

STRATEGIC STUDIES AT UKM  
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I take this opportunity of being able to talk a little bit about strategic studies at UKM with a great deal of anticipation and with a great deal of realisation of the need for critical self-analysis of the programme that we have at UKM. If my calling as a teacher is of any value intrinsically to myself, then obviously critical self-examination is something that I realish more than anything else.

I thought of this particular assignment given to me by Maktab Pertahanan and I thought that the critical question that I wanted to raise was that: is there anything that can be discussed about strategic studies being offered as an academic programme in a tertiary institution that needs any discussion. In asking this, obviously one assumes that those in the field or those people who are engaged in strategic studies in writing, research and teaching know what strategic studies is qua discipline. If they know what it is then when one talks about any programme, what seems relevant are the emphasis and biases as one might put it and how a programme differs from another. This is all very interesting but so what, after all tertiary institutions have got their own individual choices or they make their own choices according to what they want to offer. However, a more penetrating question I believe would be whether strategic studies as an academic discipline is able to fulfill the objective in the quest for knowledge, in the search for truth, in the ability to explain phenomena<sup>s</sup> that we understand it in life. I think if we got that as a basic premise, it will be much easier to do this.

Now at UKM, we have been involved in strategic studies now to almost close to a decade. We started strategic studies basically in 1981. The programme received a second dosage of emphasis in 1986/1987 that is when I resumed my duties at UKM after serving at ISIS. Then I took the responsibility of running this programme. I can claim that my hand has been quite critical in this programme in a sense because nobody else in UKM wants to do the dirty job of running this programme.

Having said that, let me just explain. When we started in 1981, it was called strategic studies but it was more offered as a social science programme under the aegis of the Faculty of Social Sciences. When I was involved during the inception of that programme, one ~~that~~ debates we had ~~at~~ at UKM was whether every other department in the univeristy should be involved in the teaching of strategic studies. Every department in the university actually said they had an interest in strategic studies which goes on to bogger your mind what they all had in mind what strategic studies was about. So what happened of course in the event was we became a social science programme. There was very little strategic studies as I would put strategic studies to be. There was a great deal of political science and there was a great deal of other social sciences. There was even a course on Jihad or Islamic way of warfare and that was ~~an~~ insistance of the Islamic Faculty in the university that this must be taught to anybody who wants to learn about strategy. What they teach, I do not know. I never bothered to sit down to discuss with them because I personally feel it is an irrelevant course for strategic studies.

Now that just shows how biased I am in this case. But in 1986 when I went back to UKM and was asked to reformulate this programme, we gave it a bit more thought. From 1981 to 1986, we have been offering this programme basically as a Diploma Programme which is a one-year academic programme where students come from the armed forces and police. We give them a sort of beginning dosage in how and what we think strategic studies is about. From 1986 onwards, we decided to upgrade the programme in a way. First of all, we refurbished or changed the syllabus for the Diploma Programme and introduced what we called an Advanced Diploma Programme which we consider it to be a post graduate programme. We also have openings in strategic studies for people who want to pursue masters and doctorates and that is basically what we have at UKM. I would not say that this has been the case of trial and error because we have been actually doing what we have started with and so we have not changed the programme in any way at all

For the rest of the discussion this afternoon, I would like to focus basically on the goals of the strategic studies programme and why we have it at UKM. The second point will be the epistemological emphasis that we want to do at UKM. The next point will be the kind of pedagogic emphasis that means how we teach this programme in terms of strategic studies. Next will be what I would label as the baggage of graduates from UKM ; what does a Diploma or a Masters mean at all and whether it is the same as someone who comes out of Oxford and says he has a PPE degree - what does it mean. That is the baggage content I am concerned with. The fifth point I would touch on will be the clientele. This is how we respond to the people who want to take part in this programme and how basically this becomes much more of a consumer orientation in terms of this programme. I have got a little bit on staff resources, in terms of research capacity and seminar activities. What was requested by MPAT itself was to discuss a little on what our future orientation should be.

Now what has been the goals of strategic studies in my mind as I have done it at UKM. These goals of course would relate to what I would call parameters. They are the boundaries in which we can stretch strategic studies. I have already told you when we began, it was called social science, now we have fine tuned it to be less social science and more strategic studies. Of course this conflicts the goals set by any university as our goal is to produce people who have a higher understanding of mankind, universalistic approach to life and may be strategic studies is not all that important. But what we would like to do is to teach them more about the search for truth. However, we have this conflict all the time at UKM that we have to grapple with especially since our clients are from the armed forces. We think one of our goals is to intellectualise the armed forces little bit more. So when they come out, their education will be much better as a result of going to university.

The parameters in these terms therefore is after having had strategic studies, they will have some understanding and inkling of what the whole field is about. One of the areas which I think is important is military history that means as military officers or police, they have got to understand how military campaigns have been ~~walked~~ and waged. Much more fundamental than that to my mind is the emphasis on the understanding of the causes of wars. You can basically see Michael Howard approach in this point. Into the second point is to understand the very nature of conflict, and how it is related to cases of wars. We do not go very much into the understanding of conflicts because then we will go into conflict studies which is something that I have so far tried to avoid in this programme.

The third point in terms of parameters is we have tried to think about what people need to attain in terms of basic understanding and that as far as I understand it, is to understand what are the concepts and the theories that we have in strategic studies. So therefore, our major piece of literature that we attach a great deal of importance is written by Baileys & Associates which is an English book. It is basically on all contemporary strategies and is a book which actually lists out all the very concepts that we use in military strategic studies: the deterrents, limited war, disarmament and the gulf crisis management. So we try to make sure that they all try to understand this a great deal. The final point on parameters that I would like to mention is much harder to think about in terms of providing the education for it is perhaps to raise the Michael Howard definition of the dimensions of strategy that we think anyone who come for this course should understand. These are the four terms that have been indentified with Michael Howard:-

- 1 The operational aspect in any strategy.
- 2 The logistical aspect in any strategy.
- 3 The technological aspect in any strategy.
- 4 The social aspect in any strategy.

Therefore this is a very comprehensive approach. If they all understood it after spending one year with us, if they all come out and say "Well now I understand better when we talk about strategy what it means", in those terms I think we have achieved basically what I think we should achieve.

Now let me turn to the area of epistemology. Basically here is what I think this morning we have discussed in terms of the the disagreements in the field of strategic studies. I am not so worried about the disagreements. I think I am more concerned with what we have as a basic understanding of the strength of weaknesses of the disagreements or the consensus that you find in the field. Therefore in this area we have basically adopted a conventional approach to strategic studies and we have steered very far from what we called an eurocentric approach.

We gave emphasis on interstate security relations. To my mind it is the basic epistemological area in which any strategic programme should deal with. The second point is the fact that we are dealing in the post-world war environment, and that environment is conditioned by the fact of nuclear wars and we do give emphasis to that. It is because I do not think anybody who comes from any strategic studies programme anywhere in the world can say that he has not understood what nuclear warfare is about; or what nuclear strategy is about. So we do include that in and we do make sure they do have an understanding of it. Of course it is more easily said than done. Cik Norma here can testify that we do have an element where for example, we try to look at nuclear deterrents and you can already see the kind of literature that we subject people to sometimes. We get them more into a tangled state of mind rather than into a state that they are very clear of what all these implies. The third element will be the notion that we are dealing basically with the international state system that has been in ~~the~~ existence since the Congress of Vienna. In this regard when we talk about national security, I think our emphasis is more on what are the problems faced by the national security in the Third World. Now there are problems of the national security in the first world and we have already heard this morning that the notion of national security itself now has began to take under much more comprehensive meaning.

I do not think we have achieved very much in trying to widen this prespective and certainly I think we do try to put in this notion or the fact that when one talks about security, one talks about strategy, one have to deal with national security, not only across national borders but also within the borders of any particular state. Here of course I refer to interstate violence and obviously we have to deal with things like insurgencies and so forth. Here of course we have to deal with regional security. Now in this area the literature is quite thin and therefore it is much more difficult to teach this subject. In a place like Malaysia it is perhaps much more so given the complexities of the political system. But so far the problem is the teaching capacity that we got, we just do not have the spread of resources in which people can deal with this subject in the intensive manner that we think it should be dealt with. So therefore this morning, there was a comment that perhaps strategic studies is very establishment orientated. I do not disagree very fundamentally with that, I think that is quite true as the nature of the discipline that we got. Certainly in building up the security you have to build up the capacity of the state. In building up the capacity of the state in many Third World Countries basically means to build up the political capacity of the regime.

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Let me just say perhaps just as an after thought to that after all in our field in strategic studies, that is why we call it strategic ~~distribution~~ studies we do not call it peace studies, we do not call it conflict research. We are more interested in realism, we are talking about the realities, we are talking about the real politics. We are not interested in that should be the case or how can peace be waged, we are more interested that war is a reality, a phenomenon that we have to deal with. Therefore to understand we have to take a much more realistic approach and we cannot take an idealistic approach. Of course at this point one may question whether realistic approach has got anything to do with rationality of human behaviour. That is another area of disagreement that one has in strategic studies.

One last point from epistemology is by basically saying that perhaps strategic studies is a hybrid discipline. Well I think it is in a sense a hybrid discipline in its own right. I do not dispute that I myself was not a strategic studies person, I streaked into strategic studies by accident or by design I am not so sure. But I do not think we can say that we got the infusion of their social sciences and strategic studies, I think there is enough literature and strategic studies to stand on its own. Nevertheless, there are relationships to the social sciences that do not allow us to do it. Basically to understand men in war, one has to turn to psychology. I do not disagree with that and certainly I think when one talks about the logistical makeup of armed forces, one has to deal with the economic questions so therefore one has to deal with economic science. So there is that intermeshing but we do not have very much of that and basically because again we have a problem of staff resources and we do not have that in this country.

Now let me turn to pathology. Basically this is a teaching programme, it is not a research programme. We differ basically from the IISS in London for example. Now I would like to touch on the breath and depth of the immersion in which people doing this subject should undertake. How do we do this? This is very difficult because the clientele that we have is very varied. Now in the armed forces and the police for example, basically not all but most of them come with only SPM qualifications. They come to do strategic studies, read about theories of war, read Michael Howard or Kenneth Watts which is very mind-boggling. They spend hours of their free time trying to understand these books. So that is the problem of the breath and depth of the immersion and whether we can achieve that or not. It is a national problem because I think we are suffering from a decline in academic standards. We are actually experiencing a mediocrity in our academic disciplines, in our universities. Only if the national leadership recognises this, we are going to face this problem for next twenty or even thirty years, or even into the twenty-first century. So this is the difficulty which is the level that is required to be achieved by these people.

The second problem that we face is the analytical capacity. If this programme is to be of any application at all, we are not interested in the people who come into this programme turning out to be Michael Howards. That is far from our objective. But what we would like to happen is that when they come out of this, they should understand what strategic studies is about. When they are asked to write a command paper direct in their respective departments, they are able approach this subject in a higher analytical level than they have been accustomed to. That is what we want to achieve. Now I do not know whether we are able to achieve that because I can only know that when I look at the kind of papers they write after leaving us. I suspect that in fact their quality have improved because that is the feedback that I received from some of the students who have gone through our programme. They say how much they have benefitted and so on. More than that perhaps since most of them have spent time reading all the things we assign them, it is found that when they get back to their respective departments, they are much more reader orientated than before. They are reading much more than they have been used to. I can understand that since they have been at the batallion level, they have never read books for the last twenty years. By coming to the university and having to read books, many more books than they ever thought they would read in a lifetime, then I think they are required to. I think this habit wears off a little bit. But the whole point is this analytical capacity that I think we try to achieve.

We have a problem in ~~pathogic~~<sup>logic</sup> in terms of the fact that this programme is conducted basically in Bahasa Malaysia. The literature that we have in strategy studies is English, there is no way we can get out of this bind. I am not too sure whether it is really an issue. It really depends on the teacher who is involved in this. We have done some work at the Dewan Bahasa to get some of the terms that we got translated. For example, deterrents is translated as "cegah rintang" and massive retaliation istranslated into "serangan balas besar-besaran" and so forth.

But the problem is the students who are taking the course are reading this text in English. We may be teaching in Malay, and so is the question of them being able to go from one medium to another with a degree of ~~facility~~. That is a problem being faced by the universities and that is why our standards have declined because people are not being able to read. Now one result is that people depreciate the quality which we can offer. For example, if the course is supposed to teach the eight books and then obviously if they cannot copy with the eight books, we have to go down to six books, four and may be to two. Finally it is just a matter of spoon-feeding them. We have not gone to that point yet, at least we have resisted doing that but that is the constant struggle I think those of us who teach strategy studies have to face this kind of pathogic problem. The final pathogic problem is a question of the basic verses of post-graduate element in our programme. I think we have started to emphasise some of the post graduate programme because I think it is much ~~more~~ easier to teach this programme at what we consider it to be at the post graduate level.

Those people who enrol are not post graduates, they come basically with high-school qualifications. Those who take this post graduate programme have a much ~~more~~ greater weight to bear during the course of the year. But we consider that much more because the people who come basically are matured adults. So we think of post graduate programme as much more fitting for these people. So there is a problem. As for the basic education, there is no problem in doing this except that I think because it is taught at that level, how this comes out back when they go back to their respective departments is a bit difficult. Perhaps if it comes any clearer to you, if you may look at this brochure that I have got for you which is part of our prospectus, you can see that some of the problems which I have tried to ~~in~~numerate to you is the course content for the course that we offer for this. On page five in the diploma level you can see the courses that we offer. Basically we are asking them to take five of those courses that we have got there. You can see there is a spread in the attempts basically as a very basic introduction to the whole field of strategy studies. So they have to take one course in military history, basic concepts, issues in Malaysian national security and we think that is very relevant. General Ali Wayat was talking about this one. We have that in UKM actually. Whether the course should be taught the way it should be taught is another matter. The point is we have this thing on tape in this programme and of course we have introduction to war, peace and conflict which basically is a course meant to lead to international relations. We think that is the whole basis in which interstate behaviour and conflict is taking place. Therefore they got the basic understanding of that.

Next on the course on Advanced Diploma - post-graduate level, they have to take ten courses from that listing there, and again we had tried to give them an open spread. In fact we have been very accommodating according to the need to widen the concept of strategic studies. So we have a course for police and security which is basically to understand that many of the Third World security problems is a police problem and therefore there is a need to understand what is the relationship of the police as an institution.

As for the baggage element which is what is the product that we want at the end of it. It is a question of whether the man comes out and has got a broader education or has he got a very specialised education. We do try to intermarry the two to get some kind of medium between the specialised and broader. I am unable to tell the result because I have never evaluated these papers after they have left. In fact that is one of the weaknesses that we have. The second and more crucial point to me personally that is to say anybody who comes out of this programme should be equivalent in knowledge to anyone else who comes out from anywhere else in the world. That means to say if you come out of UKM you must be as good as anyone else who comes out of Lancaster University or somebody who goes to Brown University in USA. I did obtain feedback from Lancaster University when they looked at our programme. They say it is a very tough programme and we do not hide the fact. It is not meant for the weak knees and weak mind. So unfortunately that is what we would intend to pursue.

Now whether I have been able to achieve this, I do not know but I would like to say that this programme is a good programme from that angle and that these people are comparable. They have got to know who the people like Michael Howard or Kenneth Watts are. At least if they go to any discussion they should be able to know who these men are and not try to figure out who they are. The final point is the question of being knowledgeable and the fact that they can apply this knowledge in an analytical sense. That again I am not able to evaluate but I try to think that the questions we put to them, the readings we give them will enable them to think in a more penetrating way and as a result we think we have achieved that if they have been doing that.

The next element which I would like to touch on is clientele. Our clientele comes from the police and armed forces. We do not have civilians per ~~say~~ that is because the Ministry of Education has made a decision that no civilians is to take the course in strategic studies at UKM. We have taken in a few civilians but they have basically come from the government and ministries. If you go to the West, most of the people who take strategic studies programme are civilians. So we would like to have the civilians flavour in. We have not been able to do that. But if we get the military and police personnel to take this course, we try to think we are intellectualising these people. They come as mature adults basically junior to middle command people. We got at least one Colonel who took this course, but we would like to believe at the end of it, the intellectual capacity has been increased. We think that in itself is valuable to the staff training needs of the armed forces and police. Because if this country is to be comparable to any other country, is that we have got a highly trained, highly qualified police and armed forces.

We try to think that this programme does assist in that element. We do not teach them what armed forces people are supposed to know like the conduct of armed forces people, behaviour and so forth. The intellectual impact is what we are trying to have. This is the clientele that we are trying to do.

There is a danger of course in this programme because when one tries to be analytical, one has to be critical. So far I have not received any complaints from the Commander or the Inspector General of Police that the people who have come to our programme have gone back and have become very critical of their superiors, system and so forth. We do hope that there is some kind of mixture which might be useful and I have said earlier on also we try to think that not only is this from the value of the individual but the fact of the importance of this programme. When he goes back to his department he upgrades the quality of the work of their department in that they write better papers and we hope this is ~~clientele~~ clientele we are able to satisfy in terms of the clientele versus the baggage.



The next topic I would like to touch on will be on staff resources. We have a big problem and that is we do not have enough staff. When I started this programme in 1986 when I joined back UKM, I basically work single-handedly. I had to carry out three or four courses per semester. We do not have the people who really are qualified to teach the subject. We do want people who are knowledgeable in strategic studies which is the first priority and not just any political scientist will do. We have got that and we have found that it has created a lot of problems. We want somebody for example, who knows the true meaning of arms control and advanced weapons system. We have been trying to get these kind of people. It has been an uphill task and we have not been able to get the people that we want. The second element of staff resources is indigenous inputs. If the discipline is going to be carried on the way it is, it must have the indigenous flavour about it. It ~~an~~ an intellectual question I suppose, it is a substantive disciplinary question. We have not been able to do that because we do not have the people and not enough people are talking about this. A seminar like this is the first step in this direction. So these are basically identified as the two elements. Now perhaps in terms of solution we have been trying to look at young people in the university that we can appoint and send them for overseas courses in strategic studies. Therefore we build up a reservoir of staff that can fill in the slots that we have to teach in this field. Now it is very fortunate that we have people in the armed forces who have gone and taken masters courses in strategic studies like General Jailani who has been one of my willing teachers in this programme. The problem of having someone like General Jailani to teach the course is not that he is not qualified but as he comes from the military establishment and since most of the students are military officers, when they take the course with him, they have to run the course in military fashion. That is what we do not wish to happen. It is unavoidable of course. We do understand that is the environment that we got if we have this kind of thing. People like General Jailani do fulfill in basically as a short-term measure to the critical need for manpower that we are suffering from.

Now into the research capacity. We have very little of it because this is basically a teaching programme so we do not have enough time and resources to devote to the research element that we think should be done for any strategy studies programme. Of course most of the staff members do carry out their own research but from the university system that we have, very little has been published. It is because the more one publishes, the less chances are of the person in getting a promotion. So because of that it is a problem which will be very difficult to be rid off. We are going to have this problem in terms of research capacity. The next point is on the seminar activities that we have at UKM. At UKM through the assistance of the Asia Foundation actually we have been able to run a series of seminars for the students so that becomes part and parcel of the series of activities that they have with us.

We have basically one seminar per year. These seminars are quite useful because this is a seminar that opens up to the rest of the community that is interested in strategic studies. For example we had a seminar two years ago on fire power defense arrangements, and relationships with South-East Asian security. Then we will be having a seminar in November which is looking at ASEAN defense policies and the time of transition. This seminar is going to be a presentation which is actually done by the resident defense attaches/advisors that we have in Kuala Lumpur. So this is an opportunity for the students to actually go and talk to the people who are in the relevant areas and we think this is a useful activity.

Let me end my discussion by looking perhaps into the future orientation that we have. Obviously the problems that we have is a question of staff resources. Basically in terms of the future orientation we have to get people who are basically specialists in strategic studies. I am looking for example, people who are defense economists. We do not have the people who do this kind of work in Malaysia, we do not have anybody who does work on arms control. We would like to introduce courses about terrorism, low-intensity conflict and weapons technology. This is basically our orientation so that this programme can get on a much more specialised note. One of the ~~fertilities~~ of this is that if one looks at the programme which offers post graduate level, we have more than ten courses there but actually the students who take this programme will have no choice but to take the ten courses that we allot them. Whereas in fact, we think a better choice for them is to be able to choose the kind of things that strike their interest or fancy in terms of what they want to learn at university level. So basically this is what we have in the strategic studies programme at UKM.

Thank you.