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## Strategic Resilience in Southeast Asia



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STRATEGIC RESILIENCE has been touted as a break from the past towards a better prepared post-pandemic future in Southeast Asia. The term focuses on strategic supply chain resilience. However, within the regional context of a people-centred ASEAN, a more comprehensive understanding of strategic resilience is needed to move beyond a narrow focus on supply chains. Without a recalibration of the term, it may signal a snap back to a pre-COVID era or 'old' ways of thinking. The term captures the mutually reinforcing nature of strategic thinking and resilience. It is therefore timely to redress this imbalance to use strategic thinking to inform a more sustainable and resilient future in Southeast Asia.

### Challenge of Cooperation within a Fragmented Global System

Regional cooperation within a fragmented global system has faced significant challenges in responding to

the COVID-19 pandemic – from the disruption of supply chains and the movement of people, disproportionate effects on marginalised communities, poor pandemic preparedness planning, to the emergence of vaccine nationalism. As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to evolve, regional cooperation particularly in Asia has re-emerged as an important component in securing vaccines, recalibrating supply chains, negotiating travel lanes, and sharing knowledge of public health safety practices for the benefit of people in the region.

Given the successes achieved so far under crisis conditions, it is important to utilise this experience to move decision-makers' mindsets away from reactive measures towards investing in a longer-term vision that engages people and builds a more sustainable and strategic resilience for the future. So, what does it all mean?

## Key Elements for ASEAN

A more holistic understanding of Strategic Resilience aims to inform states, companies and societies how to recover quickly in times of disruption and become future-ready. It does so by securing four key elements: *evidence-based decision making, institutional capability, organisational leadership* and *societal adaptability*. Three of the four are reliant on the capability to ensure strong organisations, systems and human resources through learning, development, skills, and experience.

In ASEAN, there are key operational institutions that have been developed within sectors that have implications for wider ASEAN security governance from the well-established ASEAN Coordinating Centre on Humanitarian Assistance in disaster management to the more directly relevant announcement of the feasibility study on an ASEAN Centre on Public Health Emergencies and

Emerging Diseases. These form the implementation arm of regional cooperation such as the ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response.

## The Need to Synergise Actions

However, linkages across sectors are limited and there is a need to synergise their actions with broader strategic resilience within the regional community. This would build a more robust system that would inform contingency planning for future pandemics and other potential scenarios. During the past year, it has become acutely apparent that not only does regional cooperation matter but also importantly includes engagement with extra-regional actors particularly those producing vaccines. It underlines the interconnections between countries in Southeast Asia and the wider world.

The COVID-19 pandemic has further caused restrictions on the movement of people both within and outside countries of residence. These restrictions have had a disproportionate effect on marginalised communities within countries of residence and curtailed the movement of people internationally. As countries gradually open up beginning with travel bubbles between those with a more effective pandemic response, it further underlines the importance of investment in effective governance systems. As countries in the region move forward, a greater focus on whole-of-society approaches that tackle the pandemic and its disproportionate impacts, such as through the implementation of the ASEAN Comprehensive Recovery Framework, it will be important to consider potential future crises to develop a vision to achieve strategic resilience in the region.

## Suggested Readings

- Venkatachalam Anbumozhi, 2020, ASEAN's Strategies to Address New Normal, ERIA, 28 December. <https://www.eria.org/news-and-views/aseans-strategies-to-address-new-normal/>
- ASEAN, 2020, ASEAN urged to enhance resilience amid regional and international challenges, National ASEAN 2020 Committee: Hanoi, Vietnam, 24 June. [https://www.asean2020.vn/xem-chi-tiet1/-/asset\\_publisher/ynfWm23dDfpd/content/asean-urged-to-enhance-resilience-amid-regional-and-international-challenges](https://www.asean2020.vn/xem-chi-tiet1/-/asset_publisher/ynfWm23dDfpd/content/asean-urged-to-enhance-resilience-amid-regional-and-international-challenges)
- David A. J. Axson, 2020, How resilient is your strategy? *FM: Financial Management*, 1 December. <https://www.fm-magazine.com/issues/2020/dec/strategy-resilience.html>
- Dago Diedrich, Nicholas Northcote, Tido Röder and Karolina Sauer-Sidor, 2021, Strategic resilience during the COVID-19 crisis, *McKinsey Report*, 2 March. <https://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/strategy-and-corporate-finance/our-insights/strategic-resilience-during-the-covid-19-crisis#>

## CLIMATE CHANGE

### NEWS & COMMENTARIES

#### U.S. should research solar geoengineering to fight climate change but exercise caution, scientists say

The National Academies of Science called for the U.S. to pursue research into solar geoengineering. But it needs to be conducted in coordination with other nations, under strong governance, and alongside other climate mitigation efforts, such as reducing greenhouse gases.

**Andrea Januta**

**Reuters**

25 March 2021

#### \$25m boost for research on marine climate change

The Singapore government funding will go to a research programme led by the National Parks Board which involves government agencies, research institutes and industry partners to address problems like rising sea levels, increasing sea surface temperatures and extreme storm events.

**Ng Keng Gene**

**The Straits Times**

27 March 2021

#### President Biden invites 40 world leaders to climate summit, including Singapore's PM Lee

The session will test Biden's pledge to make climate change a priority amidst competing political, economic, policy and pandemic problems. It also will pose a very important public test of whether US leaders can still drive global decision-making.

**Associated Press, New Hampshire**

**Channel News Asia**

27 March 2021

#### The three largest economies can save the world from climate change

The EU, US and China share the same goal of global decarbonisation, so they should work together even if they fight over everything else.

**Alex Lo**

**South China Morning Post**

29 March 2021

#### Climate change: Consumer pose 'growing threat' to tropical forests

Rising imports in wealthy countries of coffee, cocoa and other products are a "growing threat" to forests in tropical regions. Consumer behaviour in the UK and other rich nations is responsible for the loss of almost 4 trees per person annually.

**Matt McGrath**

**BBC**

30 March 2021

#### Growing global water crisis creates a new ESG market

While most environmental discussions focus on greenhouse-gas emissions, nine of the 10 greatest risks faced by humanity are linked to a lack of water. That means there is an investor and business case for prioritising water stewardship.

**Tim Quinson**

**Bloomberg**

31 March 2021

### SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

#### Global warming and population change both heighten future risk of human displacement due to river floods

Both global warming and population change are projected to lead to substantial increases in flood-induced displacement risk over the coming decades. Rapid action on climate mitigation and adaptation are needed to reduce future risks to vulnerable populations.

**Pui Man Kam., et al.**

**Environmental Research Letters, Vol. 16, No. 4**

2021

#### Water security for all

Four strategies to accelerate progress towards water security include advocating for political commitment and policy change, accelerating financing and capacity development, mobilising business and innovations, and activating young people.

**United Nations Children's Fund**

**New York: UNICEF**

2021

### EVENTS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

#### Innovate4Climate (I4C)

The I4C is an annual global conference on climate finance, climate investment and climate markets. It brings together thought leaders interested in linking climate innovation with investment opportunities – transforming dialogue into action.

**Barcelona, Spain**

25-27 May 2021

#### IUCN World Conservation Congress

This Congress is the world's largest and most democratic recurring conservation event, where IUCN's 1300+ government stakeholders, NGOs and indigenous peoples' member organisations gather to set priorities and drive conservation and sustainable development action.

**Marseille, France**

3-11 September 2021

## ENERGY SECURITY

### NEWS AND COMMENTARIES

#### Can the EU's climate change plan work in South-east Asia?

The EU, already the largest provider of development assistance to the ASEAN region, has committed millions of euros to various environmental programmes in the region. But its climate diplomacy runs against ASEAN's economic growth fueled by dirty energy.

**David Hutt**

**Deutsche Welle**

31 March 2021

#### SP Group building South-east Asia's first large-scale underground substation

Singapore's gas and power firm SP Group is constructing South-east Asia's first large-scale underground substation, freeing up three hectares of prime land space. The substation will have a lower risk of exposure and damage.

**S Priyashini**

**The Business Times**

6 April 2021

#### Mekong River Commission unveils strategy and action plan

The strategy is based on assessments of significant impacts caused by water and energy-related developments and infrastructure, including dams, that have changed the river ecosystem. It seeks a balance between economic growth and environmental protection.

**Sao Da**

**Khmer Times**

7 April 2021

#### Indonesia's Krakatau Steel to build 40 MW floating solar power station

State-owned steelmaker Krakatau Steel plans to build a 40 megawatt (MW) floating solar photovoltaic (PV) power station in Banten to power the operations of its water treatment subsidiary. It aims to increase the share of renewables in Indonesia's energy mix.

**The Star**

7 April 2021

#### How Bill Gates' company TerraPower is building next-generation nuclear power

TerraPower's nuclear reactor will have a safer cooling system, higher energy storage capacity, cheaper construction costs, and less nuclear waste.

**Cathernine Clifford**

**CNBC News**

8 April 2021

#### Energy partnership bolsters China–Russia relations

The deepening of ties between energy transition and gas geopolitical dynamics could bring unforeseen changes to China–Russia relations. This requires a delicate balancing between state and market interests to preserve the stability of their strategic partnership.

**Francesco Sassi**

**East Asia Forum**

8 April 2021

### SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

#### Embracing the dusk of the pandemic and the dawn of the low carbon economy in 2021

Phasing out coal power plants and electric vehicle development have been well-echoed and planned in various ASEAN Member States. This green recovery scheme allows the regional recovery from the pandemic's worst period and to commence a climate-friendlier economy.

**Monika Merdekawati, et al.**

**ASEAN Climate and Energy Insight**

2021

#### Transportation in a 100% renewable energy system

This study reviews the technologies and systems that are being proposed or proven as alternative to fossil-fuel based transportation, and their prospects for entering into a post-carbon era.

**Antonio García-Olivares, Jordi Solé and Oleg**

**Osychenko**

**Energy Conversion and Management, Vol. 158**

2021

### EVENTS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

#### ASEAN Energy Transition Webinar: Renewable Energy

The ASEAN Centre for Energy organised a webinar that engaged relevant parties and stakeholders to gain more understanding of renewable energy development in ASEAN.

**Recorded Webinar**

8 April 2021

#### 6th Annual Global Conference on Energy Efficiency

This International Energy Agency's conference brought together officials from governments, civil society organisations and businesses to discuss how next-generation energy efficiency policies and programmes can accelerate the transition to clean energy.

**Recorded Conference**

30 March 2021

## FOOD SECURITY

### NEWS & COMMENTARIES

#### High-tech farming 'toolbox' can help Singapore weather future food supply challenges: Chan Chun Sing

Developing a "toolbox" of high-tech farming solutions in Singapore will equip the country with the capabilities it needs to scale up local production when the need arises, even if such strategies are not deployed immediately.

**Audrey Tan**

**The Straits Times**

16 March 2021

#### The future of data: Unmasking community-level differences to better address food insecurity

Policymakers now have the opportunity to develop data-driven strategies, leveraging new models of machine learning, as early applications in the African region show. It produces local data for areas which have been historically difficult or impossible to access.

**Ben Leo**

**Brookings Institution**

22 March 2021

#### Over 30 million people are 'one step away from starvation', UN warns

Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and World Food Programme (WFP) published a report on hunger hotspots'. It estimated 34 million people being in emergency levels of acute hunger, attributed to conflict, climate shocks and the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Karen McVeigh**

**The Guardian**

24 March 2021

#### Japan's 2030 food export vision: Focus on processed value-added foods and supply chain development crucial

To meet Japan's 2030 JPY 5 trillion agricultural export target, it is now looking into processed foods and not just primary products. Its focus will be on marketing Japanese products internationally and supporting the infrastructure of its food supply chains too.

**Pearly Neo**

**Food Navigator Asia**

5 April 2021

#### China moving from poverty alleviation to rural revitalisation

China's "dual circulation" economic plan envisions leveraging its large population's consumption power to drive economic growth, rather than relying on trade alone. This means envisioning greater food self-reliance and improving innovation among farmers.

**Tan Dawn Wei**

**The Straits Times**

6 April 2021

#### Philippines cuts pork tariffs to address supply shortage

Philippine pork production is estimated to have dropped 20% last year amid pig-culling resulting from the highly infectious African Swine Fever. Tariffs on imports of selected fresh, chilled or frozen pork products are to be cut from 30% to 5%.

**Enrico dela Cruz and Kirsten Donovan**

**Reuters**

7 April 2021

### SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

#### Regional Developments: East and Southeast Asia

Within Southeast Asia, increased use of e-commerce has helped keep supply chains running, but the effects of the economic slowdown on agrifood-sector jobs and incomes have been devastating.

**Kevin Chen and Yue Zhan**

**2021 Global Food Policy Report. Washington D.C.: International Food Policy Research Institute.**

2021

#### COVID-19 risks to global food security

Agricultural and food markets are facing disruptions because of labour shortages created by restrictions on movements of people; shifts in food demand from closures of restaurants and schools as well as income losses; and export restrictions.

**David Laborde et al.,**

**Policy Forum, Science, Vol. 369, Issue 6503**

2020

### EVENTS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

#### Virtual Launch Event - 2021 Global Food Policy Report: Transforming Food Systems After Covid-19

The pandemic has had important impacts on the poor and disadvantaged. Based on this, this webinar provided insights to governments in transforming food systems to be healthy, resilient, efficient, sustainable, and inclusive, moving forward.

**Recorded Webinar**

13 April 2021

#### Addressing Food Insecurity Among Young Children During the Pandemic: Innovations from Vermont and Washington State

This webinar explored practical strategies to assess and address hunger needs faced by families during the pandemic and beyond, including leveraging early childhood systems and the "Help Me Grow" system model to address child food insecurity.

**Recorded Webinar**

13 April 2021

## HEALTH SECURITY

## NEWS &amp; COMMENTARIES

**AstraZeneca: Is there a blood clot risk?**

Scientists and medicines safety regulators around the world are trying to figure out if AstraZeneca's vaccine is genuinely causing blood clots and strokes, how big any risk might be, and what that might mean for vaccination programmes.

**James Gallagher**

**BBC**

3 April 2021

**COVID-19 lays bare social inequality says UN chief, as COVAX doses top 36 million**

Highlighting the inequalities and injustices that have been apparent throughout the pandemic, Secretary-General António Guterres said that the vast majority of vaccine doses administered so far, have been confined to "a few wealthy countries" or those producing the shots cleared for distribution.

**UN News**

5 April 2021

**Explainer: What is the new 'Eek' Covid-19 mutation, and will it stymie vaccination efforts?**

The Japanese government announced that it is expanding its emergency measures to contain a new wave of coronavirus infections amid fears over the spread of a new mutation believed to reduce vaccine protection.

**Justin Ong**

**Today Online**

6 April 2021

**One year after circuit breaker, people in S'pore socialising less, working more; mental well-being has declined**

Mental health has been under the spotlight since the pandemic started and the survey found that 31% reported their mental well-being had "somewhat worsened". Five percent said it had worsened "much more".

**Timothy Goh**

**The Straits Times**

7 April 2021

**Scientists call for new probe into COVID-19 origins - with or without China**

A group of international scientists and researchers have indicated that the joint China-World Health Organization (WHO) study into COVID-19 has provided no credible answers about how the pandemic began, and that more rigorous investigations are required - with or without Beijing's involvement.

**Reuters**

**Channel News Asia**

8 April 2021

**How China took an unlikely lead in the global supply of Covid-19 vaccines**

Figures from official sources and media show China and its vaccine makers have now shipped around 80 million ready-made vaccine doses overseas. Another 90 million doses worth of bulk ingredient have gone out to be finished in factories in Mexico, Indonesia and Brazil, with at least a third of those already processed.

**Simone McCarthy**

**South China Morning Post**

9 April 2021

## SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

**Public health policies and health-care workers' response to the COVID-19 pandemic, Thailand**

This article reviewed the government policies that enabled early containment and enhanced the capacity of health-care workers to provide an effective response to the pandemic in Thailand.

**Natthaprang et al.**

**Bulletin of the World Health Organization, Vol. 99, No. 4**

2021

**Environmental burden of disease from unsafe and substandard housing, New Zealand, 2010–2017**

This study assessed the burden of disease related to unsafe and substandard housing conditions in New Zealand from 2010 to 2017.

**Lynn Riggs et al.**

**Bulletin of the World Health Organization, Vol. 99, No. 4**

2021

## EVENTS &amp; ANNOUNCEMENTS

**China After Covid-19: New Rules of China's Engagement in the World**

To what extent has the pandemic affected China's strategy of international engagement? Which vectors will the China-USA competition adopt in the near future after tariffs and technology? Will the Health and Technology Silk Roads take the upper hand? This webinar examined these questions.

**Recorded Webinar**

24 March 2021

**Best Practices for COVID-19 Vaccine Distribution**

This webinar discussed the challenges and best practices for COVID-19 vaccine distribution. Experts in the field spoke about innovative methods in place for rapid and equitable vaccine distribution.

**Recorded Webinar**

2 April 2021

## HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE AND DISASTER RELIEF

### NEWS & COMMENTARIES

#### UN makes first visit to remote island where Bangladesh relocated Rohingyas

On 17 March, a United Nations delegation started a three-day visit to a remote Bay of Bengal island where Bangladesh has moved more than 13,000 Rohingya Muslim refugees since December 2020 despite criticism from rights groups.

**Reuters**

**Channel News Asia**

17 March 2021

#### Philippines shows data is key to equitable climate adaptation in Southeast Asia

A new push by the Philippines to use data to improve natural disaster responses may offer lessons for countries across Southeast Asia that face increasing impacts from climate change.

**ASEAN Today**

18 March 2021

#### Revenge of the nerds: Disaster risk reduction and climate change

Floating in the ambiguous space between disaster response and economic development, DRR lacks both the immediacy of a humanitarian crisis and the allure of big-budget development projects, and it has consistently failed to capture sustained attention and funding.

**John H Patterson and Topher L McDougal**

**The New Humanitarian**

18 March 2021

#### Natural disasters occurring three times more often than 50 years ago: New FAO report

According to a new FAO report, disasters happen three times more often today, than in the 1970s and 1980s, and their impacts are most heavily felt in the agricultural industry.

**UN News**

18 March 2021

#### Then and Now: 25 years of disasters, responses, and risk management

This article tracks the evolution of the shifting focus from managing disasters to managing risks – among states and within the aid sector, both in policy and in practice.

**Jessica Alexander**

**The New Humanitarian**

1 April 2021

#### Tracking the coronavirus pandemic and vaccine rollouts

The coronavirus pandemic continues to test humanitarian responses, while the world faces questions about how to ensure equal access to vaccines.

**The New Humanitarian**

9 April 2021

### SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

#### COVID-19 and humanitarian access: How the pandemic should provoke systemic change in the global humanitarian system

This report examines the pandemic's impact on humanitarian access and operations in 5 countries, and identifies the factors that have hindered humanitarian access.

**Rebecca Brubaker, Adam Day, and Sophie Huvé**

**New York: United Nations University**

2021

#### Cashing in: Turning challenges into opportunities when evaluating humanitarian cash assistance

This report identifies issues that humanitarian actors should pay special attention to when using or deciding to use cash transfers. It explores the challenges faced when evaluating the usefulness of cash assistance for various humanitarian scenarios.

**Neil Dillon et al**

**Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Action**

**London: ODI/ALNAP**

### EVENTS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

#### RSIS-ICRC Data Governance and Protection in Humanitarian Action Online Workshop 2021

This webinar discussed the relationship between data protection and humanitarian action with a focus on digital identity, artificial intelligence, and information-sharing platforms. It explored how the principle of "do no harm" can be applied in a digital age.

**Recorded Webinar**

18 March 2021

#### Shifting into a Forecast-based Regional Humanitarian Response

This webinar addressed the various impacts of climate change through anticipatory action as well as potential applications in disaster preparedness. These include anticipatory policies based on "forecast financing" and using "sub-seasonal-to-seasonal climate predictions" as indicators of future extreme weather.

**Recorded Webinar**

8 March 2021

## MIGRATION

## NEWS &amp; COMMENTARIES

**How the aid sector marginalises women refugees**

Localisation in the humanitarian sector needs to take into account gender and, specifically, the additional barriers and responsibilities women refugees carry. This means providing grants at a higher level to address their uniquely complex situations.

**Shima Bahre**

*The New Humanitarian*

15 March 2021

**Providing inclusive education to all refugees is within our reach**

Education for refugee children is key to their future self-sufficiency and to overcoming the trauma of displacement, especially in developing countries. The international community, host governments, and refugee and host communities should ensure this.

**Mamta Muthi and Raouf Mazou**

*World Bank Blogs*

16 March 2021

**In Indonesia, desperation grows for refugees trapped in limbo for years**

COVID-19 has worsened the situation for refugees already suffering in limbo. With global resettlement levels at their lowest in 20 years, the plight of refugees in transit countries such as Indonesia is increasingly taking a toll on their mental health.

**Antonia Timmerman**

*The New Humanitarian*

22 March 2021

**Migrants left stranded and without assistance by COVID-19 lockdowns**

The sharp increase in the amount of travel restrictions and border closures around the world caused by COVID-19 has meant that significant numbers of migrants, including those traveling by irregular means, were stranded all around the world.

**UN News**

8 April 2021

**Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh fear deadly fires**

Since the devastating 22 March fire that ravaged parts of the refugee camp in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, more than 30 fires have broken out across the sprawling camp. Several perpetrators of the more recent fires have been handed over to the authorities.

**Shaikh Azizur Rahman**

*VOA News*

10 April 2021

**COVID-19: Loss to remittances and rehabilitation of returnees pose a huge challenge**

With most destination countries hardening their immigration policies, there has been a significant drop in remittances. This is likely to also negatively affect GDP at a time when countries are already facing a paralysing economic fallout from the pandemic.

**Gyan Pathak**

*National Herald India*

12 April 2021

## SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

**Responding to disasters and displacement in a changing climate: Case studies, Asia Pacific national societies in action**

This report examines the response by National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, in coordination with governments and other agencies, to climate-related displacement across eight Asia-Pacific countries, with a focus on vulnerable populations.

**International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies**

2021

**COVID-19 and the state of global mobility in 2020**

This report analyses the travel measures and border closures that were implemented by governments worldwide as a response to COVID-19 in 2020. It also examines the human impacts for different groups of people including migrants as well as the effectiveness of these responses.

**Meghan Benton, Jeanne Batalova, Samuel Davidoff-Gore and Timo Schmidt**

*Washington DC and Geneva: International Organization for Migration and Migration Policy Institute*

2021

## EVENTS &amp; ANNOUNCEMENTS

**International Mobility Restrictions and the Spread of Pandemics: New Data and Research**

This webinar discussed the impact of mobility restrictions to prepare for future pandemics. With such restrictions being a key part of the COVID-19 response in countries, has there been much impact on final casualty rates, and should it continue to be the go-to response for future scenarios?

**Recorded Webinar**

10 February 2021

**Migration and the Illicit Global Economy**

The discussion will examine the link between irregular migration and crime in what is often referred to as the "illicit global economy". While this link is often peddled by policy makers and governments, the extent of it tends to be greatly exaggerated. The panellists will explore it using case studies from around the world.

**Webinar**

5 May 2021