No. 14

Burma: Protracted Conflict, Governance and Non-Traditional Security Issues

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Singapore

MAY 2001

With Compliments

This working paper is part of a series on Non-Traditional Security Issues in Southeast Asia. It has been produced under a grant from the Ford Foundation, for which the IDSS gratefully acknowledges.

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ABSTRACT

Of all countries in Southeast Asia, Burma has the unenviable reputation of having the largest number of armed ethnic insurgencies, as well as an entrenched civil opposition to the ruling military regime. The ethnic insurgencies began in 1948 while civil opposition has grown more open during the last decade. These conditions of protracted conflict raise a number of related questions: (1) Why has the conflict been so persistent and how is this related to "governance" in Burma? (2) Is it possible to distinguish non-traditional security issues in this conflict and, if so, what are the implications in relation to regional co-operation and stability? This paper seeks to address these questions through an examination of developments in Burma since 1988, a watershed year in domestic politico-military relations. It also seeks to establish a clear delineation of "governance" as an analytical concept and to set out non-traditional security issues arising from the conflict in Burma. The non-traditional security issues arise principally from the existence of approximately 120,000 refugees in Thailand, cross-border violations of Thailand's territorial sovereignty, and the massive influx of narcotics from Burma into Thailand and China. These issues are situated in relation to developments in Burma and proximate inter-state interactions. Finally, the paper examines the implications of these issues in the broader context of regional co-operation and stability, and undertakes a re-assessment of the relationship between non-traditional security issues and traditional (politico-military) issues.

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BURMA: PROTRACTED CONFLICT, GOVERNANCE AND NON-TRADITIONAL SECURITY ISSUES

Introduction

Of all the member states in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), Burma has the largest number of armed ethnic insurgencies, as well as an entrenched civil opposition to the ruling military regime. The ethnic insurgencies began in 1948 while civil opposition has grown more open during the last decade. These conditions of protracted conflict raise a number of related questions: (1) Why has the conflict been so persistent and how is this related to "governance" in Burma? (2) Is it possible to distinguish non-traditional security issues in this conflict and, if so, what are the implications for regional cooperation and stability?

This paper will address these questions by examining developments in Burma since 1988, a watershed year in domestic politico-military relations. It also seeks to establish a clear delineation of "governance" as an analytical concept and to set out non-traditional security issues arising from conflict in Burma. Finally, this study will examine the implications of these issues in the broader context of regional co-operation and stability.

Burma: Plural Society and Protracted Conflict

There are seven officially recognised ethnic groups in Burma apart from the Burman majority: the Chin, Kachin, Karen, Karenni (Kayah), Mon, Rakhine (Arakanese) and Shan. This, however, fails to take into account a bewildering number of subgroups speaking over 100 languages. This ethnic diversity and these ethno-nationalist aspirations, combined with the communist movement, posed formidable problems for political integration from the time Burma gained independence. Around the time Burma was granted independence in 1948, various factions of the communist movement went underground to conduct an armed struggle against the government of U Nu. Immediately thereafter, various ethnic rebellions broke out beginning with the Karen who were followed by the Mon, the Karenni, the Pao, the Kachin, the Rakhine and the Muslim *Mujahid*. Ever since then, low-intensity conflict has been endemic in Burma.

The collapse of the Communist Party of Burma (CPB) in 1989, which was brought about by the mutinies of ethnic Wa and Kokang elements, resulted in a dramatic transformation of the

patterns of conflict in Burma. The ex-CPB Wa and Kokang immediately entered into a ceasefire agreement with the Burmese *junta*, then known as the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC). The ceasefire itself was the initiative of Major-General (now Lieutenant-General) Khin Nyunt, Secretary 1 of SLORC and Head, Office of Strategic Studies and Director, Directorate of Defence Services Intelligence. This was followed by a series of ceasefire agreements with various ethnic insurgent groups in that year and between 1991 and 1997. There are currently 37 insurgent organisations of which 23 have entered into ceasefire agreements with the military regime.[1]

The following section will examine the factors which produced this spate of ceasefire agreements after forty years of armed confrontation and the impact that these agreements brought to politico-military and security conditions in Burma.

Factors leading to the Ceasefires

There are a number of related reasons for these ceasefires. The first factor was the very condition of protracted conflict or "perpetual war." As Desmond Ball and Hazel Lang observe, one outcome of perpetual war is eventual exhaustion where

> Accommodation, sometimes amounting effectively to surrender, becomes palatable. Different forms of accommodation take place, with some groups in a stronger position concerning their terms of surrender than others. This may not provide the answer to a sustainable resolution to the underlying grievances in the conflict, however, and dissatisfaction may only generate new splinter factions determined to fight on for their cause.[2]

War exhaustion in itself, however, is insufficient as an explanation because there are insurgent forces that have not entered into ceasefire agreements. This factor needs to be viewed in relation to the terms of the ceasefires, engineered by Khin Nyunt, and the relative advantage for insurgent forces by entering or not entering into such agreements. In essence, the terms of the ceasefires require that insurgent organisations recognise the sovereignty of Burma and

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[1] Martin Smith, *Burma: Insurgency and the Politics of Ethnicity* (Second Ed.) (London: Zed Books, 1999), pp.xvi-xvii, and Maung Aung Myoe, *The Tatmadaw in Myanmar since 1988: An Interim Assessment* (Canberra Paper No.342) (Canberra: Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, Australian National University, 1999), p.28.

[2] Desmond Ball and Hazel Lang, "Factionalism and the Insurgent Organisations," in Carl Grundy-Warr and Ananda Rajah, eds., *Danger Line: People, Sovereignty and Security along the Burma-Thailand Border* (forthcoming).

SLORC's right to rule, while the insurgents are allowed to retain their weapons and engage in economic activities without interference from the *Tatmadaw* (the Burmese Armed Forces). At the same time, the *Tatmadaw* can implement and proceed with "development" projects free from harassment by insurgent forces. These are infrastructure-related, such as road and dam-building and the extension of railway lines. Operational details of the ceasefires include establishing open lines of communication (LOCs) to permit the passage of troops in order to avoid accidental hostilities. In effect, the ceasefires are an attempt at conflict management on the part of SLORC.[3]

While this approach may be considered pragmatic, with the aim of inducing a cessation of hostilities, it is also fraught with contradictions in *ideational* terms. SLORC's willingness to concede to insurgent organisations the retention of weapons is wholly at odds with the idea of a sovereign, unitary state and SLORC's self-proclaimed right to rule and, consequently, the principle of the monopoly of the use of force by those who exercise state power.

The emergence of ceasefires as a viable option both for SLORC and various insurgent forces in 1989 may be traced to the convulsive events of 1988 when pro-democracy protests emerged on an unprecedented scale in the urban centres of Burma. These were brutally suppressed with an estimated civilian death toll in excess of 10,000.[4] These protests were a clear indication of the extent and depth of *ethnic Burman* disaffection with military rule and represented a serious threat to the regime's grip on power. The insurgent forces, on the other hand, viewed the pro-democracy eruptions as evidence of a weakening of the military regime. Ceasefires, therefore, offered relative short- to medium-term tactical or long-term strategic advantages depending on the "strategic assessments" by the regime and the insurgents of the pro-democracy uprising and its implications.[5] This explains SLORC's offer of ceasefires and the different responses by insurgent forces.

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[3] Ananda Rajah, "Contemporary Developments in Kawthoolei: the Karen and Conflict Resolution in Burma." *The Thai-Yunnan Project Newsletter*, Vol.19, No.2 (1992), pp.7-15.

[4] Smith, p.16.

[5] When I refer to "strategic assessment," I do not mean to imply that these kinds of assessment and related analyses necessarily resemble anything like those of strategic and security analysts (whether academic, military or policy-makers) in developed, industrial-capitalist states. Their premises and modes of thought are quite different, as I discuss later in the section on governance in Burma. See also Ananda Rajah, "Ethnicity and Civil War in Burma: Where is the Rationality?" in Robert I. Rotberg, ed., *Burma: Prospects for a Democratic Future* (Washington, DC: The World Peace Foundation and Brookings Institution Press, 1998), pp.135-50.

Ceasefires have been central to the conflict management approach of SLORC. It is evident, however, that since their implementation, the politico-military and security environment has undergone further changes. This transformation involves the existence of ceasefire and non-ceasefire forces, their respective relations with the *Tatmadaw* and, significantly, the build-up of the latter since 1988.

The Current Situation

There is now compelling evidence indicating that the ceasefires initiated by SLORC are part of a long-term strategy aimed at conflict resolution on SLORC's own terms. Since 1988, SLORC (and its successor, the State Peace and Development Council or SPDC) has embarked on a massive build-up and modernisation programme for the *Tatmadaw*. Burma's arms imports, for example, increased substantially, rising from US$ 20 million in 1988 to US$ 120 million in 1993.[6] Procurements for the Army included main battle tanks, amphibious tanks, armoured personnel carriers and artillery. Air Force procurements included a variety of aircraft such as trainers, strike aircraft and helicopters, some of which can be armed with air-to-ground rockets. These acquisitions were clearly for counter-insurgency operations.[7] Defence expenditures also grew significantly in this period, from US $946 million in 1988 to US$ 1,510 million in 1993.[8] The strength of the *Tatmadaw* has similarly increased. It is estimated that it expanded from some 186,000 personnel in 1988 to between 350,000 - 450,000 in 1999. Burmese intelligence officials have indicated that the SPDC's aim is to have a 500,000-strong *Tatmadaw* by the beginning of this century, making it the largest armed force in the region.[9] Given the lack of obvious threats from neighbouring states, only one conclusion can be drawn from this force modernisation and expansion in Burma: it is intended to contain internal threats to military rule.

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[6] Andrew Selth, *Transforming the Tatmadaw: The Burmese Armed Forces since 1988* (Canberra Paper No.113) (Canberra: Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, Australian National University, 1996), p.23.

[7] Maung Aung Myoe, pp.14-16. There have been many additional arms procurements for the Air Force and Navy. In addition to the focus on acquisitions for counter-insurgency operations, the *Tatmadaw*'s build-up and modernisation programme has provided it with a vastly improved conventional warfare capability. See also Selth, *passim*.

[8] Selth, p.28.

[9] Andrew Selth, *The Burmese Armed Forces Next Century: Continuity or Change?* (Canberra Paper No.338) (Canberra: Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, Australian National University, 1999), p.4.

Nevertheless, these developments have caused some concern if not alarm in the Thai military, which has closely followed the *Tatmadaw*'s build-up. As recently as January 2000, Thailand's then Supreme Commander, General Mongkol Ampornpisit, in a lecture at the National Defence College, said, "Though posing no threat now, Myanmar could change in the future … While most countries are downsizing their armed forces, Myanmar keeps on expanding its military capability."[10]

General Mongkol was also reported to have said that concern was expressed about Myanmar's military expansion at a meeting of army chiefs from the Asia-Pacific region in 1999.[11] Apart from cross-border incidents which have strained bilateral relations between Thailand and Burma, General Mongkol's remarks have to be viewed in the context of the substantial budget cuts faced by the Thai armed forces when the economy went into recession in 1997 and its decision to further reduce its manpower.

Burma's military build-up and modernisation programme has been accompanied by changes to the command and control structure of the *Tatmadaw*. These changes are particularly relevant to understanding the form of governance and non-traditional security issues in Burma in the last decade. Although conceived of as a means of improving the *Tatmadaw*'s operational effectiveness, these changes are revealing of the predicaments which continue to plague military rule in Burma.

In September 1988, regional commanders were made members of SLORC, which thus came to comprise 19 senior commanders. The regional commanders, consequently, enjoyed *political* as well as military power. As regional commanders and members of SLORC, they were also given authority over economic affairs in their regional command areas which, in effect, meant that responsibility for economic affairs was transferred from the relevant ministries in Rangoon into their hands. Regional command areas thus became virtually autonomous regions whose commanders were authorized to run government factories, stores and implement infrastructure projects. In 1992, the same regional commanders were posted to Rangoon where

[10] *The Straits Times*, 8 January 2000.

[11] The meeting referred to was presumably the First Pacific Army Chiefs Conference (PACC-1) held from 5-8 September 1999 in Singapore in conjunction with the 23rd Pacific Armies Management Seminar (PAMS XXIII).

they were made full cabinet ministers. As such, many were responsible for state owned enterprises (SOEs) through which they built up their power bases and wealth.[12]

In November 1997, SLORC was replaced by the SPDC. With the exception of the Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Secretary 1, Secretary 2, and the two Deputy Prime Ministers, all the members of SLORC, including the regional commanders, were made members of an "Advisory Group." The group was subsequently abolished in June 1998 and its members forced to relinquish their commissions. A commission of inquiry was convened under the National Intelligence Bureau to investigate bribery and corruption among the former members of SLORC but no details have been released.[13]

The ceasefires resulted in two kinds of operational conditions which were defined by the relations and forms of engagement between the *Tatmadaw*, ceasefire forces and non-ceasefire forces. The first kind involves the *Tatamadaw* in offensive deployments and counter-insurgency operations. Depending on the regional operation command area, counter-insurgency warfare may include the co-optation of ceasefire forces, acting as surrogate militias against non-ceasefire forces. In this situation *Tatmadaw* forces have continued to employ the ruthless "Four Cuts" (*Pya Ley Pya*) strategy. This aims to cut off food, funds, intelligence and recruits to the insurgents. This entails forced relocations of entire communities into "strategic villages," confiscation of food which is then re-issued as rations, destruction of crops, "taxes," and a shoot-on-sight policy after curfew hours. Civilian villagers have also been press-ganged as porters carrying military supplies and often made to walk in front of *Tatmadaw* troops as human "mine detectors." This draconian strategy has been responsible for the massive inflow of refugees into Thailand, especially from Karen State and Karenni State.

The second kind of operational condition involves static deployments. In this situation, the *Tatmadaw*'s objectives have been the consolidation of territorial gains and the implementation of infrastructure projects with or without the cooperation of ceasefire forces. Where possible, taxes are levied and collected from the ceasefire forces engaged in economic activities which include the production of heroin and amphetamine-type stimulants (ATS). In some cases, *Tatmadaw* commanders and their erstwhile foes have entered into joint businesses, including

[12] Maung Aung Myoe, pp.17-18.

[13] *Ibid*.

narcotics production and trafficking.[14] Although in static deployment, the *Tatmadaw* has nevertheless resorted to a form of the "Four Cuts" in order to carry out infrastructure projects which, in essence, amount to forced labour as villagers must provide their own food and are taken away from their own sources of livelihood such as farming. This has also contributed to the flow of refugees into Thailand.

Despite the ceasefires, the expansion of the *Tatmadaw* and the reconstitution of SLORC as the SPDC, Burma is still in a state of conflict as evidenced by the existence of non-ceasefire forces. It is clear that the events of 1988 led to a serious internal re-appraisal of the military regime's policies. This indicates that it remains committed to its vision of a unitary state even though it cannot be said to be fully in control. These policy changes have failed to bring about an end to the armed conflicts and have, in fact, produced new kinds of alliances between some military commanders and ceasefire organisations for personal financial gain. The reshuffling of regional commanders and the reconstitution of SLORC as the SPDC, on the other hand, indicates that not all senior commanders are involved.

The Civil Opposition

Apart from the ethnic insurgencies, there is now also a significant civil opposition united under the banner of the National League for Democracy (NLD) led by Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, as well as various other parties. Civil opposition has long existed in the form of a simmering discontent against deteriorating economic conditions and the harshness of military rule. The open eruption of opposition in 1988 followed several months of student-led protests over shortages of essential goods and the rising price of rice. This was the culmination of 25 years of economic mismanagement by the then ruling Burmese Socialist Programme Party (BSPP) through policies formulated under its official ideology, the "Burmese Way to Socialism." In December 1987, with a *per capita* income of US$ 200 *per annum*, external debt of over US$ 4 billion, and foreign exchange reserves of US$ 20 million, Burma was admitted to least developed country (LDC) status by the United Nations. In August 1987, shortages of rice and essential items were evident. In September 1987, the regime demonetised the Burmese currency,

[14] Desmond Ball, *Burma and Drugs: The Regime's Complicity in the Global Drug Trade* (Working Paper No.336) (Canberra: Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, Australian National University, 1999), p.4.

rendering worthless larger denomination bills in circulation. As a result, thousands of ordinary people lost their savings. It was this that precipitated the 1988 pro-democracy uprising.[15]

After the suppression of the uprising, the BSPP announced that a multi-party system of government would be introduced and that elections would be held in three months. Because the election (the first in over thirty years) would be conducted under the supervision of the BSPP (with the support of the military), protests followed. Nevertheless, 234 parties registered including the National Unity Party (NUP), which was the former BSPP minus serving military members. In the event, the election was rescheduled for May 1990, by which time martial law had been imposed and thousands of activists arrested. It is clear that the military had hoped thereby to win the election. The election results were a clear indication of the Burmese voters' choice. Out of a total of 492 constituencies, the NLD contested 425 and won 392 seats while the NUP won only 10 seats.[16]

In late July 1990, SLORC announced a National Convention to draw up guidelines for a new constitution after which the Peoples Assembly would convene to write a draft constitution that would then have to be submitted to the military for approval and then to the people in a referendum. This was a bizarre, roundabout way of handing over power to elected representatives after an election that the regime had proposed and sanctioned. The National Convention has yet to produce any guidelines.[17] The military is clearly unwilling to hand over power.

While the military perceived the events of 1988 and thereafter as a threat to the "national security" of Burma, it is impossible to avoid the conclusion that even in its own terms it has failed to bring about political unity. As Chai-Anan Samudvanija and Sukhumbhand Paribatra have noted of military and military-backed regimes in Southeast Asia:

> The predisposition is to conceive national security in terms of regime security and to rely on coercive power to manage tensions and conflicts within society, which makes politics a zero-sum game … the continued use of coercion against dissidents or rebellious elements reflects the fact that regimes, while often recognizing that there are dilemmas involved in trying to achieve stability in a

[15] Smith, pp.24-26.

[16] Smith, p.414, and Maung Aung Myoe, p.1.

[17] Smith, pp.415-16.

> dynamic environment and delicate balance between the interests and support of private groups or individuals and the coercive power of the state, are wont to fall back on instruments of coercion as a matter of expedience, habit or principle.[18]

However much the military regime may refer to "national security," it is evident that it is primarily concerned with its own security that it has inextricably identified with that of the state.[19] Armed conflict continues while civil opposition has grown. Burma, for these reasons, continues to be quite fragmented. It is, in other words, a *juridical* as opposed to an *empirical* state.[20]

Governance

Governance in Burma is inseparable from how the state is conceived of on the part of the political actors. Central to this are competing definitions of what the state should be, i.e. a unitary or federal state. Whereas the military regime is committed to a unitary state, most if not all ethnic insurgent movements are committed to some form of relative autonomy which, in practical terms, would amount to a federal system.[21] The situation in Burma is further complicated by the fact that while most insurgent movements are supportive of the NLD, the NLD has been careful *not* to indicate whether it favours a unitary or federal state system.

Where ethno-nationalist demands are concerned, the regime's dedication to the establishment of a unitary state has been accompanied by policies (such as the "Four Cuts") which have exacerbated ethno-nationalist sentiments. Various policies have encouraged the nationalisation of the economy along socialist principles and the militarisation of state institutions and administration. Although these principles have been abandoned, their application over four decades has resulted in a "re-embedded" economy characterised by, among other things, market distortions and inefficiencies, corruption and civil discontent. These conditions

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[18] Chai-Anan Samudvanija and Sukhumbhand Paribatra, "Development for Security, Security for Development: Prospects for Durable Stability in Southeast Asia," in Kusuma Snitwongse and Sukhumbhand Paribatra, eds., *Durable Stability in Southeast Asia* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1987), pp.12-13.

[19] Carl Grundy-Warr and Ananda Rajah, "Security, Resources and People in a Borderlands Environment: Myanmar-Thailand," in G.H. Blake, *et al*, eds., *International Boundaries and Environmental Security: Frameworks for Regional Co-operation* (London: Kluwer Law International, 1997), pp.149-220.

[20] R.H. Jackson and C.G. Rosberg, "Why Africa's Weak States Persist: The Empirical and the Juridical in Statehood," in Atal Kohli, ed., *The State and Development in the Third World* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986), pp.259-82.

[21] Rajah, "Contemporary Developments in Kawthoolei," *passim*. See also, Rajah, "Ethnicity and Civil War in Burma," pp.135-50.

offer possibilities for a definition of "governance" in general and the delineation of the attributes of "good governance" as opposed to "bad governance" in particular.

A sociologically rigorous approach requires that governance be defined empirically before attempting to set out the attributes of "good" and "bad" governance. Here, governance is taken simply as a mode of the exercise of state power whether or not the acquisition of this power has been marked by legitimacy. This rests on a critique of prevailing understandings (both classical and contemporary) of legitimacy in relation to political structures and the exercise of state power. They assume that the acquisition and exercise of state power are legitimate *only* if this accords with the norms and processes of existing, i.e. *anteriorly constituted*, socio-political institutional frameworks. But this raises the question how such norms and processes come to be incorporated with these frameworks.

Legitimacy is a product of "structuration,"[22] that is, the dialectical relationship between the generation of ideological systems and the creation of socio-political and administrative structures as part of larger process of state-building. Viewing legitimacy in this way requires, in turn, a focus on socio-political *agency*, because it is this which acts as the "operator" in the dialectic between ideological systems and socio-political and administrative structures. In short, socio-political agency is a central aspect of governance.

Because the exercise of state power has different societal consequences, it is then possible to set out what kinds of consequences may be attributed to "good" and "bad" governance. The distinction between the two cannot, however, be determined on the basis of assumed universal criteria. For, if the exercise of power has societal consequences, then what is considered to be "good" *versus* "bad" governance must necessarily be determined through what is held to be desirable or undesirable within the society itself, which, in turn, helps to define endogenous perceptions of legitimacy or illegitimacy. Accordingly, the central issue in the distinction between "good" and "bad" governance concerns means-ends relationships that are the concrete expressions of socio-political agency. It is these relationships that characterize governance as a *mode* of the exercise of state power.

[22] Anthony Giddens, *Social Theory and Modern Sociology* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1987), pp.60-62.

Governance and Rationality in Burma

Means-ends relationships imply rationality. In the social sciences, it is generally assumed that human beings are rational. However, Weber drew an important distinction between what he called "formal" and "substantive" rationality. Formal rationality is associated with intellectualisation and rationalisation where, for example, explanations are based on the empirical and obliged to observe the principle of logical consistency, and that "one can, in principle, master all things by calculation."[23] It implies a mode of thought which is quite different from substantive rationality. Substantive rationality, while also concerned with means-ends relationships, is based upon premises quite different from that in the empiricist, positivist outlook and cognition in formal rationality. It implies a mode of thought where explanations, while based on the empirical, observe different principles all operating at the same time. Such explanations, in other words, can be driven by beliefs or simple, unsubstantiated, conviction.

This distinction enables us to better understand the form of governance in Burma under military rule. The national ideology, the "Burmese Way to Socialism" introduced by Ne Win in the 1960s, was responsible for Burma's descent into LDC status and is a striking example of multi-strandedness and the non-referential at work. It was a highly idiosyncratic mix of Marxism, Buddhism and nationalism. It is internally inconsistent and contradictory, displaying little regard for fundamental economic principles and social realities. According to this ideology, it is possible to produce economic development and prosperity for all based on these three "-isms."

The dominance of substantive rationality also helps to explain the bizarre demonetisatons of the *kyat* in 1964, 1985 and 1987. The regime demonetised 100 and 50 *kyat* notes, replacing them with new notes of similar denominations, following the nationalisation of banks in 1964. This effectively wiped out people's savings and fomented a new wave of ethnic uprisings. In 1985, the 100 and 50 *kyat* notes were again demonetised and replaced with, astonishingly, 15, 45 and 75 *kyat* notes, again wiping out savings. In 1987, the regime demonetised 45 and 75 *kyat* notes and introduced a 90 *kyat* note. The regime justified this on the grounds that it was necessary as a means of dealing with insurgents and black marketeers.

[23] Max Weber, "Science as a Vocation," in H.H. Gerth and C.W. Mills, trans. and eds., *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology* (London: Routledge, reprint, 1991), pp.127-56.

It is widely believed in Burma that such policies were based on numero-astrological calculations important to Ne Win. The 75 *kyat* note was introduced on his seventy-fifth birthday while the number 9 is said to be his lucky number, thus giving rise to the belief that the timing of significant events has been based on a "sum-of-nine" formula. This apparently was the basis for the scheduling of major political events such as the 1990 election which was held on 27 May, the fourth Sunday of the fifth month. These policies defy formal rational explanation.

It has also been argued that the disturbances of 1988 were in part caused by the military. In the face of growing pro-democracy protests and the prospect of a multi-party political system, the regime saw an end to its rule as a real possibility. A strategy was thus drawn up to create chaotic conditions so that "the masses and business community will come to depend on the armed forces for protection" and people would realise the "aimlessness and confusion of a multi-party system." This was effected by secretly sending military personnel throughout the country to foment civil disturbances. At the same time, in August 1988, some 9,000 prisoners were suddenly released from seven different prisons.[24]

No less incredible is the official recognition accorded to known drug barons Khun Sa, Lo Hsing-han and Pauk Yo Chang of the United Wa State Party. They are described as having been "welcomed to the legal fold" after they either surrendered or entered into ceasefire agreements. Khun Sa and Lo Hsing-han now live in Rangoon. When, for example, Khun Sa is referred to in the official press, his name is prefixed with the honorific "U" despite the fact that he was captured and imprisoned in 1970 and released in 1973. These individuals are free to do business which still includes, at least where Pauk Yo Chang is concerned, the narcotics trade. No less difficult to understand and explain are the business alliances between regional army commanders and the commanders of ceasefire forces.

By all accounts, the 38 years of military rule in Burma can be characterized as nothing but "bad" governance. The regime has failed to unify the ethnically diverse country. The central role in the exercise of state power that it assumed, the state institutions which it militarized or created, and the ideological system it proffered to the people of Burma have not succeeded in persuading them that it has delivered what it has continually promised.

[24] Smith, p.12.

Domestic Developments in Burma and Traditional and Non-Traditional Security Issues

This section will consider how the developments outlined above — poor governance, protracted conflict and resort to ultimately unsuccessful politico-military solutions on the part of the regime — relate to security.

Security, as Barry Buzan has noted, is a contested concept.[25] If this concept is to have any comparative analytical value, however, it has to be anchored in a referent object that is conceptually constant even if conditions (e.g. political, military or human) or the focus of interest groups (e.g. the environment, the individual or human rights) associated with the referent object are variable -- rendering the object analytically "unstable" but none the less still conceptually recognizable.

Accordingly, there can only be one such referent: the state. To link security solely (and directly) to military threats, as Stephen Walt does, unduly restricts the security concept because it excludes empirically known examples of conflict and vulnerabilities to the state which are not of military origin.[26] Ann Tickner, for example, has demonstrated that of 127 "significant wars" since 1945, 125 occurred in less developed countries and were largely intrastate rather than interstate.[27] On the other hand, a too-encompassing definition of security is also problematic. As Daniel Deudney points out, "if we begin to speak about all the forces and events that threaten life, property and well-being (on a large scale) as threats to our national security, we shall soon drain them of meaning."[28]

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[25] Barry Buzan, *Peoples, States and Fear: An Agenda for International Security Studies in the Post-Cold War Era* (Second Ed.) (Boulder, CO: Lynne Reiner, 1991), *passim*.

[26] Stephen M. Walt, "The Renaissance of Security Studies," *Mershon International Studies Review*, Vol.41 (1991), pp.211-39.

[27] J. Ann Tickner, "Re-Visioning Security," in Ken Booth and Steve Smith, eds., *International Relations Theory Today* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995), pp.175-97.

[28] Daniel Deudney, "The Case against Linking Environmental Degradation and National Security, " *Millennium* Vol.19, No.3 (1990), p.465.

For these reasons (among others), the conceptual linkage between security and the state should be preserved while that between security and military threats should be flexible.[29] Both are offered by Mohammed Ayoob's definition of security:

> Security or insecurity is defined in relation to vulnerabilities, both internal and external, that threaten to, or have the potential to bring down or significantly weaken state structures, both territorial and institutional, and regimes.[30]

This builds on his previous work, which develops the security concept beyond traditional approaches while preserving a state-centric focus. In this, Ayoob argues persuasively that in the Third World, *regime* security in relation to "state-making" is of fundamental importance rather than the "Western security concept."[31] Ayoob's definition accords importance to *internal* as well as external threats to national security and *political* as well as military threats where non-military issues (whether internal or external) become sufficiently politicized and constitute a source of state vulnerability.

This definition is useful because it helps to illustrate new kinds of security predicaments that have emerged in post-Cold War Southeast Asia. Scholarly concepts developed during the Cold War and, for that matter, Waltsian-type realist approaches, are unable to handle these adequately. Furthermore, it affords a better understanding of the complex relationship between traditional and non-traditional aspects of security.

As noted above, Burma is a juridical state rather than an empirical one. Or, to put it another way, it is a "weak" state because "the institutions of the state are contested to the point of violence."[32] Two key assumptions in traditional approaches to security are sovereignty and territorial integrity. Neither of these hold where Burma is concerned as parts of the country

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[29] In addition to sound *methodological* reasons, from the perspectives of political anthropology and sociology, there are empirical and *theoretical* reasons for doing so. However, these cannot be dealt with here for reasons of space. See Richard K. Betts, " Should Strategic Studies Survive?" *World Politics*, Vol.50, No.1 (1997), pp.7-33.

[30] Mohammed Ayoob, "A Subaltern Realist Perspective," in Keith Krause and Michael C. Williams, eds., *Critical Security Studies* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), p.130.

[31] Mohammed Ayoob, *The Third World Security Predicament: State-making, Regional Conflict, and the International System* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Reinner, 1995), *passim*.

[32] Buzan, *passim*.

continue to be in the hands of ceasefire and non-ceasefire forces.[33] The weakness of Burma as a state poses vulnerabilities for neighbouring states such as Thailand that reflect the complex relationship between traditional and non-traditional aspects of security. This is illustrated by two major predicaments in inter-state interactions: (1) The presence of approximately 120,000 refugees, illegal workers and civil opponents of Burma in Thailand, which is a source of bilateral tension, manageable only on an *ad hoc* basis; and (2) Increased production of heroin and ATS in northeastern Burma and the growing problem of drug abuse in Thailand.

Refugees and Violations of Thailand's Territorial Integrity

The refugees in Thailand are mainly Mon, Karen and Karenni and are located in 28 camps on the western borders of Thailand in the provinces of Ratchaburi, Kanchanaburi, Tak and Mae Hongsorn. They have all fled fighting in Mon State, Karen State and Karenni State in Burma.

Thailand is not a signatory to the *Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees of 28 July 1951* (commonly called the Geneva Convention on Refugees (GCR)) and, thus, does not recognize refugees.[34] Instead, refugees are known in Thailand as *phu opayop* which is defined as "one who escapes from dangers due to an uprising, fighting, or war and enters in breach of the Immigration Act."[35] For this reason, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) was not allowed to provide humanitarian aid when the first wave of refugees entered Thailand. It was only in 1999 that the UNHCR was allowed into Thailand to coordinate relief efforts and assist in identifying genuine refugees.

The presence of the refugees, however, has resulted in a complex situation along the border. The ambiguity of the GCR and Thai definitions of refugees are problematic because Thai authorities often have difficulty distinguishing between refugees and "economic migrants" or illegal workers. Thai officials are not familiar with the methods employed by the UNHCR to

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[33] If we adopt a comprehensive view of security in Burma, there is no doubt that domestic insecurity prevails. This includes forced relocations of ethnic minority populations, food insecurity and human rights violations, all of which are well recognized. For that matter, environmental issues are also involved. To establish the *relevance* of these issues to a state-centric approach to security is beyond the scope of this paper, though it *can* be established. See Grundy-Warr and Rajah, *passim*.

[34] United Nations Conference of Plenipotentiaries on the Status of Refugees and Stateless Persons, Geneva, 2-25 July 1951, *Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees of 28 July 1951*, Chapter I, Article I, A (2).

[35] Court Robinson, *The War is Growing Worse and Worse: Refugees and Displaced Persons on the Thai-Burmese Border* (Washington DC: The US Committee for Refugees, 1990), p.20.

verify and document refugee status and, therefore, tend to err on (as they see it) the side of caution. Economic migrants, however, are the direct consequence of mismanagement of the Burmese economy. It is estimated that there may be up to 100,000 illegal workers from Burma in the western borderlands of Thailand.[36] As a result, local workers have become unemployed and the Thai government has come under public pressure, especially from unions, to apprehend and repatriate the illegal workers.

The refugee camps are guarded by soldiers from the Third Army Region or the Border Patrol Police but their role is to ensure that the refugees do not leave the camps and settle elsewhere in Thailand. The guards, however, are unable to secure these camps adequately and the refugees move in and out, not always under supervision. Many refugees leave the camp in the morning to work for Thai farmers or to tend crops that they have cultivated outside the perimeters of the camps before returning in the evening. More problematic, however, is the movement of insurgents in and out of the camps. Many insurgents have relatives in the camps, but these movements are not merely social visits. They are able to obtain food and medicines in the camps to take back to their bases. Some younger male refugees, on the other hand, leave the camps to join insurgent forces in Burma when they come of age. Apart from these movements, there is little evidence to indicate that the camps harbour insurgents although in January 2000 Thai forces uncovered tonnes of explosives in a Karenni refugee camp in Mae Hongsorn.[37]

The most serious problem for bilateral relations posed by the existence of the refugee camps consists of cross-border incursions and attacks on the camps by *Tatmadaw* troops and surrogate ceasefire forces such as the Democratic Karen Buddhist Army (DKBA). Most of these attacks are aimed at forcing refugees back across the border. There are two reasons why the *Tatmadaw* and its surrogates want the refugees to return. First, they need a population base to support them by providing food and labour as porters in their counter-insurgency operations. Second, they are needed to work on infrastructure projects.

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[36] *The Straits Times*, 12 May 2000, p. 30. Burmese workers are primarily employed in fruit orchards, canneries and textile factories. Some estimates place the number of illegal Burmese workers as high as 600,000. See Sarath Kumara, "Thailand expels Thousands of Burmese Immigrant Workers," *World Socialist Website* (7 December 1999) (http:/www.wsws.org/articles/1999/dec1999/tha-d07_prn.shtml, accessed 27 September 2000).

[37] James East, "Forgotten People: Time is Right to Help Karens." *The Straits Times* (30 January 2000), p.41.

The protracted conflict in Burma has seen increasingly desperate tactics being adopted by insurgent forces, straining bilateral relations further. In October 1999, a group of insurgents calling themselves the Vigorous Burmese Student Warriors took over the Burmese embassy in Bangkok and held embassy officials hostage. The situation was resolved only when they reached an agreement with the Thai authorities to be flown to the Thai-Burmese border. No less than the Deputy Foreign Minister, Sukhumbhand Paribatra, accompanied them in the helicopter as a guarantee of good faith. The Burmese regime responded by closing border crossing points to show its displeasure over the Thai government's handling of the incident. They would have preferred that the insurgents were captured or killed.

In January 2000, ten insurgents from the ethnic Karen God's Army (*Kaser Doh*) seized a hospital in Ratchaburi province and held around 200 patients hostage. They demanded an end to Thai shelling of their base near the border, medical treatment for their wounded and freedom to cross the border into Thailand.[38] The siege ended when Thai Special Forces troops stormed the hospital and killed the insurgents. This response met with the Burmese military regime's approval. Commenting on the operation, Prasong Soonsri, national security adviser to the Prime Minister, said, "The raid is a statement from Thailand that guerillas can no longer do this kind of thing to us … If you are hurt and need medical treatment, we are happy to help. But we won't stand sieges."[39]

The spillover effects of protracted conflict in Burma illustrate the complex relationship between traditional and non-traditional aspects of security and the need for a widened notion of security which can account for new forms of insecurity. Violations of Thailand's sovereignty are not the consequence of any direct military threat or an act of war on Burma's part, as has been recognized by various Thai governments over the past twenty years. Nevertheless, they require a military response. Not to do so would signal a concession of state sovereignty. The responses on the part of the Thai government and military have primarily been reactive and *ad hoc* rather than pre-emptive, i.e. in the sense of deterrence. As Thai Army commander General Chavalit Yongchaiyudh said in 1989 of a major border incursion by the Burmese armed forces, "we can't have soldiers standing hand-in-hand all along the border."[40] This was as much recognition of the

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[38] No explanation has been forthcoming as to why the Thai military shelled the base of the God's Army.

[39] James East, "Explosions, Gunshots, Screams … and It's All Over." *The Straits Times* (26 January 2000), p.3.

[40] *The Bangkok Post* (25 May 1989).

extended border between the two countries as it was of the Thai military's lack of capacity to secure the border against such incursions.

Considered in concert with the presence of illegal workers who have sought employment in Thailand because of the poor state of the Burmese economy, these developments have a negative impact on Thailand's security, rendering the Thai state vulnerable in Ayoob's sense. They constitute vulnerabilities to the Thai state in that they erode state capacity at various levels.

These territorial violations strain the capacity of the Thai military by forcing it to adopt unconventional forms of peacetime deployment in order to react as rapidly as possible to incursions, undertake intensified border surveillance tasks and intelligence-gathering activities, and sequester refugee camps. The existence of these camps, furthermore, imposes demands on state and provincial administrative resources, e.g. overseeing the coordinating efforts of the UNHCR, the documentation and registration of refugees, surveillance of refugees and the monitoring of refugee camps. The presence of illegal workers, on the other hand, poses vulnerabilities of another kind. They are largely employed by Thai businesses because they are cheaper than Thai workers.[41] Thus, while Thai workers face unemployment, the Thai businesses involved in effect function outside the regulatory framework of the state by ignoring laws prohibiting the employment of illegal workers or, worse, by subverting this framework through corruption of the officials responsible for enforcing labour laws.

Narcotics and Security in Burma and Thailand

In the last decade, there has been increasing recognition among academics and American policy-makers that narcotics trafficking and transnational crimes are serious threats to national security. Much of the work in this area has drawn on the experience of Latin America and East Asia, as well as a widened conception of security. Southeast Asia has featured only marginally in this literature, despite the fact that Burma is a major source of the illicit drugs that have contributed to problems associated with the nexus between narcotics and security in East Asia. Only in 1998 did ASEAN acknowledge that narcotics were a serious problem within the region, constituting a threat to regional stability and calling for a drug-free ASEAN by 2020.[42] In the

[41] Immigrant workers, legal or illegal, are paid wages of between 50-90 baht per day whereas the statutory minimum wage for Thai citizens was approximately 130 baht.

[42] *The Straits Times* (26 July 2000), p.32.

view of Alan Dupont, the relationship between narcotics, transnational crime and a widened concept of security rests on four propositions.

First, transnational criminal activities subvert the authority and legitimacy of governments because those involved implicitly challenge the monopoly over taxation and violence which are the prerogative of the state and thus run counter to the aim of good governance, i.e. the protection of the rights, property, welfare and security of citizens. Second, in less developed countries, individuals and elites become accustomed to working outside the regulatory framework and rule of law, thus weakening state capacity. Third, the coercive power of organized crime can undermine the norms and institutions that provide global order. Fourth, transnational crime can have significant military and strategic aspects: for example, revolutionary political or insurgent movements may finance their activities through criminal operations and in the process blur the traditional distinction between military and law enforcement issues.[43] These propositions are largely applicable to Burma and its relations with Thailand.

Burma is second only to Afghanistan as a producer of illicit opium and heroin. It is also a major producer of ATS, including "speed," "ice" and "ecstasy." In 1999, an estimated 99,300 hectares were under opium cultivation, with a corresponding estimated yield of 1,090 metric tonnes.[44] Despite a decline in opium production between 1997 and 1999 due to droughts and limited eradication efforts by the military regime, Burma still accounted for most of Southeast Asia's opium production for that year.

ATS production is much harder to estimate because as a "designer" drug produced in laboratories it is not dependent on locally-produced precursors such as ephedra and sugar cane. Instead, these are obtained from India and China. It is therefore not possible to estimate ATS production based on determinations of precursor cultivation. Nevertheless, an indication of the explosive growth of ATS production in Burma is offered by estimates of flows into Thailand from the approximately 60 amphetamine factories along the border.[45] In 1997, this was estimated

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[43] Alan Dupont, *Drugs, Transnational Crime and Security in East Asia* (Working Paper No.328) (Canberra: Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, Australian National University, 1998), pp.3-4.

[44] Bureau for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, US Department of State, *International Narcotics Control Strategy Report 1999* (Washington, DC: US Department of State, March 2000). (http: //www.state.gov/global/ narcotics law/1999 narc report/seas99.html, accessed 7 June 2000).

[45] *The Straits Times* (7 October 2000), p.30.

at 3 million tablets a month.[46] In 1999, Thai authorities estimated that 600 million tablets had been smuggled into the country.[47]

Most of the illicit drugs are produced in Shan State and to some extent in Kachin State. The ethnic insurgent organisations involved are the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army, the United Wa State Army (UWSA), the Kachin Defence Army, the Mongko Defence Army, and the Shan United Revolutionary Army (formerly the Shan State Army).[48] With the exception of the latter, all have entered into ceasefire agreements with the Burmese regime.

The production of narcotics by these organisations reflects the inability of the military regime to exercise full territorial control and to conduct its drug eradication programme. Proceeds from narcotics production and trafficking have enabled these organisations to finance their activities and thus maintain their stand-off with the Burmese regime. However, the situation is more complex than this. The terms of the ceasefires call for recognition of the military regime in exchange for autonomy to conduct "economic activities." As part of the latter, the regime has encouraged these groups to invest in "legitimate" businesses to wean them from narcotics production and trafficking. The practical consequence of this initiative has been the "laundering" of illicit proceeds through investments in hotels and construction companies, thus blurring not only the traditional distinction between military and law enforcement issues but the boundaries between the legal and extra-legal economies in Burma.[49] This has major implications for governance in Burma: a lack of transparency in macro-economic management, compromising any integrity that economic and financial authorities in the country might have and subverting their regulatory frameworks.

These conditions are generally characteristic of the breakdown of state structures in Latin American "producer" states.[50] However, as with these cases, Burma is also a "consumer" state.

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[46] Bertil Lintner, "Speed Demons: Asia's Newest Drug Scourge: Mass-produced Stimulants." *Far Eastern Economic Review* (8 May 1997), p.28.

[47] *The Straits Times* (26 June 2000), p.30.

[48] Bureau for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, *passim*.

[49] *Ibid*. The two most conspicuous figures involved are Khun Sa and Lo Hsing-han, who are both now leading business figures in Rangoon. See Dupont, p.12, and Ball, *Burma and Drugs*, p.4.

[50] Joshua S. Krasna, "Narcotics and the National Security of Producer States." *Journal of Conflict Studies* (Spring 1996) (http://www.lib.unb.ca/Texts/JCS/S96/articles/krasna.html, accessed 11 January 2001).

Official Burmese estimates placed the drug addict population at 86,537 in 1999. The United Nations Drug Control Programme (UNDCP) suggests that the figure may be between 400,000-500,000.[51] With cheap heroin and ATS, as well as underdeveloped drug treatment and rehabilitation programmes, large sectors of the population remain at risk. These include ethnic minorities as well as the urban poor. Increasing intravenous heroin use has also contributed to a growing problem of HIV/AIDS and hepatitis transmission. If good governance includes the protection and security of citizens, then it is evident that Burma is subject to new vulnerabilities that may be traced back to protracted conflict and poor governance.

Narcotics-related problems emanating from Burma have been explicitly acknowledged by the Thai government as *national security* issues. Thailand has a highly effective illicit narcotics crop control programme co-ordinated by the Office of Narcotics Control Board, the Police Narcotics Suppression Bureau and the Thai Army Third Region Command. Its effectiveness may be seen from the substantial decline in poppy cultivation and opium production. Between 1991 and 1999, the area under poppy cultivation decreased from 3,000 to 835 hectares. The drastic decline in 1999, however, is also attributable to drought. The corresponding estimates for opium production saw a decline from 35 to six metric tonnes. ATS production occurs but it is limited to small-scale producers who obtain ATS tablets from larger producers in Burma. These are crushed and mixed with additives such as caffeine and 're-tabletted', resulting in the lower grade ATS that is consumed by poorer abusers.[52]

Despite the success of Thailand's counter-narcotics programme, it has experienced an explosive growth in drug abuse in the last decade. Though no longer a major producer, Thailand is a "transit" and "consumer" state, supplied from Burma. There has been a phenomenal increase in the number of indictments in drug-related offences involving narcotics of all types: from 56,954 in 1988 to 186,232 in 1998. Between January and October 1999, 3,248 kilogrammes of methamphetamines were seized while 146,317 persons were arrested in a total of 135,358 ATS-related cases.[53] It is estimated that there are about 600,000 young drug addicts, with ATS, heroin and cocaine being the preferred drugs.[54]

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[51] Bureau for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, *passim*.

[52] *Ibid*.

[53] *Ibid*.

[54] *The Straits Times* (8 January 2000).

The former Chuan Leekpai government took the narcotics problem seriously as a security issue. This may be judged by its policy responses. Despite the economic recession in 1999 and weak recovery in 2000, it expanded and intensified counter-narcotics activities, and undertook a concerted regional initiative. The administration (particularly former Foreign Minister Surin Pitsuwan and Deputy Foreign Minister Sukhumband Paribatra) had in effect "securitised" narcotics and transnational crime.

These measures, in essence, addressed two of the propositions adduced by Dupont: subversion of the authority and legitimacy of government and challenges to the state's monopoly over taxation and violence, and habituation of those involved to working outside the regulatory framework and rule of law, thus weakening state capacity. In placing the issue of narcotics and crime high on agenda of the July 2000 ASEAN Foreign Ministers Meeting, it could be argued that Thailand also recognised yet another proposition: that the coercive power of organized crime can undermine the norms and institutions that provide regional, if not global, order. It is, however, my argument that in so doing, Thailand was attempting to reinforce a dimension of the structure of ASEAN cooperation to resolve a bilateral problem that had been defined as a non-traditional security issue.

In March 1999, Thailand's legislature passed a law against money laundering from seven types of criminal activities including narcotics. The law included the establishment of the Money Laundering Control Office and provisions for asset seizure. As a result of this, by October 1999 narcotics-related asset seizures amounted to over US$ 984.4 million. In addition a "significant number" of junior military and police officials were sacked, transferred or asked to resign.[55]

In July 2000, the Third Region Army Command initiated a programme to create village-based militias by providing villagers in Chiang Rai and Tak provinces (near cross-border transit points) with arms and basic military training to assist in the interdiction of narcotics.[56] This is clear evidence that the Thai military's resources have been over-stretched. Interdiction efforts were also stepped up in September in a massive sweep involving hundreds of soldiers in 49 villages in the provinces of Chiang Rai, Chiang Mai, Mae Hongsorn, Tak, and Lampang. The

[55] Bureau for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, *passim*.

[56] *The Straits Times* (16 July 2000), p.22, and *The Straits Times* (20 September 2000), p.40.

operation was directed at suspected traffickers from the UWSA based on the Thai side of the border.[57]

At the end of the annual ASEAN Foreign Ministers Meeting in Bangkok in July 2000, a joint statement was issued calling for a "drug-free" region by 2015, i.e. advancing the target year from 2020 as agreed upon in 1998. This was supported by Burma, Laos and Cambodia.[58] The chairmanship of the annual meeting rotates and the chair traditionally is able to exercise a certain amount of discretion in setting the agenda of the meeting. This statement must accordingly be seen as a reflection of Thailand's perception of the seriousness of the narcotics problem and as an attempt to involve neighbouring states in an intensified effort to eradicate it. Burma's commitment, as a producer state, was thus crucial.

This, however, was only part of Thailand's initiative. In August 2000, Surin Pitsuwan announced that Sukhumband Paribatra would visit China to discuss a "regional architecture" to combat the narcotics problem.[59] And, in September 2000, Chuan Leekpai announced that Thailand would seek "concrete co-operation" from Burma as a follow-up to an invitation in 1997 to Senior General Than Shwe to discuss cooperation in narcotics suppression.[60] At almost the same time, Thai officials announced that an agreement was being drafted with the US government to deepen cooperation in counter-narcotics suppression involving, for the first time, the Thai and US armies. Admiral Dennis Blair, head of the US Pacific Command, who was in Bangkok at the time of the announcement, issued a statement that the US Army would train Thai soldiers in drug suppression operations, offer night vision devices and other unspecified equipment.[61] Surin Pitsuwan has declared that cooperation with China was not aimed at any specific country because the narcotics problem is a regional one and therefore requires a collective effort.[62] While it is indeed a regional problem, Burma *is* the major producer state. The securing of regional and extra-regional collaboration was an attempt to draw Burma into

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[57] *The Straits Times* (15 September 2000), p.37.

[58] *The Straits Times* (26 July 2000), p.32.

[59] *The Nation* (26 August 2000).

[60] *The Bangkok Post* (11 September 2000).

[6161] *The Straits Times* (7 October 2000).

[62] *The Nation* (26 August 2000).

committing itself to cooperate in intensified domestic eradication programmes, and joint intelligence sharing, surveillance and interdiction efforts.

Conclusion

The protracted conflict in Burma, rooted in ethnic insurgency and poor governance, falls within more traditional conceptions of security where internal military confrontation substantially weakens state structures and threatens state sovereignty. Indeed, Burma is a state in name and not in fact as long as insurgent organizations retain their autonomy and exercise territorial control.

The case of Burma, however, also illustrates that traditional security issues can generate non-traditional security issues and new vulnerabilities -- not only internally but in inter-state relations. Narcotics production and trafficking by insurgent organizations have blurred the traditional distinction between military and non-military concerns. They have also eroded the boundary between the legal and extra-legal economies through money laundering, partly encouraged by the military regime, thus compromising the regulatory frameworks of the state, which feeds back into the problem of bad governance. The growing problem of narcotics abuse also represents potentially significant social and economic costs. All of these conditions have rendered Burma a weak state.

The very weakness of the Burmese state has generated vulnerabilities in Thailand that show a mix of traditional and non-traditional aspects of security. These include violations of territory and sovereignty that demand a military response. The presence of illegal workers from Burma, on the other hand, tests labour laws and regulations and strains state capacity. Narcotics trafficking and abuse have emerged as serious issues that have been securitised by the Thai government. The Thai response to this has been to strengthen its regulatory framework and counter-narcotics strategy, including a substantially expanded role for the Thai military. Significantly, the Thai government has sought to use the ASEAN framework as well as the cooperation of two ASEAN Regional Forum members, China and the US, to combat the narcotics problem.

These developments indicate that traditional and non-traditional aspects of security co-exist in Southeast Asia. This paper argues that this mix of security issues can only be understood

properly if we preserve the conceptual link between security and the state while allowing for a more flexible perspective on military threats.

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