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BOOK REVIEWS

***Security and Southeast Asia: Domestic, Regional, and Global Issues*. By Alan Collins.** Colorado, USA: Lynne Rienner, 2003. 245pp.

This study by Alan Collins offers a comprehensive reinterpretation of Southeast Asia's international relations and foreign policies from the standpoint of critical or non-traditional security theory. Invoking concepts such as *human security* and *securitization* (the discursive process by which specific issues become framed as matters of national security), the work provides a useful and well-informed survey of the evolution of Southeast Asia's security agenda.

In a clear, accessible literature review in Chapter 1, Collins summarizes the critical security approach as advancing two core propositions: the need to broaden the scope of security analysis from traditional politico-military affairs to embrace non-traditional security issues like environmental degradation and socio-economic stability, and second, the importance of considering multiple security referents — not simply the state, but civil society, ethnic groups, individuals. The author asserts that critical security theory is particularly relevant in studying security practice in the "Third World", where state–society relationships are often more contested than in better-institutionalized polities. In this crucial respect, Southeast Asia qualifies as a Third World region, despite the fact that several of its constituent nations have a comparatively successful record of socio-economic development. According to Collins, at the core of Southeast Asia's security dynamics lies ongoing contestation between elites and broader societal constituencies over the processes of state- and nation-building. He writes (p. 10), "The primacy of internal threats to state security, and

especially regime security, most readily makes Southeast Asia a part of the third world … The key to understanding the security issues in Southeast Asia is legitimacy; and the legitimacy in question concerns both the regimes in power and the state's borders."

The book thus focuses first on internal threats to security. Chapter 2 takes up what the author terms "societal security" and focuses on the ethnic and other communal tensions that menace social stability in many Southeast Asian countries. The discussion touches on themes well known to students of Southeast Asia's comparative politics, as when it contrasts assimilationist or accommodationist approaches towards the task of nation building in plural societies. Political or regime security is addressed in Chapter 3. This chapter's key claim is that regime security depends upon legitimacy, which in turn relies on well-institutionalized political systems that allow popular demands to be expressed and satisfied through existing political frameworks. Democracy is neither necessary nor sufficient. Rather, the key is a regime's capacity for "self-renewal", meaning some form of elite circulation in response to popular demands for improved performance in solving social or economic problems and delivering development. In such systems, the expression of political opposition need not threaten the continuation of the regime itself, and thereby need not become "securitized". Alas, the author avers, the requisite level of institutionalization is frequently lacking, and the region's otherwise dissimilar political systems face similar syndromes of chronic regime insecurity. In contrast to most writing on political institutionalization, he suggests significant commonalities between the Singaporean state and other Southeast Asian polities in this regard (pp. 71–74).

The remaining chapters take up regional security issues. Chapter 4 surveys Southeast Asian states' pursuit of military-strategic security, their responses to environmental damage, resource scarcity and competition, and their efforts to secure economic prosperity through trade cooperation and combating piracy. Chapter 5 analyses ASEAN's record, accomplishments, and weaknesses, while Chapter 6 considers Southeast Asia's relations with external powers in the context of international relations in the wider Asia-Pacific. Chapter 7, the book's final one, presents case studies of territorial disputes in the South China Sea and initial post-September 11 responses to the threat of trans-border terrorism.

As the Preface states, the book is aimed at a wide audience including undergraduate students (Collins refers specialists to his 1999 book, *The Security Dilemmas of Southeast Asia*). The author's main purpose is to demonstrate the general utility of critical security studies in interpreting Southeast Asia's international relations. Critical security theory is thus

employed as an analytic lens for a *tour d'horizon* survey, rather than as a tool to advance specific arguments within particular debates. Those already well acquainted with the literature on the region's international relations are likely to find little that is novel to them in either the (well-rendered) empirical survey or in the analytic assertions sprinkled throughout the text. In occasional passages, Collins echoes the burgeoning literature that criticizes ASEAN's elite-centred, sovereignty-guarding diplomatic norms as ineffectual and obsolete. Students of Southeast Asia's comparative politics will concur with his contention that these diplomatic practices are deeply rooted in domestic struggles over state power and regime legitimacy. By emphasizing a broader range of political determinants of state policy, as well as a wider set of security problems than traditional security or international relations perspectives, Collins' approach leads him towards pessimistic inferences. Like other recent analyses of ASEAN, the book is skeptical about the likelihood that the organization's members will begin to institutionalize cooperation to the extent needed to strengthen regional cohesion to resolve crucial problems arising from their growing interdependence, and to revive their collective diplomatic influence in Asia's wider international relations.

Security and Southeast Asia touches only briefly on the relationship between critical security theory and the widely discussed constructivist approach to international relations, in which Southeast Asia's experience of conflict management has figured prominently. Like constructivism, the critical security theory cited by this book holds that alternate security definitions and practices have important ideational or discursive roots. The conceptual discussion in Chapter 2 thus leads one to anticipate a more focused analysis of the process of "securitization", for example by process-tracing the specific politics by which the security agenda is formed and articulated. The book persuasively elaborates several well-argued general themes, however, chief among them the contention that Southeast Asian security practice is shaped by incumbent elites' tendency to conflate national security with the preservation of their domestic political hegemonies. The salience of these domestic politics undermines claims that regional security culture is embedded in a robust, shared regional identity or set of cultural norms. As the author's critique of claims for a uniquely effective "ASEAN Way" of diplomacy shows, ASEAN's recent struggles have dealt a blow to at least some constructivist interpretations of the region's international relations.

The relevant distinction between the two theoretical approaches appears to lie between ideas or discourses that express or constitute identity, and discourse that is more narrowly instrumental, reflecting key actors' political interests. As Collins observes, the ASEAN Way was

less an articulation of shared cultural norms than a deliberate ideological construction of regional rulers aimed at their common interest in securing elite-centred political regimes. He observes that coercive approaches to state- and nation-building have led to contradictions between (elite) regime or state security, on the one hand, and the human security of broad populations across the region on the other. Ameliorating such contradictions, he argues, requires the institutionalization of popularly accountable political regimes. Until such transformations occur more widely across Southeast Asia, no normative basis exists for building transparent, sovereignty-pooling institutions of regional cooperation. Thailand's abortive 1998 proposal to substantially modify ASEAN's cardinal norm of non-interference, therefore, was rejected for very real fears that "enhanced interaction" could abet threats to regime security and thereby exacerbate regional tensions. The price for keeping inter-state peace, however, is to privilege regime security over human security, and thus to ignore or cope inadequately with the burgeoning range of threats to the latter.

Security and Southeast Asia offers a comprehensive review of the spectrum of forces that shape security discourse and practice in the region. The invocation of critical security theory helps to frame the informed and well-rendered empirical discussion. This combination, together with an engaging writing style, makes the book a welcome contribution to the literature on Southeast Asia's international relations and a particularly useful teaching text.

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***The Politics of Power: Freeport in Suharto's Indonesia*. By Denise Leith.** Honolulu, Hawaii: University of Hawai'i Press, 2003. 347pp.

Indonesia's mining industry is at the centre of much of the political drama in the archipelago. Large foreign companies dominate mining, giving rise to nationalist concerns over who controls the country's natural resources. And what is at stake from an economic point of view is not small. Indonesia has extensive reserves of hard minerals and coal. Mining produces a significant share of Indonesia's export revenue — it was the dollar-earning export of coal, copper, gold, silver, nickel,