Terrorism in Southeast Asia

Nordic Institute of Asian Studies
“NIAS, together with its network of experts in political violence, recently conducted an investigation into the causes of terrorism and into the possibility of Danish development cooperation using its instruments in the containing of the root causes of terrorist violence. The final report was published by the Danish Foreign Ministry and launched in an international conference in Copenhagen at the beginning of September. Even though all the authors of articles in this NIASnytt participated in the investigation, NIASnytt readers are referred to the report (Ministry of Foreign Affairs: Development cooperation as an instrument in the prevention of terrorism. Research Report edited by Timo Kivimäki, Copenhagen 2003. More on p. 5) because the present issue of NIASnytt does not reveal the contents of the report; instead, it focuses on the special problems of Southeast Asia in relation to terrorism.”

Timo Kivimäki (see p. 4)

Contents

Terrorism in Southeast Asia • Timo Kivimäki 4

Is There an Al Qaeda Network in Southeast Asia? • PHAR Kim Beng 6

ASEAN and the Issue of Terrorist Threats • Anak Agung Banyu Perwita 8

Terrorism and Counter-Terrorism in Southeast Asia: Which is the Greater Threat? • Ruben Thorning 10

Counter-Terrorism in Thailand: A New Direction? • Michael Tivayanond 12

Terrorism in Indonesia • Timo Kivimäki 15

International Terrorism and the Weak State in the Philippines • Herman Joseph S. Kraft 19

Also in this issue

Editorial • Jørgen Delman 3

General NIAS Information 22–23

‘Terrorism and the Resurgence of Military Power in Indonesia’ • Sukandi Rinakit 21

NIAS Grants 24

Staff News 25

Recent Visitors 25, 28–29

‘Deforestation and Climate Change: A Nineteenth-Century Issue’ • Jeya Kathirithamby-Wells 30

New Books from NIAS Press 31–32

Call for Papers. ISSCO V New Chinese Migrants – Globalisation of Chinese Overseas Migration

See p. 26
These days, important negotiations are being undertaken in Beijing regarding North Korea's nuclear programme and the future of East Asian security (an issue dealt with earlier this year by *NIASnytt*). Elsewhere, the terrorist threat in South and Southeast Asia is more visible than ever, with attacks, counter-attacks and arrests of terrorist leaders filling the headlines of the national and international media. The current issue of *NIASnytt* takes a closer look at the situation and offers fresh insights often not found in the international media.

Meantime, away from the media spotlight, 1,200 academics from all over the world – including past and present staff from NIAS – recently met at the Third International Convention of Asia Scholars (ICAS 3) in Singapore, one of the biggest international conferences for Asia scholars (http://www.fas.nus.edu.sg/icas3/). The conference showed that the academic interest in Asia is unswerving, in Asia as well as outside.

Events and developments in Asia, whether those reported by the media, or the vibrant, day-to-day thud of busy and dynamic Asian societies, force us – as researchers – to constantly rethink and improve our own ways of looking at Asia as well as our position in relation to the Asia research scene. We also need to find out how we can be of more use to our stakeholders and users. If we misread or fail to notice the relevant signals, we shall fail or fossilize. NIAS is not the only institute that on a continuous basis must stay attuned to the needs and desires of its ‘customers’.

Which brings me to that ongoing issue, the future of NIAS. Not only at ICAS but also in recent months at many other conferences and meetings, NIAS staff have met Nordic and international colleagues who ask: ‘Is NIAS about to be closed? When is this going to happen?’

We are not entirely certain whether these questions are the sad consequence of lack of clear information from us or rather the result of hearsay being passed on. All too often, rumour and speculation are the currency of an environment in flux and where the destination is still unclear. This is what we and many other research institutions face today. Change is on the agenda for each and every one of us. We do not complain; such demands are what fuels our progress. We just have to make sure that we make our position clear to the outside world.

Asia does not stop, and this is exactly the reason why we do not intend to stop either. However, changes that are probably more important than what we have experienced in the past are imminent at NIAS. We have already informed you before that our current owners – the Nordic Council of Ministers – intend to find new owners for NIAS, while continuing to provide part of the core financing so that we can maintain our Nordic mandate.

At this stage, the Nordic Council of Ministers is scrutinizing a report from a consultant who has been hired to make proposals for a new ownership structure. Most likely, the next step will be the establishment of a working group with representatives from a number of Nordic universities plus our current Board. The group will have to design the new ownership while also reviewing our strategy, services and activities. It is our hope that some Nordic universities will play a strong role in the new ownership, since currently they are our main partners and stakeholders.

At the end of the process, we hope that we will maintain our independence, that we will be strengthened in terms of research capacity, and that we will maintain the crystal-clear Nordic mandate that we have today.

In the last issue we appealed to our Nordic readers to make their opinions about the future of NIAS known to those with interest and influence in their countries. We are still flying the ‘appeal flag’. We need your backing to move on. You may also consult our website ‘The Future of NIAS’ (http://www.nias.ku.dk/who/future/default.htm), where you will find a concept paper discussing our ideas.

Closure is not on the agenda. When the next issue of *NIASnytt* is on the street at the end of this year, there will have been more headlines from Asia. We shall also be able to tell you more about our own future. In the meantime, we look forward to a busy autumn calendar.

I hope that you will find this issue of *NIASnytt* pertinent and interesting. Enjoy your reading!
Terrorism in Southeast Asia

by Timo Kivimäki

Terrorism has become an Asian phenomenon. Last year three out of four casualties of terror were caused in Asia. It has been claimed that the focal point of terrorist activities is moving from the Middle East to Southeast Asia. In 2002, Indonesian incidents alone were responsible for almost one third of global deaths due to terrorism. Yet the direct victims of terrorism in Southeast Asia are just the tip of the iceberg. The strike in Bali on 12 October 2002 alone was estimated to have caused a million Indonesians to lose their jobs while counter-terrorist measures in Southeast Asia have claimed further lives and endangered the rights and freedoms in the fragile democracies of Southeast Asia. Terrorism has become a challenge that Asian studies need to respond to.

Connections of Southeast Asian terrorism are an interesting subject, which has been widely speculated on in the media. However, the media coverage has not been entirely fair about the regional efforts both among Southeast Asian terrorists and counter-terrorism officials. Southeast Asian terrorism and counter-terrorism are not led by forces outside the region, but instead the regional input has been crucial in both camps. Our effort is to be more balanced on this issue. While Kim Phar Beng’s article attempts to bring new, perhaps unexpected insights and interpretations to the discussion on international connections of Southeast Asian terrorism, Banyu Perwita looks into the regional approach to the prevention of terrorism.

We also seek a balanced view on violence caused by terrorism, as well as authoritarianism that uses counter-terrorism as an excuse. This balance deserves a separate examination which here is conducted by Ruben Thorning, who also maintains a database on terrorist organizations. This data source can be accessed from the on-line edition of this journal.

In addition to analyses of the region, the main regional trouble spots deserve some attention, too. Singapore and Malaysia have been hasty in accepting their terrorist threats and they have acted swiftly to avoid terrorist incidents. This has been explained as a reason for the fact that these two countries have so far escaped major incidents. However, both countries – but perhaps especially Singapore, which represents capitalism, non-Islamic values and wealth in the region – could in the future become a major target for regional terrorism.

However, the main problem countries are now Indonesia, the Philippines and Thailand. Terrorism in the Philippines is of an older origin and is very much mixed with separatism. Indonesia is often seen as the main regional trouble spot, while Thailand has recently developed into an important juncture for the regional terrorist organizations. These new hubs of regional terrorism are analysed in separate articles by Michael Tivyanond and by Timo Kivimäki, while the older terrorist problem of the Philippines is analysed by Herman Kraft.

It has not been our intention to select the writers of this issue on the basis of national representation, but perhaps the fact that the most suitable writers for this issue, in fact, can be found from Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, the Philippines, Finland and Denmark, testifies to the fruitfulness of Nordic–Asian collaboration. In the field of research on this Asian phenomenon of terrorism, Nordic tradition in peace research and softer approaches to security can offer alternatives and new insights to the tougher approaches and more straightforward perceptions of the Anglo-American countries. At the same time, it is clear that the regional analysis often succeeds to illuminate the socially constructed reality of political violence more accurately than the analysis of outsiders. This is why we hope that our readers appreciate our Nordic and Southeast Asian challenge to the mainstream perception of terrorism in Southeast Asia.

Terror can also be used by the state. This picture of Acehnese victims of state terrorism was given to the author by a member of Free Aceh Movement.
Development Cooperation as an Instrument in the Prevention of Terrorism

New NIAS study on aid and terrorism now available

NIAS recently undertook a study for the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs on the causes of terrorism and on the opportunities for Europe and Denmark to use development cooperation to address these causes. Some of the causes of terrorism identified were:

• Considerable groups in developing countries and some of the more developed Arab countries are economically, socially and politically deprived and terrorists often perceive them as their ‘constituencies’.
• From an international comparative perspective, Islamic people are often economically deprived; Islamic terrorists and their supporters are, on average, better off than their compatriots.
• Certain states lack ability or willingness to control the opportunities that terrorists or violent groups may exploit for political purposes.
• There is a lack of opportunity for non-violent political participation and/or protest.
• The ‘underdog’ has no opportunity to challenge the opponent(s) by using conventional military means.

The main focus of the report was on terrorism justified by Islam or embraced by Muslim communities. The report found that conflict and terrorism have potential and real links. It was recommended that development cooperation may contribute to the reduction of some of the causes of terrorism and may also shift the focus away from support for terrorism in Muslim communities. A set of detailed recommendations were proposed.

Dr Timo Kivimäki, Senior Researcher at NIAS, was the editor of the report. The research project behind it involved worldwide research networks.

The report was presented at an international conference organized by the Foreign Ministry on 4 September 2003. The conference was opened by the Danish Minister for Foreign Affairs, Dr. Per Stig Møller, and the concluding remarks were made by Ambassador Carsten Stauer, State Secretary of the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

In addition to Dr Kivimäki’s presentation of the research results, Dr. Olivier Roy, Research Director of the CNRS, Paris, Dr. Jørgen Bæk Simonsen of the Danish Institute in Damascus, Prof. Clement Adibe of the De Paul University (Chicago, USA), Professor Mats Berdal of the King’s College (London, UK) and Sheikh Fatuzy Fadel Ibrahim El Zafzaf from Al-Azhar University (Egypt) were among the scholars who presented their professional viewpoints on the topic.
Terrorism in Southeast Asia

Is There an al Qaeda Network in Southeast Asia?

by PHAR Kim Beng

Southeast Asia is the home to more than 200 million Muslim believers. Since the September 11th attacks, followed by the October 12th bombings in Kuta, the region has come under a cloud of suspicion as a haven for terrorist activities.

Now that the military campaign in Afghanistan has wound to a close, there have been reports of Southeast Asia becoming the ‘second front’ of the war on terror.

To compound matters, prior to the September 11th attacks, the perpetrators had met in Malaysia and other parts of the region, leading to the fear that Southeast Asia may be the springboard of terrorism. An al Qaeda recruit was also arrested in Malaysia, posing as a student of the International Islamic University in Kuala Lumpur.

Justified or not, the Association for Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) has already been accused of failing to recognize the ‘forces of jihad’ in its midst when Filipino al Qaeda operatives like Ramzi Yousef and Abdul Hakim Murad helped coordinate the first World Trade Center bombing in 1993.

Subsequent investigations also revealed that local militant Muslim groups have met with operatives of Al Qaeda before. While such preliminary contacts do not necessarily imply the existence of a far-flung terrorist network in the region, their meetings do raise serious alarm.

On the part of terrorists, they point to plausible efforts to cement their tenuous links. If left unchecked, the spectre of a full-blown international terrorist brotherhood that supercedes all other affiliations and loyalties cannot be ruled out. Invariably, such a network vitiates the process of nation-building, a key priority to many governments in the region. But does such a network really exist?

Network or Nest?

In contemporary analyses of the terrorism problem in Southeast Asia, especially of the post September 11 variant, the tendency has been to connect seemingly unrelated dots to form a vast network. Senior Minister Lee Kuan Yew has come out the strongest in making the claim that a network exists: ‘Osama Bin Laden has successfully twined together a broad range of local groups, each with its own history of struggle for its own objectives into a common universal jihad against the enemies of Islam. In the region (Southeast Asia), the groups include the Moral Islamic Liberation Front, Abu Sayaff, Kumpulan Mujahidden Malaysia and Jemaas Islamiah. Al Qaeda has coopted them into a larger common jihad.’ (Speech at the Shangri La Dialogue, June 2002).

It is this ‘network’ that provides material sponsorship and spiritual succor, argues one school of thought, to permit their numerous attacks on Western targets. Some scholars, together with policy makers in Singapore and the Philippines have subscribed to this notion.

This belief is only partially correct. To begin with, terrorism is used as the conceptual blueprint to explain religious and political violence in parts of Indonesia and the Philippines too. Yet, the two may not necessarily be related, as the conflicts emerging from places such as Moluccas, Mindanao or even Aceh, have localized roots.

Extremism or terrorism is a consequence of the aggravated local conditions; rather than inspired by the pan-Islamic ideology and the machinations of al Qaeda. Thus, in affirming the existence of a terrorist network in Southeast Asia, analysts of this school of thought are guilty of latching on to circumstantial evidence, rather than that based on true verification.

Indeed, true verification has to come from rigorous research, rather than from the confessions of Muslim clerics extracted from the state. The quality of the confession is further subject to doubt to as most were given under coerced conditions.

Secondly, there is also another line of thought that presupposes the historical antecedents of West Asia (i.e. Middle East) and Southeast Asia, especially those occasioned by trade and marriages, are sufficient precursors of a terrorist network based on Yemeni ‘connection’.

That is to say since most Yemeni traders had traded in Southeast Asia before, ergo, these links provide them with the infrastructure to plan their terrorist operations here, and with the local Muslim cells. Such an argument is problematic on two counts. The Yemeni connection cannot be easily revived for criminal ends. Nor is there
such a thing as a Yemeni connection in the first place.

Indeed, while it is true that most of the September 11th terrorists were of Yemeni origin, including Osama Bin Laden, the alleged lead sponsor, the terrorist operations were also planned in parts of Europe too. That there was no Yemeni ‘connection’ in Europe to ease the planning should imply that terrorists were neither guided by genealogy nor geography when they devised their plans. Rather, they chose to exploit the leeway afforded by liberal and open societies.1

The composite character of the religious groups in Southeast Asia further complicates the picture. Laskar Jihad of Indonesia, for instance, proclaims a peaceful three part mission which includes social work, Muslim education and ‘security mission’. Its membership attests to the sense of Islamic identity it provides to otherwise alienated Muslim men. The group fulfills its social missions by providing medicine and food to refugees and teaching the Koran to Muslims.

Moreover, Laskar Jihad continues to receive the support of the highest level of the Indonesian military to ensure its survival. Sympathizers within TNI (Tentera National Indonesia) are believed to provide the group with cash, and possibly arms, and to order officials in Molucca, where Laskar Jihad are most active in waging a war against Christian residents, not to crack down on Laskar Jihad members.

Indeed, according to Western intelligence sources, Laskar Jihad was actually founded with the covert backing of military hard-liners who wished to destabilize the post-Suharto reformist government of Abdulrahman Wahid. Jaffar Umar Thabh, the leader of Laskar Jihad, branded former president Wahid as an anti-Islamic.

Granted that Islam is integral to the social and political fabric of Indonesia, Malaysia and Brunei, a pan-Islamic ideology can pose a direct risk to the integrity of each regime, in turn affecting the fate of ASEAN.

Investigators in Singapore and Malaysia have shown that militant Muslim operatives in Southeast Asia have spoken of creating a ‘Darul Islam Nusantara’. This is a pan-Islamic state linked from one end of Mindanao to Aceh.

But despite such activities, it is one thing to affirm the existence of al Qaeda and yet another to attest to its network. In fact, such a loose definition may even be paradoxical, as terrorist cells are by nature hyper-exclusive. They are based on high level of internal trust to forestall the possibility of being arrested. Networks on the other hand imply swift exchange of information, even joint planning. But if such groups do indulge in these networking activities, their existence would be unduly compromised.

Conclusion
In any event, if al Qaeda’s brand of fundamentalism is allowed to take further root in the region, the political fall-outs in a region known for its heterogeneity would be severe.

In Thailand, the Thai Muslims could be stirred into taking a more activist role in Pattani. Nor are the Muslims in Brunei immune to the possibility of politicization, to the detriment of the monarchy. In such a scenario, ASEAN would be left more hapless than before due to the policy of non-interference.

Note
1. This argument is made by Zach Abuzar in his forthcoming work on Al Qaeda in Southeast Asia.

NIAS Library and Information Centre (NIAS LINC) has compiled a bibliography on Terrorism in Southeast Asia. The bibliography is in the form of a searchable database and is accessible at http://www.niaslinc.dk/gateway/terrorism.htm. Here you will also find a database of Terrorist Organizations.
Terrorism in Southeast Asia

ASEAN and the Issue of Terrorist Threats

by Anak Agung Banyu Perwita

Following the September 11 terrorist attack in the United States and the Bali bombing in October 2002, one of the crucial political security agendas of ASEAN is undoubtedly to contain the spread of terrorist threats in the region.

Basically, this issue, which has broadened the security agenda of ASEAN in the post-Cold War era from traditional security issues to non-traditional security issues, is not entirely new. The realities of the current global politics have re-emphasized the potential calamity of terrorist threats to humankind. In this era, the relationship between terrorism and globalisation is significantly complex. The globalisation has facilitated terrorism by making the borderless world, information and communication more accessible, and the transfer of funds is easier around the world.

In most cases, terrorist threats emanate from the revival of ethnic and religious nationalism (ethnic-religious terrorism). Vamik Volkan argued that it refers 'to a situation in which terrorist leaders have excessive attachment to their large-group identity and seek to enhance it through widespread violence and to perpetuate it under improved political conditions' (p. 157).

The region itself has experienced many armed separatist rebellions. Further, most of the armed separatism in Southeast Asia has had a considerable external dimension. In other words, they tried to internationalise and to attract financial, political and military support from other parts of the world. The armed separatist movements in Aceh and Southern Philippines which expressed their political activities in Islamic religion, for instance, had invited wider international Islamic solidarity and support. In this context, the region's many fragmented and fractious ethnic and religious groups can possibly provide a political basis for international terrorists to spread their activities. A leading terrorism specialist, Rohan Gunaratna, even argues that since the 1990s, the centre of gravity of terrorism has shifted from the Middle East to the Asia Pacific.

Conceptually, terrorist threats can be classified into a 'grey area phenomena'. Non-state actors and non-governmental processes and organizations can broadly define these phenomena, according to Peter Chalk, who further argues that these threats manifest in an aggressive manner and are usually associated with the activities of non-state actors.

The activities of terrorist groups, either to achieve economic or political purposes, primarily prepare and execute limited and sporadic tactics based on several characteristics, namely: using psychology of fear, inexpensive methods that can achieve relatively effective results, and conducting acts that are designed to invite optimum publicity.

The implications of terrorist activities in the region can be broadly divided into two levels: national and regional levels. On the first level, it could not only jeopardize the national resilience of the member states, but more importantly it could trigger the national disunity of the members. Regionally, terrorism could become a source of regional instability and insecurity.

Terrorism also involves other crucial activities such as arms smuggling, drugs trafficking and illegal immigrants. The main access for these activities is the openness of sea lines of communication in the region.

Considering the above characteristics and the possible trans-national network of terrorist groups, what steps might ASEAN take to eradicate or at least to minimize the terrorist threats in the region?

There are at least two crucial levels of containing terrorist threats in the region: national and regional level. At the national level, each member of ASEAN should have board inter-agency operations. These operations will not only include the ministries of foreign affairs, defence forces and the police but will also involve other agencies concerned with social welfare and home affairs. The initiative to establish a nationally integrated structure such as a national committee on terrorism can be seriously considered as an effort to better coordinate the inter-agency operations.

Considering the trans-national dimension of terrorism, ASEAN as a regional grouping should also consider to initiate regional or even multilateral cooperation, including fostering the maritime cooperation among the members. The nature of this multilateral cooperation should principally lie in formal and legalistic approaches to non-traditional security planning in order to promote a collective response to terrorism in the region. ASEAN also needs to re-consider its non-interference principle in combating terrorism due to the national, regional and inter-
Terrorism in Southeast Asia

Regional initiatives to combat terrorism in the region need to be coordinated under a comprehensive and codified form of agreement of all ASEAN members. As has been stated in ASEAN Leaders Declare Joint Action to Counter Terrorism the members agreed to:

1. review and strengthen national mechanisms to combat terrorism;
2. call for the early signing/ratification of or accession to all relevant anti-terrorist conventions including the International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism;
3. deepen cooperation among front-line law enforcement agencies in combating terrorism and sharing ‘best practices’;
4. study relevant international conventions on terrorism with the view to integrating them with ASEAN mechanisms on combating international terrorism;
5. enhance information/intelligence exchange to facilitate the flow of information, in particular, on terrorists and terrorist organizations, their movement and funding, and any other information needed to protect lives, property and the security of all modes of travel;
6. develop regional capacity building programs to enhance existing capacities of ASEAN member countries to investigate, detect, monitor and report on terrorist acts;
7. discuss and explore practical ideas and initiatives to increase ASEAN’s role in and involve-ment with the international community to make the fight against terrorism a truly regional and global endeavour;
8. strengthen cooperation at bilateral, regional and international levels in combating terrorism in a comprehensive manner and affirm that at the international level the United Nations should play a major role in this regard.

The significance of the above joint declaration and the regional cooperation on the combat of terrorism are due to political and security implications of terrorist activities to the region and the changing characteristics of international terrorism from the traditional to the more modern and sophisticated terrorist group.

Further, according to Steven Simon and Daniel Benjamin there are at least four developments which mark the advent of a new form of international terrorism: the significant rise of religion as the main impetus for terrorist attacks; the increasing lethality of attacks; the increasing technological and operational competence of the terrorists; and the desire of some terrorist groups to obtain weapons of mass destruction. Operationally, the ASEAN Secretariat can be the anchor of the regional initiatives on terrorism.

To sum up, any initiatives taken by the ASEAN Summit should be holistic and proactive in combating terrorism in the region. The multilateral cooperation on this non-traditional security issue will not only enable ASEAN to prevent the spread of domestic and international terrorists but it will also enable ASEAN to attain its claim to be a security community in the region. This could become a very significant political-security achievement of ASEAN in its 36th anniversary this year.

References

ASEAN Declaration on Joint Action to Counter Terrorism at their 7th summit on 4-5 November 2001 held in Bandar Seri Begawan, Brunei.


Canberra: Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, the Australian National University, p. 5.


Terrorism and Counter-Terrorism in Southeast Asia: Which is the Greater Threat?

by Ruben Thorning

The Bali bombings killed 202 people, and underlined claims that Southeast Asia was to become ‘the second front’ in the war on terrorism. The tragedy resulted in increasing outside pressure, primarily from the U.S., on the region, to clamp-down on local cells and cooperate more effectively on counter-terrorism measures. However, these counter-terrorism strategies risk escalating local conflicts and stimulating instability rather than tightening security in the region.

Southeast Asia in the post-911 World

Although initially denied by the Government of Indonesia, significant evidence now supports allegations that a Southeast Asian regional terrorist network, the Jemaah Islamiyah group, exists and is centred in Indonesia. More than 50 alleged members of the network have been arrested in six Southeast Asian countries. However, the issue of counter-terrorism in Southeast Asia goes beyond the targeting of prominent groups such as Jemaah Islamiyah and the Philippine Abu Sayyaf and MILF (Moro Islamic Liberation Front). The governments of Indonesia and the Philippines have consistently labelled domestic insurgency groups as terrorists, causing the emergence of a number of ‘terrorist’ groups, which have a large local support base (e.g. Gerakan Aceh Merdeka – The Free Aceh Movement and Organisasi Papua Merdeka – Organisation for Papuan Independence in Indonesia).

The danger of this strategy is that Southeast Asian governments could use the war on terrorism to target political opposition violently through draconian security bills. The war on terrorism could provide a cloak of legitimacy for measures of political suppression. In Indonesia, separatists in Aceh and Papua are consistently labelled as terrorists although none of the groups are known to deliberately target civilians. In Malaysia, the government’s allegations against the Muslim opposition party, PAS, too qualify as an example of this trend. The problem with this categorisation is that it gives legitimacy to campaigns against many groupings that, in a different time, would have been categorised as legitimate political opposition.

Furthermore, governments’ cooperation with the U.S. military adds to the discontent of particularly Muslim populations in Southeast Asian states. By sending military advisors and troops to the Philippines and reinvigorating cooperation with the Indonesian military, the U.S. is damaging their already poor image in those states, because America is being linked to failed military reform and authoritarianism. Thus, the war on terrorism and the policies it generates have a highly significant impact on both domestic and regional security structures of the Southeast Asian security complex.

When, in August 2001, Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia and the Philippines were discussing Islamic extremism in the region, they were particularly concerned with the many young Muslims from the region who returned from Islamic religious schools in Pakistan and Afghanistan after having been influenced by ‘hard-line Islamic teachers’. However, it has been stressed before and needs to be stressed again; radical Islam does not have a large following in Southeast Asia. The fear nevertheless, for secular governments and parts of the moderate majority, is that an Islamisation process, taking place in both Indonesia and Malaysia, will increase the power of Islamist groups, and eventually threaten their ‘secular and democratic values’.

Islam has certainly featured as a significant component in several of the most violent conflicts in the region. In Indonesia, GAM (Gerakan Aceh Merdeka – The Free Aceh Movement) has been fighting for an independent Islamic state in North Sumatra for decades and the Muslim militia, Laskar Jihad has been deeply involved in several violent conflicts. In the Philippines focus is on the MILF, the New People’s Army and the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG). In Malaysia, Singapore and, to a lesser extent, Thailand and Cambodia, the focus has been on local cells of Jemaah Islamiyah and, to some extent, the Kumpulan Militan Malaysia (KMM).
Political Opposition

The groups outlined above all have Islamic identification in common while their modus operandi and motives diverge. However, one thing they all seem to share is an anti-government stance.

It is a widespread assumption that terrorism in Southeast Asia is, at least partly, stimulated by authoritarian politics, political corruption and marginalisation of ethnic or religious groups. Such factors have caused social and economic deprivation which has fostered a general perception among local populations that their governments are incapable or unwilling to govern for the common good of the majority of its citizens. While separatist movements in Indonesia and the Philippines generally have been met by military force, the predicaments of the two countries differ somewhat on the issue of Islamic discontent. As a predominantly Christian country, it is easier for the Philippine government to clampdown on Muslim dissent. However, the case is quite different for the Megawati government in Indonesia, which is highly dependent on a fragile Muslim support. Malaysia is also facing an Islamic opposition, which has been strengthened over the past years.

Anti-Americanism

While the Arroyo government worries less about widespread Muslim upsurge in the Philippines, her government is widely criticised domestically because of its pro-U.S. stance. This applies even more to Megawati’s government; Indonesia saw some of the world’s largest anti-war/anti-U.S. demonstrations in response to the campaigns in Afghanistan and Iraq. The Muslim outrage does not only stem from feelings of fraternity, many moderates are also angered because they feel targeted and demonised by the counter-terrorist focus on Islamic threats. The situation is made even more problematic by the temptation of the financial rewards offered by the U.S. and Australia for compliance in the war on terrorism. As political analyst Rizal Mallarageng aptly put it: ‘We have millions of people who are living in poverty, and we have an economic crisis. So why don’t we ask for help in return for our loyalty and our partnership?’ The paradox is, that in order to get funds that could possibly reduce political instability, the governments must risk further instability by going against the will of the majority of the population.

American Strategies

According to Dana Robert Dillon and Paolo Pasicolan, ‘the war on terrorism has provided an opportunity for the U.S. to take a more active role in the region. Washington ‘should help improve the counter-terrorism capabilities of militaries in the region through training and equipment …’’. These phrases fit well with the State Department’s wording in The National Strategy to Combat Terrorism, which states that the U.S. will support weak states in building ‘institutions and capabilities needed to exercise authority over all their territory’ (p. 12).

The militaristic approach has been most visible in the Philippines and in Indonesia, and the intended strategy outlined above sparked significant controversy because many objected to the U.S. renewing ties with the Indonesian Armed Forces. Nevertheless, the U.S. in January reinstalled a program to train Indonesian officers in the U.S. The U.S. is also in close cooperation with the Philippine Armed Forces. Initially 650 American military advisors were sent to the Philippines to assist the government troops in their fight against ASG. Furthermore, American forces have been engaged in training exercises and security assistance in the troubled regions of the Southern Philippines.

Non-violent strategies adopted by the U.S. include intelligence sharing and enhanced communication with regard to terrorism related matters. However, with regard to the war on terrorism in general, very little attention is given to counter-terrorism strategies at the community level, for example by strengthening local NGOs working with local conflict issues. Or, at a higher level, appropriating more money to poverty alleviation and development programmes.

In a potential non-violent category lies an important aspect of American counter-terrorism strategy in Indonesia, namely the strengthening of the National Police Force through training and assistance programmes and supporting the country’s legal and regulatory regimes. The U.S. announced in August 2002 that it would give Indonesia US$ 50 m to combat terrorism. Of these, $31 m were designated for ‘police training’. Strengthening the police force could, if implemented wisely, be the most important start in a long-term approach to counter-terrorism and communal violence in Indonesia in general.

Conclusion

It is clear that the war on terrorism has provided an effective instrument for governments in Southeast Asia to target political opposition. However, this is actually more likely to increase than decrease the potential for violence in the region. The military strategies traditionally employed against insurgency in the region have

continued on p. 18
Counter-Terrorism in Thailand: A New Direction?

by Michael Tivayanond

Thai authorities have recently made several high profile moves in the field of counter-terrorism. Previously, the Thai government had been very hesitant in admitting any terrorist infiltration on its soil. The question facing many observers of the region is whether the current higher profile is indicative of a new direction of counter-terrorism in Thailand?

In June 2003 the Thai authorities arrested three individuals suspected of being involved with the Jemaah Islamiyah group. Arrests were made based on intelligence information supplied by the governments of Singapore and the United States, and after concurring with the evidence provided. These three were implicated by a member of the Jemaah Islamiyah, from Singapore who was arrested in Thailand (and thus deported back to Singapore) during the previous month. Directly linked to this was the recent apprehension of a suspected arms dealer in Thailand, who had in his possession thirty kilograms of cesium-137, a radioactive substance which could be used to construct a 'dirty bomb' – a conventional explosive device which could kill or injure through the initial blast and then by airborne radiation contamination. Additional intelligence reports have suggested that this material was intended for use for attacks by Jemaah Islamiyah on embassies in Bangkok, and during the upcoming APEC summit in October 2003.

For the Thai government, the affirmation of Jemaah Islamiyah members operating on Thai soil has represented an issue of key concern. The government had always declared that such elements were not operational in Thailand. Nevertheless, such arrests have been considered an important development in the country’s reinforced counter-terrorism programmes. They have also been highly praised by the security services of the United States, who claim that the operation itself was the result of nine months of investigation between the two countries. The Thai authorities have been quick to add that such arrests were not the result of any requests from any country and that they were acting on credible evidence, which, according to Thai authorities, cannot be disclosed at the moment for security reasons. Several critics, including Muslim leaders in Thailand, have suggested that these arrests have lacked any real evidence and that they have been orchestrated by the United States for the purpose of dragging Thailand into its inspired war on terrorism. Though such a position may be tempered by a history of political violence and the grievances of the Muslim ethnic minorities in the southern provinces of Thailand, the Thai authorities have been adamant that such elements were not the result of any foreign tourism, it was only after all, with their economies so dependent on foreign tourism, it was only obligatory that such a declaration be made to proclaim the safety of Southeast Asia. In this connection, travel warnings to Southeast Asia issued by Western governments have been severely rebuked by the ASEAN members. But it would also appear that the latest counter-terrorism initiatives, taken up by Thailand, have been heavily influenced by the campaign to purge a particular type of terrorist grouping, and by the desire of the United States to develop a more substantial intelligence presence in the region. As many regional observers have pointed out, the problem with this is that such a direction in policy is perhaps too suggestive of how the United States has been able to influence many of the ASEAN members’ recent counter-terrorism programmes. Though it is debatable whether this will result in the United States conducting potentially controversial counter-terrorist activity in Thailand, there are several concerns for Thailand that should be acknowledged. First, will such an approach to counter-terrorism bode well for the political and security situation in Thailand, and second, will the forthcoming technical assistance and military training provided by the United States have an effect in the suppression of political groupings in the region who may have been inappropriately labelled as terrorists?

A look into Thailand’s most recent counter-terrorism programmes would indeed reveal increased cooperation with some of its ASEAN neighbours to deal with transnational militant Islamic groupings, and increased
cooperation with the United States in intelligence operations. So far, Thailand has taken on the following measures as part of a revamped counter-terrorism programme:

- A counter-terrorism agreement with Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines and Cambodia that establishes a framework of cooperation and inter-operability of procedures for handling border and security incidents.
- Bilateral counter-terrorism agreements with Australia and the United States.
- The signing of an ASEAN-sponsored Declaration of Cooperation with the United States on counter-terrorism.
- The establishment of an inter-agency financial crimes group to coordinate counter-terrorism finance policy.
- A re-affirmation of the commitment to accede to the remaining seven of the twelve United Nations anti-terrorism conventions (Thailand is currently party to four of the twelve).

Further to this, Thailand has been active in cooperating with the United States in bilateral military exercises with significant counter-terrorism components. As for Thailand’s counter-terrorism ventures under ASEAN tutelage, it is unclear at the moment how ASEAN’s multilateral initiatives will spell out. Though the organisation has listed a variety of initiatives for its member states – such as advanced regional intelligence sharing procedures, an anti-terrorism task force to be set up in each country, and procedures for freezing terrorist assets – ASEAN’s track record in multilateral security cooperation has been limited. It is unlikely that the member states will fully cooperate on certain transnational terrorist issues if such an issue is directly related to an internal political conflict of another member state.

But when considering the extent to which Thailand’s counter-terrorism approach has been predisposed by the United States, it is important to consider first that the Thai authorities have articulated an inclination to approach counter-terrorism from an opportunity rather than motive platform. That is, more focus has been placed on dealing with the opportunity for terrorist activity in Thailand rather than the motive for it. Though it is essential when considering counter-terrorism policy that both agendas should be addressed, it is suggested that for Thailand, limiting the opportunity for terrorist activity has become a more urgent policy option. The debate over the motives vs. opportunity approach to counter-terrorism is not new. When considering a comprehensive policy to manage political violence, it is essential that the root causes of a political grievance be addressed. In other words, terrorism has a political purpose and, in this case, the reasoning to use violence against a civilian target for the purpose of delivering a political message is seen as a rational act. There is no doubt, however, that pinpointing terrorist motives is a complex task. It is not always easy to see how the motives behind an act of terrorism derive from religious, ideological, ethnic, historical, socio-economic, or nationalistic tensions. And it is not easy for governments to agree with how such factors validate a legitimate political grievance. For instance, it is not often the case that a state will recognise the political grievances of a group that has been at the receiving end of its own corruption or ethnically and religiously discriminating policies.

For the time being, it would be fair to say that restricting the capability for terrorist activity has become the central framework of operation for the Thai authorities. As security service personnel are being brought up to date on non-conventional terrorist activity (such as nuclear, biological, chemical or cyber terrorism), the practices of investigating into illegal arms and weapons transfers, monitoring possible terrorist elements with external links, protecting highly-valued potential terrorist targets, and enhancing civil defence operations will continue, with or without help from the United States or any other country for that matter. They are also working on the information that in Southeast Asia, the majority of terrorist activity has come in the form of bomb attacks on civilian targets, perpetrated by a terrorist group with extra-regional linkages. In all such programmes, intelligence work is critical – a factor that the Thai authorities have been particularly confident of, given years of military involvement in national administration. Though critics of this approach have warned of the security services being able to compromise certain civil liberties in their pursuit of such tasks, the authorities themselves have not been reluctant to stress the deterrent value of appearing hardline. For them there is every reason to do so. For one thing, the APEC summit in Bangkok, set for October of 2003, will bring together twenty-one heads of state from the Asia-Pacific region, not to mention the first visit by the President of the United States to Southeast Asia since the attacks on 11 September 2001, and in Bali on 12 October 2002. Given this and a substantial and sustained drop in tourist numbers brought on by the previous terrorist incidents and the recent SARS-scare, it is clear for the Thai authorities how their counter-terrorism techniques are unequivocally warranted.
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Terrorism in Indonesia

by Timo Kivimäki

The intensification of Islamic terrorist activities in Indonesia has surprised many students of Indonesian culture and religion. Did Indonesian religious practices not represent the most relaxed and tolerant form of Islam? For an international relations and conflict specialist, however, the Marriott Hotel bomb and the strike in Bali in October 12, last year seemed more predictable. In fact, such predictions were actually made, for example, in a background study on Indonesian and East Timorese political violence for the Finnish government in 1999: ‘Violent Indonesian Jihad could easily in the future be targeted against international financing institutions, and in the worst case also against international investments, companies and individuals, most notably tourists.’

The rise of terrorism in Indonesia could be foreseen and it can be explained by Indonesia’s conflict tradition and by changes in Indonesia’s international setting. The special features of Indonesia’s conflict tradition can be seen as a condition that makes Indonesia more vulnerable to terrorist militia activities, while the international changes offer violent groups a direct motivation for terrorism.

Militias as a positive thing

Militias are normally associated with something negative. Even in Indonesia, a conflict scholar would easily conclude that militias are the main security threat and the ‘least unlikely’ cause of Indonesian disintegration. However, the history of Indonesia has taught Indonesians to respect militias.

In some cases militias have been used as supplements to the official coercive apparatus. Most Indonesian political parties, for example, have their own militias to secure their activities and party members. But militias have also been very important for the national cause. Indonesian independence was won by militias in 1945–49. The colonial master, the Netherlands, was able to capture top political and military leaders of the nationalist republican forces, but the fight continued because of the fact that the army was based on relatively independent militias.

In the 1950s Indonesia obtained US support by claiming that without sympathetic policies in the West, communist militias could take over. In 1961–2 Indonesia won (back) West Irian by using militia fighters. The president could not be held responsible or be persuaded by force since the force against colonialism in West Irian was based on spontaneous militia activity rather than coordinated efforts by the national Indonesian defence forces. Indonesia also fought against the establishment of Malaysia by using nationalist militias. Again the Indonesian president could not be forced to withdraw the militias, simply because he did not have enough control over them. Indonesia’s defence against separatism has also secretly used army-trained militias.

Militias were also used extensively in the suppression of the communist opposition of President Suharto’s ‘New order’ regime in the 1960s. By using militias harsh measures have not caused as much international condemnation as they would have, had Indonesia used its own military forces for these operations.

Militias have thus not been so much a challenge to the monopoly of legitimate law enforcement for the Indonesian government. Instead, they have been allies to the state. Militiamen are often considered national heroes. Therefore, it was not surprising, when radical Islamic movements started to emerge at the turn of the millennium, that Indonesians were not alarmed by the fact that these movements also had armed wings of their own. In fact, up until the Bali incident, many Indonesian politicians openly supported movements that were already labelled as terrorist by the United States. Indonesia’s Vice President Hamzah Haz visited the Afghanistan-trained leader of the Laskar Jihad, Jaffar Umar Thalib, after the latter was arrested for a murder. In a press conference, Hemzah Haz called the convict his brother. Hamzah Haz also appealed for the release of Abu Bakar Bashir, the suspected leader of the infamous Jamaah Islamiyah, and referred to him as his teacher.

Humiliation of Islam and Indonesia

Anti-Western terrorism does not originate from religious circles. Many organizations want to keep religious teachers upfront for the sake of credibility, but this does not mean that Islamic terrorists are committed to Islamic teachings. Rather, religion comes to the picture in the definition of group interests: group interests of Islamic people.
## Terrorist strikes and campaigns in Indonesia

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Place</th>
<th>Target</th>
<th>Casualties</th>
<th>Suspected perpetrators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1999–2000</td>
<td>Moluccan Islands</td>
<td>Terror campaign against mosques, churches, Christians, Moslems</td>
<td>&gt; 5,000</td>
<td>Laskar Jihad; Laskar Kristen; various organized and spontaneous groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000–2002</td>
<td>Poso, Sulawesi</td>
<td>Terror campaign against mosques, churches, Christians, Moslems</td>
<td>~ 1000</td>
<td>Laskar Jihad; Red Army Christian Militia; Moslem Defence Front; al Qaeda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.9. 2000</td>
<td>Jakarta</td>
<td>Bomb in the Jakarta Stock Exchange car park</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Jamaah Islamiyah?; al Qaeda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24.12.2000</td>
<td>9 cities in Java</td>
<td>Simultaneous bomb attacks against churches</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Jamaah Islamiyah; al Qaeda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19.9. 2002</td>
<td>Palu, Central Sulawesi</td>
<td>Bomb in a Christian school</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23.9. 2002</td>
<td>Jakarta</td>
<td>Car bomb near a US Embassy building</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.10.2002</td>
<td>Manado, North Sulawesi</td>
<td>Bomb near the Philippine Consulate</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Miners angered over a licence row</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.10.2002</td>
<td>Kuta Beach, Bali</td>
<td>Car bombs near a night club</td>
<td>202</td>
<td>Jamaah Islamiyah; Laskar Jihad Young Turks?; al Qaeda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27.4. 2003</td>
<td>Jakarta</td>
<td>Bomb near the Sukarno-Hatta Airport</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Jamaah Islamiyah; al Qaeda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.8.2003</td>
<td>Jakarta</td>
<td>Marriott Hotel</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Jamaah Islamiyah; al Qaeda</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table above lists terrorist strikes and campaigns in Indonesia from 1999 to 2003. The data includes the time, place, target, casualties, and suspected perpetrators. The text continues with a discussion on how the economic crisis and political humiliations contribute to the motivations of Indonesian terrorism.

motivate terrorism more than Islam itself. It is known that violent Islamic radicalism is much more common in secular Indonesian universities than in religious universities. Furthermore, anti-Western terrorist organizations tend to have their headquarters in Java, the island which is known for its limited commitment in Islam. The Muslim Defence Front (Front Pembela Islam, FPI) became infamous for its raids of night clubs and discos mainly because a lot of alcohol was not destroyed, but rather consumed during the operation. Laskar Jihad militiamen, again, are known for their mass rapings after successful operations against Christians.

Instead of religious motivations, Indonesian terrorism is primarily motivated by hatred caused by the Western humiliation of Indonesia. After the collapse of the Soviet Union the United States has not had any strategic interest in pleasing Indonesians. As a result, during the economic crisis after 1997, Indonesia had to crawl in front of the USA and the Western financial institutions to get help. Indonesia had to make many concessions that it considered humiliating. Many Islamic militiamen interviewed for the NIAS project on Aid and Terrorism, said that they felt that Indonesia was especially humiliated by the pressures against Suharto to step down and by the diplomacy to ‘separate East Timor’ from Indonesia. Thus it was not surprising that the youth organization of Nahdatul Ulama, the biggest Islamic organization in Indonesia, declared the first Jihad against Australians and Americans shortly after the East Timor referendum. The feeling of humiliation and loss of dignity is also used to justify terrorist means: ‘When they humiliate us and take away our dignity as human beings, they are in fact, inviting reactions that are not humane.’

While Indonesia’s national development helps to explain why most of the victims of terrorism in Indonesia are Australians and not Americans, similar experiences as a member of the Islamic community might explain why Indonesian terrorism has taken an Islamic track. Islamic people are objectively economically and politically deprived, both in domestic and in the international economy and politics. Islamic people also receive a smaller allocation of international aid than their share of the third world population would justify. Wars in Afghanistan and Iraq have confirmed in the minds of Indonesians that this unfairness cannot be fought by using non-violent or conventional military

continued on p. 18
Violent Islamic Militias in Indonesia

Jamaah Islamiyah (JI, Islamic group), Est. 1993, linked with Laskar Jundullah (Legion of the Jundullah), Indonesian Mujahidin Council (MMI), Anti-American Terrorist Soldiers and Brigade Hizbullah.

- Alleged spiritual leader: Abu Bakar Bashir, the leader of the Indonesian Mujahidin Council (MMI). Denies his links to JI.
- After 911 Malaysia and Singapore have detained 50 alleged Jamaah Islamiyah operatives.
- Links al Qaeda to South East Asia; coordinates cooperation between radical Islamic militias in Southeast Asia and al Qaeda
- Vice President Hamsah Haz & former Parliamentary Speaker Abkar Tanjung have publicly defended Abu Bakar Bashir

Front Pembela Islam (FPI, Muslim Defence Front), est. 1997

- Raids against discos, brothels and bars in Central Jakarta; extraction of protection money
- Leader: Habib Rizieq Shihab
- Number of members unknown
- Al Qaeda sympathies (wearing Osama T-shirts)
- Supporters until Bali blast: Muhamadiya, Amien Rais (Chair, People’s Consultative Council)

Laskar Jihad (Ahlus Sunnah Wal Jamaah), Est. 1998

- War against Christians in the Moluccan Islands; raids of discos in Jakarta, Yogyakarta; harassment of Christian missionaries and separatists in Papua. Young turks of LJ possibly involved in Bali blast
- Leader: Jaffar Umar Thalib
- 10,000 members. Laskar Jihad is dispersing the bulk of its forces from Sulawesi and Maluku
- Leaders have no sympathy towards al Qaeda, but many of the followers have, training in Afghanistan, possibly also by the Indonesian military. Cooperates with MILF
- Alleged protectors: former Def. Min. Wiranto, Strategic Reserve (Kostrad) commander Djaja Suparman & former Jakarta Police Chief Nugroho Jayusman; after Bali, they dropped their support. Vice President Hamsah Haz has publicly supported the leader of the organization

Indonesian Muslim Workers Brotherhood (PPMI),

- Organized paid demonstrations and civilian militias that terrorized Jakartans after the downfall of Suharto 1998
- Leader: lawyer Aggy Sudjana (defended LJ leader)
- Weak support base
- Takes distance from al Qaeda, condemned Bali blast as an un-Islamic act

Banser (Barisan Serba Guna = Multi Purpose Front), Est. 1965. Militia of the Nahdlatul Ulama, NU, Indonesia’s largest Islamic movement. NU has 40 million followers

- Very extensive violence against Communists after the alleged Communist coup attempt in 1965.
- NU’s former chairman was Abdurrahman Wahid, Indonesia’s former president, and is currently led by Hasyim Muzadi, presidential candidate who visited Denmark in August this year
- Strong support base
- Strongly against the terrorist Moslems, committed to religious freedom. Backed Anti-Terror Decree’s after 18.10. 2002
- National Awakening Party, PKB, Abdurrahman Wahid

Komando Kesiapsiagaan Angkatan Muda Muhammadiyah (KOKAM, Vigilance Command of Muhammadiyah Youths), Military wing of Muhammadiyah, which has 30 million supporters

- Involved in the anti-Communist killings in Indonesia after the alleged Communist coup attempt in 1965.
- Current leader: Syafii Ma’arif
- Formerly supported the FPI/FDI, after Bali demands their arrest. Backed Anti-Terror Decrees after 18.10. 2002
- National Mandate Party, Amien Rais (Chair, People’s Consultative Council)
continued from p. 16

means. In these wars international law and the rights of states have been pushed aside and military power has ruled. As a consequence, there is a general perception among Indonesians that the world is divided between the Islamic people and the West, and that in this division non-violent political means and means utilizing existing laws are not applicable for the underdog. Even conventional wars lead to humiliating defeats. According to an opinion poll published this year by the famous PEW polling centre, a majority of Indonesians, as well as a majority of Islamic people in most of the other countries studied, felt that terrorist means against Western civilians are sometimes justifiable.

Culture of tolerance towards terrorism

A culture of tolerance towards terrorism in Indonesia has been a result of three factors. On the one hand, militias have a positive association in Indonesia. Secondly, people feel a justified anger for the marginalized position of their country and the Islamic population of the world. Thirdly, they perceive that there are no fair means to challenge the global top dog. In this kind of a climate it is not surprising that a small number of frustrated young men feel that they have to do something desperate for the defence of ‘their constituencies’; Indonesians and Muslims.

Indonesian terrorists are not themselves impoverished, poorly educated or marginalized. On the contrary, like most terrorists in the world, they are well educated and wealthy. Their elite position is the very reason for the fact that they feel that it is up to them to act: ‘I did not get involved in fighting because I would be poor, but because I am one of a people who is poor. The fact that I am not poor and uneducated means that I have certain political responsibilities for the poor people of Indonesia.’ However, poverty and marginalization of Indonesians and Muslims together with the culture of tolerance towards terrorism has created opportunities for young, frustrated elite members to prove their heroism for an oppressed people. These opportunities, much more than serious religious commitment, motivate young Indonesian terrorists.

Consequences

In conflict situations there is a tendency for each party to exaggerate the homogeneity of the opponent as an agent: punishment of just any of the Westerners is seen to hurt equally the Westerner that is the intended target of the punishment. Likewise, the bad intentions of one of the Westerners are seen by terrorists as being shared by all Westerners. Thus, when other means of protest and combat are not available, targeting of civilians is seen as an option. However, as we have seen, anti-American terrorism has given a new rationale for the United States to strengthen its international leadership position, and the existence of Islamic terrorism has given an additional reason for some people to discriminate against Muslims.

Also Indonesian terrorism has bounced back and further hurt the already humiliated Indonesians. Tourism employs about 8 million Indonesians and contributes US$ 5.4b to the national economy. The Bali bomb effectively crippled the Indonesian tourism industry for some time and the Marriott bomb did not improve the situation. Merely because of the Bali incident, economists estimate an increase of one million in the official number of jobless people in Indonesia. The number of underemployed will also grow proportionally. Terror in Indonesian has been a strategy that rises out of weakness and helplessness, but as such it has only further weakened and marginalized the ‘terrorist constituencies’. The young militia heroes have become anti-heroes.

Notes


2 This citation is from a civil servant (!) and he referred to us as the Muslim population. This statement was related to the war in Iraq and its effects on terrorism. It is interesting to note, how the perception of sides (Islam against the US) in many interviews in Indonesia (conducted by Kivimäki in April 2003) was the same among radicals and people who were supposed to feel ownership for the common effort to clamp down on terrorism.

3 Interviewed by the author in Jakarta, February 2000.

continued from p. 11

only made the violence more durable, and it is unlikely that demonising political opposition further, will bring stability to the volatile regions of Southeast Asia.

If the Southeast Asian states and the U.S. continue to focus on military solutions, the strategies applied will only treat the symptom, not the disease. A report on Development Cooperation as an Instrument in the Prevention of Terrorism recently produced for the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs by a research team at NIAS concluded that military solutions in counter-terrorism should be carefully targeted and efficiently, and democratically monitored: the use of counter-terrorism as a legitimization for human rights violations could make the medicine more deadly than the disease. Counter-terrorism in Southeast Asia could learn from this conclusion.

Note:
Data on these groups can be found at the NIAS project’s database at http://www.niaslinc.dk/gateway/terrorism.htm.
International Terrorism and the Weak State in the Philippines

by Herman Joseph S. Kraft

This article looks at the linkage between the Philippines involvement in the ‘global war on terror’ and the stability of the country. It is argued that instability in the Philippines is due to the weakness of the Philippine state. The growth and persistence of terrorism in the country is, in fact, indicative of the weak Philippine state. At the same time, however, terrorism exacerbates the inability of the Philippine state to enhance the stability of the country.

While the Philippine involvement in a campaign against terrorism pre-dates the September 11 attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, evidence of the intensification of cooperation between armed groups in the country opposed to the government and the Jemaah Islamiyah (JI), the Southeast Asian chapter of al Qaeda, has changed the nature of the terrorist war in the Philippines. The main issue that has emerged is the question of the extent to which the internationalization of this war in the Philippines affects the stability of the country. A direct result of the internationalization of the war against terrorism in the Philippines is the re-emergence of Philippine–US security relations, something that had lain moribund for a long time. As such, its critics have argued that the Philippine government’s unquestioning support for the United States-led international coalition against terrorism, has made the country more open to terrorist attacks, especially involving foreign terrorists. Supporters of the policy on the other hand, have said that US assistance in fighting the Abu Sayaff has been instrumental in the gains that the government has had against terrorism in the Philippines. This debate misses out on an important point – terrorism per se is the not the main cause of instability in the Philippines.

By and large, it is the weakness of the Philippine state which stands as the critical issue of stability that any political leadership in the country will have to first contend with. In one of the major works which first explored the conception of the weak state, Joel Migdal described it as a state whose capabilities in penetrating society, regulating social relationships, and extracting and appropriating resources are extremely limited. At the turnover ceremony of the Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces of the Philippines in 2002, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo pointed to the problem of the weak Philippine state as the principal reason for the country’s continuing malaise. She was quoted by Philippine Star as saying that the ‘state is weak if dominant classes or sectors control it or shape government policies, especially those dealing with the economy’. The wide gap between the rich and the poor, a political system based on patronage that breeds corruption, and an over-preoccupation with politics were alluded to as the symptoms that show the weakness of the state in the Philippines. These factors all impact on the ability of the government in its fight against international terrorism.

In the Philippines, the issue of terrorism begins with the Abu Sayaff, a group which emerged out of the Afghan resistance against the Soviet occupation of...
Terrorism in Southeast Asia

the country. It was first noticed by the AFP in 1992 when it began to engage in activities primarily involving the kid-napping and killing of Christians and the bombing of Christian places of worship in Western Mindanao. Their connection to international terrorism was initially established when it was discovered that they had helped Ramzi Ahmad Yousef (who was taken into custody by the United States for complicity in the bombing of the World Trade Center in 1994) move in and out of the Philippines. Since then, there have been a number of reports of foreigners training with them and the MILF, Moro Islamic Liberation Front, (especially when Camp Abubakar was still under its control) and even taking part in their operations.

The involvement of foreigners added a new dimension to the terror equation in the country. The 30 December bombing of the Light Rail Transit train bound for Baclaran killed 22 people and injured scores of other commuters. At first, the attack was thought to have been the handiwork of the Abu Sayyaf. Later, however, Al-Ghozi, an Indonesian, was arrested and held in connection with the bombing. Al-Ghozi was identified as having been seen in Camp Abubakar when it was still under the control of the MILF.

In the investigation which followed the September 11 attacks, the linkage between the Abu Sayyaf, al-Qaeda and the Jemaah Islamiyah in Indonesia became clearer. At the initial stages of the development of the Abu Sayyaf, bin Laden had sent a brother-in-law to coordinate with them. Money was provided and an attempt was made to arrange a merger between the Abu Sayyaf and the MILF. The relationship never really developed though there were reports of joint operations in Zamboanga and joint training in Camp Abubakar. Eventually, these connections between the Abu Sayyaf and the Jemaah Islamiyah were revealed after the capture of Al-Ghozi.

The internationalization of the terrorist war led to the involvement of United States military forces in the Philippines. 650 troops were committed to the Philippines to train local forces and join patrols against Muslim rebels. President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo had declined an offer from President George Bush of direct US military support in the Philippines but accepted $90M in military aid. President Arroyo has openly set her government on the side of the Americans in its war against terrorism. At the same time, nationalists have already expressed their concerns over the increased military relations between the two countries and the possibility of increased U.S. military presence in the country.

The backlash from the direct involvement of the Philippine government in the international war on terror has already become evident. Hamsiraj Sali, one of the five leaders of the Abu Sayyaf on the US wanted list of terrorists, warned that the Philippine government’s support for the US-led global war on terror and its new military agreement with the US makes the country a prime target for terrorist attacks. The December 2000 bombing of the Light Rail Transit train showed that this is not an idle threat.

At the same time, the weakness of the Philippine state multiplies the impact of terrorist activities. The bombings on 19 and 20 October 2002 in Zamboanga and Manila exposed the volatility of the peso and the stock market as both dropped significantly.

The military rebellion that took place on 27–28 July 2003 further complicates the situation. The possibility of a coup d’état by the AFP has been rumoured since the military withdrew its support for President Joseph Estrada. In early November 2002, former AFP Chief of Staff Lisandro Abadia declared that the slow implementation of a pay hike for soldiers was causing unrest in the military ranks and fueling fears of a military coup. Abadia noted that recruitment of those willing to join the coup is gaining ground because of issues against the Arroyo administration. He said that recruitment is ‘going on in three Army divisions, the Army’s Special Operations Command, Philippine Marines and the Air Force Strike Wing’, reaching up to the level of Colonel (field command level). While the rumors of military restiveness in late 2002 are different in nature from what took place in July 2003, both indicate the environment of uncertainty under which the Philippine government is operating.

Terrorism has a destabilizing effect but this should be manageable to a state which has complete control of its domain. In the case of the Philippines, the impact of the war on terror is multiplied by the weak Philippine state. The effect of a heightened terror campaign, especially if conducted in Metro Manila, would definitely place the weak Philippine state in crisis.

References


Terrorism and the Resurgence of Military Power in Indonesia

Sukardi Rinakit

Although the situations in the Philippines and Indonesia are quite different, there are those who argue that just as in the Philippines the weakness of the Indonesian state – or at least of its civilian politicians – has hampered the war on terrorism in Southeast Asia. Since the end of the Suharto regime, the military has had a greatly reduced presence in Indonesian politics and society – a situation that has not pleased many in the military. Especially, there had been concern about the death of Pancasila as the state ideology and consequent resurgence of cleavages and conflicts in society. The Bali bombing confirmed these fears and stiffened the military’s resolve to act in defence of national unity. The result has been increased military involvement in day-to-day politics. This shortened excerpt from Sukardi Rinakit’s forthcoming book on The Indonesian Military after the New Order explores the possibility that terrorism could lead to the military’s return to power. Here, the changed attitude of the United States is significant.

The Western view, especially from the United States, on civilian government in the developing countries has shifted since its declaration of war against terrorism after the 11 September 2001 terrorist attack. Issues like democratization and the military’s withdrawal from the political arena are no longer on her foreign policy agenda. In fact, the United States is disappointed with civilian governments in developing countries for being too slow and weak in responding to terrorist threats.

In the Indonesian case, such United States disappointment was exemplified by the strong criticism of Indonesia by Deputy Secretary of Defense, Paul Wolfowitz. He criticized the Indonesian government for doing nothing to suppress terrorism in the country and stated that the United States took a dim view of the country for not supporting her efforts in tackling terrorism (Kompas, 11 October 2002). Following his comments, United States military aid to Indonesia was postponed temporarily.

As head of a country where the majority of the population are Moslems, it was not easy for President Megawati to take firm action against the Islamic organizations that were considered to be radical groups. The attitude of most Islamic leaders in the country, particularly from those Islamic political parties that supported the Islamic organizations identified as radical, caused more difficulties for the government to take action against them.

The slow response of civilian leaders, as shown by the Indonesian government, has opened up the possibility for the United States to reconsider the return of a military regime in the country. The firm attitude of Pakistan’s military regime under General Musharraf in fighting terrorism furnished evidence for the United States on how effective a military regime can be in supporting US foreign policy, compared to civilian regimes. Therefore, as mentioned earlier, there is a possibility that the United States would consider Indonesia’s return to a military regime.

If the United States proceeds with that, Indonesia is fertile ground for the military to make a comeback for power in the future. This is because the Indonesian military, like the Turkish Army, traditionally prefers secularism to sectarianism. The emergence of radical Islam in the country has displeased the military; its displeasure is even greater since the leaders of political parties are busy pursuing their own interests. In such a situation, the United States’ support will determine whether the military will maintain its role as guardian of the state or seize power for itself. The direction, of course, will be determined by the younger generation of the military, most of whom are disappointed with their seniors because the latter conducted internal reforms of the military.

However, it is difficult to predict which scenario is likely to happen in the future. Besides the US role, four other indicators will determine the future role of the military. These are the maturity of civilian politicians, the success of the civilian regime in developing economics and politics, the development of a civil society in the Republic, and the ability of the civilian government to provide for the military’s budget and modernize its equipment and weapons. If these four indicators take place, the idea of civilian supremacy will win and the military will have to return to its barracks. In contrast, if these fail, the military will take over.

The Indonesian Military after the New Order
Sukardi Rinakit

NIAS, November 2003, 256 pp., illus.
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**Guest Researcher Scholarships for Nordic Scholars**

This type of scholarship is designed for senior researchers and doctoral candidates based in the Nordic countries. It offers researchers an opportunity to work at NIAS as an affiliated researcher for 2 or 4 weeks. A scholarship includes inexpensive travel to and from Copenhagen and accommodation with full board in a NIAS room at Nordisk Kollegium. The guest researcher enjoys full access to the Institute's library services and research tools, computer facilities, contact networks and scholarly environment. Stays are arranged subject to a time schedule administered by NIAS.

The application form is available at http://www.nias.ku.dk/activities/supra/NIASNordicGuestResearcherSch.doc

**Contact Scholarships for Nordic Graduate Students**

These scholarships are designed to make NIAS's library and other resources accessible to graduate students in the Nordic countries. A scholarship covers inexpensive travel to and from Copenhagen and accommodation with full board in a NIAS room at Nordisk Kollegium for a period of two weeks. Stays are arranged subject to a time schedule administered by NIAS.

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Researchers and students from Lund and Roskilde universities are invited to apply for NIAS's 'Øresund Scholarships'. The candidate will be seated in the library's reading room and will be offered the same extended library services as the regular holders of contact scholarships. Only transport costs are covered by the scholarship. Accommodation costs and incidental expenses are not covered. Stays are arranged subject to a time schedule administered by NIAS.

Find the application form at http://www.nias.ku.dk/activities/supra/NIASresundScholarshipAppliac.doc

**Application Deadline**

Monday 3 November 2003 for scholarships during the period January–April 2004.

Further information on NIAS's scholarship programme on the web:
http://www.nias.ku.dk/activities/supra/scholarships.htm#students.
We bid a fond farewell to Liz Bramsen who graced both staff and visitors with her gentle charm. She was a key person in the development of NIAS’s publication programme and the launch of NIAS Press. Our authors especially appreciated how she saw their books through to publication in a friendly but capable manner; for Liz it was always the person that came first. Not least will we miss her warm smile, rich laughter and haunting singing voice.

Nis Høyrup Christensen, Department of Political Science, University of Copenhagen, has a studieplads at NIAS until 18 February 2004. He is working on a MA thesis on *Capitalism in China*. Nis has formerly been employed at DUPI (now Institute for International Studies) and has worked for half a year as a trainee in the political section of the Danish Embassy in Beijing.

The seminar on ‘Tibet Just Now’ was organised by NIAS in collaboration with the Danish newspaper *Politiken* on 3 June: From left: Prof. Mette Halskov Hansen, University of Oslo, Dr Tsering Shakya, Research Fellow, SOAS, University of London, and Ms Heidi Fjeld, PhD Student, University of Oslo. The seminar was organised on the occasion of the visit to Denmark of His Holiness the Dalai Lama.

Recent Visitors

Morten Kjærgaard Retof joined the NIAS team for June–September as a trainee to assist John Christensen with the accounts. He is a student at Niels Brock Business School.

Retoft

Carol Richards, originally from Canada, joined the Institute on 1 September to work in the accounting and administration departments, and NIAS Press. She also takes care of the Reception.

Li Narangoa (Nara) held a Guest Researcher Scholarship in 14 April – 9 May. Nara is working on a book project together with Ole Bruun.

Stine Lykke Nielsen, University of Aarhus, held a Contact Scholarship in May. Stine Lykke Nielsen is working on an MA-thesis on *Chinese Interpretations of Sustainable Development*. Carol Richards

NIASnytt no. 3, 2003 25
The Department of Asian Studies, University of Copenhagen, and the Nordic Institute of Asian Studies, Copenhagen, are pleased to announce the Fifth Conference of the International Society for the Study of Chinese Overseas (ISSCO V).

Date: 10–14 May 2004  
Venue: LO-School, Elsinore (Helsingør), Denmark  
Website: http://www.nias.ku.dk/issco5/  
Key-note speakers: Professor Wang Gungwu, National University of Singapore, and Professor Ron Skeldon, University of Sussex

The primary objective of the Fifth International ISSCO conference is to examine the implications of globalisation and the recent phenomenon of increasing out-migration from the People's Republic of China. The process of globalisation accelerated by transnational financial and commercial developments and innovations in transportation, Internet technology and telecommunication has increased human mobility. Chinese migration is taking new forms by which new types of migrants from a variety of geographical and socio-economic backgrounds are on the move to new destinations.

These developments suggest that scholars need to re-address their studies about migration from China. New paradigms for migration studies and processes have to be worked out to understand the significant political, economic, social and cultural consequences of migration from China. The 5th international conference of ISSCO should strive to serve this purpose.

Sub topics  
Topics within social sciences, history, literature, and the arts related to Chinese migration.

Call for papers, panels and posters  
The ISSCO V Organising Committee invites proposals for organised panels, individual papers and poster presentations relating to the main topic of 'New Chinese Migrants – Globalisation of Chinese Overseas Migration' or any other topic within social sciences, history, literature, or the arts relating to Chinese migration. For details on registration, see the conference website, http://www.nias.ku.dk/issco5/.

Conference language  
English and Chinese. No official interpretation will be provided.

Exposition, displays and sales  
Space will be allocated in front of the main hall to allow participants to bring materials for display and/or sale.

Organising Committee  
Mette Thunø, PhD, Associate Professor, Dep. of Asian Studies, University of Copenhagen  
Jørgen Delman, PhD, Director, Nordic Institute of Asian Studies (NIAS), Copenhagen

Conference Secretariat  
Anders Højmark Andersen, student assistant, NIAS  
Phone: +45 35 32 95 15  
E-mail: issco5@nias.ku.dk

ISSCO, the International Society for the Study of Chinese Overseas, was established in 1992 as a scholarly, non-political and non-profit professional society of individuals and institutions interested in and committed to the study of Chinese overseas. The primary purposes of the society are to advance research and scholarly exchange in the study of Chinese overseas, to provide means for research and publications, and to organise and support national and international conferences.
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Recent Visitors

Elina Ekoluoma, Uppsala University, will held a Contact Scholarship 26 May–6 June. She is carrying out a doctoral project on Everyday Life in Bulikago: Identities and Social Relations in Tourist-Oriented Prostitution in the Philippines.

Erika Wasserman, Uppsala University, had a Contact Scholarship in May. She is working on an MA-thesis on Foreign Ideas in a Local Context (Laos).

Camilla Tenna Nørup Sørensen, the University of Aarhus, held a Contact Scholarship in May. She is working on an MA thesis on The Security Situation in Northeast Asia – Optimistic Trends but Near-term Challenges.

Elina Ekoluoma, Uppsala University, will held a Contact Scholarship 26 May–6 June. She is carrying out a doctoral project on Everyday Life in Bulikago: Identities and Social Relations in Tourist-Oriented Prostitution in the Philippines.

Cesar de Prado Yepes, Guest Researcher at the Lund Centre for East and Southeast Asian Studies, held an Øresund Scholarship in May–June.

Marianne Hester, University of Sunderland, UK, held a Guest Researcher Scholarship at the beginning of June. She is collaborating with Senior Researcher Cecilia Milwertz, NIAS.

Jang-sup Shin, National University of Singapore, held a Guest Researcher Scholarship in May–June. His research is pertinent to NIAS’s research themes on ‘Corporate Governance and The State and the Private Sector’ and at NIAS he collaborated with Senior Researcher Geir Helgesen (NIAS). Jang-sup Shin’s stay was sponsored by the Swedish School of Advanced Asia Pacific Studies (SSAAPS).

Jaana Karhilo, London School of Economics and Political Science, had a Contact Scholarship in April. She carrying out a Ph.D. project on Conflict Prevention and State-Building in Kosovo and East Timor.

Marianne Hester, University of Sunderland, UK, held a Guest Researcher Scholarship at the beginning of June. She is collaborating with Senior Researcher Cecilia Milwertz, NIAS.

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Delsy Ronnie (1st from right), Aceh Institute for Social Political Studies, Banda Aceh, Indonesia held a Guest Researcher Scholarship 26 May–20 June. He collaborates with Timo Kivimäki (2nd from left), NIAS. The other visitors in the photo are Robert Cribb (1st from left), ANU, Canberra, Jacob Trane Ibsen (3rd from right), Copenhagen, and Mason Hoadley (2nd from left) Lund University.
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Tony Fang, Stockholm University School of Business holds a Guest Researcher Scholarship 4 – 15 August. Tony Fang is carrying out a research project on Negotiating Business in the “United States of China”. Tony Fang will give a seminar presentation on Thursday 14 August (details below).

Gry-Irene Skorstad, University of Bergen held a Contact Scholarship in June. Gry-Irene Skorstad is working on an MA-thesis on The Implementation of the Family Planning Policy in China – China’s Forbidden Children.


Ann-Louise Bäcktorp, Umeå University, had a Contact Scholarship 26 May–6 June. She is carrying out a doctoral project on Educational Transformation in Laos – The Construction of Gender and Power.

Paulus Maasalo (left), University of Helsinki, and Tiejun Zhang, Göteborg University, both held a Contact Scholarship in August. Paulus is carrying out a PhD project on Track-Two Diplomacy – Managing Potential Conflicts in the South China Sea, while Tiejun Zhang’s PhD project is on China as a Rising Power: Security Strategy in the Early 21st Century.

Noralv Pedersen, Norwegian University of Science and Technology in Trondheim held a Contact Scholarship in June. He is working on an MA-thesis on The Timorese Democracy – A Clash of Paradigms.

Dinh Trong Thang from the Central Institute for Economic Management (CIEM) in Hanoi visited NIAS in June. He was trained in the use of electronic resources partly in the NIAS Library and Information Centre and partly at the Institute of Economics, University of Copenhagen.

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Deforestation and Climate Change:
A Nineteenth-Century Issue

Jeyamalar Kathirithamby-Wells

The 2003:1 issue of NIASnytt reproduced a brief excerpt from Susan Martin’s ‘UP Saga’, describing how tough plantation life was in 1930s Malaya. But what becomes abundantly clear in the mammoth history of peninsular Malaysia’s forests by Jeya Kathirithamby-Wells (soon to be published by NIAS Press) is that clearing the land was even more arduous. British efforts in this direction began in Penang, which was acquired in 1786 from the Sultan of Kedah (in return for protection against his enemies) by the English trader, Captain Francis Light, acting on behalf of the East India Company. The story has it that, in his haste to clear land for a settlement on what was then a densely forested island, Light loaded the ship’s cannons with silver dollars and fired them deep into the jungle so as to spur the labourers to clear the undergrowth at a quicker pace. But that was just the beginning.

Although the bulk of ‘Nature and Nation’ deals with the British colonial period in peninsular Malaysia, the book is not as such a colonial history. What makes the study such a groundbreaking work is that it goes beyond environmental and economic history to consider the spiritual, intellectual and social forces that have shaped – and been shaped by – the forests of Malaya. In so doing, the author makes clear to the reader that many of the environmental issues concerning us today are not new; similar concerns were voiced and acted upon over 150 years ago by scientist-administrators of the British Empire.

British intervention between 1874 and 1888 in the mineral-rich States of Perak, Selangor, Negeri Sembilan and Pahang marked the beginning of a dramatic phase of environmental change in the west coast... The pioneer landscape that shaped Residency rule encouraged the emergence of a class of naturalists-cum-administrators who arrived at an early appreciation of the forests beyond their immediate economic value. Forest preservation, imaginatively linked by Perak’s Resident, Hugh Low, with long-term environmental stability, emerged as a central theme in pioneer colonial development...

The ardent botanical interests of Hugh Low, Resident of Perak in 1877–89, related to the wider debates on of tropical deforestation and climate change. His views strongly echoed the concerns of Logan some 30 years earlier and the contemporaneous preoccupations of Joseph Hooker, Director of the Royal Botanical Gardens, Kew.

If the general belief can be trusted, the denudation of forest land very much alters the climate of a country, making it hotter, diminishing the rainfall and causing it to rush down the mountains in floods, carrying the surface soil with it instead of the comparatively steady flow of the water-courses when protected by the jungle.

Unlike Logan who had no official rank, Low was able to use the substantial powers he wielded as Resident to translate some of his ideas into practice, taking advantage of the growing sensitivity of his superiors to forest depletion. The government’s delayed action in response to Joseph Hooker’s request for reportage on colonial forests was followed by efforts to anticipate timber depletion. Introducing the idea of sustainability, Lord Carnarvon, the Secretary of State for the Colonies and a keen botanist and collector, advocated instituting reforestation as a means of averting depletion in areas of concentrated economic activity. Low interpreted the government’s interest in timber preservation as endorsement for forest protection on a wider front,
including its importance for climate, hydrology and soil stability that he considered could be at stake.

Although Low believed that forest loss was not likely to affect precipitation to any appreciable degree in Perak as in some other climes, the heavy run on timber and water resources by settlement and mining in Larut demanded special attention. To protect water supplies drawn principally from Gunung Hijau (1,488 m) in the Larut Hills (Banjaran Bintang), the forest cover on the western face was preserved by a prohibition on cultivation. These forests that have survived into the present time bear testimony to one of the earliest conservation efforts in the Peninsula resulting from Low's initiative, possible only within the large measure of independence enjoyed by the early Residents.

For a more detailed account of early Penang, see also

TRADE AND SOCIETY IN THE STRAITS OF MELAKA Dutch Melaka and British Penang, 1780s–1830
Nordin Hussin

fuller details in the upcoming NIAS Press 'New Books' catalogue (out in October)

"A genuine pioneering study of Malaysian urban history [...] and breaks much new ground. At its best it is a fine-grained social history of which we have seen so far too little in Southeast Asia." (External reviewer)
Dear Gerald and Janice,

Two things. First [...].

Second, I’m attaching a photo which we both hope you will use for the front cover. It is of our landlady in Hanoi posing with her Dream II. The title 'Reaching for the Dream' contains a pun you see. I really like this photo: it reminds me of one of those very formal victorian married couple poses and [...] I’m sure she loves her Dream more than [anything]!!! She is a good friend of both of us and would be really chuffed to have her picture on the front of our book. It also happens to depict the Vietnamese idea of the bourgeois life (just as those victorian photos did).

>From your point of view, I think the red/gold tones in the picture, framed by a black cover would look very Vietnamese. Sort of like one of the lacquer paintings.

Let me know what you think.

cheers,
Melanie

Nice idea, can do. -- gbj

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REACHING FOR THE DREAM
Challenges of Sustainable Development in Vietnam
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NIAS Press, October 2003, 288 pp., illus
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