

Linking governance and security

Defence's role in South East Asia By Kate Boswood

Promoting good governance as a way of fostering regional stability has long been identified as a high priority for the Australian Government.

At its core, governance is about transparency and accountability in decision-making, and strengthening political leadership. In world terms, governance is essentially the establishment of effective institutions to mediate the relationship between governments and their citizens. It covers the gamut of processes through which governments manage economic and financial matters; build public sectors effectiveness; and deliver effective law and justice systems.

Why it's important

For Australia, facilitating a stable security environment in South East Asia is an enduring strategic interest. Strong and stable governments make better strategic partners and contribute to regional stability and security. States with strong corporate governance functions are recognised as being more efficient at law enforcement, border control, countering terrorist threats and responding to corruption.

Because governance is a complex and multifaceted issue, Australia's regional engagement in this area is long term, and a whole of Government responsibility. Australia assists in strengthening institutional structures of regional states, and works to build the capacity

of organisations and systems to deal with internal challenges. Our support is aimed at reducing the destabilising effects of weak institutions. The result is a more stable government, which is beneficial to all in the region – limiting the need for nations, like Australia, to become involved in efforts to restore stability.

The role of Defence in regional governance

For Defence, regional governance is about assisting our neighbours with developing effective and appropriate military forces. Security forces with strong governance functions and accountability are better equipped to deal with internal security challenges, as well as better able to contribute effectively to coalitions in addressing regional security issues.

As South East Asian nations continue to modernise, we can expect to see development of their military capabilities. Because of the centrality of military institutions in many of these societies, Defence is a natural partner to engage our neighbours on governance issues.

Through the Defence Cooperation Program (DCP), Defence supports courses and workshops for regional military and civilian participants on principles of good governance and public sector management. These training programs cover issues of effective management, international law, civil-military legal cooperation and regional leadership.

Defence is committed to the promotion of good governance and provides significant support on the ground in South East Asia. This is demonstrated by the following case studies, which outline specific governance activities in the Philippines, Thailand, Papua New Guinea and Indonesia.

Philippines and Thailand: personnel management and reform

Defence reform assistance to the Philippines and Thailand is targeted at developing the capacity and institutional strength of both armed forces. One of the main areas of reform in these countries is personnel management.

The Royal Thai Armed Forces do not currently employ civilian personnel, relying instead on an exclusively military workforce. However, recent legislation passed by the Thai Government aims to civilianise many military positions over the next two years. This will be a huge cultural change.

The Armed Forces of the Philippines employs civilians in its Department of National Defence in policy and support roles. There is keen interest from the Philippines in further development of its civilian workforce in areas such as recruitment from university; attraction and retention; career streaming; and professional development. Australia is viewed as a good model for the Department of National Defence to follow.

With funding from the DCP, a team of four personnel policy experts from the People Strategies and Policy Group held workshops

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Building International relationships: Republic of Singapore Air Force's Major Yeow Wei Pang, Royal Thai Air Force's Wing Commander Visut, Republic of Singapore Air Force's Lieutenant Chris Quek, Royal Malaysian Air Force's Major 'Hulk' Mohdnasir Mohddin, NATO's Captain Peter Verlandé and Royal Australian Air Force's Flying Officer Martin Alderette enjoy a relaxing walk along the beach at the Darwin Sailing Club. *Photo provided by Public Affairs.*

in Thailand and the Philippines in May 2007. Supported by Defence staff at our embassies in Bangkok and Manila, the team tailored information to fit the requirements of both countries in a seminar-based format. The Australian approach acknowledged that both countries have their own cultures and existing personnel management systems, without seeking to impose a new system over the top. The presentations focused on imparting knowledge about our systems, Australia's experience of reforms – both positive and negative – and lessons learnt.

The seminars in both countries resulted in requests for further cooperation and information sharing, which are currently being pursued as part of the DCP.

Papua New Guinea: financial accountability

Under the Strongim Gavman Program (SGP, formerly the Enhanced Cooperation Program) between the Governments of Australia and Papua New Guinea (PNG), Defence provides a financial adviser to the PNG Department of Defence to help build capacity within the Finance Division.

In this role, Australian Defence employee Kristina Pawliw works closely with members of the PNG Defence Force and civilians within the PNG Department of Defence to develop budget, allowance and cash flow templates and processes to improve the transparency of decisions that involve spending Defence funds.

"Developing communication within the Headquarters and with PNG Defence Force units, Treasury and Finance on important financial issues is a key focus," Kristina says.

"I also provide advice and assistance to senior Defence officials in the Senior Defence Committee and the Finance Working Group."

This position plays a central role in developing PNG Defence's budget submission to Treasury each year, and quarterly reviews to the Government to update on Defence spending.

"These activities go hand-in-hand with mentoring and training PNG Defence staff members in areas such as management practices, and computer and communication skills."

Kristina also works closely with Australian Defence Cooperation advisers placed in key roles in the Policy, Logistics, Personnel and Training areas of the PNG Defence Force Headquarters to improve the governance of the Department's financing decisions. Over the long term, the aim is to develop the finance skills of PNG's Defence staff to the point where SGP officials are no longer necessary.

Indonesia: Defence management and reform

Defence is also increasing governance cooperation with Indonesia's military (TNI) and Department of Defence (Dephan) to assist with their defence management reform processes.

This is done through a range of targeted seminars and workshops aimed at increasing professionalism in key areas such as capability development; capital acquisition processes; workforce planning; financial management; personnel management; strategic logistics; and strategic policy.

Another area we focus on in governance cooperation is leadership and the adherence to strict rules of engagement based on the laws of armed conflict during operations.

Earlier this year Defence and the St James Ethics Centre co-hosted a multilateral Military Leadership Forum in Jakarta, which focused on 'Leadership, Law and Ethics in Military Operations other than War'. The forum looked at the importance of a professional regional military leadership in conducting civil-military operations, particularly peacekeeping operations. The forum also discussed the impact of international law on such operations; for example, how military personnel can protect civilians in times of conflict.

Initiatives such as these highlight the valuable contribution Defence is making to good governance in the region. Investing in governance is vital to Australia's strategic interests and ongoing stability in South East Asia.

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