



THINK TANK

News from the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies

RSIS Welcomes the M.Sc./Ph.D. Class of 2009

On 24 July 2008, RSIS welcomed the new batch of M.Sc. and Ph.D. students. Over the course of the following two days, an orientation was organized for the Class of 2009. The orientation involved briefings on the various programmes at RSIS as well as visits to SAFTIMI and ISEAS. Our Dean, Ambassador Barry Desker, delivered the following welcome speech to the new students:

"It is my great pleasure to welcome you all to the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS), a professional Graduate School of the Nanyang Technological University



Dean Barry Desker having a photo opportunity with some of the new students of the M.Sc. programmes

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(NTU). Our aim is to train you to participate actively in a globalizing world. Some of you will work away from your home countries, others will be based in your countries of origin but all of you will travel, interact with people of other nationalities, handle issues dealing with international society. Our job is to train you to meet these demands. Besides a tough academic programme in the next 10 months, you will have the opportunity to learn about how to handle media interviews, write policy papers, participate in crisis management workshops."

"Since our establishment in 1996, we have experienced robust growth in student numbers and quality. Our enrolment has diversified and we have been successful in attracting

top quality students from many areas of work. From a small class of 10, all Singaporeans, all fully sponsored students in 1998/99, more than 160 students are enrolled in our graduate teaching programmes this academic year. Students from close to 40 different countries have passed through the School since 1998. This year, we have students from 28 countries. More than half of our current student body comes from overseas."

"We are proud at RSIS to provide a rigorous professional education with a strong practical emphasis. Our key teaching goal is to prepare our students for a career in a broad range of strategic professions, including the foreign and national security-related ministries, MNCs and local corporations, investment

banks, regional and international organizations, NGOs and journalism.”

“Our students get globally competitive educational opportunities through four graduate programmes; namely, the Masters of Science in Strategic Studies, International Relations, International Political Economy, and Asian Studies. Next year, we will add a two-year Master of Business Administration in International Studies taught jointly with the Nanyang Business School. We have a small Ph.D. programme. But as a professional school of international affairs, we will be judged by how many go into careers dealing with the regional and international environment, not the number going on to a Ph.D.”

“RSIS is not only a school of international affairs but also a think tank focusing on policy and academic research. Constituents of RSIS, besides IDSS, include the International Centre for Political Violence and Terror-

ism Research (ICPVTR), the Centre of Excellence for National Security (CENS), the Centre for Non-Traditional Security Studies (CNTS) and the Temasek Foundation Centre for Trade and Negotiations.”

“The School also convenes numerous conferences, workshops, seminars, and colloquia on aspects related to the security and stability of the Asia-Pacific and their implications for Singapore and other regional countries. One of the highlights of the School’s activities is the annual Asia Pacific Programme for Senior Military Officers (APPSMO), which will start on Sentosa island on 3 August. You are welcomed to join those sessions, which are open to our students. You are encouraged to participate in all these research and networking activities. We believe that attendance and active participation in our seminars and conferences makes your MSc programme different from other Masters degree

courses. As students, you are at the centre of our teaching programme. We aim to produce graduates who can make a difference to society.”

“It is once again my pleasure to welcome you to RSIS and I hope that you will find your time in the School to be a challenging and rewarding experience.”



The new students being briefed by the Head of Graduate Studies, Associate Professor Ralf Emmers

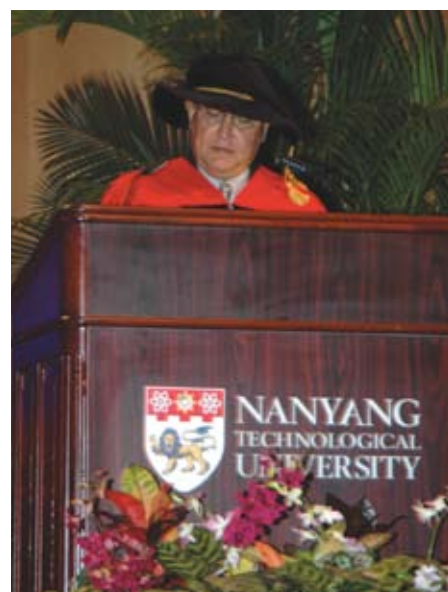
Congratulations to the Class of 2008

On 21 July 2008, RSIS was proud to confer the Master of Science degrees in International Political Economy (IPE), International Relations (IR) and Strategic Studies (SS) to the M.Sc. Class of 2008.

Of the 106 students being conferred the degrees, the three top students from the respective programmes were also awarded various medals. They were Alvin Tan Poh Heng, winner of the Lion Group Gold Medal for the IPE programme; Ang Tiau Linn, winner of the Singapore Technologies Engineering Gold Medal for the IR programme; and Ho Shu Huang, winner of the United Overseas Bank Gold Medal for the SS programme.

RSIS would also like to congratulate Miss Gonzalez Lozano Alma Arcelia for being awarded the prestigious Nanyang President’s Graduate Scholarship to pursue her Ph.D. at RSIS.

We welcome the new members to the RSIS Alumni and hope that they would all maintain a continuing interest in RSIS.



Dean Barry Desker at the convocation ceremony for the Class of 2008

The top students of the respective M.Sc. programmes: (from left) Alvin Tan, Ho Shu Huang and Ang Tiau Linn



Some of the students from the RSIS Class of 2008 with Mr. S R Nathan, President of Singapore and Chancellor of NTU, and Dean Desker.

Seminar on “The U.S. Take on Combating Terror” by Dr. James Jay Carafano

On 16 April 2008, ICPVTR was privileged to host Dr. James Jay Carafano. Dr. Carafano is Assistant Director at the Kathryn and Shelby Cullom Davis Institute for International Studies and Senior Research Fellow at the Douglas and Sarah Allison Center for Foreign Policy Studies. He is a leading expert in defence affairs, military operations and strategy, and homeland security at The Heritage Foundation.

Dr. Carafano spoke to ICPVTR staff on “The U.S. Take on Combating Terror”. Names of wars change over time, and the War on Terror has since been renamed the Long War by the vast majority of observers. This renaming captures the nature of the conflict. According to him, the dynamics of a long war are fairly consistent. It does not end until the sovereign entity loses in-

terest. A long war is a war of attrition: direct confrontation with the enemy is impossible.

Dr. Carafano touched on the four good elements of long-war strategy. The first is security, where offence is more important than defence. Second is economic growth and competition, which is necessary to pay for security and the society’s needs. The third is the protection of the liberties of the citizens in order to protect the underlying element of social cohesion. Finally, the nation has to win the war of ideas. As Clausewitz said, “Defeat is in the mind of the enemy commander.”

Dr. Carafano believes that the United States has to take the basic principles of fighting a long war and apply it to its fight against global terrorism, much in the same way that it out-competed the Soviet Union dur-



Dr. James Jay Carafano

ing the Cold War. He also stated that in order to win the Long War, the state has to appeal to the emotional and the metaphysical. The state cannot simply focus on terrorism and ignore the extremists. History shows that people flourish after winning long wars but society has to be either authoritarian or very liberal in order to win.

The participants of the seminar had an engaging session and RSIS wishes to thank Dr. James Jay Carafano for his insightful sharing.

Seminar on “Four Broad Themes of Jihadi Online Curriculum” by Mr. Stephen Ulph

On 18 April 2008, ICPVTR hosted a seminar on “Four Broad Themes of Jihadi Online Curriculum”. We were privileged to have Mr. Stephen Ulph, Senior Fellow at The Jamestown Foundation and founder and editor of Terrorism Security Monitor, to speak on the nature of the Internet becoming an important media platform for jihadist propaganda.

Mr. Ulph spoke about the “jihadi curriculum”. Even though there is no single coherent curriculum to train a person as a jihadist, the jihadist ideological materials on the Internet are so vast and comprehensive that they could be regarded as an undergraduate course on jihad.

Mr. Ulph also said that the Internet today is an important media platform for jihadist propaganda. The open nature of the Internet, being difficult to regulate, allows jihadists to propagate their ideology. This has enabled jihadists to radicalize some Muslims and subsequently recruit them into their struggle. The result is a continuing jihadist threat, especially from elusive and self-radicalized but unaffiliated individuals.

Continuing his idea of the jihadi curriculum, Mr. Ulph identified four broad themes from the online curriculum of jihad.

The first is the undermining of the present cultural order by targeting democracy, secularism and pluralism. The second is the undermining of the current order within Muslim society and the world by removing any kind of legitimacy for Muslim regimes, state systems, political conduct, and pro-establishment Muslim scholars and those who do not strive against those regimes, systems and political conduct.

Third, according to Mr. Ulph, is the reviving of the spirit of jihad in Muslims. Jihadists construct four main arguments to fuel this spirit.

- It is the “forgotten obligation” that needs to be revived.
- It is an individual duty of every Muslim.
- It means first and foremost an armed struggle, before other meanings.
- It is the ultimate priority above all other obligations.

Jihadists are often forced to reiterate and clarify their positions because they are constantly challenged by their critics from within and without Muslim society. Thus, Mr. Ulph elaborated, the fourth theme that could be found in the curriculum is the claim for the authority to speak for Islam and Muslims.



Mr. Stephen Ulph

Mr. Ulph also observed that while the proliferation of jihadist online curriculum through websites, chat rooms and forum boards is a source of concern, it also offers great opportunity for counter-ideology research. The curriculum allows deep understanding of the intricacies of the ideology. Mr. Ulph called to attention jihadist polemics and self-analysis, which provide analysts with points of tension, controversy and weaknesses. These are useful to weaken the appeal of the ideology and delegitimize its tenets.

RSIS would like to thank Mr. Ulph for sharing his thoughts at the seminar and the discussion of jihadist propaganda through the media platform of the Internet.

The Tenth Asia-Pacific Programme for Senior Military Officers



The Tenth Asia-Pacific Programme for Senior Military Officers (APPSMO) was held at the Sentosa Resort and Spa on 4–10 August 2008. Organised by the Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies (IDSS) of the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS), Nanyang Technological University, APPSMO 08 saw one of the largest participation of senior military officers—61 in total—since its inauguration in 1999. Participants from 28 countries, with a record number of four Brigadier-Generals, were involved in the programme this year. APPSMO 2008 also marked the first time Saudi Arabia participated in the event.

The senior military officers participated in a series of seminars and discussions that featured distinguished speakers from Singapore and around the world. The speakers addressed various topics pertaining to security and policy concerns, such as the future of warfare, the rise of private military companies,



Military Officers (APPSMO)

the role of the armed forces in non-traditional security, cultural knowledge and military operations, the media and international conflict, terrorism and international security, and the new dimensions in international security.

It was, of course, not all work and no play. The participants of APPSMO 08 were also treated to a variety of activities including visits to SAFTI Military Institute, the Army Museum, The Arts House and Changi Naval Base. As APPSMO 08 coincided with Singapore's National Day on 9 August, the participants also celebrated with the whole nation by attending the National Day Parade held at Marina Bay.

APPSMO 08 will be remembered by its participants not only for the valuable defence networking opportunities and stimulating academic sessions addressing up-to-date and relevant topics but also for the relationships built that will last beyond their stay in Singapore.



Brigadier General Erwin Dahinden (Switzerland):

"Being in Singapore for APPSMO 2008 allows me to get an alternative perspective of security, different from a Euro-centric one. Furthermore, Singapore is an ideal place, being not only multicultural and successful in world trade; it is also the balcony of Asia, allowing for an international perspective on security."



Captain (N) Mushabab Al-Asmari (Saudi Arabia):

"I am looking forward to engaging other officers in the exchange of views on security issues, especially on anti-terrorism."



Brigadier Naveed Mukhtar (Pakistan):

"It is exceptional to be here at APPSMO 2008. A lot of credit goes to RSIS for inviting officers from 28 countries and for being a great host!"



Seminar on “Myanmar’s Militarized State and its Priorities: How It Uses Cyclone Victims to String the International Community Along” by Dr. Maung Zarni

On 2 June 2008, RSIS invited Dr. Maung Zarni, Visiting Research Fellow at the Department of International Development (Queen Elizabeth House), University of Oxford, and founder of the Free Burma Coalition, to talk about the nature of the junta’s priorities and the consequences for the future of Myanmar.

Dr. Zarni shared that Myanmar’s generals see power as limited and personalized, and that sharing power is akin to losing power. He explained the interaction of the diverse institutions and groupings in Myanmar society with the help of a diagram. The regime was placed outside and above the people with communication between them being primarily

unidirectional from the top down. He cited the junta’s reaction to the recent Cyclone Nargis as evidence that the regime is simply not concerned with public welfare.

Dr. Zarni also noted that national reconciliation is seen as key to progress in Myanmar. The *tatmadaw* were once respected by the Burmese people but the violent repression of civil protests has changed this. He also focused on the idea that the soldiers, being a part of the people of Myanmar, cannot influence the generals and are essentially hostage to their situation. He added that reconciliation between the Myanmar people and the rank-and-file soldiers of the army is essential for progress in Myanmar.

Concerning the international



Dr. Maung Zarni

community, Dr. Zarni said that while the U.S., the U.K. and France have a moral code, their dealings with Myanmar have been hypocritical. Sanctions have not worked. He also criticized ASEAN’s position towards Myanmar as giving the junta a blank cheque to do as they please. He asserted that there is mass public rage against the regime but doubted that there would be any mass uprising.

RSIS wishes to thank Dr. Zarni for addressing the seminar, which was insightful for the participants.

Visit by European Union Experts, Office of the Delegation of the European Commission

On 6 June 2008, RSIS hosted a visit by a delegation of experts from the European Union (EU). This visit was requested by the European Commission in Singapore and was led by Mr. Sigurd Hess. The experts had also visited Indonesia and Malaysia and were on a fact-finding mission on critical maritime routes, with a particular focus on the Malacca Straits.

During the visit, the delegation met with RSIS staff Dr. Sam Bateman and Mr. Joshua Ho for a discussion on issues ranging from the EU’s involvement in the maritime security domain in Singapore to terrorist threats in the region. The discussion at RSIS was lively and was a memorable stop of their Southeast Asian visit.



Dr. Sam Bateman of RSIS (third from the front, right) hosting the European Union delegation

Visit by the National Institute for Defense Studies, Japan



The delegation from NIDS being briefed by Dean Barry Desker (right)

On 13 June 2008, a delegation from the National Institute for Defense Studies (NIDS) of Japan led by Professor Toda Kazuhiro visited RSIS. The officers who came with Professor Kazuhiro were Captain Yokota Tomonori, Major Kitano Mitsutaka, Colonel Shigemura Kazayuki, Colonel Kamisakai Masami and Captain Odora Kazuyuki. Apart from the Japanese officers, members of the U.S. and Chinese Navy and Army were also part of the delegation as students of NIDS.

The visitors were briefed by RSIS staff on Chinese military modernization and the regional security situation, including the ASEAN Regional Forum. The discussion focused on regional security challenges in the Asia-Pacific region and the responses to these challenges.

Visit by African Leaders and Policymakers

From 13 to 17 July 2008, Singapore played host to a delegation of leaders and policymakers from eight African countries. The four-day working visit was organized by RSIS, and the Johannesburg-based Brenthurst Foundation and Business Leadership South Africa. The visitors came to find out how Singapore managed to transform itself from a Third-World to a First-World country within a generation, as well as the social and economic policies behind the transformation. They were interested in how Singapore, a former colony of Britain that had no natural resources and a high unemployment rate of 25 per cent at the time of its independence in 1965, was able to transform itself into a well-developed and high-income country within a generation. They believed that there are relevant lessons to be learnt in both policies and processes, which could be tailored and adapted to the conditions in Africa.

The delegation was assembled and led by Dr. Greg Mills, Director of the Brenthurst Foundation, and Mr. Michael Spicer, CEO of Business Leadership South Africa.

Other distinguished participants of the visit include the following.

- Dr. Luisa Dias Diogo, Prime Minister of Mozambique
- Mr. Wycliffe Ambetsa Oparanya, Minister in the Prime Minister's Office of Kenya
- Mr. Festus Wangwe, Economist, Central Planning and Coordination, Kenyan Ministry of Planning and National Development
- Mr. Moeketsi Majoro, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Development, Lesotho
- Mr. Max Sisulu, National Executive Committee, African National Congress
- Mr. Patrick Mazimhaka, Chairman of the Governance Board, Brenthurst Foundation



The African leaders and policymakers having tea with the President, Mr. S R Nathan, at the Istana on 16 July 2008

- Mr. Bobby Godsell, Chairman, Business Unity, South Africa
- Dr. Neva Makgetla, Sector Strategies Coordinator, Office of the President, South Africa
- Francis Gatere, Director-General, Rwanda Investment and Export Promotion Agency, Rwanda
- Mr. Collen Kgengwenyane, Director, Training and Development, Office of the President, Botswana
- Mr. Ousman Tall, Director of Planning and Policy, Ministry of Agriculture, Liberia
- Ms. Heba Selama, Manager of COMESA Regional Investment Agency, Egypt

The intensive programme, organized by RSIS, included meetings with senior officials of International Enterprise Singapore, the Economic Development Board, Jurong Town Corporation, PSA, National Trades Union Congress, Singapore Cooperation Enterprise and Singapore Business Federation. The delegation also met the President, Mr. S R Nathan, for a tea session as well as Senior

Minister Mr. Goh Chok Tong, Minister for Foreign Affairs Mr. George Yeo and Senior Minister of State for Trade and Industry, Mr. S Iswaran.

The visitors were also hosted to dinner by Senior Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Zainal Abidin Rasheed. In addition, the Prime Minister of Mozambique called on Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong. A highlight of the visit was a lunch talk given by former top senior civil servant, Mr. Ngiam Tong Dow, which enabled the visitors to learn first hand from one of the people primarily responsible for policymaking and implementation in the early years of Singapore's progress.

Commenting on the visit, Dean Barry Desker said: "We are pleased to host this visit by the African policymakers. It allows them to learn from the Singapore experience. Particularly useful is the emphasis by our policy makers on the need for effective governance and that there are no short cuts to economic development."



Ahlan Wa Sahlan (Warm Greetings) from Damascus, Syria!



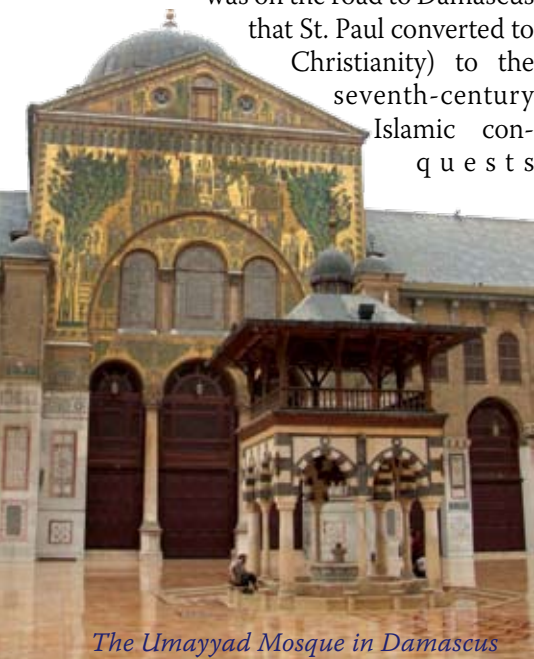
Elena Pavlova

Elena Pavlova is an alumnus (Class of 2004) and a former Associate Research Fellow of RSIS. In this letter to Think Tank, Elena reflects on her trip to Syria.

Elena at the ancient Roman city of Apamea, Syria

After four intensive and highly rewarding years at RSIS, I decided to take time off to learn Arabic in the Middle East. My choice of Damascus, Syria, was prompted by the knowledgeable advice of two colleagues with the Contemporary Islam programme at RSIS. From the moment I arrived, I knew they had advised me well.

In addition to a welcoming and safe environment for learning Arabic, Syria offers a unique experience for first-time visitors to the Middle East. The land and its people are a veritable micro-cosmos of civilizations, religions and cultures. From the ancient Phoenicians that inhabited it through the communities of early Christians (it was on the road to Damascus that St. Paul converted to Christianity) to the seventh-century Islamic conquests



The Umayyad Mosque in Damascus

by the Prophet's Companions and the subsequent Umayyad and Abbasid Caliphates, Syria still bears the legacy of its various forefathers.

Perhaps the best symbol of this cultural and religious coexistence is the Umayyad Mosque in Damascus. Built in the eighth century, it incorporates the remains of a Christian basilica dedicated to St. John the Baptist, which in turn was constructed over the ruins of an ancient Roman temple dedicated to Jupiter. It also houses the grave of twelfth-century Arab commander Salahuddin, who is famous for re-conquering Jerusalem from the Crusader armies. There is also a small shrine dedicated to the Prophet's grandson, Hussein, venerated by Shi'a Muslims all over the world. Standing with the splendours of its Umayyad architecture and Byzantine mosaics, I was reminded of the strong spirit of multiculturalism that Singapore embodies as well.

My first experience in learning Arabic was at the Arabic Language Centre at Damascus University. With its eight levels and rapid pace, the course was a challenging, yet rewarding, experience. Upon graduation, I was able to read basic texts and listen to Al-Jazeera news.

Having learned the importance of "total immersion" through the fieldwork that RSIS strongly encourages, I decided to take the plunge and go "native". I donned a hijab and traditional Muslim dress, and joined the all-girl classes at Abu Nour Islamic Foundation. The foundation was established by the late Sufi Sheikh Ahmad Kuftaro in conjunc-

28–29 August 2008
Regional Workshop on Energy and NTS

Grand Copthorne Waterfront Hotel, Singapore

2 October 2008

Book Launch and Talk, "Trade Policy, New Century" by Razeen Sally
Pod @ National Library, Singapore

18–19 November 2008

"Between Rising Naval Powers: Implications for Southeast Asia of the Rise of Chinese and Indian Naval Power", a conference organized by RSIS and the National Maritime Foundation

Traders Hotel, Singapore

tion with the Syrian government and promotes a traditional Islamic education in an all-Islamic environment.

To this day, I feel this was the best decision I made in Syria. In addition to witnessing a genuine Islamic curriculum and traditional style of teaching, I also improved my Arabic significantly. Part of the reason is due to the enduring links that the Arabic language shares with its primal texts, the Holy Quran and the Hadith collections.

A second reason is the welcoming atmosphere in the school itself. Even as a non-Muslim, I was encouraged to attend classes on how to read the Holy Quran or learn about the Prophet's biography, as well as being invited to a private celebration for Prophet Mohammad's birthday! I made many friends and, most importantly, many lasting memories.

In September, I will be heading off to Princeton University, USA, to embark on my first year as a Ph.D. student at the Near Eastern Studies department. I will be working closely with Professors Bernard Haykel and Muhammad Qasim Zaman to formulate a Ph.D. topic covering salient themes from the modern Muslim world.

Looking back on my experiences, and the road that took me to Princeton, I feel deeply indebted to RSIS for the solid intellectual foundations that it gave me, as well as to my RSIS colleagues for their never-ending inspiration and assistance. How else would I have taken the road less travelled, coming to Syria and enrolling at a traditional Muslim school, if not being accompanied on my journey by RSIS' logo, "Ponder the Improbable".