

Policy Bulletin

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Nontraditional Security Threats in Southeast Asia

Increasingly, conflict and instability are being generated in Southeast Asia by nontraditional or human security challenges such as failures in governance, health crises, and environmental degradation. Increasing globalization and technological change are magnifying the potential security-related impact of many of these failures. Conflict and instability have clear and present implications for the United States, especially in a world of dramatically expanding interactions through travel and trade.

The tragic events of September 11 require us to transform the way we think about security. This should cause us to more closely connect human security with US traditional security interests, which recognizes that discontent and conflict elsewhere has a direct consequence for the United States. At this time, the United States must examine issues of security in the context of how they relate to human development.

From October 16 to 18, 2003, the Stanley Foundation convened a discussion of nontraditional security threats in Southeast Asia as part of its 44th annual Strategy for Peace Conference to examine human security issues and make recommendations to improve US policy. Participants included academics, consultants, officials from civil society organizations, foundation executives, and a member of the Thai Parliament. The diversity of backgrounds, perspec-

tives, and expertise laid the foundation for an informative discussion.

Participants identified three major principles that underlie the concept of human security. Next, they analyzed three major human security issues in Southeast Asia. Finally, participants developed a set of policy recommendations for the US government to better address these issues in the future.

Context

Three contextual issues were found to be particularly important in influencing human security-related issues in Southeast Asia: the war on terrorism, the lingering effects of the 1997 economic crisis, and the history of US involvement in armed conflict in Southeast Asia.

The war on terrorism affects human security issues both directly and indirectly. Directly, the war on terrorism—particularly the US-led occupation of Iraq—has inflamed anti-American passions in many areas of Southeast Asia. In addition, US pressure on Southeast Asian governments to crack down on terrorist activities within their borders may backfire, as human rights violations committed in the name of counterterrorism may lead to the radicalization of the Muslim populations within these countries. Such crackdowns may also weaken civil society and impair governments' ability, leaving a vacuum in which terrorism can flourish.

More information on the Asia-Pacific Initiatives program is available online at api.stanleyfoundation.org.

This Policy Bulletin summarizes the primary findings of the conference as interpreted by the rapporteur. Participants neither reviewed nor approved this bulletin. Therefore, it should not be assumed that every participant subscribes to all of its recommendations, observations, and conclusions.

Participants had some disagreements about the long-term effects of the occupation and reconstruction of Iraq, but strongly agreed the United States' emphatic focus on terrorism was neglecting critical dimensions of the human security agenda that might well act in the long run to prevent conflict and terrorism from emerging. Participants feared that an indirect effect of the war on terrorism would be the diversion of funds from other human security issues, such as good governance, civil society, poverty, human rights, and democracy.

Much of Southeast Asia is still recovering from the 1997 financial crisis. In addition, more international trade has increased global economic interdependence, making countries in Southeast Asia more vulnerable to a downturn in the US economy. Furthermore, the United States has a history of armed conflict in much of Southeast Asia—a history that heavily influences public opinion throughout the region.

Major Principles

Addressing human security issues effectively requires that solutions be people-based, multilateral, and multisectoral/holistic.

People-Based Solutions

Participants began by redefining the topic as one of “human security issues,” as opposed to “nontraditional security threats.” (The former term will be used throughout this brief to signify the latter.) They felt it was important to define the topic positively in terms of what it *was* rather than in terms of what it was not. In addition, focusing on “issues” as opposed to “threats” served to shift the focus from state-based security to people-based security and recognized that successfully addressing individual issues such

as health could potentially have lasting, multiple effects. In discussing human security, the participants adopted the view of the Commission on Human Security, which has defined *human security* as the protection of:

[T]he vital core of all human lives in ways that enhance human freedoms and human fulfillment.

Human security means protecting fundamental freedoms—freedoms that are the essence of life.... It means creating political, social, environmental, economic, military, and cultural systems that together give people the building blocks of survival, livelihood, and dignity.

Individuals, families, and communities are threatened by a variety of factors in addition to military security, and these other factors are often more significant to them than traditional military security. At the same time, good governance and more money are not a panacea for the human security issues in Southeast Asia.

Therefore, we also need to enhance people's ability to cope with these threats themselves. This can be done by empowering and educating people and making them active participants in development.

Nevertheless, participants were quick to emphasize that an increased emphasis on human security could not—and does not—detract from the focus on traditional, state-based security. Rather, human security and traditional security are inextricably linked; one cannot be achieved without the other.

Multilateral Solutions

Considerable emphasis was placed on the need to address human security issues multilaterally. In an increasingly intercon-

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nected world made smaller through increased trade and improved technology, human security issues ignore borders and require greater levels of multilateral communication and cooperation.

Crucial to the success of multilateral approaches are open-mindedness of governments and their willingness to face these issues. Also, governments will have to be able to work with other countries in the region, even those with whom they have past or current problems.

Multisectoral/Holistic Solutions

Human security issues are location-specific, complex, and constantly changing; as a result, these issues cannot be solved solely through government action. Therefore government, business, and civil society forces will have to collaborate to solve today's human security issues.

Strengthening all three of these sectors will allow them to more effectively address these issues. In addition, holding states accountable for corruption and human rights violations will reduce their incidence, thereby ameliorating related human security issues.

Human security problems are often interconnected. For example, human security issues connected with logging along the Burma Road include all of the following: loss of forest cover (affects watersheds), drugs (smuggled in logs), HIV/AIDS (truck drivers who use prostitutes spread the disease across countries), malaria and other communicable diseases (spread during logging and deforestation), industrial pollution; organized crime (associated with mining along the road), and military concerns (logging roads provide direct military access between China and India). As a result, to successfully address one human security issue, parties must



also address related issues. If, however, one issue is addressed successfully, it should have positive consequences for other human security issues.

Major Human Security Issues

Of the many human security issues of concern in Southeast Asia, participants focused on the following: HIV/AIDS, environment and food security, and crime and corruption.

HIV/AIDS

Participants felt strongly that the issue of HIV/AIDS in Southeast Asia was receiving insufficient attention and resources. Failure to adequately address this issue could result in HIV/AIDS rates that would rival those in sub-Saharan Africa

today. In addition, interrelationships exist between HIV/AIDS and other human security issues, including crime, human trafficking, and poverty.

The major causes of HIV/AIDS differ among Southeast Asian countries, thereby requiring different focuses to address the problem. For example, HIV/AIDS is spread primarily by drugs in Indonesia, but mostly by the sex trade in Burma. Nevertheless, addressing HIV/AIDS in Southeast Asia should include efforts to:

- Target high-infection or high-risk areas and build local governmental capacity in these areas.
- Devote research to the differences between “E Stream” (common in Southeast Asia) and “A Stream” (common in the United States) HIV/AIDS.
- Focus on reaching those who are not currently benefiting from treatment programs, whether because of geographic (distance from treatment centers), financial (inability to afford drugs), or religious (reduced impact in Muslim areas) reasons.
- Encourage greater openness, participation, and collaboration by and among all sectors of society (government, business, and civil society).
- Reduce reproductive tract infections (RTIs), since RTIs increase the likelihood of HIV/AIDS transmission.

Environment and Food Security

As the example of logging on the Burma Road demonstrates, environmental degradation is often linked to several other security issues including violence, poverty, crime, and human trafficking. Solving

environment and food security issues will require attention to these other security issues as well.

Participants also noted the growing importance of regional environmental issues, which was brought into sharp focus following the haze from Indonesian forest fires that enveloped much of Southeast Asia in 1997. Such transboundary environmental issues will require an effective means of multilateral response.

Specific recommendations included:

- Focus on the destabilizing regional and local effects of environmental degradation rather than lecturing countries on domestic environmental policy.
- Work to strengthen multinational institutions for multilateral responses to regional environmental problems.
- Use nongovernmental organizations to provide local governments with technical assistance to enable them to sustainably—and profitably—manage their natural resources. Focus on agricultural extension and people-centered, community-based silviculture and forest management rather than resorting to counterproductive logging bans.

Crime and Corruption

Organized crime structures are widespread throughout Southeast Asia. Curtailing crime and corruption will require the establishment of an effective system of justice with respect for the rule of law and equitable enforcement of law.

At the same time, however, participants warned against giving the military and government carte blanche to attack crime and corruption, since engagement with-

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out effective accountability measures can lead to human rights violations. In addition, earnings from drugs and corruption often make up a significant portion of people's livelihoods. Therefore, providing viable economic alternatives is critical.

The following recommendations emerged:

- Economic development and salary increases for bureaucrats will help reduce farm-based drug production and bureaucratic corruption.
- Strengthening government and civil society institutions will aid in the fight against elite corruption, trafficking, and laboratory-based drug production.

General Recommendations

Generally, US planning efforts and resource allocations related to Southeast Asia need to be much more attentive to human security issues that may lead to instability and conflict. In particular, these efforts should:

- **Connect human security to traditional security.** Incorporating human security into traditional security considerations will allow governments to respond to security threats more dynamically, more comprehensively and, ultimately, more effectively. There is a danger that the war on terrorism may overshadow the dangers associated with human security issues. These issues also require attention; to ignore them is to reduce the effectiveness of traditional security measures.
- **Build capacity in all sectors.** Focus greater attention on strengthening the capacity of national government, local government, private sector, and civil society actors to respond to human

security issues. Care must be taken to ensure that counterterrorism measures taken by governments do not weaken civil society in the process.

- **Emphasize people-focused security.** While states also benefit from it, human security is ultimately about protecting people. A shift from purely state-focused security policies to more people-focused ones will increase the effectiveness of such policies by creating ones that better meet people's needs and empowering people through their participation in development.
- **Use multilateral approaches to regional concerns.** In an increasingly interconnected world, security issues are often transnational and cannot be addressed effectively by individual states. Multilateral, integrated responses will be necessary. Ways to increase multilateral action include:
 - **Support the strengthening of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).** A strong ASEAN may be able to more effectively address the transnational human security threats that pervade the region. In particular, engage ASEAN's Security Council on food security and other human security issues.
 - **Engage other multilateral institutions.** These human security issues can also be addressed multilaterally through other institutions such as the Asian Development Bank, World Bank, and United Nations.
- **Pay greater attention to Southeast Asia.** Given its size and importance, Southeast Asia warrants more attention. In particular:

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- **More money for HIV/AIDS.**
Allocating of greater resources to combat HIV/AIDS will address one of the critical human security challenges in Southeast Asia.
- **Millennium Challenge Account.**
Rework the Millennium Challenge Account to extend eligibility to Southeast Asia.
- **Invest in education and health.**
Greater investments in education and health offer the greatest prospects for empowering people to better address these issues themselves.
- **Improve transparency.** Currently, US industries involved in extraction of natural resources often sign opaque agreements. Such industries should be required to disclose the details of their contracts, which can be done in cooperation with multilateral agencies.
- **Research effects of human security issues.** More research is needed on the economic impact of HIV/AIDS in Southeast Asia and on the extent and impacts of regional trafficking of drugs and people.

Reference Resources

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Participant List

Chair

Kevin F. F. Quigley, President, The National Peace Corps Association

Rapporteur

Jeremiah Grossman, Graduate Student in Law and International Development and Economics, University of Pennsylvania Law School and The Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies, The Johns Hopkins University

Participants

Jean Bush Aden, Adjunct Professor of Asian Studies, Asian Studies Program, School of Foreign Service, Georgetown University

Christina Asha Arnold, Executive Director, Project HOPE International

Priscilla A. Clapp, Consultant

Peter F. Geithner, Independent Consultant

Kim Ninh, Program Director, The Asia Foundation

Surin Pitsuwan, Member of Parliament, National Assembly of Thailand

Peter W. Riggs, Program Officer, Sustainable Development Program in East Asia, Rockefeller Brothers Fund

Lionel A. Rosenblatt, President Emeritus, Refugees International

Kirk Talbott, President, First Voice International

Lee Thorn, Chair, Jhai Foundation

Bridget Welsh, Assistant Professor, Southeast Asia Studies Program, The Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies, The Johns Hopkins University

The Stanley Foundation Staff

Cliff Brockman, Associate Producer, *Common Ground*

Elizabeth Constantine, Program Officer

Michael Kraig, Program Officer

Jeffrey G. Martin, Vice President and Director of Programs

Susan R. Moore, Conference Management Associate

Richard H. Stanley, President

Leslie Winter, Program Associate

Affiliations are listed for identification purposes only. Participants attended as individuals rather than as representatives of their governments or organizations.

The Stanley Foundation

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The Stanley Foundation
209 Iowa Avenue
Muscatine, IA 52761 USA
563-264-1500
563-264-0864 fax
info@stanleyfoundation.org

The Stanley Foundation
209 Iowa Avenue
Muscatine, IA 52761 USA

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