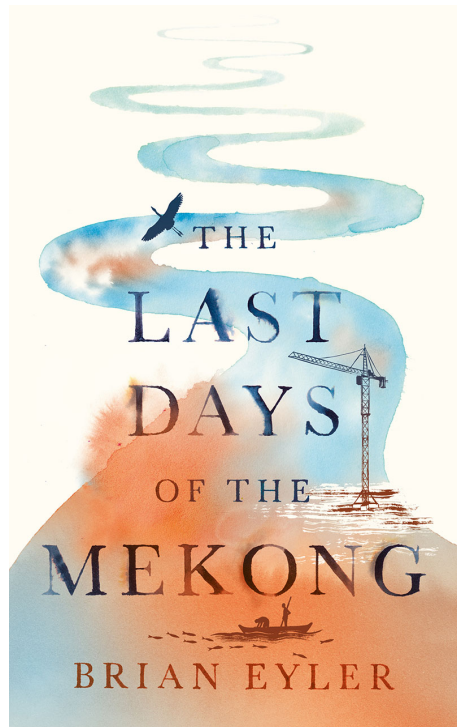


## **Last Days of the Mekong: Navigating an Unsustainable Development Pathway**

### **Brian Eyler**

Director, Southeast Asia Program, The Stimson Center  
Co-founder, [EastBySoutheast.com](http://EastBySoutheast.com)



The Mekong River flows through China, Myanmar, Laos, Thailand, Cambodia, and Vietnam. Its basin is one of the world's most biodiverse and home to more than two hundred ethnic groups, many of which live in upland, mountainous areas which Yale professor James C. Scott and others have labeled Zomia. The river naturally provides an abundance of resources, and this, coupled with its remoteness are the key to the region's diversity. But plans for more than two hundred dams in the Mekong Basin will cut off critical ecological flows that allow local communities to thrive. Further, an economic development model imported from the West and China will transform this part of the world from a unique patchwork of humanity to a widely connected, globalized space. Brian Eyler, Director of the Stimson Center's Southeast Asia program, will discuss the mightiness of the Mekong, examine cultural and ecological threats posed by unsustainable economic development practices and climate change, and discuss how communities and downstream government are building resilience to cope with future crises. He

will also discuss his own policy work which promotes alternative and more sustainable development pathways to the business as usual development model in the Mekong.

**Brian Eyler** is an expert on transboundary issues in the Mekong region and specializes in China's economic cooperation with Southeast Asia. He has spent more than 15 years living and working in China and over the last decade has conducted extensive research and engagement with stakeholders and policy makers in the Mekong region. Before coming to the Stimson Center, he served as the Director of the IES Kunming Center at Yunnan University and as a consultant to the UNDP Lancang-Mekong Economic Cooperation program in Kunming, Yunnan province. He holds a MA from the University of California, San Diego and a BA from Bucknell University. Brian is the co-founder of the influential website [EastBySoutheast.com](http://EastBySoutheast.com). His first book, *The Last Days of the Mighty Mekong* is published by Zed Books.

**Wednesday, January 23**

**12:00 Noon**

**Room 203, Luce Hall, 34 Hillhouse Avenue**