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Maritime Security in Southeast Asia

Edited by Kwa Chong Guan and John K. Skogan. London and New York: Routledge, Regional Security in Asia Series, 2007. i–xiii. pp. 224. Contents, Notes on contributors, Preface, List of abbreviations, Bibliography, Index.

This edited volume deals with issues and dimensions related to maritime security in Southeast Asia. This is of considerable interest and relevance both from scholarly and policy-making perspectives. The contributors are scholars based in Southeast Asia and a limited number of European based scholars. The volume is the end product of a two-workshop process. The volume is structured in the following way.

The volume is divided into five parts and fifteen chapters. The five parts are "Introduction", "Challenges", "Responses", "Comments and reflections", and "Afterword". Chapter 1 by Anders C. Sjaastad analyses the Southeast Asian sea-lanes of communication and security options (pp. 1–13). Chapter 2 by Barry Desker discusses the safety of navigation in the Malacca Strait (pp. 14–18). Chapter 3 by Joshua Ho analyses the importance and security of regional sea-lanes (pp. 21–33). Chapter 4 by W. Lawrence S. Prabhakar is devoted to the regional dimension of territorial and maritime disputes in Southeast Asia (pp. 34–48). Chapter 5 by Ralf Emmers analyses the maritime disputes in the South China Sea (pp. 49–61). Chapter 6 by Catherine Zara Raymond is devoted to piracy in the waters of Southeast Asia (pp. 62–77). Chapter 7 by Arabinda Acharya studies the threat of maritime terrorism in Southeast Asia (pp. 78–93). Chapter 8 by Sam Bateman analyses the possibilities of creating order at sea in Southeast Asia (pp. 97–116). Chapter 9 by Robert Beckman studies the issue of Archipelagic sea-lanes passage in Southeast Asia (pp. 117–133). Chapter 10 by Christian-Marius Stryken is devoted to the Regional Maritime Security Initiative of the United States of America (USA) and its grand strategy on Southeast Asia (pp. 134–145). In chapter 11 Jan Georg Christophersen studies satellite-based tracking of ships as a global crime control (pp. 146–161). Chapter 12 by Gunnar Stølsvik is devoted to flags of convenience and its impact on combating crime at sea (pp. 162–174). Chapter 13 by John K. Skogan analyses the challenges of terrorism at sea (pp. 177–188). In Chapter 14 Kwa Chong Guan reflects on the changing maritime security environment (pp. 189–197). Finally, in Chapter 15 Tay Lim Heng discusses the importance of shipping and the challenges ahead (pp. 201–204).

Despite the fact that the volume is the end result of a two-workshop process it lacks in coherence and the contributions are uneven in quality. The most surprising feature is that there is no introduction outlining the

rationale and structure of the volume. In fact neither of the two chapters in the "Introduction" are intended to outline the structure nor to provide an overall theme and approach of the volume. There is also no concluding chapter summarising the main findings of the volume. Thus, although the various contributions do address a multitude of relevant aspects and dimension the volume as a whole lacks in cohesion.

The chapters do vary in depth and in quality as compared to the existing literature in the field. Chapters 8 and 9 by Sam Bateman and Robert Beckham stand-out as the most coherent and also those that best relate to existing research in their respective fields, i.e. order at sea and archipelagic sea-lanes passage, respectively. There are also directly related to the Southeast Asian region. Chapter 6 by Catherine Zara Raymond is also a good overview of the piracy in waters of Southeast Asia. Moving to chapters of mixed quality, Chapter 3 by Joshua Ho is a good overview on the importance of the sea-lanes in the region but the fact that the author has opted to specifically highlight Norwegian shipping although it is not the major shipping nations in the area is odd (pp. 21–22). Chapter 5 by Ralf Emmers is overall a good overview of maritime disputes in the South China Sea with one major weakness namely that the disputes between China and Vietnam that caused major tensions in the 1990s are largely overlooked in the chapter. The weak chapters include Chapter 4 dealing regional dimension of territorial and maritime disputes in Southeast Asia that fails to properly identify the existing disputes and also the progress made in addressing territorial disputes made by Vietnam in the 1990s and 2000s. Chapter 7 on the maritime terrorist threat in Southeast Asia is stronger on factual information but features the actions of Liberation Tigers of Tamil Elam (LTTE) in Sri Lanka prominently, and the relevance of the LTTE in the Southeast Asian context is not established. In other words the chapter lacks in relevance for the Southeast Asian region.

An observation relating to the contributions of the European based scholars is that they are all from Norway and their contributions—although of general relevance—all display none or very limited linkage to the Southeast Asian region. The fact that they are all Norwegian is understandable since funding from Norway made the workshops possible, but the lack of Southeast Asian expertise ought to have been addressed.

Another observation that among the non-Norwegians all except three are based at the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore. In addition Catherine Zara Raymond was formerly with this institution. The remaining two contributors—Robert Beckman and Tay Lim Heng—are both based in Singapore. This situation gives the impression that regional expertise beyond the Rajaratnam School of International Studies has largely been overlooked.

The volume had the potential to be a very solid contribution to scholarship in a very relevant field and on relevant topics. Unfortunately, a combination of weaknesses outlined in this review have resulted in a final product that lacks in coherence, that is partly weak, and that partly lacks in relevance for the Southeast Asian region that is supposed to be the focus of attention. Given that the volume is the end product of a two-workshop process it ought to have been possible to avoid the weaknesses outlined in this review.

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