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Paper_Title: Counter-Terrorist Strategies in Southeast Asia: Risks and Lessons

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Abstract: The aim of this paper is to analyze the impact of international counter-terrorist policies on the protection of political rights in Southeast Asia. The first reaction of this region to the events of September 11, 2001 was the condemnation of the terrorist attacks and support to the United States. With the outbreak of the war on Afghanistan and the emergence of internal pressures coming from Muslim communities, the position of several Southeast Asian countries became deliberately more ambiguous and nuanced. This was the case of Indonesia and Malaysia, two states who have wavered in their support to the United States and its goal to combat "rogue states" suspicious of hiding international terrorists. At first sight, this situation does not seem surprising. A more detailed analysis shows, however, that the situation is certainly more paradoxical. Albeit with varying intensities, states like Indonesia, Malaysia or the Philippines, who have expressed legal and moral reservations toward the United States' attempts to combat international terrorism, are also enforcing internal laws to prosecute terrorist suspects that contradict international standards of human rights. This duality is reinforced by a change in the U.S. foreign policy agenda and the domestic political equations of these countries. In the nineties, the United States and the European Union were remarkably critical with the human rights record of many Southeast Asian countries. Since 9/11, their security concerns in the region have been accompanied by a decrease in the level of criticism. This, in turn, has contributed to a very unpromising scenario in which certain political rights have become the indirect casualties of the war on terror. In addition, the long term effect of this shift may well be the increase of regional disputes and the strengthening of dissent and anger vis-a-vis the US and other "Great Powers".