After two years, the world is beginning to emerge out of the Covid-19 pandemic. Restrictions are easing, travels are resuming, and businesses are getting back to normal. However, instead of finding itself in a pre-pandemic situation, the world is witnessing precarious challenges relating to the Russian invasion in Ukraine. Inflation rate is rising, food prices are getting more expensive, and geopolitical tensions involving Russia, China, and the West are becoming more acute. This is against looming climate threats that remain unresolved.

Budget constraints pose further challenge to managing the different issues that are happening simultaneously. This often sparks fear about whether certain problems will receive lesser attention over the others. For example, commitments to climate action may weaken due to policies taken to deal with the Covid-19 pandemic.

Given their interconnectedness, the world cannot afford to lose sight of the dual impact of traditional and non-traditional security challenges. Russia’s war in Ukraine is a case in point because the conflict triggers food security concerns globally. Conversely, hunger may lead to social instabilities and generate conflicts.

In light of its complexity, governments thus need to address these different issues holistically. Commitments must remain even on issues that may not appear to be as urgent. Furthermore, regional cooperation mechanisms must be strengthened to respond to challenges more effectively. Last but not least, the society must increase its resilience to withstand ever-evolving shocks moving forward.
MESSAGE FROM THE SECRETARIAT

In the latest 6th NTS-Asia Consortium annual conference held in Singapore in April this year, the NTS-Asia Consortium members deliberated on the concept of Planetary Health. The emerging concept emphasises that the survivability of human civilisation hinges on the preservation of the well-being of the Earth. The Covid-19 pandemic is a case in point. The destruction of the environment is believed to be a possible reason behind the outbreak and the spread of the coronavirus. It thus serves as a powerful reminder that the neglect of planetary health can result in devastating consequences on human health and cause significant losses across sectors.

Against this backdrop, the reflections featured in this Newsletter discuss some of the ongoing environmental challenges that directly concern human health. Dr Zhou Zhanggui, Research Fellow at the Overseas Safety and Security Programs of the Center for Non-Traditional Security and Peaceful Development, Zhejiang University, China, makes the case of the Fukushima nuclear power plant incident in 2011. He argues that although the exact implications of the accident on human health are yet to be established, its wastewater discharge may actually pose a threat to human life and health.

Along similar line, Dr Lina Gong, Research Fellow with the Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief Programme at the Centre for Non-Traditional Security Studies, S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Nanyang Technological University (NTU), Singapore, highlights worsening marine plastic pollution due to the increased use of medical protective materials and plastic packaging during the Covid-19 pandemic. She calls for a stronger commitment to marine plastic debris now that the world is no longer gripped by the pandemic. This is to avert the emergence of other types of diseases arising from plastic littering the marine ecosystems.

Warmest regards,
Mely Caballero-Anthony
Secretary-General

Researcher Profile

Dr. Zhou Zhanggui

Dr. Zhou Zhanggui, is Senior Research Fellow of Overseas Safety and Security Programs, NTS-PD, Zhejiang University. He was the Program Officer, at International Center on small hydropower, United Nations Industrial Development Organization (October 2005 - July 2011). He co-founded the International Forum on Non-Traditional Security (Hangzhou) and the Overseas Safety and Security International Collaboration Mechanism (Center) and chaired the secretariats. He also served as Mentor of Global Competency Center at Zhejiang University and Judge of All China Universities Contests of Future Elites for International Organizations (Since 2019). His main research focus is on non-traditional security risk management. He has published books and papers on Non-Traditional Security including energy, environment and climate security, private security, etc. translated core documents of private security standards into Chinese including ICoCA core documents and ISO 18788, etc.
Ecological and environmental problems accumulated in the past 40 years of rapid development after China’s reform and opening up have become increasingly apparent. Even if the ecological environment quality is improved in general, it will take a long time to alleviate the health impact of environmental pollution on the population, which was also the similar situation of those industrialized countries in history.

For example, somewhere rural residents were exposed to both emissions from solid fuel combustion and heavy metals from industry. The health impact of industrial pollution is something China is and will have to grapple with in the coming decades. The environmental and health picture in China is grim, but there are some positive trends. With the development of society and the continuous improvement of people’s living standards, the public’s environmental awareness is also further enhanced, putting forward higher requirements for the government to effectively protect citizens’ environmental rights and health rights.

In recent years, China has resolutely declared war on pollution and implemented three action plans for the prevention and control of air, water and soil pollution, thus solving a number of major environmental problems. On the whole, the quality of the ecological environment has been improving steadily. For the Chinese government, another incentive to tackle problems comes from a strong concern for social stability and the rule of law. All of these, along with the expansion of the space for public participation, bring hope to the solution of health problems caused by pollution, and give impetus and resources to sustainable development.

The large-scale projects in human development are important but also easily lead to Not In My Backyard (NIMBY) crisis and most of them need international co-governance and public participation. At present, nuclear radiation and potential human health risks remain the main concern for China and other Asian countries.

On April 13, 2021, the Japanese government held a cabinet meeting to formally finalize the policy of discharging nuclear wastewater from the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant into the sea. Neighbouring countries have expressed grave concern over the Japanese government’s official decision to dispose of nuclear wastewater from the Fukushima nuclear power plant by ocean discharge. The ocean near Fukushima is not only to the survival of local fisher men fishing grounds, but it is also part of the global and the Pacific Ocean. Thus, nuclear wastewater discharged into the ocean will affect global migratory fish, fishing, human health, ecological safety and other aspects. This problem is clearly not just for Japan’s domestic problems, but it concerns global marine ecological and environmental security.

To address this concern, the environmental monitoring of NIMBY facilities should be strengthened, and relevant data should be disclosed to the public in real time. Information disclosure of all NIMBY facilities shall be based on the standard of “effective explanation” – the so-called information shall not be posted or published on the website – and specific places and personnel (including technical personnel) shall be set up on the basis of publicity to explain relevant information, accept inquiries and answer questions.

Secondly, gaining the trust of NIMBY residents is the key to solving the NIMBY problem, and site selection is the most critical issue. In practice, if we can actively solicit public opinions at the early stage of urban planning and invite citizens in some planning areas to participate in discussion and decision-making, government departments will not be put into a passive and embarrassing situation at the later stage. It is likewise necessary to establish a diversified and reasonable compensation mechanism and insurance mechanism to build a bridge between government behaviour and citizens’ trust.

Last but not least, international arbitration and litigation should be extended to potential transboundary pollution problems such as the plan to discharge Fukushima nuclear wastewater to the sea by 2023.
Researcher Profile

Dr Lina Gong

Dr Lina Gong is a Research Fellow with the Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief Programme at the Centre for Non-Traditional Security Studies, S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Nanyang Technological University (NTU). Her research interests include humanitarian studies, China’s foreign policy, global governance, and non-traditional security studies in East Asia. She has published journal articles and book chapters on humanitarian affairs, China’s foreign policy, and non-traditional security issues in Asia.

REFLECTIONS

Combating Marine Plastic Debris after COVID-19: Managing Competing Priorities

By Lina Gong
Centre for Non-Traditional Security Studies (NTS Centre), S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS)

The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly disrupted almost every sector of our societies, including the campaigns to reduce plastic use. As countries are learning to co-exist with COVID-19, it is time to review the progress in the combat against marine plastic debris and reflect on the ways forward.

Marine plastic debris poses a serious challenge to the marine ecosystem, which consequently threatens the security and safety of human beings in many ways. The oceans are crucial for many people’s food security, supporting source of nutrition for over three billion people. The quality of fish and seafood concerns food safety. Degradation in the marine environment threatens the livelihoods of people working in various marine industries, including marine tourism.

Southeast Asian countries are both major contributors and victims of plastic pollution. Indonesia, the Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam are among the world’s top contributors of marine plastic debris. Malaysia faces the problem of illicit trade of plastic waste. ASEAN leaders adopted the Bangkok Declaration on Combating Marine Plastic Debris in ASEAN Region in June 2019, reflecting the seriousness of the problem.

Since then, the region has seen national and regional action to curb plastic pollution. Thailand banned single-use plastic bags from January 1, 2020. Indonesia was to impose a similar ban in Jakarta by June 2020. The Philippine government is considering this option too. At regional level, Norway provided three million US dollars in November 2019 to support the implementation of the Bangkok Declaration through the ASEAN-Norway Cooperation Project on Local Capacity Building for Reducing Plastic Pollution in November over three years.

However, the outbreak of COVID-19 disrupted this positive trend. Global pandemic responses have intensified marine environmental problems, particularly marine plastic debris. The pandemic has seen the surge in the use of medical protective equipment and plastic packaging, with most plastic waste ending up in the ocean. Studies suggest that marine plastic debris will quadruple by 2050 if countries don’t take effective action.

Food delivery became popular and necessary during the outbreak as most people were confined at home. It is reported that the plastic waste generated in Bangkok was up from 5,500 tonnes to 6300 tonnes daily in the pandemic. Due to the consideration for hygiene, businesses had to suspend the effort to encourage customers to bring their own reusable containers.
As most countries are learning to co-exist with COVID-19, efforts to address various challenges have resumed and are moving forward. ASEAN for instance launched the ASEAN Regional Action Plan for Combating Marine Debris in the ASEAN Member States (2021 – 2025) in May 2021.

However, a major challenge facing the efforts to tackle marine plastic debris is to balance between the immediate priority and longer-term target. The pandemic has inflicted significant impact on economies. National governments now face both the more urgent need to revitalise economic activities and the longer-term target of reducing marine plastic debris significantly, which is related to the goal of life below water of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Given the imminent threat posed by the COVID-19 to public health, it’s understandable that prevention and containment of the disease was prioritised at the peak of the pandemic, even at the expense of other socio-economic activities. However, as countries are gradually recovering from the disruptions induced by COVID-19, it is important that marine environmental protection features strongly in the recovery plans, as the issue has critical bearing on people’s well-being, national development and the global climate action. The political and financial support for the combat against marine plastic debris should be revived and strengthened. As the COVID-19 pandemic has shown to us, a crisis in one area, if not managed effectively, can have strong spillover effects on other aspects of our societies.

### Nuclear Governance in the Asia-Pacific

**Edited By Mely Caballero-Anthony, Julius Cesar I. Trajano**  
Centre for Non-Traditional Security Studies (NTS Centre), S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS)

This book on Nuclear Governance in Asia-Pacific, published by Routledge, is the culmination of a two-year research project that aims to examine the regional trends, issues and challenges of using nuclear technology. The growing interest in nuclear technology is driven by a number of factors. These include the need to respond to growing energy demands and the ability to diversify the countries’ energy sources, the increasing application of nuclear technology for peaceful use in agriculture and food safety, medicine, environmental protection, climate change adaptation and mitigation, among others. Against these peaceful uses of nuclear technology are also the persistent concerns about nuclear safety, security and safeguards in light of incidents of nuclear accidents, growing nuclear risks and proliferation of nuclear weapons.

This edited book offers a broad-based analysis of nuclear governance in the Asia-Pacific and the pivotal role of Southeast Asia, an area that scholarly literature in the form of a book or edited volume has been relatively silent on in recent years. Also, most of the books on related topics have tended to concentrate on global nuclear regimes, proliferation of nuclear weapons, and nuclear issues in South Asia and Northeast Asia. This book serves as an authoritative reference on the burgeoning nuclear governance cooperation in the Asia-Pacific, with special emphasis on Southeast Asia and the role of ASEAN-related mechanisms and institutions. It also assesses the progress and gaps at national and regional levels in managing civilian nuclear issues and challenges.

The contributors to this book explore approaches to building a framework for nuclear governance in the Asia-Pacific – encompassing nuclear safety, security, and safeguards/non-proliferation. This edited book contributes to the literature on security studies in that it provides an Asia-Pacific perspective to the discussions on nuclear governance. Moreover, it adopts a holistic, multidisciplinary approach to nuclear governance that recognises the connections between different nuclear issues (safety, security and safeguards). By bringing together the discussions on different issues and key regional perspectives from nuclear governance scholars, this book presents a relatively comprehensive examination of the most critical nuclear safety, security and non-proliferation issues faced by states in the Asia-Pacific and the growing cooperation spearheaded by Southeast Asian states.

Nuclear governance collaboration offers an avenue for states in the Asia-Pacific to tackle the emerging opportunities for and challenges to the peaceful uses of nuclear energy and the civilian applications of nuclear and radioactive materials. The nature of national actions, bilateral initiatives and regional cooperation in capacity building taking place in East Asia provides a good foundation to pursue a more robust collaborative framework for nuclear governance in the wider Asia-Pacific region. The contributors to this book explore the most critical nuclear safety, security and non-proliferation issues faced by states in the Asia-Pacific and the growing cooperation spearheaded by Southeast Asian countries, China, Japan, South Korea and the United States.

This book is a valuable read for academics working on security and strategic studies, international relations, non-traditional security issues as well as nuclear-related issues.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bangladesh Institute of Peace &amp; Security Studies (BIPSS)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Click here to read more.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The SMERU Research Institute, Indonesia (SMERU)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fakultas Ekonomi dan Bisnis and Yogyakarta, Developing SiBakul as an Inclusive Digital Ecosystem for MSMEs in the Special Region of Yogyakarta, Policy Research, August 2022</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Click here to read more.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Click here to read more.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Women in Security, Conflict Management and Peace (WISCOMP)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Click here to read more.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Regional Centre for Strategic Studies (RCSS)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RCSS NEWSLETTER VOLUME I ISSUE II, JAN-JULY 2022</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Click here to read more.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
S. Nanthini, Urban Resilience: A 21st Century Challenge, Commentary, 19 August 2022

Click here to read more.

Julius Cesar Imperial Trajano, Expanding the Peaceful Uses of Nuclear Technology and Climate Change Adaptation: Opportunities and Challenges, NTS Insight, 18 August 2022

Click here to read more.

S. Nanthini and Lina Gong, Planetary health: An alternative framework for disaster governance in ASEAN?, Commentary, 17 August 2022

Click here to read more.

NTS Bulletin August 2022, Newsletter, 17 August 2022

Click here to read more.

Jose Ma. Luis P. Montesclaros and Margaret Sembiring, Food Insecurity Beyond Borders: Untangling the Complex Impacts of Ukraine War on Global Food Security, NTS Insight, 16 August 2022

Click here to read more.

Beyond Relief! Issue 5, Newsletter, 12 August 2022

Click here to read more.

Alistair D. B. Cook, Climate Complacency Is No Option for Defence and National Security, IDSS Paper, 12 August 2022

Click here to read more.

NTS Bulletin July 2022, Newsletter, 26 July 2022

Click here to read more.


Click here to read more.

Mely Caballero-Anthony and Jose Ma. Luis P. Montesclaros, MN36 | Non-Traditional Security Concerns in the New Normal, Monograph, 12 July 2022

Click here to read more.

Paul Teng, Global Food Insecurity – Food Import: Reducing ASEAN’s Dependency, Commentary, 5 July 2022

Click here to read more.

NTS Bulletin June 2022, Newsletter, 29 June 2022

Click here to read more.

Paul Teng, Genevieve Donnellon-May, Growing Food Insecurity – Global Water Crisis: Options for Food Security, Commentary, 21 June 2022

Click here to read more.

Margarthe Sembiring, Planetary Health: Reflections from Asia, NTS Insight, 20 June 2022

Click here to read more.

Jose Ma. Luis P. Montesclaros and Margareth Sembiring, Food Insecurity Beyond Borders: Untangling the Complex Impacts of Ukraine War on Global Food Security, NTS Insight, 16 August 2022

Click here to read more.

Alistair D. B. Cook, Climate Complacency Is No Option for Defence and National Security, IDSS Paper, 12 August 2022

Click here to read more.

Julius Cesar Imperial Trajano, Expanding the Peaceful Uses of Nuclear Technology and Climate Change Adaptation: Opportunities and Challenges, NTS Insight, 18 August 2022

Click here to read more.

S. Nanthini, Urban Resilience: A 21st Century Challenge, Commentary, 19 August 2022

Click here to read more.

NTS Bulletin August 2022, Newsletter, 17 August 2022

Click here to read more.

Jose Ma. Luis P. Montesclaros and Margaret Sembiring, Food Insecurity Beyond Borders: Untangling the Complex Impacts of Ukraine War on Global Food Security, NTS Insight, 16 August 2022

Click here to read more.
Margareth Sembiring, Planetary Health: Managing Competing Tensions, Commentary, 24 May 2022
Click here to read more.

Click here to read more.

Click here to read more.

Jose Ma. Luis P. Montesclaros, India's Approach to Food Security Resilience Amid COVID-19: Relevance to ASEAN?, NTS Insight, 4 May 2022
Click here to read more.

PAST EVENT SUMMARIES

Bangladesh Institute of Peace & Security Studies (BIPSS)

A World in Turmoil: The Fallout from the Ukraine Conflict

BIPSS, in partnership with COSMOS Foundation, recently hosted a roundtable on 'A World in Turmoil: The Fallout from the Ukraine Conflict' at The Westin Dhaka. The event was moderated by Major General ANM Muniruzzaman (retd), President of BIPSS and Mr. Enayetullah Khan, Chairman of COSMOS Foundation. The roundtable had an expert panel comprising Md. Touhid Hossain, Former Foreign Secretary at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Government of Bangladesh, Umme Salma Tarin, Assistant Professor of International Relations at Bangladesh University of Professionals and Mr. Parvez Karim Abbasi, Assistant Professor of Economics at East West University.

The roundtable had an expert panel comprising Dr. Lailufar Yasmin, Professor of International Relations at the University of Dhaka and Mr. Parvez Karim Abbasi, Assistant Professor of Economics at East West University.

The session was attended by many distinguished Ambassadors, dignitaries, foreign diplomats, government officials, defence personnel, academics, editors, journalists, scholars and students where they deliberated on the ever changing politico – security landscape of the Middle East, it’s implications for the region and on a global scale.

Click here to read more.

The Changing Dynamics of the Middle East: Implications for Bangladesh?

BIPSS, in partnership with Dhaka Tribune, recently hosted a roundtable on ‘The Changing Dynamics of the Middle East: Implications for Bangladesh?’ at The Westin Dhaka. The event was moderated by ANM Muniruzzaman, President of BIPSS and Mr. Zafar Sobhan, Editor of The Dhaka Tribune.

Click here to read more.
The Ministerial Conference is also part of a larger initiative by Germany to advance a Declaration on Peace, Climate and Stability to be launched at the Berlin Climate and Security Conference (BCSC) later this year. In his address, President BIPSS pointed out systemic risks that climate change poses to international peace and stability. The conference was inaugurated by the German Foreign Minister and was attended by leaders, senior policymakers, international experts and opinion shapers.

GMACCC releases its report “Climate Change and Security in South Asia”.

South Asia is on the front line in confronting the implications of climate change and addressing the consequences for security. To analyse this and more, Global Military Advisory Council on Climate Change (GMACCC) has just released its report “Climate Change and Security in South Asia”. GMACCC is a global network of military and security experts working on the security implications of climate change. President BIPSS, Major General A N M Muniruzzaman, ndc, psc (Retd) is the chairman of GMACCC.

Women’s Empowerment through Journalism

Bangladesh Institute of Peace and Security Studies recently organised a Policy Café at Hotel Lake Castle, Dhaka on ‘Women’s Empowerment through Journalism’. The event was moderated by Major General A N M Muniruzzaman ndc psc (retd), President of BIPSS. The invited discussants for the policy dialogue were Ms. Zyma Islam, Senior Reporter of The Daily Star, and Tasmiah Nuhiya Ahmed, Editor in Charge of Daily Our Time. The event was attended by distinguished editors, scholars, academics, and other dignitaries and relevant participants like aspiring working journalists, journalism students. The discussion focused on the special role that can be played by women in journalism, and how it’s become a major avenue towards the empowerment of women.

The report, map, photo of the lead authors, media release and eventually additional materials can be downloaded from the press kit at: bit.ly/GMACCC_SouthAsia

Click here to see the full report.

Women in Politics: Shaping the Future

Bangladesh Institute of Peace and Security Studies recently organised a Policy Café at Westin, Dhaka on ‘Women in Politics: Shaping the Future’. The event was moderated by Major General ANM Muniruzzaman ndc psc (retd), President of BIPSS. The panel of discussants at the policy dialogue included Dr. Nadia Binte Amin, Chairman of TARA Foundation and Ms, Nasima Akhter Joly, Director of Hunger Project, Bangladesh. The event was attended by distinguished diplomats, editors, scholars, defense personnel, academics and other dignitaries and participants. The discussion illustrated the contemporary circumstances and future prospects and challenges concerning women’s participation in the political realm.
Poverty and inequality remain a challenge in developing DIY. In 2021, around 12.76% of the total population in DIY lived below the poverty line. This percentage was higher than the national percentage even though the number of poor people in DIY was smaller than the national average. With a Gini coefficient of 0.436 in the same year, DIY also became the province with the highest level of inequality in Indonesia. Both figures show that there are still some glaring issues regarding the policies to promote public welfare through the achievement of the development targets in the province, notably during the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic. Efforts to combat poverty and inequality in DIY require cohesive efforts and solid collaboration between various stakeholders.

The SMERU Research Institute (SMERU) and the DIY Provincial Government have collaborated in organizing the Regional Development Forum (FPD), with the objective of promoting efforts to combat poverty and inequality, especially through the development of MSMEs and the strengthening of human resources in DIY.

Multidimensional Poverty in the Midst of the COVID-19 Pandemic: A Commitment to Reducing Poverty in All Its Forms

This collaboration event between T20 Task Force 5 in collaboration with the Faculty of Economics and Business Universitas Indonesia and the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI) aims to bring together experts and academics in the field of multidimensional poverty, inequality and wellbeing, to find solutions to the challenges faced by G20 nations due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

As the culminating summit of a series of forums on inequality, human capital and wellbeing, this concluding side event seeks to generate the best solutions to address multidimensional poverty issues faced by G20 nations in the midst of COVID-19. Please join us for a fruitful discussion with global experts on multidimensional poverty issues to recover together and stronger as G20 nations.

Rethinking Social Protection Reform in Post-Pandemic Recovery

The coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic is the major unprecedented event faced by mankind in the 21st century with global impact on social protection systems. It emphasizes the urgency to establish comprehensive, adaptable, and responsive social protection systems to health, disaster, and financial crises. In parallel, the rapid demographic shift across the global economy also calls for the similar need for inclusive social protection systems and safety nets in the post-pandemic world that can protect and support vulnerable groups as well as narrowing inequality.

To develop comprehensive and inclusive social protection reform, the adoption of digital technologies and innovative approaches as well as financial literacy, among others, are key solutions to the challenges posed by the abovementioned crises, particularly to vulnerable groups. The design and implementation of social protection systems and emergency safety nets must be refined and tailored to a community, or a country based on different socioeconomic characteristics and other intersecting factors that shape its needs, opportunities, and outcomes.

As countries develop post-pandemic recovery strategies, social protection programs that help the poorest and most vulnerable groups will become increasingly important. Continuous innovation, learning, and sharing of experiences in the design and implementation of social protection measures are essential in shaping the reform of social protection systems for the post-pandemic recovery.
Recognizing Differences, Building on Commonalities: A Peacebuilding Workshop

Youth leaders from across India who were part of the 2021-22 cohort of DISOM – The Leadership School, engaged in an experiential workshop on peacebuilding, conflict transformation and cultural syncretism organized by WISCOMP on 30 May 2022.

Coming from diverse underserved backgrounds, they have been touring and learning through an immersive program that enables them to engage with the many civil society initiatives and grassroots movements to understand the workings of Indian democracy.

The workshop facilitated a rich context to reflect on issues of inter-faith dialogue; environmental security; disability rights; justice needs of Dalits and tribal communities; gender justice for women and sexual minorities, among others.

Engendering International Relations: An Australia-India Dialogue

With the geopolitical order in serious flux, rising politico-economic insecurities around the world—including India's own neighborhood—and emerging vulnerabilities triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic, it is more important than ever before to understand the gendered impact of instability and violence, and the unique challenges faced by women dealing with those.

In light of such challenges, there is also an urgent need to explore newer ways to ensure women's participation in peace, security, and development agendas. On 20 April 2022, WISCOMP, Centre for Policy Research (CPR) and Australia India Institute (AII) brought together some of the finest minds working on foreign policy, security, and development for a roundtable discussion. The experts explored trends and prospects in the domains of foreign policy and security issues through a gender lens.

The eminent panel of speakers included Hon. Lisa Singh, CEO, Australia India Institute; Hon. Sarah Storey, Deputy Head of Mission, Australia High Commission – New Delhi; Avani Dias, International Foreign Correspondent for South East Asia, Australia Broadcasting Corporation; Yamini Aiyar, President and Chief Executive, CPR; Dr. Meenakshi Gopinath, Chairperson, CPR Governing Board & Director, WISCOMP; Dr. Nimmi Kurian, Professor, CPR; Ambika Vishwanath, Founder Director, Kubernein Initiative; Jyoti Malhotra, National & Strategic Affairs Editor, The Print; Dr. Shweta Singh, Senior Assistant Professor, South Asian University; Dr. Swarna Rajagopalan, Founder and Director, Prajnya Trust; Dr. Mallika Joseph, First South Asian woman to be inducted in UN Roster of SSR Experts and Fellow, CPR; Dr. Mallika Joseph, First South Asian woman to be inducted in UN Roster of SSR Experts and Fellow, CPR; Dr. Soumita Basu, Senior Assistant Professor, South Asian University, among others.

Embedding Gender Justice in the Academy

WISCOMP collaborated with India International Centre, as part of the Centre’s Diamond Jubilee celebrations, to organize a Dialogue on ‘Embedding Gender Justice in the Academy’. Eminent speakers from the fields of law, policy, higher education and the UN system deliberated upon the role of Higher Education Institutes (HEIs) in India’s quest for gender equality.

They shared insights on a range of equality concerns: What are HEIs doing to bridge gender gaps and break stereotypes, especially in the STEM fields? What role does policy play in catalysing these changes? What are the links between gender-just and enabling campuses and workspaces?

How can HEIs accord legitimacy to action against discrimination while also signalling to society the need for a broader transformative framework on gender justice?

The Dialogue culminated with the launch of a unique Handbook Navigating the Terrain of Gender Justice: A Handbook for Gender Audits at Higher Education Institutes in India, which introduces a practical roadmap for participatory Gender Audits at HEIs in India.

An Exhibition commissioned by WISCOMP and curated by Ridhima Mehra and Tulika Srivastava: When Women Write...in Words and Pictures was also part of the event.

WISCOMP launching its first ever BOOK CAFE "Log-in Gender", an Online Portal for Educators

The Book Café is an interactive virtual space for university students, early career researchers, academicians and grassroots practitioners to share their ideas and insights. It seeks to be a non-judgmental, non-hierarchical, non-adversarial, collaborative space for asking questions, clarifying concepts, sharing and refining ideas/ hypotheses/ ruminations. It is a space to read together, to discover alternative ways of reading and writing and explore possibilities beyond the conventional academic tropes.

Each month a text is selected. The text works as a facilitator, as a companion or a point of departure to raise questions that are of contemporary relevance; to reflect on the lessons from the past for more egalitarian and inclusive futures. Every event of The Book Café is an episode, an encounter in its own right. Yet, it forges continuing conversations by picking up threads from earlier discussions.

Click here for more information.
ASEAN Women for Peace Registry (AWPR) meeting 25-26 July 2022

The ASEAN Institute for Peace and Reconciliation (ASEAN-IPR) organised the second ASEAN Women for Peace Registry (AWPR) meeting in Bangkok, Thailand, with The Asia Foundation (TAF) on 25-26 July, 2022. This was a hybrid event. The meeting was supported by the Australian Government through the ASEAN-Australia Political Security Partnership (APSP), implemented by TAF. The meeting was attended by Dr Tamara Nair, Research Fellow at the NTS Centre, in her capacity as the Singapore member of the registry. After presentations from the Executive Director of ASEAN-IPR, Ambassador I Gusti Agung Wesaka Puja, and Ambassador of Australia to ASEAN, Ambassador Will Nankervis, the first day focused on an overview of support from ASEAN-Australia Political Security Partnership (APSP) to raise the profile and visibility of AWPR, support the institutional and individual WPS expertise of AWPR, and to promote the AWPR as an advocate for WPS at ASEAN and at member states’ levels. The second day was the second formal meeting of the AWPR, which consisted of setting a workplan and brainstorming ideas on moving the registry forward.

Asia-Pacific Office of the Raoul Wallenberg Institute (RWI) of Human Rights and Humanitarian Law Visited RSIS 21 July 2022

21st July 2022, RSIS was visited by the Asia-Pacific Office of the Raoul Wallenberg Institute (RWI) of Human Rights and Humanitarian Law. The delegation consisted of Dr Tuti Alawiyah (fourth from left), Deputy Director of the Asia-Pacific Office in Jakarta, Indonesia, and Mr Victor Bernard (second from right), Program Officer. RWI seeks to integrate human rights within current approaches to international development, including climate change adaptation. The Asia-Pacific Office, a fruit of bilateral discussions between the embassies of Sweden and of Indonesia, serves as base to strengthen human rights within the region. Professor Leonard Sebastian (centre), Head of RSIS’ Indonesia Programme, hosted the meeting together with Dr Alex Arifianto and Mr Gerardus Rino. The Centre for Non-Traditional Security Studies (NTS Centre) participated in this meeting, including Mr Jose Ma Luis Montesclaros, Ms Margaret Sembiring, and Ms S. Nanthini. The NTS Centre team introduced the field of Non-Traditional Security Studies, touching on food security, climate change and environment, and climate-related disasters in the Asia-Pacific (including gender lenses). The team shared copies of related publications, including the recent RSIS Monograph on Non-Traditional Security Concerns in the New Normal, and the ASEAN Disaster Resilience Outlook, among others. The discussion was insightful, with potential ideas to jointly explore moving forward, including private sector involvement in financing climate change adaptation and human rights promotion; climate risks and conflict (including food security); and gendered approaches to human rights in climate adaptation and within disaster settings. Subsequently, RWI delegates met with Dr Shashi Jayakumar, head of the Centre of Excellence for National Security (CENS) at RSIS.

Annual Meeting of the International Nuclear Security Education Network 19 July 2022

Prof Mely Caballero-Anthony, Head of NTS Centre, and Mr Julius Trajano, Research Fellow, delivered a book presentation at the Annual Meeting of the International Nuclear Security Education Network, organised by the International Atomic Energy Agency in Vienna, Austria on 19 July 2022. They introduced their new edited book titled Nuclear Governance in the Asia-Pacific, recently published by Routledge.
As a follow up to the ASEAN-IPR Focus Group Discussion entitled The Role of Information & Communication Technology (ICT) as a Tool in Mitigating Conflict and Fostering Peace, in January 2021, the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue and ASEAN-IPR organised an online workshop on 13 July 2022 on Addressing Disinformation to Promote Peace. The main objectives of the workshop were to explore the impact of disinformation on peace processes and how it affects conflict transformation, and to identify the scope for regional cooperation to prevent disinformation moving across borders. With instability and threats growing in cyberspace, the workshop aimed to enhance and modernise the traditional mediation processes and efforts on conflict prevention. Dr Tamara Nair, Research Fellow at the NTS Centre, was invited to be a reactor to presentations made during the workshop. Dr Nair’s main takeaways were: understanding the importance of social cohesion as a weapon against disinformation, building trust in official sources of information, and analysing public perceptions on disinformation. Most importantly, Dr Nair emphasised the intersection of misogyny and the spread of disinformation as a serious factor in undermining democratic processes. She emphasised how the targeting of female politicians erodes democratic institutions and rights, and as a result efforts at building peace and stability are compromised.

The Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia Pacific (CSCAP) Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Study Group Third Virtual Meeting
23-24 June 2022

The Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia Pacific (CSCAP) Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Study Group had their third virtual meeting on the 23rd – 24th June 2022. This meeting aimed to build on the first and second meetings held in 2021. The third meeting hoped to encourage academics, researchers, and policymakers from CSCAP member committees to engage in discussions of past and present work and share ideas about future activities. Based on thematic areas identified in the second meeting, issues related to WPS, notably disaster (including COVID-19 and climate change) management, countering terrorism, managing digitalisation/cybersecurity, women in conflict, and women in security forces, where followed up by having brief presentations on the sustainable integration of WPS into these areas of concern by selected expert speakers. Dr Tamara Nair, Research Fellow at the NTS Centre, attended the meeting in her capacity as the CSCAP WPS study group member from Singapore. She highlighted the need to incorporate WPS initiatives in the ASEAN Economic Community in addition to its incorporation in the socio-cultural and political communities. Economic security, especially in crises and post-crises situations really highlight gendered suffering starkly, hence the need to include a WPS perspective in the economic sphere.

International Conference on the Safety and Security of Radioactive Sources
22 June 2022

Mr Julius Cesar Trajano, Research Fellow, NTS Centre, delivered a presentation at the International Conference on the Safety and Security of Radioactive Sources: Accomplishments and Future Endeavours in Vienna, Austria on 22 June 2022. The conference was organised by the International Atomic Energy Agency. His presentation is titled “A Regional Approach to Radiological Safety and Security in Southeast Asia: Accomplishments and Future Opportunities.” The conference had brought together more than 600 senior government officials, representatives from international organisations, research think tanks and universities involved in radiological safety and security.

Visit Mercy Relief Team at their Singapore Headquarters
20 June 2022

Dr Alistair D.B. Cook, Dr Lina Gong, Mr Christopher Chen and Ms S. Nanthini from the HADR Programme visited the Mercy Relief team at their Singapore headquarters on 20 June 2022. As part of this visit, they shared their recent humanitarian research and response activities, and how the Singapore humanitarian network can work and support each other. Their discussions also included the effect of COVID-19 on HADR in the region, as well as other emerging trends and issues of humanitarian work.

An AIIA Asia Policy Forum was hosted by the Australian High Commission, Singapore, on 20 June 2022 on Regional Reflections on the Russia-Ukraine Conflict – Diplomacy, Conflict and the Future of Southeast Asia. The Russian invasion of Ukraine has caused shockwaves extending far beyond the localised conflict. Beyond military tactics and strategic analysis, there are significant diplomatic, political and regional lessons for South East Asia. The way states and global players like NATO, the EU, and the UN, have responded to the invasion has revealed realities and fault lines in global priorities. Questions of values, economic interdependencies, and regional alliances have been laid bare as states and international organisations grapple with their responses. Professor Mely Caballero-Anthony moderated a panel discussion on Narratives and Values which included Dr Alistair D. B. Cook (NTS Centre, RSIS), Lee Sue-Ann (ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute), Dr Melanie O’Brien (University of Western Australia) and Dr Sebastian Kaempf (University of Queensland).

Fieldwork Research
24 May 2022

Mr Julius Trajano, Research Fellow at NTS Centre, conducted fieldwork research at the Philippines’ nuclear power plant on 24 May 2022. He met the power plant’s nuclear engineers and maintenance staff to have comprehensive understanding of the Philippines’ nuclear energy plans, issues and opportunities.
The State of the World

The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute’s (SIPRI) latest report divulges the global twin crisis that the world faces – environmental deterioration and a darkening security horizon. From a security perspective, the number of war casualties in the second decade of the 21st century is twice that of the first decade, and the number of refugees in 2020 has doubled since 2010, due to armed conflicts and climate-induced displacement. Military spending is reflective of how the world perceives the global outlook and in 2021, global military spending was 2.1 trillion, nearly doubling since 2000. The ongoing Russian invasion of Ukraine has further exacerbated the security crisis, and nations are scrambling to defend themselves. From an environmental perspective, the 21st century has witnessed 19 of the 20 warmest years. Every region is progressively getting warmer, and from unprecedented warming in Greenland to an alternation between terrible flooding and catastrophic droughts in Somalia. Sea level rises are harrowing due to intermittent sea level surges that used to occur once every 50 years but will occur more than once a year from 2050 onwards, posing a seismic threat to human security.

The Conflation of Security and the Environment

The deficiency of governance links environmental and human crises, and governance has failed in the management of natural resources and services provided by the biosphere. There is no purely environmental problem, for these problems are manufactured by human relationships with the natural environment. Environmental crises lead to insecurity, which consequently lead to conflicts and disputes within society. These conflicts and social unrest may escalate towards violent conflict and internal armed conflict, as seen in Somalia. In Somalia, when sudden shocks like floods occur, governments are slow to react, and the first response parties are usually politically dangerous entities. In the case of slow onset droughts, agricultural workers are forced to sell animals and livestock at an unsustainable lost and are subsequently displaced to slum areas. These circumstances offer the displaced little to no prospects, and the youth may feel aggrieved and unsettled, and present recruitment opportunities for Islamic extremists in Somalia to tap into the resentment of those affected by climate-induced disasters and recruit them. Conversely, where there is conflict, there is greater difficulty in handling local environmental problems. There is a critical urgency for those who deal with security issues to understand that one of the biggest sources of insecurity is environmental change, thus environmentalists and security associates need to understand each other’s language. Climate and conflict are so closely interlinked, that if one damages the environment, one damages peace and vice versa. If peace is enhanced, there is a chance to protect and enhance the natural environment, and potentially foster peaceful relations which are fundamental to tackling the twin crisis.

Guiding Principles

Cultivating the ability to identify risks and exercise strategic foresight is quintessential to a nation’s ability to counteract climate and security threats. These are one of the guiding principles set out by SIPRI, and countries ought to adopt this principle as a guiding framework in policymaking. ASEAN hosts 8 of the 10 countries most vulnerable to climate change, therefore the principle of strategic foresight is pivotal to this region to detect potential threats early to minimise the damage to infrastructure and the loss of human lives. Furthermore, when countries possess foresight and are able to anticipate risks, they will be able to design policies that protect citizens from both climate and security threats. These policies may include humanitarian aid in the event of a crisis, or the creation of climate-resilient infrastructure to minimise displacement and enhance safety.

Ensuring a just and peaceful transition, from a carbon-emissions heavy economy to one that decouples resource use from environmental degradation, is another guiding principle proposed by SIPRI. Ministries in charge of security and the environment alone cannot carry out the transition, given the numerous other factors at play. When Sweden wanted to be the first fossil-free social democracy in the world, it was astonishingly difficult to move the statistics along and achieve the improvement. Carbon emissions barely changed, and it was realised that transitioning to a green economy is a mountainous challenge. The challenge is to continue operating with a degree of familiarity and efficiency while unsustainable practices are phased out. Operating in the given state of the global economy is destructive, however a just and peaceful transition entails involving all stakeholders in the inclusive transitional process, using the principle of “by us, for us”, to ensure that workers and communities have the time and space to adapt. Backtracking on 150 years of economic models and practices will not be achieved in a day or two, and instead requires global cooperation to allow for minimal disruption and inconveniencing.

Adaptation and resilience are also salient traits that will be definitive of a countries’ success in the face of the twin crisis. Singapore for instance is a nation that has displayed innovative adaptation in the face of a warming globe, using anticipatory urban planning to combat rising temperatures. Seeking alternative clean sources of energy such as hydropower is of paramount
have been laid bare as states and international organisations grapple with their responses. Professor Mely Caballero-Anthony moderated a panel discussion on Narratives and Values which included Dr Alistair D. B. Cook (NTS Centre, RSIS), Lee Sue-Ann (ISEAS–Yusof Ishak Institute), Dr Melanie O’Brien (University of Western Australia) and Dr Sebastian Kaempf (University of Queensland).

**ASEAN Regional Plan of Action on Women, Peace and Security (ASEAN RPA on WPS)**

10 June 2022

The second technical briefing and brainstorming session for the ASEAN Regional Plan of Action on Women, Peace and Security (ASEAN RPA on WPS) was held on 10 June 2022. More broadly, the meeting covered the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Agenda in ASEAN but also discussed some pertinent issues around the security and well-being of women in the region. These included leveraging a whole-of-ASEAN approach to implement the ASEAN RPA on WPS, followed by thematic discussions on: WPS and climate-related disaster and emergency response, gender dimensions of conflict prevention and protection from gender-based violence, and promoting leadership and other meaningful roles for women in peace and security decision making processes and gender-inclusive cybersecurity. Dr Tamara Nair, Research Fellow from the NTS Centre presented on her research on indigenizing the WPS agenda in ASEAN.

**Prospect of Global Political Economy in the Post-Pandemic Era Conference**

Dr Tamara Nair, Research Fellow at the NTS Centre, was invited to be a discussant in the conference on the Prospect of Global Political Economy in the Post-Pandemic Era. This was a joint conference between the National Chengchi University, in Taiwan, and the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore. The conference covered many topics of interests, including US-China competition in the post-pandemic era, global and Asian security in the post-pandemic era, and the international economics in the post-pandemic era. Dr Nair was discussant on the paper entitled: Gender-sensitive Climate Change Adaptation Aid: the case of Small-Island Developing States.

**RSIS Seminar on “A Nuclear 3S Assessment for Small Modular Reactors in East Asia”**

The NTS Centre organised the RSIS Seminar on “A Nuclear 3S (Safety, Security, and Safeguards) Assessment for Small Modular Reactors in East Asia” on 31 May 2022 at the RSIS Lecture Theatre. The seminar was delivered by Dr Jorshan Choi, a retired nuclear scientist from Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory. Dr Choi presented examples of emerging Small Modular Reactors (SMRs) and assessed their nuclear safety, security and safeguards implications. He also discussed key challenges to introducing SMRs in Southeast Asia such as regulatory framework, operation and maintenance, spent fuel management, and nuclear 3S implications.

**Assessing US-ASEAN Relations: The 2022 Special Summit and Beyond**

NTS Centre Head, Prof Mely Caballero-Anthony, joins webinar panel on “Assessing US-ASEAN Relations: The 2022 Special Summit and Beyond” jointly organised by the East West Centre, Washington DC and ASEAN Studies Initiative, American University on 18 May 2022.

**Visiting Scholar at the East-West Center and the Daniel K. Inouye Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies (DKI APCSS)**

Visiting Scholar, East-West Center and Daniel K. Inouye Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies. Dr Alistair D. B. Cook, Senior Fellow and HADR Programme Coordinator, was a Visiting Scholar concurrently at the East-West Center and the Daniel K. Inouye Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies (DKI APCSS) in Honolulu, Hawaii, USA, from 9 May – 3 June 2022. During his time at the two institutions he met with officials and researchers, participated in seminars, and developed a proposal on Disaster Governance in the Asia-Pacific: Capacity, Legitimacy and Proximity. He also participated in taro farming while in Honolulu to learn more about the local community and environment.

**Disinformation Expert Working Group Workshop**

1-5 May 2022

Dr Alistair D. B. Cook, Senior Fellow and HADR Programme Coordinator is a member of the Disinformation Expert Working Group (EWG). Hosted by the Daniel K. Inouye Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies (APCSS), the EWG focuses on the development of a Human Security approach to disinformation. The multistakeholder group convened their first session from 1st to 5th May, at APCSS, Honolulu, Hawaii.
The opportunity to exchange views on the concept of planetary health provided the focal point for the 6th NTS-Asia Consortium Annual Conference held on 6 April 2022 at the Novotel Hotel, Singapore. Conducted in a hybrid format, the conference facilitated an exploration into the different aspects of planetary health across countries in Asia, with discussions covering the interpretations of and responses to the concept, specific risks to planetary health, and existing and/or hypothetical measures to operationalise the concept in each country.

Planetary health represents the highest standard of comprehensive health, without which human health would be under threat. The COVID-19 pandemic is a powerful reminder that the neglect of planetary health could cause significant losses across sectors. Although the occurrence of a global pandemic had been predicted long ago, the warning was not sufficiently heeded and countries were not prepared, as evidenced by the ongoing pandemic. Unfortunately, our collective capability to deal with global public health emergencies would be insufficient if we continued the current approach to public health and the broader socio-economic model, even after the ongoing pandemic ends. Rather, a preventive or anticipatory approach should be taken as the cost for effective prevention would be much lower than the post-pandemic losses.

A holistic approach that takes into account the respective planetary boundaries would be needed to ensure the sustainable development of societies. This would entail system-level thinking, coupled with a multi-sector, multi-scalar, and multi-stakeholder approaches, to bring together different nodes of environmental and health policies. The idea would be to empower the processes underlying the co-production of knowledge, joint monitoring and review, networking between different levels of governance (central, state, local), and fairness and efficiency in legal procedures.

To effectively address these multifaceted and interlinked issues, it would be vital to infuse the concept of planetary health into national political will, before it can be reflected in national policy frameworks.

ASEAN-IPR Module Development for WPS Training Programme for mid- to senior level government officials in ASEAN

The increased interest in UN Security Council Resolution 1325: the Women, Peace and Security agenda in Southeast Asia presented an opportunity for the ASEAN Institute of Peace and Reconciliation (AIPR) to work towards a more sustainable, regular, standardised, and modular training designed to enhance and support women’s participation in conflict resolution and peacebuilding. These modules focus on grassroots efforts and integrating UNSCR 1325: prevention, protection, participation, and peacebuilding and recovery into negotiations and decision-making to support communities and lives to ensure women are not merely observing from the side-lines. The AIPR Secretariat organized a series of Expert Meetings to develop the training module to achieve this objective. Together with seven other experts in the region, Dr Tamara Nair of the RSIS Centre for Non-Traditional Security Studies was actively involved in curriculum development in three areas:

1. Conflict Analysis and Management for Mid-Level officials
2. Formulating Inclusive Post-Conflict Recovery and Reconciliation Sustainable Peace Strategy
3. Policy Formulation for Senior Level officials

The training modules, targeted at mid- to senior level government officials and other stakeholders across the ASEAN Member States was sent out in early 2022.