

# NON-TRADITIONAL SECURITY IN ASIA

## *THE DYNAMICS OF SECURITIZATION*

REPORT OF A WORKSHOP ORGANIZED BY THE  
INSTITUTE OF DEFENCE AND STRATEGIC STUDIES  
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## INTRODUCTION



*Mr. Barry Desker, Director of IDSS,  
giving the opening address*

The Workshop on the “Dynamics of Securitization in Asia” was part of Phase II of the Ford-IDSS Project on Non-Traditional Security (NTS) that commenced in early 2003. Funded by the Ford Foundation, the project is directed by the Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies (IDSS). Its overarching objective is to facilitate discussion on non-traditional aspects of security as they relate to Asia. The project seeks to develop conceptual and methodological tools to understand the causes of NTS issues, how they were defined as security threats, how governments and non-state actors have addressed them, and what policy responses have been or should be formulated to tackle them. It is structured around a number of NTS issues including terrorism, migration, environmental security, transnational crime, poverty and health security. The Ford-IDSS project on NTS thus combines theoretical innovation, an empirical research programme, and policy-relevant analysis and findings.

The Workshop was opened by **Barry Desker**, Director of IDSS, who welcomed distinguished academics, policy thinkers and young scholars from all over Asia. Desker explained that the workshop was aimed at developing regional institutional capabilities to raise awareness of the importance of NTS in the region. He proposed that the participants investigate issues ranging from environment to health, from illegal migration to transnational crime, and from stateless population to poverty and corruption and examine how these issues are securitized or desecuritized in the region.

Barry Desker observed that the current understanding of security has been dominated by terrorism, religious radicalism, and ethnic politics and rebuilding of war-torn failed states. So with the increase in non-traditional security issues, a key question that arises is how states are improving their responses to these issues. Desker commented that while the process of securitization allows for a better handling of NTS issues, his concern with the concept of securitization is that it could lead to the legitimization of armed forces in politics, especially in Asia. With the growth of security threats it would be likely that the military’s involvement grows, undermining civilian authority in emerging democracies.

## PANEL I SECURITIZATION OF ILLEGAL MIGRATION

The first speaker on this panel was **Priyankar Upadhyaya**, who spoke on the “Securitization Matrix in South Asia: Bangladeshi Migrants as Enemy Alien”. The main issue of his paper is the illegal cross-border migration of Bangladeshis to India. He argued that the flow of population between countries has been a common trend in South Asia since borders are meaningless to people who share

similar ethnic identities, with no particular national affiliation.

From a human security perspective, he argued that the poor are the most vulnerable since they do not have proof of citizenry and are unsure of their own identity. Against concerns that India was going to turn into an Islamic state, the Indian government began to politicize the issue of identity and instituted measures to stop the influx of Muslim migrants from Bangladesh. The key measures taken by India include issuing identity cards and constructing a fence at the borders between the two countries. In his conclusion, Upadhyaya stated that securitization of migration has been taken seriously over time by India, and that poverty and structural violence are the main factors that lead to this migration flow.

The second speaker, **Joseph Liow**, spoke on “Malaysia’s Approach to its Illegal Indonesian Migrant Labour Problem: Securitization, Politics or Catharsis?”. According to Liow, Indonesian migration to Malaysia has been a key feature to the character of the region. Reasons for migration include shared culture, language and ethnicity. Indonesians also played an integral part in the industrialization of Malaysia. The supply of Indonesian migrants is due to the geographic proximity of the two countries and the elimination of bureaucratic processes. It is also cheaper for Malaysians to hire illegal workers as they do not provide welfare or medical services to them. These bring about the security concerns of the Indonesian influence on deviant religious and criminal activities within Malaysia. The Malaysian government has responded both unilaterally and bilaterally. Unilaterally, it has taken a few steps including the capping of work permits and identifying and labelling this issue as a threat. Bilaterally, Malaysia and Indonesia conduct joint border controls. The repercussions of Malaysians trying to securitize the problem include the shortage of labour in key industries, bilateral

tension between Malaysia and Indonesia and multiple protests within Malaysia. Evaluating the securitization theory in the context of this case study, Indonesians have been portrayed as a threat to Malaysian lifestyle and culture. Also, the speech act was mobilized by government officials and emergency measures were taken to reduce the number of illegal Indonesians in Malaysia.

From the perspective of securitization, Liow argued that the plight of illegal Indonesian workers has become politicized due to the intensive involvement of the state. Implementation of securitization measures has also failed due to government corruption and oversight.

In conclusion, Liow stated that non-traditional security issues are not objective, as they are influenced by political and social forces. The differentiation of politicization and securitization has been problematic, as well as the implementation of security measures. Implementation has been an issue due to Malaysia’s domestic politics, and measures have not been followed up with effective action. Finally, the securitization of illegal migrants continues to be within, rather than outside, the political domain.

The third speaker, **Jose Franco**, spoke



*Mr. Jose Franco describing the plight of migrant workers from the Philippines*

on the plight of Filipino migrant workers in his paper “Securitizing / Desecuritizing the Filipino’s ‘Outward Migration Issue’ in the Philippines’ Relations with other Asian Governments”. Franco stressed that securitization of migration is essential due to the high value of the economic contribution the Filipino foreign workers provide the Philippine economy. Although there is both documented and undocumented migration of Filipinos, the securitization concerns are not limited only to illegal migrants. The migration of Filipinos does not pose security concerns to the Philippines, but is posed to the workers themselves who are victims of human rights violations and suffer from the lack of basic needs and medical care. Another reason for securitizing this migration issue is due to the controversial labour migration cases that have occurred in the past. Such migration issues have brought about diplomatic friction between the Philippines and other countries like Singapore.

Over politicization of the migration issue could lead to the manipulation of the law by government officials. Therefore, migration can be managed with the help of international organizations together with the Filipino government acting as a protector. The Filipino government has learnt that both illegal and legal migrants fall under its responsibility. According to Franco, the government should also use the media to inform the public of the facts relating to migration.

In conclusion, Franco stated that desecuritization is more important and appropriate than securitization, and there should be a fast and smooth transition from securitization to desecuritization. The government should act as a facilitator to foreign migrants, and Franco stressed that the protective mechanism has to start within the Philippines.

In her discussion, **Melissa Curley** noted that the application of the securitization framework in the case of migration, whether



*From left to right, Dr. Joseph Liow, Mr. Jose Franco, Mr. Kwa Chong Guan, Dr. Priyankar Upadhyaya, and Dr. Melissa Curley*

voluntary or through force, is a concern for state sovereignty and territoriality. It is also important to note that the post-colonial context pose a new setting for the study of securitization. Commenting on Upadhyaya's paper, Curley said that the paper shows the transformation from migrants to invaders to infiltrators, and indicates the economic benefits of this migration to the host country. Curley was also interested in whether India and Bangladesh would engage in future talks on this issue. Finally, she noted that there was no mention of educating the politicians about this issue and highlighted the importance of human security in the context of the securitization framework.

Looking next at Liow's paper, Curley pointed out that there has been both legal and illegal migration but that the latter has increased considerably. She also noted that extreme politics are also a common practice in Malaysia and it appears that securitization can be applied to various political contexts with different bureaucratic practices.

On Franco's paper, Curley noted the government's failure to recognize and protect the welfare of their foreign workers. She questioned whether there would be any negative consequences of securitizing these migration issues. Although the paper shows how well the media has affected securitization and desecuritization, there could be more information on how the free press may affect civil society and influence issues related to migration.

## DISCUSSION

**Bob Hadiwinata** asked both Priyankar Upadhyaya and Joseph Liow to clarify the grey area between traditional and non-traditional security. Upadhyaya replied that the theory should not overrule practicality. He added that grey areas would always exist and that there should therefore be no divide between non-traditional security and

traditional security. Liow argued that there should not be any overlap between the definitions of traditional security and non-traditional security.

In the case of securitizing illegal workers in Malaysia, **Mak Jun Num** asked why the discourse did not resonate with the target audience and also why there was a discourse for Indonesian illegal immigrants but no specific discourse for Chinese illegal immigrants. Liow responded that the current discourses on Indonesian migrants are due to the influx of numerous Indonesian migrants. In response to Curley's comments, Franco stated that his paper suggests that the Filipino government needs to educate emigrants about the related security issues and that the media is an extremely influential factor in the Philippines.

## PANEL II SECURITIZATION OF STATELESS POPULATION

The first speaker was **Mika Toyota**, who presented on "Securitizing Border-crossing: The Case of Marginalized Stateless Minorities in the Thai-Burma Borderlands". According to Toyota, these people become stateless due to the intersection of nations in that region and they have been denied all human rights under the Thai government. Toyota gave three reasons for this situation. The first is the inherent dilemma of controlling border minorities by the state. The second is the historical development of the securitization process. The third is the legal status of being a "non-Thai citizen" and the securitization process itself. The lack of citizenship has affected people and their ethnic identities are constantly shifting. Therefore, a discourse has to be created to clearly define Thais and non-Thais.

Toyota noted that the "hill tribes" have been seen as a security concern

*Dr. Mika Toyota conferring  
with Professor Jorge Tigno  
before the start of the Session*



from the 1950s, initially due to the fear of communism. They were later labelled as “opium cultivators”, then “forest destroyers” and finally “illegal immigrants”. The hill tribes initially included both upland and lowland people. Although segregations were made in 2002, only 24% of the upland population have Thai citizenship, while 31% of the people belong to the hill tribes and 45% of the people live without any citizenship or any form of identity. This is due to the lack of proper documentation in that region and corruption. Toyota therefore stressed the importance of national identity or citizenship in dealing with this problem. Prior to the 1990s this was essentially a political matter, but now it has become a security issue due to measures such as labelling them as illegal workers, forest destroyers and as drug cultivators.

The second speaker, **Josy Joseph**, spoke on “Securitization of Illegal Migration of Bangladeshis to India”. He started by noting that most illegal Bangladeshis are concentrated in the northeastern part of India. Most Bangladeshi immigrants are economic refugees and feed India’s demand for cheap labour. Although previous Indian governments had legislations in place to

stop this migration problem, they failed to act on these policies in the initial stages of the problem. The right-wing movements gained power by breeding fear about the creation of an Islamic Indian state and by gathering Hindu votes. There were also Hindu sympathizers and western Indian immigrants who supported these movements and helped them fund such views.

There has been speculation that Bangladesh is itself a safe haven for terror groups, and security and intelligence agencies have been key players in bringing this issue to light. There have also been other northeastern movements that have carried out massacres, leading the Indian government to take immediate action against these migrants. This has brought about the perception of Bangladeshis as a serious threat to India’s security.

Joseph remarked that the securitization theory was not adequate to understand the intricacies of the problem of migration in South Asia. He also added that speech acts, even by high-ranking government officials, need not necessarily lead to extraordinary measures.

Discussing the two papers, **Jorge Tigno** remarked that both highlighted a similar

disconnect between how categories are conceived and how they are applied. Tigno observed that it is difficult for states to clearly define their enemies—the stateless population. He found it interesting that this redefinition of the enemy was conceived at the time of the formation of these states rather than during the post-Cold War timeframe. Another interesting point to note is the importance of the states' relationships with civil society. For instance, in Joseph's paper, Tigno pointed out that how civil society has become part of the problem itself. Tigno suggested that there is also a need to desecuritize the illegal migrant population by eliminating the states' concept of a carefree and safe society. Finally, Tigno said that states should manage their risks in order to have minimal security issues and they should provide citizenship without all the required documentation.

## DISCUSSION

**Rizal Sukma** observed that although securitization is now widely discussed, many questions have become security issues while there has not been a clearly defined boundary to measure the process of securitization. In response to Sukma's comment, **Mely Anthony** noted that the point of this workshop was to trace the path of the securitization of issues. She observed that the response to security threats is still very traditional in nature.

Upadhyaya commented that right wing governments should not study these issues independently but should include other organizations like NGOs. It is also important to understand the root causes of securitization when seeking to achieve desecuritization. **Kwa Chong Guan** asked Toyota whether the hill tribes even know that they are creating a security problem. In response Toyota stated that the hill tribes do not see themselves as threats to security and are unaware of the

legal implications of residing in the forest. **Kavi Chongkittavorn** added that the royal family in Thailand treats the hill-tribe issue seriously and that citizenship in Thailand has become an important matter.

**Chin Kin Wah** stressed that securitization should be firmly placed within the political environment as they are interconnected. He commented that desecuritization plays an important role in the understanding of the roots of these problems. The distinction between securitization and desecuritization should thus be blurred. Tigno concluded the panel discussion by observing that there is a resistance in the movement from traditional security to non-traditional security.

## PANEL III PART I SECURITIZATION OF TRANSNATIONAL CRIME

**James Laki** opened this session with his presentation on "Non-Traditional Security Issues: Securitization of Transnational Crime in Asia". He discussed socio-economic factors, such as the weak structure of the state, as a cause for transnational crime in Papua New Guinea. Laki discussed the cases of illegal human trafficking and drug trafficking. Being weak in its institutions, the state in Papua New Guinea is unable to act as an effective securitizing actor. Laki concluded that unless socio-economic disparities in Papua New Guinea and the wider region are tackled and resolved, criminals would continue to make money illegally, leading to serious security concerns and consequences. As a form of transnational crime, terrorism can also only be addressed once poverty and states' weaknesses are first tackled. Laki concluded that the proliferation of transnational crime would continue to be a challenge in this part of the world.

The second speaker, **Mak Jun Nam**, spoke on "Securitizing Piracy in Southeast



**LUNCH TALK**  
**– Ms SIDNEY JONES –**  
**FIGHTING TERRORISM IN SOUTHEAST ASIA: WHAT CONSTITUTES SUCCESS?**



*Ms. Sidney Jones giving her lunch talk on “Fighting Terrorism in Southeast Asia”*

**Sidney Jones** argued that terrorism was one of the most important aspects of non-traditional security. She noted, however, that terrorism was becoming trivialized as many governments around the world are abusing the term “terrorism” by using it for all politically motivated crimes irrespective of its nature. Jones provided a comprehensive review of the nature of the threat of terrorism and discussed the role of Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) in Asia. According to Jones, JI is roughly 20 years old, although it was only formally established in the early 1990s, and it has cells all over Southeast Asia.

Jones observed that, unlike traditional criminal groups, JI does not necessarily recruit poverty stricken or uneducated people. In fact, many of the JI members are well educated with college degrees and are computer or technologically savvy. Jones pointed out that there are no Filipinos or Thais active in JI, as is commonly believed. However, there are some Singaporean and Malaysian JI members. The aim of this organization is to create an archipelagic Islamic Indonesia and jihad movements. Their passion for religion has been the main motivating factor. This organization acts in cells and takes independent initiatives to organize uncoordinated attacks. It is said that JI develops long-term plans of up to almost 25 years. The training of

new recruits is mainly done in Karachi and Afghanistan and from a small outfit in the Philippines. Younger people are used for the regeneration of the network and for training purposes.

Although Singapore and Malaysia hunted JI members even before the Bali bombings in October 2002, it was only after the bombings that Indonesia and other regional countries started to pursue JI seriously. Jones believes that the command structure of JI has now been disrupted. However, a number of important people have not been arrested, posing therefore a real danger. JI's electronic communication has been disrupted and an ideological split within the organization has been alleged. Jones stated that the JI support network within Indonesia seems to be shrinking and funding from around the world has also started to dry up.

Jones concluded that, since the bombing of the nightclubs in Bali, the strength of the organization has been considerably reduced, but it is feared that the members of JI are now trying to regroup underground. It is also believed that operations have been more limited since the JI funding, especially from the Middle East, has reduced. She stated it was important to balance the number of people arrested with the number of people being newly recruited into JI. Finally, Jones noted that even if JI were dismantled, it would be impossible to determine exactly when the threat would be completely eradicated.

Asia: Malaysia, the IMB & Singapore", which studied the International Maritime Bureau's (IMB) securitization of piracy. Mak observed that the study of the IMB since 1992 shows a clear use of the speech act. The IMB does not adopt the United Nations' definition of piracy, relying instead on its own non-legal definition. This independent stance is due to the securitization strategy of the IMB that views piracy as a threat to the environment, economies and political systems.

Although the IMB has utilized the press effectively to publicize the issue of piracy as a security concern, Malaysia has not been impressed with the IMB's efforts. Also, Malaysia's security concerns are concentrated on illegal migration and other domestic issues, viewing piracy only as an afterthought. Mak listed the limitations of the IMB's speech act as being exclusively

focused on the Malacca Straits, lacking attention to the attacks on other local crafts. Mak examined the reactions towards the piracy issue of the Malaysian government and the wider public. There were major incidents of Malaysians being attacked by the Abu Sayaf in 2000. This highlighted the Malaysian problem of not just piracy, but also porous maritime borders. These incidents led to the adoption of emergency measures by Malaysia to curb border problems, including setting up special marine forces and amending their Immigration Act.

After the World Trade Centre attacks in 2001, Singapore recognized the piracy and terrorism nexus, and eventually succeeded in implementing security measures with the support of Malaysia and Indonesia. Even with these measures, the IMB has continued to de-link piracy and terrorism in order



*Mr. James Laki on transnational crime in Papua New Guinea*

to focus regional attention on combating maritime crime. Mak concluded by pointing out that the IMB's and Singapore's speech acts were only partially successful as the target audience did not fully accept the threat construction and the assessment of the securitizing actors.

In her comments, Sidney Jones noted that both papers dealt with the concept of national sovereignty and territorial integrity. She said that Laki's paper raised the problem of the different kind of security concerns held by small and large states. Jones commented that Laki brought to light why weak states become a haven for transnational crime. She also noted that resolving human trafficking required foreign support. Discussing Mak's paper, she found it interesting how the piracy problem has been evolving, and how the act of securitizing piracy has gone beyond the IMB. Jones also raised the possibility that the attention given to piracy and terrorism in the Straits of Malacca could serve as a self-fulfilling prophecy.

## DISCUSSION

**Mushahid Ali** asked Mak why the IMB has paid so much attention to piracy and whether the security concern could be solved through better policing. In response, Mak pointed out that securitization is necessary to prevent attacks by terrorists and to study ways of operationalizing the required measures. Kwa Chong Guan asked Mak if he could suggest a better way for Singapore to handle the problem of piracy in the Straits of Malacca. Mak responded by saying that if Singapore wanted to be more effective, they should have a more discreet discourse to gain more positive support from both Malaysia and Indonesia.

**Ralf Emmers** questioned Laki on the advantages of securitizing transnational crime and whether this securitization act could unnerve nations. Laki responded by stating that there have been greater cooperation, but this cooperation has to be examined carefully in order to maximize their outcome. Tigno asked Laki if trans-border migration should be considered as a criminal activity. In response, Laki laid out his doubts about how migration fits into the notion of security and noted that the UN has stressed the need to address the migration issue more carefully.

**Tan See Seng** asked Mak whether he believed in the importance of a securitization framework and who could construct such a framework. In response, Mak specified that securitization is circular and that the target audience should be considered as part of the act of securitization. Mely Anthony raised the possibility that the process of securitization could have unintended consequences. She argued that it is important therefore to examine the issues that should or should not be securitized.

## PANEL III PART II SECURITIZATION OF TRANSNATIONAL CRIME (CONTINUED)

The first speaker, **Reifqi Muna**, spoke on “Securitization of Transnational Crime: Small Arms and Light Weapons & Drug Trafficking in Indonesia”. He started by pointing out that securitization is part of the revolution of security affairs and explained that the kind of political platform is important when security issues are being reviewed. Muna went on to explain how the concept of securitization can easily be abused by authoritarian regimes or in the name of civil liberties.

Muna then moved to the area of transnational crime in Indonesia, noting that it is still considered as a criminal rather than as a security problem at the domestic level. He reviewed two important responses adopted by the Indonesia government to transnational crime. The first is to

respond to the problem of small arms, as they have been too easily available in the country. The second is to address the lack of infrastructures and resources that derive from budgetary constraints when curbing illegal drug trafficking. Muna then questioned whether small arms and drug trafficking should be securitized, politicized or criminalized in Indonesia. The speech act does not work in Indonesia due to the weak administrative set-up and because these issues are still essentially categorized as criminal problems. In his conclusion, Muna stressed that for securitization to succeed, it is crucial to first conduct a discourse analysis as language has played an important role in Indonesia’s securitization of issues.

The second speaker was **Shyam Tekwani** who spoke on “The LTTE’s Online Network and its Implications for Regional Security”. The LTTE problem is a threat to regional security as its support structure is transnational in nature. Tekwani observed



*From left to right, Mr. Shyam Tekwani, Dr. Ralf Emmers and Reifqi Muna on panel on “Securitization of Transnational Crime”*

that the LTTE taps into its diaspora and thus globalizes its sources of funding and network activities in the First World and Third World respectively. Due to the far-reaching capabilities of the Internet, insurgency is becoming transnational. The LTTE has been a pioneer in using technology to gather support and by using computer crimes on a mass scale when the Internet was still relatively new. The LTTE even had virtual training camps on its website until this information was taken off after 9/11.

Tekwani referred to a current debate on whether the Internet is a “weapon of mass destruction” or a “weapon of mass disruption”. Either way, the Internet is seen as a weapon that can cause significant damage. Therefore, he argued that the Internet should be securitized against acts of terrorism and transnational crime. He observed, however, that although securitizing the Internet is a viable option, there are limitations such as public responsibility, international cooperation between developed and developing countries, and the cooperation between governments and the private sector. Tekwani concluded that there are no geographical restrictions for the Internet as a possible security threat and therefore immediate action is required through multinational approaches. He also stated that virtual or online networks are as threatening as the ground networks.

Ralf Emmers noted that Muna’s paper highlighted the importance of the nature of the political system of the state that is playing the role of securitizing actor. According to Emmers, the paper indicates that many issues in Indonesia were securitized essentially for political objectives. He then referred to the criminalization and securitization nexus and that in practice there is no clear distinction between the two. He noted that in Indonesia the drug-trafficking issue has been securitized but not the small arms issue. This is surprising as drug trafficking is essentially a human security concern

while small arms threaten the sovereignty of the state. Emmers also pointed out that the problem in Indonesia is not about the lack of securitization but rather an insufficient and incomplete process of criminalization when addressing issues like drug trafficking and small arms.

On Tekwani’s paper, Emmers observed that the paper should clarify what was meant by securitizing the Internet and what practical measures could be undertaken as a result of such a process. He also questioned the technical feasibility of securitizing this tool of communication and whether the US or other states would be able to securitize the Internet without the support of the online community. Finally, Emmers noted that the acts outlined in the paper resemble other forms of cyber crime and that lessons could be learnt from the fight against other online criminal activities.

## DISCUSSION

With regard to how to deal with small arms and drug trafficking, Mely Anthony raised the point as to whether criminalization is a form of securitization, hence legitimizing securitization. This was followed by a comment by Upadhyaya that there is an overlap among politicization, securitization and criminalization. In response to both Anthony’s and Upadhyaya’s comments, Muna confirmed that the distinction between securitization and criminalization is blurred.

Jorge Tigno asked whether it is the Internet that has to be securitized or the act of using the Internet for terrorism. There could be implementation problems—like the restriction of its use by innocent people as well—which would be negating the concept of the Internet itself. He then asked Tekwani if the state could block terrorist websites. Responding to Tigno’s comments and question, Tekwani pointed

out that there is a distinction between criminalization and securitization in relation to the Internet. There is always a possibility that over-securitization occurs, leading to an infringement of privacy. Tekwani stressed that this possibility exists off-line as well.

**Bob Hadiwinata** followed up with a comment regarding the distinction between securitization and criminalization, drawing on Buzan and Weaver's notion that a successful act of securitization is dependent on it being accepted by a separate audience. Following this comment, James Laki asked Muna if the securitization process takes into consideration the interests of human beings in developing states. Responding to both Hadiwinata's comment and to Laki's question, Muna explained that in the case of Indonesia there was a problem in relation to securitization versus criminalization. Due to language problems and political factors, issues have often been too easily securitized.

The final question came from **Morton Hansen** regarding the role of academia and whether academics are meant to be observers or advocates. Responding to this question, Emmers noted that academics often play the role of advocates although they should primarily be observers. This, he suggested, was due to a need to be policy relevant.

## **PANEL IV**

### **SECURITIZATION OF HEALTH/ INFECTIOUS DISEASES**

The first speaker on this panel, **Peter Chalk**, spoke on "Disease and Securitization in the Asia-Pacific". He argued that disease not only affects the state in traditional terms, particularly through the strategic dimension of biological warfare and bio-terrorism, but can also undermine social stability, distort economic growth and undermine civilian

confidence in the government by generating criticisms of its perceived inefficiency in handling a crisis. Chalk outlined five salient factors for the outbreak and subsequent spread of diseases—globalization, modern medical practices, unsustainable urbanization, environmental factors, and the changes in social and behavioural patterns. On the implications on securitization, Chalk pointed out that the security dimension of diseases has filtered into the policy-making process of different states. Bio-terrorism and bio-warfare have triggered states in the Asia-Pacific to set up homeland security structures and intergovernmental organizations to cooperate against terrorism and the proliferation of offensive biological and chemical agents.

In his assessment, Chalk opines that many Asia-Pacific governments still continue to regard disease as a public health problem rather than a national security issue. This is due to the strong norm against internal interference, the time lag for which the disease takes to manifest itself, the current preoccupation with terrorism, and the security and intelligence communities' conservative approach towards threat perception. Chalk thus called for the urgent need to adapt their institutional structures to manage the new challenges and change the traditional conceptions of national intelligence and national security.

**Samsu Rizal Panggabean** followed with his presentation on "Securitizing Health in Violence-affected Areas of Indonesia", which focused on the health threats under conditions of communal war in the provinces of Maluku and Aceh. He observed that violence in these provinces has resulted in a serious threat to the life and well being of the population. Some of the health problems in these provinces include abused healthcare facilities, disrupted transportation system, ethnic segregation in treatment, mobility of health workers, rising cost of healthcare for the public, and the internal displacement of

people resulting in problems of sanitation.

Among the actors that are pushing for the securitization of health include the Indonesian government who puts in place a disaster management system. Supported by the international community that promotes such norms, humanitarian principles of beneficiary rights and neutrality in giving assistance provide a foundation for health securitization in Indonesia. The provinces have also benefited from the aid of the UN and NGOs. Lastly, health workers also play an active role in securitizing the issue but face problems of personal safety, the dilemma of impartiality and the power to implement processes effectively without getting involved in local politics. In his opinion, the health sector is the most prepared one in the government in dealing with the conflict. However, due to the complex disaster management system and multiple intervening actors, coordination of the securitization process is a big problem, compounded by corruption.

**Phua Kai Hong**, the panel discussant,

started by noting that the two papers offered an alternative perspective to his public health orientation. He observed that since the traditional emphasis has been on the control of epidemics like communicable diseases that affect large numbers, securitizing disease will de-emphasize the current stress on primary healthcare. Therefore, for the government to respond to public health problems efficiently, there is a need for inter-sectoral collaboration to integrate the different sectors of the health system, and considerations of the magnitude and severity of the crisis. Also important are the disease's vulnerability to available technical solutions, community participation, the appropriate methods of intervention and its cost, and the overall impact these considerations have on security. Phua argued that securitization of health is a challenging task as there is no parsimonious solution requiring instead a society-specific approach encompassing knowledge of the epistemology of the disease, the engineering of an appropriate solution, the education of the masses to



*From left to right, Professor Phua Kai Hong, Professor Amitav Acharya, Dr. Peter Chalk, Dr. Mely Anthony, Dr. Samsu Rizal Panggabean and Dr. Rizal Sukma*



*From left to right, Mr. Riefqi Muna, Professor Kog Yue Choong and Dr. Chin Kin Wah chatting over tea break*

change their perceptions and habits as well as appropriate enforcement and incentives.

Phua proceeded to sum up the paper on “Securitizing the HIV/AIDS Issue in Asia” by **Ilavenil Ramaiah**, which examined the extent to which the Copenhagen School could be applied to a framework for securitizing the issue of HIV/AIDS. In July 2002, the UN classified AIDS as an international security issue for the first time, making it the first health issue to be debated in the UN Security Council. As a point of departure from the securitization theory, Ramaiah believes that to evaluate the effectiveness of the management of HIV/AIDS, one has to go beyond normal speech acts to look at mechanisms, persuasion and negotiation in the running of public health campaigns and educational programmes. There is thus a need to develop a framework tailored to the Asian context to develop effective strategies to overcome this crisis.

## DISCUSSION

Melissa Curley noted that Hong Kong’s handling of SARS could have been used to illustrate Chalk’s point on the possibility of the outbreak of disease undermining

public confidence in the government and its efforts at cooperating with the epistemic community. She went on to question if bio-terrorism was a real threat, as it requires knowledge, funding and a certain level of organization not available in this region to any particular group. In response, Chalk explained that threat assessments on bio-terrorism are based on assumed risks, which could result in the misallocation of resources.

**Tin Muang Muang Than** pointed out that the values of the international organizations may sometimes be at odds with the regime’s core values. For example, AIDS in Burma was not recognized earlier by the government as it clashed with the values of the Burmese culture. The lack of resources to deal effectively with the problem is also beyond the implementers’ capacity.

Mely Anthony asked what the obstacle to the successful securitization of infectious diseases is as its current treatment is still from a medical rather than a security approach. In response to this query, Chalk argued that there is a challenge of greater openness and exchange of information between current organizations whose roles are too compartmentalized. There is thus a need for a paradigm shift in policy responses



and also an enormous amount of investment, which he noted is not forthcoming. Chin Kin Wah noted that Singapore's handling of SARS illustrated a highly securitized underlying system of control and surveillance of a pre-existing structure that was able to deal with the crisis. He added that one has to go beyond talking about different types of securitization and focus on the need for a security system that addresses both long- and short-term responses. Phua argued that the sense of priorities, economic imperatives and the impact on the population have to be factored into the decision-making process, adding that it is easier to assess the effectiveness of policies in retrospect than at the moment of crisis.

With regards to Chalk's paper, **Amitav Acharya** noted an interesting hypothesis that could be developed—that of the concept of grafting security threats by linking current challenges with prior ones. Besides biological weapons, Chalk cited other examples, including the security dynamics of drugs postulated as a form of syndicated crime rather than an issue that is impacting on social and economic stability, and piracy treated as maritime terrorism rather than a result of economic distraction. He added that it is easier to use prior knowledge than to innovate when required.

## **PANEL V**

### **SECURITIZATION OF POVERTY AND CORRUPTION**

**Bob Hadiwinata's** presentation was on "Securitizing Poverty: The Role of NGOs in the Protection of Human Security in Indonesia". He posited that with the concept of security expanding, the main referent object is no more the state alone but community groups, for example, the poor. Its success depends on the referent objects' acceptance of the existential threat and

the securitizing actors' address of the emergency situation. Hadiwinata argued that poverty, which touches on human dignity, is securitized because it is no longer perceived as a value-free concept. Secondly, poverty is also a political issue, as it is not only measured in terms of material well being but also civic rights. He also noted that many NGOs believe development should be initiated from outside the state and that the victims should be encouraged to solve their own problems independent of the state, which is seen to perpetuate the poverty problem.

Hadiwinata noted that the NGOs were concerned with the state's inability to deal with the poverty problem and even accused the Indonesian government of intentionally putting the poor at risk during the restructuring programme between 1998 and 2003 supervised by the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The social impact of these reforms included a stark increase in the numbers living under the poverty line, a decline in access to health services especially for children, and the spread of riots. All of this portrayed the government as the enemy of the poor, validating the NGOs' claim that development could only be effected externally. In assessing the success of securitization, Hadiwinata noted that the NGOs did manage to raise awareness among the marginalized of the availability of alternatives to solve their plight through disengagement from the state. However, the public may perceive the NGOs as creating instability in the country by inciting a revolution against the government, so external agents attempting to securitize poverty should be careful not to be enmeshed in a class struggle in the process.

**Kavi Chongkittavorn**, the panel discussant, started by commenting that both Hadiwinata's paper and **Shabnam Mallick** and **Rajarshi Sen's** one on "The Incidence of Corruption in India: Is the Neglect of

Governance Endangering Human Security in South Asia?” converged on two key points—the ineffectiveness of the government in alleviating poverty in their country and the process of empowerment of the poor. He observed that a point of divergence was that in the case of Indonesia, the NGOs had to perform roles meant for the government, whereas in India, the government acted like NGOs by setting up grassroot organizations in an attempt to solve these problems. However, Chongkittavorn differed with Hadiwinata on his point that the NGOs lack legitimacy as they are not elected, arguing that NGOs in both Thailand and Indonesia are legitimate organizations and have the authority to solve human security issues that the government cannot handle effectively. Although he conceded that the economic crisis did have a sudden devastating effect on the lives of the people in both Indonesia and Thailand, he believed that it did not have as negative an impact as other neighbouring countries as they were still, on the whole, better prepared to handle the social aspect of the crisis. Chongkittavorn summed up by suggesting that the success of securitizing human security issues like poverty and corruption could be gauged by measuring the improvement of the individuals’ capacity to survive.

## **DISCUSSION**

Chin Kin Wah shared his observation that in this context of security, the state is as much a part of the problem as the solution, complicating the process of securitization even further. Priyankar Upadhyaya suggested making a case of state agencies securitizing the poverty issue by showing a demonstrative link between poverty and the military and security apparatus. It would add a new dimension in showing how poverty could not only create social threats but also affect military matters. In response, Hadiwinata

argued that in dealing with the issue of poverty, the priority is to employ a radical ideology in defence of those who gain less. However, the problem is the lack of such a radical leader in Indonesia currently. Furthermore, states tend to prioritize national security over human security.

Amitav Acharya commented that the illustration of the leading role of non-state actors in securitization, not evident in the Copenhagen School, by invoking human security rather than state security was noteworthy. However, the challenge is to demonstrate more explicitly that what the NGOs are doing is actually a human security discourse. Acharya also noted that the notion of the bottom up approach to securitization conflicting with state goals was interesting. He also speculated that states may deem poverty as a security problem but are not taking any actions or are taking actions different from what the NGOs demand, making a study of the clash in bottom-up and top-down approaches to securitization worthy of attention. On analysing the discourse and its impact on state policies towards poverty, Hadiwinata explained that the government tended to select less radical NGOs to participate in the safety-net programmes, and not even their core programmes, which resulted in the engagement of mainly fly-by-night NGOs, further contributing to the problem.

**Ho Kai Leong** noted that since it is implied that the state is part of the problem, perhaps it would be more effective if poverty were desecuritized. He went on to question if the argument of NGOs replacing the state as the securitizing agent really challenges the theoretical framework of the Copenhagen School as, to do so, one has to argue that this is not a security problem or identify a specific new framework different from the Copenhagen School. In response, Hadiwinata argued that there is a need to agree on the extent of security in this discourse to include society as a referent object. Hence the focus

is naturally on human rather than national security.

Ralf Emmers observed that the securitization model expects that once an issue becomes securitized, it may lead to the implementation of extraordinary measures. This leads to the question about what exactly would constitute “extraordinary measures” when dealing with non-state actors, and whether NGOs actually have to go beyond their expected role to deal with the problem. In response, Hadiwinata illustrated this by pointing out the examples of NGOs bringing medical facilities to the people rather than wait for them to approach them and also how NGOs mobilized the people to control the village parliament, which are all acts beyond their call of duty.

Tin Muang Muang Than queried Hadiwinata on what alternatives states have other than international institutions to help alleviate poverty, especially if the state itself does not have the resources. Hadiwinata responded by first stating that governments depend on NGOs to intervene. However, sometimes the NGOs choose not to accept government funding in order to maintain their autonomy and prefer to depend on independent donors, reflecting the lack of trust between the two securitizing actors.

## PANEL VI SECURITIZATION/ DESECURITIZATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

**Kog Yue Choong** presented his paper on “Environmental Management and Conflict in Southeast Asia: Land Reclamation and its Political Impact”. He argued that environmental disputes might destabilize regional security, illustrated by the land reclamation dispute between Singapore and Malaysia and between Singapore and



*Professor Kog Yue Choong talking on “Land Reclamation and Its Political Impact”*

Indonesia. The threats to Singapore are non-traditional in that they are economic and environmental in nature. Kog disagreed with the Malaysian claim that Singapore’s reclamation projects had adverse effects on its environment, arguing instead that the underlying reason is the political and economic rivalry between the two states. He also believed that Indonesia’s dispute with Singapore over the issue of illegal mining around the Riau Islands was to deflect the Indonesian people’s attention from its domestic problems.

Kog reasoned that if the underlying dispute is over state rivalry, then it might be better to desecuritize the issue to maintain better bilateral relations instead of using existing frameworks to solve the problem. For example, both Singapore’s and Malaysia’s environment bodies could look into the issue of environmental pollution together. Kog postulated that such disputes should have been solved through diplomacy and not through the media. He also recommended the building of stronger institutions and the opening of new channels for dialogue

between the states involved to go beyond establishing ties between the ruling and business elites.

The panel discussant, Ho Kai Leong, inferred from Kog's paper two pertinent arguments. The first was that the complaints by the Malaysian and Indonesian governments about Singapore's reclamation project were motivated by increasingly competitive economic rivalry and possibly misguided political perception, which Ho felt was a nationalistic viewpoint. The second argument on how the disputes should not be securitized as the speech acts of the leaders of Singapore, Malaysia and Indonesia do not converge is, in Ho's opinion, well-intentioned but not a reflection of the hard realities of the leaders' intentions. Ho also referred to Kog's postulation that Malaysia's silence on this ongoing project over the years was a sign that Singapore did no wrong. Ho suggested, however, that the silence could be due to other reasons, namely the possibility that Malaysia did not notice the problem till then or that they were aware but chose to ignore it until the problem became unavoidable. However, Ho concurred with Kog on the point that the leaders should not have exploited an environmental issue for political ends, which would hint that this was not even a security concern.

Ho went on to summarize and comment on **Evelyn Goh's** paper on "China in the Mekong River Basin: The Regional Security Implications of Resource Development on the Lancang Jiang". He noted that Goh's paper reiterated a pertinent argument made by Kog—that the securitization of the issue may not contribute much to a solution and thus there is a need to desecuritize the question. However, Goh went on to propose using a more comprehensive approach of securitization as the potential ecological and socio-economic problems of the Mekong has not been sufficiently politicized yet. Ho,

however, would like to see how the framing of environmental issues as non-security matters, from a comprehensive security approach, could be done.

## DISCUSSION

Kog Yue Choong responded to Ho's suggestion of alternative possibilities of Malaysia's silence by explaining that empirical studies have shown that there is no ecological damage to Malaysia. He went on to identify how Singapore specified environmental damage and the measures taken to avoid it.

While Joseph Liow agreed that the issue between Malaysia and Singapore should be desecuritized, he questioned how it could be done. Secondly, Liow also agreed that the issue pertained to Singapore's economic survival but questioned if Singapore really had no other options of maintaining the same goal. Kog responded by reiterating that reclamation was vital for Singapore's current economic survival, which depends heavily on the industrial sector, unless it gives up its aspirations of being a player in this sector. He also added that it was difficult to turn to alternative industry to replace the current established one.

Hadiwinata commented that Indonesia's argument on grounds of sovereignty risks overlooking the security concerns about environmental protection. Even though reclamation does not seem as vital, the reaction of Malaysia and Indonesia was important. To this, Kog reiterated how reclamation was not the only factor for the loss of islands. Ho concluded by suggesting that since the Singapore leaders have not made the claim on economic survival, perhaps the claim was made by an epistemic community with a vested interest in the reclamation project.



*Closing remarks by Professor Amitav Acharya*

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## CONCLUSION

In his closing remarks, Amitav Acharya noted that this was the final session of the series of workshops on “Dynamics of Securitization in Asia” organized by IDSS with the support of the Ford Foundation. He highlighted that one of the key objectives of the workshop was to construct a coherent theoretical framework in this under-theorized and underdeveloped issue and make it relevant and operational

both regionally and internationally. The challenge lay in creating an interesting concept for the study of securitization in this region. Acharya stressed that a comprehensive framework should identify the issue area, securitizing actors, security concept, process by analysing speech acts, the degree of securitization and its impact on the threat.

Acharya proposed that authors explore salient questions with regard to their case studies and draw some tentative hypotheses. These questions are the following. Firstly, whether securitization is more likely to succeed in authoritarian states or states where the military plays an important role in domestic politics than in liberal states. Secondly, whether pressure by powerful actors is more likely to lead to securitization and more likely to have an impact on the level of the threat. Thirdly, to examine the ability of securitizing actors to link an emerging existential threat, which has not been securitized, with something which has already been recognized as a security threat. Lastly, whether the advent and strength of new international norms could lead to the securitization of issues previously left out of the security realm.

Finally, Acharya concluded the workshop by thanking the paper writers, the discussants and all the participants for their excellent contribution to this project as well as the Ford Foundation for its generous funding.

## WORKSHOP PROGRAMME

### Thursday

2 September 2004

1400–1700 Registration of Panellists

1900 Welcome Dinner

### Friday

3 September 2004

0830–0900 General Registration

0900–0915 **Opening Remarks**  
Mr. Barry Desker, Director,  
Institute of Defence and  
Strategic Studies, Singapore

0915–1045 **Panel I**  
Securitization of Illegal  
Migration

Chair:  
Kwa Chong Guan, Institute  
of Defence and Strategic  
Studies, Singapore

Presenters:  
Priyankar Upadhyaya,  
Malaviya Centre for Peace  
Research, India  
Joseph Liow, Institute  
of Defence and Strategic  
Studies, Singapore  
Jose Franco, University of  
Philippines

Discussant:  
Melissa Curley, Centre of  
Asian Studies, Hong Kong  
University

1045–1100 Coffee/Tea Break

1100–1230 **Panel II**  
Securitization of Stateless  
Population

Chair:  
Mely Caballero-Anthony,  
Institute of Defence and  
Strategic Studies, Singapore

Presenters:  
Mika Toyota, Asia Research  
Institute, Singapore  
Josy Joseph, Times of India  
Group, India

Discussant:  
Jorge Tigno, University of  
the Philippines

1230–1400 **Lunch Talk**  
The Gallery (Level 2)  
Ms Sidney Jones  
*Fighting Terrorism in  
Southeast Asia: What  
Constitutes Success?*

## WORKSHOP PROGRAMME

1400–1600 **Panel III**  
Securitization of Transnational  
Crime

Chair:

Rizal Sukma, Centre for  
Strategic and International  
Studies, Indonesia

Presenters:

James Laki, National  
Research Institute, Papua  
New Guinea

Mak Jun Nam, Institute of  
Southeast Asian Studies,  
Singapore

Discussant:

Sidney Jones, International  
Crisis Group

1600–1630 Coffee Break

1630–1800 Securitization of Transnational  
Crime (Continued)

Presenters:

Shyam Tekwani, Nanyang  
Technological University,  
Singapore

Reifqi Muna, GFN-SSR,  
Royal Military College of  
Science, UK

Discussant:

Ralf Emmers, Institute  
of Defence and Strategic  
Studies, Singapore

1900 Welcoming Dinner  
Ubin Seafood Restaurant,  
Bukit Chermin Road

**Saturday**  
**4 September 2004**

0900–1100 **Panel IV**  
Securitization of Health/  
Infectious Diseases

Chair:

Mely Caballero-Anthony,  
Institute of Defence and  
Strategic Studies, Singapore

Presenters:

Peter Chalk, RAND  
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Samsu Rizal Panggabean,  
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Indonesia

Ilavenil Ramaiah\*, Harvard  
School of Public Health,  
USA

Discussant:

Phua Kai Hong, National  
University of Singapore,  
Singapore

1100–1130 Coffee/Tea Break

## WORKSHOP PROGRAMME

1130–1300 **Panel V**  
Securitization of Poverty and  
Corruption

Chair:

Chin Kin Wah, Institute of  
Southeast Asian Studies,  
Singapore

Presenters:

Bob Hadiwinata, University  
of Parahyangan, Indonesia  
Shabnam Mallick\*, USAID,  
USA

Discussant:

Kavi Chongkittavorn,  
NationGroup, Thailand

1300–1400 Lunch  
Ah Hoi's Kitchen (Level 4)

14:00–15:00 **Panel VI**  
Securitisation/Desecuritisation  
of Environmental Issues

Chair:

Jorge Tigno, University of  
Philippines

Presenters:

Kog Yue Choong, National  
University of Singapore,  
Singapore  
Evelyn Goh\*, Institute  
of Defence and Strategic  
Studies, Singapore

Discussant:

Ho Khai Leong, Institute of  
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1500–1515 Coffee/Tea Break

1515–1630 **Closing Remarks**  
Professor Amitav Acharya,  
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\*Denotes paper was tabled for  
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**The Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies (IDSS)** was established in July 1996 as an autonomous research institute within the Nanyang Technological University. Its objectives are to:

- conduct research on security, strategic and international issues;
- provide general and graduate education in strategic studies, international relations, defence management and defence technology; and
- promote joint and exchange programmes with similar regional and international institutions, organize seminars/conferences on topics salient to the strategic and policy communities of the Asia-Pacific.

Constituents of the IDSS include the International Centre for Political Violence and Terrorism Research (ICPVTR) and the Asian Programme for Negotiation and Conflict Management (APNCM).

## **RESEARCH**

Through its Working Paper Series, *IDSS Commentaries* and other publications, the Institute seeks to share its research findings with the strategic studies and defence policy communities. The Institute's researchers are also encouraged to publish their writings in refereed journals. The focus of research is on issues relating to the security and stability of the Asia-Pacific region and their implications for Singapore and other countries in the region. The Institute has also established the S. Rajaratnam Professorship in Strategic Studies (named after Singapore's first Foreign Minister) to bring distinguished scholars to participate in the work of the Institute. Previous holders of the Chair include Professors Stephen Walt (Harvard University), Jack Snyder (Columbia University), Wang Jisi (Chinese Academy of Social Sciences), Alastair Iain Johnston (Harvard University) and John Mearsheimer (University of Chicago). A Visiting Research Fellow Programme also enables overseas scholars to carry out related research in the Institute.

## **TEACHING**

The Institute provides educational opportunities at an advanced level to professionals from both the private and public sectors in Singapore as well as overseas through graduate programmes, namely, the Master of Science in Strategic Studies, the Master of Science in International Relations and the Master of Science in International Political Economy. These programmes are conducted full-time and part-time by an international faculty. The Institute also has a Doctoral programme for research in these fields of study. In addition to these graduate programmes, the Institute also teaches various modules in courses conducted by the SAFTI Military Institute, SAF Warrant

Officers' School, Civil Defence Academy, Singapore Technologies College, and the Defence and Home Affairs Ministries. The Institute also runs a one-semester course on "The International Relations of the Asia-Pacific" for undergraduates in NTU.

## **NETWORKING**

The Institute convenes workshops, seminars and colloquia on aspects of international relations and security development that are of contemporary and historical significance. Highlights of the Institute's activities include a regular Colloquium on Strategic Trends in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, the annual Asia Pacific Programme for Senior Military Officers (APPSMO) and the biennial Asia Pacific Security Conference (held in conjunction with Asian Aerospace). IDSS staff participate in Track II security dialogues and scholarly conferences in the Asia-Pacific. IDSS has contacts and collaborations with many international think tanks and research institutes throughout Asia, Europe and the United States. The Institute has also participated in research projects funded by the Ford Foundation and the Sasakawa Peace Foundation. It also serves as the Secretariat for the Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia-Pacific (CSCAP), Singapore. Through these activities, the Institute aims to develop and nurture a network of researchers whose collaborative efforts will yield new insights into security issues of interest to Singapore and the region.

