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NTS VIEWPOINT

Should Asian cities be climbing on the 'resilience' bandwagon?

By J. Jackson Ewing

Providing essential services to Asia's booming cities is becoming more difficult. With over 100,000 people thought to be moving to the region's urban spaces every day, the demands on cities are becoming more pronounced at the same time that environmental stresses make delivering those services harder.

Unsurprisingly, allaying such challenges has become an urban policy priority, and 'resilience' has gained traction as a result. But is resilience all that it is made out to be?

Resilience may be broadly defined as the ability of a system to cope with and respond to changes, and its higher visibility in urban planning is laudable. After all, creating more resilient systems can reduce the risks faced by Asia's most vulnerable urban populations during the initial aftermath of any systems failure and in times of crisis.

Yet, the concept of 'resilience' is fraught with ambiguity. It is often unclear who or what is being made more resilient through a given approach. In Asia's cities, for example, countless infrastructure projects result in people having to move – without adequate safeguards, compensation and relocation strategies in place.

Further, efforts to foster resilience to future challenges may distract from more immediate development needs throughout much of Asia's urban landscape. Millions of the region's urban citizens face daily struggles to meet their food, water and sanitation needs; and resilience strategies, in focusing on systems breakdowns or crises, do little to address such systemic shortcomings.

Trade-offs can also exist when fostering resiliency to challenges in different sectors. For example, promoting economic resilience can create new vulnerabilities in other areas. Indeed, it is well-recognised that consumption growth in cities has fomented wide-ranging environmental stresses and social vulnerabilities.

At the same time, too much resilience can have the unwanted effect of rendering systems so unyielding that they fail to evolve with broader trends. Resilience can also require significant resource allocation, such as the costs of creating back-up systems to ensure 'safe failure', which must be justified by cities on limited budgets. Policy and resource prioritisation becomes difficult in the face of such trade-offs, and questions about the place of resilience in urban planning and development abound.

There are no uniform pathways for assuaging these problems, but Asia's experiences demonstrate that resilience goals need to be coupled with efforts to meet short-term urban challenges.

Among the immediate threats are flooding, heatwaves and violent storms, which affect Asian cities as well as the rural peripheries that they depend on for food and resources. Growing environmental degradation and warming climate trends suggest that these challenges are expanding.

It is vital that urban resilience efforts also address these stresses. Otherwise, the quality of life of urban populations, particularly those in informal and at times structurally dangerous housing settlements and workplaces, will be seriously affected; and the stability upon which cities depend compromised.

Thus, while the enthusiasm over resilience is encouraging, it should be framed, prioritised and pursued in ways that position individuals and communities as key beneficiaries, and with human and community progress as the ultimate rationales.

[Note: This NTS Viewpoint draws on the findings of the Expert Working Group Meeting on Advancing Urban Resilience in the Face of Environmental Change held in Singapore in April 2013.]

J. Jackson Ewing is Research Fellow with the Centre for Non-Traditional Security (NTS) Studies at the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS), Singapore.

Meeting Summary:

- RSIS Centre for Non-Traditional Security (NTS) Studies, 2013, 'Advancing urban resilience in the face of environmental change', *NTS Issues Brief*, No. IS13-03, Singapore.

Additional Info:

- Asian Cities Climate Change Resilience Network (ACCCRN).
- Brown, Anna, Ashvin Dayal and Cristina Rumbaitis Del Rio, 2012, 'From practice to theory: Emerging lessons from Asia for building urban climate change resilience', *Environment and Urbanisation*, Vol. 24, No. 2, pp. 531–56.
- Leichenko, Robin, 2011, 'Climate change and urban resilience', *Current Opinion in Environmental Sustainability*, Vol. 3, No. 3, pp. 164–8.
- Razafindrabe, Bam H.N., Gulsan Ara Parvin, Akhilesh Surjan et al., 2009, 'Climate disaster resilience: Focus on coastal urban cities in Asia', *Asian Journal of Environment and Disaster Management*, Vol. 1, No. 1.
- Romero-Lankao, Patricia and David Dodman, 2011, 'Cities in transition: Transforming urban centers from hotbeds of GHG emissions and vulnerability to seedbeds of sustainability and resilience: Introduction and editorial overview', *Current Opinion in Environmental Sustainability*, Vol. 3, No. 3, pp. 113–20.
- Schwarz, Franziska, 'Climate resilience in Asian cities: Latest news from the frontlines', *Climate & Development Knowledge Network (CDKN)*, 16 April 2012.

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CLIMATE CHANGE, ENVIRONMENTAL SECURITY AND NATURAL DISASTERS



News & Commentaries

- 'Up a creek: Flood control in Vietnam', *The Economist*, 4 May 2013.
- Harvey, Gemima, 'Can ecotourism save Indonesia's disappearing forests?', *The Diplomat*, 19 May 2013.
- Maslog, Crispin, 'Asia-Pacific analysis: Rain harvesting can avert crisis', *SciDev.Net*, 29 May 2013.
- Einhorn, Bruce, Yoga Rusmana and Eko Listiyorini, 'Indonesia goes green to the dismay of palm oil producers', *Bloomberg Businessweek*, 30 May 2013.
- Solheim, Erik, 'Green growth is the heart of development', *Climate Change Policy & Practice*, 3 June 2013.
- Reyes, Elga, 'World Environment Day puts spotlight on food waste across the globe', *Eco-Business*, 4 June 2013.
- Aye, Sapay Phyu, 'Disaster management in the curriculum', *Myanmar Times*, 10 June 2013.
- Frialde, Mike, 'DPWH unfinished projects worsened Metro flooding?', *The Philippine Star*, 17 June 2013.
- 'Haze worsens in Singapore', *Channel NewsAsia*, 17 June 2013.

Selected Publications

- Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), 2013, *Putting green growth at the heart of development*, OECD Green Growth Studies, OECD Publishing.

This report sets out why developing countries should pursue green growth development. By looking at 74 policies and measures from 37 countries and 5 regional initiatives, the report seeks to put forth an action-oriented agenda that is workable at both national and international scales. In addition to the full report, the OECD website also provides a summary for policymakers.

- Schmidt-Thome, Philipp, Johannes Klein, S.V.R.K. Prabhakar et al., 2013, 'Promoting risk insurance in the Asia-Pacific region: Lessons from the ground for the future climate regime under UNFCCC', in Philipp Schmidt-Thome and Johannes Klein (eds), *Climate change adaptation in practice: From strategy development to implementation*, Oxford: John Wiley & Sons.

This article highlights the growing significance of risk insurance as a necessary measure for coping with disasters. It argues that while

there are several regional initiatives to promote risk insurance, its potential has not as yet been maximised. To make risk insurance more credible, there is a need to substantiate it with input from on-the-ground experiences at the local, regional and national level.

- UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction – Regional Office for Asia and Pacific (UNISDR AP), 2013, *Asia Pacific synthesis report: Consultations on the Post-2015 Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (HFA2)*, Geneva: UNISDR Secretariat.

This paper highlights significant points raised during a series of consultations at the regional, national and community level in the Asia-Pacific region on the Post-2015 Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (HFA2). Such an output is significant as it provides an update on how the HFA2's predecessor – the Hyogo Framework for Action – has performed, the gaps that have to be filled and future steps to take.

Events & Announcements

- 'Training Course on Building Resilient Communities: Community Managed Disaster Risk Reduction (CMDRR)', 2–12 July 2013, Phnom Penh, Cambodia.
- 'Office Disaster Prevention Expo', 10–12 July 2013, Tokyo, Japan.

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ENERGY AND HUMAN SECURITY

News & Commentaries

- Girianna, Montty, 'Rescue for global climate change – Country-by-country efforts', *The Jakarta Post*, 3 May 2013.
- Yep, Eric, 'Update: Seaborne gas to boost Singapore security, LNG trade', *The Wall Street Journal*, 7 May 2013.
- Gronholt-Pedersen, Jacob, 'Myanmar pipelines to benefit China', *The Wall Street Journal*, 12 May 2013.
- Lucas, Daxim L., 'ECCP urges government to focus on energy security', *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, 13 May 2013.
- 'US oil boom changing market', *iafrica.com*, 16 May 2013.
- 'Indonesia offers 21 oil and gas blocks in tender', *Reuters*, 17 May 2013.
- Jensen, Fergus, 'PetroChina locked out in Indonesia gas dispute', *Jakarta Globe*, 28 May 2013.
- Levi, Michael, 'Make sure fracking is done right', *CNN*, 28 May 2013.



Selected Publications

- Phillips, Andrew, 2013, 'A dangerous synergy: Energy securitization, great power rivalry and strategic stability in the Asian century', *The Pacific Review*, Vol. 26, No. 1, pp. 17–38.

This article argues that the significant transformation in Asian energy consumption – particularly the rise of China and India as major energy consumers and importers – could exacerbate strategic rivalries among countries in the region. The complex nexus of increasing energy demand, energy securitisation by Asian states and greater strategic competition in the region could aggravate existing frictions. To avoid this, it is imperative to foster stronger bilateral, regional and global energy cooperation.

- Matsuo, Yuhji, Akira Yanagisawa and Yukari Yamashita, 2013, 'A global energy outlook to 2035 with strategic considerations for Asia and Middle East energy supply and demand interdependencies', *Energy Strategy Reviews*, Vol. 2, No. 1, pp. 79–91.

The study employs integrated energy economics models to examine energy supply-demand relationships between the Middle East and Asia. The article argues that alternative energy sources would not significantly alter Asia's dependence on oil, and the Middle East would remain the region's major fossil energy supplier. The need for stable and enduring energy supply from the Middle East means that it is imperative for the region to make appropriate investments in oil resources development.

Events & Announcements

- 'The European Conference on Sustainability, Energy & the Environment', 4–7 July 2013, Brighton, UK.
- 'World Renewable Energy Congress – Australia 2013', 14–18 July 2013, Perth, Australia.

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FOOD SECURITY



News & Commentaries

- Balch, Oliver, 'Food security: Will a mix of policy, investment and biotech feed the world?', *Guardian*, 24 April 2013.
- Rikin, Ari, 'Indonesian scientists urge more crop technology to battle climate change', *Jakarta Globe*, 2 May 2013.
- Mukherji, Biman and Saurabh Chaturvedi, 'India's food bill debate derailed, again', *The Wall Street Journal*, 7 May 2013.
- 'Burma poised to double rice exports', *Radio Free Asia*, 9 May 2013.
- Piotrowski, Jan, 'Basic science may yield crop gains in developing countries', *Thomson Reuters Foundation*, 9 May 2013.
- Shelton, Peter, 'Cornell's Per-Pinstrup Andersen: Don't believe the hype (and data) surrounding food price crises', *International Food Policy Research Institute*, 10 May 2013.
- Fenby, Jonathan, 'Food scandals are undermining trust in China's new regime', *Guardian*, 12 May 2013.
- 'Forest products critical to fight hunger – Including insects', *Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN (FAO)*, 13 May 2013.
- Hodal, Kate and Chris Kelly, 'Deutsche Bank and IFC accused of bankrolling Vietnam firms' land grabs', *Guardian*, 13 May 2013.
- Gillespie, John, 'Vietnam's land law reforms: Radical changes or minor tinkering', *East Asia Forum*, 14 May 2013.
- Phoonphongphiphat, Apornrath, 'Thailand to extend controversial rice intervention for 3rd year', *Jakarta Globe*, 27 May 2013.

Selected Publications

- Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN (FAO), 2013, *The State of Food and Agriculture 2013: Food systems for better nutrition*, Rome.

This report focuses on the issue of malnutrition in all its forms – undernutrition, micronutrient deficiencies, and overweight and obesity – and its economic and social costs on all countries across income levels. It highlights that it is the entire food system, not just agricultural production, that is important in the eradication of malnutrition.

- Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN (FAO), 2013, *OECD-FAO Global Agricultural Outlook 2013–2022*, Rome.

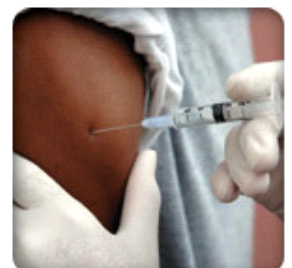
This report presents global and regional trends for agricultural productivity and trade for the period 2013–2022. According to the report, agricultural production is likely to slow in the medium term in tandem with slower area and productivity growth. Aside from this, crop prices are expected to fall from current highs and hold firm over the medium term.

Events & Announcements

- '40th Session of the Committee on World Food Security', 7–11 October 2013.
- 'World Rural Women's Day', 15 October 2013.
- 'World Food Day', 16 October 2013.

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HEALTH SECURITY



News & Commentaries

- Ives, Mike, 'Canada gives US\$10 million to health innovations', *SciDev.Net*, 10 May 2013.
- 'WHO says new coronavirus may be passed person to person', *BBC*, 12 May 2013.
- 'Tracking vaccine scares', *IRIN*, 14 May 2013.
- Cyranoski, David, 'Human stem cells created by cloning', *Nature*, 15 May 2013.
- Chen, Stephen, 'Warmer weather may be curbing spread of bird flu in China', *South China Morning Post*, 16 May 2013.
- Fabi, Randy and Nilufar Rizki, 'Indonesia's nationwide healthcare plan stumbles at first hurdle', *Reuters*, 19 May 2013.
- Anderson, Lisa, 'New financing partnership to speed delivery of medical aid', *Thomson Reuters Foundation*, 20 May 2013.
- Abano, Imelda, 'US\$100 chip may ease diagnosis of 15 tropical diseases', *SciDev.Net*, 21 May 2013.
- Fowler, Jonathan, 'World not ready for mass flu outbreak: WHO', *AFP*, 21 May 2013.
- Mo, Lavinia, 'New bird flu may be capable of human to human spread – Study', *Reuters*, 24 May 2013.
- Vousden, Petrina, 'Plain packs only for Irish smokers: Ireland follows Australia's example to remove advertising', *Mail Online*, 29 May 2013.
- Mathers, Imogen, 'Japanese fund to tackle infectious diseases in historic agreement', *SciDev.Net*, 31 May 2013.

Selected Publications

- Mackay, Judith, Bungon Ritthiphakdee and K. Srinath Reddy, 2013, 'Tobacco control in Asia', *The Lancet*, Vol. 381, No. 9877, pp. 1581–7.

After reviewing tobacco control in the World Health Organization's combined Southeast Asia and Western Pacific regions, the article highlighted the need for a new framework to address tobacco use in the region that incorporates not only medical but also political, economic, environmental and trade concerns. Such a framework could help translate public health research into policy.

- Horby, Peter, Dirk Pfeiffer and Hitoshi Oshitani, 2013, 'Prospects for emerging infections in East and Southeast Asia 10 years after Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome', *Emerging Infectious Diseases*, Vol. 19, No. 6.

This article argues that the greater concentration and connectivity of livestock, persons and products in rapidly developing East and Southeast Asia increase the impact of emerging infectious diseases. Despite improvements in detection and response capacity in the region, deficiencies in the area of assessing risks of disease emergence signify that the capacity to manage threats to public health still needs to be enhanced.

Events & Announcements

- '7th International AIDS Society (IAS) Conference on HIV Pathogenesis, Treatment and Prevention', 30 June – 3 July 2013, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.
- 'Job: Consultants – Polio Technical Assistance, World Health Organization (WHO)', Application deadline: 31 August 2013.

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INTERNAL AND CROSS-BORDER CONFLICT

News & Commentaries

- Suy, Se, 'Khmer Rouge cadres have little appetite for landmark trial', *AFP*, 1 May 2013.
- Ahmed, Farid and Josh Levs, 'Bangladesh Islamists battle police; 4 dead', *CNN*, 6 May 2013.
- Paul, Ruma, 'Bangladesh sentences Islamist to death for 1971 war crimes', *Reuters*, 9 May 2013.
- 'Thailand: Rebels target children in southern conflict', *Human Rights Watch*, 14 May 2013.
- 'Filipino Muslim rebels take tentative steps towards governance', *IRIN*, 21 May 2013.
- 'Amnesty says refugees face rising dangers', *BBC*, 23 May 2013.
- Haviland, Charles, 'Tension over army "seizure" of Sri Lanka Jaffna land', *BBC*, 24 May 2013.
- 'Linking opponents to Khmer Rouge, Cambodia PM seeks law to punish those who deny atrocities', *AP*, 27 May 2013.
- Nyein, Nyein, 'After Kachin peace talks, intl observers praised but mistrust persists', *The Irrawaddy*, 29 May 2013.
- 'Rising Muslim-Buddhist tensions in Sri Lanka', *IRIN*, 12 June 2013.



Selected Publications

- Graubart, Jonathan, 2013, 'R2P and pragmatic liberal interventionism: Values in the service of interests', *Human Rights Quarterly*, Vol. 35, No. 1, pp. 69–90.

This article critiques the pragmatic liberal approach to operationalising the Responsibility to Protect and argues that international efforts to stop mass atrocities should take account of the context and possible consequences.

- World Economic Forum, 2013, *Natural riches? Perspectives on responsible natural resource management in conflict-affected countries*, Geneva.

This publication looks at conflict risks associated with exploitation of natural resources. Different aspects of the question are explored, from human rights to accountability and legal frameworks. It provides recommendations for responsible management of natural resources so as to reduce the risks of conflict induced by resources exploitation.

Events & Announcements

- 'Northeast Asia Regional Peacebuilding Institute (NARPI) Summer Training', 5–20 August 2013, Inje, South Korea.
- 'Call for articles: *Forced Migration Review* issue 45 on "crisis migration"', Deadline: 2 September 2013.

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TRANSNATIONAL CRIME



News & Commentaries

- 'Porous borders helping gun smugglers, say police', *AsiaOne*, 15 May 2013.
- FitzPatrick, Terry, 'How to ... use the media to help combat human trafficking', *Guardian*, 3 June 2013.
- Santos, Juan Manuel, 'Four new ways to deal with the problem of drugs in the Americas', *Guardian*, 4 June 2013.
- Moreau, Ron, 'The Taliban's life of luxury', *Newsweek*, 12 June 2013.
- Vallikappen, Sanat, 'U.S. money laundering fines seen rising in 2013 with Iran focus', *Bloomberg*, 12 June 2013.
- 'Vietnamese gang jailed for smuggling people into Australia by boat', *The Australian*, 12 June 2013.
- 'Australia, Lanka discuss harmonising laws to combat people smuggling', *Daily News*, 13 June 2013.
- 'Fight vs human trafficking goes to the movies', *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, 17 June 2013.

Selected Publications

- Environmental Justice Foundation (EJF), 2013, 'Sold to the sea: Human trafficking in Thailand's fishing industry', London.

This report features the testimonies of Myanmar workers, some as young as 16, who were forced onto fishing vessels for many months and subjected to arduous, often violent, working conditions without pay. The testimonies include accounts of crew murdered at sea and on shore. It highlights a 2009 survey by the UN Inter-Agency Project on Human Trafficking (UNIAP) which found that 59 per cent of migrants trafficked onto Thai fishing boats reported witnessing the murder of a fellow worker.

- Gerney, Arkadi and Chelsea Parsons, 2013, 'Recommendations for executive action to combat illegal gun trafficking and gun crime', Center for American Progress, 10 June.

On 17 April 2013, the US Senate rejected a proposal to expand background checks for gun purchases. In light of this, this report urges the Obama administration to take action using its existing authority, both to improve the federal government's ability to prevent dangerous individuals from acquiring or possessing guns, and to enhance investigations of gun-related crime by law enforcement agencies.

- RSIS Centre for Non-Traditional Security (NTS) Studies, 2013, *Roundtable on Managing Cross-border Movements of People: Promoting Capacity and Response for Irregular Migration (19–20 November 2012)*, Report, Singapore.

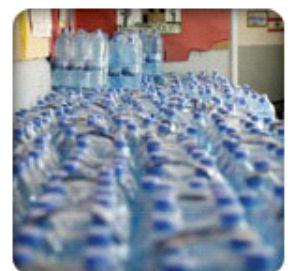
This report documents the presentations and discussions at a roundtable meeting focusing on irregular migration in Southeast Asia. Issues discussed include human trafficking, human smuggling and undocumented labour; asylum seekers and refugees; and climate change-induced refugees.

Events & Announcements

- 'Global Anti-Fraud Conference 2013 – Fraud Scene Investigation', 24–25 September 2013, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.
- 'World BORDERPOL Congress', 3–4 December 2013, London, UK.

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WATER SECURITY



News & Commentaries

- 'Serious drought takes its toll on Myanmar water reserve', *AsiaOne*, 9 May 2013.
- Walton, Brett, 'Study: Fewer trees in the Amazon, less hydropower from dams', *Circle of Blue*, 16 May 2013.
- Rikin, Ari, 'Indonesia water policies "among world's worst": Scientist', *Jakarta Globe*, 23 May 2013.
- 'China's water quality "not optimistic": Report', *Xinhua*, 4 June 2013.
- 'Singapore's water companies aim to quench China's \$850 billion thirst', *Eco-Business*, 4 June 2013.
- 'The price of water 2013: Up nearly 7 percent in last year in 30 major U.S. cities; 25 percent rise since 2010', *Circle of Blue*, 6 June 2013.
- Pottinger, Lori, 'Why has the Nile River become a battleground?', *International Rivers*, 7 June 2013.
- Karunanathan, Meera, 'El Salvador mining ban could establish a vital water security precedent', *Guardian*, 10 June 2013.
- Yan, Katy, 'Almost 28,000 rivers disappear in China', *International Rivers*, 12 June 2013.
- 'Ethiopian parliament votes to strip Egypt of rights to majority of Nile water', *Guardian*, 13 June 2013.

Selected Publications

- Abdelrahman, Rami and Anders Jagerskog, 2013, 'A last ditch effort to save the Jordan River', *Waterfront*, No. 1, Stockholm International Water Institute (SIWI), pp. 6–8.

According to this article, lack of direct or formal coordination between upper and lower riparian countries along the Jordan River is a key issue. It argues that in the short- and medium-term, partial restoration of the Lower Jordan River should be considered a priority, together with partial restoration of the Dead Sea or increased supply of potable water to Amman (Jordan) and other areas.

- Bekchanov, Maksud, Anik Bhaduri and Claudia Ringler, 2013, 'How market-based water allocation can improve water use efficiency in the Aral Sea basin?', ZEF Discussion Papers on Development Policy No. 177, Bonn: Center for Development Research.

This paper analyses the potential benefits of a market-based, decentralised water management system for the Aral Sea basin using an aggregated integrated hydro-economic model. The findings suggest that water users would gain from both inter-catchment and intra-catchment trading, provided that transaction costs are low enough.

- Global Water Partnership (GWP), 2013, 'National stakeholder consultations on water: Supporting the post-2015 development agenda', Stockholm.

This report summarises the findings of a series of 22 country consultations on the importance of water to national development. A significant observation is that management of water resources is extremely important and requires long-term support. Stakeholders also noted that it is essential to pursue an integrated approach.

Events & Announcements

- 'Kenya National Water Conference 2013', 5–7 September 2013, Nairobi, Kenya.
- 'International Conference on Environment Pollution and Prevention', 7–8 October 2013, Melaka, Malaysia.

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About the Centre:

The Centre for NTS Studies, based in the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS), 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 Climate Change, Food Security, 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.

The Centre is the Coordinator of the ASEAN-Canada Research Partnership (2012–2015) supported by the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), Canada. It also serves as the Secretariat of the initiative.

In 2009, the Centre was chosen by the MacArthur Foundation as a lead institution for its three-year Asia Security Initiative (2009–2012), to develop policy research capacity and recommend policies on the critical security challenges facing the Asia-Pacific. It 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.