Refugees and the Rebalancing of State and Human Security in Europe and Southeast Asia

Baroness Valerie Amos, the former Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator at UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, and Ms. Janet Lim, the previous Assistant High Commissioner (Operations) of UN High Commissioner for Refugees, referenced Europe’s reduced human security ambitions at seminars here at RSIS last month. Comparing the EU’s response to the ongoing crisis in Rakhine state, Myanmar, with its actions during the refugee crisis on its doorstep, demonstrate what this means in practice.

On 23 October 2017 in Geneva, the EU co-hosted an event for Rohingya refugees fleeing Rakhine state, and promised €30 million in aid on top of the €21 million already pledged this year. The funding is intended for the 900,000 Rohingya currently estimated by the EU to have fled, as well as the 300,000 Bangladeshi host population in the Cox’s Bazaar area to provide emergency shelter, food and health assistance.

In 2016, the EU agreed a deal with neighbouring Turkey for €6 billion to handle the influx of an estimated 2.2 million asylum seekers trying to reach Europe. These massively imbalanced donations for comparable crises demonstrate at best a limited human security motivation: a little over twice as many are people seeking asylum in Europe, but the EU is dedicating more than 117 times as much money.

The widely noted terms of this EU-Turkey deal further underscore this conclusion. The agreement has meant sending those arriving “irregularly” in Greece back to Turkey, despite concerns over their safety once they return. Amnesty International reports subsequent cases of *refoulement* in which asylum seekers have been returned once more to Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan, where they risk serious human rights violations. Nonetheless, the EU is reportedly considering this cash-for-containment model for places with even more dubious records, including Libya.

Institutional aid generally comes with
political considerations. It is, therefore, unsurprising that the EU is giving more to address an issue with direct local implications. But these two agreements suggest a substantial minimisation of concern with human security, together with a significant rebalancing towards using EU member-states as principle security referents. This is reminiscent of debates here in Southeast Asia.

The human security doctrine has penetrated institutions in this region to some extent. The 2007 ASEAN Charter and the 2012 ASEAN Human Rights Declaration attest to this. The ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Affairs on disaster management’s (AHA Centre) recent involvement in providing aid to those affected by conflict in Marawi City, Philippines, and in Rakhine State, Myanmar – beyond its conventional natural disaster experience thus far– provides some evidence of practical implications. However, it is likely to be commitments at national level that will ultimately determine the protection of human security here. The treatment of several minority groups in the region – including Rohingya and other minorities in Myanmar, and Muslims in the Philippines – often justified through appeal to state security, demonstrate the tensions that remain between using the state or the human as a security referent in countries in this region.

In their seminars, both Baroness Amos and Ms. Lim contrasted the role of Europe during their careers at the United Nations with its current positioning. Europe has historically exercised exaggerated influence in the institutions and doctrines that frame human security. With the EU pivoting back towards a state-focus in security policy articulation, Europe and Southeast Asia may now be pursuing a similar balance. If this is the case, it could conceivably produce greater cooperation between the two regions on security articulation, or an overall retrenchment on human security, or even both together. In other words, there may be both threats and opportunities for proponents of the human security concept.

Suggested Readings

- Martel, Stéphanie, 2017, “From ambiguity to contestation: Discourse(s) of non-traditional security in the ASEAN community,” Pacific Review, 30(4), 549-565
NEWS & COMMENTARIES

Factories, cars behind haze in Singapore
Tan Tam Mei,
The Straits Times
5 October 2017

Climate change will increase the risk of severe turbulence on planes, research says
Anmar Frangoul,
CNBC
5 October 2017

IMF chief warns of ‘dark future’ over climate change
AFP,
Channel NewsAsia
24 October 2017

Concentration of CO2 in atmosphere hits record high: UN
AFP,
Today
30 October 2017

U.S. report says humans cause climate change, contradicting top Trump officials
Lisa Friedman and Glenn Thrush,
The New York Times
4 November 2017

Climate change: 5 things to know about Bonn climate summit
Associated Press,
The Economic Times
4 November 2017

Climate change imperils one in four natural heritage sites: Report
AFP
13 November 2017

Perception of climate change in patients with chronic lung disease
Jeremias Götschke et al.,
PLOS One
2017

Climate change: The facts 2017
Jennifer Marohasy (ed.),
Melbourne: Institute of Public Affairs
2017

EVENTS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

The 4th Global Science Conference On Climate Smart Agriculture
28–30 November 2017
Johannesburg, South Africa

International Conference on Resilient Hindu Kush Himalaya: Developing Solutions towards a Sustainable Future for Asia
3–6 December 2017
Kathmandu, Nepal

NEWS AND COMMENTARIES

Looking back and looking ahead: Energy development in Southeast Asia
Fatih Birol,
The Straits Times
24 October 2017

Malaysia’s Green Islamic Sukuk funds green tech projects
Ayisy Yusof,
New Straits Times
25 October 2017

Assessing the benefits of an Open Electricity Market for households and small businesses
Allan Loi,
Channel News Asia
28 October 2017

The future for Singapore’s energy burns bright
Irving Low and Tim Rockell,
Channel News Asia
2 November 2017

Commentary on nuclear energy sparks debate over risks, safety
Sue-Ann Tan,
The Straits Times
5 November 2017

China seeks energy security by buying LNG from U.S., Russia: analyst
Song Lifang,
Xinhua Net
11 November 2017

Courtesy of Flickr account of European Commission DG ECHO and used under a creative commons license.

Perception of climate change in patients with chronic lung disease
Jeremias Götschke et al.,
PLOS One
2017

Climate change: The facts 2017
Jennifer Marohasy (ed.),
Melbourne: Institute of Public Affairs
2017

International Conference on Resilient Hindu Kush Himalaya: Developing Solutions towards a Sustainable Future for Asia
3–6 December 2017
Kathmandu, Nepal

Looking back and looking ahead: Energy development in Southeast Asia
Fatih Birol,
The Straits Times
24 October 2017

Malaysia’s Green Islamic Sukuk funds green tech projects
Ayisy Yusof,
New Straits Times
25 October 2017

Assessing the benefits of an Open Electricity Market for households and small businesses
Allan Loi,
Channel News Asia
28 October 2017

The future for Singapore’s energy burns bright
Irving Low and Tim Rockell,
Channel News Asia
2 November 2017

Commentary on nuclear energy sparks debate over risks, safety
Sue-Ann Tan,
The Straits Times
5 November 2017

China seeks energy security by buying LNG from U.S., Russia: analyst
Song Lifang,
Xinhua Net
11 November 2017

Courtesy of Wikimedia account of Gretchen Mahan and used under a creative commons license.
FOOD SECURITY

Millions either malnourished or obese in global nutrition crisis
Kate Kelland, Reuters
4 November 2017

Bigger push for high-intensity, large-scale commercial farms
Lee Meixian, The Straits Times
10 November 2017

How to feed 800 million: The battle over the future of US food aid
Matt Seyler, ABC News
11 November 2017

Exclusive: S. Sudan government using food as weapon of war - U.N. report
Michelle Nichols, Reuters
11 November 2017

APEC’s Da Nang Declaration aims to act on food security, sustainable agri sector
Food Evolution
12 November 2017

Papua villages under rebel blockade receive food, aid
Reuters, The Straits Times
13 November 2017

EVENTS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

Third International Conference on Human Resource Development for Nuclear Power Programmes
28-31 May 2018
Gyeongju, South Korea

Asia-Middle East Energy Security Summit 2018
14-16 February 2018
Karnataka, India

Exclusive: S. Sudan government using food as weapon of war - U.N. report
Michelle Nichols, Reuters
11 November 2017

APEC’s Da Nang Declaration aims to act on food security, sustainable agri sector
Food Evolution
12 November 2017

Papua villages under rebel blockade receive food, aid
Reuters, The Straits Times
13 November 2017

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

Security culture: An educational handbook of nuclear & non-nuclear case studies
Geoff Chapman, et al, Centre for Science and Security Studies, King’s College London
2017

World nuclear performance report: Asia edition
London: World Nuclear Association
2017

Subsistence urban agriculture: Key externalities and way forward
Stella Liu and Paul Teng, RSIS Policy Brief, S Rajaratnam School of International Studies
2017

High-tech plant factories: Challenges and way forward
Stella Liu and Paul Teng, RSIS Policy Brief, S Rajaratnam School of International Studies
2017

EVENTS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

8th International Conference on Food Safety, Quality & Policy
27-28 November 2017
Dubai, United Arab Emirates

3rd International Conference on Global Food Security
3-6 December 2017
Cape Town, South Africa

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

Subsistence urban agriculture: Key externalities and way forward
Stella Liu and Paul Teng, RSIS Policy Brief, S Rajaratnam School of International Studies
2017

High-tech plant factories: Challenges and way forward
Stella Liu and Paul Teng, RSIS Policy Brief, S Rajaratnam School of International Studies
2017
HEALTH SECURITY

Climate change already damaging health of millions globally, report finds
Damian Carrington, The Guardian
30 October 2017

Climate change isn’t just hurting the planet - it’s a public health emergency
Christina Figueres, The Guardian
31 October 2017

What Canada taught Bernie Sanders about health care
Sarah Kliff, Vox
31 October 2017

Yemen’s health crisis: How the world’s largest cholera outbreak unfolded
Rachel Thompson, Chatham House
2 November 2017

MOH wants to make national patient database mandatory
Linette Lai, The Straits Times
9 November 2017

Delhi’s air pollution is triggering a health crisis?
Soutic Biswas, BBC News
12 November 2017

NEWS & COMMENTARIES

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

Asia takes robotic body parts and smart hospitals further
Ari Altstedter, Bloomberg
14 November 2017

Ending cholera: A global roadmap to 2030
Global Task Force on Cholera Control
2017

Responding to children and adolescents who have been sexually abused: WHO clinical guidelines
World Health Organisation
2017

EVENTS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

3rd World Congress on Public Health & Nutrition
26-28 February 2018
London, UK

SingHealth Nursing Conference 2018
5-7 April 2018
Singapore

NEW AND COMMENTARIES

A better political economy of the Rohingya crisis
Lee Jones, New Mandala
26 September 2017

Fall of Raqqa inflames Southeast Asia terror threat
John McBeth, Asia Times
16 October 2017

Trump’s China trip ends with few gains on trade, North Korea
Bloomberg and AFP, The Straits Times
10 November 2017

Trump’s post-pivot strategy
Patrick M. Cronin, The Diplomat
11 November 2017

PEACE, HUMAN SECURITY AND DEVELOPMENT

EVENTS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

www.rsis.edu.sg/research/nts-centre November 2017

Courtesy of Flickr account of CDC Global and used under a creative commons license.
TRANSNATIONAL CRIME

With Iraqi-Kurdish talks stalled, phone diplomacy averts new clashes
Margaret Coker, The New York Times 12 November 2017

Trump and Duterte: A budding bromance
Richard Javad Heydarian, Al Jazeera 12 November 2017

Extremism, drugs, piracy take center stage in ASEAN
Ruth Abbey Gita, SunStar Manila 13 November 2017

Current progress on South China Sea dispute cannot be taken for granted: PM Lee
Jalelah Abu Baker, Channel News Asia 13 November 2017

North Korea: US is "escalating tension" with military exercises in peninsula

Jihadism in southern Thailand: A phantom menace

Rousing a response: when the United States changes policy towards mass milling

EVENTS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

International Conference on Human Rights and Human Security 2018
25-26 June 2018 Paris, France

International Conference on Universities and Women's Studies
8-10 March 2018 Hong Kong

NEWS & COMMENTARIES

What motivates Chinese President Xi Jinping’s anti-corruption drive?
Rob Shmitz, NPR 24 October 2017

Police forces failing to tackle modern slavery in UK, report shows
Jamie Grierson, The Guardian 24 October 2017

India’s wildlife trafficking epidemic
Neeta Lal, The Diplomat 26 October 2017

Australia’s asylum boat turnbacks are illegal and risk lives, UN told
Ben Doherty, The Guardian 29 October 2017

Is marijuana good for health? How drug laws restrict research of cannabis treatments
Kastalia Medrano, Newsweek 2 November 2017

The Christian vigilantes fighting Myanmar’s heroin epidemic
Josh McDonald, The Diplomat 1 November 2017

Golden Triangle under spotlight as illegal wildlife trade hub
Traffic 2 November 2017

Strategy – people smugglers globally, 2017
John Coyne and Madeleine Nyst, SEEFAR and Global Initiative 2017

Modern slavery in supply chains reporting requirement – public consultation
Focus on Labour Exploitation (FLEX) 2017

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

Courtesy of Flickr account of Coast Guard News and used under a creative commons license.
HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE AND DISASTER RELIEF

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

Leveraging humanitarian technology to assist refugees
Connor Evans et al., University of Pennsylvania
2017

The global refugee crisis: Regional destabilization and humanitarian protection
Sarah Kenyon Lischer,
Daedalus, Vol 146, No 4
2017

NEWS & COMMENTARIES

Singapore to give S$100,000 for humanitarian aid in Rakhine
Channel News Asia
19 October 2017

Red Cross warns of ‘dehumanizing’ rhetoric in ISIS fight
Anne Barnard,
The New York Times
26 October 2017

Thousands of Rohingyas cross into Bangladesh overnight; child malnutrition soars in camps –UN
UN News Centre
3 November 2017

ASEAN must do more to prevent conflict, protect refugees
Noelene Heyzer,
The Straits Times
10 November 2017

How to fix our $350 billion disaster relief problem
Trent Lott and Jason Gru- met,
CNBC
10 November 2017

Vietnamese government’s tough decision on natural disaster relief
Oliver Ward,
ASEAN Today
13 November 2017

EVENTS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

21st Annual IBA Transnational Crime Conference
16-18 May 2018
Krakow, Poland

4th Annual Anti-Trafficking Conference
26 January 2018
Kansas, United States

ASEAN must do more to prevent conflict, protect refugees
Noelene Heyzer,
The Straits Times
10 November 2017

How to fix our $350 billion disaster relief problem
Trent Lott and Jason Gru- met,
CNBC
10 November 2017

World Tsunami Awareness Day 2017— Protecting Lives! Ensuring Sustainability
30 November - 2 December 2017
Marsa Alam, Egypt

Launch of the Sendai Framework Monitoring Process
6-8 December 2017
Bonn, Germany
WATER SECURITY

NEWS AND COMMENTARIES

Migration of farmers viewed as opportunity for Mekong Delta
VietNamNet Bridge
24 October 2017

From Bhutan to Cambodia, early warning saves lives in floods
Rina Chandran, Thomson Reuters Foundation
25 October 2017

New Greenland maps show more glaciers at risk
University of California-Irvine, Science Daily
1 November 2017

Opening the flood-gates: Water security and terror
Annie Lehman-Ludwig, Brown Political Review
3 November 2017

Big companies invest billions to secure water supplies
Attracta Mooney, Financial Times
7 November 2017

Govt implements Botswana Emergency Water Security, Efficiency Project
BOPA, Botswana Daily News
7 November 2017

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

A dynamic framework for water security
V. Srinivasan, M. Konar and M. Sivapalan,
Water Security, Vol 1 2017

Does improved irrigation technology save water? A review of the evidence
Chris Perry and Pasquale Steduto,
UN Food and Agriculture Organisation 2017

EVENTS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

Call for Papers: 1st International Conference on Water Security
15 December 2017
Toronto, Canada

WASH Futures Conference 2018
5 - 9 March 2018
Brisbane, Australia