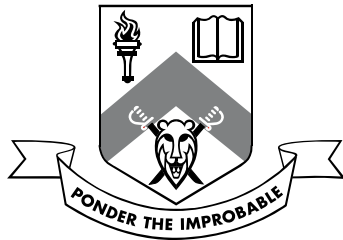


# SECURITY COOPERATION AND GOVERNANCE IN SOUTHEAST ASIA: RESPONDING TO TERRORISM, INSURGENCY AND SEPARATIST VIOLENCE IN INDONESIA, THAILAND AND THE PHILIPPINES

REPORT OF A CONFERENCE CO-ORGANISED BY  
THE INSTITUTE OF DEFENCE AND STRATEGIC STUDIES (IDSS) AND  
THE ASIA-PACIFIC CENTER FOR SECURITY STUDIES (APCSS)

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26-28 SEPTEMBER 2006  
PAN PACIFIC HOTEL, SINGAPORE



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## INTRODUCTION

**Professor Amitav Acharya**, Deputy Director of the Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies (IDSS), warmly welcomed the participants to the “Security Cooperation and Governance in Southeast Asia: Responding to Terrorism, Insurgency and Separatist Violence in Indonesia, Thailand and the Philippines” conference co-organised by the Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies (IDSS) and the Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies (APCSS). Acharya remarked that the conference was born out of an effort to extend the collaboration between two institutions which shared common objectives and functions, as well as to investigate an issue of great importance to Asia and the United States. In addressing terrorism, insurgency and separatist violence in three different countries, Acharya commented that it was unwise to take a holistic label to what could in actuality be a very disparate set of problems. He urged the participants to appreciate the variations between both the problems and the countries, but also highlighted the need for some amount of generalisation in order to have a sense of how the region of Southeast Asia as a whole could address the problems of terrorism, insurgency and separatist violence on a regional level.

In highlighting the state responses undertaken to address these problems, Acharya also stressed the importance of emphasising what should not be done. In this respect, a critique must be offered on the measures adopted by the state—which measures had been wrongly implemented and what needed to be corrected. Acharya noted that the term “root causes” in the discourse was a much abused cliché but ironically also one of the most understudied. He remarked on the absence of significant research that offered empirical evidence on the traditional parameters of root causes and systematically correlated those causes with the level of violence. Acharya expressed hope that the conference would deal with such issues.

**Dr Lee Endress**, Dean of the College for Security Studies at the Asia-Pacific Center for



*Dr Lee Endress and Prof Amitav Acharya delivering the welcome and opening remarks*

Security Studies (APCSS), extended a warm welcome on behalf of Lieutenant General (Ret) Ed Smith, Director of APCSS. Endress opined that the conference provided a unique opportunity to investigate the extent to which terrorism, insurgency and separatist violence shared commonalities, whilst at the same time being mindful not to overextend the analysis. It is important to also examine the differences that exist between the three kinds of conflict to allow for a nuanced approach. Endress set out three key objectives of the conference: first, to achieve a comprehensive assessment of the current status and prospects for the resolution of the three types of security threats facing contemporary Southeast Asia; second, to explore the relationships and dynamics linking the three threats without introducing too much synergy where it is not appropriate; and third, to identify regional needs in addressing the security threats.

## SESSION I: INTRODUCTION TO SEPARATISM, INSURGENCY AND TERRORISM IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

### CASE STUDY 1: ISLAM AND POLITICAL VIOLENCE IN INDONESIA

Speaking on Jemaah Islamiyah (JI), **Greg Barton** emphasised that JI needed to be understood in three dimensions: the historical development

of JI; the evolution of Jihadi ideology; and the enabling environment. On the historical aspect, Barton stated that whilst JI was officially launched in 1993 in the context of a rising al-Qaeda, it had a much longer history than was usually recognised. He traced the organisation's radical roots to earlier movements in the 1950s, with co-founders Abu Bakar Ba'asyir and Abdullah Sungkar active in the Wahhabi-oriented ethnic Arab organisation al-Irsyad and the Islamist political party Masyumi respectively. Barton noted that the Bali bombing on 12 October 2002 demonstrated a well-established al-Qaeda style transnational terrorist network operating in Southeast Asia. Although the arrests of over three hundred operatives across Southeast Asia since then had substantially disrupted and incapacitated the JI network, the organisation has mutated, metastasized and evolved. According to Barton, "we know that it is currently greatly weakened but we don't know its current capacity or future intentions with certainty".

Barton acknowledged that Islamism, as a family of political ideologies, covered a broad spectrum and contained sharp divisions often overlooked by outsiders but noted that a key turning point in the evolution of Jihadi ideology occurred when Jihadi Islamism and Saudi Wahhabism united to produce the emergence of global mujahidin. He stated that Afghanistan in the 1980s and 1990s became a site of transformation for foreign ideologues to locate the global struggle in local grievances. Barton further articulated that Jihadi Islamism was the product of modernisation and globalisation, and fed on an individual's alienation, loss of dignity and despair. He noted that the appeal of the irrational but seductively attractive ideology found traction in individuals and motivated them to join the global movement.

Outlining the current environment in Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines and Singapore, Barton remarked that the longer-term capacity and intentions of JI and its spin-offs remained highly uncertain with no clear knowledge of how fast they were recruiting and regenerating. He stressed that the force of the idea behind



*Dr Greg Barton giving his speech on the Jemaah Islamiyah*

JI was inspiring spontaneous developments that were less predictable, harder to track and would live on even after JI had diminished. Indeed, the situation in Afghanistan, Iraq and Pakistan would continue to inspire, legitimise and facilitate new jihadi terrorists. In closing, Barton suggested engaging with traditional and conservatively Islamic societies and working with moderate Muslim communities as the best ways forward. He stressed that simplistic zero-sum thinking would cost dearly in the medium and long term.

## **CASE STUDY 2: SOUTHERN PHILIPPINES**

In her presentation on "The Philippine State and More Resistance: Dynamics of a Persistent Conflict", **Miriam Coronel Ferrer** defined the situational analysis in Mindanao as historical, socio-economic and political conditions that had generated and sustained political mobilisation; in essence the interplay of conditions and agency that over time had led to transformation. Ferrer listed the key conflict actors to include the Philippine state, the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) and the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG). She proceeded to identify three elements of the nature of Moro resistance: first, as a political struggle against the present construct of the Philippine state; second, as a nationalist struggle with Islamic identity as a defining feature; and third, as a struggle for national self-determination and self governance. From the Moro perspective, the Philippine state was perceived as repressive,

discriminatory and one of poor governance. Ferrer remarked that forced annexation, the impact of colonial and post-colonial state policies from the sixteenth century to the present and other complicating factors such as military corporate interests and elite politics had caused landlessness, relative deprivation, minoritisation and the formation of a separate Moro identity.

Despite the political negotiations that had taken place in the Marcos, Aquino, Ramos, Estrada and Macapagal-Arroyo Administrations, a resolution to the conflict was nonexistent. Ferrer attributed the persistence of the conflict to six reasons. First, the state leadership was unclear on whether to adopt a war or peace response to the Moro challenge to the state. Policies had shifted from one administration to the other, with different administrations operating under diverse motivations and constraints. As a result, the process of pursuing a peace policy had not been sustained. Second, local and national governments have failed to adequately introduce greater redistributive measures to address the social and economic contexts of the Moro resistance and discontent. Third, existing structures and mechanisms under the central government did not support genuine regional autonomy and had not been able to effectively channel the competing political agenda of the different interest groups.

Fourth, political and economic groups who had benefited from the war conditions sabotaged peace initiatives by creating or perpetuating the use of violence. Fifth, there remained a lack of national consensus on the framework of conflict resolution that would in essence realign political power and threaten existing economic arrangements. Lastly, international contexts such as the US-led global war on terrorism and the rise of extremist networks of groups had complicated the domestic dynamics and created conditions for greater violence and destructive policies, if approached without due regard for local realities.

On the issue of conflict resolution, Ferrer called for a negotiated political settlement with the



*Dr Miriam Coronel Ferrer talking about the conflict in the southern Philippines*

MNLF and MILF, socio-economic, political and security sector reforms, the observance of human rights and international humanitarian law, the healing and reconstruction of affected communities, as well as a more equitable and inclusive global order. Ferrer stressed the need for a clear distinction between “insurgency” and “terrorism” and the corresponding state response, and recommended that the resolution of the Mindanao conflict be located within the larger process of democratisation.

### **CASE STUDY 3: SOUTHERN THAILAND**

**Joseph Liow** shared his impressions on the situation in Southern Thailand and the re-emergence of the Malay-Muslim resistance. He remarked that the “success” of Bangkok’s counterinsurgency efforts in the late 1980s and 1990s had lulled the government into a sense of complacency which only served to catch them off guard with the re-ignition of violence particularly since January 2004. Liow identified four key elements of the current operational theatre and tactics: a shift from rural areas to urban centres; the inclusion of both non-security government officials and civilians as targets; a move from conventional guerrilla warfare to covert and seemingly random acts of violence; and well-coordinated operations utilising bombings, drive-by shootings and beheadings. He raised however the salient point that the highest rate of casualties were the Malay-Muslims.

Four categories of violence prevalent in Southern



*Dr Joseph Liow giving a background of the insurgency in southern Thailand*

Thailand were identified. Violence engineered by organised groups normally targeted the state, tended to be larger in scale and was well-coordinated, often with active albeit unofficial cooperation between groups. In contrast, isolated acts of violence by individuals were more often revenge killings motivated by perceived injustices and with no defined objective or agenda. Criminal activity, the third type of violence, was classified as a consistent feature in the south and one that was taking advantage of a climate preoccupied with Islamic militancy. Liow listed the formation of new cells as the final category of violence. These small groups operated autonomously with loose ties to established insurgency groups, shared the ends of the insurgency but not necessarily the means, were responsible for the indiscriminate killings of civilians and hence posed the largest threat to the state.

On the causes of the conflict, Liow acknowledged that suspicions of international terrorist involvement in Southern Thailand were heightened after the JI Bali bombings in 2002 but noted that there remained very limited indication of the groups' interest in the global Jihadi ideology. He described economic depravity, state policies, international events, bureaucratic politics, criminality and the Malaysian factor as second-order causes that only aggravated existing grievances. The primary or first-order causes of the conflict were rooted in issues of history and identity, with the objectives decidedly local and insulated from the broader global Jihadi ideology. On where the conflict was headed, Liow cited

inter-agency rivalry, Bangkok's preference for a heavy-handed approach and Kuala Lumpur's reluctance to assist as reasons for pessimism. He noted however that negotiations, albeit difficult, were needed to prevent a perpetual replaying of the same narrative.

## DISCUSSION

The discussion started with a question from the floor on whether political systems mattered. It was stressed that the post-Thaksin situation in Thailand was crucial and represented an opportunity to empirically test the correlation between authoritarian governments and the escalation of conflict in the south. The participants pondered whether democratisation and increased openness would facilitate better conflict resolution. A remark was made that the southern region was the bastion of democratic support and that the mood in post-Thaksin Southern Thailand was celebratory. The key question would be whether the new government would be willing to pursue open channels of official dialogue with the militants. On the issue of democratisation, a participant commented that whilst on the one hand the absence of democracy was an enabling factor for the growth of terrorist groups, on the other democratisation in Indonesia and the relative political freedom in Malaysia had allowed JI to develop. The participant added that democracy was on the ground a lot messier than was normally considered.

The role of religion in the three conflicts was also investigated, with a discussion on whether religion was exploited for political purposes or whether it was a genuine grievance at the core of each conflict. It was noted that religious discrimination was manifested as political sentiment against the state and that such resentment was presented in the form of political mobilisation. Whilst religious discrimination was a severe problem at the social level where measures should be taken to address the social dimension of being a religious minority, religion was not at the core of the problem. The conflict in Southern Thailand was primarily an ethno-

nationalistic issue despite the mobilisation of religious metaphors and symbolisms. It was recommended that part of the solution was to engage with religious communities and disallow individuals to drift away to communities that viewed the world in simplistic terms.

Specifically on the issue of Southern Thailand, a question was asked whether the absence of the international Jihadi movement in the south was due to an internal or external lack of interest. It was pointed out that the absence could possibly be due to the fact that no external help had been offered. A participant reported however that Southern Thailand was indeed featured in several international jihadi websites and was referred to with some notion of external interest.

The discussion also focused on a further elaboration on the distinction between terrorism and insurgency, and on the suggestion of security sector reforms. A point was made that security sector reforms were required to address problems of politicisation, factionisation and poor governance. A move towards a more peace oriented policy was advocated by the participants. They highlighted that distinctions in labelling terrorism and insurgency must be made to ensure the use of standard military operations did not create problems of displacement and generate even more significant resentment. Guidelines needed to be established with increased investment in intelligence work. The role of the United States as perceived by the Philippine forces and whether US presence was helpful to security sector reforms were raised. It was stated that US investments, along with the specific recommendations emerging from the various recently- established commissions, were positive developments that were in favour of long term state-to-state relationships. There remained mixed feelings on the ground to US involvement, with some organisations welcoming US intervention and some communities still in remembrance of the armed military confrontation and hostilities in the early twentieth century. The relationship between the Philippines and the US was described as essentially a love-hate relationship.

The discussion underlined both the commonalities

and the unique characteristics of each conflict in view of all three presentations. It was salient to note that JI and its associated groups grew out of the Darul Islam movement and thus had a different internal dynamic from the other ethno-nationalist insurgency groups and regional separatist groups. On a broader scale, the problem with governance was an underlying pattern in all three conflicts. The combination of poor governance and unresolved issues was deemed a recipe for future political violence. It was also noted that the conflict in Indonesia revolved around the unresolved repression of Islam in society. In contrast, minoritisation as a product of colonial policies and carried forward by independent states in the post-colonial era was the key issue in Southern Philippines and Southern Thailand. Participants agreed that transforming the state to become more inclusive and participatory was crucial and should be framed within the larger picture of peacebuilding. A comment was made on the relevant role of religion and how it was being used and abused. Packaging conflicts as religious ones allowed the state to then bracket out its culpability and responsibility.



*The conference participants participating in the discussion*



## KEYNOTE ADDRESS

**ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR HO PENG KEE, SENIOR MINISTER OF STATE FOR LAW AND HOME AFFAIRS, SINGAPORE**

**Associate Professor Ho** remarked that recent global events were a stark reminder of the perilous world we currently live in today. Significantly, the attacks of September 11 brought onto the security agenda a new face of terrorism: first, terrorist attacks now had a tendency to inflict high death tolls and strike in the hearts of the general populace; second, terrorist groups such as al-Qaeda, Jemaah Islamiyah, Abu Sayyaf Group and their affiliates were enamoured by the ideology of creating a larger religious community and had managed to survive despite the absence of a clear structure and organisation. Associate Professor Ho noted that as a result, there had been increased pressure on the authorities, law enforcement and intelligence agencies to prevent and thwart terrorist attacks. He added that a vigilant public reporting suspicious activities and characters was a salient effort towards counter-terrorism but commented that it was often a perennial challenge for governments to maintain high vigilance among the general population.

Speaking on the terrorist threat, Associate Professor Ho identified several reasons for its continuation into the future. First, the root problems that gave rise to religious extremist terrorism cut across socio-economic imbalances and perceived local political grievances. Governments and the international community needed time to work together to resolve these root problems and prevent susceptible individuals from being exploited by terrorist organisations. Second, until and unless the space within which terrorist groups train their operatives was eliminated, the world would continue to be faced with terrorists who were willing to die for their cause. Third, the terrorist threat had become even more insidious, with the ideology of Jihad fuelling smaller extremist groups and elements.



*Associate Professor Ho Peng Kee delivering the keynote address*

Associate Professor Ho highlighted three implications of the terrorist threat on government responses. First, the infusion of extremist religious ideology in terrorism meant that governments were required to take into consideration the “other worldly appeal” of the terrorists’ ideology. Secular governments that had no expertise on religious matters thus needed to seek assistance and support of their religious communities. Second, governments must extricate extremist groups without destroying or undermining the religious community. In practice, this would mean government dialogues with the religious community, where change was effected from within the religious community. Lastly, governments must work towards a strategy of conciliation rather than division. In this respect, inter-faith dialogue would play an important role in enabling the better understanding of one another’s religion, beliefs and practices.

In closing, Associate Professor Ho drew on Singapore’s experience in developing appropriate government responses to terrorism. Religious groups such as the Singapore Islamic Scholars and Religious Teachers Association (Pergas) and the Religious Rehabilitation Group sought to promote a better understanding of Islam in Singapore’s secular society. In addition, the recently established Community Engagement Programme was a bottom-up approach to promote inter-faith dialogues and interaction by creating authentic and sustainable programmes, with the aim of sustaining the public’s vigilance and commitment to countering terrorism.

## SESSION II: INTRODUCTION TO SEPARATISM, INSURGENCY AND TERRORISM IN SOUTHEAST ASIA (CONTINUED)

### CASE STUDY 4: NEW PEOPLE'S ARMY (NPA)

**Roger Browning** began his presentation on “Understanding the Communist Party of the Philippines” by quoting from Jose Maria Sison’s address at the Communist Party of Philippines 23<sup>rd</sup> Anniversary. He emphasised that when “conditions are fluid”, the re-emergence of armed insurrection was predictable.

Browning proposed four aspects of understanding the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP). The first was the evolution of the CCP and its elements. This he traced through periods of US influence, the struggle against the Japanese in World War II and radical ideological changes in 1959. Second, he considered the nature of the CPP, National Democratic Front (NDF) and the New People’s Army (NPA). The character of Sison was infused into the doctrine of the CCP. Its campaign capitalised mainly on the social, political and economic problems in the country.

Third, he explained the various elements of the CPP/NDF/NPA strategy and noted that each organ had a different role to play. The NPA worked with the people and the mass base to garner support and spread its propaganda. The CPP was fundamentally responsible for policy and ideology. The NDF agitated, opposed and undermined the government through domestic and international efforts. A further list of organisations fell under the larger strategy. Fourth, Browning looked at the organisation of the CPP/NDF/NPA and described a Central Organisation which established a national congress and various committees, as well as party groups in mass organisations. He illustrated how this rebutted the labelling of the CPP as a “common criminal”.



*Mr. Roger Browning giving an introduction to the NPA insurgency in the Philippines*

Browning concluded with three factors that would cause the persistence of the insurgency problem: fluid and volatile social, political and economic situations to feed the problem; CCP’s ability to continue balancing its three primary powers; and passing of the insurgency from generation to generation.

### CASE STUDY 5: ACEH

An introduction to the insurgency problem in Aceh was given by **Anthony Smith**. He outlined the scope of his presentation as identifying the key elements of the conflict and concentrating on the themes for the root causes.

Smith stated that the Aceh problem was generally understood in religious terms, with the Free Aceh Movement (GAM) believed to be demanding a separate Islamic state. He suggested that this was not the entire story, and that separatist forces and Islamist forces were distinct. He highlighted Aceh’s memory of a precursor state as being similar to that of Pattani and Mindanao, strongly resisting previous Dutch attempts to gain sovereignty over it. Smith made mention of the emergence of religious leaders as the new elite, with these leaders being distinct from GAM- itself a full blown secessionist movement. He described the creation of the “Aceh Sumatra Liberation Front” by Di Tiro. Di Tiro glorified his family’s role in Acehnese history and stood strongly against dependency on Java.



*Dr. Anthony Smith addressing the conference on the Aceh conflict*

Smith listed three themes for the root causes of the conflict. First, the Indonesian government's military campaign and human rights abuses triggered a reaction from the people. Severe crackdowns during the 1989-1998 martial law period and military operations had seen brutal tactics transferred from East Timor to Aceh. Human rights violations against GAM were frequent in a bid to frighten its followers back into the fold. The Acehnese were treated as being disloyal to the Republic, where justice in Aceh was seen as only for the security forces. Second, the socio-economic conditions of the Aceh province served to create much dissent. Aceh produced a third of Indonesia's gas exports and 10 percent of its oil. Naturally, GAM was able to point to this as part of Aceh's potential viability for statehood. Yet despite its resources, Aceh province remained the 7<sup>th</sup> poorest out of 27 provinces. GAM had taken advantage of the people's belief that they were being economically exploited, at one point promising a million rupiah to each as spoils from the resources. Third, the issue of ethnic and religious identity was a root cause of the conflict. Smith noted that despite being one of the most conservative Islamic provinces, GAM had never explicitly asked for a separate Islamic state. On contrary, it had only used Islam nominally for support from the larger Muslim world, with most of its leaders remaining secular in their beliefs. Smith remarked that GAM was more ethno-separatist than Islamic. It also distanced itself from al-Qaeda. Aceh had a different identity dynamic, where it faced a fear of the loss of culture, race and language, and their particular interpretation of Islam, rather

than of Islam itself.

In the post-Suharto period, the situation worsened in terms of deaths. It had been evident by 1999 that the majority of Aceh was in favour of independence. Smith attributed this to three reasons: the incidences of high-profile massacres perpetrated by the security forces; President Wahid's speeches which raised the hopes for independence; and expectations raised by the referendums held in East Timor. Smith concluded by asserting that the solution to the conflict would have to address the socio-economic and military issues through a negotiated political settlement.

## **SUMMARY: PATTERNS OF POLITICAL VIOLENCE IN SOUTHEAST ASIA**

**Zachary Abuza** began his summary of all the previous case studies by asserting that classifying the various organisations was a difficult task. Groups could be classified as criminal, ideological, separatist, or even others. In his summary, Abuza raised nine points of similarity between the different case studies.

First, he noted that these groups operated in weak states at their weakest. This was when provision of social services was poor and local authority had collapsed. Systems were over-centralised and lacked consultative measures. Abuza went further to observe that the groups that had attempted to supplant the state were not entirely able to provide services and governance themselves. Indeed, their social services and consultation were not necessarily superior to the states'. In fact, it was mainly their propaganda which carried on uncurbed by the government that accounted to some extent for their support.

Second, Abuza observed that the groups in Southeast Asia had legitimate grievances and serious issues. Their problems were unresolved and often exacerbated by events and actions. Abuza remarked that the problems tended to transpire in regions with socio-economic disparities and marginalisation of groups. He

suggested that the problem was not merely poverty, pointing to the example of Southern Thailand which was more developed than many other parts of the country. The grievances stemmed more from an inequitable distribution of resources than from underdevelopment.

Third, Abuza referred to the political geography of the case studies and commented that many problems arose in border regions. The implications in each case however were varied. Border regions tended to be marginalised by the state and were not afforded the same attention and investment. Arbitrary borders had been previously imposed by colonial powers. Transnational opportunities also existed, which allowed problems to fester.

Fourth, human rights violations and inefficiencies of the state exacerbated the problems. The presentations had demonstrated that the security forces were often unprofessional and poorly trained, acting independently of their orders. Smith stated that the inefficiencies of the state in pursuing justice contributed to the impunity of the security forces. They had little to fear with no trials or investigations. Competition between the army and police for resources in the case of Indonesia led to conflicting efforts of the two groups and the withholding of information from each other. Corruption, drug running and informal taxations had complicated inefficiencies.

Fifth, Abuza highlighted that security forces were not well-equipped to deal with the organisations and the arms races that occurred within the insurgency context. This was often due to a characterisation of the problem as a low-intensity conflict, trivialising the need to better train and equip forces to counter them. Abuza recommended education and military programmes to depart from the traditional approaches to the problem.

Sixth, the funding and support from external actors was observed to be increasing, with insurgents in Southern Thailand and the Philippines supported by Syria and Libya.

Seventh, Abuza indicated that the growing



*Dr. Zachary Abuza talking about patterns of political violence in SE Asia*

sectarian violence of the conflicts was a cause for concern. He suggested that this concern was being ignored by the Canadian and US governments. Abuza noted that the different groups generally used various means of strengthening their cause through sporadic efforts aimed at increased recruitment and sectarian violence.

Eight, he asserted that the organisations were living and needed to be treated as such, with more attention paid to their evolution. The organisations had adopted new goals and political approaches whilst it appeared that governments continued to pursue the old groups and were slow to adapt to the changes of their adversary. For instance, the Philippines had neglected the growth of the MILF, allowing it to grow rapidly through the mosque system. Abuza suggested that it was important to look at the new perpetrators and their distinct strategic and tactical relationships, and command and control structures.

Ninth, Abuza stressed that all groups had displayed an ability to adapt to the new counter insurgency methods being deployed by security forces. He pointed out the adaptability of the different organisations and the way they responded. For instance, JI was a rather horizontal organisation which shifted to smaller tactics to avoid detection. Counter insurgency was a case of asymmetrical warfare, where the organisations were conservative with their resources.

Abuza concluded with two key concerns: first,

that the religious nature of the conflict was increasing and would have a regional impact; and second, he suggested that sensitive unaddressed issues had a serious potential to fester.

## DISCUSSION

The geographical location of the NPA insurgency and why it was prominent in those areas was deliberated. The NPA's involvement in 77 different provinces with guerrilla activities was described as having no specific strongholds but rather areas of fluctuating strength. The NDF was prevalent throughout the Philippines, raising widespread dissent and agitating at local levels. There was no general area of operations and given the mountainous terrain of the context, the NPA preferred to shift provinces and redeploy frequently. On whether there was any clear evidence of links between the NPA and the MILF, the point was made that it was possible that there was a short or long term alliance between the two, with tactical cooperation evident in the Perawi Lake Canal. It would be impossible to maintain close guerrilla front operations without any form of ties. It was noted that there was no positive evidence of cooperation in active operations, but was rather mainly limited to trainings, freedom of passage and tactical alliances.

A portrait of the type of people who supported the NPA and the basis on which they continued their support was requested. The impact of the insurgency on the political and military and economic aspects of the Philippine state was also questioned. A comment was made that the common interpretation of the NPA was "Nice People Around". The effectiveness of the NPA also included the operation of its other elements. The NDF opposed the government on a significant political level. The people accepted the NPA apathetically, not with an active rural support. With regards to the impact of the insurgency, the withdrawal of troops from Iraq had a significant political impact on the CCP. In addition, the political damage done by the NPA was reflected in the divided government response over the last 37 years.

The discussion also revolved around the next big trigger that could impact on the Philippines or Thailand and increase the prospects for peace. It was reflected that no new developments in Southern Philippines would be made due to the large presence of spoilers on both sides. These spoilers restricted security and economic dividends, and the stalling only further diminished the prospects for peace. The ceasefire was not tantamount to peace, even though neither side could afford war. With regards to Thailand, a point was made that the government's counter insurgency response had been a "disaster" thus far. A region of ungovernability had been created, and the government's attempts to control the scale of war and technical capacities had conversely enhanced the dynamics for war.

It was added that no one had predicted the breakthrough of peace in Aceh and that it had been put on the map of the world following the tsunami. GAM had lost the will to fight on, while the TNI could no longer enjoy such impunity to carry out its military operations. A participant however offered several considerations to the general belief that the tsunami had brought peace, highlighting instead the efforts of the newly elected President and the increased civil society pressure in Aceh that had emerged with democratisation and political change.

The perceived linkages between any of the organisations in Southeast Asia and whether the states could to an extent share perspectives on countering them were raised. A point was made that the groups were adaptable. Moral and advocacy support, but not monetary support, could be proved between the groups. The existence of training camps and cross-fertilisation between organisations was inevitable. Such evidence may be seen in the uncovering of truck bomb plans, similar to those in Bali, in the Philippines. Linkages were not only regional, with ideas on insurgency adopted from Iraq. Yet not all tactics on counter insurgency could be borrowed between states, given the varied distinctions. There also remained the failure of some states to learn from others' mistakes by continuing to adopt poor tactics.



*The conference participants listening to the discussion*

The question of whether security forces were part of the problem or the solution was raised. There was a general consensus that they were very often part of the problem. The TNI was branded as very frequently both the firestarter and the fire brigade. The participants agreed that the security forces ultimately needed to be made part of the solution. On the inefficiencies of development agencies and how it affected the peace process, the participants felt that it was not always true that positive development was a requirement of the peace process. They believed development was not always able to solve the problems and promoted education as necessary to make the public realistic in their expectations for development.

The use of the Internet in insurgency was highlighted. The Internet was viewed as a double edged sword with a potential to be used both as a propaganda machine and in the facilitation of crime and communication of insurgent ideas. The existence of 4500 websites linked to terrorism was pointed out. Conversely, the Internet could be used to pool information and strategies on law enforcement.

## **SESSION III: STATE RESPONSES TO SEPARATISM, INSURGENCY AND TERRORISM**

### **CASE STUDY 1: SOUTHERN PHILIPPINES**

**Jon Lindborg** introduced the scope of his

presentation on “US Responses to Insurgency in Mindanao” as primarily centred on the tactics of development programs and responses to issues in the Philippines. He sought to cover the interests and approaches of the US government, briefly introduce the Mindanao context, cover the 3 Ds of the US National Security Strategy, and finally summarise the lessons learnt and the remaining challenges.

Lindborg remarked that post-September 11, many had realised the need for development as an equivalent tool alongside defence and diplomacy in dealing with counter terrorism and insurgency. Condolezza Rice had declared transformation as a key to winning the war on terror. A report after September 11 had suggested that underlying conditions were present for insurgency in the Philippines but had qualified this by stating that poverty did not single-handedly cause terrorism and insurgency. More significant was the “poverty of dignity”, where the frustration and humiliation of a lack of recognition led to insurgency. Insurgents had different approaches based on their ideology and beliefs.

Lindborg outlined two key elements of US policies. The first covered prosperity, economic growth and cooperative trade and investment in the region. It also focused on peace and security, increasing defence and counter terrorism capabilities. The second aspect of US policy was aimed at encouraging good governance, especially the rule of law and anti-corruption. The US recognised its relationship with the Philippines as a maturing bilateral one based on shared international and regional interests.

In introducing the Mindanao context, Lindborg noted that Mindanao was the second largest island in the Philippines and made up a third of its territory. Despite vast resources, it remained the seventh poorest out of ten provinces. It had poor infrastructure, high crime and conflict, and poor access to social services. In terms of social indicators, it ranked second last amongst all regions. Lindborg remarked that security and peace was the government’s top priority in Mindanao.

Lindborg elaborated on the 3Ds of the US National Security Strategy: diplomacy, development and defence. Diplomacy referred to the fundamental exchanges and activities between state and organisations, enhanced by the establishment of the Security Enhancement Board. Two key elements of diplomacy were public diplomacy and law enforcement cooperation. Development assistance in the Philippines was extremely active, with US\$ 250 million provided since 2001 to reinforce the government's efforts. 27 projects and more than 600 staff were under USAID in the Philippines. Together, this had a concrete impact in improving the quality of life. USAID also focused on the important role of the private sector in enhancing development in conflict affected areas. It adopted a policy of encouraging the active involvement of private firms in development activities.

Defence focused on containing and reducing the environment open and willing to support terrorist activities and ideology. The Joint Special Operations Task Force - Philippines was tasked with eliminating this environment for terrorists. It consolidated the roles of civil, military and medical units. Lindborg highlighted that the Basilan success story in defeating the ASG had since been adopted as the Philippines model. Military and civil action had been combined with humanitarian efforts in 2002, transforming the environment of the island. He remarked that the unified approach between USAID and the military had proved to be a huge success.

Finally, Lindborg drew on some of the lessons learnt. He stressed the need for the empowerment and training of local capacities. He made known that USAID worked with its "Filipino force", preferring to recruit locals wherever possible to encourage the sustainability of operations. Cost-sharing with local communities, strengthening local governance authorities and promoting the involvement of private sector were practices that USAID had observed to result in positive effects. Improving the quality of life and planning long term development simultaneously had also shown itself to be effective. Lindborg concluded by affirming that whilst development was



*Mr. Jon Lindborg giving his speech on the state responses to the southern Philippines conflict*

necessary, it was not the sole solution and was not substitutable for a lasting political solution.

## CASE STUDY 2: SOUTHERN THAILAND

**Francesca Lawe-Davies** analysed former Prime Minister Thaksin's response to the insurgency in Southern Thailand. She remarked that the recent coup which had thrown Thaksin out of power may have provided an opportunity to solve the insurgency problem. This opportunity needed to be grounded in rebuilding democratic processes and institutions, obtaining a fresh approach and leadership to deal with the insurgents, and rethinking the state's policy on the conflict.

She categorised three problems faced by the state in dealing with the insurgency. In her opinion, these caused what was initially a splinter group of rebels to fester and turn into an insurgency. The first problem was the failure to consult with local government and officials on political issues. By replacing local government officials with his supporters, Thaksin's personal ambition had hampered his handling of the problem. There was an initial denial of the insurgency problem. Thaksin had previously passed it off as banditry and criminal activity, failing to notice the patterns of dissent and attacks against the state. He also dismantled the institutional structures for coping with the insurgents, transferring security issues from the military to the police. He disbanded two leading agencies in the security network, fostering a legacy of mistrust

between the army and police. Lawe-Davies also described a 7 point plan raised by the National Reconciliation Commission. She highlighted that the plan was not heeded by the government and failed to exhibit a genuine desire for resolving the conflict.

The second problem was that the state was guilty of using excessive force to deal with the insurgency and had failed to provide just recourse for human rights abuses. Thaksin had relied almost exclusively on force to deal with the insurgents through arbitrary arrests, raids and mass crackdowns. More than a hundred people disappeared following the declaration of martial law. Lawe-Davies drew the link between excessive force and fear and resentment, noting that such antagonism had been manipulated into sympathy, support and even recruitment for the insurgents' cause. She recounted two incidents of human rights abuses by the security forces in 2004, where the state dealt insensitively and unjustly in the wake of brutal violence and killings. The state had failed to grant justice for the breaches by prosecuting security forces. She noted that Thaksin's emergency decree for National Reconciliation failed to bring about change. It granted immunity to security forces and suspended the jurisdiction of the Administrative Court over human rights abuses. Eighteen months of martial law had brought few arrests and even less understanding of the leadership and causes of the insurgency.

The final predicament was the failure of the Thaksin administration to develop a consistent policy to deal with the problem. The rivalry between Thaksin and the military meant that cooperation between the two was difficult, with their efforts often undermining that of the other. The differing cultures and solutions each adopted, as well as poor leadership control, made for varying strategies on either side.

Lawe-Davies commented that there might be a positive side in the departure of Prime Minister Thaksin. She noted that the upcoming Administration could enhance the prospects of a solution if it resolved the inter-agency feud,



*Ms. Francesca Lawe-Davies addressing the conference on the responses of the Thaksin administration to the southern Thailand insurgency*

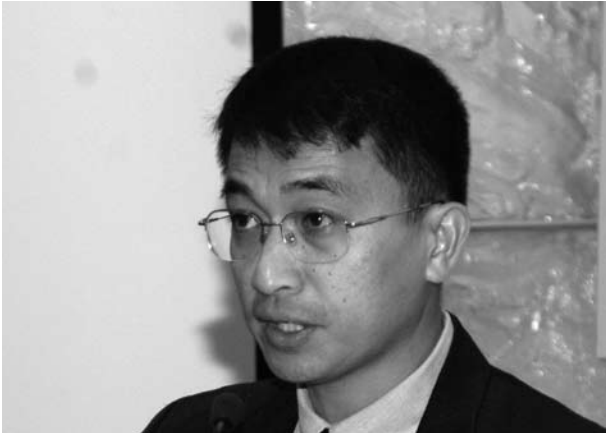
adopted a common and unified policy to deal with the insurgents, and gave further consideration to the NRC's 7 point plan.

### **CASE STUDY 3: NEW PEOPLE'S ARMY (NPA)**

**Dennis Acop** began his presentation by noting that the question of how to solve the insurgency problem in the Philippines had plagued the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GPR) since the Communist Party of the Philippines and the National People's Army (NPA) were established in 1969 and 1969 respectively. He described the Armed Forces of the Philippines' 2010 deadline to end the insurgency problem as the main reason why such aggressive action had been undertaken. The hawks in the government had become more dominant. Acop also outlined Operation Freedom Watch, with its strategic principles of Holistic Approach, "Win-Hold-Win", Sustained Operations and its operational principles of "Clear-Hold-Support", Special Operations Team and the Integrated Territorial Defence System.

Acop observed that the number of Guerrilla Fronts in Philippines had increased. He traced the increase of numbers over years to 107 in 2005. The NPA strength stood at 6,828 and the assorted firearms numbered 6,000. He described the "White Areas" dealing with legal, semi-legal, and illegal boundaries as a challenge to the security forces. He remarked that the CPP and the National Democratic Front were legal





*Colonel (Ret) Dennis Acop talking about the state responses to the NPA insurgency*

organisations while the NPA engaged in killings and illegal activities.

He outlined four reasons why the current state response to the insurgency problem would not succeed. First, a hawkish approach to the problem would only serve to further alienate people who had legitimate reasons to oppose. Second, security efforts without the involvement of the civilian development stakeholders would not be effective; rather it would aggravate the situation. He noted that the problem was not merely a military one but a multi-dimensional one. Third, he suggested that the most effective way to end the insurgency was to address its root causes. The dysfunctions in the political-social-economic structure needed to be corrected. Finally, Acop opined that the shortcomings of the government would serve to exacerbate the problems in the country. Some counter-insurgency efforts were designed to divert attention from other problems within the country.

#### **CASE STUDY 4: ACEH**

Speaking on “Aceh: One Year after Helsinki”, **Leonard Sebastian** underlined the reasons for optimism in Indonesia, particularly of the man behind the peace process. In his opinion, the election of Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono had resulted in a platform of change with increased economic growth, poverty alleviation, legal reforms and political resolution. SBY had been a part of previous initiatives and was deeply

involved in previous negotiations with the Free Aceh Movement (GAM). He had relevant linkages and expertise in the area, reopened negotiations immediately on being elected and contacted the GAM leadership in Aceh and abroad. He had pressed on despite early setbacks in negotiation and despite the risk to his reputation. The tsunami further consumed his time and offered an opportunity to call for solidarity on all fronts. SBY had also offered to enter into reconciliation under the context of a “special autonomy”. GAM could not negotiate with its leadership in Sweden, and the President called for support from the Swedes.

The first meeting in January 2005 had been a hostile exchange with little sign of compromise. However after the third meeting, GAM had finally been persuaded to drop claims for independence, and practical features of the political solution were discussed in the fourth and fifth meetings. Substantial progress in the arms and amnesty aspects of the agreement were achieved and a comprehensive political settlement was signed in a Memorandum of Understanding on 15 August 2005. GAM had agreed to a “special autonomy” with a new law on governing Aceh and many concessions had been made on the part of the government. Aceh had autonomy with most public affairs sectors and the government eventually withdrew troops and police numbers in stages. GAM was encouraged in economic and cultural participation, giving up its arms and weapons. One of the most important aspects of the peace process was the allocation of resources, with 70 percent of Aceh’s output scheduled to remain within the province. External auditors were appointed to ensure this. In addition, the Aceh Monitoring Mission was accepted to monitor human rights, reintegration, legislative reform, amnesty cases and violations of the settlement.

Sebastian outlined four factors that had contributed to the success of the peace process. First, he emphasised the integral role of the President in brokering the peace deal. Civil emergency status had been extended and goodwill and peace had been signalled through various initiatives.



*Dr. Leonard Sebastian delivering his speech on Jakarta's response to the Aceh conflict*

Regular contact between the government and GAM was crucial. Second, military operations against GAM had been relatively successful. Aimed at GAM military bases, it significantly reduced the capacity of GAM by 5,000. GAM communication and supply lines were severely disrupted. Third, the impact of the tsunami was likely the most consequential on the negotiations. 150,000 people were killed, including many police and military personnel. 600,000 were rendered homeless and numerous government officials and local government capacities were lost. Most importantly, it forced a profound re-evaluation of the situation by both sides. Fourth, pressure from international donors in the aftermath of the tsunami required access and concessions by both sides in order to facilitate the relief and recovery efforts.

Sebastian concluded by summarising the lessons learnt. He asserted that the indirect strategy had its merits and that the resolution of insurgency problems required a combination of the military and non-military approach. Despite the success of the military operations, disarmament had ultimately been voluntary. In addition, lessons had been learnt from previous attempts by the Habibie and Megawati Administrations to broker peace. In those cases, a lack of political goodwill had resulted in a poor perception of GAM and an inability to win over the hearts and minds of the Acehnese. The new political impetus of SBY gave a driving force to peace. Sebastian noted that success required patience and flexibility. The negotiations had only one non-negotiable

- the non-independence of Aceh. It had a flexible list of items and strong spirit of compromise. Sebastian highlighted that peace would only be sustainable if it was supported by a wider range of national actors. Both the army and strong public support needed to be incorporated into peace efforts through responsible action. Finally, the leadership of both parties was extremely important. The example of Aceh demonstrated the possibilities that strong leadership affords. Investment of political capital in the resolutions of issues was deemed critical.

## DISCUSSION

The discussion began with an important point on why lessons were not learnt. States were often very reluctant to tone their military activities down, even when it was apparent that the hardliner approach was not yielding results. A number of insightful reasons were proposed: degraded political legitimacy; a sense of impunity post-September 11; and a fundamental threat to state unity. It was asserted that much of the problem lay in phraseology, with the “Global War on Terror” often giving the impression that the enemy was an ideology. While root causes needed to be addressed, underlying problems could not always be solved immediately. Patience and judgment were essential to avoid jumping into the military option. A suggestion was made to build up the community of “good guys” to crowd out the “bad guys” or negate their efforts.

It was added that the issue of US security was contentious and that the Indonesian approach was generally a mix of learned military experiences and contact with the US. The military approaches to GAM were generally recognised as successful but needed to be followed up with structural attempts to bolster peace. With regards to legitimacy, it was remarked that it would have been difficult to get support for negotiations in Parliament without the occurrence of the tsunami. The dynamics in Indonesia required the building of a coalition and the removal of spoilers. A participant further suggested that

the success of the TNI military operations in Aceh could have rubbed off onto the mindset of the AFP, encouraging them to pursue the military option to incapacitate the adversary into negotiations.

The lack of global awareness of the problem, especially in Southern Thailand, and its effect on over-militarisation was highlighted. In addition, the military approach was not only mandated by the hardliners in the government but often also by the general majority. Promotions in the army were given not for community building efforts and civil-military relations, but for the killing of terrorists and insurgents. Civil military skills were lacking and civil society was not harnessed in decision making and peace-building efforts.

A participant queried on the economic reasons for continuing the war in Indonesia with an appreciation that the problems were also motivated by the breakdown of democratic governance and romantic reasons for defending a religious cause. Noting that the tsunami had wiped out much of the economic benefits of the region, the participants wondered whether development and diplomacy were enough in dealing with the insurgency problem. It was opined that there might be a problem with the peace process in the future with regard to the distribution of resources. Although Aceh's total revenue was increasing, so were its poverty levels. The upcoming elections were observed as a key point in deciding the next group of officials to subsequently govern the province. Resource management and distribution as well as the successful reintegration of ex-fighters into society were identified as big issues facing the province. It was remarked that Aceh was plagued with the "resource curse", where increased endowment increased dissatisfaction with the manner of distribution. The province would have to be given resources to manage if offers of autonomy were to be taken seriously. Decentralisation was holding the states together and investment in capacity building was necessary to ensure accounting and transparency for resources.

The role of public opinion in the insurgency

problems and whether it was a factor in pushing the military options was raised. The two strategies of stability through force or through reform were alluded to as a "chicken and egg" problem. The changing civil-military affairs and growing literature gave security forces a greater opportunity to utilise them to their advantage in dealing with the problem. This would give public opinion an increased role in future policy making. It was added that the Parliament and President were controlled by the military and public opinion might hence not be translated into action through the legislative bodies. Furthermore, public opinion in the Philippines was often divided with no clear consensus on what came under the government's purview. The heavy handed approach as seen in the Philippines was asserted to be an immature reaction of the troops on the ground and not a solution to the problem.

## WORKING LUNCH

### **MR PIETER FEITH, HEAD OF THE ACEH MONITORING MISSION, ON "LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE ACEH PEACE PROCESS"**

**Pieter Feith** prefaced his talk with a description of the Aceh Monitoring Mission (AMM). The AMM efforts at attempting to solve the conflict in Aceh, albeit relatively small-sized and time-limited, were part of a broader context of strengthening security and stability in both Indonesia and the region. Feith noted that the AMM was the first European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) mission in Asia, and that through the ESDP, the European Union (EU) sought to engage in effective multilateralism in support of the United Nations. He remarked that the EU had undertaken military and civilian crisis management operations in Africa, the Balkans and the Middle East since achieving initial operational capability five years ago. In so doing, the EU aimed to become a global power but not a super power.

Feith identified working with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) as the

key ingredient of the mission. He pointed out that both groups contributed their comparative strengths and skills: the EU provided the planning and financial framework and ASEAN offered its unique knowledge of local languages and customs. The mission was thus fully integrated across nationalities and civilian and military expertise, with transparent reporting back to the participating capitals and to Brussels.

Feith pointed out that the Helsinki agreement brokered by former President of Finland Martti Ahtisaari ended the thirty years of low level but continuous conflict that disrupted local civil society, damaged Indonesia's reputation and affected regional stability. He highlighted that the AMM mandate was to monitor, facilitate and build confidence without establishing a dependency culture. He stressed that the peace process should be self-sustainable when the mission was to end on 15 December 2006. Feith attributed the achievements of the AMM to three factors: first, the Helsinki agreement provided clear provisions and timelines with minimal gaps to be filled by the implementing authority; second, implementation was entrusted to a credible and professional coalition with significant political leverage; and third, the presence of strong political will among the parties to make the process work.

Addressing the wider aspects, Feith recognised that a refreshing new openness had emerged in the post-Suharto era, with the leadership publicly accepting the mistakes of the past and realising the need for accountability whenever violations occurred. He commended the increased global responsibility on the part of Indonesia, noting that Indonesia's policies and efforts at conflict resolution were of direct interest to the international community.

In the discussion that followed, the role of non-governmental organisation (NGO) mediators was addressed. It was acknowledged that whilst NGO mediators undertook highly commendable work in the past, they were more easily pushed away when governments found the process unfolding in a manner no longer in line with



*Mr. Pieter Feith talking about lessons learned from the Aceh Peace Process*

national interests. It was instead better to have a coalition of governments with better political leverage and resources in the event where outside mediation was invited.

The performance of the Southeast Asian representatives in the AMM, especially in light of a possible ASEAN role in peacekeeping efforts, was examined. The willingness of the Southeast Asian governments to make available their best officers was emphasised. The Philippine contribution, in particular, was exemplary. A point was made that the Aceh experience clearly demonstrated that it was rewarding for the ASEAN countries to work together. In this respect, hope was expressed that the establishment of the ASEAN Security Community (ASC) would not move at too slow a pace. The ASC was envisaged to encompass increased cooperation and exchange of information, as well as a mechanism of specific early warning shared assessments on where conflicts may potentially occur. The EU would encourage and support the ASC within this context. It was highlighted that regional actors were extremely important in mitigating sensitivities and bringing additional expertise. Examining planning capabilities, financial arrangements and a more effectual system for force generation were deemed necessary in order for ASEAN to create a more effective crisis management mechanism.

The application of Sharia law in Aceh and whether it would lead to the possibility of renewed



*The conference participants contributing to the analysis*

instability was discussed. It was noted that the AMM mandate was to monitor and observe human rights in the context of reintegration without assuming the wider burden of examining the application of Sharia law. The application of Sharia law had been controversial and it would be difficult to assess what Sharia would mean in Aceh. It was opined that the leadership after the elections would determine how much the more visible parts of Sharia, for instance corporal punishment, would be enforced. Without overdramatising the situation, it was perceived that Sharia could discourage international presence and foreign direct investments in a period where Aceh was still struggling to overcome the tsunami effects and stabilise in the aftermath of armed conflict.

## SESSION IV: WHAT SHOULD THE UNITED STATES BE DOING?

### ENGAGING WITH CIVIL SOCIETY IN ASIA: A VIEW FROM THE ASIA FOUNDATION

From the perspective of The Asia Foundation, **Douglas Ramage** explained that the foundation engaged with civil society by supporting Asian initiatives for better governance, the reduction of poverty and ensuring women benefited from development in the region. He noted that the foundation differed from others in that religious organisations were the primary focus of the foundation's work. He traced this aspect to

the 1960s when the foundation had discovered that religious organisations were the most effective civil society organisations to partner with in supporting efforts to reduce poverty and improve governance. Ramage commented on the centrality of religion in Asian society and how it played into striving for better governance. Support for religious-based initiatives was thus often more credible and cost effective than other direct foreign-led initiatives.

Ramage introduced four examples from Indonesia to illustrate the involvement of religious organisations and the nexus between governance, terrorism and security issues: elections and Islamic organisations; poverty reduction; police reform; and judiciary reform. He remarked that the main Muslim civil society organisations in Indonesia had been crucial to the country's democratic transition and had proved to be the most effective civil society elements in promoting free and fair elections. The delivery of civic education messages by religious leaders had a particular moral authority in society as they spoke in a local cultural context. Ramage also highlighted that the organisations' non-partisan institutional commitment bound them to a secular process and ensured effective election monitoring.

As a consequence of Indonesia's prioritising of political and institutional reforms, democracy had not yet appreciably reduced poverty. Ramage stated that the foundation was working with donor communities in Indonesia to involve Muslim organisations in policy reform to benefit the poor. It was found that such initiatives resulted in greater resonance than other private sector organisations making a similar case. On police reform, Ramage made known that very little international attention had been paid to the notion of a civilian police force in a democratic society. A study by The Asia Foundation had revealed an enormous distrust between the police and the citizens, but found that they were interested in turning to non-partisan intermediaries as interlocutors. As a result, the foundation had supported a pioneering effort to build a community-oriented policing



*Dr Douglas Ramage talking about Asia Foundation's work in Indonesia*

programme in Yogyakarta which in turn reduced crime by 25 percent. Ramage stressed that better relations between the police and community had significant implications for counter-terrorism. On the civil society dimension in judiciary reform, he pointed out that there existed many public-private law reform partnerships. In closing, Ramage emphasised the necessity of recognising religious organisations as civil society organisations and of supporting civil society-public agency partnerships to improve governance.

## US POLICIES IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

**Douglas Macdonald** started by providing a brief framework of US foreign policy. He commented that the default US foreign policy of isolationism was due partly to a certain kind of hypercriticism targeted at the US. Whilst acknowledging that the US stood as a symbol of what many people did not like, Macdonald opined that such association distorted behaviour and was not going to play into any long term sensible and moderate internationalism on the American people. On the issue of unilateralism, Macdonald argued out that US foreign policy in Asia was better than in other areas. To his knowledge, there had not been any unilateral US military action in the region since September 11 and the US now had closer ties with India and Japan. He acknowledged however that US involvement in Asia was based on bilateralism, rather than multilateralism. Macdonald cited a quantitative study from Ohio State University that suggested a positive

correlation between a perception of military dependence and terrorist activity. The implication drawn was that the US should leave far smaller footprints militarily. Macdonald remarked that US assistance should be given to Indonesia, Southern Philippines and Southern Thailand but cautioned that the aid should not be so large as to lead to future political consequences. He made a further point that the US was losing badly in the war of ideas and the winning of hearts and minds. In terms of reformism, Macdonald proposed that governments adopted a dual or hyphenated identity. He saw this as a reasonable compromise that would avoid complete autonomy.

On the issue of China, Macdonald analysed that the key difference between Australia and the US was on the rise of China. Australia perceived the rise as an opportunity whilst the US saw it as a potential threat. Recent developments however have been more positive, with the smoothing over of economic issues and increased naval activities between China and the US. As a final point, Macdonald asserted that US foreign policy in Asia had changed for the better over the last year. According to Macdonald, the shift from so-called unilateralism to establishing several instruments of non-military and non-security policies was an intelligent development.



*Dr. Douglas MacDonal giving his speech on U.S. foreign policy in Southeast Asia*

## AMERICA AND THE SECURITY OF SOUTHEAST ASIA: KEYSTONE OF REGIONAL ORDER OR KEYSTONE COP?

**Tan See Seng** prefaced his presentation with a reference to an article he had co-authored with a fellow IDSS colleague. The article, written prior to September 11, had argued that the key role for the US in Southeast Asia was to serve as the keystone of regional order. This equated

to the exercising of power and prerogative to promote as well as protect US interests in the region, whilst also appreciating the restraint and deep sensitivity to the region's complexities and idiosyncrasies. Tan opined that the need for the US as keystone of regional order was even more apparent in the post-September 11 era. He noted that the Southeast Asian nations begrudgingly acknowledged the US role as Asia's great stabiliser but were also mindful of recent developments such as the War on Terror and the justification of the Iraqi campaign. Tan was in agreement that the issue was not so much what the US had done in Southeast Asia, but rather what the US had done in other regions, specifically the Middle East. This contributed to a rise of anti-US sentiment in certain segments of Southeast Asian countries.

According to Tan, three elements would be salient in assessing whether the US could improve its image in Southeast Asia and arrest the drift towards regional alienation: first, the willingness on the part of the US to revise the contentious parts of its foreign policy; second, the level of US commitment to and support of regional institutions, in particular ASEAN, and peacekeeping efforts; and third, the critical component of Southeast Asian governments and societies to avoid both the tendency of blame displacement and the temptation to unfairly criticise and target the US.

Taking into consideration that there was no single perspective that adequately described how Southeast Asia viewed the US, Tan identified four different views. The first perceived the US as a benign hegemon and argued that the US was a main stay in Southeast Asian security discourse. The second view observed the US as a rouge state. The third revolved around the notion of the US as a trigger happy sheriff, with perceptions fuelled by US foreign military interventions in the post-Cold War period. The final perspective upheld that the US remained the only credible keeper of regional order and the only global-scale exporter of security. Tan maintained that the practice of strategic restraint by the US needed to be augmented by the avoidance of



*Dr. Tan See Seng addressing the conference on the U.S. role in maintaining regional order*

excessive militarism. Tan concluded that the US should engage in greater soft power options and diplomacy.

## DISCUSSION

The notion of strategic communications and how the label of the Global War on Terror (GWOT) was interpreted in the region were examined. An observation was made that there existed a popular anti-American and subversive culture even within the US. An examination of the levels and instruments that should be adapted to Southeast Asia was recommended. It was opined however that the initiative should come from the three conflict-ridden countries and be targeted specifically to the country's culture. On the topic of language, the use of the term "moderate Muslim" in US foreign policy discourse was perceived as a grave mistake. Such terminology gave the misperception that the US was looking for a "good" Muslim. The use of "mainstream Muslim" was recommended instead. There was a general consensus that the ideological discursive battle needed to be fought but that it was insufficient. It was remarked that public diplomacy outreach needed to be commensurate with words and actions. The fact that not enough attention was given to positive US responses was attributed to the lack of a coherent message to tie them all together.

On the issue of identity, a participant remarked that Thailand actually allowed its people to

practice dual-identity. The problem however was more ethnic than religious and revolved more around the notion of the Malay language and culture. The crisis was more about the Thai government's inability to accept the notion of Malayness than about being a Muslim. It was added that the conflict in Southern Thailand aptly demonstrated the importance of framing the problem in a correct manner. Consistently framing it in religious terms would only lead the international community to go around in circles.

The willingness of interlocutors to carry the important messages necessary in winning the ideological battle was assessed. It was stressed that the collective articulation of such messages on behalf of the US needed to be implemented. Two key factors on which the implementation rested were identified: the readiness for a measure of self reflection and self criticism on the part of Southeast Asia; and the avoidance of simply making the US the scapegoat in the region. In ensuring the messages were delivered without seeming to be agents and propaganda of the US, it was recommended that they be packaged as being part of "global citizens" and "responsible stakeholders".

The discussion noted that the US strategy in Southeast Asia appeared to mainly stem from supporting civil society and providing developmental aid. A question was raised on whether the increased European profile in the region that resulted from the AMM would lead the US to undertake a similar role. A participant remarked that the AMM was primarily focused on conflict resolution and that the US had a significant role in governance in Aceh. The participant was of the view that the development community was on the right path.

The language used by the Bush Administration in the past few weeks was raised. Whilst some participants remarked that the present type of framing was very problematic and served to worsen the situation, others were intrigued by the US's sensitivity on the complexities of Southeast Asia. It was highlighted however that the Bush

Administration needed to appreciate that the people in Southeast Asia, and in particular the faith communities, were knowledgeable of the events in the Middle East and thus reverted in more responsive fashions.

## **BREAKOUT GROUP REPORTS**

### **GROUP 1: SOUTHERN PHILIPPINES- IDENTIFYING LESSONS LEARNT AND THE NEXT STEPS FORWARD**

The group introduced the scope of their discussion, which encompassed the three main groups present in Southern Philippines – the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG), the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) and the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP)/ New People's Army (NPA). The group noted that the issues involved were extremely complex.

The group came to three main lessons learnt. First, a military solution, or at least a solely military solution, was not viable. The group recommended adopting a "carrot and stick" approach instead. Second, it emphasised the need for "good governance". The group went further to unpack the commonly used phrase and listed the values of resisting corruption and graft, transparency, rule of law, de-centralisation, provision of social services and the de-marginalisation of groups. Third, the group acknowledged that the Philippines faced a problem of implementation and needed to build a comprehensive political solution. The main problem cited was a weak state, necessitating legal and constitutional affairs.

The group then focused on the next steps in dealing with individual insurgent groups. Regarding the ASG, the group concluded that they should be treated primarily as a criminal group and not be given 'political oxygen' by the media in branding them as terrorists. Efficient law enforcement would be crucial in dealing with this. With the MILF, the ceasefire was seen to be positively holding up, with the next step being the introduction of further development projects into the political solution. The group regarded



the CPP/ NPA as a different issue, noting that it had not made any territorial claims. The military solution was seen as unviable and the group recommended a similar approach to that in Aceh- of entering negotiations not with a list of conditions, but rather a list of non-negotiables and leaving all else flexible.

## **GROUP 2: COUNTERING TERRORISM IN SOUTHEAST ASIA**

The group was tasked to look at the question of “what’s working, what’s not, and how to improve?” It was suggested that the group did not wish to offer solutions, but rather to define key issues. The group noted that the problems were multi-faceted and multi-dimensional and that unique circumstances called for unique solutions.

The group looked at the aspects of action. The use of terminology was first highlighted. In the group’s opinion, the “enemy” was not properly defined, resulting in a difficulty in finding the means to counter it. The question of whether the enemy comprised a “people” or “idea” was raised. The role of democracy and whether it had allowed the growth of terrorism was also deliberated. The group concluded that democracy had a general positive effect and its principles did not necessarily support terrorism.

The group then looked at the role of political participation, noting that more often than not, it was positive to encourage the participation of Islamic and other groups in the political process. This was seen to help moderate the extremist views and encourage interaction with other political elements. The group also compared community and government level engagements, noting that the best results and opportunities came at the grassroots level. Finally the group sought to evaluate ongoing counter-terrorist efforts, in particular the tracking down of terrorists and the limiting of their freedom of action. The group recommended that the focus should not merely be limited to causes or short term symptoms.

With regard to the question of future directions,

the group offered three propositions. First, build on ongoing programmes, with a focus on activities that fostered good governance, community involvement and education. Second, the group advocated not to “do less”, but to “do things smarter”, taking into consideration regional and global circumstances. Finally, the group emphasised patience, noting that the environment was a continuous one where long term programmes were applicable. A problem that had festered over decades could not be expected to be solved in years. Rather, there would be decades to counter the issues.

## **GROUP 3: IDENTIFYING REGIONAL NEEDS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR US ENGAGEMENT TO ADDRESS CURRENT AND POTENTIAL THREATS**

The group reminded the participants that solutions to political violence in Southeast Asia had no silver bullet. The group’s findings were presented from the point of view of Washington. The important role of academics to advise the policy makers in Washington and to provide them with a good analysis with which they could frame their policy was highlighted.

The group offered suggestions for the role of regional centres to ensure a bottom-up analysis of the problems in collaboration with regional sources. Linkages needed to be built with forward deployed US authorities like embassies and experts. National goals should then be built with these analyses. The group also noted that there was a need to avoid making things difficult for the functioning of private foundations by bringing attention to them and presenting them as targets. Strategic communications was deemed vital with respect to the manner in which reports were framed. Positive diplomacy by publishing the good work of development agencies was particularly helpful.

The role of democracy was highlighted by the group. Democracy gave Islamic groups an opportunity to express their views and make their concerns heard. The group noted the evolution of Islamic groups and felt that the democratic processes would allow the easier integration



*Dr Joseph Liow, Dr Greg Barton, Dr John Harrison and Dr Ian Storey delivering the concluding remarks*

of their changing concerns. The group finally mentioned the importance of overlapping initiatives. They remarked that institutes such as APCSS and IDSS worked on the Track 2 level, whilst ASEAN worked on the national Track 1 level, buying legitimacy and attention by involving government agencies.

#### **GROUP 4: US POTENTIAL INFLUENCE IN SOUTHERN THAILAND**

The group noted that the historical approach of the Thaksin Administration had been brutal and heavy handed and had caused the insurgency problem to fester. There was a general consensus that the separatist movement in Southern Thailand was more along a Malay cultural divide than an Islamic one.

The role of the US government in the Thai government's approach was modest and small, limited to the conduct of specific trainings. The group agreed that the Thai government had lost credibility within a short period but felt that it was similarly possible to rebuild it within a short period. For this to be possible, a fair handling of crimes and building contact with the police was necessary. Professionalism and better training in cultural and linguistic understanding would further enhance police-civil relations.

With regard to US influence, the group felt that its role could be extended in various ways. The US could offer its expertise to promote

cross-cultural classes by teaching the need to understand the differences that exist. Influence could be exerted on the Thai police leadership. In addition, the influence of the US could be extended to include Thai universities whose activities influenced Thai thought. Brochures could be used as an information tool to explain the rights of civilians to all, including the police. The laws and regulations of the emergency decree could be made comprehensible to the public. Finally, the US could be involved in the capacity building of casework and legal support of the Thai police.

## **CONCLUDING REMARKS**

**Joseph Liow** thanked the participants for their inputs into what was a very fruitful conference. He raised three points in an attempt to summarise the conference's main take-aways. First, he made the point that a military solution was not a viable solution on its own. He noted that in most of the cases, the militants did not have much support of the general populace. The general population could be harnessed and utilised to promote principles of good governance.

Second, Liow commented on the possibilities and constraints of dialogue and negotiation in each of the case studies. He described the positive outcomes in Aceh, the stalled dialogue in the Philippines and the informal communication

in the absence of institutionalised dialogue in Southern Thailand. Finally, he spoke about the importance of defining the adversary. The political space allowed to the adversary was a sensitive issue, with dialogue inadvertently legitimising the movement. Taking into consideration other factors, however, there remained a necessity to continue dialogue.

**Gregory Barton** expressed his appreciation for the participants' high quality and in-depth presentations. He also commended the level of the discussion sessions. He raised several points as main findings. He felt that the next steps forward involved engaging the communities across the board, not merely those that were deemed progressive or similar. He noted the need to include those whose views were not necessarily congruent. Barton also highlighted the common consensus against violence, which provided the opportunity to build on similarities such as tolerance and understanding, rather than emphasising the differences. He remarked that here was a great basis for cooperation that needed to be tapped into.

He suggested the development of community policing as opposed to a mere rounding up of dissidents. Stopping the recruitment and radicalisation of people within the non-governed areas was crucial to prevent its spread. He pinpointed the Internet as being a means of proliferation. Barton mentioned that the battle of ideas would require greater attention paid to legitimacy, communication and understanding. Barton stressed that the situation was always complex and that there was no definite solution. He felt that the broader context needed to be addressed and that greater international cooperation could encompass dealing with civil society and communities.

**John Harrison** focused on the role of analysts in the peace process. He stated that the analyst sought to point out things that had been done well and how these could be developed upon. He raised issues about the application of history and how it had not been properly understood. He asserted the need to comprehend it as an

experience and not to merely match similar situations together. He distinguished the issue at present not so much as a battle of ideas but rather as a struggle of extremism against indifference. There was a need to build up conservative Islam. Harrison also highlighted a point that was often underemphasised. He asserted that the broader Islamic community needed to make an effort to understand the West as well, since dialogue required the efforts of both parties.

**Ian Storey** thanked the first class speakers for their time, participation and thoughtful insights. He also thanked IDSS for their cooperation in making the conference materialise. Storey described the problem of separatism in Southeast Asia as "persistent". He noted the broad spectrum of case studies of counter insurgency in Southeast Asia, with Aceh, Mindanao and Southern Thailand all exhibiting different levels of intensity and success. He opined that the central issue underpinning all the conflicts lay in the common root causes. These were identified as poor governance, political and economic marginalisation of ethnic groups, the threatening of religious and cultural freedoms, disputes over resource sharing and the failure of nation building. He summed up his remarks by introducing the phrase "Southeast Asia: where governance fails, political violence follows".

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Rapporteurs: Beverley Loke and Andrew Ong

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PROGRAMME SCHEDULE  
PRESENTERS & OTHER PARTICIPANTS

# PROGRAMME SCHEDULE

## Monday, 25 September 2006

1800-2000 Welcome Reception

## Tuesday, 26 September 2006

0800-0900 Registration

0900-0930 Welcome and Opening Remarks  
Dr Lee Endress, Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies (APCSS)  
Professor Amitav Acharya, Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies (IDSS)

### 0930-1100 **Session I: Introduction to Separatism, Insurgency and Terrorism in Southeast Asia**

Moderator: Dr Ian Storey, APCSS

Speakers:

- Case Study 1: Islam and Political Violence in Indonesia  
Dr Greg Barton, APCSS
- Case Study 2: Southern Philippines  
Professor Miriam Coronel Ferrer, University of the Philippines
- Case Study 3: Southern Thailand  
Dr Joseph Liow, IDSS

1100-1130 Group Photo and Break

1130-1230 Questions and General Discussion

1230-1400 Keynote Address by Associate Professor Ho Peng Kee, Senior Minister of State for Law and Home Affairs, Singapore

### 1400-1530 **Session II: Introduction to Separatism, Insurgency and Terrorism in Southeast Asia (continued)**

Moderator: Dr Joseph Liow, IDSS

Speakers:

- Case Study 4: NPA  
Mr Roger Browning, U.S. Embassy, Manila
- Case Study 5: Aceh  
Dr Anthony Smith, New Zealand Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet
- Summary: Patterns of Political Violence in Southeast Asia  
Dr Zachary Abuza, Simmons College

1530-1600 Break

1600-1700 Questions and General Discussion

## Wednesday, 27 September 2006

### 0830-1030 **Session III: State Responses to Separatism, Insurgency and Terrorism**

Moderator: Dr John Harrison, IDSS

- Case Study 1: Southern Philippines  
Mr Jon Lindborg, USAID, Manila
- Case Study 2: Southern Thailand  
Ms Francesca Lawe-Davies, International Crisis Group
- Case Study 3: NPA  
Colonel (Ret) Dennis Acop, Philippine Army
- Case Study 4: Aceh  
Dr Leonard Sebastian, IDSS

1030-1100 Break

1100-1200 Questions and General Discussion

1200-1330 Working Lunch: Lessons Learned from the Aceh Peace Process  
Keynote Speaker: Mr Pieter Feith, Aceh Monitoring Mission (AMM)

- 1330-1500 **Session IV: What Should the U.S. Be Doing?**  
Moderator: Dr Greg Barton, APCSS  
Speakers:  
- Engaging with Civil Society  
Dr Douglas Ramage, The Asia Foundation  
- U.S. Responses – Views from the U.S. and Southeast Asia  
Dr Douglas Macdonald, U.S. Army War College  
Dr See Seng Tan, IDSS
- 1500-1530 Break
- 1530-1700 Questions and General Discussion

**Thursday, 28 September 2006**

- 0830-1000 **Session V: Breakout Sessions**  
Moderator: Dr Joseph Liow, IDSS  
Group A  
Moderator: Dr Ian Storey, APCSS  
- Identifying lessons learned and next steps forward to address the problems of separatism and insurgency.
- Group B  
Moderator: Dr Greg Barton, APCSS  
- Countering terrorism in Southeast Asia: What's working, what's not, how to improve?
- Group C  
Moderator: Dr Joseph Liow, IDSS  
- Identifying regional needs and opportunities for U.S. engagement to address current and potential threats.
- 1000-1030 Break
- 1030-1130 Breakout Group Reports
- 1130-1200 Concluding Remarks  
Dr John Harrison, IDSS  
Dr Joseph Liow, IDSS  
Dr Greg Barton, APCSS  
Dr Ian Storey, APCSS
- 1200-1300 Closing Luncheon

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## ABOUT IDSS

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.
- Promote joint and exchange programmes with similar regional and international institutions, and organise seminars/conferences on topics salient to the strategic and policy communities of the Asia-Pacific.

Constituents of IDSS include the International Centre for Political Violence and Terrorism Research (ICPVTR), the Centre of Excellence for National Security (CENS) 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, 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. 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.

***On 1 January 2007, the Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies will be formally inaugurated to become the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS), an institute of Nanyang Technological University.***