

## **ABSTRACT**

### **Globalization and its Effects on the Mekong Delta Region**

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The Great Mekong Subregion is currently one of the world's fastest growing sub-regions. Covering an area of 2.6 million square kilometres it is ideally positioned for trade with all its neighbours as it provides a "land bridge" between South and East Asia. Its rich human and natural resources make it a new economic growth area. Thus, it is not surprising that the Great Mekong Subregion Economic Cooperation Program (GMS Programme) has drawn together the six countries that share the Mekong River - Thailand, Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Vietnam and China - into greater economic cooperation and new or closer economic ties.

The construction of a dam and highway, constant border crossings, flow of goods, services and people are now daily activities of the subregion making it no longer a frontier land. In the past few years, the subregion has become a very popular subject of study and research involving both Western and Asian researchers, academics as well as NGOs--who have flocked to the area in a competitive search of competent counterparts to join in research projects studying the impact of such rapid growth, developments, and their prospective consequent transformations.

In the current era of globalization the Mekong subregion is certainly facing changes and potential conflict especially over natural resources including water. These conflicts may not be as acute as the war over oil that we have recently witnessed, but they are affecting the lives of people in the small riparian countries both in Yunnan and the countries of mainland Southeast Asia. Yet, despite its geographic advantages and resources, approximately 50 million of the subregion's 300 million people are still living in poverty on less than the equivalent of one US dollar a day.

Recognizing the strategic significance of this subregion, Dr. Charnvit Kasetsiri of Thammasat University, Bangkok, Thailand, has made several study visits along the Mekong River in the period of 2001 and 2006. With groups of academics and students from Thailand and USA, he traveled from Yunnan all the way down to the Golden Triangle (Burma, Laos, Thailand), Cambodia, and to the Delta in south Vietnam. He has observed and studied tremendous socio-economic changes taking place in the region which is the focus of his SEAF-KANEKA Public Lecture 2006.