

Civil Society Contributions on Regional Security Issues

Conference Report



Japan Center for International Exchange

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1. Overview

This report summarizes the discussions at an August 4, 2010, conference in Jakarta, Indonesia, on “Civil Society Contributions on Regional Security Issues” that was co-sponsored by the Japan Center for International Exchange (JCIE) and the Centre for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS). Many of the arrangements on the ground were made by CSIS staff, and we are deeply appreciative for all they did to make the gathering a success.

The conference was held as part of a JCIE study on the “Nongovernmental Contributions to Regional Security Cooperation,” which has been made possible by generous funding from the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation’s Asia Security Initiative. The project was launched in 2009 in acknowledgment of the growing—although often overlooked—role that civil society organizations are playing in the response to many of East Asia’s security threats and out of a conviction that it is critically important to strengthen their capacity to contribute in a meaningful manner to the region’s stability and security.

A seven-member project team has been examining the extent of civil society involvement in a range of regional security issues, mostly issues that fall under the rubric of nontraditional security but also including some that cross over into the realm of traditional security. These include climate change, disaster relief, global health, piracy, human trafficking, and the role of the think tanks and Track 2 dialogues. In this conference, they shared their preliminary findings with a group of 30 senior policymakers, NGO leaders, and foreign policy experts, and this report covers the key points of the wide-ranging discussion that ensued. Three major themes emerged, which can be loosely summarized as follows:

- 1) Civil society organizations are playing greater roles than anticipated in Asia, particularly on nontraditional security issues. In addition to the direct services many provide, they often have a clearer sense how to solve concrete problems than governments; they are setting norms that governments increasingly heed, especially in Southeast Asia; and they are pressuring other sectors of society to be transparent and accountable.
- 2) While there is considerable sophistication on the part of civil society organizations in some areas, there are large disparities country by country and issue area by issue area. These disparities and a host of other challenges have limited the development of regional networks of likeminded civil society organizations.
- 3) Nonetheless, there seems to be considerable potential to link up national networks of civil society organizations active around the region in various issue areas in order to help build regional cooperation. Particularly promising areas include disaster relief, weapons proliferation, and possibly health issues. Cooperation among civil society organizations can be instrumental in building momentum for greater regional cooperation among governments as well.

Overall, the discussions reflected a sense that there is a need for civil society organizations to play a larger role in helping ameliorate security threats in the region, but much needs to be done to strengthen their capacity to operate, to link them up with other likeminded organizations, and to better enable them to form effective partnerships with governments, intergovernmental agencies, and other key actors in tackling the pressing issues of the day.

2. The Regional Context: Civil Society and Changing Perceptions of Security

Summary of Remarks

The following is a distillation of the main points raised by two presenters in the August 4, 2010, conference on “Civil Society Contributions on Regional Security Issues.”

Jusuf Wanandi, Senior Fellow, CSIS

In this part of the world, most of the countries are newly developed or developing nations. In countries that have obtained their independence recently, the government is always strong and the issue of security is taken very seriously. For example, after Indonesia’s independence, the military had a monopoly on all security issues, and the field of security was not easy to pry open.

However, in the 1960s and 1970s, we in Asia also started to conceive of security in a much broader sense. In the 1970s, the energy crisis prodded Japan to change its national security approaches and think more about comprehensive security. In ASEAN, meanwhile, in the 1960s, we started to think that developing nations’ main preoccupation would have to be nation-building, which meant that political and economic issues would be considered critical in addition to military issues. As a result, ASEAN also began to come up with its own comprehensive security approaches. With this shift, other actors had a role to play, not just the military.

Now, after years of development, there are many pressing nontraditional and human security issues, and this makes the role of civil society more pronounced. In particular, there is a need for civil society participation in specialized fields. There are many issues—such as climate change, health, human trafficking, and piracy—in which we need more expertise than we have and thus we must draw upon the specialized knowledge of civil society. Even on some hard security issues, the development of technology and various platforms has become a more difficult proposition, and technical expertise is needed to master these fields.

Now, APEC and the ASEAN Regional Forum have become active on nontraditional security issues and, in the future, hopefully the East Asia Summit will as well. This means that the challenge ahead is to expand the degree of networking among and with civil society, which has not developed as much as it should. Track 2 dialogues involving government officials and convened by civil society organizations are necessary to inform and help governments. Government officials do not normally have enough time to adequately deal with specialized nontraditional security issues because on a day-to-day basis they have too many practical issues they have to handle. This explains the growing need for Track 2 dialogues and think tanks in the region.

There is also a need for Track 3 dialogues just among civil society organizations. Civil society organizations play an increasing role in terms of public awareness and thus, in some instances, Track 3 discussions have an equally important role to play. However, they are still not well accepted in this part of the world, especially on sensitive issues, since the idea of sovereignty still remains strong. But, at the same time, the need is there. So, we have to find a way to balance the “absoluteness of sovereignty” with the need for closer cooperation with civil society organizations. This need is not obvious yet to many governments in this part of the world. But there is no way that they can escape it forever.

Hitoshi Tanaka, Senior Fellow, JCIE; former Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Japan

When I was in government, I thought that all issues dealing with security should be the monopoly of the government. I thought that government officials had the wisdom and the right to conduct security affairs because, in democratic nations, the government has a popular mandate. If the government produces the wrong policies, it will fall. Therefore, those people who work for the government have the responsibility to decide the proper policies. This is particularly true in the field of security, which involves military affairs and political consultations with other nations.

However, after my retirement from government, I started thinking that these issues should not be tackled just inside the government. Instead, governments require cooperation from outside on a huge variety of issues. For example, they need NGOs to carry out different functions. NGOs need to be countervailing partners vis-à-vis the government. They must introduce transparency to society. They can come up with alternatives to government policies.

In fact, in East Asia, the growth of civil society is a crucial element that can contribute to stability, safety, and security in the region. This is partly because threat perceptions have changed as a result of globalization. There is a consensus in Europe and America that East Asia is going to be a center of world affairs and that the welfare of the world is very dependent upon economic growth in Asia. There has been tremendous economic growth in the region—in China and Indonesia—as a result of globalization, and now we want to take care not to destroy this prosperity. This makes it more important to deal with the issues that can threaten this economic and social prosperity—like piracy, climate change, energy shortages, HIV/AIDS, terrorism, and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. So, while we have different types of governments in the region, we have a common stake in nontraditional security issues, which are critical not just in terms of human security but also in terms of state and international security.

The major question is how to deal with these nontraditional security issues. Although I originally thought everything could be handled by the government, this is really not true. There is much that governments should do, and I feel we need an approach that has four components. One is bilateral alliances and relationships. The second is confidence building, for example among Japan, China, and the United States. The third is subregional mechanisms, such as the Six-Party Talks. And the fourth is an inclusive regional forum—I have proposed the East Asia Security Forum—to make possible joint operations on security issues, mainly nontraditional security issues.

But there is a lot more to be done, not just by the government but also through new partnerships among stakeholders. One successful example of successful partnerships is the way that the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria has dealt with fundraising, awareness programs, education programs, and concrete issues involved with combating HIV/AIDS. This is based on new types of partnerships among key stakeholders, which include government bureaucracies, politicians, the pharmaceutical industry, academics, and NGOs. Only when we create the right partnership can we deal with issues such as global health.

The same thing applies to all of the nontraditional issues. For example, to combat piracy, we do not just need joint military operations. We have to deal with the root causes, such as the poverty in coastal regions in Southeast Asia. So, the creation of partnerships is a critical area that Asia needs to deal with. There is a need for civil society to play a role. Only when we start talking about the role of civil society and the creation of new types of partnerships among stakeholders can we deal with nontraditional security issues.

3. Case Studies: Civil Society Involvement on Regional Security Issues

Piracy

J. N. Mak

The following is a summary of a paper by J. N. Mak that was shared with conference participants as a basis for discussion. This was not prepared by the original paper writer.

There are two “hotspots” for piracy and other illegal maritime activities in Asia: the Malacca Straits between Indonesia and Malaysia and the “Sulu Zone” where Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines meet. Two types of NGOs have an important role to play in addressing illegal maritime activity—those with a specific anti-piracy agenda and those taking a broader development perspective—but only the former has been engaged so far.

While incidents of piracy garner a lot of attention and present serious security concerns, everyday smuggling of people and goods in both regions is in fact much more prevalent. And while acts of piracy and the seemingly more benign practice of smuggling adopt very different approaches, the roots of both activities can be traced to low levels of economic development and a dearth of economic opportunities coupled with a relatively high potential economic gain to be had from illicit maritime activities, rather than a penchant for illegal activity per se.

If we are to attack these roots of illicit maritime activity, we need to rethink the role of NGOs that have traditionally tackled these problems. For the most part, the two types of NGOs have remained very separate, but not only do they both bring important abilities and perspectives to the field of piracy and illicit maritime activity but they also have complementary strengths that could benefit anti-piracy efforts if they were to work together in this area.

Industry and seafarers associations fall into the first category of anti-piracy NGOs, and they have been very successful at expanding the definition of piracy to include acts taking place beyond the high seas. This is particularly important in Asia where most of the relevant maritime areas fall under the jurisdiction of a state. These NGOs have also played a critical role in highlighting the security risks that piracy poses well beyond the players directly involved. But while anti-piracy organizations’ emphasis on the threats posed by piracy have helped raise awareness of the seriousness of piracy, it has led to responses focused more on surveillance, state-level collaboration, and legislation rather than encouraging solutions that deal with the root causes of piracy and other illegal maritime activities.

This is where political advocacy and development CSOs come in. These organizations, which rarely focus on coastal communities, could apply strategies they use elsewhere to improve governance and create economic and social opportunities that ultimately reduce the need for illegal activity. To adequately address the needs experienced by these communities and ensure that illegal activity is reduced as a result, these organizations need to collaborate and find ways in which they can complement each other’s approaches.

Global Health

Yanzhong Huang

The following is a summary of a paper by Yanzhong Huang that was shared with conference participants as a basis for discussion. This was not prepared by the original paper writer.

The connection between global health and regional security can be examined through the lens of three security frameworks: human security, national security, and international security. As civil society organizations (CSOs) have become more active in international affairs, their role in addressing these connections has grown.

Health challenges threaten human security because they have a direct impact on people's ability to earn a livelihood and an education, to lead fulfilling lives, and to become resilient to threats to other aspects of their lives. Throughout Asia, CSOs of all kinds have long addressed the human security aspects of poor health, even in countries with tight restrictions on nongovernmental activities. CSOs in the region are active in prevention and awareness-raising activities, service provision, and advocacy. Nongovernmental actors are particularly important in addressing the human security challenges of poor health because of their ability to reach out to marginalized populations.

In addition, poor health is bad for national security because it limits the pool of healthy individuals able to protect the country, govern, and generate economic growth. And poor health can create conflict over access to limited supplies of medicines. Widespread infectious diseases can lead to political unrest and distrust by other countries. CSOs are crucial to mitigating the effect of poor health on national security in two ways: they play a role in ensuring that health-related demands are communicated from the grassroots to the policy level; and they often fill gaps in the health system, thereby helping reduce the potential for political and social unrest resulting from widespread disease outbreaks that the public health system is not equipped to handle on its own.

International security can also be threatened by health problems. Infections do not respect national borders, so a disease outbreak in one country can easily have "spillover" effects in other countries. These effects might be caused by the spreading of infections into other countries or by the social and political unrest that can result from widespread illness, especially when one government's responses are not considered adequate or drugs needed to treat sickness are not available everywhere.

CSOs help mitigate the effect of poor health on international security in several ways. First, through their advocacy efforts, CSOs encourage governments to channel more funding to social services, including healthcare services, which means that there are fewer resources available for military action. Second, CSOs are often more efficient and effective at conducting disease surveillance, which is critical to fighting communicable diseases and limiting their spread across borders. Third, CSOs can help broker humanitarian agreements between countries in conflict to address health challenges because they are generally seen by both sides as politically neutral. Finally, they can form linkages with likeminded CSOs in other countries.

While the engagement of CSOs in public health is not new, the proliferation and prosperity of health-promoting CSOs is a relatively recent development. That being said, the breadth and depth of engagement by CSOs in the health field in Asia are uneven across issue areas. A majority of the health-promoting CSOs work

on HIV/AIDS prevention and control, few on other infectious diseases or health system capacity building, and even fewer on chronic noncommunicable diseases. The development and engagement of health-related CSOs also vary across countries in the region, often because of the nature of political institutions in those countries. Overall, CSOs play a more prominent role in promoting health and security in Japan, Thailand, and Indonesia than in China, Vietnam, and Laos.

As health is increasingly viewed through the lens of security in Asia, there is tremendous unrealized potential for CSOs to make greater contributions to regional security through cooperative efforts. For example, in dealing with a cross-border disease outbreak, networks of likeminded CSOs can develop and disseminate norms for medical and nonmedical interventions (e.g., quarantine or exit screenings) that facilitate coordination and cooperation among national governments. This becomes particularly important given the discordant measures implemented by some East Asian countries in reaction to the 2009 H1N1 pandemic. Yet, thus far most health-related CSOs in the region are confined to human security promotion and their contribution to national and international security has been indirect and often symbolic.

Climate Change

Chung Suh-Yong

The following is a summary of a paper by Chung Sub-Yong that was shared with conference participants as a basis for discussion. This was not prepared by the original paper writer.

Climate change is tied to an array of problems that increasingly threaten stability around the world. Although the impact of climate change will be global, East Asia is particularly vulnerable. According to a report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the availability of fresh water in most Asian subregions is expected to decrease by the 2050s, and coastal areas—especially the heavily populated mega delta regions—will be seriously damaged by rising sea levels and flooding.

Climate change has also become a serious challenge for national security in that it poses multiple threats to the human population through negative impacts such as water stress, food insecurity, and forced migration—all of which may lead to violent conflict—and it has already had an impact on public health in East Asia as well. In the near future, these threats may challenge the stability and security of East Asian countries individually or in aggregate.

However, East Asia has not yet developed appropriate regional mechanisms to address climate change as a source of regional insecurity. Few security-related organizations or dialogues in the region have even taken up the issue of climate change. In this context, the role of civil society organizations (CSOs) is crucial. CSOs in East Asia have recently started to take the issue of climate change seriously, placing it high on their regional agenda. While many are focusing on raising awareness among both the public and the government, some have expanded the scope of their activities to include monitoring the implementation of government policies and recommending policy alternatives. To a certain degree, these organizations in aggregate have provided information, affected governments by building coalitions, monitored government performance, engaged the private sector, and contributed to enhancing their countries' participation in the climate change regime. However, the capacity of each individual CSO to carry out these roles varies widely by country, and CSOs in East Asia remain extremely diverse in terms of their involvement and achievements in addressing climate change.

Given that the security implications of climate change—including potential natural disasters, the spread of infectious diseases, increased competition over business opportunities, and climate refugees—have not yet been taken into serious consideration by national governments, CSOs have the potential to play an important role in reframing the discourse on this issue.

But despite the active role being played by some CSOs at the domestic level, there have been insufficient efforts to date at the regional level. Since further mobilization of political will and available resources in the region is of great necessity, CSOs in East Asia need to find ways to build confidence and engage more deeply in regional efforts to cope with the security threats of climate change. As noted above, there is a great deal of diversity among CSOs in East Asia, and building stronger networks among CSOs can therefore be advantageous in leveraging the various strengths of these organizations in developing and promoting viable policies. A reinforced network that includes stakeholders at every level will help strengthen and accelerate the contributions of CSOs to addressing the common insecurities caused by climate change in East Asia, which will ultimately enhance the peace and prosperity of the region.

Human Trafficking

Jun Honna

The following is a summary of a paper by Jun Honna that was shared with conference participants as a basis for discussion. This was not prepared by the original paper writer.

Human trafficking for sexual exploitation has been an issue of serious concern in Asia, particularly since the 1990s. In 2000, it was estimated that about one-third of the world's trafficking victims—approximately 220,000 people—were from Southeast Asia, and that number has grown in the ensuing decade. A decade of international anti-trafficking initiatives since the adoption of the Palermo Protocol in 2000 has succeeded in disseminating a new global norm that identifies contemporary slavery as a serious nontraditional security threat to the wellbeing of both national sovereignty and civil society. This recognition has encouraged states to fight against transnational organized crime, and various efforts have been made to promote law enforcement cooperation worldwide. In 2002, for example, Asia Pacific countries established the “Bali Process” to promote law enforcement cooperation, legislation modeling, and victim protection. Yet despite these signs of progress, the number of victims continues to rise. Clearly, a state response alone is far from sufficient to effectively deal with the problem of human trafficking.

In fact, one reason that efforts to deal with human trafficking have not been more successful is that the securitization of the issue has meant that government-led approaches are focused primarily on law enforcement and thus on the supply side rather than the demand side. This often criminalizes the victims rather than protecting them, and in many of the countries in the region, it opens up the possibility for corruption as traffickers are able to bribe low-paid police officers to look the other way. Instead of a “3D” strategy that disempowers, detains, and deports trafficking victims, the fight against human trafficking requires a “3P” approach of criminal prosecution combined with prevention and protection.

Civil society organizations (CSOs) are playing significant roles in the latter two areas, establishing shelters for victims, providing legal consultation, offering free psychological counseling services for victims, and urging police to understand various sensitivities in treating the victims of trafficking. CSOs are also promoting civic awareness, disseminating information on the danger of job opportunities offered by brokers and recruiters, and carrying out advocacy efforts to enlighten state authorities regarding the reality of human trafficking. Partnership between the state authorities and CSOs is important given that input from CSOs is critical to the state's ability to provide effective prevention measures. CSOs also engage in community development activities aimed at reducing the impact of poverty and creating job opportunities in urban and rural areas, thus reducing the triggers of trafficking.

In Southeast Asia, the roles and scope of action of CSOs in this field vary by country and by level of democracy in each country. A large number of the prominent CSOs are found in the more democratic nations, such as Thailand, Indonesia, and the Philippines. In these countries, the roles of the CSOs may include working to protect children's rights, working with the police to train hotline operators to assist trafficking victims, providing legal support to female victims, and carrying out advocacy campaigns. In countries where the democratic

space is limited, however, CSOs have less capacity for information gathering, advocacy, and fundraising. Finding ways to establish an effective partnership with law enforcement agencies is another challenge for many CSOs. At the regional level, a mutual distrust between ASEAN government officials and regional CSOs is also evident, raising the important question of how to close that gap.

Global, regional, and subregional initiatives by CSOs are helping to fill those gaps, such as the efforts by the Coalition against Trafficking in Women, which has an Asia Pacific branch that raises awareness on the issue, or the Mekong Migration Network, which brings together 30 CSOs to help trafficking victims and oppose the brutality of Thai security agencies toward undocumented migrants. These various networks can empower local NGOs in terms of agenda setting, strategic planning, capacity building, information sharing, and fundraising. The development of regional networks of support structures is also important to enable anti-trafficking CSOs to better protect women and children who are trafficked from one country to another for sexual exploitation

Disaster Relief and Humanitarian Assistance

Yukie Osa

The following is a summary of a paper by Yukie Osa that was shared with conference participants as a basis for discussion. This was not prepared by the original paper writer.

Asia is the most disaster-prone region in the world. According to the Asian Disaster Reduction Center, the Asian region accounts for nearly 90 percent of people in the world who were affected by disasters in the period from 1975 to 2007.

In the region, NGOs are playing a major role in providing disaster relief and other forms of humanitarian assistance. One practical reason is that, in most cases, the magnitude and frequency of disasters has overwhelmed government capabilities. At the same time, UN agencies such as the World Food Programme, UNICEF, and UNHCR need operational implementing partners. Moreover it is no exaggeration to say that NGOs have unique capabilities in that they can mobilize volunteers and funds in ways that governments cannot, they can connect various actors, and they provide specialized services that communities need to rebuild.

Still, one challenge that NGOs have faced in the region involves the difficulty of reconciling their commitment to humanitarian principles—impartiality, neutrality, independence, and the prioritization of the humanitarian imperative—with the notion of contributing on issues associated with security. However, from a broader human security perspective, there are many ways that NGO actions can affect regional security, both positively and negatively.

In recent years, there has been a noticeable growth in the number and range of NGOs involved in disaster relief and humanitarian assistance in various countries around the region.

- In 2000, a novel mechanism, the Japan Platform, was created to help Japanese NGOs enhance their ability and capacity to respond to major natural disasters and humanitarian crises overseas. Japan Platform acts as a cooperative, multisectoral coordination mechanism in which NGOs, the business community, and the Japanese government cooperate and work together in managing resources.
- In China, many new NGOs emerged after the 2008 Sichuan Earthquake, and many humanitarian non-profits redirected their efforts toward disaster relief.
- Korean NGOs working on disaster relief and humanitarian assistance have multiplied dramatically, going from virtual nonexistence before the 1990s to comprising a vibrant sector of Korean civil society today. Their efforts are visible around the globe and the Korean government provides millions in US dollars to NGO efforts.
- A wide range of Indonesian NGOs became involved in disaster relief and humanitarian assistance in the aftermath of the December 2004 tsunami, and a large number of them have maintained activities in this field. The diversity of NGOs involved in disaster relief is now huge in terms of size and function.

Many of these organizations are still so young that they are not ready to work in tandem with international standards, nor are they deeply aware of their impact on regional security. However, it is clear that the NGO community will play a more important role in disaster relief in the years ahead, partly because the need will increase. This will force the organizations to develop, and regional cooperation can play a role in helping them.

4. Summary of Discussion: Challenges and Opportunities for Civil Society Contributions

A large portion of the conference was given over to an open discussion, and the following encompasses some of the key themes that were raised.

I: The Growing Role of Civil Society

There was a sense that there is a greater space for civil society to play a role on regional security threats and that the need for civil society participation is growing. Below are some illustrative points that were made during the discussion.

- “The world has changed, and governments can no longer handle or deal with all issues including security issues, both traditional and nontraditional.”
- “We [governments officials] should involve civil society even in the process of the formation of policy, security policy.”
- “The role of NGOs, the definition of civil society, their relationship with government, we all know those differ from one country to another. ...But yet we all think that the future activities on the part of NGOs will be extremely important for the stability of East Asia. ...Indeed, [regional] cooperation needs to be inclusive of all nations in East Asia and all civil society stakeholders because this project is part of the concept of East Asia community building. Therefore, we think that we [need] new types of partnerships among the civil society and the government, among other stakeholders. And this is different from the role of the media, or the role of the political [advocacy] NGOs that criticize the government policies. They are very, very important because of the need for transparency, because of the need to get rid of corruption, and things like that. But what we are talking about is probably a little bit more pragmatic—the role of civil society in relation to nontraditional security issues.”
- “In the past it has been very, very difficult for us to develop a civil society and NGOs. I was the founder of an NGO working mostly on health. At that time....you could only work with the government, you could not really develop without the blessing from the government, [unless you were] what we call GONGOs, government nongovernmental organizations. ...So, it is not a new thing, to develop civil society and NGOs. That has been around for a long time. But there are [now new] opportunities, I think. It always takes time, this evolution.”
- “In this region for instance, we learn that the political spaces are open because of domestic political changes. In Indonesia 15 years ago, it was not possible to talk of human rights. ...In ASEAN, it is quite difficult to move forward with the government because ASEAN adopted the principle of consensus.”
- “Now in Indonesia, “NGO” means “next government official.” And that actually means that the level of association of NGOs is high in the policy process in this country. Who could imagine that 10 years ago?”
- “Since the authoritarian regime [in Indonesia ended in 1998], the situation, the relationship, the perspective, and the paradigm [of the relationship between NGOs and the government] has been fluid. This is

why there are many [people with NGO experience] crossing over to be in the parliament, and then to be in the government. The immediate responses of the time were against the idea, accusing the NGOs of being co-opted, of their positions being compromised. But in the issue of human trafficking, for example, we found that more [people with NGO experience] sitting in the right places in government and in parliament makes policy output better. And because NGOs have been doing a lot of politicking in this relationship, they know how to move the priorities up in parliament. So increasingly we see the crossing over [of NGOs to government] become an example of good practice in how we can change policy.”

- “Japan is also undergoing a political transformation, and ...this is actually a process of engaging civil society, or ordinary people, into politics, [which is] an essential demand and an essential challenge we have to face still in Japan. The debate over Okinawa for the past year has proven that without public support we cannot even manage the alliance with the United States properly.”

II: Civil Society Contributions on Regional Security Challenges

The participants debated the areas in which civil society organizations can be most effective and discussed some of the functions they can fulfill in tackling security issues, from supporting policy formulation to direct service provision.

Ways for civil society organizations to contribute on regional security

Many participants felt that there is a need for greater civil society contributions in the field of nontraditional security, and others warned that concerns about sovereignty in some countries make it difficult for civil society organizations to make progress on more sensitive issues.

- “I think when we try to engage NGOs, many opportunities arise with issues of nontraditional security, but ...there is a limit to cooperating with government institutions dealing with traditional issues of security.”
- “The role of NGOs in this regional security cooperation really depends on the issue area; they can be useful or they can also be a problem in the eyes of the government.”
- “The security in the region depends most on civil societies. This is the time for us, and I am glad to hear about the comprehensive approach, much broader... not just of hard military security ...but food security, energy security, health security. ...[When] you talk about security issues now, about joint military ventures, [it is impossible] without addressing all the basics of security including food security and security to survive.”
- “Some NGOs, if their work is about policy influence, policy work, or we call it policy advocacy, have to mirror the processes of the government because the output of the work itself will influence the daily lives of the people we are concerned about most: marginalized, poor people. But if it is about raising awareness, if it is about capacity building, if it is about empowering individuals, or empowering organizations at the local level, usually civil society does not need the government to set the agenda. So I think it depends on the characteristics of the approach and mandate of the organization. This is not only at the national level but also at the regional level.”

- “Some [NGOs] are looked upon positively by the people, but some may be looked upon negatively, particularly NGOs with political affiliations. A lot of criticism internally was directed against NGOs for interfering too much in domestic issues, for saying what sort of political system should be adopted... but a lot of NGOs are very successful, and I can classify them. Basically if they are working in the economic and social fields they are much more successful. In environmental kinds of matters, they are very, very successful. And, [even] ... in dispute settlement mechanisms, NGOs can be very constructive.”
- “For a country like Myanmar, civil society—as long as they can help with humanitarian responses, for support—that would be fine. That would be the case of Cyclone Nargis in 2009. But if they are working on political issues, then they are insurgents. Suddenly the issue of security or human rights may draw the line between which NGOs can be accepted and which NGOs cannot be accepted as part of society.”

Advocacy & policy formulation

Several examples were pointed out of ways that civil society has helped to shape the policy discourse to a degree that was difficult to imagine 10 or 20 years earlier.

- “I would like to give an example of how the NGO agenda has been adopted in the national agenda ...in the process of coming up with the terms of reference for the ASEAN Human Rights body. ... [O]ur civil society position at the regional level was similar to the government of Indonesia’s. So we worked hand-in-hand and we shared notes. ...I think for human rights, civil society has mingled well with the government of Indonesia, in this case the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. ...This kind of venue has been used to put people’s agenda into the government’s agenda, so the government can bring this mandate into negotiation with other governments at the ASEAN level.”
- “The issue is no longer for NGOs to only criticize what the government has been doing; to me what is important is how we can harness the government to NGOs. For example...there is a new norm now that just came into force a few days ago, on August 1, the new Convention on Cluster Munitions. This convention is a particularly successful story of partnership between the governments, the UN, other international organizations—ICRC, the UNDP—and NGOs. We call it the Coalition on Cluster Munitions, and it is a coalition of 600–700 NGOs focusing on issues with cluster munitions and landmines.”

Transparency in policy making

Participants argued that NGOs are also already playing important roles in bringing more accountability and transparency to policymaking on security issues.

- “I am sorry to differ... on this issue of NGOs and civil society, and because you said that we have to be pragmatic, solving problems and so forth, and cannot weigh problems of ideology. I beg to differ, because I think our democracy in this country at this stage now is dependent on NGOs and the media.”
- “On the issue of global health, civil society can seek the accountability of the government, to ensure transparency in society and provide alternative policies...”

Track 2 and Track 3 dialogues

The capacity to facilitate regional security dialogues was also highlighted as an important role for NGOs.

- “In my 20 years of working on [territorial disputes in] the South China Sea, the way we do it is involving government officials in their private capacities... No formalities, no diplomatic kind of behavior, and in the end whatever was agreed can be channeled to the government by those participants who attended in their private capacities... The process is rather slow, but it has resulted in some cooperative programs, and it has resulted in some kind of “code of behavior”—we have been able to encourage people to settle their maritime boundaries as much as possible...but without telling them what to do. This would be one way, I think, where the NGOs could be substantially contributing.”

Service Provision

Other speakers focused on the capacity of NGOs to ameliorate security threats by providing services to marginalized communities in ways that governments and other sectors of societies find difficult.

- “For me the most critical of the CSOs and NGOs that deal with piracy are those that deal with the root causes of piracy rather than the symptoms. ...Piracy is just a manifestation of maritime criminality on land... they are impoverished, they are disempowered, so they turn to crime... the ultimate mark of desperation.”
- “There is a very important role for development and political advocacy CSOs and NGOs that help with poverty alleviation, that help in empowering communities, especially coastal communities, and then eliminating poverty, eliminating corruption.”

III. Challenges to Civil Society Involvement in Regional Security

Participants noted that civil society organizations in Asia face a number of challenges that need to be overcome so they can contribute more effectively on regional security issues. The following are some of the issues that were raised.

Diversity of the region

One difficulty in building regional cooperation among NGOs is the vast disparities that are found in Asia, in terms of forms of government, levels of development, and even understanding of what constitutes civil society.

- “Civil society is not a monolithic entity, it is very diverse... and has been identified or defined differently both by the government and by civil society.”
- “A Western concept, it is the academics who introduced the words “civil society.” Therefore, there is no local interpretation of what civil society means. Secondly, there is no local term for that, and in the Vietnamese context, there is no civil society, there are “people.” There are NGOs, but they are “peoples.” In the context of Vietnam, the NGOs are actually the government. At the same time, I also observe a lot of independent organizations in Vietnam. So I think the words “civil society” still needs to be defined in this region, especially because of the different understandings and different sentiments when the words come into discussion.”

- “[There is] concern that ASEAN does not seem able to have a unified position. This is to be expected of course, because with the 10 countries of ASEAN, as you already indicated, two are run by communists: Laos and Vietnam. And then we have de facto one-party systems—in Cambodia we have a military junta, in Myanmar we have one-man rule, in Brunei... I think in the past or even now, we still sometimes pride ourselves on our diversity. Indonesia itself, there is much diversity. But the diversity sometimes hampers our efforts to strengthen unity.”

Limited institutional capacity of Asian NGOs

Many of the challenges that NGOs face in Asia are connected to the lack of a strong financial and legal infrastructure to support their activities and the need for greater capacity building.

- “One of the lessons that need to be understood by us is how do you assure continuity? That is always one of the big problems, either continuity in terms of budgeting, in terms of programming, or in some cases in terms of personnel attention to these. A lot of experience indicates that NGOs work for two or three years, and then they disappear. And when they disappear, it creates a bad taste. Work has not been completed.”
- “We should take into consideration the relationship between local NGOs and international NGOs to elaborate more about the problem of capacity building and sustainability. Sometimes when we talk about dishonest NGOs, we have to understand that local NGOs with links to the grassroots do not have the capacity to link with international NGOs, with donors... It becomes a problem in the way advocacy groups and the NGOs work in the field. I think it is also important to take a look and discern the relations between donors and recipients, the relations between local and international NGOs.”
- “One of the real issues we assume—it is not really proven yet, probably because of the dependence on external sources of funding in some areas—is if there is a source of funding from the outside then suddenly networks can be easily built, but if there is no such source of funding, then that is hard to expect.”
- “Many civil society organizations depend upon the government for their funding resources for many reasons... Why do most civil society organizations have to rely on governmental resources for their activities? Does that come from culture in East Asia, or political dynamics, or from other reasons?”

Difficulties navigating government-NGO relations

It remains challenging for NGOs to work with national and local governments in Asia. Still, there was a sense that the situation has improved dramatically in recent years and governments are increasingly open to partnering with NGOs.

- “Open governments like Indonesia, Thailand, and the Philippines want to bring civil society into the process of intergovernmental policymaking, but this idea has been continuously rejected by the rest of the ASEAN countries, Brunei, Singapore....”
- “[The 2009 ASEAN Regional Forum under Thailand] came up with the inclusion of civil society consultations in nontraditional security issues. ...The Vietnamese government is now making the theme of ASEAN chairmanship “from vision to action,” but what kind of action is actually taking place? ...This

is an opportunity that has been deliberately missed by the [Vietnamese] government to provide space for civil society to engage in discussion on security issues.”

- “In Laos, there is a law on governing civil society or NGOs. ... On one hand, having the law means the government acknowledges that NGOs exist. At the same time, it provides the venue for the government to control them. So they have mixed feelings, ...but it is good progress.”
- “I think it is impossible now for us in the government to suppress the desire of civil society to try to intervene, to try to contribute to the policy making process. We should rather, I believe, involve civil society even in the process of the formation of policy, security policy. That is why I think the world of civil society, the responsibility of society, is getting more and more important.”
- “...from the view of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs we view NGOs as indispensable, because the world has changed. For the last few years, we have what we call a new unit in the directorate in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs dealing with applicable processes, which is how to engage or strengthen engagement with the public in general, including NGOs.”
- “From experience I can identify a number of problems when we work with the government. I think one problem is the partnership itself with the government... that the government is not a monolithic institution. ... They have different interests and different views. For example, most of our cooperation with the foreign ministry is with planning and research agencies... but the people dealing with issues of East Asia community are from implementing agencies within the foreign ministry. ... When we talk with research and planning agencies we have a common view, but whenever we talk with implementing agencies, there is a gap.”
- “I think for human rights, civil society has mingled well with the government of Indonesia, in this case the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Now, we are experiencing how to engage with another department, like the Ministry of Women Empowerment and Child Protection. ... [And] in the area of climate change, I think the situation is quite different [as well].”
- “In the [Indonesia’s] Reform Era, the NGOs had different perceptions if we compare it to the New Order Era. In the New Order Era, NGOs still did not believe the government, so NGOs did not want to give them policy alternatives. But in the Reform Era they tried to advocate policy alternatives to the government... and now NGOs think it very important to press them to formulate good policy for the people.”
- “[On] the question of where NGOs can be useful, I tend to feel cooperation should take place in areas where our NGOs have certain comparative advantages over the governments.”

Lack of coordination among NGOs

Another challenge that was noted was the propensity for NGOs to compete with one another for attention and resources for their pet issues rather than to work together in a more farsighted manner.

- “In Indonesia ... coalitions of NGOs for campaigns on climate change are strong. But the problem is this is a campaign on climate change, not part of human security. They just discuss and campaign for climate change under environmental topics, they do not understand how to relate it [more broadly] to human security issues.”

VI. Future prospects

The participants had a number of recommendations about the need to involve civil society more on regional security issues, the importance of building regional networks, and issue areas where civil society should be more active.

- “In the regional context, although not all NGOs and civil societies have been as strong across the board, I think we have to pursue [their development] because it is a very critical element for the region in the future.”
- “We need the empowerment of civil society. Without a strong civil society, without the proper engagement of civil society, I believe there is no future development of East Asia. Second, now is the time that we have to think very seriously about security issues, not only nontraditional, but traditional security issues. I think that nontraditional security issues were an ingenious invention by our elders, and we appreciate that very much. That has helped us promote the discussion of security issues. Now, maybe this is the time we also should discuss traditional security issues.”
- “We have good practices on how the government tries to bring people’s voice to the government level, but in civil society we would like to have regional NGOs or coalitions of NGOs meet with the regional government. At the national level NGOs exist, but at the regional level in ASEAN, NGOs do not exist, even though ASEAN has the guideline of engaging with civil society.”
- “At least up to the moment, I do not see good or strong NGOs who are willing to focus on issues, for example, on disarmament and nonproliferation.... Perhaps it is about time for us to think that we can try to promote the establishment of NGOs who are focused on issues related to disarmament and nonproliferation in general, not only weapons of mass destruction.”

5. Agenda and Participants

Conference Agenda

“Civil Society Contributions on Regional Security Issues”

Wednesday, August 4, 2010

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|-------------|--|
| 9:00-9:15 | Welcome
Jusuf Wanandi, Senior Fellow, Centre for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS);
Vice Chair, CSIS Foundation
Tadashi Yamamoto, President, Japan Center for International Exchange |
| 9:15–9:30 | Overview of Study
Tadashi Yamamoto, President, Japan Center for International Exchange |
| 9:30–10:30 | The Context: Regional Security and Civil Society |
| 9:30~9:45 | Jusuf Wanandi, Senior Fellow, CSIS; Vice Chair, CSIS Foundation |
| 9:45~10:00 | Hitoshi Tanaka, Senior Fellow, JCIE; former Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan |
| 10:00~10:30 | Discussion |
| 10:45-13:00 | Challenges and Opportunities for Civil Society Contributions
Moderator: Rizal Sukma, Executive Director, CSIS |

Participants

Lina A. Alexandra, Researcher, Department of Politics and International Relations, CSIS

Al A'raf, Program Director, Imparsial (The Indonesian Human Rights Monitor)

Chung Suh-Yong, Associate Professor, Korea University

Alexius Djemadu, Associate Dean of Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Universitas Pelita Harapan

Hasjim Djagal, Ambassador-at-Large for the Law of the Sea and Maritime Affairs; Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Indonesia; former Ambassador to Germany and Canada; former President, International Seabed Authority

James Gannon, Executive Director, JCIE/USA

Gui Yongtao, Associate Professor, Peking University

Jun Honna, Professor, Ritsumeikan University

Yanzhong Huang, Associate Professor and Director of the Center for Global Health Studies, John C. Whitehead School of Diplomacy and International Relations, Seton Hall University

Makmur Keliat, Chair, Postgraduate Program, Department of International Relations, School of Social and Political Sciences, the University of Indonesia.

Firman Lubis, Executive Director, Koalisi untuk Indonesia Sehat (KUIS)/Coalition for a Healthy Indonesia; Chairman, Kusuma Buana Foundation (YKB)

J.N. Mak, Independent Analyst; former Director of Research, Maritime Institute of Malaysia

Setia Ambar Pertiwi, Lecturer, Universitas Prof. Dr. Moestopo

Shiskha Prabawaningtyas, Instructor, Universitas Paramadina

Andy Rachmianto, Deputy Director for International Security and Disarmament, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Indonesia

Teuku Rezasyah, Head, Department of International Relations, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Universitas Padjadjaran

Rizal Sukma, Executive Director, CSIS

Tomoko Suzuki, Program Officer, JCIE

Hitoshi Tanaka, Senior Fellow, JCIE; former Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan

Yuyun Wahyuningrum, Policy Advisor on ASEAN, OXFAM International

Jusuf Wanandi, Senior Fellow, CSIS; Vice Chair, CSIS Foundation

Wiryo Sastrohandoyo, Commissioner, International Commission on Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament (ICNND); Senior Fellow, CSIS; Former Ambassador of Indonesia to Australia, France and Austria

Takio Yamada, Ambassador of Japan to ASEAN

Tadashi Yamamoto, President, JCIE

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Founded in 1970, the Japan Center for International Exchange (JCIE) is one of the few truly independent think tanks in the field of international affairs in Japan. With offices in Tokyo and New York, JCIE conducts political exchange programs, carries out policy research and dialogue projects on pressing international issues, and works to promote a greater understanding of civil society and philanthropy in Japan and the Asia Pacific region.



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