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NTS VIEWPOINT

Myanmar's national reconciliation process: A positive for the region?

Since taking office in March 2011, Myanmar's new government has implemented a host of reforms. These include the release of some political prisoners, a lifting of restrictions on media freedoms, the initiation of peace negotiations with ethnic armed groups and a declaration of a war on opium; all of which are intended to further democracy, promote national reconciliation and end international isolation. These efforts have impacted not only Myanmar but also its neighbours who have been negatively affected by Myanmar's protracted ethnic conflict and political struggle.

The discriminatory ethnic policies of the military government and struggle of ethnic nationalities for equality have created massive humanitarian burdens for Myanmar's neighbours. Thailand hosts over 140,000 refugees and asylum seekers along its border with Myanmar. Over 260,000 Rohingyas have fled to Bangladesh to escape the government's military campaigns and widespread human rights abuses. In 2009, the fighting in the Kokang region forced 37,000 refugees to move across the border into China. The influx of refugees has aroused discontent, with tensions rising between the newcomers and local communities as they compete for resources and jobs. Moreover, Myanmar's ethnic conflict has also caused casualties in its neighbouring countries. For instance, in the 2009 Kokang incident, two Chinese citizens were killed and fifteen were injured. Reports indicate that the recent political changes within Myanmar

may spark refugee repatriation, and this is definitely welcomed by the refugee host countries as they can be freed from the burden to some extent.

Myanmar's domestic instability has also posed other non-traditional security challenges to its neighbours, such as drug trafficking. The ethnic conflicts and weak governance have created a favourable environment for the growth of drug cultivation and trade in Myanmar. According to the *World Drug Report 2010*, Myanmar is now the second largest producer and primary regional supplier of various kinds of drugs, such as heroin and methamphetamine tablets. As Myanmar seeks national reconciliation and international legitimacy, it has strengthened its crackdown on drugs with its declaration to eradicate opium by 2014. However, according to the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), this target is not realistic, even with foreign assistance.

The recent changes in Myanmar are encouraging, but these measures have just been implemented and have yet to produce any substantial effect on the overall situation. Fighting between government troops and ethnic armed groups continue to break out sporadically. Accusations of human rights abuses still persist.

Since Myanmar's internal instability has spillover impacts, a democratic and stable Myanmar is in the interests of all stakeholders. All domestic parties should be more firmly and consistently committed to the transition process. In addition to domestic efforts, neighbouring countries can also contribute to the reconciliation process. For instance, China facilitated the process by hosting ceasefire talks between the government and the Kachin Independence Organization (KIO) in the Chinese border town of Ruili in November 2011 and January 2012. More such efforts should be encouraged.

Contributed by Lina Gong.

Additional Info:

- International Crisis Group (ICG), 2010, *China's Myanmar strategy: Elections, ethnic politics and economics*, Asia Briefing No.112, Brussels.
- 'India lauds Myanmar's reforms, pledges \$500 mn for projects', *India Strategic*, October 2011.
- Aziz, Mohd Abdul Hakim, 'Recalibrating Bangladesh-Myanmar relation', *The Daily Star*, 17 December 2011.
- International Crisis Group (ICG), 2011, *Myanmar: A new peace initiative*, Asia Report No. 214, Brussels.
- Aung, Zaw, 'Burma's tightrope', *Foreign Policy*, 12 January 2012.

- 'Pragmatic virtues: Unravelling the mysteries of a -so far-peaceful revolution', *The Economist*, 11 February 2012.
- 'Govt to back Myanmar at UN summit', *Bangkok Post*, 27 February 2012.

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CLIMATE CHANGE, ENVIRONMENTAL SECURITY AND NATURAL DISASTERS



News & Commentaries

- '7 new countries join the UN-REDD programme', Newsletter No. 25, *UN-REDD Programme*, December 2011 – January 2012.
- Wirth, Timothy E., 'Urgent action on energy needed for both development and environment', *Sustainable Development Policy and Practice*, 5 Jan 2012.
- 'New weather and climate information system becomes operational', Press Release No. 939, *World Meteorological Organization*, 31 January 2012.
- Grimes, Sarah, 'Ocean science for sustainable development: Facts and figures', *SciDev.Net*, 15 February 2012.
- Ford, Liz, 'Pakistan delayed international response to floods, report says', *Guardian*, 16 February 2012.
- Teng, Paul, 'The Rio+20 Summit and ASEAN: Towards a green economy', *RSIS Commentaries*, 16 February 2012.
- 'Big crowd at MPK4 field for anti-Lynas demo', *The Star*, 26 February 2012.
- 'Thai King blames "greedy" civil servants for floods', *Today*, 26 February 2012.

Selected Publications

- Keskinen, Marko and Olli Varis, 2012, 'Institutional cooperation at a basin level: For what, by whom? Lessons learned from Cambodia's Tonle Sap Lake', *Natural Resources Forum*, Vol. 36, No. 1, pp. 50–60.

This paper examines institutional dynamics in the Tonle Sap Lake area in Cambodia, and analyses three initiatives for establishing a coordinating organisation for the lake basin, an area significant to both Cambodia and the wider transboundary Mekong River Basin. While the discussion revolves around commonly accepted ideals of cooperation and sustainability, existing institutions, and their political rivalries and interests, have a strong influence on institutional reform. Thus, in order to realize the goal of a new basin organisation, existing institutions must be given greater attention

- Werksman, Jacob and Joseph Foti, 2011, 'Improving public participation in environmental governance', *Perspectives*, Issue 1, United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), December.

Given that one of the two main themes of the 2012 UN Conference on Sustainable Development in Rio de Janeiro (Rio+20) is 'strengthening the institutional framework for sustainable development', this discussion paper provides further details on how to operationalise this framework. Specifically it highlights ways in which the process of public participation can play an important role in enhancing the institutional framework.

Events & Announcements

- E-Learning course on 'Cities and Climate Change Leadership', 26 March – 13 April 2012, Worldwide.
- 'Third Workshop on Water and Climate Change Adaptation in Transboundary Basins: Making Adaptation Work', 25–26 April 2012, Geneva, Switzerland.

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ENERGY AND HUMAN SECURITY



News & Commentaries

- 'Government's water management adviser revives Salween dam idea', *Bangkok Post*, 13 February 2012.
- Tabuchi, Hiroko, 'Japan ignored nuclear risks, official says', *The New York Times*, 15 February 2012.
- 'India to push ahead with nuclear power', *UPI*, 23 February 2012.
- 'On the road to green economies', *Malaya Business Insight*, 24 February 2012.
- Meng, Jing and Liu Yiyu, 'Renewable energy riding high', *China Daily*, 25 February 2012.

- Bhattacharya, Pallab, 'Dhaka keen on hydro plant', *The Daily Star*, 27 February 2012.
- 'Myanmar: Humanitarian cost of economic development', *IRIN*, 27 February 2012.
- 'Exploring for the long haul', *Bangkok Post*, 27 February 2012.

Selected Publications

- Schofield, Clive (ed.), 2012, *Maritime energy resources in Asia: Legal regimes and cooperation*, NBR Special Report No. 37, Seattle: The National Bureau of Asian Research (NBR).

This report consists of articles discussing legal challenges for maritime cooperation in contested waters in East and Southeast Asia, areas rich in living and non-living resources. The report is part of a project on maritime energy resources in Asia.

- Goldthau, Andreas, 2012, 'A public policy perspective on global energy security', *International Studies Perspectives*, Vol. 13, No. 1, pp. 65–84.

This article analyses major global energy risks through the lens of market failure. Market failure can be caused by imperfect competition, externalities, public goods and lack of information. To address the failure, governance should be strengthened with regard to information and planning security, spillover effects and collective actions.

Events & Announcements

- '22nd Annual International Conference on Soil, Water, Energy, and Air', 19–22 March 2012, San Diego, US.
- 'National Seminar on Energy Security and Management Strategies for Rural Areas', 21–22 March 2012, Hyderabad, India.

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FOOD AND HEALTH SECURITY

News & Commentaries

- Cotonou, Benin, 'Research strategy to realize Africa's tremendous rice potential unveiled', Press Release, *AfricaRice*, 1 February 2012.
- 'UN says Somali famine over, but warns action needed to forestall new crisis', *UN News Centre*, 3 February 2012.
- 'The Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index', *International Food Research Institute (IFPRI)*, 6 February 2012.
- 'Global food prices rebound for first time in six months – UN', *UN News Centre*, 9 February 2012.
- Tisdall, Simon, 'Poor diet kills 2.6 million infants a year, says survey by Save the Children', *Guardian*, 15 February 2012.
- 'The nutrition puzzle: Why do so many people in poor countries eat so badly – and what can be done about it?', *The Economist*, 18 February 2012.
- Zhang, Hongzhou, 'China's food security: Threats from conflicts of interest', *RSIS Commentaries*, 22 February 2012.
- Blas, Javier, 'Gates attacks "outdated" UN food agencies', *Financial Times*, 24 February 2012.



Selected Publications

- Fan, Shenggen and Rajul Pandya-Lorch (eds), 2012, *Reshaping Agriculture for Nutrition and Health*, Washington, DC: International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI).

Access to a diet containing adequate nutrients is of fundamental importance to achieving global health and food security goals. There is room for improved collaboration between the agricultural, health and nutrition sectors in achieving these objectives. This book draws from expertise across the three sectors, identifies linkages and presents suggestions to improve related policies and programmes.

- Buxton, Abbi, Mark Campanale and Lorenzo Cotula, 2012, 'Farms and funds: Investment funds in the global land rush', *IIED Briefing Papers*, London: International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED).

This briefing paper provides an overview of issues related to the rising interest of investment funds in farmland and the agricultural sector in developing countries. It identifies key stakeholders in the phenomenon, outlines investment processes and investigates the impact of these investments in recipient countries. In the interest of supporting food security goals for local populations, it suggests actions to promote collaborative investment models.

Events & Announcements

- '3rd Annual Symposium on Global Agriculture and Food Security', 26 April 2012, Washington DC, US.
- 'The European Food Security Conference', 15 May 2012, Brussels, Belgium.

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INTERNAL AND CROSS-BORDER CONFLICT



News & Commentaries

- Fuller, Thomas, 'In Myanmar, Karen rebels deny signing a cease-fire', *The New York Times*, 3 February 2012.
- 'Pakistan: Quetta's Hazara community living in fear', *IRIN*, 7 February 2012.
- 'Security: New report on R2P challenges humanitarians', *IRIN*, 10 February 2012.
- Jayasinghe, Amal, 'Sri Lanka agrees to probe war crimes', *AFP*, 15 February 2012.
- 'Timor Leste: Falling short on MDGs', *IRIN*, 21 February 2012.
- Bhattacharjya, Satarupa and Frank Jack Daniel, 'Insight – India's wild east unprepared for new Myanmar', *Reuters*, 21 February 2012.
- Mustikawati, Ingrid Galuh, 'Turning the tide in Indonesia's chronic land conflicts', *Jakarta Globe*, 27 February 2012.
- Kyaw, San Wai, 'Beyond ceasefires: Myanmar's precarious peace process', *RSIS Commentaries*, 21 February 2012.

Selected Publications

- South, Ashley, Susanne Kempel, Malin Perhult et al., 2011, *Myanmar – Surviving the storm: Self-protection and survival in the delta*, Local to Global Protection Initiative.

This report explores how Burmese people affected by cyclone Nargis in 2008 perceive and realise protection. Self-help has been the primary source of protection, especially in the immediate aftermath of the disaster. Assistance from the unaffected-sectors of Myanmar society has also been crucial, while international involvement has been less significant due to the government's restrictions on international assistance.

- Cook, Alistair D.B. and Lina Gong, 2011, 'Cambodia's legacy and the Responsibility to Protect in Asia', *Peace Review*, Vol. 23, No. 4, pp. 447–55.

This article examines the Khmer Rouge trials through the lens of the Responsibility to Protect (RtoP) as well as the regional utility of this emerging principle. It notes that civil society groups could serve as a champion to promote RtoP in the Asia-Pacific region.

Events & Announcements

- 'Call for Papers: Women in War and at War', 11–12 May 2012, Wales, UK.
- 'Cultivating Peace: Context, Practices and Multidimensional Models', 17–19 May 2012, New South Wales, Australia.

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TRANSNATIONAL CRIME



News & Commentaries

- Sihite, Ezra, 'Corruption costs Indonesia \$238m in 2011', *Jakarta Globe*, 30 January 2012.
- 'Party leader demands Thai govt take action to stamp out prostitution', *AsiaOne*, 13 February 2012.
- 'Black market for babies thrive due to high price and demand', *The Star*, 15 February 2012.
- King, Rachel, 'Reports of counterfeit parts have quadrupled since 2009', *ZDNet*, 15 February 2012.
- Harlan, Chico, 'In North Korea, role of foreign currency grows', *The Washington Post*, 15 February 2012.
- Janssen, Kim and Fran Spielman, 'It's official: Chicago is nation's corruption capital', *Chicago Sun-Times*, 15 February 2012.
- Beaubien, Jason, 'Mexican cartels push meth beyond U.S. market', *NPR*, 16 February 2012.
- Fritz, Ben, 'Piracy reduces foreign box office receipts 7%, study says', *Los Angeles Times*, 20 February 2012.
- 'Ransom money laundered by pirates affects stability in the Horn of Africa, says UNODC chief', United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), 22 February 2012.
- Trofimov, Yaroslav, 'Afghanistan targets flight of cash', *The Wall Street Journal*, 22 February 2012.

Selected Publications

- UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), 2012, *Vienna Declaration*, Third Ministerial Conference of the Paris Pact Partners on Combating Illicit Traffic in Opiates Originating in Afghanistan, Vienna, 16 February.

The Vienna Declaration reaffirms the commitment of Paris Pact partners to the fight against opiates originating in Afghanistan. It focuses on four main areas of cooperation: regional initiatives, financial flows linked to illicit traffic in opiates, preventing the diversion of precursor chemicals, and reducing drug abuse and dependence.

- UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), 2012, *Monitoring the impact of economic crisis on crime*, Vienna.

The report finds that economic factors play an important role in the evolution of crime trends. For instance, violent property crimes such as robbery appeared most affected during times of economic crisis, with up to twofold increases in some contexts. These findings are consistent with criminal motivation theory, which suggests that economic stress may increase the incentive for individuals to engage in illicit behaviours.

Events & Announcements

- '15th Transnational Crime Conference', 14–16 June 2012, São Paulo, Brazil.
- '15th International Anti-Corruption Conference (IACC)', 7–10 November 2012, Brasilia, Brazil.

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About the Centre:

The Centre for Non-Traditional Security (NTS) Studies of the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies was inaugurated by the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Secretary-General Dr Surin Pitsuwan in May 2008. The Centre maintains research in the fields of Food Security, Climate Change, Energy Security, Health Security as well as Internal and Cross-Border Conflict. It produces policy-relevant analyses aimed at furthering awareness and building capacity to address NTS issues and challenges in the Asia-Pacific region and beyond. The Centre also provides a platform for scholars and policymakers within and outside Asia to discuss and analyse NTS issues in the region.

In 2009, the Centre was chosen by the MacArthur Foundation as a lead institution for the MacArthur Asia Security Initiative, to develop policy research capacity and recommend policies on the critical security challenges facing the Asia-Pacific.

The Centre is also a founding member and the Secretariat for the Consortium of Non-Traditional Security (NTS) Studies in Asia (NTS-Asia). More information on the Centre can be found at www.rsis.edu.sg/nts.