



Clearing up ASEAN's Hazy Relations

Sofiah Jamil

THE haze knows no boundaries. A Singaporean mother once tried to explain this foggy phenomenon to her son by telling him that “the whole of Singapore is smoking”. The boy replied: “No, Singapore is taking in second hand smoke”. Amusing as that may be, the air inhaled as a result of the forest fires in neighbouring Indonesia, does, in fact, have the potential to be as lethal as passive smoking. The air quality in Malaysia and Singapore over the past few weeks has deteriorated significantly, with PSI levels remaining largely in the unhealthy range. This has caused many people to remain homebound to avoid falling ill. Economies have had to bear the brunt of this. Outdoor coffee shops and restaurants note a lag in business by about 15 to 20% while poor visibility has become a hazard to ships’ navigation, with Indonesia reporting its first smog-related accident when two Indonesian vessels recently collided in Jambi, Sumatra. It has also delayed flights and retarded Sarawak’s vital helicopter service, often used in remote areas. The overall sentiment amongst these regional passive smokers is one of disappointment and increasing resentment towards Indonesia.

In this edition

- **Featured Article:** Clearing up ASEAN's Hazy Relations
- Workshop on Non-Traditional Security in Asia
- 1st meeting of the Coordination Committee of the KAF-CSDS Study of Youth in India
- 2nd Workshop on Political Transition and Political Change in South East Asia
- Publications
- New Additions on the NTS-Asia Website
- Announcements

NTS-Asia Inaugural Meeting

The NTS-Asia Inaugural Meeting will be held at the **Marina Mandarin, Singapore** from the **8th to 9th of January 2007**.

The meeting aims to discuss key issues pertaining to NTS-Asia’s activities; including its annual conventions, sub-regional meetings and research fellowships.

Indonesia’s ‘Forgotten’ Concrete Steps

ASEAN states, in particular Singapore and Malaysia, have over the years expressed concern over the Indonesian government’s lack of progress in alleviating the situation. Indonesia, however, has engaged in a series of projects as early as the 1990s to tackle the haze, which ironically, have had more assistance from beyond fellow ASEAN members, such as the European Union. More recently, there has been technical collaboration between the Ministry of Forestry in Indonesia and Japan Cooperation Agency (JICA) known as Forest Fire Prevention Management in Indonesia (1996 – 2006). The project aimed to improve early warning and detection systems, support forest fire prevention activities as well as training to local communities and local government staff to develop effective forest management techniques. The projects have made some improvements. For instance, the early detection systems have increased Indonesia’s ability to detect hot spots thus allowing officials to be notified of forest fires swiftly. More than 6000 hotspots have been detected throughout Indonesia this year, including those in remote areas.



Another project with positive outcomes is the joint venture by Wildlife Habitat Canada and Indonesia's Forest Protection and Nature Conservation directorate. The project was aimed at battling peatland fires – a common source for forest fires and regional haze – by irrigating dry peatlands. This is done via simple local methods of blocking existing canals that surround peatlands with logs and sandbags. This project proved to be a success as not only has it put an end to fires but also allowed forests to recover and created a new food source with fishes breeding in the blocked off canals.

Although requiring four years to complete, such sustainable solutions with long term benefits ought to have been supported by ASEAN member states. Regrettably, none of them, not even those inflicted by the haze, funded the project. Rather they have channeled most of their funds to more expensive short term solutions. Cloud seeding, for instance, costs the Sarawak state government RM50,000 per cloud seeding trip. Moreover, success is not always guaranteed as it is often difficult to find 'rain-bearing clouds' during the dry season. As such, the lack of effective use of funds by ASEAN states has also contributed to the current prolonged haze situation.

Then again, it is perhaps due to the Indonesian government's slow response and lack of effort in addressing the issue that has deterred its neighbours from offering financial assistance. While legislation outlawing the use of fire for land clearance has been established and satellite data indicate that a significant number of hot spots are located in private plantations, Indonesia has done very little beyond that. The rate of prosecuting law breakers especially in remote areas is still slow, if not stagnant. ASEAN members have been critical of this. Even so, the concept of state sovereignty impedes ASEAN from being able to take any form of action to coerce Indonesia to act responsibly. The 2002 ASEAN agreement on Transboundary Haze Pollution clearly illustrated this as Indonesia has yet to ratify it.

While Indonesia expressed that it would ratify the agreement, it did not specify a timeframe and suggested that action would occur once the Indonesian legislature agreed to it. Whether that may be a fact or merely a way of buying time, the result is the same – hazier days to come. There has, however, been a glimmer of hope for ASEAN since the recent

Sub-Regional Ministerial Meeting on Transboundary Haze Pollution in Pekanbaru, especially after President Yudhoyono's apology to Indonesia's neighbours for the haze problem.

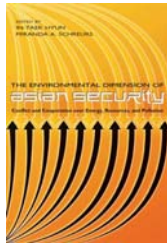
What can be done

Although much still remains to be seen, where does this then leave ASEAN's haze-inflicted states, and can anything be done to improve the situation? There are two broad points that ASEAN should bear in mind for the time being. Firstly, ASEAN states, including their citizens, must exercise more patience and understanding towards Indonesia's colossal predicament. With the bird flu epidemic and reconstruction after tsunamis, earthquakes and mud floods stretching Indonesia's pockets, the haze would not be one of Indonesia's top priorities at the moment. Moreover, the process of detaining forest fire culprits is itself difficult. Masterminds of the forest fires are often companies with land concessions, who employ locals to use their traditional agricultural methods to clear the land. These companies would then evade responsibility for fires by claiming their land had been encroached upon by these small farmers who would have to bear the brunt of fines by the government due to a lack of evidence to prove otherwise.

Critics may argue that Indonesia's neighbours have been patient for long enough. Sad to say, they do not have any other choice. It would be unwise to pursue hawkish measures against Indonesia as it would jeopardize decades of strong socio-economic and historical links. Fortunately, there is still hope for the region. The post-Suharto era has witnessed a greater deal of freedom of expression by Indonesians, via the media and public protests. With such intense pressure from within the state and regionally, President Yudhoyono has to take decisive and effective action as soon as possible.

Secondly, ASEAN leaders must persevere to sustain dialogue and continue to foster greater understanding amongst its member states. Some progress has been made during an ASEAN conference in May earlier

Publications



The Environmental Dimension of Asian Security: Conflict and Cooperation over Energy, Resources, and Pollution

In-Taek Hyun, Miranda Schreurs (eds.), February 2007

Northeast Asia is a region with highly disparate levels of industrialization and political systems. It also contains some very troubling security flashpoints - the Taiwan Strait, the Korean Peninsula, and the East China Sea. China's rapacious quest for energy and rapid industrial expansion have led to intense international competition-with Japan and the United States - and internal instability as well. North Korea poses two distinct environmental security threats: "famine refugees" and the regime's use of "nuclear blackmail" for subsidized energy. Yet there is very little regional cooperation, despite the need to manage disputes over energy, natural resources, and pervasive pollution. The Environmental Dimension of Asian Security examines these issues through a "regional environmental security complex" that explores the potential for greater intersubjective understandings of regional environmental and natural resource problems and greater institutional collaboration and management.

This book examines a host of critical environmental and resource issues through a "regional environmental security complex" that explores the potential for greater intersubjective understandings of regional environmental and natural resource problems and greater institutional collaboration and management.

Review

"An important book that deserves a wide audience. This book lucidly conceptualizes, succinctly describes, and cogently analyzes the nexus between environmental and natural resources (ENR) problems and security in Northeast Asia. A clear picture of the nature and scope of ENR problems and their security implications will certainly act as a solid foundation for the development of more extensive regional cooperation in the foreseeable future. This book provides us with such a clear vision."

-Hiroshi Ohta, Aoyama Gakuin University

this year. ASEAN members made a significant step in establishing a Peatland Management Strategy (2006-2020). Not only were solutions to effectively stop peatland fires discussed but the plan also highlighted the need to employ measures that ensure sustainable development and multi-stakeholder and multi-agency involvement. The meeting also acknowledged its past errors, such as channeling resources to fire suppression and emergency purposes rather than preventive measures. Confidence building measures may also assist in improving strained relations between Indonesia and its neighbours and also perhaps increase the former's efforts to ratify the 2002 agreement. Dialogue and consensus have always been fundamental mechanisms of ASEAN and require a great deal of endurance to see solutions through to the end. The haze issue is no exception; a great deal of time is needed to establish sustainable and efficient preventive measures. By sticking to these inherently ASEAN ideals, it is possible to eventually clear up South East Asia's hazy atmosphere.

Sofiah Jamil is a Research Analyst at the Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies, Singapore. She is also webmaster of the NTS-Asia website.

Workshop on Non-Traditional Security in Asia

14 September 2006

Institute of International Relations, Hanoi

Prof. Amitav Acharya, Dr. Mely Caballero-Anthony and Dr. Ralf Emmers conducted a one-day workshop on Non-Traditional Security in Hanoi, Vietnam on 14 September 2006. The workshop was organised jointly by the Asia Foundation (Vietnam) and the Institute of International Relations (IIR), Vietnam.

The Workshop is an integral part of the dissemination programme of the Consortium on Non-Traditional Security Studies in Asia (NTS-Asia). This programme is essentially meant to share to a wider audience, beyond the academic community, the importance of non-traditional security issues. The Workshops, in particular, are designed to help communities understand how certain issues have become serious security threats and challenges to states and societies in Asia and to share experiences on how these threats have been addressed.





Prof. Amitav Acharya presenting his paper at the workshop

1st meeting of the Coordination Committee of the KAF-CSDS Study of Youth in India
25 – 26 August 2006
CSDS in Delhi, India

CSDS hosted the first coordination committee meeting of the *Konrad- Adenauer Foundation* (KAF)- CSDS Youth Study on 25th and 26th August 2006. Prof. Peter deSouza, (co-director, *Lokniti*) briefed the session regarding the proposed study. Mr. Jorg Wolff (resident representative to India, KAF) spoke about the Shell Youth Survey of Germany as the basis of doing a similar Youth study in India.

The main points discussed in this two day meeting were- how to identify who the Youth are (age group); the broad ‘lines of Enquiry’ within which the questions would be framed; and possible areas of case studies. To have special representation from some groups like women and the Northeast India, Prof. Yadav (co-director, *Lokniti*) proposed the strategy of a booster sample, which would be selected from the main sample itself. The rubric or ‘lines of Enquiry’

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would be in terms of the following for all domains with which the youth have attitudes, values and perspectives stretching from the personal to the political-

- On Tradition and Modernity
- On Democratic and Authoritarian systems
- On Social Justice and Inequality
- On Development and its Discontent
- On National and Global processes
- On Present and Future for the youth
- On Means and Ends, and
- On Diversity and Identity



Photo Courtesy: www.flickr.com

The survey will be conducted with a national representative sample of about 4000 youth spread across almost the whole of India. The study will use a combination of research tools such as cross-sectional surveys, dialogues, and case studies.

2nd Workshop on Political Transition and Political Change in South East Asia
28- 29 August 2006
Traders Hotel, Singapore

The 1 ½ day workshop brought together participants from across the region to examine the nature of the political transitions and challenges in South East Asia. Jointly organized by IDSS, Konrad Adenauer Stiftung (KAS) and CSIS Indonesia, the workshop was insightful and raised several significant issues on the different trends of democratization in South East Asia. This workshop is the 2nd in a series of workshops for this project and welcomed the attendance of Dr. Hadi Soesastro, Executive Director of CSIS, who is the co-convenor of this project. The scope of the workshop focused on

the impact of democratization elements; in particular, how it has altered the power configuration within the state, how these changes affect state-society relations and whether these transitions would lead to the establishment of a more liberal political environment. Six papers focusing on Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore and Thailand were presented. Discussions on the papers were highly engaging with a sea of questions and comments made by the discussants and other participants. What could be deduced from the observations in the various ASEAN countries was that the process of political transformation was not as clear cut as theory would suggest due to the influence of socio-economic and cultural circumstances, which vary in different states. Nonetheless, it brings to the surface greater analysis regarding the various forms of “democracy” that would better suit South East Asian contexts.

Paper Presenters and Chairs

Dr. Rizal Sukma, CSIS Indonesia
 Dr. Thitinan Pongsudhirak, Chulalongkorn University, Thailand
 Prof. Sorpong Peou, Sophia University, Japan
 Dr Herman Kraft, University of the Philippines
 Dr Cherian George, NTU, Singapore
 Dr. Helen Nesadurai, Monash University, Malaysia
 Dr Lee Hock Guan, ISEAS Singapore
 Dr. Hadi Soesastro, CSIS Indonesia
 Dr Colin Duerkop, KAS
 Mr Kwa Chong Guan, IDSS Singapore
 Dr Mely Caballero Anthony, IDSS Singapore

Discussants

Assoc. Prof Vedi Hadiz, NUS, Singapore
 Assoc. Prof Leonard Sebastian, IDSS, Singapore
 Assoc. Prof Khoo Boo Teik, University Sains Malaysia
 Dr. Ake Tangsupvattana, Chulalongkorn University, Thailand
 Dr Bob Hadiwinata, Universiti Parahyangan, Indonesia
 Prof. William Case, City University of Hong Kong
 Assoc. Prof Ho Khai Leong, NTU, Singapore



Workshop Chairs/Convenors. From left to right, Dr. Colin Duerkop, Dr Mely Caballero-Anthony, Mr Kwa Chong Guan and Dr Hadi Soesastro

Calling for NTS- related Papers

NTS-Asia is constantly on the lookout for NTS- related resources, in particular articles and commentaries. If you have short articles (max 1,500 words) and wish to contribute them to our expanding NTS database, do email them to isssofiah@ntu.edu.sg or webmaster@idss-nts.org .

Your contribution will also be in the running to be the featured article on either our bimonthly newsletter or website.





New Additions on the NTS-Asia Website

Occasional Diplomats Paper Series – Courtesy of Center of Asian Studies, University of Hong Kong

- *Cooperating for Common Security: China's Approach to Non-Traditional Security Issues* – He Xiangqi
- *Drug Control Cooperation between China and ASEAN: Past, Present and Future* – He Miao
- *Maritime Security in the Straits of Malacca* – Swedianto Sumardi
- *Poverty as a Non-Traditional Security Challenge in Southeast Asia: Vietnam's Case for Development Partnership Against Poverty* – Hoang Thi Ha
- *Securitisation and the Challenge of ASEAN Counter-terrorism Cooperation* – Neal Imperial
- *South Asia in the Globalisation Era and its Non-Traditional Security Collaboration* – Chen Yun
- *The Association of Southeast Asian Nations' (ASEAN) Efforts in Dealing with Transnational Crime* – Un Sovannasam,
- *The International and ASEAN Legal Framework Against Non-Traditional Security Issues* – Phan Duy Hao
- *Trafficking in Women as a Non-Traditional Security Challenge: Philippine Cases and Responses* – Irene Susan B Natividad

Human Security

- *Politics and Mobilization of Lower Classes* – Priyavadan M. Patel
- *Sectarian Mobilization, Factionalism and Voting in Gujarat* – Priyavadan M. Patel

Environmental Security

- *A Socio-ecological Analysis of the Loss of Public Properties in an Urban Environment: A Case Study of Pokhara, Nepal* – Jaganath Adhikari
- *Environmental Justice for Sustainable Livelihoods: A Grassroots Perspective* - Jaganath Adhikari

Pandemics

- *Clearing up ASEAN's Hazy Relations* – Sofiah Jamil
 - IDSS Commentary; published in *The Straits Times*, 28th Oct 2006, Pg. S10
- *Human security and public health in Southeast Asia: the SARS outbreak* – Melissa Curley & Nicholas Thomas
 - Published in *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 58, No. 1, pp. 17–32, March 2004

To view these articles, visit <http://www.idss-nts.org/publications.htm>

NTS Asia Secretariat

Secretary- General – Amitav Acharya
 Coordinator – Mely Caballero Anthony
 Research Analyst / Webmaster – Sofiah Jamil



Editorial Team

Mely Caballero- Anthony
 Sofiah Jamil
www.idss-nts.org
webmaster@idss-nts.org

