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Abstract:

Mediation is mostly treated apart from other approaches to dealing with violent conflicts, especially when dealing with conflict in which one or both parties deny the legitimacy of an overarching sovereign authority. This is the case in most violent conflicts in Southeast Asia, which are overwhelmingly ethnic in nature and usually pit a group fighting against the central government. This paper treats mediation as just one tool in a wider set of approaches to dealing with so called “intractable-conflicts” and shows how mediation can and should be integrated so as to achieve the synergy and momentum necessary to deal with the many obstacles to a long term settlement of a dispute. The concept of Human Security as well as of the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) are used as overarching theoretical frameworks necessary in order to achieve not only negative but also positive peace. An approach to mediation resembling Lederach’s “elicitive model” and Burton's problem solving workshops are recommended as important tools in a concerted and holistic effort to move an intractable conflict towards settlement and sustainable peace. Examples are used throughout the paper from Southeast Asia’s many intractable conflicts such as the one in Indonesia between the government and the pan-Islamic movement Jemaah Islamiya (JI), the Muslim nationalist Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) fighting for independence in the Philippines, and the Southern Muslim insurgency in Thailand fighting for an Independent Greater Patani.

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