



Global Governance Adrift: Pathways Forward for Non-Traditional Security

8th NTS-Asia Consortium Conference Report 2026



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Report on the 8th NTS-Asia Consortium organised by: The Centre of Non-Traditional Security Studies, S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS), Nanyang Technological University, Singapore

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Executive Summary

The Centre for Non-Traditional Security Studies (NTS Centre) at the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS) convened the 8th NTS-Asia Annual Conference from 7 to 8 April 2026 at PARKROYAL on Beach Road, Singapore. Since its inception in 2007, the NTS-Asia Consortium has served as a premier platform for sustained dialogue on critical regional challenges, including climate and ecological risks, health security, food, energy and water security, human security, and resilience in Asia.

Themed “Global Governance Adrift – Pathways Forward for Non-Traditional Security”, the conference took place at a moment of significant strain on the global governance landscape. The proceedings commenced with a commemorative video detailing NTS-Asia’s milestones, followed by welcome remarks from Professor Mely Caballero-Anthony, Head of NTS Centre, RSIS, and opening remarks by Ambassador Ong Keng Yong, Executive Deputy Chairman, RSIS.

Professor Barry Buzan, Emeritus Professor, The London School of Economics and Political Science, United Kingdom, Visiting Ngee Ann Kongsi Professor of International Relations, RSIS, delivered the keynote address. Prof Buzan spoke on the decline of the Western-led world order, the crisis facing neoliberalism, and the rise of the far right, before reflecting on the implications of these developments for NTS.

The Geopolitical Context

Global institutions and international norms are increasingly challenged by intensifying geopolitical competition, protracted conflicts, and growing contestation over the foundations of the international order. This shift is exemplified by recent disruptions to multilateralism, including the United States’ withdrawal from key international agreements like the Paris Climate Agreement and from multilateral organisations like the World Health Organization (WHO), and volatility in development and humanitarian financing.

The theme of this year’s conference also reflected concerns over heightened geopolitical rivalry, new dimensions of conflicts in the Middle East, the acceleration of artificial intelligence (AI), the urgent need to address the impacts of climate change, and the imperative to protect and steward our natural environment.

Conference discussions suggested that the post-Second world war rules-based order led by the US and its allies is fundamentally broken and needs to be recast. In response to this fragmentation, states are increasingly adopting strategies to bolster strategic autonomy: diversify supply chains, reduce dependency on great powers, and expand cooperation with other like-minded states. Multilateralism remains essential for ensuring great-power accountability and safeguarding the agency of small and middle powers. Against this backdrop, the conference examined how these shifts affect the governance of NTS challenges, identifying potential pathways for cooperation, adaptation, and resilience in a fragmented global order.

Thematic Focus on Global and Regional Governance

The conference explored three primary dimensions of the global governance crisis: (i) the fragmentation of multilateral institutions (Panels 1 and 6); (ii) the geopolitical contestation of resources in energy and food (Panels 2 and 3); and (iii) the emergence of new security bedrocks through the lenses of Planetary Health and the Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) agenda (Panels 4 and 5).

Critical geopolitical faultlines including the South China Sea dispute, cross strait relations, and unresolved border conflicts and contestations persist as significant risks requiring cautious management. In Southeast Asia, the norms of comprehensive security, non-intervention, and peaceful cooperation remain central to the region. ASEAN continues to champion these values as reflected in the ASEAN Charter and ASEAN Community Blueprints across its Political-Security, Economic, and Socio-cultural Communities.

Nonetheless, ASEAN faces significant challenges of its own. The region remains highly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change and requires more robust solutions to tackle transnational crime and trafficking, secure its food and energy supply chains, and advance the WPS agenda. Despite ongoing global uncertainties, the transnational nature of these issues provides opportunities for states to cooperate and rework global governance into one that is more equitable and inclusive.

Keynote Address

Professor Barry Buzan

Emeritus Professor, The London School of Economics and Political Science, United Kingdom

Visiting Ngee Ann Kongsi Professor of International Relations, S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore

In his keynote address, Professor Barry Buzan examined the structural evolution of NTS amid a radically shifting global order. He observed that the contemporary understanding of NTS is largely a product of the “Cold Peace” era of the 1990s and 2000s, a period defined by neoliberalism and globalisation. During this time, NTS become inextricably linked with norms such as human rights, gender equality, and nuclear safety, all framed as security issues transcending national borders. As a result, the perception of NTS as an activity is fundamentally “liberal in spirit”.

However, Prof Buzan argued that the previous Western-led world order has eroded, with neoliberalism no longer its defining feature. Undone by the “excesses of globalisation”, persistent inequalities, and repeated economic crises, the international landscape has succumbed to anti-liberal sentiments, creating conditions for NTS that differ vastly from its origins. Prof Buzan traced this decline to the onset of a “Second Cold War” in 2014 to a definitive “Third Cold War” that emerged in 2025.

This new, durable world order is characterised by the rise of powerful far-right forces, heightened nationalism, and a pivot towards militarisation. Within this climate of deep uncertainty and distrust, the erosion of traditional alliances has rapidly reduced the space for multilateral cooperation. A particularly effective strategy of far-right actors has been the “hyper-securitisation” of diverse social issues, further complicating the landscape for experts and policymakers. Consequently, Prof Buzan emphasised that NTS practitioners must navigate a reality where the previous liberal foundations are increasingly contested.

Central to the address was the provocation that NTS is not an intrinsically liberal activity. Prof Buzan noted that core NTS concerns, such as environmentalism and the protection of vulnerable populations, depart from cosmopolitan values and can even be interpreted as anti-liberal in certain contexts. Nevertheless, NTS faces challenges in decoupling itself from the wider liberal agenda with which it is strongly associated. For NTS to retain its relevance, it must unpack these associations and determine how it can function independently of a liberal framework.

Prof Buzan identified the Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) agenda as the most vulnerable in this emerging order, noting that far-right political ideologies frequently marginalise or actively oppose women’s rights. He expressed concern that progress toward gender equality may have peaked in previous decades, posing a direct challenge to the objectives of the WPS framework.

Ecological justice constitutes a complex challenge moving forward. Historically tethered to liberal ideologies, the issue has frequently faced hostility from the far-right in the West. However, Prof Buzan suggested that there may still be space for ecological justice to be prioritised: in both India and China, climate change remains less politically contested, and with its impacts anticipated to worsen, engagement with solutions will be needed regardless of political orientation. He therefore challenged activists and practitioners to reframe ecological justice beyond the liberal agenda. For instance, an entry point for far-right engagement could emerge from its historical romanticisation of nature, land, and culture, suggesting that the Anthropocene crisis can resonate across a wider ideological spectrum.

From an economic perspective, the rise of economic nationalism and weaponised trade suggest a move away from cooperation. With NTS strongly linked to both human security and the right to development, the abandonment of aid and support towards the Global South raises uncertainties. With competition increasingly replacing cooperation, the scope of these issues remain unclear within the evolving international order.

On less contentious NTS issues, global health is likely to retain high importance alongside broader environmental concerns. However, when working towards advancing NTS issues in the emerging world order, he called for solutions which accurately reflect the surrounding environment. It is therefore vital to think of solutions that go beyond globalisation and inter-governmental organisations, as these solutions are likely to encounter resistance from dominant political forces.

Concluding his address, Prof Buzan called for greater attention toward engagement at local levels: in a less globalised world, bottom-up solutions would become increasingly important.

Panel 1: Global Governance and Non-Traditional Security

Speakers: Prof Shin-wha Lee (Korea University), Major General (Retd) ANM Muniruzzaman (Bangladesh Institute of Peace and Security Studies), Dr Yanitha Meena (Institute of Strategic & International Studies Malaysia), Prof Jyoti Pathania (O.P. Jindal Global University). Moderated by Prof Mely Caballero-Anthony.

Amid intensifying geopolitical competition and institutional strain, panel discussions converged on a central observation: global governance is not collapsing, but rather fragmenting into a more complex and uneven system. Instead of a cohesive, rules-based order, the international system is increasingly characterised by selective coalitions, competing interests, and inconsistent leadership. This shift reflects a transition away from universal frameworks towards more flexible, issue-based arrangements. Crucially, this fragmentation is not merely structural; it is reshaping how states perceive and address NTS challenges, which are now deeply embedded within broader strategic and geopolitical dynamics.

Panellists underscored that NTS issues, ranging from climate change and food security to cyberthreats and migration, are no longer peripheral concerns but central to both competition and cooperation in the world today. These challenges are becoming increasingly interconnected, blurring the boundaries between military, technological, and human security. This growing complexity suggests that governance gaps across sectors are compounding systemic risks. For instance, failures in coordination and funding have undermined food security efforts, while conflict-driven food weaponisation and export restrictions have exacerbated price volatility. Similarly, inadequate climate commitments are placing the world on a dangerous warming trajectory.

The discussion further highlighted that these governance failures extend beyond individual sectors, pointing to a broader crisis of multilateralism. Institutions designed to manage collective challenges are increasingly paralysed by geopolitical rivalry, with mechanisms such as the United Nations Security Council struggling to function effectively. Concurrently, emerging threats such as cyber insecurity and hybrid warfare proliferate within a fragmented regulatory landscape, allowing malicious actors to operate across borders with relative impunity. Migration pressures further underscore this strain: record levels of forced displacement are occurring alongside declining international support and weak conflict prevention. These overlapping crises disproportionately affect the Global South, which remains both highly vulnerable and underrepresented in global decision-making.

In this context, the re-emergence of the Global South has become a pivotal dimension of NTS governance. Participants noted how the COVID-19 pandemic and intensifying major power rivalry have catalysed a renewed focus on global public goods

and collective resilience. Initiatives such as the Voice of the Global South Summit and India's G20 presidency have amplified Global South perspectives, providing platforms to articulate shared priorities and region-specific challenges. Within Southeast Asia, this momentum is reflected in ASEAN's efforts to deepen inter-regional engagement, including partnerships with the Indian Ocean Rim Association and the Pacific Islands Forum. These initiatives prioritise key areas such as climate resilience, food security, and disaster management, signalling a growing, albeit tentative, commitment to collective action.

Furthermore, the panel highlighted that while Global South narratives are gaining visibility and momentum, they remain underdeveloped and require renewed commitment. Platforms such as BRICS reflect an increasing desire for alternative frameworks of cooperation, but their long-term relevance will depend on their ability to deliver tangible outcomes rather than symbolic alignment. For Southeast Asia, this presents both an opportunity and a challenge: the region must move beyond cautious engagement to assume a more proactive leadership role in shaping NTS governance. This requires leveraging existing mechanisms more effectively, building synergies across institutions, and prioritising practical, outcome-oriented cooperation.

In this evolving landscape, middle powers are emerging as pivotal actors in navigating fragmentation and advancing governance solutions. Moving beyond traditional roles as passive "bridge-builders," they are increasingly shaping the contours of global order through innovation, coalition-building, and norm-setting. Panellists emphasised that middle powers are no longer merely adapting to global changes but actively influencing them. Their growing numbers, particularly within the Global South, and their engagement across diverse platforms reflect a more assertive approach to international cooperation.

Middle powers were advocated as capable of operating across competing frameworks while maintaining strategic autonomy through flexible, issue-based coalitions. For instance, countries such as India engage simultaneously in initiatives like the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QUAD) and BRICS, navigating distinct geopolitical alignments to advance both national and collective interests. However, panellists noted that this approach is not without its challenges. Internal diversity, coordination constraints, and perceptions of revisionism can complicate efforts to build cohesive and credible coalitions. Despite these limitations, the panel underscored that middle powers remain well-positioned to drive meaningful change. By strengthening multilateralism, advancing minilateral partnerships, and focusing on practical issue-based cooperation in key domains such as climate governance, digital regulation, and global health, these actors can bridge existing governance gaps in an increasingly fragmented order.

Ultimately, the discussion points toward a fundamental reconfiguration of global governance. While fragmentation has introduced new uncertainties and risks, it has simultaneously created space for more flexible, adaptive, and inclusive forms of cooperation. The effectiveness of this emerging order will depend not on the preservation of traditional institutional forms, but on the ability of states to translate ideas into action. In an era defined by complexity and interdependence, the challenge

is no longer merely to sustain global governance, but to ensure its practical functionality.

Panel 2: Energy Transition and Critical Minerals

Speakers: Dr Noel Morada (Chulalongkorn University), Prof Daojiong Zha (Peking University), Dr Lina Alexandra (Centre for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS)), Dr Mirza Sadaqat Huda (ODI Global). Moderated by Prof Shin-wha Lee.

The global push for energy transition and advanced technologies is reshaping politics, economies, and human security in the Global South, including in Southeast Asia. This shift is driven primarily by the demand for critical minerals, which are integral components in clean energy technologies like electric vehicles, solar panels and wind turbines, medical imaging, military hardware, and advanced electronics. As such, the extraction, supply, and processing of these minerals have become deeply entangled with geopolitical, developmental, and governance challenges.

These dynamics can be observed in Myanmar, a conflict-affected, resource-rich country where critical minerals are embedded within a broader humanitarian crisis and a burgeoning shadow economy. Panellists observed that since its independence in 1948, Myanmar has faced chronic instability, and the 2021 coup has escalated armed conflict, repression, and human suffering on an unprecedented scale. Within this context of state fragility and protracted conflict, unregulated mining of Heavy Rare Earth Elements in Kachin and Shan States is a source of revenue for the military and ethnic armed groups. However the unregulated extraction is causing toxic pollution, health problems, social harms, and cross-border impacts on communities along the Mekong River, including in Thailand's Chiang Rai and Chiang Mai provinces. In such conflict zones, standard global frameworks such as the OECD Due Diligence Guidance for Responsible Supply Chains of Minerals from Conflict-Affected and High-Risk Areas are exceedingly difficult to implement without bottom-up, community-centred approaches and sustained engagement with both state and non-state actors.

Indonesia offers a different but related perspective on the intersection of critical minerals, geopolitics, and domestic governance. As the holder of some of the world's largest nickel reserves, Indonesia's resources are central to battery production, renewable energy systems, and advanced manufacturing. To move up the global value chain, Indonesia has banned the export of unprocessed nickel ore to promote domestic smelting and downstream industry development. In theory, this represents a form of resource nationalism aimed at capturing domestic value and fostering industrialisation. In practice, however, Indonesia's mineral processing capacity and financing remain heavily dependent on Chinese investment, technology, and markets. Furthermore, because smelters are energy-intensive and require a consistent ore supply, Indonesia has had to import ore from neighbours such as the Philippines to maintain operations when domestic extraction lags. These dependencies potentially undermine Indonesia's efforts to establish domestic industrial capabilities in critical minerals mining and processing.

At the same time, emerging US-led initiatives such as the Indo Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity introduce risks of regulatory misalignment. Cooperation with the US may be conditioned on Indonesia loosening export restrictions, aligning regulations with US commercial interests, or limiting the role of certain foreign actors, particularly China. This puts Indonesia in a geopolitical bind with significant implications for its policy space, regulatory sovereignty, and strategic autonomy.

These dynamics are symptomatic of the rise of “climate clubs” and new alliances centred on decarbonisation, critical minerals, and clean technologies. These clubs range from informal, voluntary dialogues like city networks or renewable energy partnerships, to more binding, trade-linked mechanisms like the European Union’s Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism. Increasingly, these frameworks act as geopolitical tools rather than purely climate solutions. Often led by Global North states, these state-centric and exclusive clubs risk reinforcing power asymmetries, creating new trade and technology barriers, and neglecting justice-oriented concerns in the Global South.

While the push for critical minerals is often framed through the lens of geopolitical tension, the concept of “criticality” is not static. Lists of critical minerals are periodically revised by major powers based on shifting industrial priorities, technological breakthroughs, and perceived supply chain vulnerabilities. What is deemed “critical” is often less a scientific judgement and more a policy and security judgement, driven by anxieties over supply security, import dependence, and the concentration of production and refining capacity in a few countries. This pattern of stockpiling, strategic investments, divestment pressure, and sanctions by powerful states echoes historical episodes of resource geopolitics.

Likewise, while they often induce resource nationalism labelling, especially when producer countries seek to retain more value at home, the extent to which minerals are considered a “critical” issue has been driven mainly by rapid technological advancements. In such context, critical minerals do not always have to be linked with competition; instead, they have the potential to foster greater cooperation and interdependence among states.

In conclusion, addressing climate change and steering the energy transition toward a just and sustainable future requires more than securing critical mineral supplies. This can be realised by acknowledging material interdependence, strengthening community-level governance, and fostering active participation in resource-related decision-making. Furthermore, it necessitates improving domestic regulatory frameworks and enforcement, and building more inclusive regional cooperation that goes beyond rhetorical commitments. The global energy transition can avoid reproducing old patterns of extractivism by ensuring that it does not proceed at the expense of vulnerable communities and ecosystems. Instead, it must prioritise human security, environmental integrity, and local agency as the core pillars of a resilient international order.

Panel 3: Navigating Trade Disruptions: Food Security Resilience

Speakers: *Mr Him Rotha (Cambodian Center for Regional Studies), Dr Arisman (Center for Southeast Asian Studies (CSEAS)), Ms Bernice De Torres (Southeast Asian Regional Center for Graduate Study and Research in Agriculture (SEARCA)), Dr Anoulak Kittikhoun (Ministry of Agriculture and Environment, Lao PDR). Moderated by Dr Lina Alexandra.*

How resilient is regional food security amid intensifying geopolitical competition, protracted conflicts, and growing contestation over the foundations of the international order? The third panel examined the evolving landscape of global food supply chains amid trade disruptions, as well as the national and regional strategies for resilience, domestic food production, and self-sufficiency. While countries remain interdependent in achieving food security—defined by the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation through the dimensions of availability, access, utilisation, and stability—this interconnectedness has transitioned into a potential liability.

The border disputes between Thailand and Cambodia exemplify how traditional security disruptions impact NTS concerns. Despite deep people-to-people exchanges, with approximately two million Cambodians residing in Thailand, and Thailand exporting manufactured goods to Cambodia, tensions have fuelled hyper-nationalism. This has manifested in border closures, trade restrictions, and boycotts of one another's products. It has also negatively impacted the trade of commodities necessary for food production, such as refined petroleum, fresh fruits and food, raw materials such as cassava for starch and animal feed, and agricultural machinery.

Climate change also remains an existential threat to regional food security, affecting both agriculture and fisheries. Key vulnerabilities include fluctuating temperatures, variability in rainfall and irrigation, extreme weather events, and pests and diseases. These are particularly salient since food security is a core component of the ASEAN Economic Community Strategic Plan 2026-2030. Considering these challenges, there is a regional shift toward Climate-Smart and ecosystem-based approaches. These include improving fertiliser and fish-feed efficiencies, as well as using salt-tolerant and drought-resilient crop varieties. Such practices can bolster socio-economic resilience alongside the preservation of ecosystem sustainability.

One among the critical elements for regional food security is the Mekong River, the primary water source for aquaculture. It runs across the Mekong Region, which includes Thailand and Vietnam as the region's top rice exporters. This region is highly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change such as ocean acidification, rising sea temperatures, seawater intrusion, diseases and pathogens, and extreme weather. Furthermore, the bilateral disputes between Thailand and Cambodia could potentially have an impact on food security in the Mekong region. Additionally, food security has also been adversely affected by the Middle East crisis, which is a key source of fertilisers for the Greater Mekong Subregion also encompassing Vietnam, Laos, and Myanmar.

The panel emphasised the necessity of transformational solutions to mitigate instabilities within global food supply chains. A further challenge facing regional food security is the growing scarcity of agricultural resources, specifically the shrinking labour force and declining land allocation for growing food. To address the manpower crunch, it is critical to attract young people into the sector. However these roles should not be framed as manual labour, but as opportunities for entrepreneurship, agricultural technology innovation, and development of digital platforms and systems.

Agriculture increasingly demands cross-sector solutions across the supply chain. AI has tremendous potential to transform how communities manage climate risks and anticipate supply chain disruptions. Research and development and innovations like low-cost electric tractors are likewise critical in reducing dependence on fuel imports from West Asia or the Middle East. These technological advancements should be complemented by nature-based solutions, including the production of homegrown blended bio-fertilizers alongside traditional chemical alternatives, leveraging the regional comparative advantage of large potash deposits, such as those in Lao PDR. Cooperation across the Mekong River Commission and other regional bodies is paramount. For instance, rather than relying on dams, the region should maintain natural floodplains upstream of the Mekong River Delta to mitigate flooding. Such approaches require regional dialogue to ensure fair trade-offs between energy needs, environmental protection, and sediment flow. These will allow for coordinated policies, in conjunction with policies such as the ASEAN Power Grid.

Unity and collective action within ASEAN will be critical in improving Member States' collective regional bargaining power amid global disruptions like the US-China trade war. Regional platforms such as the Consortium for Agricultural Policy Research Initiatives can be harnessed to build horizon-scanning capacities to identify emerging threats, leverage agricultural data science for high impact research, and provide policy advisory in disseminating and sustaining discussions. In a new normal defined by frequent shocks and interconnected risks, the discussion concluded that future policy must foster agrifood systems capable of continuous adaptation. This requires leveraging system-based transformation, building resilient market integration, investing in data and foresight systems, and empowering the youth as innovation drivers.

Panel 4: Planetary Health: Governing Ecological Security

Speakers: Prof Tan Sri Dr Jemilah Mahmood (Sunway University), Prof Chiho Watanabe (Nagasaki University), Prof Md Saidul Islam (Nanyang Technological University), Dr Naoyuki Okano (United Nations University Institute for the Advanced Study of Sustainability (UNU-IAS)). Moderated by Prof Daojiong Zha.

The panel on “Planetary Health: Governing Ecological Security” convened at a critical juncture, where the traditional boundaries of security studies are being forcibly redrawn by the Anthropocene and the urgent triple planetary crisis. In alignment with the conference theme of navigating a “Changing Global Order”, the session moved beyond abstract threat multiplier rhetoric to address the visceral reality of what panellists termed a “systemic rupture” of planetary health. Ecological security can no

longer be treated as a soft or liberal subset of international relations. Instead, it has become the bedrock of a hardcore realist agenda. In this fractured landscape, biosecurity crises and the erosion of multilateral norms have transformed natural resources from shared commodities into instruments of geopolitical coercion, demanding a fundamental reassessment of how the Asia-Pacific governs its common biosphere.

The discussion framed the current era as a polycrisis, wherein geopolitical fractures, such as the conflict in the Middle East, directly catalyse ecological degradation in Southeast Asia. The conflicts were noted for being environmentally destructive, and that the "catastrophic irony of the carbon surge" generated by military intensity prioritises short-term survival at the expense of long-term climate stability. For the Asia-Pacific, the threat is existential, as 2025 regional assessments indicate the area is warming at twice the global average. The panel advocated for a shift in security metrics: moving away from merely protecting borders to protecting Planetary Health and Sustainable Development Goals, where biosphere integrity is the prerequisite for all social and economic stability. To do so, the gradualist mindset dominating current policy must be challenged. This was supported by an argument of urgency and a point of no-return: the planet is currently at risk of breaching five of sixteen identified global tipping points, including the abrupt thawing of Boreal permafrost, which could trigger a binary switch into a less habitable Earth system.

However, not all panellists shared the same view of this systemic vulnerability, with the suggestion of a framework of "Unequal Ecologies" as an opposing argument. This framework posits that climate change is fundamentally a justice crisis structurally produced by historical colonial land systems and unequal global power dynamics. The stark disparity where countries like Bangladesh contribute only 0.4% of global emissions yet suffers disproportionately from sea-level rise and salinity intrusion is an example of such "unequal ecologies". Critically, adaptation was cautioned from being treated as a purely technical exercise: without a justice-oriented lens, adaptation often becomes "enclosure", whereby benefits are captured by export-oriented actors while costs are externalised to displaced farmers and marginalised fishing communities. The response to "unequal ecologies" included the proposal of a transformative four-dimensional justice framework encompassing material, procedural, recognition, and ecological justice to ensure that climate governance addresses structural power imbalances rather than merely reinforcing existing inequalities.

The discussion also integrated the complexities of external shocks, such as pandemics and warfare, into the planetary health model. Systems thinking was identified as essential for understanding how sudden turmoil deviates societal attention and funding away from the ecological crisis. While both pandemics and wars shift resources, they often push the world in directions opposite to the "great transition" required for planetary health. The panel advocated for utilising periods of upheaval to "build back better", citing the European Green Deal post-COVID-19 as a precedent. This legal and normative dimension was further highlighted by the 2025 ICJ Advisory Opinion on Climate Change, which was raised as a potential gamechanger in establishing state responsibility for climate protection. Such developments signal a

move toward decentralised, multi-layered governance in a world where universal political consensus is increasingly elusive.

The conversation shifted toward the pragmatic challenges of regional cooperation, questioning the deficit of political trust that often stalls initiatives like the ASEAN Power Grid. Panellists discussed the necessity of reframing energy democratisation and resource management as security strategies rather than mere economic costs. The weaponisation of natural resources, from the manipulation of water levels via mega-dams on the Mekong to the destruction of coral reefs for territorial expansion, was identified as a primary threat to ASEAN centrality. The panel proposed the establishment of an "ASEAN Centre for Ecological Security" to monitor biological and ecological tipping points with the same urgency as military movements. By treating shared commons like the Mekong or the South China Sea as collective security assets, the region can move from a reactive posture to one of anticipatory governance.

The Asia-Pacific must secure its own strategic autonomy through ecological resilience. A forward-looking agenda for the NTS-Asia Consortium must prioritise decoupling ecological security from its liberal associations, reframing it instead as a core component of regional stability. As the world approaches irreversible environmental thresholds, panellists emphasised that the only defence is a "positive tipping point": the rapid, mass adoption of regenerative sovereignty and trans-border justice mechanisms. The path forward requires a community of practice that bridges the gap between hard climate science and policy, ensuring that the health of the biosphere remains the non-negotiable foundation of regional peace.

Panel 5: Women, Peace, and Security (WPS), Human Security and Peacebuilding in the Indo-Pacific

Speakers: Prof Siti Mazidah Mohamad (Universiti Brunei Darussalam), Dr Meenakshi Gopinath (Women in Security, Conflict Management & Peace), Dr Ako Muto (Rikkyo University). Moderated by Dr Tamara Nair.

The panel examined the influence and evolution of the Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) agenda in the Asia-Pacific. With an emphasis on its expansion beyond traditional conflict settings, the panel reflected the comprehensive scope of the 2022 ASEAN Regional Plan of Action on Women, Peace, and Security (RPA WPS). Addressing the intersection of human security and NTS, including ageing, digital security, and disaster preparedness, the panel highlighted the agenda's growing breadth. It also discussed the challenges facing WPS amid global systemic shifts, underscoring the importance of building on the region's broad definition of WPS through enhanced engagement with anticipatory governance and networks.

A focal point of the discussion was the intersection of ageing, gender, and digital security. Panellists argued that the WPS agenda must be anchored in the "everyday", reframing ageing not merely as a demographic or health concern, but as a socio-technological security issue. Using Brunei as a case study, in societies that increasingly

rely on digital technologies, older populations' vulnerabilities are often sidelined. Older women, in particular, face heightened risks of cyber-enabled fraud such as scams and cyberattacks which contributes to economic insecurity. Furthermore, because digital infrastructure is often designed for younger demographics, older women experience wider exclusion from online community engagement. While ASEAN's RPA WPS acknowledges both digital security and ageing, these themes can be better integrated. Brunei's digital literacy outreach programme was cited as a model for creating inclusive digital spaces, emphasising that the WPS agenda must dismantle ageist structures to strengthen women's position in society.

The panel also situated WPS within an increasingly fragmented and "dystopian" world order. There has been substantial progress and influence of women's movements in South Asia and the wider Asia-Pacific, including the institutionalisation of the WPS agenda. However, the emerging world order, shaped by a polycrisis of overlapping challenges, create a need for "white spaces" to be identified. These spaces, which go beyond great power rivalries, can help build interconnected networks involving local level actors, civil society, and middle powers. Central to this approach is the adoption of an "ethics of care" which transcends conventional policy boundaries. These networks would enable continued work towards higher female participation, which remains a critical challenge undermining broader societal well-being. Concluding with a reflection on societal and individual complicity in systemic violence, the panel argued that a gender-sensitive foreign policy is a prerequisite for WPS to move forward amid global fragmentation.

Japan's efforts to advance the WPS agenda through both international cooperation and domestic action were also examined. The panel outlined the evolution of Japan's National Action Plans (NAPs), noting a shift toward more flexible and initiative-based approaches in the 2023 NAP. In the Asia-Pacific, Japan has prioritised anti-trafficking efforts and supported women's roles in political, peacebuilding, and disaster response efforts. Domestically, focus remains on increasing female representation in disaster risk reduction and the security sectors. Despite progress, there remains persistent gaps in female participation. The panel called for multi-stakeholder solutions and capacity building tailored to the unique challenges facing women and vulnerable populations, reiterating that the WPS lens must be applied consistently across all NTS domains.

The subsequent discussion explored the trajectory of the WPS agenda following its 25th anniversary. Speakers noted that meaningful participation requires a deeper understanding of personal security concerns and structural barriers that may hinder greater involvement from women. While both formal and informal networks were identified as essential pathways forward; specifically informal networks were raised as particularly valuable in capturing lived experiences at the local level, complementing top-down and formal policy frameworks. Enhanced engagement with issues including digital security, ageing, and agriculture will ensure that the WPS agenda continues to respond to women's needs, not only in conflict settings.

The Asia-Pacific has successfully expanded the agenda to a wide range of security issues beyond armed conflict, including climate change-related events and environmental hazards, human trafficking, health governance, and digital spaces. The panel concluded that the borders of WPS remain porous, allowing for constant evolution and adaptation to newly emerging challenges. With human security increasingly sidelined at the global stage, the panel reinforced the need for a broad understanding of WPS in order to sustain progress, address needs, and contribute meaningfully toward peace in the wider region.

Panel 6: Emerging Health and Biological Security Risks

Speakers: Dr Li Fujian (China Foreign Affairs University), Dr Tessy Joseph (Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine), Mr Julius Trajano (S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies), Dr Chu Minh Thao (Diplomatic Academy of Viet Nam). Moderated by Major General (Retd) ANM Muniruzzaman.

The panel on “Emerging Health and Biological Security” examined the evolving risks, governance gaps, and policy responses shaping global and regional biosecurity. Discussions highlighted a central concern: biosecurity, understood as the collective defence against naturally occurring outbreaks, laboratory accidents, and deliberate biological threats, is a global public good under increasing strain. Despite heightened awareness following recent pandemics and advances in biotechnology, panellists agreed that the systems required to sustain effective biosecurity are faltering amid geopolitical fragmentation, uneven capacity, and institutional decline.

At the global level, the panel highlighted a burgeoning “supply crisis” in biosecurity. While biological risks are increasing in frequency and complexity, the political and institutional frameworks needed to address them are weakening. Three interrelated dynamics were identified. First, biosecurity tools, such as vaccines, pathogen samples, and surveillance data, are increasingly treated as strategic assets rather than shared resources, undermining collective action when equitable access is most critical. Second, the rise of data nationalism has complicated the timely sharing of epidemiological and genomic data, limiting early detection and coordinated response. Third, the weaponisation of medical supply chains, evident during recent global health emergencies, has exposed vulnerabilities in the distribution of essential goods.

Compounding these challenges is the weakening of traditional multilateral institutions. The panel noted that the WHO faces growing politicisation and reduced engagement from key member states, constraining its coordinating role. Similarly, the Biological Weapons Convention remains structurally limited, lacking robust verification mechanisms and struggling to keep pace with rapid biotechnological advancement. These institutional constraints have contributed to a broader erosion of trust, further impeding international cooperation at a time when it is most needed.

Panellists called for a shift away from highly centralised models of governance toward more flexible, multi-layered approaches. Rather than relying solely on universal political consensus, there was support for advancing functional and technical

cooperation in areas such as disease surveillance, laboratory safety, and information sharing. Strengthening regional hubs was also emphasised as a pragmatic pathway forward. Institutions such as regional centres for disease control can play a critical role in coordinating responses, building capacity, and ensuring sustained engagement, particularly when supported by reliable and long-term financing. In parallel, panellists emphasised the importance of a broader multistakeholder ecosystem that includes the private sector, academic institutions, and civil society, recognising their growing role in innovation, data generation, and implementation.

The discussion then turned to the specific challenges facing Asia. A region characterised by high population density, rich biodiversity, and rapid technological development, these factors that contribute to economic growth and scientific advancement also heighten vulnerability to biological threats. Environmental changes such as climate change, urbanisation, and increased human–animal interaction are accelerating the emergence and transmission of zoonotic diseases. At the same time, biosafety lapses, laboratory incidents, and the dual-use potential of emerging biotechnologies such as AI and synthetic biology introduce new layers of risk.

Panellists stressed that Asia’s rapid progress in biotechnology has outpaced the development of consistent regulatory frameworks, creating uneven oversight across countries. This raises concerns about the potential misuse of scientific advances, whether accidental or deliberate. Moreover, ethical considerations including responsible research practices, data governance, and equitable access to healthcare innovations are becoming increasingly salient. In this context, traditional reactive approaches to health security are no longer sufficient. Instead, participants emphasised the need for anticipatory strategies that prioritise early risk detection, prevention, and adaptive response mechanisms. Investments in biosurveillance systems, predictive analytics, and responsible innovation were identified as key components of a more resilient regional architecture.

A focused discussion on Vietnam highlighted how the region’s unique characteristics shape its approach to biosecurity. Historically, biosecurity in Southeast Asia has been closely linked to national health strategies aimed at controlling infectious diseases affecting human, animal, and plant populations. Over time, this understanding has evolved to reflect the interconnected nature of these domains, aligning with the One Health framework. Today, biosecurity in the region encompasses a broader spectrum of risks, including transboundary disease transmission and the implications of porous borders, which are also associated with other NTS challenges such as environmental degradation, irregular migration, and human trafficking.

Recent regional initiatives reflect a growing recognition of these challenges, with the ASEAN Leaders Declaration on Strengthening Regional Biosafety and Biosecurity, adopted in October 2024, standing out as a key milestone. It calls for sustained investment in human resources through training, education, and certification, reflecting a shared commitment among ASEAN Member States to strengthen regional preparedness. It also calls for the establishment of the ASEAN Biosafety and Biosecurity Network to enhance knowledge sharing, coordination, and cooperation among Member States, partners, and relevant stakeholders.

The discussion also acknowledged persistent constraints. The decline of the global order and reductions in international aid and technical assistance have placed additional strain on national capacities. Notably, developing economies in the region face challenges in resource mobilisation and responding effectively to emerging threats. This underscores the importance of strengthening both regional and global cooperation mechanisms to address gaps in governance and capacity.

In response, panellists proposed several actionable measures. These include expanding regional networks and partnership mechanisms to facilitate information sharing and joint responses; leveraging ASEAN's convening power to establish systems for monitoring transboundary disease transmission; and enhancing transparency in biological research to reduce security risks. The development of common biosafety standards and codes of conduct was also identified as a priority, alongside efforts to reinforce existing international frameworks.

Conclusion

The conference concluded with a dialogue on the future of NTS and the Consortium. Ideas ranged from increasing visibility through platforms such as the *NTS Perspectives* podcasts and the NTS-Asia website, to working groups revolving around salient topics such as AI, digitalisation, and everyday security; multilateralism and regional institutions; health and ageing; disinformation and misinformation; and policy and practice.

Since its inception in 2007, the NTS-Asia Consortium has evolved into a network of think tanks and research organisations dedicated to advancing rigorous and policy-relevant research on NTS challenges. The Consortium remains committed to providing a platform for sustained dialogue on critical NTS issues such as climate and ecological risks, health security, food, energy and water security, human security, and WPS in Asia and beyond.

We extend our deepest appreciation to the members of the NTS-Asia Consortium and to participants, including policymakers, preeminent academics, and scholars, whose dedicated efforts continue to advance the field of NTS studies.

Programme

Day 1 – 7 April 2026	
08:30 – 09:00	Registration
09:00 – 09:05	<p><u>Welcome Remarks</u></p> <p>Professor Mely Caballero-Anthony <i>Professor of International Relations Associate Dean (International Engagement) Head of Centre for Non-Traditional Security Studies S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies Nanyang Technological University, Singapore</i></p>
09:05 – 09:10	Video Presentation: The NTS-Asia Consortium: Key Milestones
09:10 – 09:15	<p><u>Opening Remarks</u></p> <p>Ambassador Ong Keng Yong <i>Executive Deputy Chairman S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies Nanyang Technological University, Singapore</i></p>
09:15 – 09:40	<p><u>Keynote Speaker</u></p> <p>Professor Barry Buzan <i>Emeritus Professor The London School of Economics and Political Science, United Kingdom (UK) Visiting Ngee Ann Kongsi Professor of International Relations S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies Nanyang Technological University, Singapore</i></p>
09:40 – 11:15	<p><u>Panel 1</u> Global Governance and Non-Traditional Security</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The state of global governance and its impact on non-traditional security (NTS) • Role of regional actors and middle powers <p><u>Speakers</u></p> <p>Professor Shin-wha Lee</p>

	<p><i>Professor, Department of Political Science and International Relations)</i> <i>Director, Institute for Interdisciplinary Unification Studies</i> <i>Korea University</i> <i>South Korea</i></p> <p>Major General (Retd) ANM Muniruzzaman <i>President</i> <i>Bangladesh Institute of Peace and Security Studies</i> <i>Bangladesh</i></p> <p>Dr Yanitha Meena <i>Analyst</i> <i>Institute of Strategic & International Studies Malaysia</i> <i>Malaysia</i></p> <p>Professor Jyoti Pathania <i>Professor & Founding Editor oijpcr.org</i> <i>O.P. Jindal Global University</i> <i>India</i></p> <p><u>Moderator</u></p> <p>Professor Mely Caballero-Anthony <i>Professor of International Relations</i> <i>Associate Dean (International Engagement)</i> <i>Head of Centre for Non-Traditional Security Studies</i> <i>S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies</i> <i>Nanyang Technological University, Singapore</i></p> <p>Q&A</p>
<p>11:15 – 11:30</p>	<p>Group Photo and Coffee Break</p>
<p>11:30 – 13:00</p>	<p><u>Panel 2</u> Energy Transition and Critical Minerals</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Just and inclusive energy transition • Geopolitics and critical minerals • Water diplomacy amidst resource competition <p><u>Speakers</u></p> <p>Dr Noel Morada <i>Visiting Research Professor</i> <i>The Nelson Mandela Centre, Faculty of Political Science</i> <i>Chulalongkorn University</i> <i>Thailand</i></p>

	<p>Professor Daojiong Zha <i>Professor</i> <i>School of International Studies, Institute of South-South Cooperation and Development, Peking University</i> <i>China</i></p> <p>Dr Lina Alexandra <i>Head, Department of International Relations</i> <i>Centre for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS)</i> <i>Indonesia</i></p> <p>Dr Mirza Sadaqat Huda <i>Senior Research Fellow (Climate and Sustainability)</i> <i>ODI Global</i> <i>Singapore</i></p> <p><u>Moderator</u></p> <p>Professor Shin-wha Lee <i>Professor, Department of Political Science and International Relations)</i> <i>Director, Institute for Interdisciplinary Unification Studies</i> <i>Korea University</i> <i>South Korea</i></p> <p>Q&A</p>
13:00 – 14:00	Lunch
14:00 – 15:30	<p><u>Panel 3</u> Navigating Trade Disruptions: Food Security Resilience</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evolving landscape for global food supply chains amidst trade disruptions • National and regional approaches to resilience in food security, domestic food production and self-sufficiency <p><u>Speakers</u></p> <p>Mr Him Rotha <i>Deputy Director</i> <i>Cambodian Center for Regional Studies</i> <i>Cambodia</i></p> <p>Dr Arisman <i>Executive Director</i></p>

	<p><i>Center for Southeast Asian Studies (CSEAS) Indonesia</i></p> <p>Ms Bernice De Torres <i>Program Coordinator Research and Thought Leadership Department (RTL D) Southeast Asian Regional Center for Graduate Study and Research in Agriculture (SEARCA) The Philippines</i></p> <p>Dr Anoulak Kittikhoun <i>Advisor to Minister Ministry of Agriculture and Environment Lao PDR</i></p> <p><u>Moderator</u></p> <p>Dr Lina Alexandra <i>Head, Department of International Relations Centre for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) Indonesia</i></p> <p>Q&A</p>
<p>15:30 – 15:45</p>	<p>Coffee Break</p>
<p>15:45 – 17:15</p>	<p><u>Panel 4</u> Planetary Health: Governing Ecological Security</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governing the Commons: How Asia-Pacific actors can protect the biosphere as global consensus fractures. • Ecological Justice: Addressing the inequity between security burdens of environmental degradation and resource extraction • Planetary Health as Framework: Using the PH concept translated into policy, to bridge the gap between health security and environmental policy in the region <p><u>Speakers</u></p> <p>Professor Tan Sri Dr Jemilah Mahmood <i>Executive Director, Planetary Health Sunway University Malaysia</i></p>

	<p>Professor Chiho Watanabe <i>Professor</i> <i>School of Tropical Medicine and Global Health, Nagasaki University</i> <i>Japan</i></p> <p>Professor Md Saidul Islam <i>Associate Professor</i> <i>School of Social Sciences, Nanyang Technological University</i> <i>Singapore</i></p> <p>Dr Naoyuki Okano (Video Recording) <i>Programme Officer, Governance for Climate Change and Sustainable Development (GCSD) programme, United Nations University Institute for the Advanced Study of Sustainability (UNU-IAS)</i> <i>Japan</i></p> <p><u>Moderator</u></p> <p>Professor Daojiong Zha <i>Professor</i> <i>School of International Studies, Institute of South-South Cooperation and Development, Peking University</i> <i>China</i></p> <p>Q&A</p>
17:45 – 20:30	Transfer to Dinner Venue & Dinner

Day 2 – 8 April 2026	
08:30 – 09:00	Registration
09:00 – 10:30	<p><u>Panel 5</u> WPS, Human Security and Peacebuilding in the Indo-pacific</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Progress of Asia-Pacific states in advancing WPS • Global south perspectives on WPS and peacebuilding • Human security and peacebuilding security <p><u>Speakers</u></p> <p>Professor Siti Mazidah Mohamad</p>

	<p><i>Assistant Professor/Director Universiti Brunei Darussalam Brunei Darussalam</i></p> <p>Dr Meenakshi Gopinath <i>Director Women in Security, Conflict Management & Peace (WISCOMP) India</i></p> <p>Dr Ako Muto <i>Specially Appointed Research Fellow, JICA Ogata Sadako Research Institute for Peace and Development Specially Appointed Professor, Rikkyo University Japan</i></p> <p><u>Moderator</u></p> <p>Dr Tamara Nair <i>Senior Associate Fellow S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Nanyang Technological University Singapore</i></p> <p>Q&A</p>
10:30 – 10:45	Coffee Break
10:45 – 12:15	<p><u>Panel 6</u> Emerging Health and Biological Security Risks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AlxBio: Opportunities to strengthen health and biosecurity in Asia • Global health security architecture • Biosecurity governance in the Asia-Pacific <p><u>Speakers</u></p> <p>Dr Li Fujian <i>Deputy Director Center for Global Biosecurity Governance, China Foreign Affairs University China</i></p> <p>Dr Tessy Joseph <i>Senior Assistant Director Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine Singapore</i></p>

	<p>Mr Julius Cesar Trajano <i>Research Fellow</i> <i>S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies,</i> <i>Nanyang Technological University</i> <i>Singapore</i></p> <p>Dr Chu Minh Thao <i>Senior Research Fellow</i> <i>Diplomatic Academy of Viet Nam</i> <i>Viet Nam</i></p> <p><u>Moderator</u></p> <p>Major General (Retd) ANM Muniruzzaman <i>President</i> <i>Bangladesh Institute of Peace and Security Studies</i> <i>Bangladesh</i></p> <p>Q&A</p>
12:15 – 12:55	<p><u>NTS-Asia Consortium</u></p> <p>Future Agenda</p>
12:55 – 13:00	<p><u>Concluding Remarks</u></p> <p>Professor Mely Caballero-Anthony <i>Professor of International Relations</i> <i>Associate Dean (International Engagement)</i> <i>Head of Centre for Non-Traditional Security Studies</i> <i>S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies</i> <i>Nanyang Technological University, Singapore</i></p>
13:00	Closing Lunch

About the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies

The S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS) is a global graduate school and think tank focusing on strategic studies and security affairs. Its five Research Centres and three Research Programmes, led by the Office of the Executive Deputy Chairman, and assisted by the Dean on the academic side, drive the School's research, education and networking activities.

The graduate school offers Master of Science Programmes in Strategic Studies, International Relations, International Political Economy and Asian Studies. As a school, RSIS fosters a nurturing environment to develop students into first-class scholars and practitioners.

As a think tank, RSIS conducts policy-relevant and forward-looking research in both national and international security, science and technology, society and economic and environmental sustainability. RSIS also produces academic research on security and international affairs. It publishes scholarly research in top-tier academic journals and leading university presses, and distributes policy research in a timely manner to a wide range of readers.

About the Centre for Non-Traditional Security Studies (NTS Centre)

The NTS Centre conducts research and produces policy-relevant analyses aimed at furthering awareness and building the capacity to address non-traditional security (NTS) issues and challenges in the Asia Pacific region and beyond. The Centre addresses knowledge gaps, facilitates discussions and analyses, engages policymakers, and contributes to building institutional capacity in areas which include Climate, Peace and Security (CPS), Women, Peace and Security (WPS), Biosecurity, Food Security, Low-Carbon Energy Transition, Nuclear Safety and Security, and Planetary Health. The NTS Centre brings together myriad NTS stakeholders in regular workshops and roundtable discussions, as well as provides a networking platform for NTS research institutions in the Asia Pacific through the NTS-Asia Consortium.