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INSIGHT SOUTHEAST ASIA

Looking Eastwards From New Delhi



An old style home in Vietnam
Photo Courtesy: Sampa Kundu

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INSTITUTE FOR DEFENCE STUDIES AND ANALYSES

Editor:

Dr Sampa Kundu

Editorial Assistance:

Niranjan C Oak

Adviser:

Dr Udai Bhanu Singh

Southeast Asia and Oceania
Centre

Institute for Defence Studies
and Analyses

No. 1, Development Enclave, Rao
Tula Ram Marg, Delhi Cantt, New
Delhi – 110 010

Tel. (91-11)2671 7983,

Fax: (91-11)2615 4191

Email:

southeastasia.centre@gmail.com

Website: <http://www.idsa.in>

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CENTRE ACTIVITIES FOR JULY TO OCTOBER 2016

Editor's Note

The combined issue of Insight Southeast Asia gives an overview of incidents that shaped the regional architecture in Southeast Asia and Oceania in the months of July to October 2016. The most remarkable events took place in Lao PDR as the smaller economy of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) hosted 28th and 29th annual summits of the regional grouping as well as other related meetings including ASEAN-India Summit, ASEAN-China Summit, East Asia Summit and so on. These months were important for the newly elected democratic government in Myanmar as the State Counsellor and Foreign Minister Daw Aung San Suu Kyi made her debut in the United Nations General Assembly as the de facto leader of her country. A lot has happened in Philippines as well as the new President Rodrigo Duterte continued to make headlines in the news for the last four months. He gave a surprise talk in China where he dramatically announced his 'separation' from the US. Though later clarified in a much softer tune, his remarks are likely to impact the US-Philippines relationship. Closer to home, BIMSTEC members were hosted by India to attend the 8th BRICS Outreach Summit in Goa and India received indirect vocal support from its neighbours regarding recent terror attack in Uri. Overall, these four months were eventful and definitely had profound impact on the region.

With this, we hope that our readers will enjoy reading this issue and would provide insightful comments to improve the newsletter in future.

Thank you,

Dr. Sampa Kundu

Democratisation of Myanmar

Nehginpao Kipgen, New Delhi, London, New York,
Routledge, 2016, xviii+ 194pp., Rs. 695 (hardback), ISBN:
978-1-138-66787-7 (hardback), 978-1-315-65212-2(e-book).

Dr. Udai Bhanu Singh



Dr. Udai Bhanu Singh is Senior Research Associate and Coordinator of Southeast Asia and Oceania Centre, IDSA

It is interesting that in recent history Myanmar came to be better known for its army than its democracy. When the British vacated Myanmar, they left a country unprepared for democracy and the weak attempt at democracy in the decade after independence, gradually faltered and the military took over. Democratic institutions were not allowed to take root in the country and the political system and the social structure that emerged was quite unsuited to the genius of its people. The urge for democracy that ensued and the changes in the structure (including the two other constitutions) and ethos that it entailed, were not obtained without a struggle. Nehginpao Kipgen has sought to trace some of this struggle for democratisation in this book.

The author has had a truly cosmopolitan academic trajectory. He is a dedicated scholar (belonging to an ethnic minority community) from North East India who has published extensively in prestigious journals. He obtained his highest degree in Hyderabad, became an American

citizen but has returned to teach in India as Assistant Professor at O.P. Jindal Global University. Dr Kipgen is no idle armchair academic grounded in theory alone, but is an activist of sorts with links at the highest policy making levels straddling India, Myanmar and the United States. Thus what he writes has the additional advantage of insight into the feasibility of policy options.

The process of democratisation has been studied threadbare by scholars as has been the process of militarisation. Kipgen provides a theoretical anchor in his Introduction by referring to the ontology of democracy: democratisation, democratic transition and democratic consolidation. He familiarises the reader with the various theoretical works on democratisation by scholars like Huntington, Sorenson, JJ Linz and Alfred Stepan: the literature survey on the subject is exhaustive which experts would find useful. He examines the role of the civil society, the elites, external agencies, and institutions. Myanmar which experienced military rule for over five decades (with an initial flirtation with democracy in the immediate post-independence period) has begun its march towards democratisation but

it has not yet reached the destination. There is much ground yet to be covered and structural constraints remain. Myanmar's latest (its third) Constitution has found it difficult to break the shackles of the past. Chapter 1 of Kipgen's book, on 'Political Developments since Independence' is really a record of Myanmar's political evolution in the post-1948 period, although the author does provide a brief background to the colonial phase. This chapter largely covers the period since 1948 and in one table he lists the reform and revolution cycles around the years 1948, 1962, 1974, and 1988. In fact, the chapter is not limited to 'political developments' alone as the economic impact is also analysed. However, the political developments after 1988 hardly find a mention in this chapter.

'Role of Civil Society' is covered in Chapter 2. Civil society is considered an important element in a democratic transition. The author provides the theoretical justification for a civil society as represented by Myanmar's students, the media etc. There are differing views about the role the civil society played in the democratic transition. Chapter 3 showcases 'Power of Elites'. Starting with elites under AFPFL government, the author goes on to assess their role under the BSPP government, the SLORC government, and the SPDC government and finally the NLD government. The author notes: "Unlike the successive military government or the NLD, there has not been one top leader who has been widely recognised or has assumed the elite role in Myanmar's ethnic politics." (p.91) He then goes on to elaborate on 'Role of ethnic minorities in transition' and 'Situation of the Rohingyas'. Chapter 4 on 'Influence of External Agencies' records

the role of the US, European Union, the United Nations (including the General Assembly, the offices of the secretary general, the Security Council), the ASEAN engagement, China's engagement and India's own engagement. While ASEAN advocated engagement with the regime in Myanmar in the face of Western criticism, India decided to engage the military regime around 1993 when it became evident that not doing so would not best serve India's interest. US sent Secretary of State Hillary Clinton when it realised that its policy of sanctions and boycott against Myanmar was not working. That action opened the floodgates of engagement and interaction with Myanmar not only of the US but other countries as well. But the chapter covers the period prior to that as it seeks to explore the impact of the sanctions on the process of transition.

Chapter 5 on 'Institutional Effects' examines the role that institutions played in the transition to democracy especially that of the military's seven point road map to democracy, the electoral process, the sangha and the saffron revolution. Kipgen's comparison of the 2010 election with the 1990 elections is especially interesting because the results of the earlier election were not accepted by the military. Myanmar is one country where some institutions like the monarchy were already demolished (under the British) while others like the Military took on a larger than life role.

The author takes a realistic position in his Conclusion when he states that "...the transition from a non-democratic regime to a democratic government is possible when contending parties realise their respective limitations and are willing to compromise and work towards a negotiated transition for gradual change." (p.158)

The author has provided a number of useful tables to accompany the narrative, a good bibliography and some photographs too but the

absence of maps is a limiting factor for a book of this kind.

This well researched book, relying not just on secondary but primary source material and first hand interviews with policy makers at the highest levels, makes the analysis and the conclusion credible and would be relied on by policymakers tasked with formulating the Myanmar policy. Although over the years a number of books on Myanmar have been published like the ones by Preet Malik, Rajiv Bhatia, K Yhome and Renaud Egreteau besides a few RIS publications on cross-border economic interactions, Kipgen's book deserves a place in the library for its scholarly yet policy-oriented approach.

Southeast Asia

ASEAN

Celebration of ASEAN Day

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), for the first time as an ASEAN Community, witnessed its 49th anniversary on 8 August 2016. A celebration was organised at the ASEAN Secretariat in Jakarta, Indonesia. The Secretary-General of ASEAN H.E. Le Luong Minh emphasised on the successes that ASEAN has achieved in the last 49 years, which empowered ASEAN to play a central role in the evolving regional architecture as well as in reducing tensions, maintaining peace and stability and promoting economic and cultural cooperation. “Indeed, ASEAN has come a long way from the limited aspirations of trade and economic cooperation in its early days in divided Southeast Asia with serious security concern”, mentioned the Secretary General. The people-oriented celebration also included a panel discussion on ASEAN Convention on Trafficking in Persons, hosted by the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR) and the ASEAN Committee of Permanent Representatives (ASEAN CPR) during which they shared good practices on anti-trafficking initiatives. The ASEAN Women’s Circle organised the Food Festival to display the ASEAN cuisine.

Other attractions of the day included an ASEAN Trivia Booth for visiting students and youth and various performances to celebrate the artistry of ASEAN Community. The ASEAN Community was established in December 2015 with a goal of bringing more opportunities and benefits to the peoples.¹

28th and 29th ASEAN Summits

The 28th and 29th ASEAN Summits and related meetings/summits were organised under the theme “Turning Vision into Reality for a Dynamic ASEAN Community” in the first week of September. Earlier to that, the 49th ASEAN Foreign Ministers Meeting was organised in July 2016. The ASEAN Member States met their Dialogue Partners, Secretary-General of the United Nations, Secretary-General of ASEAN and various other stakeholders. Among many other things, ASEAN Leaders adopted the Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity 2025 (MPAC 2025) in Vientiane, Lao PDR during these meetings. The MPAC 2025, which succeeds the Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity 2010, highlights five strategic areas: sustainable infrastructure, digital innovation, seamless logistics, regulatory excellence and people mobility.²

ASEAN-India

India Participated in ASEAN Related Forums

The 14th ASEAN-India Summit was concluded in Lao PDR in the first week of September. In the summit, Prime Minister Modi said, “Our ties are a source of balance and harmony in the

¹ “ASEAN celebrates its community during 49th anniversary”, *ASEAN*, August 15, 2016, at <http://asean.org/asean-celebrates-its-community-during-49th-anniversary/>. Accessed on November 15, 2016

² Various news as available in the *ASEAN* Secretariat website, asean.org.

region. The substance of our strategic partnership covers economic, security, socio-culture...ASEAN-India Plan of Action (2016-20) has served us well in fulfilling our objectives. We have already implemented 54 out of 130 activities.”³ The 13th ASEAN-India Economic Ministers Consultation Meeting took place in Vientiane, Laos on August 6. The ministers agreed to push the implementation of the two sides’ agreements on investment, trade and services towards lifting ASEAN-India ties to a strategic partnership. Addressing the event, which was part of the 48th ASEAN Economic Ministers’ Meeting and related events, Indian Commerce and Industry Minister Nirmala Sitharaman praised the establishment of the ASEAN Economic Community that came up in the late 2015, saying that this would boost the bloc’s connectivity and cooperation, make it a dynamic and highly competitive region by 2025. Participants hailed the robust bilateral trade exchange in 2015, reaching 58.7 billion USD, accounting for 2.6 percent of ASEAN’s total trade value and making India the bloc’s sixth largest trade partner. India is also the eighth largest investor in ASEAN, with total investment of 1.3 billion USD. They welcomed constructive discussions to accelerate the review of the ASEAN-India

Trade in Goods (AITIG) Agreement in line with the schedule reached during the 12th ASEAN-India Economic Ministers Consultation Meeting in Kuala Lumpur in August 2015.⁴ India also participated in the 11th East Asia Summit on September 8 and leaders discussed matters of regional and international concerns including maritime security, terrorism, non-proliferation, irregular migration, etc. Three statements/declarations were adopted at the EAS, namely, the Vientiane Declaration on Promoting Infrastructure Development Cooperation in East Asia; an EAS Declaration on Strengthening Responses to Migrants in Crisis and Trafficking in Persons; and an EAS Statement on Non-Proliferation.⁵

India Attended ASEAN-India Foreign Ministers Meeting

Indian Minister of State for External Affairs Dr. V.K. Singh delivered closing remarks at the 14th ASEAN-India Foreign Ministers’ Meeting in Vientiane on July 25. He said, “Countering terrorism is an imperative in the face of rising terrorist attacks across the globe, including in our region notably in Jakarta, Bangkok, Pathankot, Dhaka and Kabul in recent times.” India emphasised on the construction of a strong international legal regime, built on the principle of ‘zero tolerance’ for direct or indirect support to terrorism, adopting an ‘extradite or prosecute’ standard and ensuring obligatory

³ ASEAN is central to India’s ‘Act East’ policy: PM Modi in Laos, *The Indian Express*, September 8, 2016, at <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-news-india/asean-is-central-to-indias-act-east-policy-pm-modi-in-laos-3019730/>. Accessed on November 15, 2016.

⁴ “ASEAN, India agree to work toward strategic partnership”, *Vietnamnet*, August 8, 2016, at <http://english.vietnamnet.vn/fms/government/161707/asean-india-agree-to-work-toward-strategic-partnership.html>

⁵ 14th ASEAN-India Summit and 11th East Asia Summit in Vientiane, Lao PDR (September 08, 2016), *Ministry of External Affairs*, September 01, 2016, at <http://mea.gov.in/press-releases.htm?dtl/27354/14th+ASEAN+India+Summit+and+11th+East+Asia+Summit+in+Vientiane+Lao+PDR+September+08+2016>. Accessed on November 15, 2016.

collaboration by countries in the investigation of terrorism-related cases. “And thus, deepening of security cooperation must be based on an outright rejection of state sponsored terrorism, isolating those who harbour, support or sponsor terrorists, and bringing the perpetrators, organisers, financiers and sponsors to speedy justice.”, he added. Asserting that today’s realities warrant that nations act for urgent finalisation of the Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism at the United Nations, Gen. Singh urged ASEAN countries to support early adoption of the Convention. He also expressed India’s willingness to host an ASEAN-India Conference on preventing radicalisation and promoting de-radicalisation to share India’s experience and benefit from the experience of ASEAN countries, notably Malaysia, in this important area. Underlining that the sea lanes of communication passing through the South China Sea are critical for peace, stability, prosperity and development, the minister said, “In the context of the Award of the Arbitral Tribunal constituted under Annex VII of the 1982 UNCLOS in the matter concerning the Philippines and China, India, as a State Party to the UNCLOS, urges all parties to show utmost respect for the UNCLOS, which is the foundation of the international legal order of the seas and oceans.”⁶

Indian Navy Chief on Indonesia Visit

India’s navy chief visited Indonesia from August 9-13 as both countries eyed a closer maritime cooperation. According to the Indian defence ministry, the visit “aimed to consolidate existing maritime cooperation initiatives with Indonesia as well as explore new avenues in accordance with India’s ‘Act East Policy’”. India and Indonesia share a maritime boundary and have been enhancing their maritime cooperation over the years. The navies conduct Navy to Navy staff talks; participate in port visits and training exchanges; participate in the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS); and carry out coordinated patrols along the international maritime boundary.⁷

Cabinet Approves Signing of Air Services Agreement between India and Lao

The Union Cabinet chaired by the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi gave its approval for signing of new Air Services Agreement (ASA) between India and Lao People’s Democratic Republic (Lao PDR). The agreement was expected to promote greater trade, investment, tourism and cultural exchange between the two countries. It would provide enabling environment for enhanced and seamless connectivity while providing commercial opportunities to the carriers of both the sides ensuring greater safety and security. Under the agreement, the designated airlines of the two countries would have fair and equal

⁶ “India for strong international legal regime to deal with terrorism-related cases”, *The Indian Express*, July 25, 2016, at <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-news-india/india-for-strong-international-legal-regime-to-deal-with-terrorism-related-cases-2935245/>

⁷ Prashanth Parameswaran, “India, Indonesia Eye Deeper Maritime Cooperation With Navy Chief Visit”, *The Diplomat*, August 9, 2016, at <http://thediplomat.com/2016/08/india-indonesia-eye-deeper-maritime-cooperation-with-navy-chief-visit/>

opportunity to operate the agreed services on specified routes. The routes and frequencies would be decided subsequently. ASA is the basic legal framework for any air operation between the two countries.⁸

Singapore PM Refers to India's Vigorous and Active Role in Region

Singapore Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong said that he wanted to see India involved “vigorously and actively” in the region beyond the Indian Ocean for trade, communications and stability. “You (India) have an interest in the wider region but you have not pursued it as vigorously as the other powers have,” Lee said in his address to delegates at the South Asian Diaspora Convention (SADC). “If you pursue your interests more vigorously and actively beyond the subcontinent, in fact, beyond the Indian Ocean, you should be a great trading country,” the prime minister said. Pointing out the stability of the region, he said the lines of communication, the trade routes and the freedom of navigation in the region would become vital concerns of India. He said he would like to see India participate in the Trans-Pacific Partnership and the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership.⁹

India Gets Assurance from Vietnam on UNSC High Seat

Vietnam assured India of its support for India's candidature for a permanent seat at the UN Security Council (UNSC). The assurance by Vi Hong Nam, Vice-Foreign Minister of Vietnam came during his meeting with Preeti Saran, Secretary, East, Ministry of External Affairs (MEA). Both sides met for the 8th Foreign Office Consultations (FOC) and 5th Strategic Dialogue in New Delhi on August 2. “Vietnamese side reaffirmed its support for India's candidature for a Permanent seat in an expanded UNSC,” stated a release issued by the MEA. Both sides also discussed bilateral issues, including political and security related matters, and held talks on trade and investment, cooperation in health, energy and agriculture sector, connectivity, lines of credit and other capacity building projects in Vietnam and increasing people-to-people ties. Both parties also discussed the progress in energy space.¹⁰

Northeast India-Act East Policy

India Hosted BIMSTEC Members in Goa

India invited BIMSTEC members to attend the 8th BRICS Outreach Summit in the mid of October in Goa. According to media reports,

⁸ “Cabinet approves signing of Air Services Agreement between India and Lao”, *Business Standard*, August 4, 2016, at http://www.business-standard.com/article/news-cm/cabinet-approves-signing-of-air-services-agreement-between-india-and-lao-116080400216_1.html

⁹ “Singapore PM wants to see India involved ‘vigorously and actively’ in region beyond Indian Ocean”, *The Indian Express*, July 19, 2016, at <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-news-india/singapore-pm-wants-to-see-india-involved-vigorously-and-actively-in-region-beyond-indian-ocean-2923169/>

¹⁰ “Vietnam assures India support for UNSC high seat”, *Business Line*, August 3, 2016, at <http://www.thehindubusinessline.com/news/national/vietnam-assures-india-support-for-unsch-high-seat/article8937586.ece>

by not inviting SAARC to the BRICS Summit, New Delhi ensured to isolate Pakistan in the aftermath of Uri attack. Eventually, the SAARC Summit, which was supposed to be conducted in Islamabad in November, was also cancelled. In the Outreach Document of BIMSTEC meeting, the leaders of the sub-regional grouping condemned terrorism and it was hailed as a diplomatic win for India. For BIMSTEC, this was the grouping's first international interaction with another multilateral body. BIMSTEC is a seven member grouping which involves Bangladesh, India, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Nepal and Bhutan. BIMSTEC is believed to be a linkage between South Asia and Southeast Asia. India hopes to be connected with Southeast Asia through Northeast India and Myanmar and BIMSTEC is believed to be yet another avenue to achieve that goal.

Suu Kyi Visited New Delhi

Following the BRICS - BIMSTEC Outreach Summit, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, Myanmar's State Counsellor and Foreign Minister, visited New Delhi and three agreements were signed. One Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed on cooperation in the power sector; a second MoU was signed on banking supervision between the Reserve Bank of India and the Central Bank of Myanmar and a third MoU was

documented for designing an academic and professional building programme for the insurance industry of Myanmar. Besides PM Narendra Modi, Suu Kyi also met President Pranab Mukherjee and Foreign Minister Sushma Swaraj. In August, the President of Myanmar U Htin Kyaw also visited India. With these visits, the Indo-Myanmar ties are expected to grow.¹¹

Brunei

Brunei, Singapore Secure Key Defence Agreement

Brunei Darussalam and the Republic of Singapore signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on Defence Technology Cooperation on August 29 with the aim to bolster security alliance between the two countries. Based on the principles of equality, mutual benefits and respect for the sovereignty of both nations, the MoU aimed to promote cooperation in key areas of defence technology, including research and development, sharing of knowledge and best practices in defence acquisitions, and cooperation and collaboration in technology management.¹²

Brunei, Vietnam Spoke on Implementation of DOC On South China Sea

Brunei and Vietnam agreed on August 27 to fully and effectively implement the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (DOC). The pledge came as Brunei's Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah spoke to the visiting

¹¹ India, Myanmar sign three agreements in sectors of power, banking and insurance, *Firstpost*, October 19, 2016, at <http://www.firstpost.com/india/india-myanmar-sign-three-agreements-in-sectors-of-power-banking-and-insurance-3060444.html>. Accessed on November 16, 2016

¹² Azaraimy HH, "Brunei, Singapore seal key defence accord", *Borneo Bulletin*, August 30, 2016, at <http://borneobulletin.com.bn/brunei-singapore-seal-key-defence-accord/>

Vietnamese President Tran Dai Quang on August 27. They also agreed to work towards the early conclusion of a code of conduct in the South China Sea (COC). The DOC, signed in 2002 by China and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) member states, outlines the most important principles in the management of disputes on the South China Sea and consultations for the COC were launched by the two sides in 2013. Both were aimed to safeguard peace and stability in the region.¹³

Cambodia

President Xi Visited Cambodia

Chinese President Xi Jinping visited Cambodia in the mid of October and signed nearly 28 agreements with the Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen on issues that include economy, investments, agriculture and infrastructure. China is Cambodia's crucial ally and economically Cambodia is heavily dependent on Chinese investments. China provides millions of dollars in aid and investment over the past decade. In return, Cambodia supports China in international forums on issues that includes Beijing's ongoing dispute with other Southeast Asian countries in the South China Sea. This was President Xi Jinping's first visit to

Cambodia since he took charge as the President of PRC.¹⁴

East Timor

Cambodian PM Visited East Timor

Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen visited East Timor in which both the countries signed several agreements to boost bilateral ties. The two countries signed three important agreements: a framework agreement on technical and economic cooperation, one on visa exemptions for holders of diplomatic and service passports, and a memorandum of understanding on labor cooperation. The two delegations also discussed cooperation in several other areas. According to Cambodia's foreign ministry, Hun Sen told Timor-Leste's Prime Minister Rui Maria Araujo that Cambodia would offer ten scholarships each year to East Timorese students. During the visit, Araujo also reportedly thanked Hun Sen for his support for Timor-Leste's bid to join the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the World Trade Organization (WTO).¹⁵

Indonesia

Indonesia Plans to Change Name of South China Sea to Natuna Sea

Indonesia announced on August 17 that it was planning to change the name of South China

¹³ "Brunei, Vietnam vow to fully, effectively implement DOC on South China Sea", *Global Times*, August 28, 2016, at <http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/1003251.shtml>

¹⁴ "China's leader visits ally Cambodia to cement strong ties", *FoxNews*, October 13, 2016, at <http://www.foxnews.com/world/2016/10/13/china-leader-visits-ally-cambodia-to-cement-strong-ties.html>. Accessed on November 16, 2016

¹⁵ Prashanth Parameswaran, "What Did Cambodia's Hun Sen Accomplish in His First Timor-Leste Visit?", *The Diplomat*, August 22, 2016, at <http://thediplomat.com/2016/08/what-did-cambodias-hun-sen-accomplish-in-his-first-timor-leste-visit/>

Sea to the Natuna Sea in the area within 200 miles of its maritime border/EEZ. Ahmad Santosa, the Chief of Task Force 115, an agency combating illegal fishing, said the proposal would “be given to the United Nations”, adding that “if no one objects ... then it will be officially the Natuna Sea”. The plan would involve renaming the sea surrounding the Natuna Islands, which lie to the northwest of the Indonesian part of Borneo, within their 200 nautical mile exclusive economic zone.¹⁶

Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines Agree on Maritime ‘Hot Pursuit’

Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines agreed to allow each other’s maritime forces to pursue suspected criminals into their waters in a bid to stem a surge of hostage-takings by Islamic militants. Defence ministers of the concerned countries met for the third time since May to give shape to plans for joint patrols in the waters off the southwestern Philippines. They said on August 2 that they were discussing protocols that would allow security forces to enable so-called hot pursuit across land borders as well.¹⁷

Indonesia, Malaysia Decides to Solve Maritime Dispute

Indonesia and Malaysia agreed on August 2 to intensify their efforts to resolve their maritime boundary dispute in the Sulawesi Sea during a consultation between their two leaders in Jakarta. Despite multiple rounds of consultations by the two countries over more than a decade, the dispute has still not been resolved. “We take note that there is a bit of progress reported by the two envoys but it is still too far from any comprehensive solution,” Najib said in a joint press conference with Jokowi at the Presidential Palace. “We agree that the two envoys be given a fresh mandate to resolve the claims which can be accepted by both countries as soon as possible.”¹⁸

Laos

Lao President Discusses Border Peace with Myanmar

President Htin Kyaw met Laotian President Bounnhang Vorachith at the meeting hall in Nay Pyi Taw on August 5 to discuss border issues and bilateral affairs. Bounnhang Vorachith and wife Khammeung Vorachith were welcomed by Htin Kyaw and his wife Su Su Lwin at the president’s residence.

¹⁶ “In bid to defend sovereignty, Indonesia plans to change name of South China Sea to Natuna Sea”, *South China Morning Post*, August 18, 2016, at <http://www.scmp.com/news/asia/southeast-asia/article/2005484/bid-defend-sovereignty-indonesia-plans-change-name-south>

¹⁷ Ben Otto, “Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines Agree on Maritime ‘Hot Pursuit’”, *The Wall Street Journal*, August 2, 2016, at <http://www.wsj.com/articles/indonesia-malaysia-philippines-agree-on-maritime-hot-pursuit-1470139890>

¹⁸ Prashanth Parameswaran, “Indonesia, Malaysia Pledge to Solve Maritime Dispute (Again)”, *The Diplomat*, August 3, 2016, at <http://thediplomat.com/2016/08/indonesia-malaysia-pledge-to-solve-maritime-dispute-again/>

Establishing peace in the border areas was discussed and a signing ceremony on the Myanmar-Laos friendship bridge was held with Foreign Minister Aung San Suu Kyi and her Lao counterpart Saleumxay Kommasith.¹⁹

Malaysia

Controversial National Security Act

The National Security Council Act has been passed in the parliament in Malaysia and many critics are arguing that it has been an effort by Prime Minister Najib Razak to end opposition against him. The mentioned act was pushed through parliament in December by the government of Prime Minister Najib Razak, who has been facing calls to resign for more than a year over an alleged corruption scandal related to 1MDB. The law gives the government authority to declare virtual martial law in areas deemed to be under “security threat”. The legislation permits a National Security Council led by the prime minister to basically suspend civil liberties in designated “security areas”, giving security forces sweeping powers of search, seizure and arrest. Al Jazeera reporter mentioned, “In these areas, police and soldiers have the power to search and arrest without warrants, to seize property

without warrants and prevent demonstrations ... These sweeping laws have raised alarm among the opposition and rights groups who say it [the law] could be misused.” Wan Saiful Wan Jan, head of the Institute for Democracy and Economic Affairs, a Malaysian think-tank mentioned, “The law will definitely put fear in people planning to participate in street protests”.²⁰

ISIS Attack in Malaysia

Malaysian Police’s Inspector-General Khalid Abu Bakar mentioned it to the new agencies that ISIS carried out a grenade attack on June 28 at a nightspot near Kuala Lumpur on the orders of a Malaysian Islamic State fighter in Syria, Muhammad Wannady Mohamed Jedi. This was, according to the Malaysian Police, ISIS’s first attack on Malaysia. In the attack, eight people were injured. Following this incident, 15 people including two policemen were arrested.²¹

Myanmar

Suu Kyi Visited US

Myanmar’s foreign minister and de facto leader of the state, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi visited US in the mid of September and met President Obama. During this visit, the US president declared that the remaining economic sanctions, imposed on Myanmar, would be lifted. Experts believed that the elimination of

¹⁹ Nay Rai, “Lao president discusses border peace”, *Myanmar Eleven*, August 6, 2016, at <http://www.elevenmyanmar.com/politics/5599>

²⁰ Malaysia: Controversial National Security Act launched, *Al Jazeera*, August 1, 2016, at <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/08/malaysia-controversial-national-security-act-launched-160801062824956.html>. Accessed on November 16, 2016.

²¹ Marc Lourdes, Islamic State launches first successful attack in Malaysia, *CNN*, July 4, 2016, at <http://edition.cnn.com/2016/07/04/homepage2/islamic-state-attack-malaysia/>. Accessed on November 19, 2016.

American sanctions would help the country's economy by stimulating the growth of smaller businesses. On the other hand, human rights advocates are arguing that the move was premature. Suu Kyi shares power with the former Junta representatives and lifting of all sanctions would also benefit them. Some believe that Mr. Obama's move is a part of a strategy to reduce China's influence in the region. China, which borders Myanmar, helped military government during the sanctions era and is one of the major investment holders in the country.²²

Suu Kyi Represented Myanmar in UNGA

Myanmar's leader, Aung San Suu Kyi made her debut speech at the United Nations General Assembly this September. She pledged to uphold human rights in her country in the wake of the Rohingya issue. She said, "However, we are determined to persevere in our endeavor to achieve harmony, peace and prosperity in the Rakhine state". She further said, "I would like to take the opportunity to ask for the understanding and constructive contribution of the international community... By standing firm against the forces of prejudice and intolerance, we are reaffirming our faith

in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person." After the UNGA Summit, she headed towards Washington DC to meet US President Obama.²³

Philippines

President Duterte's First Four Months in Office

In the first 120 days in the office of the President of Philippines, Rodrigo Duterte has been in the news for controversies revolving around extrajudicial killings of drug dealers, insulting people like Pope Francis and US President Barack Obama and his tilting towards China. Philippines police have informed that more than 3,400 drug-related killings since Duterte took power. Over 1,490 accused drug suspects were shot in police operations and more than 1,930 were killed by hitmen and vigilantes. Over 18,000 suspects have been arrested and more than 53,000 drug dealers and 662,000 users surrendered to the police. Besides these, Duterte made it to the headline as he repeatedly insulted the US president which resulted in cancellation of a bilateral talk between the two countries in the side-line of ASEAN Summits in Lao PDR. Duterte visited Japan and China in the neighbourhood and in both the occasions, he made it clear that Philippines is now looking for alternatives other than the US as its key ally.²⁴

²² Richard C. Paddock, "Obama's Move to End Myanmar Sanctions Promises a Lift for Its Economy", *New York Times*, September 15, 2016, at http://www.nytimes.com/2016/09/16/world/asia/myanmar-sanctions-economy-us.html?_r=0. Accessed on November 16, 2016.

²³ "Aung San Suu Kyi makes first UN address as Myanmar's leader", *The Guardian*, September 21, 2016, at <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/sep/21/aung-san-suu-kyi-united-nations-address-rohingya>. Accessed on November 16, 2016.

²⁴ Steve Mollman, "85 days of Philippines president Rodrigo Duterte: the insults, the firings, the killings", *Quartz*, September 23, 2016, at <http://qz.com/789336/philippines-president-rodrigo-duterte-85-days-of-of-insults-firings-and-killings/>. Accessed on November 16, 2016

Singapore

Singapore, Malaysia Cooperation to Curb Terrorism

Singapore and Malaysia agreed to share critical data between both countries, including the biometric information of known terror fighters as well as those convicted of terrorism offences in order to step up efforts to counter terrorism. “Given the transnational nature of terrorist networks and the attraction of Isis propaganda, it is critical to deny terrorists ease of movement across borders and new recruits from amongst prisoners being released,” Singapore’s Ministry of Home Affairs said in a statement on August 10. The measures were agreed by Ahmad Zahid Hamidi, Malaysia’s Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Home Affairs and Singapore’s K. Shanmugam, Home Affairs Minister. The two ministers previously held a bilateral meeting on the side-lines of an international meeting on counter-terrorism held in Bali, Indonesia. The leaders discussed the latest terrorism situation in Southeast Asia and what could be done to “...further enhance cooperation between the security and intelligence agencies of Malaysia, Indonesia and neighbouring countries,” the statement added.²⁵

US Spy Planes Deployed in Singapore till August for Exercises

Two advanced United States spy planes involved in naval military drills conducted with the Singapore Armed Forces (SAF) were deployed in Singapore. P-8A Poseidon maritime patrol aircraft were technologically advanced and would provide Singapore’s military with valuable experience. The planes would operate from Paya Lebar Air Base during their third detachment, which started on July 15 and would end on August 12. The planes would be involved in exercises relating to search-and-rescue, anti-piracy, and humanitarian assistance.²⁶

Thailand

King Bhumibol Passed Away

King Bhumibol Adulyadej of Thailand, who ruled the kingdom for more than 70 years, establishing himself as a esteemed epitome of Thai nationhood, died in Bangkok at the age of 88. He was one of the longest-reigning monarchs in history. King Bhumibol was a unifying monarch in an intensely divided country. His death raised few questions about the future of the monarchy in Thailand. As the Thai military seized power few years back and now rules the country, the future of monarchy in Thailand remains a question.²⁷

²⁵ Rachel Middleton, “Malaysia and Singapore agree to share biometrics of terror suspects to curb their movements”, *International Business Times*, August 10, 2016, at <http://www.ibtimes.co.uk/malaysia-singapore-agree-share-biometrics-terror-suspects-curb-their-movements-1575407>

²⁶ Jeremy Koh, “US spy planes deployed in Singapore till next month for exercises”, *The Jakarta Post*, July 31, 2016, at <http://www.thejakartapost.com/seasia/2016/07/31/us-spy-planes-deployed-in-singapore-till-next-month-for-exercises.html>

²⁷ Barbara Crossette, “Bhumibol Adulyadej, 88, People’s King of Thailand, Dies After 7-Decade Reign”, *The New York Times*, October 13, 2016, at <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/10/14/world/asia/thai-king-bhumibol-adulyadej-dies.html>. Accessed on November 16, 2016

Vietnam

Vietnam Allegedly Moves New Rocket Launchers into Disputed South China Sea

Vietnam allegedly discreetly fortified several of its islands in the disputed South China Sea with new mobile rocket launchers capable of striking China's runways and military installations across the vital trade route. It shipped the launchers from the Vietnamese mainland into position on five bases in the Spratly islands in recent months. The launchers were hidden from aerial surveillance and they were yet to be armed, but could be made operational with rocket artillery rounds within two or three days. However, Vietnam's Foreign Ministry said the information was "inaccurate", without elaborating.²⁸

Oceania

Australia

Timor-Leste-Australia Maritime Boundary Tussle

Timor-Leste urged Australia to negotiate over the Timor Sea maritime boundary and not to "turn its back on the law". Australia had been forced to appear before a UN conciliation commission at the permanent court of arbitration in The

Hague – the first time any country had been brought for "compulsory conciliation" – by Timor-Leste after its consistent refusal to negotiate a permanent maritime boundary, and revelations that Australian agents spied on Timor-Leste's government during earlier treaty talks. The long-running dispute centres upon the maritime boundary between Timor-Leste and Australia, most pointedly over control of the area where an estimated \$40 billion worth of oil and gas lies beneath the sea.²⁹

Attempts by Australia to Derail UN Plan to Ban Nuclear Weapons

Australia attempted to derail a ban on nuclear weapons at a UN meeting on disarmament, by single-handedly forcing a vote on a report that had been expected to pass unanimously. The report, which recommended negotiations begin in 2017 to ban nuclear weapons, was eventually passed by 68 votes to 22. An Austrian-led push for the treaty had reached a milestone on August 19, when the report was presented to representatives of 103 nations in Geneva. Moves towards a ban had been pursued because many saw little progress under the existing non-proliferation treaty, which obliges the five declared nuclear states to "pursue negotiations in good faith" towards "cessation of the nuclear arms race... and nuclear disarmament". The proposal recommended a conference be held in 2017 to negotiate "a legally binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons, leading towards their total elimination".³⁰

²⁸ Greg Torode, "Vietnam moves new rocket launchers into disputed South China Sea", *Reuters*, August 10, 2016, at <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-southchinasea-vietnam-exclusive-idUSKCN10K2NE>

²⁹ Ben Doherty, "Timor-Leste urges Australia 'not to turn its back on law' over maritime boundary", *The Guardian*, August 29, 2016, at <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/aug/29/timor-leste-urges-australia-not-to-turn-its-back-on-law-over-maritime-boundary>

³⁰ Michael Slezak, "Australia attempts to derail UN plan to ban nuclear weapons", *The Guardian*, August 21, 2016, at <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/aug/21/australia-attempts-to-derail-un-plan-to-ban-nuclear-weapons>

Australia PM Turnbull's Conservatives Win Tight Election

Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull declared victory on July 10 in a marathon national election, with his coalition government retaining power and the opposition Labor Party conceding defeat. "We have won the election," Mr Turnbull told a news conference in Sydney. "We have gone through this election with fiercely fought arguments, issues of policy, issues of principle and we have done so peacefully and it's something we should celebrate." Mr Turnbull's narrow margin of victory over Labor leaves him likely to be forced to rely on independents, who won five seats, to ensure the passage of legislation. That raises questions about how effective his government will be in the long term. Labor, on course to win 69 seats, conceded defeat.³¹

Fiji

Fijian PM Attended 71st Session of UNGA

Fiji's Prime Minister Frank Bainimarama attended the United Nations General Assembly in September and informed the audience that his country is reconsidering its foreign relations. Mr Bainimarama mentioned Fiji intends to align itself more meticulously with those countries that

share common values. Mr Bainimarama has taken the charge of the foreign ministry in Fiji few months ago. He mentioned that Fiji would follow a policy which respects other countries' sovereignty and would not interfere in others' internal affairs. He further said he wants to gradually reform the foreign ministry and improve certain aspects of Fiji's foreign policy and to give it a new course and a renewed sense of determination.³²

Tension Continues between Fiji and Australia-New Zealand

Fijian PM Frank Bainimarama has accused Australia and New Zealand for interfering in its internal affairs. This happened after one prominent Fijian MP and politician was arrested by the authority in Fiji for organising a protest gathering against the Bainimarama government. Following this incident, both Australia and New Zealand condemned Fijian government's action and declared that individual freedom needs to be respected. In response, the Fijian PM mentioned, "We have not lectured to you about the allegations of human rights abuses in your own countries... These include the extreme disadvantage suffered by indigenous people in New Zealand, and Australia, and in the case of Australia, the inhumane treatment of asylum seekers... We also refrain from commenting on the stark double standards of nations that preach to us yet fail to criticise the flagrant human rights abuses of their neighbours."³³

³¹ Colin Packham, "Australia's prime minister declares victory in marathon election", *Reuters*, July 10, 2016, at <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-australia-election-idUSKCN0ZQ03R>

³² "Fiji to tweak foreign policy", *Radio New Zealand*, September 21, 2016, at <http://www.radionz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/313865/fiji-to-tweak-foreign-policy>. Accessed on November 17, 2016

³³ "Fiji says "Australia and NZ inconsistent on human rights", *Radio New Zealand*, September 17, 2016, at <http://www.radionz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/313535/fiji-says-australia-and-nz-inconsistent-on-human-rights>. Accessed on November 17, 2016

New Zealand

Joe Biden Visited New Zealand

US Vice President Joe Biden visited New Zealand and declared about ending a 31-year stalemate by saying that a US navy ship would be visiting the Oceanic country in its Navy's 75th anniversary observations. After the anti-nuclear rift in 1985, this will be the first visit by US naval ship to New Zealand. Victoria University's Professor of Strategic Studies Robert Ayson mentioned, this visit signifies that US considers New Zealand as a key partner in the region. However, Greenpeace, which heralded the anti-nuclear campaign in 1985, mentioned that this should be seen as a big victory for New Zealand. John Key, the PM of New Zealand mentioned that US navy officials would maintain New Zealand laws during their stay in the country. New Zealand is a non-nuclear country and is proud of this fact.³⁴

Papua New Guinea

Australia, PNG Talk on Controversial Refugee Camp

Australia and Papua New Guinea agreed on August 17 to close a controversial

Australian-funded asylum seeker detention center on Manus Island, but gave no timeline. Under Australian law, anyone intercepted trying to reach the country by boat is sent for processing to camps on Nauru or to Manus Island off Papua New Guinea. They are never eligible to be resettled in Australia. The announcement came after reports of 2,000 incidents of sexual abuse, assault and attempted self-harm reported over two years at the Nauru detention center.³⁵

PNG Prime Minister O'Neill Meets China's President Xi

Papua New Guinea Prime Minister, Peter O'Neill, met with Xi Jinping, President of the People's Republic of China on July 7 for bilateral talks and had in-depth exchange of views on issues of shared interest, including the development of bilateral relations. The Prime Minister O'Neill said that President Xi wanted to see a strengthening of PNG's industrial and manufacturing sector, and to increase exports from the country into China. President Xi also wanted to encourage more tourists from China into Papua New Guinea to see the amazing landscape and the people and to do that he said that China would work with the PNG's tourism sector to lay the groundwork for Chinese tourist and promote the country.³⁶

³⁴ "US to send ship in first naval visit in three decades", *Radio New Zealand*, July 21, 2016, at <http://www.radionz.co.nz/news/political/309128/first-us-naval-visit-in-three-decades>. Accessed on November 17, 2016

³⁵ Matt Siegel, "Australia, PNG agree to close controversial refugee camp but give no date", *Reuters*, August 17, 2016, at <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-australia-asylum-idUSKCN10SoQL>

³⁶ "PNG Prime Minister O'Neill meets China's President Xi", *One Papua New Guinea*, July 9, 2016, at <http://www.onepng.com/2016/07/png-prime-minister-oneill-meetschinas.html>

Centre Activities for July to October 2016

- Trinidad and Tobago based Defence analyst and Attorney-at-Law, Dr Sanjay Badri-Maharaj delivered a talk on 'Some Observations on the South China Sea Arbitration Award of 12 July 2016' on July 14, 2016.
- The Centre organised a roundtable discussion on South China Sea (SCS) Arbitration Award: Implications for the Future on July 28, 2016.
- Fiji National Security delegation visited IDSA on 26 October to discuss various issues.
- Philippines CGSC visited IDSA on September 30 and discussed various issues including regional security.
- Dr. David Brewster delivered a talk on India Australia Cooperation in the IOR on September 9, 2016
- Dr Udai Bhanu Singh's views on India-Myanmar relations were quoted in an article titled 'Suu Kyi rekindles ties in India, seeks development cooperation for Myanmar', published in 'Nikkei Asian Review' on October 20, 2016.
- Dr Udai Bhanu Singh wrote an article, 'The Significance of the ADMM Plus: A Perspective from India' in Asia Policy, (Washington), No. 22, 2016
- Dr Sampa Kundu spoke on 'India's Bilateral Relations with Vietnam through the prism of Act East Policy' during the International Conference on 'India-Vietnam: New Context, New Vision', at the Ho Chi Minh National Academy of Politics, Hanoi, on August 25, 2016.
- Dr. Sampa Kundu wrote a piece on 'How India Can Direct its 'Act East' Policy Toward Myanmar' in The Diplomat on September 2, 2016
- Mr. Niranjana Chandrashekhara Oak wrote a book review for The US Pivot and Indian Foreign Policy: Asia's Evolving Balance of Power, by Harsh V. Pant and Yogesh Joshi, in the Journal of Defence Studies, Vol 10, Issue 3
- Dr. Sampa Kundu wrote a background paper, 'Political Transition, Tatmadaw and Challenges for Myanmar's Democracy' for IDSA on July 26, 2016
- Dr. Sampa Kundu wrote a commentary, 'Understanding Duterte: The Unpredictable President of The Philippines' for IDSA on July 14, 2016
- Dr. Sampa Kundu wrote an article, 'Philippines and South China Sea' for The Diplomatist, September 2016

ABOUT US

The Southeast Asia and Oceania Centre focuses on policy-relevant research in respect of the ten ASEAN states, East Timor and Oceania, including Australia and New Zealand. The Centre studies India's bilateral and multilateral relations with states of the region with a view to providing contemporary relevance to India's Look East policy. It has a futuristic approach and examines the emerging trends in the regional security architecture. The Centre studies the potential for India's enhanced defence cooperation (including maritime issues) and cooperation in non-traditional security issues with the region. It examines internal developments of countries in this region, especially political transition and the role of the military, and their implications for India. The Centre seeks to promote Track-II institutional linkages with the region.

Contributions are invited for:

Book Review (800 words)

Commentary (900 - 1300 words)

Photo Essay (10-12 photographs, each with a caption,
accompanied by a 1000 words essay)

Please E-mail: southeastasia.centre@gmail.com

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Contact us at: southeastasia.centre@gmail.com