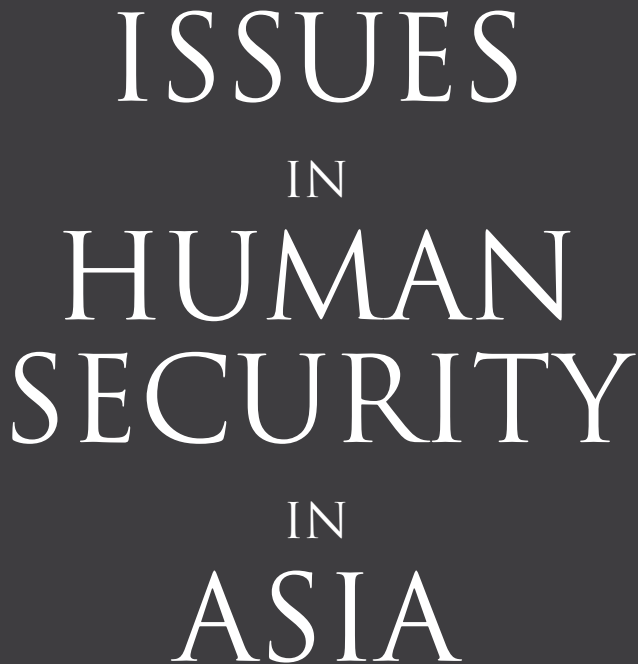


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STRATEGIC CURRENTS



ISSUES
IN
HUMAN
SECURITY
IN
ASIA

yang razali kassim
editor

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Contents

Preface	xi
---------	----

CHAPTER I

CLIMATE CHANGE AND NATURAL DISASTERS

MELY CABALLERO-ANTHONY & SOFIAH JAMIL

Japan's Mega Disaster: Managing Vulnerabilities	3
---	---

PAUL TAPPONNIER & KERRY SIEH

Catastrophe in Haiti: A Repeat Lesson for Asia	6
--	---

ALAN CHONG

The Haiti Earthquake: Protecting Small States	11
---	----

YANG RAZALI KASSIM

From Aceh to Chile: Is ASEAN Prepared for Another Disaster?	14
---	----

NAH LIANG TUANG

Urban Search and Rescue: Boosting Intra-ASEAN Self-Help	17
---	----

YANG RAZALI KASSIM

Australia and Climate Change: The Changing Weather in Climate Politics	19
--	----

SANIA NISHTAR

Pakistan's Flood Disaster: An Unprecedented Humanitarian Crisis	22
---	----

EVAN A. LAKSMANA

The Indonesian Military and Disaster Relief: Potential Pitfalls and Challenges	25
--	----

YANG RAZALI KASSIM

Indonesia's Twin Disasters: Will the Next Big One Reach Singapore?	28
--	----

CHAPTER II

ENERGY SECURITY

BARRY DESKER

Japan Disaster: Nuclear Power after Fukushima	33
---	----

ALVIN CHEW

Japan Disaster: End of the Nuclear Industry?	36
--	----

Contents

C. RAJA MOHAN

Japan and India: Towards Nuclear and Security Cooperation 38

RYAN CLARKE, NUR AZHA PUTRA, MELY CABALLERO-ANTHONY & RAJESH BASRUR

Nuclear Energy in Southeast Asia: Will it Enhance Human Security? 41

ALVIN CHEW

Nuclear Energy in Southeast Asia: Competition or Cooperation? 43

JOSHY M. PAUL

Japan-China: Spat Over Nuclear Arsenal? 46

ERIC FRÉCON

Environmental Issues: Challenges or Opportunities for Indonesia? 49

KOH SWEE LEAN, COLLIN

The Yeonpyeong Attack: Shooting Down Denuclearisation 52

YOU JI

Yeonpyeong: Tough Test for China's North Korea Policy 55

KWA CHONG GUAN

A Second Nuclear Age in Asia? 58

CHAPTER III

HEALTH, FOOD AND WATER SECURITY

YANG RAZALI KASSIM

Tunisia's Revolt and Food Insecurity: What it Means for Southeast Asia 63

PAUL P. S. TENG

Global Food Price Spiral: Causes and Consequences 66

P. K. HANGZO

Food Shortages: Urban Food Security in an Age of Constraints 69

ARPITA MATHUR

Arsenic Poisoning of Water in Bangladesh 72

BILL DURODIÉ

Infectious Disease Outbreaks: Crafting a Response 75

Contents

ZHANG HONGZHOU	
China and Global Food Security: Conflicting Notions	78
YANG RAZALI KASSIM	
Water Insecurity in the Himalayas: Emerging Tensions and Lessons for ASEAN	81
BILL DURODIÉ	
Pulp Friction: Southern Environment or Western Agenda?	84
ARPITA MATHUR	
Water Disputes in South Asia	87
 <i>CHAPTER IV</i>	
<i>GOVERNANCE, POLITICS AND IDENTITY</i>	
MUSHAHID ALI	
After the Facebook Revolution: Whither Egypt?	93
YANG RAZALI KASSIM	
Post-Mubarak Egypt: Is Indonesia the Model?	96
IFTEKHAR AHMED CHOWDHURY & YANG RAZALI KASSIM	
Libya and the United Nations: Whose Responsibility to Protect?	99
YANG RAZALI KASSIM & NUR AZHA PUTRA	
Responsibility to Protect: How should Southeast Asia Respond?	102
SAMUEL CHAN	
Our Road Out of Afghanistan	105
JOSEPH CHINYONG LIOW & FARISH A. NOOR	
Religion and Identity in Malaysia	108
CHAN WEN LING	
When Islamists Play by the Rules Yet Change the Game	111
AKANKSHA MEHTA	
Countering India's Maoist Insurgency: The Need for Strategy, not Operations	114
CHOONG PUI YEE	
More than a Cake Party: Evolving Protest in Malaysia	117

Contents

ADRI WANTO	
Indonesian Islam: What Went Right	120

CHAPTER V

TERRORISM, CYBER SECURITY AND CYBERSPACE

ROHAN GUNARATNA	
After Osama bin Laden: Will Al Qaeda Survive?	125
ALAN CHONG	
Diplomatic Confidentiality: The Real Lesson of Wikileaks	128
KUMAR RAMAKRISHNA	
The MSK Family Affair: Is Blood Thicker than Water?	131
ARABINDA ACHARYA & FATIMA ASTUTI	
Chink in Jakarta's Armour: Tightening Counter-Terrorist Financing	134
MOHAMED ABDUL SADDIQ	
Whither e-Jihad: Evaluating the Threat of Internet Radicalisation	137
KUMAR RAMAKRISHNA	
Self-Radicalisation and the Awlaki Connection	140
ASHOK SAWHNEY	
Cyber War in the 21st Century: The Emerging Security Challenge	143
YEAP SUYIN & JENNA PARK	
Countering Internet Radicalisation: The Need for a Holistic Approach	146
TUTY RAIHANAH MOSTAROM & NUR AZLIN MOHAMED YASIN	
The Internet and Women: Avenue for Female Jihadists	149
SAMUEL CHAN	
The SAF in Cyberspace: The Image of Defence and the Internet	152

CHAPTER VI

MARITIME SECURITY AND PIRACY

ASHOK SAWHNEY	
Somalia Two Years On: Making the Anti-Piracy Drive More Effective	157

Contents

SAMUEL CHAN	
Fighting Piracy: Another First for the SAF	160
SAM BATEMAN	
Killing Pirates: Dilemma of Counter-Piracy	163
JOSHUA HO	
The Malacca Strait: Will It Remain Safe?	166
SAM BATEMAN	
The Bay of Bengal: A New Sea of Troubles?	169
ROBERT BECKMAN	
The South China Sea: Worsening Dispute or Growing Clarity in Claims?	172
SAM BATEMAN	
The South China Sea: When the Elephants Dance	175
YANG FANG	
The South China Sea: Problems and Progress in China's Position	178
LI MINGJIANG	
The South China Sea: Emerging China-Taiwan Cooperation	181
JOSHUA HO	
Piracy in the South China Sea: Lessons from the Gulf of Aden	184
CHAPTER VII	
DIPLOMACY AND NON-TRADITIONAL SECURITY	
PRADUMNA B. RANA	
The G20 Summit: How Asia Can Strengthen Its Voice	189
BARRY DESKER	
The G20: Should Europe Give Way to Asia?	191
TAN SEE SENG	
The ASEAN Regional Forum at 17: The Curse of Ad Hoc-ism?	194
C. RAJA MOHAN	
Embracing Myanmar: India's Foreign Policy Realism	197
YANG RAZALI KASSIM	
The Singapore Global Dialogue: Heated Start to Strategic Debates	200

Contents

JOSEPH CHINYONG LIOW	
Indonesia-Malaysia Relations: Baggage of Blood Brotherhood	203
YANG RAZALI KASSIM	
Railway Land Swap: New Light on an Old Issue	206
BARRY DESKER	
Is Indonesia Outgrowing ASEAN?	209
C. RAJA MOHAN	
East Asian Security: The United States Wants a Bigger Indian Role	212
BARRY DESKER	
ADMM Plus Defence Cooperation: Rise of a New Player	215
YANG RAZALI KASSIM	
ADMM Plus: New Twist to Old Security Issues	218
TAN SEE SENG	
The East Asia Summit 2010: Big Step Forward, or Business-as-Usual?	221
YANG RAZALI KASSIM	
Indonesia, the U.S. and Australia: New Age, New Issues	224
Our Contributors	227

Preface

THIS VOLUME IS dedicated to the study of Human Security in Asia. Conceptually, it resides within the broader framework of Non-Traditional Security.

Human security is still very much a contested concept. This notwithstanding, there is no disagreement among scholars that, at the core, human security is about the well-being of the individual—in contrast to the well-being of the state. This well-being of the individual is measured in terms of two basic freedoms: freedom from want and freedom from fear. An individual who is free from deprivation of his basic needs, such as food, water and shelter, can be described as a secure person. A society that is free from fear for its safety can equally be deemed as a secure society.

Human security therefore views security not in terms of the traditional notion of security of the state but the non-traditional concept of the security of the individual. Hence, human security is people-centred. The definition of human security reached a conceptual highpoint in 1994 when the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) issued a Human Development Report, which defined human security as “not a concern with weapons” but “a concern with human life and dignity”. The UNDP identified seven categories of threat to human security: environment, food, health, economy, personal, community and political.

There are four key characteristics of human security as defined by UNDP: that it is universal, interdependent in its components, is preventive and is people-oriented. Scholars see the UNDP version of human security as an organising concept in security studies.

This volume focuses on human security at a time when security of the Asian person is increasingly under siege from the forces of nature and man-made disasters, especially in the last few years. There has been an increase in the numbers as well as the frequency of natural calamities around the world. All of them triggered consequences that led to human tragedy and suffering; some even generated political consequences. The year 2010 began with a major earthquake in Haiti. Though geographically distant, it had lessons for Asia. Since that event, several major earthquakes had erupted in Asia. In 2011, one of the worst earthquakes to hit Japan caused a tsunami and, later, a nuclear disaster.

Strategic Currents is a periodic volume based on the regular series of commentaries by staff and affiliates of the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS). This issue continues what hopefully will become a tradition of republishing select articles adapted from *RSIS Commentaries*, in the case of this particular volume, since January 2010. These articles include some perspectives on major events that rocked the world in 2011 with implications on human security in Asia, such as the triple disasters in Japan, Wikileaks, the death of Osama bin Laden, and the Arab uprisings in North Africa and the Middle East.

This is the third volume of *Strategic Currents*. The first was published in 2006 by the Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies to mark its transition to RSIS. The second was published in 2009 by RSIS in co-publication for distribution with the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies (ISEAS).

Yang Razali Kassim
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