Securitizing Poverty: the Role of NGOs in the Protection of Human Security in Indonesia

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Security and Securitization

In the past few years, security concept has become increasingly expanded in its referent object, core values and type of threats. Among scholars, Richard Ullman was the first to advocate an extension of security concept to include a wide range of issues from natural disasters and diseases to environmental degradation. Such advocacy was prominent with the end of Cold War that led to the decline of military threats, while other threats to human being (poverty, diseases, natural disaster, environmental degradation, and so on) have seemed to increase in the past few decades. This extension has nevertheless turned security into a sharply contested concept in the study of International Relations.

On the one hand, defending the “traditionalist” view of security, scholars such as Stephen Walt and Patrick Morgan argue that the state should remain the only referent of security because they believe that security should only deal with deliberate threats (primarily of a military nature) to the physical security of the nation-state. Moreover, with regard to the scope of security concept, they believe that security should be limited to the international level, that is, rivalries between states. On the other hand, moving beyond this traditionalist approach, Ken Booth, Simon Dalby and Barry Buzan argue that the referent of security should be people or human collectivities instead of the state. They view security as encompassing all issues – both at the domestic and international levels – that affect the emancipation or interest of the people. Therefore, security issues should not be limited to the deliberate threats to the state.

While Walt and Morgan confined security to strategic-military issues as they argue that the major threat to security and the principal means to achieve it is through the use military force, Booth, Dalby and Buzan would go beyond military threat to encompass a wide range of threats and dangers affecting the condition of human existence. The security of human collectivities, Buzan argued, does not only include the question of survival, but also a range of conditions of existence which is affected by military, political, economic, societal and environmental factors. This debate seems to illustrate that security concept has become sharply contested especially between the traditional realists who regard the state as the primary – if not the only – actor of international

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relations against the pluralists who think the state as one of many different actors in international relations which include transnational corporations, NGOs, civil and society organizations.

When the definition of security is extended beyond its traditional common sense, one begins to think of the idea of securitization. Buzan, et al. defined securitization as “the move that takes politics beyond the established rules of the game and frames the issue either as a special kind of politics or above politics”. In conceptual term, securitization can be perceived as the classification of and consensus about a non-traditional framework of understanding of security concept that moves beyond the state and beyond military threats. In this context, securitization can be seen as an extreme politicization of particular issues where government decision, public policy and resource allocation are urgently needed.

As a process, securitization involves three types of units that make a particular issue securitized. First, referent objects: things that are seen to be existentially threatened and that have a legitimate claim to survival. The securitization of the environment, for example, will bring into play both the environment and civilization as the referent objects because they are considered to be facing a constant threat of degradation and scarcity. Second, securitizing actors: those who securitize issues by declaring something - a referent object - existentially threatened. In the case of the securitization of the environment, the securitizing actors could be the state (in the case of some Scandinavian countries and Australia), international and local environmental NGOs, UN agencies, and individuals (environmental activists). The securitizing actors are not necessarily the referent objects for security because they do not speak or act to defend their own survival. In many cases, these actors speak and act to defend the security of the state, nation, civilization in general, or some other larger community, principle or system. Third, speech act: idioms and jargons used by the securitizing actors in addressing the existential threat faced by a referent object to a target audience. The speech act is used not only to put emphasis on the emergency situation, but also to demand actions outside the conventional bounds of norms. In the case of the environment, securitizing actors may declare the substantial damage of our environment that has significantly threatened our civilization.

A particular issue is “securitized” when it is presented by the securitizing actor(s) to a particular audience as an existential threat, requiring emergency measures and justifying actions outside the normal bounds of political procedure. According to the Copenhagen School, whether or not an issue has been successfully securitized depends at least on three factors. First, an issue is securitized if the target audience and/or the referent objects accept the presence of an existential threat. If no sign of such acceptance exists, it is likely that we are simply talking about a “securitizing move”. Second, securitization of a particular issue is not fulfilled only by breaking rules nor solely by presenting the existential threat, but by cases of existential threats to the referent objects that legitimize the breaking of rules. Third, a particular issue can only be securitized if the securitizing actor (political leaders, state agencies, governments, lobbyists, pressure groups, NGOs, and so on) performs the security speech act that addresses the emergency situation.

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5 Ibid. pp.25-6.
The Copenhagen School proposed five extended categories of security (military, environmental, economic, societal, and political security). This has enabled them to bring together traditional as well as non-traditional security issues. However, there are those who are cynical to the extension of security concept. Benjamin Miller, for example, argued that the expanded view of security has at least four substantive and methodological flaws which include overstatement of realities outside the state, poor analytic utility and explanatory value, lack of distinction between guns and butter, and confusion between liberal-idealist advocacy and empirical analysis. While the debates are far from being settled, there has been a growing demand among scholars as well as policy makers of the need to put more attention on the security of individuals or communities from economic, social and environmental threats.

It is in this context the concept of human security comes into our attention. While traditionalist security studies and international relations scholars remain skeptical about the idea of human security, arguing that it is too vague and broad a concept to be useful either analytically or practically, decision makers increasingly recognize the importance of human security as a policy framework. They believe that the advancement of the concept of human security can generate more attention to all problems against humanity which include internal violence, repression, human rights abuses, the large scale displacement of civilian population, drugs and arms trafficking, extreme poverty, the AIDS pandemic, food scarcity, and environmental disasters.

The specific phrase “human security” is most commonly associated with the 1994 UNDP Human Development Report, an attempt to capture the post-Cold War peace dividend and redirect those resources towards the development agenda. The definition advanced in the report was rather ambitious. Human security was defined as the summation of seven distinct dimensions of security which include: (1) economic security (the threats to which include unemployment, insecure jobs, income inequalities, poverty, homelessness); (2) food security (inadequacies in terms of food availabilities and food entitlements), (3) health security (infectious and parasitic diseases, new viruses, respiratory infections, and so on); (4) environmental security (degradation of air, water, soil, and forests); (5) personal security (discrimination, exploitation, crimes, terrorism, and so on); (6) community security (ethnic and communal conflicts); and (7) political security (violation of human rights). Meanwhile, the government of Canada adopted a more or less similar approach by defining human security as safety for people from both violent and non-violent threats. It is a condition or state of being characterized by freedom from pervasive threats to people’s rights, their safety, or ever their lives. Although these definitions have been criticized for being “too ambitious”, they have nonetheless provided us with some clues with regard to the growing concern on the need to provide maximum protection to human collectivities. What has been indicated in those definitions is relevant to our discussion about poverty as a security matter.

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Although the primary referent of human security is the individual, the proponents of this new approach do not discount the importance of the state. With regard to the question of who is the principal provider of human security, it is often argued that the state bears the main responsibility to guarantee the security of its citizens. There are at least three explanations on why the state should take full responsibility in providing human security. First, the fact that state security and individual security are interrelated. Kanti Bajpai argued in his paper that the security of the individual depends amongst other things on the security of the state. If the state failed to maintain a minimum security, the security of all individuals within its boundaries is also threatened. Second, the attainment of human security for many different human collectivities covering the whole citizens will require a governance with the capacity to produce coherent policies in sectors such as employment, education, health, social security, and so on. Third, the fact that human security enters into the category of public goods. Because public goods tend to be under-produced, it is therefore the state’s principal obligation to ensure that every individual receive them.

However, there are situations in which the state has failed to carry out its main duty to provide security to the people. Financial limitation, bureaucratic deadlock, weak governance, and ongoing political instability are factors that may reduce the state’s capacity to provide human security to its citizens. This situation has allowed agencies outside the state (church-related organizations, NGOs, and so on) to play crucial roles in launching their appeal to remove threats against human security (poverty, population displacement, discrimination, environmental degradation, human rights abuse, and so forth). Strongly believed in the power of humanitarian activism, these organizations are ready to supplement (or in an extreme case to take over) the state’s principal duty to ensure security of its citizens. Some sectors, which receive too little attention from the state, have indeed provided an ample opportunity for securitization. In many developing countries encountering financial crisis, where the state have failed to tackle problems of impoverishment, unemployment, the decline of living standards, and so on, the issue of poverty is likely to be securitized by agents outside the state circles. In many cases, poverty-alleviation NGOs raise the issue of poverty to the public as they believe that the impoverished people may not be able to maintain their survival as they are constantly exposed to scarcity, shortage and destitution. In terms of security, the speech act used by these organizations often centered around the state’s neglect in protecting the deprived.

Securitizing Poverty

Poverty is a multidimensional concept. When one speaks about poverty it may include the economic, social, political, physical conditions and psychological aspects of human being. Poverty is routinely defined as the lack of what is necessary for material well-being - especially food, housing, land and other assets. However, later definitions also

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12 “Public goods” are defined as goods that can be consumed by all actors or from which no actor can be excluded and whose cost is not increased by the addition of more consumers. See Fen Osler Hampson and Mark W. Zacher. Human Security and International Collaboration: Some Lessons from Public Goods Theory. Paper for Commission on Human Security, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA, January 2003.
reveal other aspects of poverty. More and more people believe that poor people are acutely aware of their lack of voice, power, and independence that subject them to exploitation and manipulation. For example, a poor elderly man in Uganda said (as quoted by a World Bank report): “The forces of poverty and impoverishment are so powerful today. Governments or the big churches can only manage them. So we now feel somewhat helpless. It is this feeling of being helpless that is so painful, more than poverty itself”.13

In other countries, poor men and women speak about the shame, stigma and humiliation of poverty. Being poor can expose one to ridicule. In Latvia, for example, poor people felt humiliated by what they perceived as a pressure to beg for help and to put up with rude, contemptuous and moralistic behavior on the part of social assistance office staff. Meanwhile, in Armenia and Georgia parents talked about children’s psychological trauma of wearing old clothes and being so ashamed that they refused to go to school.14 All in all, in explaining poverty poor men and women often express a sense of hopelessness, powerlessness, humiliation and marginalization.

In Asia, the economic crisis that hit most part of the region in the late 1990s had made the lives of millions of the underprivileged more vulnerable. Because the state’s capacity to provide necessary assistance in the forms of price subsidies, discounted health care, and so on was in a serious decline, more and more people became exposed to extreme poverty. Robert Chambers links vulnerability with factors such as defenselessness, insecurity, exposure to risks, shocks and stress.15 Indeed, during the Asian crisis those who lost their jobs and access to social security were exposed to defenselessness, shock and stress.

The poor rarely speak about income, but they do speak about assets that are important to sustain their daily activities. These assets include a broad range of tangible and potential resources, both material and social, that individuals, households and communities draw in times of need or crisis. The assets of the poor, according to Narayan, can be classified into four categories: (1) physical capital including land and material belongings; (2) human capital including health care, education, training and labor power; (3) social capital which refers to the extend and nature of social networks such as kinship networks, neighbors and associations; and (4) environmental assets, that is, grass, trees, water, and non-timber products.16 Policy makers of the state’s development agencies often fail to take these assets into account in formulating various development policies. As a result, the voices of the poor are more often than not unheard and their participation in program design has never been considered.

In the early 1980s, a new approach in development policies – popular among the NGO sector – put emphasis on people’s active participation and the voices of the poor. A call for a people-centered development practice among the NGO sector emphasized the need to strengthen institutional and social capacity supportive of greater local control,

14 Ibid., p.38.
16 See Deepa Narayan, et.al., op.cit., p.49.
accountability, initiative and self-reliance at grassroots level. Learning from their field experience, NGOs began to think of the need for development agencies to put more emphasis on the imposition of decentralized and self-organizing principles in the management of resources. This new approach grew out of a changing view on poverty. Initially poverty was often viewed as a lack of minimum nutritional intake needed to sustain life, lack of physical assets (land, shelter, clothing and the like), and lack of human capital (education, skill and so on). Therefore, the response of the aid system – whose projects were carried out by NGOs – was confined to the provision of technical assistance and investment in primary health care, water supply and income-generation. Later on, however, poverty is increasingly perceived as a political problem, that is, the state of hopelessness caused by exploitation, global injustice, government’s neglect and reckless policies. The response to the problem is therefore changed, from simply providing basic needs to more serious attempts to fight the root causes, which include campaign, advocacy and mobilization.

This new thinking has its resonance among the academic circle. In the late 1990s, Amartya Sen of Trinity College, Cambridge, proposed a new paradigm of rights-based development in which the boundaries between development and human rights are dissolved, and both become conceptually and operationally inseparable parts of the same process of social change. In his book, Development as Freedom (1999), Sen defines development as the expansion of capabilities or substantive human freedoms for each person the capacity to lead the kind of life he or she has reason to value. He correctly adds: “despite unprecedented increases in overall opulence, the contemporary world denies elementary freedoms to vast numbers – perhaps even the majority – of people”. The denial of the underprivileged of their basic freedoms, according to Sen, has produced “poverty as well as tyranny, poor economic opportunities as well as systematic social deprivation, neglect of public facilities as well as intolerance or over-activity of repressive states”. An attempt to link development and freedom seems to indicate at least two things. First, the growing realization that conventional view of development focusing on transfer of capital, knowledge and technology is no longer sufficient to fight poverty caused by exploitation and injustice. Second, there has been a growing concern that human being needs to be guaranteed security from external threats, namely: force, fear, exploitation and systematic injustice.

Although the state bears ultimate responsibility to provide human security, in some cases the state may be part of human security problem. When poor communities or individuals rely heavily on state institutions for service delivery, the breakdown of the state leaves them vulnerable. This vulnerability was particularly striking in the Eastern European and former Soviet Union in the early 1990s and in many parts of East and Southeast Asia during the financial crisis of the late 1990s. In these regions, there was a widespread sense that the state had abandoned its citizens, many of whom had plunged into desperate poverty as a result of political turmoil. In Indonesia, the poor who were the victims of government’s financial cutbacks and job slash (recommended by the IMF) condemned the government. Their protest was well reflected in many of street demonstrations and

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19 Ibid., p.1.

20 Deepa Narayan., op.cit., p.100.
violence. Indeed, during 1997-2001, the incidence of social violence in Indonesia had increased from 15 incidents in 1997 to 124 in 1998; 308 in 1999; 408 in 2000; and to 233 in 2001. Meanwhile, the number of death of social violence at the same period had also increased from 131 in 1997 to 1,343 in 1998; 1,813 in 1999; 1,617 in 2000; and to 1,065 in 2001. The increase of social violence coincided with the decline of the popularity of government officials. In expressing their frustration against public officials, poor people often characterize them as “dishonest”, “swindlers”, “speculators”, or simply “thieves”.

If one can use Indonesia as an example, one has to believe that poverty and conflict is closely related. Ibrahim El Badawi at the World Bank argues that civil wars and poverty are inextricably linked. Civil wars have direct effects on poverty through the destruction of physical, human, and social capital, resulting in disruption of productivity, heightened unemployment, social displacement and increased physical insecurity. On the other hand, poverty is also believed to form a sufficient condition for conflict. William Easterly posits that poverty, when combined with high income and asset inequality particularly along ethnic or communal lines, can lead to violent conflict. Rwanda seems to represent the most extreme case of how poverty has led to violent conflicts. Andrew Storey observed that the 1980s system of paternalistic communalism that ensured the relatively equal distribution of land and income in Rwanda gave way in the 1990s to a pattern of “savage individualism”. This new distribution of wealth resulted in members of the akazu or Hutu governing elite taking over land previously controlled by smaller, often indebted farmers of Tutsi origin. When poverty intensified and land became increasingly scarce, the struggle for daily life combined with ethnic hatred suddenly turned into the world’s bloodiest genocide since the World War Two.

The debate on human security is relatively new to Asia. This region has been associated with the traditional view of security focusing on strategic-military issues. Arabinda Acharya and Amitav Acharya argued that a desire to preserve the sanctity of the newfound sovereignty of post-colonial nation-state and a relative paucity of sustainable democracies have been the major cause for Asia’s unfamiliarity with human security. The traditionalist stance on security remained intact for sometime in the region despite a growing number of scholars who have shown an active interest in the extension of the security concept to include non-military issues. In the late 1990s, in the wake of the economic crisis, the issue of human security began to receive more serious attention, especially from policy makers. Various meetings organized by state agencies began to address human security issue.

In his opening address to the ASEAN 2020 Conference, the Foreign Minister of Thailand, Surin Pitsuan, stressed the link between the concept of human security and the need for

social safety nets. Attempts to organize seminars on human security came from various state agencies. For example, on 28 July 2000, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan hosted an International Symposium on Human Security in Tokyo in which no less than 1,000 people had participated representing various international organizations, government agencies, and NGOs. The meeting featured Sadako Ogata of the UNHCR and Amartya Sen of Trinity College, Cambridge, as keynote speakers. In her speech, Ogata stressed on the need to treat human security as a practical necessity, especially in the restoration of shattered communities caused by civil wars and internal conflicts. Meanwhile, Amartya Sen put emphasis on the need to ensure security during economic downturns. He also argued that the adoption of the concept of human security needs to be based on a global framework and that it must go beyond the Bretton Woods system. Although one cannot expect that in the near future human security will secure a crucial position on the policy agenda of any Asian states, one can be amused with the growing attention and debates on the issue in the Asia region.

How poverty is securitized? Who are the securitizing actors, the referent objects and the target audience? What speech act has been used by the securitizing actors in addressing the existential threat to the target audience? What conditions determine the success of the securitization of poverty? How far does it require action outside the conventional rules? These questions beg a further discussion on securitization as a process that goes further than politicization. On the one hand, politicization is a process that makes an issue appear to be open, a matter of choice, something that is decided upon and that entails a kind of public responsibility. On the other hand, securitization is a process that presents an issue as urgent and existential, as so important that it should not be exposed to normal bargaining of politics but should be dealt with actions outside the normal practice of politics.

As mentioned earlier, poverty tends to be securitized when the state has been considered by the securitizing actors as having failed to protect the disadvantaged. In this context, the securitizing actors (NGOs that dedicate their activities to poverty-alleviation) address the emergency situation of poverty and present to the public the existence of threat to the lives of those who are neglected by the state. They also demand for an action that should be taken outside the conventional practice of politics. Thus, rather than expecting a conventional way of handling poverty, that is to say, an appeal to the state to produce more pro-poor policies, NGOs tend to argue that the solution for poverty must be outside the state, if not against the state, because they view the state as part of the problem.

It is clear that the securitization of poverty has involved poverty-alleviation NGOs as the securitizing actors, the disadvantaged as the referent object, and the public in general as target audience. In addressing the emergency situation and the call for non-conventional political action to alleviate poverty NGOs tend to use radical catchphrase initiated by Paulo Freire as the major content of their speech act. In many cases, NGOs often talk

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26 Surin Pitsuan addressed the ASEAN 2020 Meeting in Bangkok, Thailand, on 20 July 2000.
27 Sadako Ogata delivered a keynote speech to the International Symposium on Human Security at the Takanawa Prince Hotel, Tokyo, on 28 July 2000.
28 Professor Amartya Sen's keynote speech to the International Symposium on Human Security at the Takanawa Prince Hotel, Tokyo, on 28 July 2000.
29 Barry Buzan, et al., Security... op.cit, p.29.
30 Ibid.
31 Paulo Freire is a Brazilian educationalist who often talk about conscientization and awareness-creation among grassroots people in order to carry out their own physical and psychological advancement.
about the state’s denial and abuse of people’s rights to basic needs.\textsuperscript{32} But there are also those NGOs who argue that the marginalized should solve their own problems and perform their own development without the help from the state. In the context of poverty, the process of securitization includes an attempt by the securitizing actors to create a public wrath of the state’s denial and neglect of people’s rights to get access to basic needs, and that the solution to poverty should be decided by the people.

NGOs’ critical view on the state’s lack of political will to alleviate poverty stemmed from the new dynamics in development thinking. In the early 1980s, a call for people-centered development practice emphasized the need to strengthen institutional and social capacity supportive of greater local control, accountability, initiative, and self-reliance at grassroots level. While the conventional view of development, based on transfer of capital and technology, was seriously questioned, a new priority was placed on a process of grassroots empowerment, that is, the imposition of decentralized and self-organizing principles in the management of development resources.\textsuperscript{33} A people-centered development was built upon two basic assumptions. First, a belief that the state is part of the development problem and that development must proceed outside and perhaps against the state. Second, a notion that community action is essential for autonomous development and that community must deal with the threat to their survival by carrying out their own development.\textsuperscript{34} Presenting themselves as the “third sector” agency (as an alternative to the state and the market), NGOs are so determined in their attempt to promote a people-centered development practice. It is in this context NGOs establish themselves as the securitizing agency of poverty.

To determine how successful NGOs in their attempt to securitize poverty is a tricky business. One of the reasons is that thus far we have no clear indicator on how to determine the success or failure of the securitization of a particular issue. The Copenhagen School came up with three factors that may be useful in determining the success or failure of securitization. These factors include: (1) a condition in which target audience accepts the presence of an existential threat; (2) the existential threat should legitimize the breaking of conventional rules; and (3) the speech act used by the securitizing actors should address the emergency situation. We may use these factors as indicators whether a process of securitization of poverty by NGOs has been successfully carried out. Thus, in talking about the securitization of poverty, one can point to three things. First, whether or not the public accepts that there is an existential threat (i.e. the state’s neglect to fight poverty) to the survival of the marginalized people as the referent object. Second, whether or not the state’s neglect can justify the breaking of conventional rules. Third, whether or not NGOs as the securitizing actors have done enough to alarm the public of the emergency situation faced by the neglected.

Identifying the Existential Threat: Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) and the Defeat of the Poor

\textsuperscript{34} Bob S. Hadiwinata. The Politics ... op.cit, p.26.
Despite the fact that the extension of security concept has received more serious attention in the past few years, realists still believe that the main referent object of security should remain the state as the dominant form of political organization. For realists the state internally defines and protects the life, liberty and property of individuals and groups through the creation of political and socio-economic order. Externally, it protects the rights of its citizens from the harmful actions of other states and non-state entities. However, realists’ admiration on the sanctity of the state has been increasingly challenged for its ignorance of a possible collapse of the state’s capacity to provide security. In the past few years, more and more scholars claim that the capacity of the state to discharge its primacy functions of identity, physical security, material welfare, and habitable environment is declining.

The recent crisis in Asia and the following adjustment policies adopted by the governments clearly indicated how the state’s capacity to protect the underprivileged was in a serious decline. Rather than adopting pro-poor policies to rescue the weak, the states in Indonesia, Thailand and the Philippines, for example, had to bow to the IMF’s policy recommendations to cut down government budgets, remove subsidies and rationalize public and private enterprises. To those who are victims of the adjustment policies, the state has been perceived as an oppressor and therefore produces insecurity to them. For this reason, making the state the main referent object of security can only lead to abuse, particularly in places where the legitimacy of the nation-state, regime or government is contested as the Indonesian case has indicated.

In Asia, the severe economic downturn of the late 1990s and the subsequent economic stabilization has helped to bring the burgeoning debate over human security into much deeper concern. The crisis has created a pervasive sense of insecurity with wide range of political, economic, social and cultural dimensions. Increasing poverty as a result of the fall of real incomes which led to food shortages, malnutrition, declining health and education, intensifying crimes, and lack of confidence in existing political systems has gone beyond the state’s capacity to resolve through the use of traditional security instruments. Rescue packages structured by the IMF had rendered the state subject to more pressures from the poor majority of the population. In this situation, the reputation of the state is at stake and the trust of the society upon the state has begun to wane.

For countries experiencing Structural Adjustment Policies (SAPs), IMF’s policy guidance to cut down the state’s budget has substantially reduced government subsidies on food, health care, education, fertilizers, petrol, kerosene, and so forth. The poor population who are already losing their purchasing power have become more exposed to extreme poverty, malnutrition and serious illnesses. Meanwhile, IMF’s policy option to rationalize inefficient public and private corporations – which is often followed by merger, acquisition or simply liquidation – has generated a pervasive unemployment. As a result, people faced a serious decline in real income. For poor women, because most of them hold non-strategic occupations (cleaning service, secretarial jobs, casual workers, and so on) it is likely that they become the first victims of lay-offs. For housewives, because their husbands face redundancies, they are forced to find extra jobs, often in the informal sector. For men with large families, inflation and the decline real income have substantially reduced their capacity to support their family.

36 Arabinda Acharya and Amitav Acharya. op.cit, p.7.
In Indonesia, SAPs were formally adopted in January 1998 when Suharto signed the Letter of Intent in the presence of IMF’s managing director, Michael Camdessus. This was followed by the dramatic cut of government’s subsidies on food, fuel and electricity which in turn led to a sharp increase of the prices of basic items and other goods. These cutbacks provoked protests, demonstrations and riots in major cities all over the country which culminated in the May 1998 riots in Jakarta, Solo, Medan and Surabaya where mass demonstrations turned into riots killing hundreds of people, many of whom are Indonesian Chinese who controlled the business sector. Despite some comments about IMF’s hazardous adjustment policies, SAPs persisted and was still considered as the only way to repair the economic damages.

In April 2000, the government issued another rescue package which included four policies. First, further reduction of subsidies on fuel and electricity that has caused price increase of fuel by 12 per cent and electricity by 29 per cent. Second, fiscal restructurization through the intensification of income tax (PPh), the introduction of new tax on luxurious goods (PPn-BM), and the decentralization of fiscal system. Third, the limitation of salary increase of the civil servants. If inflation used as a measure to calculate salary increase, Indonesian civil servants had to receive at least 100 per cent increase during 1997-2000. However, the government limited such an increase to only 15 per cent in April 2000 and another 15 per cent in October 2000. Fourth, a reform in the banking sector through the formation of IBRA (Indonesian Bank Restructuring Agency) that served as a monitoring agency for banking operation in Indonesia and as a restructuring agency for the troubled banks. During the stabilization period, the feeling of desperation and distrust toward the government among the poor continued to grow which led to ongoing social disorder, riots and violence all over the country.

Economic crisis, when combined with the weakening of the state, may generate social violence. In his study on social violence in Indonesia, Tadjoeddin indicated that during the economic crisis the incidence of violence increased in terms of regional distribution, the number of incidents, and the death toll. With regard to the cause of violence, Tadjoeddin argued that 52 per cent of the total conflicts during 1990-2001 was caused by ethnic, religion and migration; 25 per cent was related to food riots and civil commotion; 22 per cent was related to separatist movements; and the remaining 1 per cent was due to industrial conflicts.

The May 1998 riots were considered as the most serious violence during the transition in Indonesia. It was estimated that 1,026 houses, 4,676 other buildings (shops, offices, shopping-malls, and so on), and 1,948 vehicles were damaged and burnt in this anti-Chinese riots. The total number of deaths was 1,188; and about 150,000 people left the country, of which 70,000 are believed to be ethnic Chinese. Ethnic and religious conflicts were deepened during the economic crisis. The conflicts between Muslims and Christians in Maluku and Poso as well as the massacre of hundreds of Madurese migrants in the Dayak’s area of Sampit, East Kalimantan, clearly indicate the bloodiest religious and ethnic conflicts in Indonesian history.

39 Ibid., p.39.
Food riots occurred sporadically around January and February 1998 at least in 23 locations such as Padang Sidempuan, Pagaralam, Jatiwangi, Kuningan, Cirebon, Pamanukan, Cikarang, Tegal (2 locations), Pangalengan, Rembang, Brebes, Jember, Tuban, Pasuruan, Bojonegoro, Bima, Praya, Ende, Sampang, Ujung Pandang and Dongglia. At the time of violence, prices of goods increased dramatically to between two and four times the normal price. This sharp increase was accompanied by scarcity of basic items (rice, sugar, cooking oil, and so on). This condition created a sense of desperation among the poor as well as the middle class.

For its lack of sensitivity to the faith of the poor during the stabilization period the IMF has been increasingly condemned and criticized of being anti-social. Ironically, the fierce attack came from an insider, namely Joseph Stiglitz, a former World Bank economist and the 2001 Noble Prize winner. He argued that the most grievous mistake of the IMF is that its structural adjustment policies run the risk of social and political turmoil in many developing societies enduring IMF-guided adjustment policies. He added that prior to the commencing of SAPs in Indonesia he had warned Michael Camdessus of the danger of social and political unrest, especially in countries where there has been a history of ethnic division such as Indonesia.

Stiglitz blamed the IMF when riots exploded in Jakarta, Medan, Solo and Surabaya in May 1998 just a few days after Indonesian government announced the drastic cut back of subsidies on food and fuel. In other parts of Indonesia such as East Timor, Aceh, West Papua and Riau, increasing poverty and the continuing social and political instability have indeed reinstated the aspiration for self-determination and independence. In those areas, separatist movements, brutally suppressed during Suharto’s government, regained new momentum as their leaders began to spearhead campaigns on self-determination and independence. Although these movements - especially in the case of Timor, Aceh, and West Papua - claimed that they are ethnically distinct and therefore can have their own independent states, the separatist feelings are also generated by an absolute control on local resources by the central government and the state’s brutal repression on resistance against the central government, especially during the New Order period. The New Order state had used brutal methods (intimidation, torture, rape and murder) in East Timor and Aceh to dissuade separatist movements.

Indonesian experience in sustaining SAPs seems to indicate how ignorant both the IMF and the Indonesian government towards human security issues. Their harsh approach in imposing stabilization policies had put the poor majority of the population into not only extreme poverty, but also exposed them to an ongoing threat of violence. On the part of IMF, Sergio Pereira Leite, called for the balancing of the standard economic and financial social and financial prescriptions while respecting human rights. He argued that respect for human rights can contribute to increased economic and social stability and helps prevent setbacks to development from political unrest and civil conflict. He went on to summarize a rights-based development strategy as consisting of five elements: (1) active protection of civil and political liberties; (2) pro-poor budgets and growth strategies; (3) policies geared toward ensuring the basic needs of people, especially health, education, 

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41 Stiglitz insisted that he had warned IMF’s managing director of a possible social and political turmoil in Indonesia in a meeting of G-22 finance ministers and central bank governors of major industrial countries in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, in early December 1997. See Stiglitz. loc.cit.
and food; (4) broad participation in policy design; and (5) efforts to combat discrimination. Meanwhile, World Vision, a leading international NGO, called for a more target-based approach to conditionality rather than short-term efforts to economic policy reform in developing countries.

President Megawati defended the stabilization policies despite demands from the nationalists to cut ties with the IMF. In January 2003, her economic team announced price increases between 6 per cent and 22 per cent for fuels, 6 per cent per quarter for electricity and 15 per cent on average for phone calls which led to a nationwide protest demanding her to step down. The protesters also raised concern on two other government policies: the sale of a 42 per cent stake in telephone company Indosat to a Singaporean company and a move to formalize criminal immunity for a group of high-profile former bank owners who protesters believe have yet to settle their debts to the state. Similar protests took place sporadically expressing anxiety towards IMF’s stabilization policy. For example, a loose alliance of Islamic student groups and Islam-oriented parties began to raise the idea of economic populism, anti-privatization and anti-globalization.

The four-year, US$4.8 billion IMF economic recovery program is due to end in late 2003. Indonesia’s highest legislative body has already recommended that it should not be extended. Within the government circle, the co-ordinating Minister for Economic Development, Kwik Kian Gie, continuously attacked the IMF for being too dominant in controlling the allocation of the fund in the recovery program. He insisted on the need to end the bond with the IMF in order to allow more flexible economic policies, although he did not mention how the state will finance the development projects upon the withdrawal of the IMF.

How did SAPs actually affect the lives of the poor? During the first few month of their inception, SAPs have already taken their toll. Many members of the urban poor – factory workers, shop assistants, public transport drivers, street side traders, coolies, and so forth – live in squalid kampung. Their children regularly suffer from cholera, typhus, meningitis, dysentery, skin disorders, influenza, sinus and eye infection due to the poor sanitation, malnutrition and inadequate water supply. As a result, incidence of poverty showed a dramatic increase. In 1996, prior to the economic crisis, it was estimated that there were 37.7 millions people lived under poverty line. In 1999, this figure increased to 55.8 millions, indicating a 48 per cent increase. The BPS (Indonesian Centre for Statistical Bureau) estimated that the incidence of poverty rose from 19 per cent in February 1996 to 37 per cent in September 1998 at the height of the crisis.

A survey conducted by the Indonesia Family Life Survey (IFLS) indicated that the proportion of adults that had used public health services fell from 7.4 per cent to 5.6 per cent between 1997 and 1998. The proportion of children using the health facilities also

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45 Ibid.
dropped from 26 per cent to 20 per cent, and alarmingly from 47 per cent to 28 per cent in the case of children under the age of five.\textsuperscript{48} Indonesian NGOs consider this as an emergency situation that needs action beyond the normal political procedures of policy making. Because they believe that the state has given way to the IMF’s demand for financial cutbacks and rationalization that has exposed people to an extreme poverty, they suggest the solution of poverty should come from the people, and not from a normal procedure of policy making within the state circle. They think that the dramatic decline of living standards of the disadvantaged is the existential threat to poverty after the economic crisis and they believe that the state has contributed to the emergence of the threat.

\textbf{NGOs as the Securitizing Actor of Poverty}

The scaling-back of social spending advocated by the IMF which led to the decline of the state’s capacity to provide human security in developing societies have created a considerable space for NGOs and made them key figures in providing necessary assistance to the underprivileged. Increasingly, NGOs are becoming more visible, respected and entrenched part of many societies. The success of many NGOs - especially those operating in the developing countries - in providing health care, education, economic opportunities and human rights advocacy to millions of people has been widely known.

In the context of NGO activities, the objective of human security is often understood as an attempt to safeguard of “the vital core of all human lives from critical pervasive threats, in a way that is consistent with long-term human fulfillment”.\textsuperscript{49} This perception highlights that human security concerns with the unanticipated threats to people’s daily lives. When people consider that the state have failed to provide security in terms of minimum health care, education, economic access of the poor, and the protection of human rights, it is understandable if NGOs as the voluntary sector entered into the arena trying to keep the poor and the neglected away from the unexpected social, economic and political threats.

As a result, NGOs are eager to announce to the public that the state’s neglect has endangered the lives of millions of the poor, especially those who are the victims of structural adjustment policies. In many societies, NGOs conducted the speech act by addressing the failure of the state to protect the interests of the poor. For them, the state’s neglect should justify the breaking of the conventional way of development policy-making. But NGOs’ response to state’s failure in alleviating poverty is not only limited to addressing the grave danger of poverty to human security. They also take emergency actions by providing assistance to the poor through their fund-raising, community development, and self-help activities. Referring to the Latin American case, David Lehmann argued that the deterioration of living standards of the poor had led to the formation of neighborhood associations and co-operative activities whose immediate

\textsuperscript{48} Ibid, p.18.
aims were either to lower the costs of household subsistence or to provide extra income to co-operative works.\textsuperscript{50}

In countries such as Chile and Brazil, within a given bairro (neighborhood), women established the olla communes (communal kitchens) with the aim to collectively prepare at least one hot meal a day for their poor members. Initially, this pattern of voluntarism grew out of an external help provided by Church action groups and international NGOs. Later they became more organized through the help of the local NGOs formed by the concerned middle-class. Indeed, in places where poor people are vulnerable to extreme poverty and exploitation, NGOs and many other civil society organizations may well serve as what Lehmann terms “the provider of public goods”.\textsuperscript{51} In Indonesia, a similar pattern was also on the move during the 1997 financial crisis. NGOs such as Suara Ibu Peduli (SIP), Kalyanamitra, and Urban Poor Consortium (UPC) initiated an emergency action in providing staple food to poor families at more affordable prices. They raised funding from the middle-class families and used the money to subsidize the staple food. Not only did this collaborative efforts succeed in providing temporary relief to the poor, they also managed to set up an emergency effort based on solidarity within the community without involving the state.

Many have attempted to define and classify NGOs although to nobody’s great satisfaction. Some observers loosely group NGOs under an assortment of headings such as “voluntary organizations”, “non-profit organizations” or “intermediary organizations” carrying out various social activities. Yet this classification seems to cover too much. It can include hundreds of types of organizations ranging from political action committees to sport clubs. However, although a definition may not necessarily reduce complications surrounding the concept of NGOs, it may help us to determine what type of organization is included and excluded in our discussion. For this purpose, we may refer to Hodgkinson and Sumariwalla who defined NGOs as “organizations that serve as advocates of the poor, the neglected and the disenfranchised … They provide social services, particularly to underserved groups, and in some nations serve as the major vehicle for the provision of social welfare”.\textsuperscript{52} The definition refers to organizations with rules, structures and procedures which perform intermediary roles to achieve at least two common goals: to help the poor develop self-help management to solve their problems; and to represent the marginalized in their attempt to challenge social and political structures that have exposed them to insecurity.

When one talks about the growing significance of NGOs as the securitizing agent of poverty, one should bear in mind where exactly NGOs settle themselves as voluntary agencies. Concern on the securitization of poverty cuts across the traditional sectors of development activity. As a sovereign entity, the state is perhaps the most appropriate and able agent to ensure human security of their populations. Yet, as Indonesia’s experience with SAPs has indicated, the state may at times have been unable to tackle human security problems of the population on its own. NGOs, according to Sarah Michael, are

\textsuperscript{51} Ibid., p.164.
among the many actors who have shown to be adept at complementing or supplementing the human security efforts of government agencies.\footnote{Sarah Michael. The Role of NGOs ..., op.cit., p.6.}

In modern societies, there are three clusters of organizations that carry distinct activities with different purposes. The first cluster belongs to the so-called “first sector”, whose purpose is to protect, secure and regulate the lives and activities of citizens. The state agencies whose main duties, among others, are to provide services to the people and to supply basic social securities, and these are some of the examples of this sector.\footnote{See Bob S. Hadiwinata. The Politics of NGOs in Indonesia: Developing Democracy and Managing a Movement. London and New York: Routledge-Curzon, 2003, p.2.} The “second sector” consists of the private realm whose major purpose is to make a livelihood, create and accumulate wealth. This sector includes private market-oriented agencies, namely, the business and industrial establishments. The “third sector” refers to the private realm whose main purpose is to pursue individual interests or tackle unforeseeable threats to individual and collective securities. NGOs belong to this sector. As “third sector” organizations NGOs are not subject to political scrutiny of the ruling elite and are not meant to distribute profits to those who run them.\footnote{See for example John Clark. Democratizing Development: the Role of Voluntary Organizations. London: Earthscan, 1991; P.J. Di Maggio and H.K. Anheier. “The Sociology of Non-Profit Organizations and Sectors”. In Sharon M. Oster (ed.). Management of Non-Profit Organizations. Brookfield, USA: Dartmouth, 1994; and David Hulme. “Social Development Research and the Third Sector: NGOs as Users and Subjects of Social Inquiry”. In D. Booth (ed.). Rethinking Social Development: Theory, Research and Practice. London: Longman, 1994.} Operating outside both the state and the market, NGOs are supposed to have a certain degree of independence to determine their own ideologies, policies and strategies.

Often organized in a relatively small size with emphasis on flexibility and informality, NGOs can be critical in helping poor people meet everyday needs, particularly when both the state and the business sector are weak or absent. Many believe that NGOs’ capacity to design and implement programs – using innovative approaches and bypassing long bureaucratic procedures – have enabled them to reach the poorest members of society. Some have argued that NGOs are sources of diversity and innovation because they contribute to pluralism by creating centres of influence outside the state and by providing the means through which disenfranchised groups can organize among themselves.\footnote{Bob S. Hadiwinata. The Politics of NGOs... op cit., p.3.} Others have noted that NGOs have the capacity to make governments more responsive, to get new issues on the public agenda, to provide low-cost services, to raise people’s awareness, to focus on humanitarian issues and even (in extreme cases) to overturn governments.\footnote{See V.A. Hodgkinson and R.D. Sumariwalla. op. cit; Lars Jorgensen. "What Are NGOs Doing in Civil Society?". In Andrew Clayton (ed.). NGOs, Civil Society and the State: Building Democracy in Transitional Societies. Oxford: INTRAC, 1996; and Harry Blair, “Donors, Democratization and Civil Society: Relating Theory to Practice”. In M. Edwards and D. Hulme (eds.). NGOs, States and Donors: Too Close for Comfort? London: MacMillan, 1997.}

Alan Fowler identified four factors that have determined the strength and merit of NGOs, which include: (1) their ability to design innovative projects; (2) their ability to deliver low-cost services due to the committed and dedicated staff members; (3) their small scale activities that can effectively link vision and action; and (4) their flexibility in...
maintaining relations with governments, donors and target groups. However, there are those who argue that NGOs tend to be “oversold” because their presumed strength and effectiveness may not materialize in practice. Sheldon Annis, for example, argued that in the face of pervasive poverty, “small scale” can merely mean “insignificant”, “politically independent” can mean “powerless” or “disconnected”, “low-cost” can mean “under-financed” or “poor quality”, and “innovative” can mean simply “temporary” or “unsustainable”. While there must be some elements of truth about NGOs’ strengths and weaknesses, the fact that NGOs are often formed by concerned individuals, staffed with low-paid but committed activists, organized on the basis of flexibility, and guided by humanitarian concerns (justice, equality, democracy, the protection of human rights, and so on) raises the hope that they must make a difference to the community they serve.

Many believe that NGOs are willing to deal with the question of human security. There are at least three reasons that make NGOs engage in human security activities. First, human security, which deals with issues such as health care, education, poverty-alleviation, and human rights protection is already on NGOs’ agenda. When NGOs work with their clients and beneficiaries, their first and most fundamental reason is to run activities that will alleviate deprivation faced by society resulted from lack of health care facilities, poor education, restricted access to productive activities, and human rights abuses. Sarah Michael maintained that NGOs will seize upon opportunities to enact solutions to these problems as part of their contribution to the protection of human security. Second, involvement in human security initiatives will render NGOs a good reputation vis-à-vis the beneficiaries, donors, governments, and the public. When NGOs begin to expand their activities from simply relief provision to a wide range of activities which includes income-generating, advocacy, grassroots mobilization, policy-making and protest actions, they need to build a good reputation to increase the degree of recognition and acceptability of their potential beneficiaries, donors and governments. Third, human security offers NGOs the opportunity to become more sustainable and enduring. NGOs’ activities are often criticized of being ephemeral due to their emphasis on short and mid-term initiatives. Addressing human security issues will require NGOs to increase their focus on preventative measures and develop longer-term plans and programs.

NGOs are always critical to SAPs. For NGOs, major changes in government policies or government spending in countries enduring SAPs are introduced with scant reference to their impact on the poor. They object the government’s approach to the implementation of adjustment policies in which little or no attempt has been made to consult organizations, which are best equipped to predict the social impact of those changes. To many NGO activists, many of the reforms during the stabilization period appear to relate more to an ideological mission (carried by the Bretton Woods institutions) than to a concern to create conditions which foster sustainable development. Therefore, the reforms are usually sudden and sweeping. Thus, unless such measures are made explicitly pro-poor, they are likely to be socially damaging. Referring to the Latin American case, Manuel Chiriboga argued that NGOs strongly opposed neo-liberal policy model since they believe that

60 Sarah Michael. op.cit. p.18.
61 Ibid., p.19.
62 See John Clark. Democratizing Development ... op.cit., p.203.
privatization has implied massive lay-offs, which increased the incidence of poverty.\textsuperscript{63} For these reasons, NGOs began to launch their fierce attacks to IMF-sponsored adjustment policies. For example, when the IMF celebrated its fiftieth birthday in 1994, a group of NGOs led by Oxfam-Great Britain launched a “Fifty Years is Enough!” campaign and demanded a fundamental reform inside the IMF or (if it failed to do so) an immediate withdrawal of their involvements in many troubled countries.\textsuperscript{64}

How do NGOs securitize poverty in the context of a deepening economic crisis? As mentioned earlier, NGOs tend to use radical jargons drawn from Paulo Freire’s alternative education putting emphasis on conscientization and awareness-building of the oppressed as their speech act in addressing the presence of a threat against poor people’s survival. In their meeting in August 1999, an international NGO coalition in Indonesia, INFID (International NGO Forum for Indonesian Development), alarmed the public of the state’s inability to deal with poverty problems during the economic crisis. Some other NGOs even accused the state of deliberately putting the poor at risk for the sake of fulfilling the conditions set out by the IMF. Some radical NGOs even went further by declaring that the state is the “enemy” of the poor. In response to the deliberate attempts by the Jakarta’s local government to crack down on the pedicab (becak) drivers and street vendors and to expel poor settlers from the squalid kampungs, the Urban Poor Consortium (UPC) mobilized the poor to fight the local government by setting up a camp in the local government office.

The UPC also used the national print as well as electronic media to announce to the public that the poor had been treated unfairly by the government and that the poor should be defended against the government arbitrary actions. They urged the public to condemn the government for neglecting the urban poor. They particularly concerned with the lives of the marginalized who had become the victims of the government’s non-compromising development policy. For them, such a policy is a sign of a deliberate violation of people’s right to survive in a difficult economic situation. Through the use of media, NGOs try to alarm the public of an emergency situation faced by the poor. In many occasions, they announce to the public that the state (considered as losing their interest to protect the marginalized) has caused a threat to the lives of the poor.

It is clear that the referent object of the NGOs’ version of securitizing poverty is the marginalized class who must bear the adverse effect of the economic crisis. For NGOs, the state’s total allegiance to the IMF’s liberal solution to the economic crisis has caused a threat to the survival of the urban poor who must deal with high inflation rates, redundancy, and substandard living condition. However, the use of particular class in society as a referent object can disturb NGOs’ attempt to securitize poverty issue. As Buzan, et.al have argued:

Classes cannot be ruled out as potential referent objects of economic security, but so far the attempt to securitize class had only patchy and short-lived success. It is worth noting that non-monetary economies (especially subsistence farming) have the family or even the extended family as their unit. Although entire regions (especially sub-Saharan Africa) are based on this principle, there is no

\textsuperscript{63} Manuel Chiriboga. “Latin American NGOs and the IFIs: the Quest for a South-determined Agenda”. In A. Scholte and A. Schabel (eds.). Civil Society and Global Finance. London: Routledge, 2002, p.41.

\textsuperscript{64} See Tony Killick. IMF Programmes in Developing Countries. London: Routledge, 1995, p.156.
politicization or securitization of these economic activities except for some community-based development literature.65

Indeed, attempts to securitize the subsistent economic activities may not be successful because the poor class (as referent objects) may still have the capacity to survive. In this context, securitization can be mixed up with ideological contest or class struggle. When an issue has been used as a supporting element for an ideological contest, the message that comes from a certain actor or agency may not be acceptable to all audience because it represents only the interest of a particular class. Thus, the securitization of an issue that contains an element of class struggle may not be fully successful. For this reason, we must be careful in treating the speech act used by NGOs in their attempt to securitize poverty.

However, some Indonesian NGOs have managed to avoid direct involvement in ideological contest. These NGOs grew out of small development programs concentrating on the mobilization of the poor to develop self-help activities. Rather than raising the issue of class struggle, they are more interested in promoting development outside the state circle because they believe that the state has lost its capacity and interest to put priority on the lives of the marginalized. Although these NGOs do not declare a war against the state, they believe that an autonomous development can only be achieved if the people carry out their own development. The experience of two of these NGOs – Bina Swadaya Yogyakarta (BSY) and CD-Bethesda – will be discussed as an illustration of how NGOs have attempted to promote development outside the state circle. This may indicate a move beyond the conventional way of development policy.

Promoting Development outside the State: the Case of CD-Bethesda dan Bina Swadaya Yogyakarta (BSY)

Although self-help grassroots organizations have been active in Indonesia for generations, development-oriented organizations became more visible only in the late 1960s and early 1970s. During that period, a number of organizations – which dedicated their activities to community development – such as Bina Swadaya, LP3ES (Institute for Social and Economic Research, Education and Information), LSP (Development Studies Institute), YLKI (Indonesian Foundation of Consumers’ Organizations), P3M (Association for Pesantren66 and Community Development), YIS (Indonesian Welfare Foundation), Sekretariat Bina Desa (Village Development Secretariat), and Dian Desa came into existence. They were formed by concerned and dedicated middle-class (ex-student activists, university graduates, researchers, lawyers, and academics) to promote self-management activities of the poor households.

Despite an attempt by the Indonesian government to control NGOs’ activities (especially during the New Order government), Indonesian NGOs have become increasingly involved in various community development activities. The limited capacity of the government to provide basic services (health care, credit schemes, trainings, water

65 Barry Buzan, et.al, Security... op.cit, p.101.
66 Pesantren is the traditional Islamic boarding school.
supply, and so on) to the underprivileged rendered the apparently low-cost alternative offered by NGOs relatively attractive. The decline of the state’s revenue as a result of the collapse of the oil prices in the mid-1980s had forced the Indonesian government to open some space for NGO activities.

Thus, despite the fear among certain government agencies (especially the military) that NGOs might somehow disturb their attempt to de-politicize the society, NGOs were invited to engage in poverty-alleviation activities. Government’s recognition of NGOs’ contribution to development was stipulated in the parliamentary decree (ketetapan MPR) No.II/MPR/1983 which called for a basic framework that would allow people to develop through their own strength in order to achieve an equal distribution of welfare (pemerataan). Even President Suharto himself demanded the “assistance and participation of the whole Indonesian people because development could no longer be delivered by the state sector alone”.

As a result, various regulations on NGOs (especially the UU Ormas No.8/1985) were not fully implemented and government officials at various levels often offered their personal guarantee to allow NGOs to have a certain degree of freedom of operation. This reflects that under certain circumstances the state needs NGOs’ participation in supplementing its duty to provide human security to the citizens. Even an authoritarian regime such as the New Order Indonesia (which was by nature at odds with the NGO sector) must compromise its stern approach towards NGOs, particularly when it deals with human security issues.

In the post-Suharto era, the removal of all regulations controlling societal organizations – including NGOs – has put NGOs into a central stage. A combination of sectoral imbalances, the lack of policy coherence, a poor banking system, the wake of new export competitors (especially China and Vietnam), and a poor allocation of assets had generated pressures to the Indonesian currency which later created a fiscal crisis in both the public and the private sector. As mentioned earlier, from June 1997 to March 1998 Indonesia was hit by a deep economic crisis where the value of rupiah (the Indonesian currency) had dramatically dropped, losing more than 70 per cent of its value. The crisis quickly turned into panic and shock all over the country which was followed by riots and lootings in major cities in Java and Sumatra. Conflicts and violence began to spread around the country which raised a great concern on human security.

NGOs could not turn a blind eye to this problem. In order to help mitigate the adverse effects of the economic and political crisis, NGOs created programs to help the poor fight the crisis. Many new NGOs engaged in different activities to distribute loans and grants coming from various international development agencies to those who were badly affected by the financial crisis and the subsequent adjustment policies. Max Lane described the appalling quality of life of the urban poor in Jakarta during the financial crisis:

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68 Under this law on mass organizations, NGOs and other societal groups are forced to embrace Pancasila (the five principles) as their only ideology and are not allowed to receive foreign assistance without the government’s consent.
69 Bob S. Hadiwinata. The Politics of NGOs ... op.cit., p.93.
70 Bob S. Hadiwinata. Politik Bisnis ... op.cit., p.185.
The urban poor – factory workers, shop assistants, supermarket employees (mostly women), coolies, public transport drivers, street stall owners, etc. – live in squalid kampung. Rubbish is piled up everywhere, there is no water, the drains are blocked mosquitoes abound, the rooms are tiny so that people pile up against each other like sardines to sleep ... Incomes are around 100-300 thousand rupiah (US$12-36) a month. Most families have two to five members. Children regularly suffer from cholera, typhus, meningitis, dysentery, skin disorders, influenza, sinus and eye infections and malnutrition.71

Many NGOs believe that the economic crisis had posed an existential threat to the lives of the poor. They put the blame on the state who had failed to prevent the dramatic decline of living standards. A number of national print and electronic media such as Kompas, Suara Pembaruan, Republika and Media Indonesia, Surya Citra Televisi (SCTV), and Rajawali Citra Televisi (RCTI) carried stories and programs featuring the growing poverty. In those programs, NGO activists commented on the state’s neglect and the need to empower people to carry out their own development. In one of the feature in Kompas daily newspaper, for example, Bonnie Setiawan (a senior NGO activist in Jakarta) argued that the economic crisis had generated threat to human security, especially with regard to dramatic deterioration of the living standard of the poor. If the situation went out of control, he insisted, the whole population will be exposed to ongoing instability and disorder. He demanded that NGOs – together with all components of civil society – to take a collaborative action to fight poverty.72

Enjoying a relative freedom during the transition to democracy, some NGOs began to expand their activities to include grassroots mobilization. If in the past their activities had been focused on community development and income-generation in order to avoid direct confrontation with the state, they have now become increasingly involved in a broader political context of grassroots resistance which includes an attempt to organize and mobilize grassroots people to find their own solutions to their problems and to influence decision-making at local level. Two case studies – CD-Bethesda and Bina Swadaya Yogyakarta (BSY) – will illustrate how Indonesian NGOs responded to the state’s lack of crisis mitigation initiative through the promotion of self-help activities outside the state circle.

CD-Bethesda of Yogyakarta is one example of NGOs that eventually makes a sharp turn in running its activities from health care and income-generation to mobilization. Formed in 1974 as a community service unit of the Christian-owned Bethesda Hospital in Yogyakarta, this NGO initially focused on attempts to assist poor people with limited access to hospital treatments through the formation of village health cadres (kader kesehatan desa or KKD). CD-Bethesda recruited and trained villagers to provide health care to their neighborhoods. By 2001, this organization claimed to have recruited and trained 3,200 KKD in Yogyakarta and Central Java.73 This welfare approach had been adopted by CD-Bethesda for years. However, during the transition to democracy, this organization began to focus on grassroots mobilization.

72 Kompas, 19 August 1999.
73 Interview with CD-Bethesda’s executive director, Andreas Subiyono, 6 July 2001.
The introduction of Law No.22/1999 on regional autonomy had allowed democracy to emerge at village level, especially through the formation of village representative bodies (Badan Perwakilan Desa or BPD) which serve as a village parliament with the duty to make village government more accountable. Realizing the potential influence of the BPD in village decision-making, CD-Bethesda became interested in forming organizations that may have some bearing on the BPD. Working in a number of villages in Java and eastern part of Indonesia (Maluku, Sulawesi, and Nusa Tenggara Timur), this organization conducted its speech act by expressing their critical view of local authorities. Activists of this organization declared to the public that the domination of thick-skinned local leaders in village decision-making had generated a threat to the poor, especially those who are less connected to the local leaders through kinship, political affiliation, and comradeship. In various discussions they accused the greedy local leaders as being corrupt, dishonest and insensitive to local problems. As Andreas Subiyono, CD-Bethesda’s executive director, put it: “We simply cannot let the poor people become the victims of the greedy local leaders who disburse development fund for their political and personal purposes. Thus, we must take development (initiatives) away from these swindlers and speculators and give them back to the people”.74

In 1999, CD-Bethesda transformed all of its village health cadres (KKDs) to the so-called people’s organizations (Organisasi Rakyat or ORA). This organization also trained ORA members in ideology, organizational skills, democratic principles, negotiation techniques, and conflict resolution methods. No longer limiting their activities to health care, ORAs were expected to have their members elected as village representatives in the BPD. In this way, CD-Bethesda has helped villagers to become more confident in their involvement in the decision-making, especially in determining development priorities and in designing programs to alleviate poverty. Moreover, the involvement of ORA members in BPD consultative meetings with the village head seems to have increased accountability and transparency of village governments. In this way, CD-Bethesda has been able to encourage villagers to determine their own development and to become more self-reliant.

Other NGOs responded to the economic crisis by intensifying its partnership with grassroots people. This strategy was adopted by Bina Swadaya Yogyakarta (BSY) in their attempt to help the urban and semi-urban poor to mitigate the adverse effects of the economic crisis. In its attempt to conduct the security speech act, BSY announced to the public the sense of hopelessness, marginalization, defenselessness, and humiliation among the poor. This organization realized that poor people must be encouraged to determine the direction of their own development, while outsiders facilitate the brainstorming, agenda-setting and program-implementation. For this purpose, BSY adopted the PRA (Participatory Rural Appraisal) technique, a method of assessment of development problems in which local population carry out their own appraisal, analysis, planning, action, monitoring and evaluation, while outsiders facilitate, sit down, listen and learn.75 Widely used in Latin America, Africa and Asia, PRA has contributed to the new understanding of a partnership between outsiders and local people in fighting poverty. This partnership was based on three assumptions: (1) outsiders should reflect critically on their concepts, values, behavior and methods; (2) they have roles as convenors, catalysts

74 Personal interview with Andreas Subiyono, 6 July 2001.
and facilitators; and (3) the poor and the marginalized can and should do much of their own investigation, analysis and planning.76

In June 1999, BSY launched a program called “Project Support to Home Workers' Response to the Economic Crisis” in the Bantul District, Yogyakarta. Using the PRA method, this project was aimed at: (1) enabling micro-entrepreneurs to identify and analyze factors that have caused the decline of their income; and (2) enabling micro-entrepreneurs to find their own solutions to the problem. After various activities of diagramming, mapping, wealth-ranking, modeling, and so on, with the help from BSY’s fieldworkers, micro-entrepreneurs in Bantul were able to identify factors that have caused the decline of their businesses (food stalls, petty-trading, and processed-food home industries). These factors are: (1) the dramatic increase (between 200 and 300 per cent) of the prices of raw materials; (2) the decline of market demand, while new competitors abound; (3) higher production costs as a result of high inflation rates; and (4) the scarcity of raw materials due to the poor distribution system.

They finally came up with the idea that poor people must be organized and mobilized to carry out their own development. There are three sets of action taken by BSY and its beneficiaries which includes: (1) an attempt to form small-business association to avoid tough competition according to their specialization; (2) a collective purchase of raw materials arranged by the newly formed associations; (3) an attempt to encourage members of the associations to purchase a large amount of raw materials and establish a collective storage system in order to avoid scarcity; and (4) an attempt to reach buyers from various markets in other cities. In general, BSY’s program in Bantul has been relatively successful in building the capacity of the local people to solve their own problems. The limited space does not allow us to discuss further detail of the effectiveness of the program. However, the fact that people can organize themselves and fabricate a collective action to solve their common problems has generated optimism of people’s self-reliance in handling problems.

Although none of these NGOs have intended to take over the Indonesian government’s responsibility to ensure human security to the citizens, they somehow managed to establish themselves as external agencies outside the state that are prepared to provide human security, especially in a situation where the state is shaken by financial crisis. Their activities might have overlapped those of the state agencies, yet the effectiveness of their approach and programs has made them more acceptable to the donors, the beneficiaries, and even to the state. The role of the two NGOs in providing human security to the poor has been justified by a number of reasons. First, employing committed and dedicated fieldworkers, both CD-Bethesda and BSY were able to establish intensive contacts with their target groups. This has made them able to win the “hearts and minds” of the people they serve. Second, the willingness of the two NGOs to listen and allow the people find their own solutions has encouraged people’s participation in their programs. Third, the role of both CD-Bethesda and BSY as a facilitating (rather than a determining) agent has generated confidence among the poor that they are able to solve problems on their own.

The experience of both CD-Bethesda and BSY seems to underline the merits of NGOs as alternative agencies of the state in providing human security. In places where poverty is

76 Ibid
prevalent, the state is facing financial and legitimacy crisis, and public confidence of the state’s ability to ensure security is declining, NGOs can make a difference to the society. While state has been increasingly perceived as part of the security problem, NGOs may establish themselves as alternative agencies with committed and dedicated staff members who are prepared to supplement the state agencies in mitigating the adverse effects of economic crisis and the subsequent adjustment programs.

With regard to NGOs’ effectiveness in securitizing poverty, one may argue that the experience of both CD-Bethesda and Bina Swadaya Yogyakarta indicates a partial success. One of the major problems is that the public may not be entirely convinced of the existence of an existential threat to the lives of the poor because NGOs may not have the authority or legitimacy to address poverty in the context of security. As a result, their speech act may not be too convincing that the existential threat should legitimize the breaking of rules. When NGOs organize and mobilize grassroots people, the public – at least in Indonesian context – is always suspicious that they may initiate a kind of revolution that may bring disorder and instability. Thus, as far as the target audience is concerned, NGOs may not be fully successful in securitizing the issue of poverty. However, NGOs are successful in their attempt to convince the referent object (the disadvantaged) of the emergence of existential threat and the need to take actions outside the normal practices. Their action to mobilize the disadvantaged to challenge the local leaders and to deny government intervention had indicated their success to convince the referent object to take action beyond the conventional rules.

Conclusion

The securitization of poverty seems to pose a challenge to the Copenhagen’s School approach of securitization. While the Copenhagen School argues that securitization involves the extension of security concept that moves beyond the state and beyond military threats and that securitization can be seen as an extreme politicization of particular issues where government decision, public policy and resource allocation are urgently needed, the securitization of poverty which involves NGOs as the securitizing actor address the problem that comes from the state. Thus, the solution to the problems should also come from outside the state circle. Unlike the Copenhagen School which views the source of the existential threat comes from outside the state, the securitization of poverty views the state – through the corrupt, dishonest, and insensible character of its officials - is a source of a threat to the lives of the poor. NGOs therefore insist that the solution to poverty problem should come from the people and not from the state. Our discussion seems to illustrate the complicated nature of securitization of poverty that might not have been expected by the Copenhagen School. What we need to pursue is a new concept of securitization that may define emergency action beyond the public policy or government decision-making.

Representing themselves as a third sector agency outside the state and the market, NGOs try to announce to the public the existence of a threat to the lives of the poor because the state is lacking capacity and political will to put priority on the protection of the poor. However, because NGO leaders are not elected and they act simply as virtual representatives to the marginalized, the public as the main target audience of NGOs’ security speech act are not entirely convinced of the real existence of a threat to the lives
of the poor. What appears to be lacking in this case is NGOs’ legitimacy as an agency that has the authority to declare an emergency situation. However, NGOs’ attempt to securitize poverty is not necessarily doomed to failure. The referent object (the disadvantaged) is more or less convinced that there is an existential threat to their security. In the case of both CD-Bethesda and Bina Swadaya Yogyakarta, it is clear that the referent object realized that the lack of capacity and interest of the state to defend their interests amid the IMF-guided structural adjustment policies had brought an existential threat to their security. Therefore, they organize and mobilize among themselves to challenge the local leaders and to promote their own development. All in all, the securitization of poverty by NGOs have been partially successful in convincing the referent object to take measures beyond the conventional practice of development where the state played a crucial role in initiating development programs and activities. With the help from CD-Bethesda and Bina Swadaya Yogyakarta, the marginalized people developed a collaborative action to solve their own problems.
References


