



THE NATION: NARRATIVES AND COMMUNITY

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**S. RAJARATNAM SCHOOL
OF INTERNATIONAL STUDIES**
A Graduate School of Nanyang Technological University

NATIONAL SECURITY
COORDINATION SECRETARIAT

THE NATION: NARRATIVES AND COMMUNITY

REPORT ON A WORKSHOP ORGANIZED BY
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This report summarizes the proceedings of the conference as interpreted by the assigned rapporteurs and editor of the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies. Participants neither reviewed nor approved this report.

The conference adheres to a variation of the Chatham House Rule. Accordingly, beyond the paper presenters cited, no other attributions have been included in this report.

National narratives—or the stories that nations tell to connect their past, present and future—are powerful and necessary tools in shaping national identity. Within such narratives, the “nation” as a concept may often appear to rely heavily on an essentialized narrative that seeks to homogenize diversity as a strand of coherent unity. Yet, this is arguably a mere blanket over the differences that truly exist within and between communities. Moreover, the mobility paradigm of today accentuates to a greater degree the intricacies of communication among disparate individuals within the nation.

The workshop addressed the complex nature of the nation and its narratives in a two-fold manner. First, it fleshed out the relationship between state narratives and counter-narratives. Second, by embracing narratives essentially as a manner of communication, the workshop offered a critical examination of the narrative dissonances in the state-citizen relationship that is expressed and asserted via alternative mediums.

The workshop was divided into five panels:

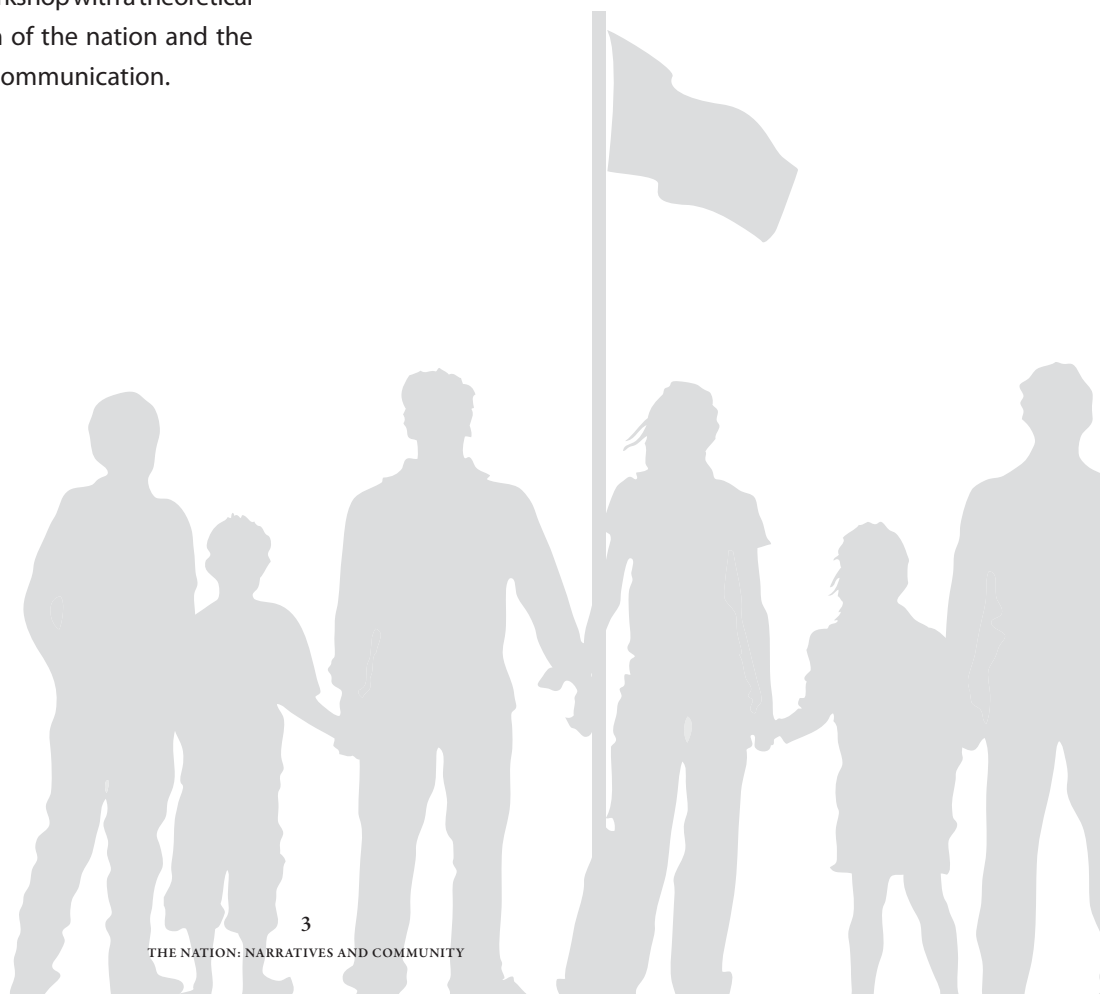
The first panel set the tone of the workshop with a theoretical and philosophical re-examination of the nation and the delicate nature of narratives and communication.

Following that, the second panel presented and evaluated—via case studies—alternative strands of narratives that counter the official thread by the state.

The third panel continued on the juxtaposition of state-citizen narratives by illustrating the immense power the military wields in defining and articulating identity. Yet, at the same time, the panel also highlighted the ability of the individual to adapt and appropriate the narrated ideology.

The last two panels branched into the essence of communication, with the fourth panel concentrating on the visual and spatial paradigms of narratives, delving into the theatrical visualities and biopolitical effects of space, symbols and signs on identity.

The final panel attempted an examination of national narratives by exploring the power and freedom of the creative license and its various media—such as fiction, music and illustration—to amplify the tensions of self/other, race and identity in relation to the nation-state.



Conceptual Re-Examination of “Nation” and Narrated Communication

I. Terrorism, Story-Telling and Existential Communication

Reflecting on the Northern Ireland experience, **T. Brian Mooney** posited that some of our most deeply held positions are not a result of reasoned enquiry but are instead founded in the realm of habituation and affect. As such, he argued that it is in this realm in which the causes and cures for terrorism could be explored—with “story-telling” and “accounts of emotional relatedness” as two particular areas worth studying.

Mooney explained that the process of rationalization is often a reaction to formative experiences embedded in individual psyches that ultimately constitutes our identity in fundamental ways. Hence, the rhetoric of rationality and reason articulated to validate one’s claims are in effect appeals made on emotional and affective bases.

In this respect, story-telling appeals to the *pathemeta*—the experiences we fatefully undergo—which can rekindle existential communicative bonds to mitigate relationships between divided communities. A community of affective concern could be created when the life stories of those who have suffered the circumstances and conditions of injustice are allowed to emerge. Such exchanges would be critical to overcoming cultural stereotypes and in deepening the human capacity for understanding existential predicaments.

II. Nationalism and Nationalist Theory or How Europe has Failed to Cope with the Past

Howard Williams provided a review of several influential nationalist theories to assess their implications for the current state of world politics.

He began with the classical European arguments for nationalist sentiments forwarded by J. G. Herder and Giuseppe Mazzini. Herder believed human individuals to be social beings dependent on others in order to advance and progress. As such, Herder emphasized the importance of language for communicating one’s desires and

experiences to others. As the emotional bonds of kinship and national allegiances are forged through one’s native language, Herder believed that a unifying language was necessary to hold a culturally diverse nation together. In a similar vein, Italian nationalist Mazzini tied his nationalistic ethic to Christian beliefs.

In contrast, Elie Kedourie and Ernest Gellner located their study of twentieth-century nationalism wider afield, beyond its chequered history in the European continent. Rather than viewing it as the most natural and appropriate form of organizing politics, Kedourie saw nationalism as a disruptive force in politics whose influence had to be kept in check. However, unlike Kedourie, Gellner acknowledged the resilience of nationalism and sought to explain it. As modern mass societies require homogeneity in cultural, linguistic and communicating habits in order to function, he argued that the socialization of citizens for this end forms the basis of nationalism.

Williams also assessed the arguments of David Miller and Margaret Canovan, who both sought to depict nationalism in a positive light and advance a claim for its continued centrality in the generation of political solidarity, namely, by serving an important civic function in place of old forms of solidarity such as those provided by villages and clans. In view of both external and domestic challenges that nations face today, Williams concluded that the cultivation of affection and respect for one’s nation should be balanced with respect for all other people in the world.

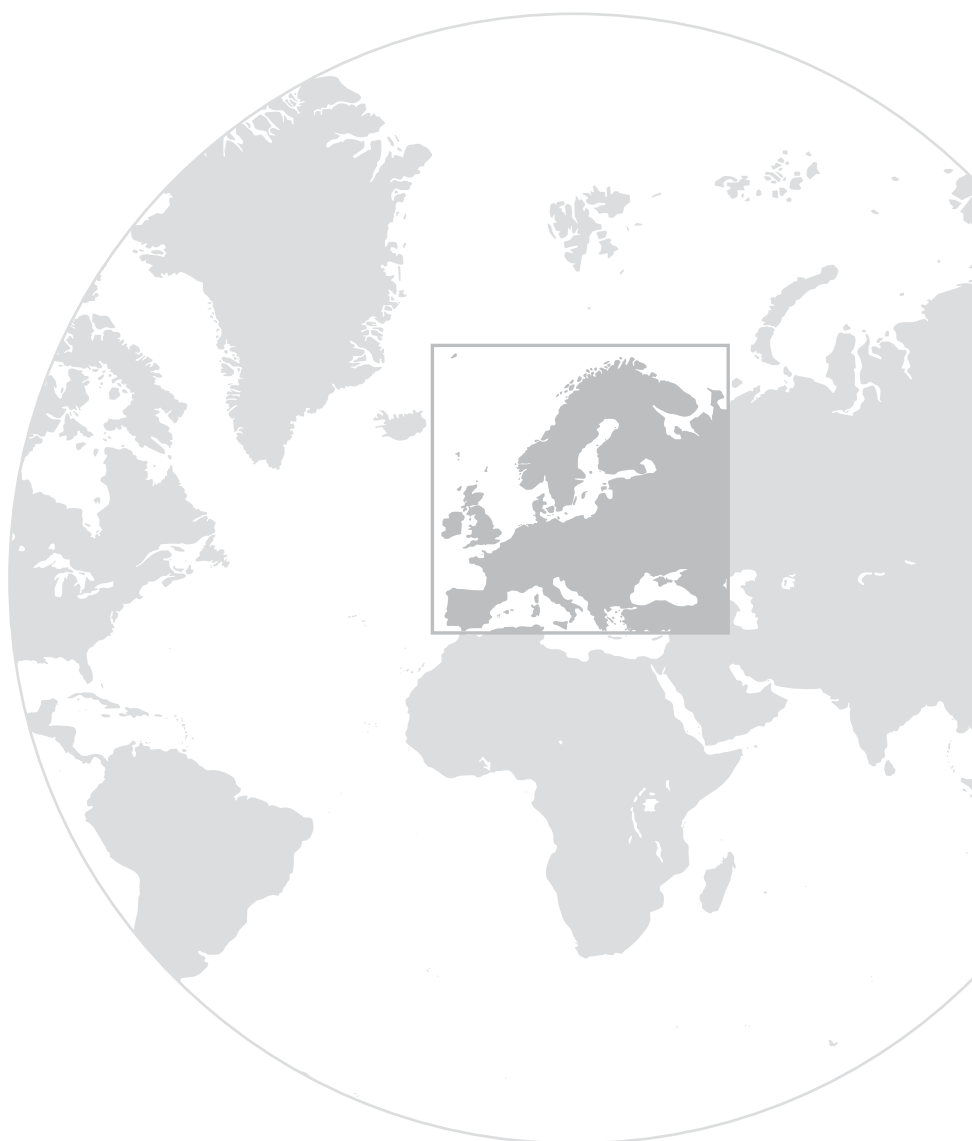
Discussion

The necessity for deeper interpersonal communication in order to achieve effective understanding was questioned in relation to an attack on young catholic schoolgirls from Holy Cross in Belfast. It was pointed out that research on counselling sessions after the incidents revealed that the students whose parents explained to them the incident from a political perspective premised on the Catholic-Protestant cleavage coped better. Moreover, some were of the belief that polarizing narratives were more powerful than empathy-evoking ones, rendering the breaking down of stereotypes through story-telling as such difficult.

While it was agreed that the power of divisive narratives might be too strong to pave any new developments at the present moment—a situation attributed to the politicization of narratives for narrow gains—there was the potential of existential communication to move things forward. An example of a successful research project worthy of emulation cited was one where criminal offenders met their victims to confront the problems and effects of their actions.

A question was asked if interpretations of the organic origins of nationalism from the people are unique to Europe in view of how the Southeast Asian model of nationalism is by and large state-imposed. In response to

the differences between European and Asian nationalism, it was clarified that nationalism and national identity should not be regarded as natural occurrences but instead as socially created ones. However, it was also emphasized that what it has achieved in the European context is the promulgation of liberalism or representative democracy. Moreover, while the European experiences of nationalism differ both within and between continents, it was suggested that countries in other parts of the world have tried to emulate this European image even if it does not apply to them. It was also reiterated that nationalism should be cultivated in a manner that encourages liberal values of equality and freedom.



Counter-Narratives of National Identity

I. Fractured Narratives: Identities in a Political Vacuum

Sadhvi Sharma examined the dilemmas that nations face in their attempts to construct a coherent national narrative and a shared national identity through the case study of India. She argued that the decline of the Congress Party and a larger loss of a unifying ideology in the 1980s created a political vacuum that resulted in attempts to shore up political support through appeals to identity-based politics. This in turn now serves as an obstacle to inequality being bridged in India today.

Sharma posited that the Indian government's concern over the unity of its multicultural polity could be traced back to its independence. India's first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, created a historical narrative of multiculturalism and tolerance as a "fact", although he did not explicitly institutionalize cultural diversity as a national value, believing instead that the forces of social change and economic development would eventually transcend cultural divisions.

However, Sharma argued that the inability of India's economic development to materialize and the loss of the Congress Party's uncontested mandate to rule resulted in a political vacuum. This void was seized by political parties that campaigned along cultural lines for political gains, unleashing a divisive and intolerant brand of politics based on competing claims of cultural rights.

II. Rule Britannica, Cool Britannica, Britain Plc: Versions of Britishness

By tracing the changing content and forms of British nationhood and identity from the mid-century highpoint of British-ness to the present, **Alan Hudson** explored whether a contemporary British national identity is plausible.

Hudson opined that there is a historic tension between the Whig presumption that British nationhood embodies a political and juridical equality in its institutions and the alternative patriotisms and identities that have emerged. The tension becomes more acute when the historic justification of British institutions in particular, and the

legitimacy and efficacy of the traditional public sphere in general, is doubted, disregarded or dismissed. This leads to a widespread predisposition to trust varied and multiple identities as alternative sources of identification.

In this respect, Hudson argued that discourses of national identity are borne out of uncertainty, in particular by elites who require a suitable language to communicate and engage with the masses. Although the British elite were successful in redefining a national consensus between the end of the nineteenth century and the immediate post-war period, the time between the death of Churchill in 1965 and Princess Diana in 1997 however witnessed a simultaneous erosion of objective power and subjective allegiance to British institutions that reached a critical point of meltdown.

Hudson concluded with the observation that the redefinition of British-ness from the "island story" to a more cosmopolitan one might seem attractive on one hand but this on the other hand, may well reinforce elite isolation as it draws attention to an absence of public allegiance.

III. A Nation of Immigrants: Emigration in the American Imagination

In her presentation, **Sarah Starkweather** assessed the national narrative of the United States as a nation of immigrants by arguing that the construction of its history as exclusively a nation of immigrants tends to obscure the process of emigration that has also shaped the American national community.

Starkweather discussed the manner in which American citizens living abroad have been positioned not only outside territorial borders but also outside of the American national project itself. She averred that there has been a tendency to portray American emigrants as "un-American"—and even unnatural—in the belief that people want to enter, not leave, the United States. Moreover, in the absence of mass emigration from the United States, those who leave are often categorized as members of specific, bounded social groups who are presumed to have deliberately rejected American identity and ideals. This notion was explored through portrayals of the British

Loyalists of the 1770s, American expatriate artists and intellectuals of the 1920s and 1930s, and Vietnam War draft resisters of the 1960s and 1970s.

This was followed by a discussion of some of the rhetorical strategies used by advocates for American citizens living abroad to disrupt the dominant narrative of the “nation of immigrants” while also repositioning emigrants as “good” Americans. This was illustrated through the example of the Association of American Residents Overseas, which campaigned for American emigrant voting rights in the 1970s using the rhetoric and imagery of a defining moment in American political mythology—the historical Boston Tea Party. Starkweather concluded that one way of challenging dominant narratives is to draw upon both universalistic and particularistic arguments.

Discussion

The questions raised may be divided into two categories. The first of these focused on the best approach to building national narratives. The second category questioned the sense of loss and lack of coherent narratives that have left individuals in search of an identity and something to belong to while also looking back at history with longing.

In response to the first category of questions, it was highlighted that while there have been attempts at creating a hegemonic national identity in the United States, questions have been raised by policymakers concerning emigrants from America as to how they fit into the national narrative. Attitudes toward emigrants from the United States have changed in recent years but there is still a drag on the policy responses in how to address issues relating to ex-patriots because of negative portrayals from the past. In the British context, it was argued that a challenge lay in negotiating the top-down approach to the building of a national narrative with a bottom-up approach that appears to have more popular appeal.

With regard to the second category of questions, the panellists stated that we are currently living in an era where the future is uncertain and, in this respect, the nostalgia of the past provides an appealing sense of certainty and security. As a result, individuals have begun to view the past in a romantic light, placing greater importance on where they come from. The accompanying narratives provide a strong political message that, the panellists argued, has a strong resonance with policymakers.



Narratives and Identity in The Military

I. Rethinking the Who, What and When: Why not Singaporean Military Heroes?

In his analysis of the national narrative of war heroes in Singapore, **Ho Shu Huang** argued for the commemoration of local war heroes by the Singapore Armed Forces (SAF) through the comparison of the reification of Major-General (MG) Lim Bo Seng, who fought during the Second World War with the lesser known Second Lieutenant (2LT) Tay Siow Kai, who was fatally wounded while shielding a recruit during a training accident in 1970.

Ho was of the opinion that the appropriation of Lim Bo Seng as a Singapore war hero is unnatural because Lim did not consider himself to be Singaporean although he fought in Singapore. Instead, he saw himself as an overseas Chinese patriot resisting the Japanese war efforts. Nevertheless, Lim is commemorated as a Singapore war hero as his story fits the meta-narrative of “the great, the dramatic and the distant” by which the construction of the Singapore Story is guided.

Ho then made the case for the celebration of Singaporean military heroes from the SAF. He averred that this approach might resonate better with Singaporeans for the following reasons. Firstly, National Service is a part of Singapore life. Secondly, the commemoration of military (as opposed to war) heroes is a better reflection of the absence of war in the current strategic environment. Thirdly, moving away from the fixation with larger-than-life personalities from historically dramatic events of the past might reignite young Singaporeans’ interest in Singapore’s nation-building endeavour.

II. The Role of the U.S. Military in Political Identity Development: The Making of Immigrant Soldiers

Cristina Ioana Dragomir examined the role of the U.S. military in shaping the political identity of immigrants who gain American citizenship by becoming soldiers. She argued that identity development is a complex process that takes place in both formal and informal ways, placing the individual at the crossroads of grand discourses that create spaces for assimilation, resistance and negotiation.

In her analysis of the naturalization process of immigrants Dragomir noted that immigrants form political identities and detach themselves from ethnically centred organizations and associations. Moreover, immigrants are inclined to participate actively in politics (such as through voting and participation in political parties) and more disposed to making claims through judicial forums.

However, Dragomir observed that such formal ideological training through the process of naturalization is absent for those who attain citizenship by joining the military. Nevertheless, she argued that immigrant soldiers learn the rules of citizenship informally through the command structure and social interaction with fellow American peers, and from vigorous training of the body, which underscores values deeply entrenched in the notion of American citizenship such as endurance and strength. Hence, these processes contribute to the development of the political identity of immigrant soldiers.

III. Creating the Van Doos in 1914: Policy Choice to Manifest Identity?

Jordan Axani assessed state efforts to explicitly consolidate a national identity through the case study of French Canada’s 22nd Regiment, also known as the Van Doos. By outlining its history, he pointed out that the Van Doos were created in 1915 as a policy choice to support Canada’s broader war efforts in the Great War, which French Canada was hesitant to participate in. Nevertheless, many French-Canadians fulfilled their duty by fighting in the war. The regiment still exists today and is widely regarded in Canada’s national history as a glorious embodiment of the commitment to French Canadian identity and nationalism.

Axani suggested that the creation of the regiment was a convenient wartime policy choice for the largely English government which led to the following outcomes: increased war support in French Canada; increased French-Canadian enlistment; economic support for the desolate agrarian regions of Quebec; and a platform on which the French can conciliate their own identity in Canada. As such, it was argued that the historical glorification of French-Canadian identity vis-à-vis the Van Doos is by default rather than design.

In conclusion, Axani argued that identity in post-colonial states such as Canada does not necessarily emerge through a natural occurring cycle or by forceful efforts to encourage co-existence. Instead, it may also be the result of sound policy choices.

Discussion

The questions raised in the third session fell into three categories. First, questions were asked pertaining to the efficacy of military heroes in the context of today's social narrative. Second, participants enquired about the underlying reasons individuals employed when explaining why they joined the military. Third, a question was asked about the narratives that had the greatest resonance with soldiers from the militaries discussed in the panel.

The response from the speakers with regard to the efficacy of military heroes in today's context began with a distinction between "military heroes" and "war heroes". Having made this clarification, it was suggested that in today's society the term "war" has become a dirty word and, as such, the concept of the military hero was more appealing in the Singaporean context. It was also argued that Singapore requires military heroes because they may be a useful symbol for rallying the people.

In response to the second category of questions, a speaker stated that in the Singaporean experience, though National Service is compulsory, it offers male Singaporeans an opportunity to connect with fellow Singaporeans and most, on hindsight, derive fond memories of their experience. In the case of the United States, the employment opportunities offered by the military are very appealing to those who sign-up, especially foreign nationals seeking to expedite their citizenship applications.

Finally, with regard to the question about the appeal of particular nationalist narratives to militaries, the speakers were of the view that narratives which resonate best with soldiers depend on individuals and context, as there is no single narrative when one is discussing the military. For the American experience, it was stated, for example, that "the military is America in that there is equality". In Canada, a speaker explained that when examining the history of the military there is no one narrative. As for the case of Singapore, it was argued that Singaporeans identify with the little stories, common bonds and stories of the "little person" rather than a grand master narrative.



Alternative Communication I — Visualities and Theatrics

I. Managing Conflict in Canberra: National Identity and Narrating Difference

Catriona Elder examined the issues of national identity and cultural policy in a culturally diverse state through the case study of space in Canberra. She argued that while narratives cannot produce a singular shared identity, the dissonance is not necessarily negative.

Elder explored ways in which alternative, even antagonistic, narratives of the nation could still work to produce a strong sense of pleasure in national belonging. This was demonstrated through an analysis of the manner in which the Parliamentary Zone in Canberra is presented by local and federal governments as reflecting and producing a sense of national identity. The memorials, museums, galleries, statues, thoroughfares and pathways that make up this central space are the places where Australian values are seen to be given substance and, as such, Australians are encouraged to visit them. As Australian government policy has moved to recognize cultural difference, more voices have been given a place in the national capital. This has led to more conflicting stories given narrated space in the Parliamentary Zone.

By identifying where the tensions are in these conflicting stories, Elder posited that they coalesce around ideas of who a real Australian is and what being a good citizen entails. Through an examination of how policymakers manage and plan for these differences, it was concluded that conflict in national stories need not be seen as negative but could be recognized and then used to produce a more complex understanding of citizenship that would be useful in negotiating an increasingly cosmopolitan and multicultural future.

II. The Nation and its Murals: A Reading of Malaysian Images, 1957–1969

Lai Chee Kien explored the various forms of national cultural production at the time of Malaya's independence through murals, sculptures and historical narratives that were inscribed and impinged on spatial constructions and architectural forms. The contexts of these productions were examined to see how they were intended to give form to aspects of national identity.

By analysing a series of murals in Kuala Lumpur, Lai demonstrated the mediating role of a "middling citizen" that the commissioned artists play in projecting state messages, be they propagandistic, educational or inspirational. Examples included murals extolling the use of the Malay language to unify the ethnically diverse populace, subtle depictions of the privileging of the Malays vis-à-vis other ethnic groups, and anti-communist rhetoric.

However, Lai also argued that even though the murals were commissioned for buildings of official state functions, the narratives formed by them did not necessarily converge with the buildings' "intentions", reflecting instead a "drawbridge of unconscious energies" that revealed personal perceptions of citizenship. An example was a commissioned mural depicting the mundane reality of ethnic diversity in Malaysia that was eventually not installed.

In conclusion, Lai reiterated that the narratives on the mural spaces reflected the lingering problems of Malaysia's multiple ethnicities and contested political ideologies that were largely unrecognized and remain unresolved to this day.

III. Building a Nation by the Bay: Examining Singapore's Edenic Narrative

Drawing on the case study of Singapore, **Joanna Phua** offered an examination of Singapore's bio-political engagement of its citizens' senses and emotions to bolster the critical connections, narratives and anchors needed to build a nation of like-minded citizens.

Phua began with an analysis of the state's interpretation of the "garden city" concept for the purposes of softening the harshness of a rapidly industrializing landscape and to create a "first-world oasis in a third-world region". It demonstrates Singapore's commitment to the highest levels of progress and efficiency, and underscores its capability to investors. Following from this, Phua illustrated this translation into a dominant narrative inscribed within the Marina Bay's visually indulgent landscape. It was averred that the seductive visuals of the Marina Bay area combined with the alluring Edenic narrative established a highly sensory and emotive experience that engrains and weaves the Singaporean identity.

However, Phua argued that the power to enthrall was similarly the power that attempts to silence. Moreover, the focus on indulging in the visual spectacle in bid to hold on to a distinctive identity in the face of rapid progress may result in the dislocation of place memories and attachments, as well as inured senses.

IV. Theatrical Narratives of Major Demonstrations in Taiwan

Stephen S. Chou assessed the role of public demonstrations as a form of political narrative through the case study of Taiwan. He argued that the construction of political discourses in Taiwan is currently highly predicated on the “staging” of mass demonstrations and campaigns.

Referring to the expressions of political opinion in the form of large-scale ad hoc popular movements such as the 2006 protests against President Chen Shui-bian and the series of rallies against the Chinese envoys in November 2008, Chou argued that the theatrics in creating spectacles and manipulating symbols in these “staged dramas” have proven to be highly effective in mobilizing ordinary citizens and conveying ideas. They have been regarded as major watersheds in Taiwan’s democratization and have become kernels of political narratives. However, at the same time, conflicting interpretations of their historical significance in democratization have been proposed by rival camps in contention for the discursive power.

Moreover, Chou posited that these campaigns also undergo a self-transformation as a result of their theatrical effect. For instance, originally a campaign to espouse the idea of defending Taiwan’s sovereignty, the rallies of November 2008 developed into a physical performance of defending their sovereignty by repelling the Chinese representatives. In such a context, it was argued that boundaries between concepts and realities eventually dissolve within this “theatre”.

Discussion

The questions and discussions in this panel centred largely on the issue of the relationship between the spaces of a city and its citizens. Noting that “it is citizens that make cities,

not cities that make citizens”, a participant asked whether the process of city building in a country like Singapore is a mediated or one-way process. It was also asked for whom these spaces were designed, for example, whether it was for those living in the city or for tourists, or, alternatively, for “insiders” or “outsiders”.

In response to these questions, much of the discussion centred on Singapore. In comparison to the Australian example, Singapore lacks the sort of vibrant, organic space exemplified by the Tent City in Canberra. The reason for this may be due to a number of factors but one speaker noted that a key reason might be the weak sense of ownership on the part of Singaporean residents. This apparent weak sense of ownership might be exacerbated by government-planned projects such as the Marina Bay project, where three images of Singapore are juggled in an attempt to appeal to three distinct communities: residents, tourists and businesses. To the government’s credit, one speaker said, they have attempted to reach out to residents in order to encourage them to use the space more fully, such as the installation of recreational spaces at the Marina Bay. The discussion then shifted to the mediated relationship between the government and residents in Singapore with a speaker using a government-planned project, Far East Square, as an example. This project, located in the heritage district of downtown Singapore, was originally meant to be a transformative preservation project aimed at the arts and media community in Singapore. But in doing so, rents were raised beyond the means of the community. As a result of this, many of the businesses moved down the road to cheaper rents in Chinatown, which resulted in the area becoming an (unplanned) arts-and-media community centred.

The discussion closed with one participant contesting the idea that there was an “Edenic narrative” arising out of the Marina Bay project and the implication of a hegemonic masterplan contained within the narrative. According to the participant, the Marina Bay project could simply be the result of incremental responses to needs that had arisen at particular moments in time. As such, the Marina Bay project may simply be an example of how contested memory spaces come about rather than being evidence of a grand masterplan.

Alternative Communication II –Art and Culture

I. Policing the Beat: American National Identity and Fears of Hip-Hop Culture

Through an analysis of rhetoric surrounding jazz, rock n' roll and hip-hop music, **Baz Dreisinger** examined the production of moral panics in America, especially in relation to American concepts of race and nationhood.

Dreisinger posited that African-American musical forms, from jazz to rock n'roll to hip-hop, have long been among America's greatest exports, affecting the popular-culture landscape in countries such as Japan, South Africa and Germany. Such music has also been the site of America's primary national mythologies, defining and embodying "Americanness" both internationally and domestically. In this respect, it was demonstrated that the critical discourses surrounding hip-hop culture—fears and anxieties incited among cultural gatekeepers in America and overseas—reveal much about the narrative myths that America lives by, and the way they are enacted in the public sphere.

It was underscored that the critics of such music relied on metaphors of contagion to convey a sense of anxiety that "non-whiteness" will somehow "spread" beyond designated boundaries and "infect" the whole of America. Yet within this rhetoric, a rift between "good" and "bad" music is born, the former titillating but ultimately tame while the latter is considered too wild and "primitive" to be contained. This is most illustratively embodied, for example, in the contrast between top-selling rappers Kanye West (college-educated and middle class) and 50 Cent (a larger-than-life caricature of all things "gangsta") respectively.

Dreisinger concluded with the following arguments. First, the rhetoric of fear surrounding these genres of music serves as forms of social control. Second, the excessive blaming of social ills on any form of music is unfair and simplistic. Third, instead of engaging in fear-saturated rhetoric about hip-hop culture, it was suggested that a more grounded and practical approach to thinking about the appeal of hip-hop music, such as media literacy, may better help in understanding the youth of today.

II. Miniatures and the Ottoman Empire in Orhan Pamuk's *My Name is Red*

Through an analysis of the novel, *My Name is Red*, **Nishevita Murthy** presented her joint analysis with **Sudha Shastri** on the conception of nationhood through debates on art.

Set in the late sixteenth-century Istanbul, the novel revolves around the murder of a miniaturist. The reasons for the murder are centred on ideological differences regarding the significance of art, its relationship to Islam and the Ottoman's relationship perspective on the world. The novel portrays the problematic change felt in Istanbul, evident in the simultaneous fascination with, and resistance to, "Frankish" paintings, which are depicted as modern as opposed to traditional miniatures. In the debate on the role and significance of miniatures shaping the identity of a nation, two views of art are fore-grounded: one that privileges innovation through external influences and a second, more purist one that champions the imitation and mastery of traditional art forms in bestowing national identity.

Some issues raised by the novelist Orhan Pamuk to provoke reflection among the readers include the following: What role does art play in constructing national boundaries and frontiers? Are the portrayals of the Turkish "Self" as distinct from the Frankish "Other" deliberate? How far is a nation an imagined or imaginary community?

III. Visualizing Terrorists: Representations of the Muslim Terrorist in Indian Graphic Novels

T. G. Gokul examined the role of graphic novels in reinforcing identity politics. While the graphic novel as a medium of expression has its origins in American counter-culture experiments in the 1960s, Gokul observed that this is not the case in India today. Examining two seminal Indian graphic novels, *The Believers* and *Kashmir Pending*, it was argued that despite being written by Muslim writers, these graphic novels refrain from exploring the counter-narrative potential of the medium. Instead, the uncritical equation of Muslims with terrorist activities embedded in both the national and international narratives is perpetuated.

Gokul noted that *The Believers* and *Kashmir Pending* are significant in the current context of increasing incidences of serial bomb blasts and insurgent activities as the former deals with the growth of Muslim fundamentalism and terrorist activities in Kerala while the latter delves into terrorist activities in Kashmir. In his analysis of these two texts, Gokul demonstrated that the authors have refrained from going beyond the media stereotypes of Muslims as perpetrators of terrorist activities by choosing not to explore the feelings of alienation, insecurity and the fear of persecution increasingly felt by the Muslim community. Such vulnerable sentiments among Muslims are especially heightened by the politicization of the Hindu identity by right-wing Hindu groups.

Some of the factors attributed to the self-restraint in employing the counter-narrative potential of graphic novels include fears of losing its mass appeal that would determine its viability in the market and also fears of political backlash.

Discussion

The first part of this panel discussion featured a wide-ranging conversation between participants and speakers on contemporary and historical issues in Indian politics, focusing on the issue of secularity and the question of national identity—particularly as it pertains to Indian Muslims. A speaker noted that the narrative of Indian identity was exemplified by a form of cultural nationalism that was predominantly Hindu-Brahmic-Vedantic in nature. For such people, the notion of being “secular” is taken for granted, whereas Muslims are told that it is “first nation, then religion”. The difference is worth noting as it implies that one is unable to be both Indian and Muslim simultaneously. Also, if one does not subscribe to such a form of “cultural nationalism”, then one would not generally be thought of as being “Indian”. The result of this was that it becomes increasingly difficult for Hindus to be as easily perceived as being “terrorists” in the wake of acts of violence perpetrated by Hindu terrorist groups than it is for Muslims in the event of similar incidents committed by groups acting in the name of Islam.

Art in India, such as the graphic novels discussed by one speaker, are written specifically to cater to an elite upper middle-class audience—an audience one speaker termed “globalized readers”. While it was noted that, in fairness, current Indian graphic novels attempt to portray “honest” and “neutral” viewpoints if one were to examine both the narrative and read “between the frames”, these graphic novels actually express the predominant ideology of the society in which they exist instead of pushing forward the sort of counter-narrative the speaker thought would be most useful.

In discussing the moral panics in America during the jazz age and the hip hop age, a participant asked if there was a perceptible shift in prescribed gender roles when comparing the two ages. In the participant’s opinion, it would appear that the discourse on moral panics in the jazz age was most concerned with the corruption of white womanhood whereas in hip hop, moral panics seemed to revolve much more around young white males. A speaker responded that the shift in anxious discourse about women to anxious discourse about men may be a generalization but the discourse about jazz during the moral panics of the 1920s and 1930s was more about jazz’s perceived hypersexuality, which was *implicitly* a threat to (white) women rather than men. However, when hip hop became part of the national discourse in the United States at the tail end of the 1980s, the discourse was centred on violence rather than sexuality. It was emphasized that there might be too many variables to explain such a national concern about the perceived dangers of a particular music form but one variable was certainly the increase in inner-city violence and drugs during the 1980s. Fears of violence, particularly at the hands of supposedly hyper-violent young males (almost all thought to be African-American), certainly added to the fears that such behaviour could, in a sense, be transmitted to the minds of impressionable young white males who would then copy such behaviour discussed in certain forms of hip hop music at the time.

0800-0830 **Registration**

0830-0840 Welcome remarks by **Norman Vasu**,
Assistant Professor and Coordinator,
Social Resilience Programme,
Centre of Excellence for National Security,
S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies

0840-0950 **Panel One :**
**Conceptual Re-examination of
'Nation' and Narrated Communication**

Chairperson :
Norman Vasu,
Assistant Professor and Coordinator,
Social Resilience Programme,
Centre of Excellence for National Security,
S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies

Presenters :
**"Terrorism, Story-Telling and
Existential Communication"**
by **T. Brian Mooney**,
Associate Professor,
School of Social Sciences,
Singapore Management University

**"Nationalism and nationalist theory
or how Europe has failed to
cope with its past"**
by **Howard Williams**,
Professor,
Department of International
Politics,
University of Wales, Aberystwyth

0950-1000 **Tea break**

1000-1145 **Panel Two :**
Counter-Narratives of National Identity

Chairperson :
Yolanda Chin,
Associate Research Fellow,
Centre of Excellence for National Security,
S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies

Presenters :

**"Fractured Narratives:
Identities in a Political Vacuum"**
by **Sadhvi Sharma**,
Researcher,
Partners for Urban Knowledge,
Action & Research (PUKAR), Bombay, India

**"Rule Britannia, Cool Britannia,
Britain plc: Versions of Britishness"**
by **Alan Hudson**,
Director,
Leadership Programmes for China,
University of Oxford

**"A Nation of Immigrants: Emigration in
the American Imagination"**
by **Sarah Starkweather**,
Postdoctoral Fellow,
Department of Geography,
National University of Singapore

1145-1245 **Lunch**

1245-1430 **Panel Three :**
Narratives & Identity in the Military

Chairperson :
Richard Bitzinger,
Senior Fellow,
S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies

Presenters :
**"Rethinking the Who, What and When:
Why not Singaporean Military Heroes?"**
by **Ho Shu Huang**,
Associate Research Fellow,
Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies,
S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies

**"The Role of the U.S. Military in
Political Identity Development:
The Making of Immigrant Soldiers"**
by **Cristina Ioana Dragomir**,
PhD Candidate,
New School for Social Research

**“Creating the ‘Van Doos’ in 1914:
Policy Choice to Manifest Identity?”**

by **Jordan R. Axani**,

M.A. Candidate,

Royal Military College of Canada

1430-1630 **Panel Four:**

**Alternative Communication I –
Visualities and Theatrics**

Chairperson :

Bill Durodie,

Senior Fellow and Coordinator,
Homeland Defence Programme,
Centre of Excellence for National Security,
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Presenters :

**“Managing Conflict in Canberra: National
Identity and Narrating Difference”,**

by **Catriona Elder**,

Senior Lecturer,
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University of Sydney

**“The Nation and its Murals: A Reading
of Malaysian Images, 1957-1969”**

by **Lai Chee Kien**,

Assistant Professor,
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National University of Singapore

**“Building a Nation by the Bay:
Examining Singapore’s Edenic Narrative”**

by **Joanna Phua**,

Associate Research Fellow,
Centre of Excellence for National Security,
S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies

**“Theatrical Narratives of Major
Demonstrations in Taiwan”**

by **Stephen S. Chou**,

Assistant Professor,
Division of Chinese,
School of Humanities and Social Sciences,
Nanyang Technological University

1630-1640 **Tea Break**

1640-1810 **Panel Five :**

**Alternative Communication II –
Culture & Art**

Chairperson :

Kumar Ramakrishna,

Associate Professor and Head,
Centre of Excellence for National Security,
S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies

Presenters :

**“Policing the Beat: American National
Identity and Fears of Hip-Hop Culture”**

by **Baz Dreisinger**,

Assistant Professor,
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**“Miniatures and the Ottoman Empire in
Orhan Pamuk’s My Name is Red”**

by **Nishevita Murthy**,

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Sciences, Indian Institute of Technology,
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**“Visualizing Terrorists: Representation of
the Muslim Terrorist in
Indian Graphic Novels”**

by **T. G. Gokul**,

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The Centre of Excellence for National Security (CENS) is a research unit of the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS) at Nanyang Technological University, Singapore. Established on 1 April 2006, CENS is devoted to rigorous policy-relevant analysis of a range of national security issues. The CENS team is multinational in composition, comprising both Singaporean and foreign analysts who are specialists in various aspects of national and homeland security affairs.

Why CENS?

In August 2004 the Strategic Framework for National Security outlined the key structures, security measures and capability development programmes that would help Singapore deal with transnational terrorism in the near and long term.

However, strategizing national security policies requires greater research and understanding of the evolving security landscape. This is why CENS was established to increase the intellectual capital invested in strategizing national security. To this end, CENS works closely with not just other RSIS research programmes, but also national security agencies such as the National Security Coordination Secretariat within the Prime Minister's Office.

What Research Does CENS Do?

CENS aspires to be an international research leader in the multi-disciplinary study of the concept of Resilience in all its aspects, and in the policy-relevant application of such research in order to promote Security within and beyond Singapore.

To this end, CENS conducts research in four main domains:

- **Radicalization Studies**
 - The multi-disciplinary study of the indicators and causes of violent radicalization, the promotion of community immunity to extremist ideas and best practices in individual rehabilitation. The assumption being that neutralizing violent radicalism presupposes individual and community resilience.
- **Social Resilience**
 - The systematic study of the sources of - and ways of promoting - the capacity of globalized, multicultural societies to hold together in the face of systemic shocks such as diseases and terrorist strikes.

- Homeland Defence
 - A broad domain encompassing risk perception, management and communication; and the study of best practices in societal engagement, dialogue and strategic communication in crises. The underlying theme is psychological resilience, as both a response and antidote to, societal stresses and perceptions of vulnerability.
- Futures Studies
 - The study of various theoretical and conceptual approaches to the systematic and rigorous study of emerging threats, as well as global trends and opportunities – on the assumption that Resilience also encompasses robust visions of the future.

How Does CENS Help Influence National Security Policy?

Through policy-oriented analytical commentaries and other research output directed at the national security policy community in Singapore and beyond, CENS staff members promote greater awareness of emerging threats as well as global best practices in responding to those threats. In addition, CENS organizes courses, seminars and workshops for local and foreign national security officials to facilitate networking and exposure to leading-edge thinking on the prevention of, and response to, national and homeland security threats.

How Does CENS Help Raise Public Awareness of National Security Issues?

To educate the wider public, CENS staff members regularly author articles in a number of security and intelligence-related publications, as well as write op-ed analyses in leading newspapers. Radio and television interviews have allowed CENS staff to participate in and shape the public debate on critical issues such as radicalization and counter-terrorism, multiculturalism and social resilience, as well as the perception, management and mitigation of risk.

How Does CENS Keep Abreast of Cutting Edge National Security Research?

The lean organizational structure of CENS permits a constant and regular influx of Visiting Fellows of international calibre through the Distinguished CENS Visitors Programme. This enables CENS to keep abreast of cutting edge global trends in national security research.

For More on CENS

Log on to <http://www.rsis.edu.sg> and follow the links to “Centre of Excellence for National Security”.



The **S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS)** was inaugurated on 1 January 2007 as an autonomous School within the **Nanyang Technological University (NTU)**, upgraded from its previous incarnation as the **Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies (IDSS)**, which was established in 1996.

The School exists to develop a community of scholars and policy analysts at the forefront of Asia-Pacific security studies and international affairs. Its three core functions are research, graduate teaching and networking activities in the Asia-Pacific region. It produces cutting-edge security related research in Asia-Pacific Security, Conflict and Non-Traditional Security, International Political Economy, and Country and Area Studies.

The School's activities are aimed at assisting policymakers to develop comprehensive approaches to strategic thinking on issues related to security and stability in the Asia-Pacific and their implications for Singapore.

For more information about RSIS, please visit **www.rsis.edu.sg**

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The National Security Coordination Secretariat (NSCS) was set up in the Prime Minister's Office in Jul 2004 to facilitate national security policy coordination from a Whole-Of-Government perspective. NSCS reports to the Prime Minister through the Coordinating Minister for National Security (CMNS). The current CMNS is the Deputy Prime Minister Professor S. Jayakumar, who is also Minister for Law.

NSCS is headed by Permanent Secretary (National Security and Intelligence Coordination). The current PS(NSIC) is Mr Peter Ho, who is concurrently Head of Civil Service and Permanent Secretary for Foreign Affairs.

NSCS provides support to the ministerial-level Security Policy Review Committee (SPRC) and Senior official-level National Security Coordination Committee (NSCCom) and Intelligence Coordinating Committee (ICC). It organises and manages national security programmes, one example being the Asia-Pacific Programme for National Security Officers. NSCS also funds experimental, research or start-up projects that contribute to our national security.

NSCS is made up of two components: the National Security Coordination Centre (NSCC) and the Joint Counter-Terrorism Centre (JCTC). Each centre is headed by a director.

NSCC performs three vital roles in Singapore's national security: national security planning, policy coordination, and anticipating strategic threats. As a coordinating body, NSCC ensures that government agencies complement each other, and do not duplicate or perform competing tasks.

JCTC is a strategic analysis unit that compiles a holistic picture of terrorist threat. It studies the levels of preparedness in areas such as maritime terrorism and chemical, biological and radiological terrorist threats. It also maps out the consequences should an attack in that domain take place.

More information on NSCS can be found at www.nscs.gov.sg



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