

# ADVANCING NON-TRADITIONAL SECURITY GOVERNANCE THROUGH MULTI-STAKEHOLDER COLLABORATION

Policy Report  
June 2019

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**RSiS**

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SCHOOL OF  
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**NANYANG  
TECHNOLOGICAL  
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**SINGAPORE**

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# Executive Summary

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Non-traditional security (NTS) issues continue to threaten the well-being of nations and communities in Asia and around the world. National governments alone cannot solve the multifaceted problems associated with NTS, ranging from climate change and disasters to mass movement of people in search of refuge and safety. Given that traditional multilateralism is in retreat, a more sustainable approach to multilateral cooperation is critically needed, requiring the collaborative participation and engagement of multiple stakeholders from local communities, civil society organisations, the private sector, governments, regional organisations, and other international agencies. The Annual Conference of the Consortium of Non-Traditional Security in Asia (NTS-Asia),<sup>1</sup> held in Singapore on 25 and 26 March 2019, examined the relevance of multi-stakeholder collaboration in facilitating efforts to address a number of NTS challenges including, among others, (i) irregular and forced migration; (ii) economic inequality; (iii) environmental degradation; (iv) digital threats; and (v) social friction.

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<sup>1</sup> The author would like to acknowledge and appreciate his NTS Centre colleagues who served as rapporteurs during the conference: Dr Lina Gong, Mr Jose Ma Luis Montesclaros, Mr Christopher Chen, Ms Margareth Sembiring and Mr Angelo Paolo Trias.

## Key Recommendations

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This policy report recommends the following steps to further advance cooperation among multiple stakeholders in addressing NTS challenges:

1. The challenges outlined in this report are transnational in scope, defying unilateral remedies and therefore requiring multidisciplinary responses through the STSE Approach: Science-Technology-Society-Economy.
2. Due to the transnational consequences of NTS threats, sharing of information and data among state and non-state stakeholders is crucial. Only through multi-sectoral platforms will state and non-state actors be able to work together to develop clear and shared standards, best practices, and explicit codes of conduct for managing data and information so as to verify raw data and transform it into useful information for decision-making.
3. Multi-stakeholder cooperation should involve finding ways to incorporate practical ideas and sensible measures made by individual actors and groups at the grassroots into national and regional policies.

Specific recommendations and implications pertaining to the aforementioned NTS issues in Asia are discussed in this report.

## Introduction

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Non-traditional security (NTS) issues continue to threaten the well-being of nations and communities in Asia and around the world. Multilateral cooperation, efficient and timely deployment of resources, and a long-term vision of sustainable development are needed to address ever-complex and transboundary implications of these threats, ranging from climate change and disasters to mass movement of people in search of refuge and safety. It has been widely recognised that national governments alone cannot solve the multifaceted problems associated with NTS. However, in spite of these overlapping and transboundary challenges, there has been a rising trend among several states to retreat from state-led, traditional multilateralism, amid a resurgence of isolationist, protectionist, and xenophobic sentiments around the world.

Given that traditional multilateralism is in retreat, enhanced multi-stakeholder cooperation is critically needed, requiring the collaborative participation and engagement of various stakeholders from local communities, civil society organisations, the private sector, governments, regional organisations, and other international agencies.

The Annual Conference of the Consortium of Non-Traditional Security in Asia (NTS-Asia), held in Singapore on 25 and 26 March 2019, examined the relevance of multi-sectoral multilateralism in facilitating efforts to address a number of NTS challenges including, among others, irregular and forced migration, environmental degradation, digital threats, economic inequality, and social friction. This report captures the deliberation among experts at the Conference with the view of providing recommendations towards advancing NTS governance through multi-stakeholder collaboration and highlighting its relevance in Asia, particularly in Southeast Asia.

# Irregular and Forced Migration as Humanitarian Emergencies

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Asian countries are collectively facing natural hazards and climate change challenges, particularly extreme weather events. For instance, majority of disasters in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) region are hydro-meteorological in nature, such as floods, winds, storms, and landslides. Due to the constant risk of natural hazards, ASEAN's exposed capital stocks amount to US\$ 8.35 trillion, or three times its combined economy.<sup>2</sup> More than 50 per cent of global disaster mortalities occurred in the ASEAN region between 2004 and 2014.<sup>3</sup> Meanwhile, the region has recently seen humanitarian crises arising from large-scale flows of irregular and forced migrants. These movements have significantly tested national governments' capacities to manage responses, leading to more complex humanitarian crises for migrants and their communities. From 2004 to 2014, an estimated 191 million people in Southeast Asia were displaced temporarily by natural disasters.<sup>4</sup> Intractable internal conflicts in the region exacerbate the impact of climate change and natural disasters, creating thousands of refugees, irregular migrants, and internally displaced persons. For example, in 2017, 700,000 refugees mainly from Rakhine, Myanmar<sup>5</sup> resorted to irregular migration with Bangladesh as their primary destination. They are housed in settlements that remain at risk from potential landslides, flash floods, and the unpredictability of impending cyclones and monsoon rains. This complex situation requires a robust humanitarian response.

Persons who are fleeing armed conflicts and humanitarian emergencies are highly vulnerable to trafficking in their desperate attempt to seek safety and protection. Human trafficking remains an endemic security problem in the Asia-Pacific. Two-thirds or 25 million of global trafficking victims were identified to be in the region.<sup>6</sup>

Ineffective anti-trafficking law enforcement efforts and legal frameworks remain a challenge. Inadequate institutional resources, funding, and training for frontline officers and law enforcers impede the investigation of human trafficking cases. Corruption and the complicity of border officials and law enforcers with syndicates

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<sup>2</sup> Pang, Qingyuan and Lawrence Anthony Dimailig. "Trillion Dollar Multi-Hazard Risk Landscape in Southeast Asia." in the AHA Centre. *ASEAN Risk Monitor and Disaster Management Review (ARMOR)*. Jakarta: ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on disaster management (AHA Centre), 2019.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> *ASEAN Vision 2025 on Disaster Management*. Jakarta: The ASEAN Secretariat, 2016.

<sup>5</sup> UNHCR. "Rohingya Refugee Emergency at a Glance." UNHCR, 21 March 2018.

<https://unhcr.maps.arcgis.com/apps/Cascade/index.html?appid=5fdca0f47f1a46498002f39894fcd26f>

<sup>6</sup> Walk Free Foundation. Global Slavery Index 2018.

<https://www.globallslaveryindex.org/2018/findings/regional-analysis/asia-and-the-pacific/>

also aggravate human trafficking in the region. Furthermore, unsustainable rehabilitation and reintegration programmes for irregular migrants in their host communities, including rescued trafficking victims, also heighten their risk of being victimised again by traffickers or smugglers.

There is a need to pursue regional strategies and action plans to address the causes of large irregular movements and to provide irregular migrants and trafficking victims with appropriate protective, humanitarian, and health services. State and non-state actors could build on and reinforce existing regional frameworks and initiatives—such as the Coordinated Mekong Ministerial Initiative against Trafficking, the Bali Process, and the ASEAN Convention on Trafficking in Persons—that address the humanitarian and protection needs of irregular migrants and trafficking victims. They could consider a wide range of migration measures, including mainstreaming migration into national development initiatives; synergising frameworks on migration and humanitarian assistance; developing comprehensive humanitarian response training programmes for local actors; enhancing public-private partnerships; ensuring the involvement of civil society groups; and empowering migrants and diaspora communities.

## **Income Inequality as a Threat to Economic Security**

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Rapid economic growth in Asia in recent decades has significantly reduced poverty but has also been accompanied by a widening income inequality in many countries. Southeast Asian states, for instance, have made strides in minimising poverty and hunger. But in spite of ASEAN's economic growth success over the past decades, economic disparities have increased—both across and within countries. Economic inequality should not be just measured in monetary terms, as other equally important indicators need to be considered: quality of public health and education, gender disparities in labour markets, and access to services such as water, sanitation, and electricity. For instance, Cambodia's recent 7-8 per cent economic growth failed to uplift 4.5 million people from poverty and give them access to sufficient health and education services.<sup>7</sup> Despite fast growth and urbanisation in Jakarta, only 60 per cent of its population has access to clean and safe water,<sup>8</sup> and more importantly, the rich have much better access to it than the poor. Meanwhile,

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<sup>7</sup> World Food Programme. *WFP Cambodia Country Brief*. February 2019. [https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000103513/download/?\\_ga=2.116850374.1576304630.1554282344-293067922.1554282344](https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000103513/download/?_ga=2.116850374.1576304630.1554282344-293067922.1554282344)

<sup>8</sup> Heriyanto, Devina. "What you need to know about Jakarta's water privatization." *The Jakarta Post*, 12 April 2018.



China has the most significant case of rising inequality in Northeast Asia, being among the countries that have the most rapidly increasing income inequality.<sup>9</sup>

Why is rising inequality a threat? Aside from income risks, the widening poor-rich, rural-urban development gap could threaten political stability in Asia. Disregarding the predicament of the rural poor comes at a political price, particularly in countries with largely unified rural voting blocs. The economic difficulties of rural low-income and urban poor citizens can likewise incite destabilising political movements such as in India, Bangladesh, Thailand, the Philippines, and Myanmar. Income inequality amplifies other NTS threats faced by impoverished communities in Asia. The poorest of the poor could be more vulnerable in times of shocks—be it natural disasters or complex humanitarian emergencies—as the loss of lives, assets, and disrupted supply chains could affect them more than the wealthier sections of society.

As rising income and human development gaps remain unaddressed, Asia's regional and national policy makers should revisit their priorities and work together to prevent the current trend from continuing. For instance, in the context of ASEAN Economic Community, there must be realistic indicators of the socio-economic benefits and trickle-down effects of regional integration, especially to lower income countries and marginalised sectors. The increased connectivity among Asian countries should open up opportunities for people-centered economic integration or partnerships.

Specifically, capacity-building assistance and human resource development should be mainstreamed in regional and national economic development agenda. Greater investment in education and skills training, especially for low-income and marginalised groups, could prevent them from falling too far behind. Asian countries could build on ASEAN's efforts in narrowing the economic gap between Cambodia–Lao PDR –Myanmar–Vietnam (CLMV) countries and the more developed ASEAN member states, through human resource development and capacity-building assistance.

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<sup>9</sup> Jain-Chandra, Sonali. "Inequality in China – Trends, Drivers and Policy Remedies." *IMF Working Paper*, International Monetary Fund, June 2018.

## A Circular Economy for Sustainable Development and Environmental Protection

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Apart from addressing income inequality, regional and national economic development strategies must also strike a balance between economic growth and environmental protection. By 2050, 68 per cent of the global population may live in cities, majority of them will be in Asian cities.<sup>10</sup> Accompanying this stunning pace of urbanisation will be a complex web of challenges related to consumption, pollution, and water and energy stresses.

The circular economy model offers a fundamental and crucial alternative to the linear take–make–consume–dispose economic model that currently predominates Asian economies. The circular economy model is simple: minimise the disposal of waste and the need for raw materials by reducing, alternatively reusing, and recycling materials in production, distribution and consumption processes.

There are compelling reasons why the principles of a circular economy are relevant for the region. The plastic pollution is choking Asia's seas and river systems. Microplastics from ten rivers in the world—eight of which are in Asia—are polluting the world's oceans. China, Indonesia, Philippines, Thailand, and Vietnam have been identified as major sources of plastic pollution, accounting for up to 60 per cent of the plastic waste leaking into the ocean.<sup>11</sup> Regional water bodies are facing severe environmental deterioration because of the over-abstraction of groundwater and uncontrolled pollution of regional seas. Southeast Asia, for instance, may face a 30 per cent shortfall in the amount of freshwater needed to support the regional economy by 2030.

Furthermore, ASEAN, China, and India have emerged as the world's largest consumers of minerals, ores, biomass, and fuels. Demands for natural resources and energy continue to expand in line with Asia's industrialisation, rapid urbanisation, and accelerated economic growth. Without environment-friendly models of growth and appropriate planning, consumed materials and resources will generate more hazardous wastes and pollutants.

ASEAN member states, together with Asia's largest economies such as China, Japan, South Korea, and India, may consider adopting and implementing regional

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<sup>10</sup> United Nations. "68% of the world population projected to live in urban areas by 2050, says UN." *UN News*, 16 May 2018. <https://www.un.org/development/desa/en/news/population/2018-revision-of-world-urbanization-prospects.html>

<sup>11</sup> McKinsey & Company and Ocean Conservancy. *Stemming the Tide: Land-based strategies for a plastic-free ocean*. McKinsey & Company and Ocean Conservancy, September 2015. <https://oceanconservancy.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/full-report-stemming-the.pdf>

and national masterplans on a 'circular economy'. The current efforts to attain sustainable economy in Asia, which focus on optimised use of resources, are limited to the 3Rs—reuse, reduce, and recycle—which are not even comprehensively implemented. The circular economy, however, is not limited to the 3Rs. A masterplan on circular economy must specifically contain a whole-of-value chain approach, strategies, and tools on reusing, refurbishment, remanufacturing, and recycling resources in production, consumption, and other life cycle stages. A regional masterplan, meanwhile, must outline mechanisms to combat marine plastic debris so as to implement the 2018 East Asia Summit leaders' declaration on plastic pollution.

By introducing incentives at the local level in the form of social community funds, providing strategic information on circular economy targets, and sponsoring industry—community—civil society—university partnership, governments could likewise help raise awareness on the circular economy model at the local level, leading to sustainable behavioral changes among consumers and industries. With advances in science, technology and education, the private sector could consider strengthening support for regional collaboration in research and development of technologies and products that are more environmentally friendly.

## **Identity Politics, Pluralism, and Cohesive Societies**

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In culturally diverse regions of Asia, many countries are fraught with multiple challenges owing to the use of ethnicity, race, or religion to divide or define one's own citizens. Contemporary sociopolitical challenges in India, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, and Thailand emanate from identity politics that comes in several forms: using religion for politics, aversion towards minorities, and an intensifying ultra-nationalism. National narratives are often crafted in the interest of building a national consciousness and sense of belonging; however, political and social movements sometimes exploit such narratives for political expediency. Furthermore, several ethnically diverse states have been dealing with armed rebellions and separatism from marginalised minority groups.

Given their common familiarity in ethnic and religious diversity, Asian countries could share about their national experiences, lessons learnt, and policies pertaining to the fostering of social cohesiveness. Such multilateral dialogues could specifically deliberate on the following: promoting comprehensive programmes on civic and peace education, in collaboration with academic institutions; revitalising local mechanisms on conflict prevention and resolution; and synergising national programmes on countering violent extremism.

The Mindanao peace process in the southern Philippines clearly demonstrates multi-stakeholder cooperation on peacebuilding with the active participation of various countries from Southeast Asia and in other regions, as well as the involvement of non-state and grassroots actors. For instance, the International Monitoring Team which monitors the ceasefire agreement, and the International Contact Group which provides support to the peace process, are made up of various state actors, including several ASEAN member states and peacebuilding non-governmental organisations. The peace negotiations between the Government of the Philippines and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, profoundly supported by multiple actors, culminated with the establishment of a new autonomous region for Bangsamoro in Muslim Mindanao.

## Digitalisation and Countering Security Threats

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Contemporary threats to social cohesiveness and peacebuilding in ethnically diverse countries may also emanate from widespread online falsehoods and disinformation, which are unintended consequences of digitalisation. Rapidly developing technologies, rising use of mobile devices, and increasing interconnectedness of the internet are opening up more opportunities for socio-economic growth and progress in Asia. These advancements are improving access to information, facilitating digitalisation of services, and enabling the creation of smart cities. However, digitalisation also unintentionally amplifies security risks and generates new ones that transcend national borders. Digital platforms and related tools have become highly useful for both criminals and terrorists. Additionally, organised syndicates link up their illicit operations such as human trafficking and numerous smuggling activities in Asia with violent extremism.

Meanwhile, the society, vulnerable people, and the State need to be protected from the proliferation of 'fake news' and manipulation of information that could be adversarial and sow divisions between groups of people. Addressing new threats like disinformation, cyberterrorism, online radicalisation, and data hacking could no longer be resolved by one state; it instead requires multi-stakeholder collaboration at the regional and global levels. Given recent cyberattacks on key institutions and databases in several ASEAN member states, there is a sense of urgency for the region to build a resilient and innovative digital community together, especially when it has been estimated that the top 1,000 ASEAN companies could lose \$750 billion from cyberthreats.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> John Brandon. "Why ASEAN Needs to Invest More in Cybersecurity." Asia Foundation, 9 May 2018. <https://asiafoundation.org/2018/05/09/why-aseanneeds-to-invest-more-in-cybersecurity/>

A holistic regional cybersecurity strategy for countering online radicalisation and terrorist operations needs to be developed. Proposals for a formal ASEAN cybersecurity mechanism are currently being studied to bolster regional defences and create a dialogue for cyber diplomacy, policy, and operations.<sup>13</sup> A Regional Team with a range of skill-sets and character traits is needed to evaluate security of digital systems, identify vulnerabilities that could be exploited, and determine malicious activities. This team will be essential to building the robustness of critical infrastructures that enable the creation of smart cities. Furthermore, establishing a regional body dedicated to cyberterrorism could address the gaps in inter-agency coordination among relevant security bodies in the region.

Asian governments must remain cognizant of the fact that the effectiveness of any legislation and regulation only extends as far as the society's resilience towards disinformation. Running parallel to legislations and regulations that could be introduced are public education and awareness programmes on processing and fact-checking information, addressing every layer and segment of society. In this regard, multi-sectoral and multilateral platforms should engage equally important institutions such as youth councils, civil society organisations, think tanks, universities, and religious and secular schools.

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<sup>13</sup> Cyber Security Agency of Singapore. "ASEAN Member States Agree to Strengthen Cyber Coordination and Capacity-Building Efforts." 19 September 2018. <https://www.csa.gov.sg/news/press-releases/amcc-2018>

# Steps towards Advancing NTS Governance through Multi-stakeholder Collaboration

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## **Adopting a multidisciplinary approach**

Asia's pressing NTS challenges are increasingly complex and will require multidisciplinary solutions. The challenges outlined in this report are transnational in scope, defying unilateral remedies and requiring comprehensive STSE multidisciplinary responses. Moving forward, harnessing the complementary strengths of various stakeholders across disciplines will help states deal effectively with NTS threats, build up their capacity, and provide multifaceted protection to vulnerable communities. Similarly, promoting broader cooperation among states, greater inclusion and participation of non-state actors, and coordination among different stakeholders could advance effective governance of NTS challenges.

## **Sharing of knowledge and information among multiple state and non-state stakeholders**

The revival of protectionism and ultra-nationalism might impede the flow of information and knowledge across national borders and across multiple sectors. However, due to the transnational consequences of NTS threats, information and data-sharing among state and non-state stakeholders is crucial. Information-sharing could help reverse protectionism in addressing NTS threats. Open source data collection and real time critical information are indeed essential in the context of rapidly evolving complex humanitarian emergencies. But there are equally important issues such as privacy, ethical use, accuracy, and protection of data that also need to be addressed. Only through multi-sectoral platforms will state and non-state actors be able to work together to develop clear and shared standards, best practices, and explicit codes of conduct for managing data and information so as to verify raw data and transform it into useful information for decision-making. This cannot be done by any single actor alone.

## **Promoting participation of and innovation from grassroots community actors**

Multi-stakeholder collaboration also entails effective joint mobilisation of available resources, existing mechanisms, and expertise. It also provides the platform for non-state actors, such as the private sector, civil society organisations, the international community, and especially the local communities to empower vulnerable populations of concern to have the capability to deal with the complexities of NTS challenges. Faced with significant constraints and complex humanitarian crises, communities adapt to find more efficient and sustainable solutions. In this respect, cooperation should involve finding ways to incorporate practical ideas and sensible measures made by grassroots actors and groups into national and regional policies.

## About the Author

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**Julius Cesar Trajano** is Research Fellow with the Centre for Non-Traditional Security (NTS) Studies at the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS), Nanyang Technological University (NTU), Singapore. He obtained his Master of Science degree in Asian Studies from RSIS (2011), and a Bachelor of Arts degree in Social Sciences (Magna Cum Laude) from the University of the Philippines (2006). Mr Trajano conducts policy research studies on non-traditional security issues, particularly on marine environmental protection in Southeast Asia, nuclear security and safety governance in East Asia, internal conflicts, and human trafficking. He is also presently the coordinating chair for the Asia Working Group of the International Nuclear Security Education Network and is a member of the Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia-Pacific-Nuclear Energy Experts Group.

## About the Centre for Non-Traditional Security Studies

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The **Centre for Non-Traditional Security Studies (NTS Centre)** conducts research and produces policy-relevant analyses aimed at furthering awareness, and building the capacity to address NTS issues and challenges in the Asia Pacific region and beyond. The centre addresses knowledge gaps, facilitates discussions and analyses, engages policymakers and contributes to building institutional capacity in the following areas: Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief; Climate Security; and Migration. The NTS Centre brings together myriad NTS stakeholders in regular workshops and roundtable discussions, as well as provides a networking platform for NTS research institutions in the Asia-Pacific through the NTS-Asia Consortium.

More information on NTS Centre and a complete list of available publications, policy briefs and reports can be found here: <http://www.rsis.edu.sg/research/nts-centre/>. For more information on the NTS-Asia Consortium, please log on to: <http://www.rsis-ntsasia.org/>.

## About the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies

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The **S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS)** is a think tank and professional graduate school of international affairs at the Nanyang Technological University, Singapore. An autonomous school, RSIS' mission is to be a leading research and graduate teaching institution in strategic and international affairs in the Asia Pacific. With the core functions of research, graduate education, and networking, it produces cutting-edge research on Asia Pacific Security, Multilateralism and Regionalism, Conflict Studies, Non-Traditional Security, Cybersecurity, Maritime Security, and Terrorism Studies.

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