

USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

TERRORISM, THAILAND AND SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS POLICIES

by

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ABSTRACT

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This annotated bibliography contains the reviews of one book chapter and seven journal articles that examine Thai national policy toward terrorism as well as Southeast Asian nations' regional security approaches. Effects of U.S. regional counter-terrorism policy and cooperation with the United States will also be investigated. The purpose of this research is to identify issues of relationship and collaboration between Thailand and the United States as well as Southeast Asian nations and the United States in regard to solving the terrorist problem in this region. The selected articles address key concerns of mutual interest between the United States, Thailand and the other countries of Southeast Asia. The bibliographic selections also highlight the national security perspectives of the nations in the region.

Simon, Sheldon W. "Southeast Asia." In *Strategic Asia 2002 – 03: Asian Aftershocks*, ed. Richard J. Ellings and Aaron L. Friedberg. Washington, D.C.: National Bureau of Asian Research, 2002, p. 309 – 348.

Simon Sheldon's chapter in *Strategic Asia 2002 – 03*, assesses Southeast Asia in the wake of September 11 and the reactions of the region's core states to U.S. efforts to create effective regional anti-terrorist cooperation. It focuses on those Southeast Asian states where terrorist cells operate and where there is at least some evidence that these cells aid one another across national boundaries – Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Thailand. Radicals in Southeast Asia constitute a relatively small minority of the Muslim community through out the region, though Islamist cells have been discovered in Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, and the Philippines. While there is some evidence of transnational cooperation among the radicals, for the most part their activities are confined to the countries in which they are located. None seriously threatens any government's viability. However, without continued economic growth and a more equitable distribution of national wealth, particularly in Indonesia and the southern Philippines, as well as reduced corruption and coercion, particularly by political elites in Malaysia, Indonesia, and the Philippines, the conditions which nurture militants will persist.

The author concludes that Southeast Asian states on their own have begun to work together. Statements condemning terrorism and urging intelligence sharing and collaboration among law enforcement authorities have been issued by Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF). However, he adds the most effective anti-terrorist cooperation has been bilateral, particularly between Singapore and Malaysia. The latest development, though, is a counter-terrorism agreement among Malaysia, the Philippines, Indonesia, and Thailand to monitor their porous borders, across which illegal migration is a major challenge. The efficacy of all these new joint efforts is problematic, however, given the limited surveillance and interdiction capabilities of Southeast Asian states.

The governments of the ASEAN core (Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, the Philippines, and Thailand) unanimously condemn terrorism. However, their collaboration with the United States varies both substantively and in degree of enthusiasm. Sheldon indicates that in discussions with moderate Muslim governments, the United States points out that the vast majority of the victims of Islamist-based terror are Muslims themselves. Southeast Asia's own moderate Muslim leaders insist that the faithful denounce terrorists who corrupt the message of Islam and paint an image of Muslims as vicious, violent, and cruel contrary to the peaceful, tolerant, and egalitarian character that is the heart of the religion.

The author concludes that Southeast Asian states recognize the importance of collaborating to fight transnational terrorism, but their capabilities to do so are limited, and the political challenge of Islamists varies greatly from state to state. United States offers of assistance are generally welcome, though no Southeast Asian government wishes to be seen as pandering to American demands, especially since many Southeast Asian Muslims insist that the U.S. war on terrorism is really an attack on Islam. Emphasizing the distinction between Islamist terrorists and the vast majority of peaceful Muslims is essential for both the United States and its Southeast Asian partners.

This chapter points out the three important issues: the reactions of the region's core states, the U.S. effort to create effective regional anti-terrorist cooperation, and the Southeast Asian states joint efforts to work together on common counter terrorism goals. The chapter makes good points about maintaining the U.S. influence in the region and reducing the religious conflict. United States policy is on the right track and should be continue. This is a well written and is recommended to readers who would like to know more in detail about this region.

Bush, George W., and Thaksin Shinawatra. "Joint Statement between the United States of America and the Kingdom of Thailand." *Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents* 39 (16 June 2003): 749-751.

In this article President George W. Bush commended Thailand's strong leadership in responding to the challenge of terrorism in Southeast Asia and its commitment to the international community to fight against all forms of terror and also expressed appreciation for the close U.S.-Thai partnership on counter-terrorism. President Bush and Prime Minister Thaksin agreed on the need to further strengthen bilateral and multilateral cooperation to combat terrorism. The two leaders discussed recent developments in the war on terror in Southeast Asia, welcoming the enhanced cooperation among Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) that has helped disrupt and eliminate terrorist threats from the region, and they agreed that the war on terror is far from over. The President praised Thailand for joining the Container Security Initiative, which is designed to enhance the protection of shipping against exploitation by terrorists. He also welcomed the plan that Thailand Minister of Foreign Affairs and U.S. Secretary of Homeland Security will sign the "Declaration of Principles" in Washington.

This article will also help readers to understand the strength and importance of the alliance between the United States and the Kingdom of Thailand that is built upon 170 years of close friendship and warm relations, as well as the long successful history of cooperation of the two nations. The two nations have to continue cooperation to maintain many common interests in this region. The United States influence and financial support are still necessary.

"ASEAN Regional Forum Issues Statement on Cooperation against Terrorism." 18 June 2003. Database on-line. Available from Lexis-Nexis. Accessed 24 October 2003.

This article is a statement of the chairman of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Regional Forum that addresses the fight against terrorism. He points out that efforts require a comprehensive approach and unprecedented international cooperation because terrorism has multiple dimensions, manifestations and causes and respects no national boundaries. Terrorism can link with transnational organized crime as well as the illegal movement of nuclear, chemical, biological and other deadly materials. The article points out that effective cooperation and the control of states over their borders and the denial of cross-border movement to terrorists and that of their goods, funds and material is critical to such an approach. The ARF also rejects any attempt to associate terrorism with any religion, ethnicity, race or nationality.

This statement stresses the leading role of the UN in fight against terrorism and calls upon ARF participants to become parties as soon as possible to the international conventions and protocols relating to terrorism and to fully implement the relevant UN Security Council Resolutions and remain fully committed to supporting the work of the UN Counter Terrorism Committee and other pertinent UN bodies. And it also welcomes the recent establishment of the Southeast Asia Regional Center for Counter-Terrorism in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

Finally, the ARF notes the significant progress that has been made by its participants in addressing counter-terrorism aspects of border security. The statement also encourages ARF governments to further enhance their effort and commitment to combat terrorism in a more comprehensive manner on a voluntary basis, taking into account resources and capacity of ARF participants.

This article can help the reader to understand the regional response to terrorism. The Southeast Asian nations have used the ASEAN Regional Forum and other venues to acknowledge terrorism and its linkages in the region. It stresses the necessity to address the Threats urgently, in all aspects and in all fora, and stresses the leading role of the UN in the fight against terrorism. This policy of ARF is on the right track and needs to continue cooperation and pressure on terrorists. In this way the ARF will become a more responsible player in the region.

Bush, George W., and Thaksin Shinawatra. "Joint Statement between the United States of America and the Kingdom of Thailand." *Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents* 37 (17 December 2001): 1790-1792.

This article focused on President Bush as he expressed appreciation for the Thai Government's support for the campaign against terrorism, including efforts to identify terrorist assets and money flows, reinforcing money-laundering legislation, and passing new anti-terrorism measures. The two leaders also expressed determination to expand counter-terrorism cooperation further through new programs such as the Terrorist Interdiction Program. Furthermore, the President welcomed Prime Minister Thaksin's commitment to sign all counter-terrorism conventions as soon as possible in accordance with the constitutional process in Thailand and welcomed the Prime Minister's offer to participate in the reconstruction of Afghanistan.

The leaders also pointed out the need for good relations and cooperation between the two countries in regard to combating narcotics, promoting quadrilateral counter-narcotics cooperation among neighboring countries and strong mutual commitment to open markets as the basis for expanding economic relations. Both leaders affirmed their shared commitment to protect the environment and agreed to sign an agreement to establish a Tropical Forest Conservation Fund, which would enable cooperation under the U.S. Tropical Forest Conservation Act of 1998. This article is useful because it outlines the cooperation between the two nations that spans in all aspects and all levels. It demonstrates and reaffirms the continued need for a robust alliance into the 21st Century.

Dalpino, Catharin, and David Steinberg. "The U.S. Should Support an 'ASEAN Way' to Fight Terrorism." *The PacNet Newsletter*. 29 March 2002. Available from <<http://www.ciaonet.org/pbei/csis/pac02/dac01.html>>. Internet. Accessed 25 October 2003.

In this article, the authors examine the issue of America's current unilateralist surge from Afghanistan to the "Axis of Evil" and that it is not sustainable, militarily or politically. They recommend that the United States must begin now to encourage and support regional counter-terrorism strategies in order to maintain a global war against terrorism, and strive to make it genuinely global.

The authors point out that the ASEAN framework still offers a foundation for cooperation between the U.S. and Asia and within the region. The United States should increase its priority and efforts in providing Southeast Asia encouragement and support for its counter-terrorism strategies.

They add that, since September 11, ASEAN has made several ad hoc moves to develop a common approach to counter-terrorism. The first-ever meeting of ASEAN military chiefs was held and counter-terrorism will doubtless be high on the agenda for the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) in the future. These are hopeful signs, but they don't amount to a regional framework more effort is needed.

The authors stress that the United States should encourage the development of such framework by looking beyond the immediate task of apprehending terrorists and also support regional cooperation that addresses the root causes of discontent. They also feel it is equally important that a regional framework for counter terrorism should support the development of nongovernmental networks in the region that approach these issues from a societal view.

Finally, the authors conclude that Washington needs simply to pay more attention to Southeast Asia in its Asian-Pacific dialogues. In the security environment after September 11, U.S. interests in the region are no less vital than in Northeast Asia. This is a good argument that supports both U.S. interests and interests of the nations in Southeast Asia for counter terrorism as a whole. Strengthening financial structure and security of this regional framework is an effective method.

Mohamad, Mahathir. "On Terrorism and the Real Issues." *Asian Defence Journal*. (October 2003): 6-14.

In this article, the author addresses the issue of international terrorism from various perspectives, including its causes, impact and remedy. He adds that a universal definition of terrorism should be properly formulated and accepted by all and should not be linked to any particular religion, race or creed.

First, the author focuses on differences in the views of different people at different times, and why it is difficult to get the whole world to join in the fight against terrorism. For example, some people and some countries provide shelter and protection for the terrorists because in their eyes these are not terrorists. He says it is important because people who some people describe as terrorists are regarded as noble freedom fighters by others. Some are condemned as terrorists one day, only to be considered respectable people another day.

Mahathir also says that terrorists believe that because innocent people had been killed it is right to retaliate by killing other innocent people. He also points out that terrorists are unprincipled, despicable people and questions whether or not civilized people should do unprincipled, despicable things like the terrorists did. Terrorists are not people who advertise their intention to commit acts of terror. They are not usually soldiers in uniform, although some can be. They can be like ordinary people. They need not stay in a particular country, but they can be everywhere and anywhere. Indeed, they can live as very ordinary people in the country they consider to be their enemy, against whom they intend to commit acts of terror.

To eliminate the terrorists, the author states that we must know who they are. Race, religion and country cannot be used to identify terrorists by their acts. In fighting terrorism, the author also stresses that one must not think of revenge. One must think of ways to make the world free of terrorists. And that is going to require a careful strategy.

He adds that we are in the midst of World War III, not the war against terrorists but was the war between terrorists and the peace loving antiterrorist alliance, the war between the "axis of evil" and Satan. Both sides are convinced that they are right, that theirs is the fight against evil. He stresses that Evil and Satan must be destroyed.

The author concluded that the whole world is suffused with hatred and anger. No one is seeking for anything else except revenge. Finally, he calls for examining the true causes of terrorism, remove the causes, and adds that if we don't, we continue to delude ourselves and that the fight against the terrorists will never end and the change in the world caused by terrorism will remain permanent.

As the Malaysia's Prime Minister, the author criticized and condemned the war on terrorism in a straight - forward manner. This article addresses interesting issues that any nation which would like to or have to conduct the war on terrorism in the future should be careful to note. But it is difficult to agree with him on some of the points he raises. For example, one issue that we must be concerned about is Muslims and Christians. He said that the war on terrorism is beginning to look more and more like a war against Muslims. Perhaps this statement could cause a problem and encourage religious conflict between Muslims and Christians.

Simon, Sheldon W. "Southeast Asia Solidifies Antiterrorism Support, Lobbies for Postwar Iraq Reconstruction." *Pacific Forum CSIS Comparative Connections* (2nd Quarter 2002): 1-9.

This article focused on the relationship between the core ASEAN states (Thailand, Philippines, Singapore, Malaysia, and Indonesia) and the United States with respect to antiterrorist cooperation, Iraq reconstruction and plans to reduce and reposition forces in the Pacific.

For Thailand, the author discusses Cobra Gold joint exercise–2003, which was tripartite exercise involving the United States, Thailand and a smaller number from Singapore, that focused on maneuvering, communications, gunnery, diving and salvage, and amphibious operations, and also included an antiterrorist component. He also adds Thailand appears to have become more deeply involved in the U.S. war on terror. Prime Minister Thaksin has allowed the CIA to interrogate suspected members of al-Qaeda in secure locations, and Thailand has let the U.S. Air Forces use Thai Air bases, Utapao, for both its Afghanistan and Iraq Wars.

Regarding terrorism, the author points out that Cambodian authorities, to their credit, closed a Saudi-funded religious school and arrested three foreigners for international terrorism and membership in Jemaah Islamiyah. These arrests occurred two weeks before the annual ASEAN gathering, in 2003 in Phnom Penh.

The author points out that the ASEAN foreign ministers, members of the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) met in Phnom Penh from June 16-19, 2003, focusing on regional progress with respect to the war on terrorism, concluded their discussions with a commitment to greater cooperation among law enforcement agencies to implement regional agreements, and revealed that they and United States would soon endorse a five-point counter-terrorist plan that could involve U.S. assistance in safeguarding shipping in the Malacca Strait, including the sharing of intelligence information.

The United States rewarded the states who support the war on terrorism and its war on Iraq, the author says that the Arroyo government got a substantial new military and economic aid program and that President Bush designated the Philippines a "major non NATO ally," the first Asian developing state to attain that status. Singapore's reward is in the realm of military equipment and a new free trade agreement. And Thailand has also been invited to participate in Iraq reconstruction.

He concludes that U.S. policy toward Southeast Asia encompasses several dimensions but the top priority is continued antiterrorist cooperation. It seems that the United States policy is on the right track and needs to continue to try and influence on the Southeast Asian nations by supporting them in all aspects, especially financial support on counter terrorism and military assistance.

U.S. Department of State. *U.S.-ASEAN Joint Declaration on Combating Terrorism*. Washington, D.C., 2002. Available from <<http://www.state.gov/p/eap/rls/ot/12428pf.htm>>. Internet. Accessed 25 October 2003.

The article describes the 2001 ASEAN Declaration on Joint Action to Counter Terrorism. In the joint declaration, the member countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the United States of America reaffirmed their commitment to counter, prevent and suppress all forms of terrorist acts in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, international law and all the relevant United Nations resolutions or declarations on international terrorism. Of particular note, is the importance of supporting the principles outlined in United Nations Security Council Resolutions 1373, 1267 and 1390.

The declaration focuses on the objectives, scope and areas of cooperation, participation and disclosure of information. The principle aim of the declaration is to strengthen cooperation at bilateral, regional and international levels in combating terrorism in a comprehensive manner and affirms that the United Nations should play a major role in this regard. This declaration points out the importance of having a framework for cooperation in all aspects to counter terrorism in Southeast Asia. A key point is that the nations in Southeast Asia cannot accomplish these objectives alone. The United States influence and financial support are necessary.

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