriate responses to these challenges.

Tracing the background of a normative concept

Human security as a term and concept entered the lexicon of world affairs in the mid-1990s by way of the now much cited UNDP's Human Development Report (1994). A primary observation of the UNDP Report was that nation-states continued to privilege military expenditure over and above the human development and welfare priorities of their populations. To coin the development studies vernacular, this is the "guns -v- butter dilemma." According to ul Haq (1995, p. 116), "human security is not concerned with weapons. It is concerned with human dignity. In the last analysis, it is a child who did not die, a disease that did not spread, an ethnic tension that did not explode, a dissident who was not silenced, a human spirit that was not crushed." As the UNDP Report noted at the time, "the concept of security has for too long been interpreted narrowly: as security of territory from external aggression, or as protection of national interests in foreign policy. . . it has been related to nation-states more than people" (UNDP, 1994, pp. 22–23). This did not mean that traditional state-centric security and military paradigms were moribund, but it did signal a questioning

of their suitability for dealing with the challenges posed by contemporary sources of conflict and insecurity (Kaldor, 1999).

Earlier UN conventions and declarations had prefigured this development of human security as an international norm. From the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights and International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966), the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966) through to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (1979) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), all displayed components of an alternative and expanded view of what security might mean in the world and the different nontraditional vulnerabilities and threats individuals and communities face. Collectively, they established a basis from which to challenge the conventional wisdom of traditional security paradigms for protecting human rights and peace. The links between disarmament, development and enhanced overall security were further reinforced by the Report of the [Palme Commission \(1982\)](#) and the [Thorsson Report \(1981, p. 6\)](#), which concluded “the world can either continue to pursue the arms race with characteristic vigour or move consciously and with deliberate speed toward a more stable and balanced social and economic development. It cannot do both”.

The easing of Cold War hostilities and the collapse of the Soviet Union by 1991 also marked an inflection point for thinking about international security. In 1992, then UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali issued “An Agenda for Peace, Peace-making, and Peace-keeping” that signalled a shift in the UN’s strategy from less containment to more prevention in dealing with conflict (Jolly & Ray, 2006). Given this context, the concept of human security (which is closely linked to concerns about human development) began to develop, especially in the work of Mahbub ul Haq (who had been project director on the widely acclaimed Human Development Report 1990) and renowned development economist Amartya Sen. Those initial articulations emerged on the world stage in 1990 at a high-level North-South Roundtable on the “Economics of Peace” in San Jose, Costa Rica. That meeting built on the 1985 Roundtable in Istanbul on “Development: The Human Dimension” [2]. A strong cast of luminaries were in attendance, including Oscar Arias, Mary Kaldor, Inga Thorsson, Richard Jolly, Robert McNamara, Jim Grant and Maurice Strong. The ensuing report (1990) on proceedings appealed for a redefinition of the concept of security and reductions in military spending, arms transfers, the elimination of chemical weapons and more progress on eliminating nuclear weapons. It called for the dividends from the resultant reductions to be redirected for human development purposes.

What this gradual development of the human security paradigm indicated was a normative attempt to shift the discourse and practice of “security” away from traditional state-centric concerns towards a more comprehensive understanding of nontraditional threats. The shift encompasses a wide array of issues ranging from climate change-induced environmental degradation, displacement and irregular migration to transnational crime, trafficking, sexual, ethnic or youth violence or the consequences of untrammelled resource extraction and urbanisation and the related issues of a lack of access to decent livelihoods, health and education provision, drinkable water and functioning sanitation. The [UNDP \(2005\)](#) demarcated seven generally accepted categories of human security: economic security, food security, health security, environmental security, personal security, community security and political security. These categories are viewed as interdependent, and their collective protection is considered mutually supportive of long-term international security, sustainable development and poverty reduction in the 21st century ([Commission on Human Security, 2003](#)).

Attempting to recast the “security” frames of reference towards protection (“freedom from fear”) and empowerment (“freedom from want”) of individuals and communities within societies is an ambitious if not audacious and daunting endeavour in both policy and practice. Despite its normative appeal, the sheer number of potential issues that a single concept is

trying to cover runs the real risk of being as difficult to focus and prioritise as it is to implement. The sort of meta-level discursive expansion of what security might mean being proposed is clearly ripe for contestation and criticism. For several scholars, the term human security is simply too open-ended and imprecise for practical application. They view it as having limited analytical utility in prioritising and apportioning valuable resources (Paris, 2001; Buzan, 2004; Krause, 2004; Chandler, 2008). As Khong (2001, pp. 231–236) wryly noted, “trying to prioritise everything means nothing is prioritised”. Others have gone further to argue that the adoption of “human security” discourse by certain states has allowed them to mask the entrenchment of elite interests (Chandler and Hynek, 2011). The term is also open to accusations of unalloyed universalism that affords a pretext for politically motivated forms of interventionism. According to Duffield and Waddell (2006, pp. 1–23), rather than give voice to the voiceless, the promulgation of the human security norm often resembles a case of protecting “us over here” from “those over there”.

Evidently, a tension exists between the applicability and transferability of the human security paradigm and the ways it is recognised and understood in local contexts (Carnegie & King, 2020). Nevertheless, placing issues of conceptual and operational contestability aside for a moment, what the introduction of the human security norm into the vocabulary of world affairs did capture was a growing sense of dissatisfaction with state-led responses to the range of schisms and inequities ever more exposed by globalisation’s “downsides” (Stiglitz, 2002; Heine & Thakur, 2011; Standing, 2016). It highlighted that many traditional security concerns and capabilities are simply unsuited for dealing with contemporary sources of 21st century vulnerability, threats and insecurity.

The above conceptual overview traced the development of human security as an international norm and detailed its relevance and limitations for understanding the nontraditional threats and insecurities of the contemporary world. Although encapsulating the full range of disaster scenarios confronting the countries, communities and individuals of Southeast Asia is not possible. Conceptually, human security does provide a point of entry from which to interpret disaster-prone territories of risk in the region. Rather than being applied as a broad catch-all category or neat framework, if it is applied in an adaptable, grounded and disaggregated way, such a perspective can bring insight to the underlying conditions of variable contexts. It can provide a frame of reference for understanding the socially constructed dimensions of localised disasters in the face of untrammelled processes of accumulation, speculation, extraction and indebtedness. The following sections further outline how a grounded and disaggregated human security approach can serve as a vital analytical tool for mapping and interpreting exposure to disaster in Southeast Asia.

Situating human security in Southeast Asia

Various scholars, research institutes and development aid organisations working in and on East and Southeast Asia have supported a human security perspective for identifying the risks and vulnerabilities faced by communities across the region [3]. They rightly point out that while the protection of sovereign borders, dealing with the threat of conflict, promoting development and securing economic interests remain key functions of nation-states, the impact of rapid socioeconomic transformations and wide-spread environmental degradation is exposing the limitations of countries in the region to safeguard the livelihoods and basic amenities of those living on the margins. There is little doubt that the pursuit of large-scale infrastructure initiatives, speculative real estate development (no matter how ill-advised and implemented), unbridled natural resource extraction and the accumulation of significant sovereign debt are having profound impacts for affected communities across the region (Elinoff & Vaughan, 2021; Masina, 2018).

Having said that, locating and mapping how localised disasters play out in such contexts is far from straightforward. They are often messy, confusing and disjunctive. These are not static phenomena, but they interact with situational circumstances that permeate social structures in different ways. Vulnerability, risk and disaster exposure often materialise at the capricious interstices of asymmetrical political, commercial and sociocultural forces and interests (McCarthy, 2010; Endo, 2014; Li, 2014; Campbell, 2018). The scales and dimensions of which permeate and reproduce in largely unseen and debilitating increments in the seas, rivers, forests and fields of Southeast Asia and its many anonymous inlets, corners and alleyways.

For those communities disproportionately exposed to vulnerability and risk of disaster, it is not simply an accidental or natural occurrence. High levels of uncertainty attach to the exercise of everyday routines. They experience inherent trust deficits in a host of political and economic situations, especially when they have to deal with those who exercise power, influence or control over their life chances and circumstances – their safety (Zhao, 2023). Their situations are mediated by an ensemble of material, ideational and discursive practices that order and sustain exposure to vulnerability and insecurity. At the same time, the state-level discourses on remarkable economic growth and wealth generation tend to captivate and divert attention away from those issues of socioeconomic disadvantage and vulnerability (Carnegie, King, & Ibrahim, 2016).

For example, if we consider the travails of small-scale agrarian and fishing communities across the region, it becomes apparent that the spatial appropriation and degradation of habitats combined with the steady erosion of prior relations of trust, reciprocity and support that ordered daily life are harbingers of disaster exposure. Displacement, habitat loss and declining levels of mutual cooperation mean heightened uncertainty for everyday livelihoods and ways of getting by (Borras and Franco (2011), O'Neill (2014) and Dong and Jun (2018)). This means that communities become more susceptible to the imperatives and fluctuations of global capital forces and commercial interests. In the face of such pressures, local distrust and resistance towards certain policies and actions (due to the adverse impact they have on at-risk communities) is heightened. However, their local struggles to endure and thrive invariably run counter to state-business infrastructural and resource extraction agendas (Alff & Spies, 2023).

To elaborate, investments in coastal tourism, coastal roads, ports, special economic zones and high-end real estate have mushroomed across the region (Nyíri & Tan, 2016; Padawangi, 2019b). The overwhelming state-level economic discourse is that such developments generate improved income and work opportunities for disrupted livelihoods of subsistence coastal communities. Yet it is questionable whether this well-worn trickle-down assertion holds up to scrutiny anymore. The proliferation of unfettered infrastructural projects and extractive activities, “territorialise risk” as a technology of rule, not as a matter of objective risk assessment. The aim is to control people, space and resources and to legitimate certain decisions and actions (Rebotier, 2012). Those decisions not infrequently signal a surreptitious displacement of non-integrated indigenous or marginalised communities (Wyn, 2013; HRN, 2016; Li & Semedi, 2021). Ample evidence exists to suggest that such large-scale developments invariably reproduce entrenched iniquity (Tappe & Rowedder, 2022; Nooteboom, 2016; Padawangi, 2019a). Contrary to promises and expectations, the reorientations and displacements wrought by coastal tourism developments, large-scale aquaculture projects, sprawling concrete esplanades, seawalls and port expansions or fenced export processing zones can amplify the insecurity of vulnerable coastal inhabitants to the direct threat posed by typhoons or storm surges (Fabinyi, 2010; Calvan, 2015; Sovacool *et al.*, 2018). The vulnerabilities and risk faced by disadvantaged and marginalised coastal dwellers are not “fixed” by the latter types of “development” instead, their lives are “being subtly and overtly squeezed for geographic,

political and economic space by larger-scale economic and environmental conservation interests” (Cohen *et al.*, 2019, p. 171).

In fact, the work of several scholars already highlights the tendency of “disaster capitalism” in post-calamity relocation and reconstruction developments to consign affected populations to further disruption and jeopardy (Klein, 2008; Adams, 2012; Iuchi & Maly, 2016; Yee, 2017). Generic forms of disaster mitigation (from risk reduction initiatives to climate adaptation schemes) have the potential to exacerbate pre-existing issues of land tenure and livelihood insecurity rather than address them for many marginalised and disadvantaged communities (Sovacool *et al.*, 2018; Iftekhhar, Pal, & Chonlasin, 2023).

The claims of national interest and development used to justify state-business-capital driven policies and agendas (linked closely to commercial activities and vested interest) usually end up eclipsing objections from local communities about proposed infrastructural plans, plantation licences or resource extraction activities (McCarthy, 2010; Huesca, 2016; Law, Norhasmah, Gan, Siti Nur’Asyura, & Mohd, 2018). It is the situational risk and vulnerability to disaster of local communities that is exacerbated by the deleterious consequences of such encroachments. From experience, this passes almost unacknowledged relative to the circumstances it conditions.

Conducting human security research in Southeast Asia

Evidently, the layers of vulnerability, iniquity and disadvantage at-risk communities face in the region are not easily resolved. Their concerns are regularly disciplined, silenced and trivialised by selective state-business-capital driven discourses and policies designed to advance preexisting interests and agendas (Nixon, 2010). As mentioned, if states in the region fail to take on board the intricate relationship of politics, commercial interests and development activities with marginalisation and disadvantage in exposure to hazards, then the likelihood is the perpetuation of rather contextless and standardized approaches to disaster response, mitigation and management. The scale of the threats to livelihood and habitat security, especially in the face of development displacement, land grabbing and resource extraction disputes, will linger.

As social scientists, there is a responsibility to ensure that the way we think about and conceptualise our analysis is capable of keeping pace with the region’s rapidly changing circumstances. There is a state-level tendency to focus on the immediate triggers and consequences of short-term crises. It is important to recognise a range of forces, interests and transformations mediating the frequency, exposure to and impact of disaster. An analytical lacuna appears for researchers and practitioners if the link between interests and forces conditioning the perceptual dimensions of vulnerability and insecurity and its political framing is not made or lacks purchase (Carnegie & King, 2020).

Encouragingly, a body of work is emerging that seeks to map the structural forces and politico-business power dynamics shaping people’s exposure to and understandings of vulnerability and insecurity in Southeast Asia [4]. Based on grounded and disaggregated fieldwork methods, several scholars have drawn attention to the complex intersections between policy and practice on matters such as license issuance, employment relations, migration patterns and the normalisation of certain commercial activities in the social production of disaster exposure. They have also foregrounded the role enforcement officers, employment agents and migration brokers play in the interlinked conditions of vulnerability and insecurity for different communities. By taking individual and community narratives about disasters seriously and allowing them to speak (and the agency and tactics employed to deal with those circumstances), this type of work brings the links between micro-subjective experience and wider state-business relations, interest and practice into view.

Whether it is Penan or Kenyah in Sarawak, sea-mobile but undocumented Sama-Bajau and Moro Filipinos in Sabah or displaced Karen on the Thai-Myanmar border, shifting cultivators in the southern Philippines, Phnong and Brao on the Sesan in Northeast Cambodia or informal coastal dwellers, migrants who traverse borders or street kids in Jakarta, Bangkok and Manila, there are moments when they are articulating not only their own experiences but also problems faced elsewhere. When individuals and communities are given voice, they can provide telling insight on the internalisation of insecurity embedded in daily lives and the relational character of their exposure to contemporary disasters.

By placing the links between disaster, risk, vulnerability, marginality and disadvantage in relation to one another, a grounded and disaggregated human security perspective can underpin collective endeavours for smarter, more adaptive, problem-specific and, more importantly, accepted solutions to disaster response, mitigation and management. Where possible, official state-led management of and responses to disasters need to “work with the grain” rather than simply impose solutions from elsewhere with no adjustment for changes in context. If they are to have more benefit for “recipient” communities, greater utility lies in ensuring mitigation initiatives and responses are contextually appropriate with greater local input and ownership.

Conclusion

The security and development of the nation-state on the one hand and how individuals and communities deal with situational vulnerability and insecurity in a world of environmental degradation, transboundary development investments and unprecedented infrastructural and extractive activities on the other are deeply contradictory matters in ASEAN affairs. They also remain vexing travails for social science researchers.

This paper proposed a human security perspective based on grounded and disaggregated methods of study as a way to interpret and comprehend more fully the disaster-prone territories of risk in contemporary Southeast Asia. The significance of which is to render visible obscured yet interrelated processes that underpin vulnerability and insecurity. By calling for a refocus on local disaster settings and detailed community study of the complex interplays between power, politics, interests and mistrust, the paper aimed to foreground the importance of thinking through the need for more context-sensitive and adaptive forms of disaster mitigation, management and response.

Distinct communities may have different histories and face varying socioeconomic, political and cultural realities, but they can also convey shared messages. Placing emphasis on grounded observations of lived experience across contemporary Southeast Asia through a human security lens serves as a way to decode how the forces of nation-state building, political-business linkages, transnational commercial development interests and climate-induced disruptions articulate through complex processes to configure the social construction of disaster exposure. Whether it is examining the experiences of marginalized subsistence fishermen, upland farmers, insecure migrants or displaced communities due to environmental degradation, land-grabbing or flood inundation, not to mention COVID-19, their micro-subjective realities are intertwined with broader political-economic policies and agendas.

The human development and rights of these individuals and communities (and the habitats they occupy) to protection, support and the opportunity to lead their daily lives in safety are often given a low priority. Without appropriate action, the overarching forms of marginality, disadvantage and vulnerability they suffer will bring the looming threats of water, food and health insecurity into stark relief. Devising meaningful strategies that effectively protect the well-being, livelihoods, habitats and rights of individuals and communities across Southeast Asia from evolving risks and disasters is the priority.

Notes

1. Declaration of the Bali Concord II (ASEAN Concord II) at the 9th ASEAN Summit, Bali, October 2003 affirmed ASEAN's commitment to create "a people oriented" ASEAN Community (AC) based on 3 pillars, namely ASEAN Security Community (ASC), ASEAN Economic Community (AEC), and ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC). In 2008, at the 13th ASEAN Summit, ASC was renamed ASEAN Political-Security Community (APSC). The blueprint for APSC tasks it with addressing transnational crimes, promoting human rights and conducting post-conflict peace-building (ASEAN Secretariat, 2009a, pp. 5–13).
2. Founded by Barbara Ward under the auspices of the Society for International Development, the North-South Roundtable held its inaugural meeting in Rome in 1978 with a remit to pioneer understanding and ideas for dealing with global dilemmas. See Jolly and Ray (2006).
3. For a selection of relevant scholarship, see Acharya (2001), Nishikawa (2010), Howe (2013), Caballero-Anthony and Cook (2013), Endres and Six-Hohenbalken (2014), Carnegie *et al.* (2016), Caballero-Anthony (2018), Mine *et al.* (2019) and Hernandez *et al.* (2019).
4. For a selection of relevant scholarship, see Ofreño (2013), Hewison and Kalleberg (2013), Baird (2016), van Voorst (2016), Nooteboom (2016), Allerton (2014, 2017), Uson (2017), Yee (2017), Campbell (2018), Masina (2018), Rosario and Rigg (2019), Griffiths (2019), Kusakabe and Aye (2019), Padawangi (2019a, b), Alejandria and Smith (2019), Elinoff and Vaughan (2021), Carnegie *et al.* (2021) and Li and Semedi (2021).

References

- Acharya, A. (2001). Human security: East versus West. *International Journal: Canada's Journal of Global Policy Analysis*, 56(3), 442–460.
- Adams, V. (2012). The other road to serfdom: Recovery by the market and the affect economy in New Orleans. *Public Culture*, 24(1), 185–216. doi: [10.1215/08992363-1443601](https://doi.org/10.1215/08992363-1443601).
- Alff, H., & Spies, M. (2023). Coexistence or competition for resources? Transboundary transformations of natural resource use in China's neighborhood. *Eurasian Geography and Economics*, 64(7-8), 1–14. doi: [10.1080/15387216.2023.2258150](https://doi.org/10.1080/15387216.2023.2258150).
- Alejandria, M. C., & Smith, W. (Eds), (2019). *Disaster archipelago: Locating vulnerability and resilience in the Philippines*. Lexington Books.
- Allerton, C. (2014). Statelessness and the lives of the children of migrants in Sabah, East Malaysia. *Tilburg Law Review*, 19(1-2), 26–34. doi: [10.1163/22112596-01902004](https://doi.org/10.1163/22112596-01902004).
- Allerton, C. (2017). Impossible children: Illegality and excluded belonging among children of migrants in Sabah, East Malaysia. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 44(7), 1–17. doi: [10.1080/1369183x.2017.1357464](https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183x.2017.1357464).
- ASEAN Secretariat (2009a). *ASEAN political-security community blueprint*. Jakarta: ASEAN Secretariat.
- Baird, I. G. (2016). Non-government organizations, villagers, political culture and the lower Sesan 2 Dam in Northeastern Cambodia. *Critical Asian Studies*, 48(3), 257–277. doi: [10.1080/14672715.2016.1157958](https://doi.org/10.1080/14672715.2016.1157958).
- Borras, S. M., & Franco, J. C. (2011). *Political dynamics of land grabbing in Southeast Asia: Understanding Europe's role*. Amsterdam: Transnational Institute.
- Buzan, B. (2004). A reductionist, idealistic notion that adds little analytical value. *Security Dialogue*, 35(3), 369–370. doi: [10.1177/096701060403500326](https://doi.org/10.1177/096701060403500326).
- Caballero-Anthony, M. (2018). *Negotiating governance on non-traditional security in Southeast Asia and beyond*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Caballero-Anthony, M., & Cook, A. D. B. (2013). *Non-traditional security in Asia: Issues, challenges and framework for action*. Singapore: ISEAS.

- Calvan, D. (2015). Land, property and tenurial rights in a changing coastal environment. Land Watch Asia. Asian NGO Coalition for Agrarian Reform and Rural Development. Available from: <https://landportal.org/fr/library/resources/land-property-and-tenurial-rights-changing-coastal-environment> (accessed 2 April 2020).
- Campbell, S. (2018). *Border capitalism, disrupted: Precarity and struggle in a Southeast Asian industrial zone*. New York: Cornell University Press.
- Carnegie, P. J., & King, V. T. (2020). Mapping circumstances in Oceania: Reconsidering human security in an age of globalisation. In S. Amin, D. Watson, & C. Girard (Eds.), *Mapping Security in the Pacific* (pp. 15–29). New York: Routledge.
- Carnegie, P. J., King, V. T., & Ibrahim, Z. (Eds) (2016). *Human insecurities in Southeast Asia*. Singapore: UBD-Institute of Asian Studies and Springer.
- Carnegie, P. J., King, V. T., & Knudsen, M. (2021). Human security, marginality, and precariousness in Southeast Asia. *International Journal of Asia Pacific Studies*, 17(1), 1–28. doi: [10.21315/ijaps2021.17.1.1](https://doi.org/10.21315/ijaps2021.17.1.1).
- Chandler, D. (2008). Human security: The dog that didn't bark. *Security Dialogue*, 39(4), 427–439.
- Chandler, D., & Hynek, N. (Eds) (2011). *Critical perspectives on human security*. PRIO New Security Studies. London: Routledge.
- Cohen, P. J., Allison, E. H., Andrew, N. L., Cinner, J., Evans, L. S., Fabinyi, M., . . . Ratner, B. D. (2019). Securing a just space for small-scale fisheries in the blue economy. *Frontiers in Marine Science*, 6. doi: [10.3389/fmars.2019.00171](https://doi.org/10.3389/fmars.2019.00171).
- Commission on Human Security (2003). *Human security now*. Washington, DC: Communications Development Incorporated.
- Dong, M., & Jun, H. (2018). Linking the past to the future: A reality check on cross-border timber trade from Myanmar (Burma) to China. *Forest Policy and Economics*, 87, 11–19. doi: [10.1016/j.forpol.2017.11.002](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.forpol.2017.11.002).
- Duffield, M., & Waddell, N. (2006). Securing humans in a dangerous world. *International Politics*, 43(1), 1–23. doi: [10.1057/palgrave.ip.8800129](https://doi.org/10.1057/palgrave.ip.8800129).
- Elinoff, E., & Vaughan, T. (Eds), (2021). *Disastrous times: Beyond environmental crisis in urbanizing Asia*. University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Endo, T. (2014). *Living with risk: Precarity and Bangkok's urban poor*. Kyoto: Kyoto University Press.
- Endres, K. W., & Six-Hohenbalken, M. (2014). Introduction to risks, rupture and uncertainties: Dealing with crisis in Asia's emerging economies. *Cambridge Anthropology*, 32(2), 42–48. doi: [10.3167/ca.2014.320205](https://doi.org/10.3167/ca.2014.320205).
- Fabinyi, M. (2010). The intensification of fishing and the rise of tourism: Competing coastal livelihoods in the Calamianes Islands, Philippines. *Human Ecology*, 38(3), 415–427. doi: [10.1007/s10745-010-9329-z](https://doi.org/10.1007/s10745-010-9329-z).
- Gaillard, J. C. (2022). *The invention of disaster power and knowledge in discourses on hazard and vulnerability*. New York: Routledge.
- Griffiths, M. (2019). Networks of reciprocity: Precarity and community social organisations in rural Myanmar. *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, 48(4), 602–625.
- Heine, J., & Thakur, R. (Eds), (2011). *The dark side of globalization*. New York: United Nations University Press.
- Hernandez, C. G., Kim, E. M., Mine, Y., & Xiao, R. (Eds), (2019). *Human security and cross-border cooperation in East Asia*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Hewison, K., & Kalleberg, A. (2013). Precarious work and flexibilization in South and Southeast Asia. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 57(4), 395–402. doi: [10.1177/0002764212466235](https://doi.org/10.1177/0002764212466235).
- Hijioka, Y., Lasco, R., Surjan, A., & Pereira, J. (2014). Climate change 2014: Impacts, adaptation, and vulnerability. Part B: Regional aspects, Asia. In *Contribution of Working Group II to the Fifth*

- Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change* (pp. 1327–1370). Cambridge University.
- Howe, B. (2013). *The protection and promotion of human security in East Asia*. Basingstoke: Palgrave.
- Huesca, E. F. (2016). Plantation economy, indigenous people and precariousness in the Philippine uplands: The Mindanao experience. In P. J. Carnegie, V. T. King, & Z. Ibrahim (Eds.), *Human Insecurities in Southeast Asia, 173-192, Asia in Transition Series*. Singapore: Springer.
- Human Rights Now (2016). *Sarawak, Malaysia. Infringement of the rights of indigenous people by continuous illegal logging practices*. Tokyo: Human Rights Now.
- Iftekhar, A., Pal, I., & Chonlasin, V. (2023). Complexities of post-disaster recovery: An example from Thailand. *Asian Currents*, Asian Studies Association of Australian.
- Iuchi, K. & Maly, E. (2016). Residential relocation processes in coastal areas: Tacloban city after Typhoon Yolanda. In Sapat, A. and Esnard, A-M. (Eds.), *Coming Home after Disaster: Multiple Dimensions of Housing Recovery* (pp. 209–226). London and New York: Routledge.
- Jolly, R., & Ray, D. B. (2006). The human security framework and national human development reports: A review of experiences and current debates. In *National Human Development Report Series*. New York: United Nations Development Programme.
- Kaldor, M. (1999). *New and old wars: Organized violence in a global era*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Kelman, I. (Ed.), (2019). Disaster definitions. Version 4, 17 June 2019. Available from: <https://www.ilankelman.org/miscellany/DisasterDefinitions.doc> (accessed 16 May 2024).
- Kelman, I. (2020). *Disaster by choice: How our actions turn natural hazards into catastrophes*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Khong, Y. F. (2001). Human security: A shotgun approach to alleviating human misery? *Global Governance*, 7(3), 231–236.
- Klein, N. (2008). *The shock doctrine: The rise of disaster capitalism*. London: Allen Lane.
- Krause, K. (2004). The key to a powerful agenda, if properly defined. *Security Dialogue*, 35(3), 367–368.
- Kusakabe, K., & Aye, C. M. (2019). Precarity and vulnerability: Rubber plantations in Northern Laos and Northern Shan state, Myanmar. *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, 48(4), 586–601. doi: [10.1080/00472336.2018.1554161](https://doi.org/10.1080/00472336.2018.1554161).
- Law, L. S., Norhasmah, S., Gan, W. Y., Siti Nur'Asyura, A., & Mohd, N. M. T. (2018). The identification of the factors related to household food insecurity among indigenous people (Orang Asli) in Peninsular Malaysia under traditional food systems. *Nutrients*, 10(10), 141–154. doi: [10.3390/nu10101455](https://doi.org/10.3390/nu10101455).
- Li, T. M. (2014). *Land's end. Capitalist relations on an indigenous frontier*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Li, T. M., & Semedi, P. (2021). *Plantation life: Corporate occupation in Indonesia's oil palm zone*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Lizarralde, G. (2021). *Unnatural disasters: Why most responses to risk and climate change fail but some succeed*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Masina, P. P. (2018). An uneven development trap in Southeast Asia and its implications for labour. In S. Vignato, & M. C. Alcano (Eds.), *Searching for Work: Small-Scale Mobility and Unskilled Labor in Southeast Asia* (pp. 251–279). Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books.
- McCarthy, J. (2010). Processes of inclusion and adverse incorporation: Oil palm and agrarian change in Sumatra, Indonesia. *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 37(4), 821–850. doi: [10.1080/03066150.2010.512460](https://doi.org/10.1080/03066150.2010.512460).
- Mine, Y., Gómez, O. A., & Muto, M. (Eds), (2019). *Human security norms in East Asia*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Nishikawa, Y. (2010). *Human security in Southeast Asia*. London: Routledge.
- Nixon, R. (2010). Unimagined communities: Developmental refugees, megadams and monumental modernity. *New Formations*, 69, 62–80. doi: [10.3898/newf.69.03.2010](https://doi.org/10.3898/newf.69.03.2010).

- Nooteboom, G. (2016). *Forgotten people: Poverty, risk and social security in Indonesia*. Leiden: Brill.
- Nyíri, P., & Tan, D. (2016). *Chinese encounters in Southeast Asia: How people, money, and ideas from China are changing a region*. Seattle: Washington University Press.
- Ofreneo, R. (2013). Precarious Philippines: Expanding informal sector, 'flexibilizing' labor market. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 57(4), 420–443. doi: [10.1177/0002764212466237](https://doi.org/10.1177/0002764212466237).
- O'Neill, D. (2014). Playing risk: Chinese foreign direct investment in Cambodia. *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, 36(2), 173–205. doi: [10.1355/cs36-2a](https://doi.org/10.1355/cs36-2a).
- Padawangi, R. (2019b). Forced evictions, spatial (Un)certainities and the making of exemplary centres in Indonesia. *Asia-Pacific Viewpoint*, 60(1), 65–79. doi: [10.1111/apv.12213](https://doi.org/10.1111/apv.12213).
- Padawangi, R. (2019a). Urban development, vulnerabilities, and disasters in Indonesia's coastal land reclamations: Does social justice matter?. In L. R. Mason, & J. Rigg (Eds), *People and Climate Change: Vulnerability, Adaptation, and Social Justice* (pp. 122–146). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Palme Commission (1982). Report of the independent commission on disarmament and security issues (under the chairmanship of Olof Palme). in *Common Security: A Programme for Disarmament*, London: Pan Books.
- Paris, R. (2001). Human security: Paradigm shift or hot air?. *International Security*, 26(2), 87–102. doi: [10.1162/016228801753191141](https://doi.org/10.1162/016228801753191141).
- Prakash, A. (2018). Boiling point. *Finance and Development*, 55(3), 22–26. doi: [10.5089/9781484343739.022](https://doi.org/10.5089/9781484343739.022).
- Quarantelli, E. L., & Dynes, R. R. (1977). Response to social crisis and disaster. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 3(1), 23–49. doi: [10.1146/annurev.so.03.080177.000323](https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.so.03.080177.000323).
- Rebotier, J. (2012). Vulnerability conditions and risk representations in Latin-America: Framing the territorializing urban risk. *Global Environmental Change*, 22(2), 391–398. doi: [10.1016/j.gloenvcha.2011.12.002](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.gloenvcha.2011.12.002).
- Remes, J. A. C., & Horowitz, A. (Eds), (2021). *Critical disaster studies*. University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Rosario, T. C., & Rigg, J. (2019). Living in an age of precarity in 21st century Asia. *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, 49(4), 517–527. doi: [10.1080/00472336.2019.1581832](https://doi.org/10.1080/00472336.2019.1581832).
- Smith, K. (2013). *Environmental hazards: Assessing risk and reducing disaster*. London: Routledge.
- Sovacool, B. K., Tan-Mullins, M., & Abrahamse, W. (2018). Bloated bodies and broken bricks: Power, ecology, and inequality in the political economy of natural disaster recovery. *World Development*, 110, 243–255.
- Standing, G. (2016). *The corruption of capitalism: Why rentiers thrive and work does not pay*. London: Biteback Publishing.
- Stiglitz, J. (2002). *Globalization and its discontents*. New York: Norton.
- Tappe, O., & Rowedder, S. (Eds), (2022). *Extracting development: Contested resource frontiers in Mainland Southeast Asia*. Singapore: ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute.
- Thorsson Report (1981). *Study on the relationship between disarmament and development*. Report of the UN Secretary General, New York.
- ul Haq, M. (1995). *Reflections on human development*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- UNDP (1994). *Human development report 1994*. United Nations Development Programme. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- UNDP (2005). *Human development report 2005: International cooperation at a crossroads*. New York: United Nations Development Programme.
- United Nations. (2009). *UNISDR terminology on disaster risk reduction*. New York: United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction.
- United Nations (2019). *World population prospects 2019: Highlights*. New York: Department of Economic and Social Affairs.

- Uson, M. A. M. (2017). Natural Disasters and Land Grabs: The politics of their intersection in the Philippines following super typhoon Haiyan. *Canadian Journal of Development Studies*, 38(3), 414–430. doi: [10.1080/02255189.2017.1308316](https://doi.org/10.1080/02255189.2017.1308316).
- van Voorst, R. (2016). *Natural hazards, risk and vulnerability: Floods and slum life in Indonesia*. New York: Routledge.
- Watson, S., & Moran, A. (Eds), (2005). *Trust, risk and uncertainty*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Wyn, L. T. (2013). *Malaysia: Illegalities in forest clearance for large-scale commercial plantations*. Washington, DC: Forest Trends (pp. 1-42).
- Yee, D. K. P. (2017). Constructing reconstruction, territorializing risk: Imposing ‘no-build zones’ in post-disaster reconstruction in Tacloban city, Philippines. *Critical Asian Studies*, 50(1), 103–121. doi: [10.1080/14672715.2017.1407663](https://doi.org/10.1080/14672715.2017.1407663).
- Zhao, K. (2023). Precarity among transient migrants: Mainland Chinese workers in Brunei Darussalam during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Asian and Pacific Migration Journal*, 32(3), 498–520. doi: [10.1177/01171968231209857](https://doi.org/10.1177/01171968231209857).
- Zinn, J. O. (Ed.), (2008). *Social theories of risk and uncertainty: An introduction*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.

Further reading

- ASEAN Secretariat (2009b). *ASEAN socio-cultural community blueprint*. Jakarta: ASEAN Secretariat.
- Bauman, Z. (2006). *Liquid times: Living in an age of uncertainty*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Beck, U. (1992). *Risk society: Towards a new modernity*. London: Sage Publications.
- Bhide, A., & Stevenson, H. (1992). Trust, uncertainty and profit. *The Journal of Socio-Economics*, 21(3), 191–208. doi: [10.1016/1053-5357\(92\)90009-v](https://doi.org/10.1016/1053-5357(92)90009-v).
- Caballero-Anthony, M. (2004). Re-visioning human security in Southeast Asia. *Asian Perspective*, 28(3), 155–189. doi: [10.1353/apr.2004.0017](https://doi.org/10.1353/apr.2004.0017).
- Endicott, K., & Dentan, R. K. (2004). Into the mainstream or into the backwater? Malaysian assimilation of orang asli. In C. R. Duncan (Ed.), *Civilizing the Margins. Southeast Asian Government Policies for the Development of Minorities* (pp. 24–55). Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press.
- Giddens, A. (1990). *The consequences of modernity*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Harvey, D. (2006). Neo-liberalism as creative destruction. In *Geografiska Annaler. Series B, Human Geography*, 88(2), 145–158. doi: [10.1111/j.0435-3684.2006.00211.x](https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0435-3684.2006.00211.x).
- King, V. T., & Carnegie, P. J. (2018). Towards a social science understanding of human security. *Journal of Human Security Studies*, 7(1), 1–17.
- Paris, R. (2004). Still an inscrutable concept. *Security Dialogue*, 35(3), 370–372. doi: [10.1177/096701060403500327](https://doi.org/10.1177/096701060403500327).
- Roberts, D. (2007). *Human insecurity: Global structures of violence*. London: Zed Books.
- Roughneen, S. (2017). *Southeast Asia is world's hotspot for land disputes*. Tokyo: Nikkei Asian Review.
- Standing, G. (2011). *The precariat: The new dangerous class*. London: Bloomsbury Academic.
- Straumann, L. (2014). *Money logging: On the trail of the Asian timber Mafia*. Basel: Bergli Books.

Corresponding author

Paul J. Carnegie can be contacted at: paul.carnegie@ubd.edu.bn

For instructions on how to order reprints of this article, please visit our website:

www.emeraldgrouppublishing.com/licensing/reprints.htm

Or contact us for further details: permissions@emeraldinsight.com