

SECURITY *and* SOUTHEAST ASIA

DOMESTIC,
REGIONAL, AND
GLOBAL ISSUES

ALAN COLLINS

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and Global Issues

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Preface

This book follows another I wrote on Southeast Asia back in 1999. In that book—*The Security Dilemmas of Southeast Asia*—I was concerned with developing the concept of the security dilemma, using Southeast Asia as a case study. Once it was completed, I was keen to cast my net wider to examine the variety of security issues that bedevil this region. I also wanted to engage in the debates taking place within the field of security studies itself, particularly with regard to the broadening and deepening of what the field encompasses. Finally, having written two books aimed specifically at an audience of specialists, I wanted to write something that would be accessible to undergraduates as well. This book is the result.

The book is not a state-by-state account of military doctrine (a traditional approach), nor does it cover all the nontraditional security issues, which include people-smuggling, international crime, and AIDS. I do, though, attempt to apply the concept of security in its varied manifestations to Southeast Asia and thereby to reveal not only the range of security matters in the region, but also the complexity of what security itself means.

When I was nearing the final draft of my previous book in early 1998, the wide-ranging impact of the Asian financial/economic crisis was just beginning to be appreciated. I was suddenly left having to time-restrict certain findings and to adjust others in the light of reactions to the crisis—the fall of Suharto and the notion of flexible engagement being prime examples—delaying the book by at least a year. And now again, a major event in the world, one with tragic consequences, has led me to adjust a book manuscript: September 11. I had always intended to conclude this book with illustrative case studies. The first case was, and still

is, the South China Sea dispute. The second was to be East Timor, illustrating the failure of Indonesian nation building and providing an initial assessment of East Timor's nation-building approach. This has been replaced by a discussion of the "War on Terrorism," in which Southeast Asia is apparently the second front—as illustrated all too clearly by the bombing in Bali.

* * *

There are of course many people and institutions to thank for helping me to write this book; they have provided the financial, intellectual, and emotional support without which the work could not have been accomplished. I am again indebted to the British Academy and its Committee for South East Asian Studies for their financial support, which enabled me to spend ten weeks in Singapore in late 2002 as I was putting the finishing touches to the manuscript. While in Singapore, I was a visiting fellow at the Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies (IDSS) at Nanyang Technological University and used the library facilities at the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies (ISEAS). There are a number of people to thank at IDSS for their help. The entire staff made me feel welcome and created a supportive environment in which to work. A number deserve special thanks in this regard: Ralf Emmers and Tan See Seng, for commenting on earlier drafts and providing useful feedback; Helen Nesadurai and Evelyn Goh, for help on economic and environmental details, respectively; Yee Ming, for helping me locate numerous articles held in a multitude of databases; and Peter Ee, for helping to arrange all of the paperwork and accommodation. I am also grateful to Mark Hong for inviting me to attend the RUSI-IDSS conference on the "New Security Environment After 9/11." All in all I could not have wished to be in a better environment to complete the research.

I want to thank my own Department of Politics and International Relations at the University of Wales Swansea for providing an intellectual home and financial assistance. I am also indebted to the anonymous reviewer who provided insightful and thought-provoking comments that certainly helped to clarify issues in my mind and improve the text.

Two friends deserve special thanks: in the UK, Helen Brocklehurst, for always making me laugh, often unintentionally; and Patrik Wahlberg, for his companionship while in Singapore (our unnerving visit to Bintan a couple of weeks before the Bali bombing brought home the enormity of the tasks facing the Jakarta regime as it tries to resurrect Indonesia).

Finally, my thanks to my parents, who provided wonderful support during a time in my life that witnessed much change.

All of these people have had a role in making this book possible, and I am grateful for their time and patience.

Alan Collins

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Introduction:

Security and Southeast Asia

This is a fascinating time to be studying security and the security of Southeast Asia. The idea of security, its assumptions for so long unquestioned, is now being examined. Scholars are asking questions about the nature of security itself. What does it mean to be secure? What is to be secured and what constitutes a threat? This has entailed both a broadening and deepening of what the study of security entails. The state has traditionally been the unit of analysis to be secured—the referent object of security—but it is not the only referent object. What of the international system itself, or indeed, societies within states such as ethnic groups? Perhaps the individual should be our referent object? Is security solely a military issue? Could security considerations also arise from environmental degradation, economic collapse, societal upheaval, or political illegitimacy?

The events taking place in Southeast Asia are likewise posing challenging questions. The financial crisis of 1997–1998 had not only an economic impact on the region, but also political ramifications, most spectacularly in Indonesia where it brought to an end the thirty-year rule of Suharto's New Order regime. Since 1997, other security issues have come to the fore. In the environment sector, the forest fires in Indonesia have created security problems, in terms of both health and lost tourist revenue, and led to diplomatic squabbles between states. The region is home to a host of other nontraditional security problems, such as drug trafficking, human trafficking (slavery), and organized crime. The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) has struggled to cope with this myriad of problems, leading many commentators to question its continuing viability. Not all of these subjects are covered in this book, but I will endeavor to locate a number of Southeast Asian

security issues within the broadening and deepening of security that has emerged since the end of the Cold War.

This chapter has two objectives. The first is to introduce the development of security studies from its Cold War strategic-studies emphasis to the new approaches of critical security studies, securitization, and human security. The second objective is to introduce Southeast Asia as a security complex, providing a brief account of its history and a context for the material that the succeeding chapters examine.

The question of what constitutes a security issue, and indeed who or what is to be secured, had been little debated in the academic field prior to the publication of Barry Buzan's seminal work, *People, States and Fear*, in 1983.¹ This is not to say there were not a plethora of important and highly influential books on contemporary security issues, for there clearly were. The writings of Bernard Brodie, Thomas Schelling, and Albert Wohlstetter, for example, are crucial in understanding the direction of nuclear deterrence theory and U.S. nuclear strategy in particular during the Cold War. That this literature was so important in the security field reflected the dominance of military issues, especially those concerned with nuclear weapons. Consequently, security studies during the Cold War focused almost exclusively on military defense and deterrence, particularly the East-West conflict. Hence David Baldwin's statement that

Security has not been an important analytical concept for most security studies scholars. During the Cold War, security studies was composed mostly of scholars interested in military statecraft. If military force was relevant to an issue, it was considered a security issue; and if military force was not relevant, that issue was consigned to the category of low politics. . . . [P]uzzlement as to how a central concept like security could be so ignored disappears with the realisation that military force, not security, has been the central concern for security studies.²

With the end of the Cold War and the military standoff between the superpowers, scholars have challenged the assumptions underlying security studies. In particular, the emphases placed on protecting state sovereignty and territorial integrity from an external military threat have been attacked for being too narrow. Indeed, those writers who had focused attention on the military aspect of security at the expense of other areas have been regarded as part of the security problem, not part of the solution.³ *People, States and Fear* and even more so its successor, *Security: A New Framework for Analysis*, broadened the

scope of security to encompass, in addition to the military dimension, such issues as economics, the environment, and society. In addition to broadening security to other sectors, there has also been a deepening of security. Who or what is to be secured—the referent object of security—has become a key issue in the security studies literature. Essentially, this deepening entails moving away from the state as the sole focus of security, or referent object, and embracing, among others, individuals and identity as possible alternative referents. This becomes particularly important when addressing security problems within states, where for instance a challenge to a group's ethnic identity may lie behind an incidence of violence.

In addition to the broadening and deepening of security, the field has also been challenged on one of its key assumptions: power and stability equates to security. In keeping with the normative turn in international relations theory, the assumptions of Realism that had underpinned the national security debates of the Cold War have been subjected to re-evaluation. One such approach is known as critical security studies (CSS).⁴ CSS rejects the assumption that security is achieved through accumulation of power and instead argues that because states with similar notions of social justice and economic wealth do not go to war against one another, here lies the basis of security.⁵ Drawing upon Michael Doyle's liberal peace theory—essentially, democracies do not go to war against one another—the critical security studies literature replaces power with emancipation.⁶ Hence, as Ken Booth so forcefully argues, "Security and emancipation are two sides of the same coin. Emancipation, not power or order, produces true security. Emancipation, theoretically, is security."⁷ Booth is claiming that security comes from the freeing (emancipation) of people from constraints. These constraints can be structural—the way in which the international system operates—as well as constraints created by the elite in power. Structural constraints would include an international trading system that favors developed nations, while constraints proposed and enforced by an elite would include discrimination against minority ethnic groups. The attainment of economic wealth and social justice, via the provision of education, the eradication of poverty, and freedom from political oppression, enables individuals and groups to acquire security. Like-minded states that provide economic and social well-being for their populations are able to form security communities and thus eliminate force as a means to solve problems. Thus for CSS, security comes from freeing people from poverty (want) and political oppression (fear), not by achieving stability or maintaining an order that reinforces constraints placed on the people.

The interest in expanding the referent of security to include individuals or groups within a state has become part of a recently named concept of security called human security. The first major statement on human security came in the 1994 *Human Development Report* from the United Nations Development Program (UNDP). The definition of human security is twofold: "first, safety from such chronic threats as hunger, disease and repression. And second, it means protection from sudden and harmful disruptions in the patterns of daily life—whether in homes, in jobs or in communities."⁸ The second element is so broad as to encompass almost any discomfort in a person's life, but the first clearly echoes the CSS emphasis on emancipation.

The *Human Development Report* identifies seven specific elements that constitute human security: economic security (freedom from poverty); food security (access to food); health security (protection from disease and provision of health care); environmental security (protection from pollution and resource depletion); personal security (physical safety from torture, war, and criminal attacks); community security (survival of cultural identity); and political security (freedom from political oppression). Thus it is a mixture of two aspects: freedom from want and freedom from fear.⁹ As noted below, these are not new concerns and indeed were appearing in security literature on the third world in the 1980s. The key issue with human security is that with the security referent becoming people (whether individuals or groups) as opposed to states, what constitutes security changes. Rather than the traditional notion that security emanates from achieving strategic stability for external defense or domestic order for internal stability, human security is achieved by changing a domestic order that causes insecurity for its people and an international order that condemns them to lifelong poverty.

Whether the concept of human security—and the CSS emphasis upon emancipation—entails a challenge to the discipline's statecentric approach is a moot point.¹⁰ The former Australian foreign minister, Gareth Evans, when commenting upon cooperative and human security, claims they are "less likely to be inhibited by familiar . . . traditional state-centered security thinking."¹¹ Yet writing in 1999, Lloyd Axworthy, the Canadian foreign minister, was clear that while enhancing the security of the people was the primary objective, this was best accomplished by strengthening state security. He writes that "security between states remains the necessary condition for the security of the people."¹² This difference can also be seen in the academic literature. Barry Buzan, writing about human security, claims:

States may not be a sufficient condition for individual security, and they may even be the main problem . . . But they are almost certainly a necessary condition for individual security because without the state it is not clear what other agency is to act on behalf of individuals.¹³

For Tan See Seng, however, human security discourse should not hold allegiance to the state as a necessity.¹⁴ Human security should be focused on humans, not states.

In this text since the concern is with the security problems of states within Southeast Asia and the threat state elites pose to their own people, I have adopted the Buzan approach. Thus when the prime minister of Malaysia, Mahathir Mohamad, argues that the attainment of “national security is inseparable from political stability, economic success and social harmony,” this is true only if that stability, success, and harmony are constituted by the population rather than constituted at their expense by the elite.¹⁵ It will be noted below that in the context of third world security, the elite usually determines what constitutes security, and more often than not, political stability, economic success, and social harmony are sought to achieve “regime security,” which the elite erroneously treats as synonymous with “national security.” The question of which actors within a state have the power to determine what constitutes a security question is one addressed by the Copenhagen School.

Bill McSweeney uses the term *Copenhagen School* to refer to pioneering work conducted by, among others, Barry Buzan and Ole Wæver on the broadening and deepening of security.¹⁶ With regard to the latter, it was the Copenhagen School that introduced society as a referent object (societal security) to complement the state. The Copenhagen School also has addressed the question of what is and is not a security issue, and this work has become known as securitization.¹⁷

Although a cumbersome term, securitization refers to a two-stage process that makes an issue a security issue. First, an actor (usually the elite) has to couch the issue as an existential threat. This does not automatically mean it has become a security issue. Wæver writes that a “discourse that takes the form of presenting something as an existential threat to a referent object does not by itself create securitization—this is a securitizing move, but the issue is securitized only if and when the audience accepts it as such.”¹⁸ Therefore—and this is the second stage—for an issue to be regarded as a security issue, the audience (usually the population) has to accept the elite’s interpretation of events and recognize that extraordinary measures must be implemented. Securitization

zation not only provides the definition of a security issue—an existential threat—it also examines which actors initiate the securitizing move and the need for the audience to accept this interpretation of events so that it becomes a security issue. Securitization therefore also reveals the power of the actor that initiates this move. While it is possible for the population to initiate the securitizing move, such as the people-power revolutions in Eastern Europe at the end of the Cold War or the *reformasi* movement in Indonesia and Malaysia, it is more common for the securitizing move to come from the elite. The elite, or government, is thus privileged in this respect. Hence Wæver's comment that to "study securitization is to study the power politics of a concept."¹⁹ Wæver's work on securitization is, along with the CSS literature, a seminal piece in the security studies debates of the post-Cold War era.

A recent example of securitization took place in Indonesia in the aftermath of the terrorist attack on October 12, 2002, in Bali. In this attack over 180 people were killed when two bombs exploded in the Kuta beach district, destroying a number of buildings including the Sari nightclub. The Indonesian authorities immediately sought executive powers to detain suspected individuals without recourse to the rule of law. Justice Minister Yusril Ihza Mahendra made the securitizing move when he justified the need for such powers by stating: "Terrorism is an extraordinary and inhuman crime. Therefore, we need extraordinary laws to deal with it."²⁰ Although human rights activists expressed concern the government was adopting the draconian powers employed during President Suharto's dictatorship, they represented a minority voice. The main reaction from within Indonesia—the country's two main Muslim groups supported the decision—and from other states was to welcome the government's decisive action after months of procrastination. The audience thus accepted the securitizing actor's interpretation of events. That is, terrorism was recognized by the audience as a threat, thus requiring extraordinary measures from the elite to counter it.

Security studies has therefore thrown off the all-consuming element of military matters (what is better known as strategic studies) to encompass the myriad of issues that affect the security of states and individuals. This has not taken place without its dissenters who argue that broadening the scope of security will mean that it becomes a catchall concept that loses its "intellectual coherence."²¹ Roland Paris notes this lack of coherence with regard to human security, which he derides as "so vague that it verges on meaninglessness."²² This concern—that human security is both vague and also such a fundamental challenge to core traditional security assumptions that it risks becoming marginal-

ized in policy circles dominated by traditional thinking—has led William Tow and Russell Troad to argue for a reconciliation between traditional thinkers and the human security agenda. They note that there “continues to be a large number of writers and practitioners for whom the key elements of the traditional security paradigm is as relevant today as at the height of the Cold War. In these circumstances, the challenge for the advocates of human security is to define and present their concept with rigour and clarity and to demonstrate how it might be operationalized in an international environment not readily conducive to radical reinterpretations of security.”²³ Whether such reconciliation is possible is questionable, given the different underlying assumptions about what constitutes security, but as will be discussed later, it is not impossible.²⁴

The work on securitization has also been critiqued, with Olav Knudsen arguing that by seeing security as a speech act, in which a privileged actor makes something a security issue by convincing others that it is, the issue becomes nothing more than something the actor fears. Knudsen’s view is that this may discount “real” dangers that have an independent existence.²⁵ While Knudsen’s critique is actually less about securitization and more about the move away from the state as the referent object of security, the point is well made that securitization makes an issue a security issue because it is presented as such, not because an actual threat exists.²⁶

The field of security studies has therefore undergone some important changes in recent times. In addition to broadening security to encompass economics, the environment, and society, it has also deepened to ask what unit (the individual, the state, the international system) is to be secured. This has led to the questioning of key assumptions underpinning the study of security and has raised the prospect that security comes not from power or order, but from emancipation. A sophisticated approach has also developed for understanding why certain issues are regarded as security issues. The upshot is that the study of security has undergone an extensive period of examining its key concept (security), which has provided more questions than answers. This, though, is not a problem; Steve Smith is right to argue that the study of security “is in a far healthier state than [before], even if, no, *because*, it is less secure about its referent points, about the meaning of security and above all about its foundations [emphasis in original].”²⁷

In the aftermath of the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon on September 11, 2001 (9/11), the security studies field has focused not surprisingly on the military threat posed by global

terrorism and the military response to that threat. The latter was evident in the immediate months after 9/11 in the U.S. attack against al-Qaeda in Afghanistan and, more broadly, its "war on terrorism" that U.S. President George W. Bush has claimed will not stop "until every terrorist group of global reach has been found, stopped and defeated."²⁸ This return to military matters is having two immediate effects in the field of security studies, the first concerned with human security.

One response to global terrorism has been for the state elite to make it harder for terrorists to operate by limiting civil liberties within their country. This has immediate consequences for human security, with the prospect of policies, measures, rules, and/or practices being adopted that give the elite enormous coercive power vis-à-vis their populations, for example, the ability to hold without charge an individual suspected of subversion. This is a prime example of a threat to human security and is captured in Booth's call to emancipate people from political oppression. It should be noted that in some Southeast Asian states the coercive powers available to the elite—known as internal security acts (ISA)—are not a new phenomenon. However, because of 9/11 these powers have been consolidated. Hadi Soesastro notes, while before "September 11, there was some talk about phasing out . . . the ISA [in Singapore and Malaysia] . . . This agenda is likely to be postponed."²⁹ The impact of the war on terrorism on Southeast Asian security is examined in Chapter 7. The immediate consequence of 9/11 therefore is that attempts to shift the security paradigm away from the state as the referent object, and military matters as *the* existential threat, are likely to become frustrated.

The second consequence of 9/11 on the security studies field relates to academic discourse. The danger is that the progress the field has made in broadening and deepening will be stymied by those interested in keeping security within the tight parameters established during the Cold War. Richard Stubbs provides a forewarning of this in his review of *The Many Faces of Asian Security*, which was published before 9/11 and embraces the broadening of the definition of security. Stubbs writes that while "the book makes a significant contribution to the literature on security in the Asia-Pacific region, its impact will be lessened somewhat by the fact that global security was changed dramatically by the events of 11 September 2001. The definition of security has, in [Donald K.] Emmerson's terms, once again been narrowed."³⁰ While 9/11 has raised global terrorism to the top of the security agenda, the myriad of security problems unearthed by broadening and deepening has not disappeared. It remains incumbent on academics working in the field to comment upon them, even if the policymaking community is more con-

cerned with direct attacks on national security, as they were during the Cold War.

The broadening and deepening of security studies is a development of particular relevance to those interested in the security of third world states. For the most part, security studies, like much of the international relations literature, has assumed a Eurocentric view of the international system. The focus lay on the anarchic nature of the international system determining state interaction in the security field—epitomized by the security dilemma—and this was transplanted to other parts of the world, hence the focus on external threats to state survival. The security of Asia was seen through the lens of the superpower conflict, as the United States and the USSR sought allies in their global struggle. Any interest shown in a particular region was determined by its impact on the global balance of power. Hence Joseph Nye and Sean Lynn-Jones's comment in their 1988 survey of the security studies field that much "of the work in international security studies has neglected the regional political context of security problems. Many American scholars and policy-makers made recommendations for U.S. policy in the Vietnam War in almost complete ignorance of the politics of Southeast Asia."³¹

By the 1980s, however, a number of publications appeared that examined the security problems of the third world from its own perspective. One of the most prolific authors has been Mohammed Ayoob and his work on state making, which will be discussed later. Caroline Thomas was one of the first authors to explore the need to move toward state making and nation building and away from focusing on external threats to the state—military threats in particular—in order to appreciate third world security problems. She writes:

[S]ecurity in the context of the Third World . . . does not simply refer to the military dimension, as is often assumed in the Western discussions of the concept, but to the whole range of dimensions of a state's existence which are already taken care of in the more-developed states . . . for example, the search for internal security of state through nation-building, the search for secure systems of food, health, money and trade.³²

The significance of Thomas's "already taken care of in the more-developed states" comment cannot be underestimated. This reveals that the core of the security problems facing third world states stems from their early stage of state making and nation building, when the state and regime in power are seeking to consolidate their legitimacy. These problems have largely been resolved in the developed world, although

the rise of internal violence within the former Yugoslavia and former Soviet Union in the post-Cold War era indicates that these issues are relevant to some of the security problems of what used to be called the second world. Indeed, it is the relevance of this third world security literature to the new security problems facing Europe that leads Amitav Acharya to argue that the "analysis of regional conflict in the contemporary security discourse can benefit from a framework that captures the significantly broader range of issues . . . that lie at the heart of insecurity and disorder in the Third World."³³ The security studies literature that seeks a broadening and deepening of security studies in the post-Cold War era is therefore much more relevant to the third world than its strategic studies predecessor, and vice versa. Hence Acharya's conclusion that "the end of the Cold War should serve as a catalyst for the coming of age of Third World security studies."³⁴

In this book I focus on security issues in Southeast Asia, which entails an appreciation of the security problems of third world states. This assertion requires some clarification since it might be argued that because Southeast Asia includes at least one Asian newly industrialized economy (ANIE)—Singapore—and contains others on the verge of such a status, the term *third world* might appear inaccurate. However, the term is not purely an economic one relating to issues of underdevelopment, resource scarcity, and poverty but also to the primacy of internal threats to security and the dependence on external actors for security guarantees. The latter two are certainly evident in Southeast Asia, and indeed the poverty associated with the third world can also be seen—even before the 1997 economic crisis—in Indonesia, Thailand, and Vietnam, for example. The primacy of internal threats to state security, and especially regime security, however, most readily makes Southeast Asia a part of the third world. Internal threats to these states will be examined in Chapters 2 and 3.

The key to understanding the security issues in Southeast Asia is legitimacy; and the legitimacy in question concerns both the regimes in power and the state's borders. In the former case, legitimacy is dependent upon "whether citizens are loyal and willingly support state policies—whether they accept the authority of the state and believe existing institutions are in some sense appropriate."³⁵ The legitimacy of state borders is dependent upon the population's sense of loyalty and identity with what are often colonial creations. This issue of regime and state legitimacy lies at the heart of third world security problems; it is the lack of legitimacy that makes them weak states.

The concept of weak states was introduced to the literature in

People, States and Fear, and this term is particularly apt for the third world.³⁶ The defining characteristic of a weak state is the lack of sociopolitical cohesion within the state; it does not refer to its poor military or economic capacity. Thus while China has the economic growth and increasing military capability to be regarded by some observers as the next great threat to the West, the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) concerns about secessionist demands from Tibet, Taiwan, and the western province of Xinjiang, combined with concern over its flagging legitimacy after the collapse of communism in Europe and the brutality the regime showed toward the student protestors at Tiananmen Square, add up to make China a weak state.³⁷ The lack of sociopolitical cohesion relates directly to the issue of legitimacy. Buzan acknowledges that many weak states can be found in the third world and that this "fact points to decolonization as one cause."³⁸

The establishment of colonial states rarely resulted in the creation of a single nation-state but rather a territorial entity with many ethnic groups within it. Likewise, it was not uncommon for these states' borders to divide groups, thus producing within a state disparate groups of people that have more in common with people in neighboring states than they do with one another. For example, because of the location of the international border between Thailand and Malaysia, the southern states of Thailand are home to the Patani Malay. The Patani Malay are ethnically and religiously part of the Malay world, and thus the Muslim population identifies with the people of Malaysia more than with their fellow Thai citizens.³⁹ This divide occurred because of British colonial influence, and Clive Christie asserts the "division provides a classic example of an *ad hoc* colonial arrangement that has since hardened into a permanent international frontier. The British takeover of the four Malay states undoubtedly had the effect of triggering irredentist ambitions in Patani itself."⁴⁰ The international border between Indonesia and Papua New Guinea has likewise divided the Melanesian population of New Guinea, leading to irredentist demands from the peoples of West Papua (previously known as Irian Jaya/West Irian). Such divisions of ethnic groups can be witnessed not only in other areas of the third world, but they can also be seen in Europe, especially the former Yugoslavia, with Serbs living in the Krajina region of Croatia and Albanians living in the autonomous Serb province of Kosovo.

The elite in the decolonized states of the third world—Thailand was the only state in Southeast Asia not a colony—found themselves at the early stage of state making and nation building with a territorial entity that had contentious borders and a population of different ethnic groups