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RSIS Top Think Tank in Singapore

RSIS was recently honoured in a global survey that ranked it the Number One think tank in Singapore in 2009. In the same survey, which was conducted by the University of Pennsylvania’s Think Tank and Civil Societies Program, RSIS was ranked third in Asia—after the Japan Institute of International Affairs and the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences—out of more than a thousand think tanks in Asia.

This Global “Go-To Think Tanks” ranking project was part of an annual study by the University of Pennsylvania to identify and rank the leading think tanks of the world. The study collated the nominations and choices of an Expert Panel of 298 experts, which was followed by two rounds of rankings involving about 500 policymakers, scholars, donors and think tank officials, as well as about 8,500 individuals and institutions respectively. Some of the criteria used to rank the think tanks included publication in authoritative

publications; academic reputation; access to elites in the area of policymaking, media and academia; reputation with policymakers; the ability to bridge the gap between academic and policy communities and policymakers and the public; and success in challenging the conventional wisdom of policymakers and in generating innovative policy ideas.

Established 14 years ago on 30 July 1996 as the Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies (IDSS), and renamed the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies on 1 January 2007, the school’s high placement in the ranking survey comes as no surprise. RSIS’s research findings—which are shared worldwide with stakeholders and with academic and policy communities through conferences and publications such as monographs, policy papers, working papers and especially commentaries—have had an impact out of proportion to its relative youth and size.

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Top 40 Think Tanks in Asia

1. Japan Institute of International Affairs (JIIA), Japan
2. Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS), China
3. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS), Singapore
4. Center for Strategic and International Studies, Indonesia
5. China Institute for Contemporary International Relations (CICIR), China
6. Hong Kong Centre for Economic Research (HKCER), Hong Kong
7. Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, Singapore
8. Shanghai Institute for International Studies, China
9. Institute for Defense Studies and Analyses, India
10. Lowy Institute for International Policy, Australia
11. Centre for Policy Research, India
12. Korea Development Institute, South Korea
13. Center for Civil Society, India
14. China Institute for International Studies (CIIS), China
15. Singapore Institute of International Affairs (SIIA), Singapore
16. Liberty Institute, India
17. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace (Beijing), China
18. Asian Forum Japan (AFJ), Japan
19. Institute for International Policy Studies, Japan
20. Institute of Energy Economics Japan (IEEJ), Japan
21. India Council for Research on International Economic Relations, India
22. Institute of Strategic and International Studies (ISIS), Malaysia
23. Taiwan Foundation for Democracy, Taiwan
24. Cathay Institute for Public Affairs, China
25. Centre for Development Studies, India
26. National Institute for Research Advancement, Japan
27. The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI), India
28. Research Institute of Economy, Trade and Industry (RIETI), Japan
29. Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Singapore
30. Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies, Bangladesh
31. Institute for Peace and Conflict Studies, India
32. Malaysian Institute of Economic Research (MIER), Malaysia
33. Central Institute for Economic Management, Vietnam
34. National Institute for Defense Studies, Japan
35. Philippine Institute for Development Studies, Philippines
36. Energy and Resources Institute, India
37. Third World Network, Malaysia
38. Institute of Economic Growth, India
39. Institute for Integrated Development Studies, Nepal
40. Institute of Policy Studies, Sri Lanka

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Inspired by its slogan to “Ponder the Improbable”, RSIS has ventured into both charted and uncharted terrain to blaze a trail for others to follow. This has resulted in generous research grants donated repeatedly by foundations such as the Ford Foundation and the Sasakawa Peace Foundation. The international impact of RSIS’s work in non-traditional security, for example, can be discerned from the fact that the school’s Centre for Non-Traditional Security Studies is the Secretariat of the Ford-funded Consortium of Non-Traditional Security Studies in Asia. RSIS is also the biggest beneficiary of the MacArthur Foundation’s Asia Security Initiative launched in 2009, for which it received US\$2.5 million to work on non-traditional security, and multilateralism and regionalism.

RSIS’s success is all the more remarkable considering that its core research staff are not focused on research alone but, being the faculty of a professional graduate school of International Studies, also have significant teaching duties in its increasingly popular M.Sc. and Ph.D. programmes. Commenting on RSIS’s success in the global survey, Mr. Muhammad Shafqat Munir, a research analyst from Bangladesh at RSIS’s International Centre for Political Violence and Terrorism Research, and who is also studying part-time for his M.Sc. in Strategic Studies, remarked: “The ranking result confirmed my belief in RSIS as the place to come to for a high quality post-graduate education. The school has become a ‘window to the world’ through the collective effort of its world class research staff.”

Maritime Challenges and Priorities in Asia



“Maritime Challenges and Priorities in Asia” conference

RSIS’s Maritime Security Programme organized a conference on “Maritime Challenges and Priorities in Asia” on 20–21 January 2010. This conference aimed to look at ways to improve good order at sea by first examining the challenges and the different priorities that regional countries place on maritime affairs. Asia is a distinctive maritime region. The region sits astride key choke points for shipping between the Indian and Pacific Oceans, which are economically and strategically important to the economies of Northeast Asia, the United States and the emerging maritime powers of Asia. Most regional countries have extensive maritime interests. Many of these have trans-boundary and regional dimensions that should facilitate cooperation.

Regional cooperation is fundamental to the maintenance of good order at sea, but at present this is underdeveloped in Asia. Problems that inhibit cooperation include inadequate resources, poor coordination between national agencies, and the lack of maritime boundaries in parts of the region, as well as a concern that cooperation may involve some loss of

sovereignty. Many countries see themselves as stakeholders in good order at sea in Asia, which ultimately depends on the actions of regional countries to ensure it.

“Good order at sea” was defined as the need to ensure the safety and security of shipping, and which permits countries to pursue their maritime interests and develop their marine resources in an ecologically sustainable and peaceful manner in accordance with international law. During the course of the conference, simultaneous breakout sessions were also held which saw discussions based on the historical attributes of the sea and maritime developments.

By acknowledging these interests, the conference was able to examine areas of collaboration and cooperation that could be feasible, which hopefully addressed the interests of most states and not undermine the core interests of any particular state. Of course, not all states shared the same interests, and mapping these individual interests and priorities could also facilitate bilateral cooperation as long as it did not undermine the collective interest of the entire group.

The Obama Administration: Implications for Asia



President Jose Ramos-Horta

RSIS organized a Distinguished World Leaders Lecture on 17 December 2009. The second in the series, the lecture was delivered by Dr. Jose Ramos-Horta and entitled “The Obama Promise: Challenges and Opportunities for Asia”. Dr. Ramos-Horta, the 1996 Nobel Peace Prize Laureate, President of Timor-Leste, and a Patron of the International Peace Foundation, discussed the implications of the Obama Presidency for Asia. President Obama’s inspiring message of hope and his conciliatory approach towards diplomacy present a unique opportunity for Asian countries to cooperate with the United States and with each other on numerous issues of common concern.

President Ramos-Horta began by noting the continued importance of the United States in Asia. Using Timor-Leste as an example, he illustrated how small Asian countries are heavily dependent on the U.S. economy. Having invested heavily in U.S. Treasury bonds, the national wealth of Timor-Leste is threatened by the increasing U.S. deficit and the current financial crisis, with severe negative implications for social stability and economic development.

President Ramos-Horta next examined the significance of the Obama Presidency. He noted that it is a marked change from the previous Bush Presidency and favours a more inclusive, conciliatory approach to world affairs. Alluding to President Obama’s University of Cairo speech and his 2009 Nobel Peace Prize award, President Ramos-Horta argued that President Obama had lessened tensions around the world and brought hope to millions of people that the United States is sincere in solving their problems. However, he cautioned against wishful thinking, noting that President

Obama had increased military deployment in Afghanistan and had backed down over Israeli settlements in the West Bank. He argued that while President Obama was sincere in his desire for peace, circumstances did not always favour peaceful resolutions.

President Ramos-Horta then discussed the significance of the Obama Presidency for Asia, noting that President Obama was the first U.S. President to have direct personal experience in Asia, having spent several years of his childhood in Indonesia. Furthermore, his recent visits to various Asian countries, such as Singapore, China, Japan and Korea, demonstrated his sincerity in engaging with Asia and Asians. They also demonstrated the increasing importance of Asian countries on the global scene. President Ramos-Horta argued that key Asian countries, including China, Japan, Korea, India and Indonesia, were now economic powerhouses with enormous populations. However, historical rivalries and conflicts have stymied attempts at cooperation. Nevertheless, President Ramos-Horta believed that there was still much potential for common ground, particularly in areas of human development, health, environmental preservation, resource husbandry and nuclear proliferation.

President Ramos-Horta concluded that Asian countries should rise to the opportunity offered by President Obama’s leadership and they should cooperate to solve common issues in close cooperation with the United States. The United States must be sincere in its efforts to engage with Asia, while Asian countries should recognize the continuing importance of the United States in the region.

U.S. Standing in the World



Professor Peter J. Katzenstein

On 5 January 2010, Professor Peter J. Katzenstein, the S. Rajaratnam Professor of Strategic Studies at RSIS, addressed a colloquium at Nanyang Technological University on the topic “U.S. Standing in the World: Causes, Consequences and the Future”. Katzenstein, who is also the Walter S. Carpenter, Jr., Professor of International Studies at Cornell University, asserted that the United States’ standing in the world would be determined by its “goodwill” since the core of its existence in the world’s political standing was akin to its long-term political investments. By “standing”, he was referring to what the United States did and what it is today. According to Katzenstein, the United States needs to nurture both credibility and esteem because it is the twin foundation of how the world views it.

Katzenstein argued that the U.S. government did not command a standing but rather an attribution by the international community. The U.S. government is viewed as credible when it stands up against its partners and enemies while esteem is not about standing up, but about standing for. The U.S. polity furthers the concept of esteem and its character and actions determine the image of the United States in international politics.

Katzenstein explained that, in terms of both credibility

and esteem, standing is deeply interwoven with the U.S. concept of hard power. Hard power is a mixture of attractiveness, toughness and respect, which have the ability to advance standing. On the other hand, soft power is about getting what you want through appeal rather than coercion. According to Katzenstein, soft power was not something a country had. Instead it was a tool in gaining acceptance by other countries. He explained that legitimacy enhanced standing because it meant that the country conformed to recognized principles or expected rules and standards. Katzenstein highlighted some key reasons why standing mattered. First, a decline in standing made it harder for countries to cooperate. Second, states were able to enhance their stature while diminishing that of their adversaries. Finally, standing boosted foreign policy implementations.

Prof. Katzenstein identified three important audiences of U.S. standing: the different regions and countries in the world; the international organizations and the global civil society; and, finally, the United States itself. All three audiences also keep checks and monitor the track record of U.S. standing and its status. Katzenstein quoted the PEW results, which showed a decline in U.S. standing recently, which varied over regions. Standing also differs among the elites and the masses. The elites view standing through U.S. policy and how they are affected by it while the general public gauges U.S. conduct on its justness and moral standing. How the United States perceives regional issues also impacts U.S. standing. Katzenstein drew from the research carried out by his team, which showed that U.S. standing today is the same, if not worse, than what it was with the Soviet Union during the Cold War.

The Press Freedom Index by ReportersWithout Borders shows that U.S. standing declined from 17 in 2002 to 36 in 2008. With the U.S. emphasis on free trade rather than aid, its developmental aid ranks 19 out of 22 rich nations. The sharp increase in more member nations in the General Assembly brings about greater diversity and more opinions on the table, which proves to be detrimental to U.S. standing.

Concluding his lecture, Prof. Katzenstein emphasized that policymakers should, firstly, start considering standing as an issue of national interest. Secondly, there is a need to move beyond the realm of public diplomacy. Thirdly, policymakers should identify and use different tools for different jobs for effective results. Fourthly, heed the bond between power and standing. Lastly, in the spirit of research, to work on data collection and analysis of standing.

The Changing Character of War



Professor Hew Strachan

Just how different is war today from its previous incarnations? This was the central question that Professor Hew Strachan, the Chichele Professor of the History of War, All Souls College, University of Oxford, sought to address at the inaugural S.T. Lee Distinguished Annual Lecture held on 14 January 2010 at the Shangri-La Hotel. Since the nineteenth century, the dominant driver of change in warfare has been technology. Indeed, so important is the issue of technological change to changes in warfare that the former is now often regarded, erroneously, as the only factor driving changes in warfare in the twenty-first century.

But implicit in this view of the central role of technology in warfare is the recognition that changes in warfare may also be driven by other, essentially non-technological factors, in particular political, economic and societal developments. Indeed, up to the nineteenth century, political, social and economic factors were the dominant drivers of changes in warfare.

How do we know that changes in warfare are actually not driven primarily by technological change? Prof. Strachan suggested it was precisely the absence of major war that should alert us to the folly of the technology-centric argument. The total wars of the twentieth century were as much a reflection of fundamental changes in the character of politics and states—such as popular mobilization and the increasing salience of political ideologies in shaping international relations. The technological dominance of the West has not deterred other less powerful actors to resort to other less conventional methods of waging war.

The danger is that the thinking on strategy may not have accompanied these changes in warfare. In some parts of the world, in particular Western Europe, the Clausewitzian paradigm of the political utility of war receives increasingly short shrift among its populations. This popular tendency to repudiate the Clausewitzian paradigm is exacerbated precisely by the security challenges facing the West. Terrorism and insurgency share a common characteristic, and that is the rubric of irregular—or unconventional—warfare. And given how “regular” or “conventional” war dominates western strategic thinking, there is the real danger in not regarding the anti-terror efforts of states as part and parcel of war, and therefore not requiring the full mobilization of national resources that “war” typically demands.

What is needed, Prof. Strachan argued, is a theory of war that unites both regular and irregular warfare. Many of the problems that the U.S. and its allies face in Afghanistan today derive precisely from the idea that regular and irregular wars are two distinct types of wars, and require very different strategic and tactical solutions to each set of unique problems. Furthermore, the realm of military technology brings new developments that apparently threaten to change both the nature and character of war. The reality, however, may be that all changes that wars throughout the history of humanity have experienced are different manifestations of a single phenomenon, and as such, the tactical and strategic solutions to the problems found in both may not differ from each other very much.

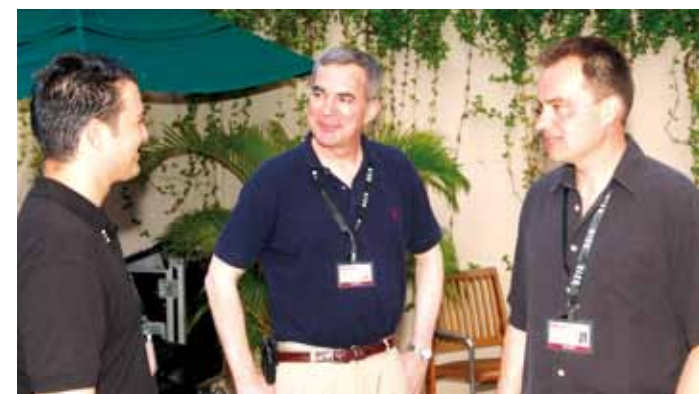
Mainstreaming Counter-Terrorism

The 4th Asia-Pacific Programme for Senior National Security Officers (APPSNO) was held at the Sentosa Resort and Spa from 12 – 16 April 2010. Jointly organized by the Centre of Excellence for National Security (CENS) of RSIS and the National Security Coordination Secretariat (NSCS) of the Prime Minister’s Office, the programme provided a platform for over 60 practitioners and academics from 18 countries across the Asia-Pacific region and beyond to share expertise and exchange perspectives as well as develop stronger networks for enhancing national security management.

Senior Minister and Coordinating Minister for National Security, Professor S Jayakumar delivered the opening speech to kick start the week long deliberation on this year’s theme of ‘Mainstreaming Counter-Terrorism’. The advances in government security measures over the years have, unfortunately, not dampened the resolve of transnational terrorist networks. So to stay ahead of the adversary, states need to “continuously innovate and expand [their] defences” to protect their hard won security. Mainstreaming counter-terrorism is one way ahead. More than just getting non-security related government bodies, private sector companies and the public to cooperate with security agencies, this involves a “mindset change” to engage the wider community in efforts to mainstream a “cultural norm” of being vigilant and rejecting extremism and violence.

Over the week, participants were provided opportunities to learn how the wider law enforcement and government machinery, as well as the community, have very important roles to play in the overall counter-terrorism effort while debating the following issues: how can law enforcement, military and government officials who are not directly involved in day-to-day counter-terrorism issues develop mindsets attuned to the risk of violent radicalisation and terrorist threats in their respective operating environments? How can public officials in non-security sectors, e.g., transport, education and health, be motivated to be better sensitized to their possible roles in counter-terrorism efforts? How can communities “mainstream” a cultural norm against the adoption of violent extremist ideologies? What safeguards can be built to prevent governmental and societal “mainstreaming counter-terrorism” efforts





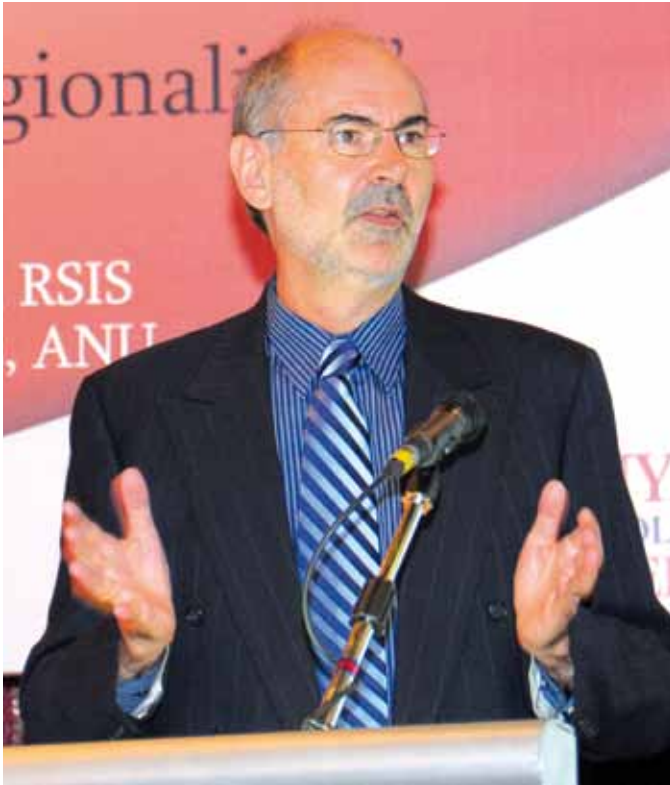
from degenerating into generalized paranoia, policy over-reactions and indiscriminate religious profiling?

Incisive perspectives on these issues were provided by a host of distinguished international and local panelists. As part of the Distinguished Dinner Lecture series, Lord Alderdice of Knock, a Member of the House of Lords, U.K., shared his insightful experiences on the Northern Ireland conflict at the Asian Civilisation Museum while multiple award-winning veteran journalist and Director for Transnational Threats at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, U.S., Arnaud de Borchgrave provided astute personal musings on the global counter-terrorism challenge at the Raffles Hotel. Other speakers included Sean Lee, Deputy Director at the National Security Coordination Centre, Singapore; Rommel Banlaoi, Executive Director of the Philippine Institute for Peace, Violence and Terrorism Research; Anil Patani, Assistant Chief Constable of the West Midlands Police HQ, U.K.; Gregory Saathoff, Executive Director of the University of Virginia's Critical Incident Analysis Group; Frank Cilluffo, Associate Vice President and Director of the Homeland Security Policy Institute, George Washington University; Suleyman Ozeren, Director of the International Center for Terrorism and Transnational Crime, Turkey; Garry Hindle, Head of Security and Counterterrorism, Royal United Services Institute, U.K.; Mohamed Feisal Bin Mohamed Hassan of the Religious Rehabilitation Group (RRG), Singapore; Farish Noor, Senior Fellow at RSIS; and Wong Hong Kuan, Chief-of-Staff of the Singapore Police Force.

It was not all work and no play at APPSNO 2010. Participants soaked in the sights, culture and history of Singapore during the Heritage Walk and visit to the Asian Civilisation Museum and also chilled over Singapore Slings at the iconic Long Bar at the Raffles Hotel.

With so many contending perspectives exchanged over the week, what then is the essence of mainstreaming counter-terrorism? "In the final analysis," underscored Head of CENS, Associate Professor Kumar Ramakrishna, "properly executed, mainstreaming counter-terrorism should enhance and not degrade the resilience of multicultural, multi-religious states targeted by transnational terrorist networks."

Preferential Trade Agreements: A Glass Half Empty



Professor John Ravenhill

On 9 February 2010, Professor John Ravenhill, the NTUC Professor of International Economic Relations at RSIS, gave a Distinguished Public Lecture entitled “Understanding the New East Asian Regionalism”. In his talk, Prof. Ravenhill, who is Professor at the Department of International Relations, Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, Australian National University, focused on the increase of Preferential Trade Agreements (PTAs) and their impact on the Asian economic landscape. He argued that current theories are insufficient to describe this trend, and that the problem lay in the insufficient framework provided by international and regional organizations. Thus the increase in PTAs was a reflection of the absence of a conducive economic environment.

The rapid proliferation of PTAs seemed to follow political considerations, more so than lobbying from the business sector. Despite an increasingly liberalized and globalized world, where exporting industries have increasing influence, Ravenhill noted that the data did not show an increase in business interest for PTAs. Furthermore, their development

did not correspond to Baldwin’s “domino theory”, whereby such agreements had substantive advantages for businesses governed by agreements while disadvantages accrue to those excluded by them. Ravenhill contended that this simply was not the case, as there were already alternative agreements in place that allowed for components to move without additional cost. He argued that the basis of the PTAs was rooted in political and strategic considerations, which sought to improve bilateral relations rather than expand trade. Herein, the opportunity provided by week-long negotiations meant that bilateral businesses benefitted from the exposure. Conversely, the business sector tends to lobby for less liberalization, seeking to secure key areas from competition.

Ravenhill also noted that PTAs did not tackle the important trade issues of modern Asia. The problem lay within the lax WTO framework that prevented weaker parties from pushing for greater liberalization in face of unwilling stronger states; hence, reflecting the political nature of PTA agreements. This asymmetrical relationship meant that the agreements remained superficial, stimulating little interest from the business sector. Prof. Ravenhill contended that this was due to the fact that a state’s strategic interest enjoyed a substantial autonomy vis-à-vis business. Consequently, the political economy explanation ignored the role of individual leaders and ideas. Furthermore, the problem lay also in the lack of consultation and understanding between business and politicians. This problem was compounded by the difference in discourse and interests that made collaboration complicated.

Instead, businesses might not be integrated enough to take advantage of PTAs. This was due to a possible malaise in Asia, where the regional institutions were failing to live up to their expectations. Prof. Ravenhill pondered the possibility that the institutions might be outdated and needed new life blown into them. He argued that stronger institutions were needed to overcome this obstacle, notably in the domain of agreement negotiations and implementations. He maintained that organizations, such as ASEAN, should move away from consensus agreements towards pathfinder agreements. This would enable interested states to implement agreements without stalling over membership issues. Furthermore, ASEAN lacked a strong dispute resolution mechanism that could solve several underlying problems of regional integration.

“Light at the End of the Tunnel” for the Indonesian Economy



Associate Professor Leonard Sebastian (right), Coordinator of RSIS's Indonesia Programme with (from left) Mr. Fauzi Ichsan, Dr. Kruskridho Ambardi and Mr. Andi Widjajanto

On 26 January 2010, RSIS's Indonesia Programme organized a seminar entitled “An Evaluation of the Yudhoyono Administration's First 100 Days in Office”. The seminar featured three speakers from Indonesia: Mr. Fauzi Ichsan of Standard Chartered Bank Indonesia, Dr. Kruskridho Ambardi of the Indonesian Survey Institute (LSI), and Mr. Andi Widjajanto of the University of Indonesia. The seminar aimed to provide insights on and an analysis of the Administration's key programmes in the area of economics, politics and security.

Speaking on the economy, Mr. Fauzi began with the Bank Century case. Despite mass protests over the government's decision to bail out Bank Century, Fauzi expressed confidence that the case would be resolved politically and without the need to sacrifice either Minister of Finance Sri Mulyani or Vice President Boediono. The Indonesian economy would thus be able to continue its strong growth, and head towards what he referred to as “the light at the end of the tunnel”. He drew his conclusions based on Indonesia's economic indicators that had consistently shown positive trends over the last five years despite global and domestic problems. Fauzi was confident that the Indonesian economy was firmly on the road to recovery.

Dr. Kruskridho followed with his findings on Indonesian perceptions of the newly inaugurated Administration's first

100 days. He measured the Administration's performance based on the results of a survey that the Indonesian Survey Institute had recently completed. According to the survey, by the end of the 100-day period, President Yudhoyono had lost 14 percentage points in public support. Nevertheless, the level of public satisfaction at that time remained high at 70 per cent. Kruskridho also revealed that a majority of the public saw the economy as being better off than last year. The security, political and law enforcement sectors were also seen in positive terms. Kruskridho concluded that despite a number of political challenges within the first few months, President Yudhoyono's public support remained high and attempts to impeach him might not be supported by the people at large.

With regard to the security sector, Andi Widjajanto identified counterterrorism, border control, law enforcement and defence capabilities as the Administration's key programmes for the first 100 days. In these, he assessed that the Administration was seen as meeting its targets. Additionally, Widjajanto mentioned that the Administration planned to submit a bill on an Integrated National Security System to Parliament. If the bill were adopted as law, Indonesia would then have an integrated defence system in 2014, self-reliance in weapon systems by 2019, and a new defence posture fully in place by 2029.

Is East Asia Becoming Sino-Centric?



Speakers and participants of the “China and the Strategic Dynamics in East Asia” conference

The China Programme at RSIS organized a conference on “China and the Strategic Dynamics in East Asia” on 11–12 March 2010. This conference was held in the context of increasing Chinese strategic influence and the ever-changing strategic dynamics in East Asia, particularly in the wake of the financial crisis. It was a comprehensive study to examine how the growth of China’s economic and military power, China’s regional strategy, and the strategic orientations of other major players have shaped, and are likely to continue to shape China’s strategic position and the strategic dynamics in the region.

A total of 16 prominent scholars from China, the U.S., Japan, South Korea, India, Britain, Taiwan and Singapore presented papers at the conference which was also attended by dozens of local scholars, diplomats based in Singapore, government officials, and business leaders. The conference consisted of five sessions. The first session focused on China’s strategic planning in the region and the strategic responses of other regional major powers and players. The second session concentrated on China’s role in regional integration and China’s approach to regional institutions. The third session discussed China’s military modernization and the impacts on East Asian regional strategic relations. The fourth session reviewed and discussed the latest developments in cross-Taiwan Strait relations and their implications for China’s strategic position in East Asia. The last session analyzed China’s role in maritime security in the region, with a particular focus on the legal aspect of various maritime issues in East Asia and the Chinese Navy’s possible role in meeting the whole range of maritime challenges facing China.

In general, participants acknowledged the notable increase in China’s strategic influence in the region over the past decade. Many of China’s strategic decisions and moves were either reactions to the strategic pressures from other major actors or reflections of the necessities of China’s domestic imperatives. The influence of smaller states, especially ASEAN’s strategic approach to regional order, also facilitated China’s strategic inroads in the region. Many participants also noted that the significant elevation of China’s regional strategic position had to do with China’s important role in pushing for regional economic integration and trade flows. Furthermore, China’s relatively moderate security policy in the past decade or so also contributed to the rise of China’s strategic status.

Most participants agreed that China still has to face many daunting challenges if it attempts to fundamentally change the strategic status quo in East Asia in the near future. The major challenges include the strategic apprehension of regional states towards the rapid rise of China, the social memory of some regional states with regard to their unhappy encounters with Chinese power in history, territorial disputes (especially in the maritime domain) between China and some of its neighbours, the counter measures of other major powers, and numerous domestic, social, economic and political constraints in China. The conference concluded that East Asia is far from becoming a Sino-centric region.

Dr. Li Mingjiang, the Coordinator of the China Programme at RSIS, and organizer of the conference will produce a conference report as well as a book based on the conference presentations and discussions, which will be shared with policymakers and scholars.

Responding to Global Infectious Disease Crises



Speakers and participants of the conference on “Strengthening Health and Non-Health Responses Systems in Asia”

Regardless of how strong a country’s national health system is, it is only as good as its neighbours’ because pandemics and infectious diseases render national borders incapable of mitigating the security threat. Hence, there is a need for countries to focus on regional cooperation, as part of the larger strategy in responding to global infectious disease crises. Dr Noeleen Heyzer, Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations and Executive Secretary to the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, highlighted this point in her keynote speech at the conference on “Strengthening Health and Non-Health Responses Systems in Asia: A Sustained Approach for Responding to Global Infectious Disease Crises”.

The two-day conference from 18 to 19 March 2010 was organised by RSIS’ Centre for Non-Traditional Security Studies. Senior Minister of State for Law and Home Affairs, Associate Professor Ho Peng Kee, was the guest-of-honour at the event.

Building upon the call for greater cooperation, participants stressed that countries must think globally and act locally in securing their national health systems. Research has shown that several national health systems appear disconnected from the socio-economic reality of the population with certain segments being more vulnerable to pandemics despite strong national health systems. Developing countries need to collaborate with global and regional institutions, developed countries, the media and civil society groups as these actors ensure that national health systems and pandemic preparedness strategies are sensitive to the needs of local communities.

In discussing barriers to the delivery of healthcare services, participants observed that many developing

countries have weak public health infrastructures, limited collaborations with non-state actors, lack epidemiology and laboratory capacities, and possess inflexible pandemic preparedness plans. Although national health systems and infrastructures have improved, these are built around specific types of viruses and epidemics, leaving the general population vulnerable to other types of pandemics.

It is thus imperative to develop efficient and effective early-warning disease detection systems at global and national levels, to ensure that epidemic diseases are controlled from the onset. These structures should be reinforced by regional and national epidemic response systems, developed from greater international cooperation and data sharing, and inter-state investments in technical facilities and public health infrastructures.

Looking ahead, participants called for an emphasis on problem-solving oriented and policy oriented research, and capacity building. Problem-solving oriented research should target equity and vulnerability issues of the poor while policy oriented research should study the effectiveness of existing healthcare policies and pandemic preparedness strategies. National agencies should also share their experiences and expertise with other countries. At the capacity building level, more can be done to educate the public on appropriate social behaviour such as social distancing and good public hygiene practices during times of crisis.

As a final point, participants agreed that there has to be synergy between state and non-state actors. This would improve trust and communication between the public and the state, and enhance the overall global capacity to mitigate the spread of diseases.

Staff Publications

Richard W. Carney

Contested Capitalism : The Political Origins of Financial Institutions

Routledge, 2009.
ISBN: 9780415547345



This book examines the political origins of financial institutions across fifteen developed democracies, with focused case studies on the US, France, Japan, Austria, and Germany.

The institutional arrangements of financial systems are widely seen as a central distinguishing feature of 'varieties of capitalism'. Through a wide-range of case studies, this book contends that political battles between landed interests, labor, and owners of capital have fundamentally shaped modern financial arrangements. Demonstrating how these conflicts have shaped contemporary financial architecture in a number of different contexts, the author offers an innovative approach to explaining the distinctive capitalist arrangements of nation-states. By demonstrating the importance of landed interests to nations' institutional configurations, the book has clear implications for developing countries such as India and China.

Providing a detailed account of the development of financial institutions, this book will be of interest to students and scholars of political science, sociology, business, finance, and law. It will also offer insights valuable to government policymakers, analysts at international organizations, and the business community.

*Edited by Joseph Liow,
Nadirsyah Hosen*

Islam in Southeast Asia

Routledge, 2009. 4-vol. set
ISBN: 9780415476805



The Islamic community in Southeast Asia is widely regarded as one of the most moderate and tolerant in the Muslim world. While most of the region's Muslims are Sunni and fairly orthodox, the Islamic faith as practised in the region has historically been a syncretic blend of Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, and folk religions. The syncretic roots of Southeast Asian Islam also underscores the pluralistic nature of Islam in the region today, where Muslims have generally lived peacefully in religiously mixed communities, even in areas where they constituted a large majority.

Alongside these pluralistic trends in Southeast Asian Islam are some alternative streams of social-political activism that threaten its traditionally inclusivist character. While most Southeast Asian Muslims are known for their moderation, there has historically been a very small but vocal minority who have been drawn to the more puritanical or extremist variants of the faith. In addition, there is a gradual but clearly discernible trend of conservatism among the general Muslim population, particularly in Malaysia and Indonesia, which has given rise to exclusivist attitudes towards non-Muslims.

*J. Soedradjad Djiwandono
and the Team of Writers of
Bank Indonesia*

Bank Indonesia : its journey through Indonesia's economic development, 1953-2003

Published by Bank Indonesia,
2009, ISBN: 9789798086502



This book is valuable not only as a reference to economic researchers, observers and public policy makers. It provides analytical notes on public policy development in Indonesia, the decision-making process, and impact of policies on the Indonesian economy. It serves as a reference on the Central Bank's development as an institution in Indonesia. Bank Indonesia began as a circulation bank and evolved into its role as an agent of development. Since 1999, its function has been more focused in achieving and maintaining the stability of the rupiah's value.

This book is expected to provide understanding on Bank Indonesia's principal functions, its constraints and challenges.

Li Mingjiang

China's International Relations in Asia

Routledge, 2009.
ISBN: 9780415476911



The startling growth of China's economic and military power, as well as its cultural influence, is having a huge impact on the rest of the world. The key region to observe this impact is, of course, Asia and the past decade has witnessed significant and multi-faceted changes in China's policy toward its Asian neighbours and in the relations between them. The strategic dimension of China's approaches to Asian international relations is increasingly a focal point in the scholarly community and policy-making circles. However, views on the strategic impact of China's rise on Asia's political and security future are polarized, with some believing that China's regional policy is an intentional attempt to challenge the US supremacy in Asia, or who are simply suspicious of China's long-term regional ambitions.

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