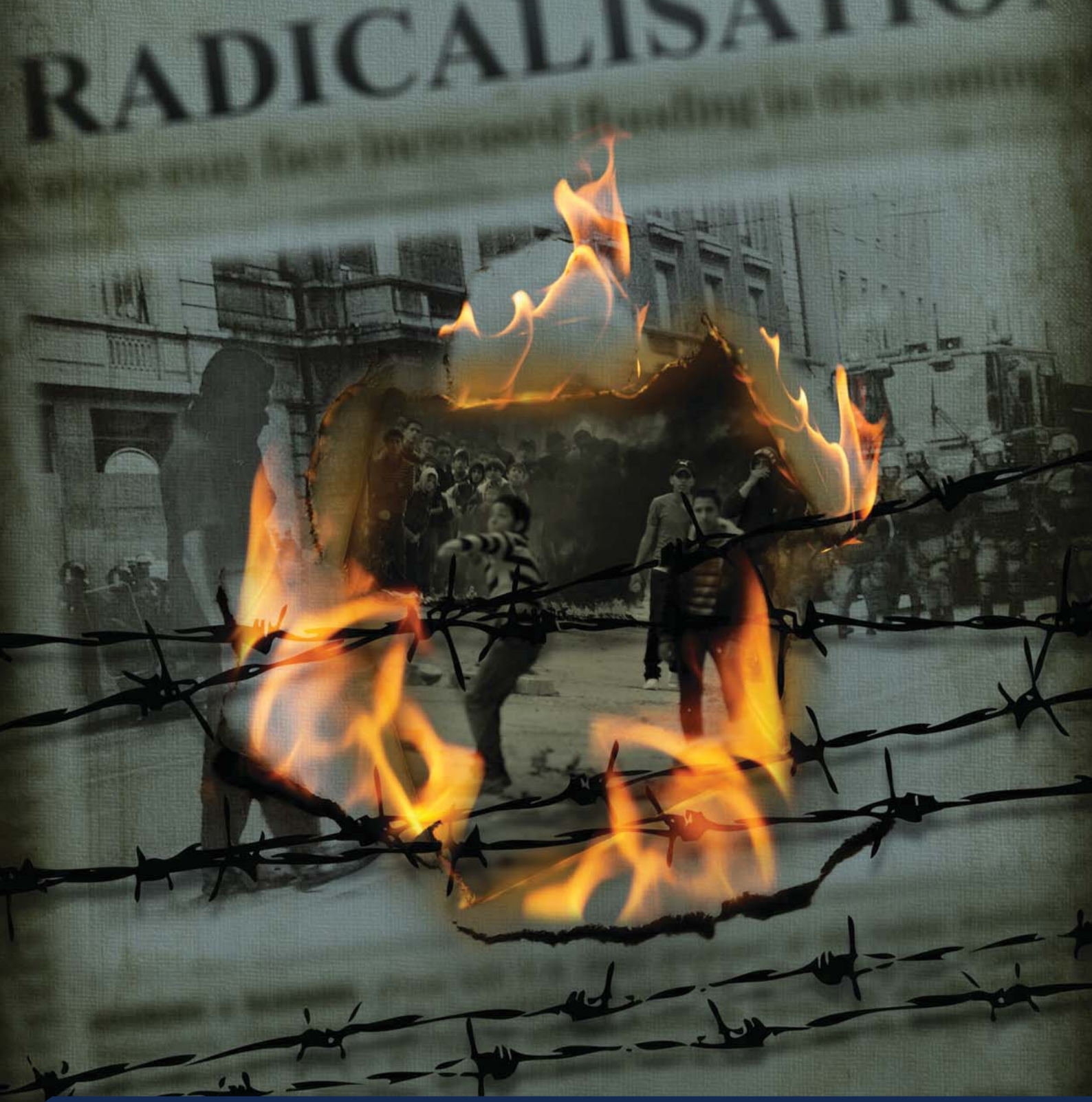

COUNTERING VIOLENT EXTREMISM AND RADICALISATION

22 OCTOBER 2012, SINGAPORE

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

NATIONAL SECURITY
COORDINATION SECRETARIAT

COUNTERING VIOLENT EXTREMISM AND RADICALISATION

REPORT ON THE WORKSHOP ORGANISED BY
THE CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE FOR NATIONAL SECURITY (SINGAPORE)

WITH THE SUPPORT OF
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This report summarises 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 points expressed in the prepared papers, no attributions have been included in this conference report.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Workshop on Countering Violent Extremism and Radicalisation (CVE-Rad), organised by the Centre of Excellence for National Security (CENS) at the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS), with the support of the National Security Coordination Secretariat (NSCS), was held on 22 October 2012 at the Marina Mandarin in Singapore. The workshop, which formed part of a standing bilateral engagement between Singapore and the United States, featured speakers who worked on CVE-Rad topics from various research institutions from both countries. The analytical communities from the two sides addressed extant concerns surrounding, among other things, research methodology, the radicalisation and de-radicalisation processes, the nexus between cognitive and behavioural violent extremism, as well as possible new areas of research.

The panel from CENS explored fresh approaches to understanding and countering violent radicalisation, the issue of prisoner radicalisation based on ethnographic research, and ways of comprehensively countering radicalisation, all largely drawn from research the respective panellists carried out in the Indonesian context. The panel from the International Centre for Political Violence and Terrorism Research (ICPVTR) showcased the Centre's approach to countering violent extremism and radicalisation in Singapore and the work done by the Religious Rehabilitation Group (RRG) to rehabilitate detained *Jemaah Islamiyah* (JI) members; it also discussed battling extremism through moderation, and the present effort to counter radicalisation in Pakistan.

The speakers from the US presented on current work conducted by the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START) at the University of Maryland on the Global Terrorism Database (GTD), the Irregular Warfare Support Program at the Combating Terrorism Technical Support Office (CTTSO) on improving academic rigour of CVE-Rad studies, and a Minerva Research Initiative on the study of different kinds of Salafism in Indonesia.

In bringing together an array of stakeholders in security – practitioners, policymakers and researchers – to discuss state of the art approaches in CVE-Rad, the workshop aimed to narrow the theory and practice gap in order to advance the CVE-Rad research agenda as well as to arrive at pragmatic and responsive strategies. Recognising that CVE-Rad approaches were often highly context-dependent, it determined that the sustained sharing of best practices and breakthroughs across countries would be crucial to developing broad consensus regarding how best to develop effective strategies that can appropriately meet contemporary global CVE-Rad challenges.

WELCOME, OVERVIEW AND INTRODUCTIONS

In his welcome remarks, **Kumar Ramakrishna** noted that both Singapore and the US shared common concerns over issues of home-grown terrorism and self-radicalisation. A number of Singaporeans had, in fact, been influenced by Anwar al-Awlaki, the radical American-Yemeni cleric and so-called Osama bin Laden of the Internet, underscoring the connectedness of the problem.

Ramakrishna went on to highlight three main issues to address when examining the threat stemming from home-grown violent extremism. First, he noted the limitations of hard, coercive or kinetic measures because the excessive use of force could inadvertently lead to terrorist cells becoming more resilient and committed to their goals, as currently evident in Indonesia.

Secondly, various non-kinetic or 'softer' counterterrorism measures were needed to diminish the underlying conditions that could give rise to violent extremism such as socio-economic deficits and weak governance. Additionally, to combat the extremist ideology it was necessary to incorporate elements of counter-ideology in the rehabilitation programmes of terrorist detainees as well as in strategic communication campaigns for the wider community in order to inoculate them against the virus of violent extremist ideologies. The issues central to such endeavours included the soundness of the process of assessment and the metrics of success.

Finally, further attention was warranted to the nexus between non-violent and violent extremism. Ramakrishna said it was crucial to work on policy responses to hate speech as well as to groups known to be conveyor belts of violence. Further research on early warning behavioural indicators of incremental radicalisation was also required although they must be bound by the limits of both law and common sense.

In his introductory remarks, **Guermantes Lailari** noted the importance of fostering social resilience as a way of countering violent extremism. Research on strengthening social resilience was thus one of the key areas of interest to the Irregular Warfare Support Program at the Combating Terrorism Technical Support Office (CTTSO). Current research on social resilience needed to focus not only on the causes of radicalisation but the factors that contribute to non-radicalisation as well, as people who do not become radicalised usually form the majority of the community. Another important area of research Lailari highlighted was strategic communications. Much value could be derived from being able to assess the effects of strategic communications; studying how governments measured the effectiveness of their strategies as well as that of the adversaries' was a couple of examples of suggested research.

ACADEMIC CVE BRIEF:

NATIONAL CONSORTIUM FOR THE STUDY OF TERRORISM AND RESPONSES TO TERRORISM (START)

START: An Introduction to START Data, Methodologies and Findings

William Braniff began his presentation over Skype with an overview of the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START), a research outfit funded by the Department of Homeland Security, and based at the University of Maryland. Beyond the University, START had an extensive research consortium made up of full-time professors from other national and international universities, thereby giving it access to a very broad pool of intellectual partners and experts of different backgrounds. START also represented a synergic consortium that had research, education, training and advising components. The research division examined topics such as terrorist group formation and recruitment, the radicalisation process, group persistence and dynamics, group disintegration and the societal impact of terrorism; the educational division featured programmes such as a Minor in Terrorism Studies at the University of Maryland, online graduate certificates, study-abroad trips and internships; the training and advising division had held close to 200 training events with around 5,800 personnel.

Braniff then introduced the Global Terrorism Database (GTD), an open-source database that had information on terrorist incidents in both domestic and international settings from 1970 through 2010, set up to address the lack of collective data on terrorism. Among other things, the database, which was used by governments, educational institutions and the news media, indicated terrorist hot spots, the persistence of such hot spots as well as the changes that occurred in the area over time. The database also reflected significant variations in ideological motivations for terrorist activities across the decades, and Braniff noted that the shifts tended to be durable and lasting.

As an inter-disciplinary research centre, START approached studying terrorism with concepts borrowed from other mature fields like criminology to inform its research. Braniff pointed out that cases of terrorism and crime often occurred in the same US counties, reflecting the social disorganisation theory that the likelihood of terrorism, like ordinary crime, was higher in areas characterised by residential instability. However, contrary to the theory, Braniff said the likelihood of terrorism was lower in areas characterised by concentrated economic disadvantage, demonstrating that economic factors had no positive correlation to terrorism incidents. Nevertheless, a high degree of population heterogeneity relating to percentage of foreign-born individuals and language diversity was positively associated with terrorism and ordinary crime.

Discussion

Asked about the relationship between extremist ideologies and terrorist activities and under which ideological category the 9/11 terrorist attacks were placed, the speaker said the 9/11 attacks were categorised as a religiously inspired terrorism event. He elucidated that religiously inspired incidents actually made up the smallest percentage of total terrorist attacks in the US, in comparison to, for instance, ethnic-based ones.

Another participant wondered how research organisations found ways to maintain the quality of their work in light of decreasing budgets and the impact of that on academic resilience; the participant also asked whether START accordingly worked with private corporations to help them assess possible threats. The speaker said that while he had been involved in consultations with private companies, he mainly worked with the government. He explained that the advantage of working with government sponsorship was that the completed research could later be published for the wider audience because the study had been financed with taxpayers' money. In contrast, when working for private companies, the research could not be made publicly available.

ACADEMIC CVE BRIEF:

CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE FOR NATIONAL SECURITY (CENS), RSIS

Fresh Approaches to Understanding and Countering Violent Radicalisation

On the issue of countering violent radicalisation, **Kumar Ramakrishna** proposed that attention be given to the concept of cognitive or mental de-radicalisation as part of wider efforts to diminish the underlying conditions that could give rise to groups such as *Jemaah Islamiyah* (JI) and its associated networks. Cognitive radicalisation would occur well before violent radicalisation, and according to Lorenzo Vidino, it involved an individual adopting ideas that were severely at odds with the mainstream and wanting to change society based on a completely new belief system. Two key features of cognitive radicalisation were strong us-versus-them sentiments and paranoia.

Ramakrishna went on to explain that when there was a process of drastic abnormal identity simplification, a community would regress from a broad range of identities to a narrower frame of reference and multi-layered identities often became reduced to a single overarching in-group. As a result, a common identity that an individual could have previously shared with someone from another community would disappear; this drastic intra- and inter-identity simplification process represented cognitive radicalisation. The mindset of such a cognitively radicalised individual included a belief in a sacred cause and that his community was victimised by another. While violence was not an inevitable outcome of the process, it remained a distinct possibility if there were other additional supporting factors present.

In collectivist societies, for instance, where there were tendencies for people to follow group behaviour and revere charismatic leaders, aversion to ambiguity and intolerance for uncertainty were such supporting factors. Ideology was another supporting factor; an ideology would allow individuals to draw upon certain themes of historical injustices and weave them into narratives to justify actions against an out-group. Another element was small group dynamics involving charismatic leaders 'hot-housing' the ideology, an experience not unlike that of a cult's. Should all the factors intersect for an individual, there was a possibility for a trajectory that could lead to violent extremism.

Noting the mixed success the Indonesian police had thus far with their de-radicalisation programme, Ramakrishna argued that an approach to cognitively de-radicalise extremists was needed to deal with cognitive radicalisation. A way to do this was to prevent identity differentiation, and this would entail taking deliberate actions to ensure that individuals did not perceive the world in terms of us-versus-them. The promotion of critical thinking was thus crucial, as was the encouragement of face-to-face interfaith interactions.

Ramakrishna concluded by reiterating that the ultimate objective in countering violent radicalisation was ideological de-radicalisation which meant disengagement from violence, genuine rejection of an ideology of violence and the embrace of pluralism. These elements must, however, be customised to local and cultural values for them to be effective.

Radicalisation in Indonesian Prisons

Sulastri Osman presented on the issue of radicalisation in Indonesian prisons, highlighting how recent cases of recidivism among released terrorist inmates had raised questions regarding the effectiveness of the country's prisons in deterring some from returning to terrorist violence. Having conducted fieldwork largely carried out using an ethnographic approach, Osman argued that there were indeed numerous non-prison-related factors that accounted for why recidivism cases occurred. It nevertheless remained necessary to get a comprehensive understanding of the inmates' prison experience, and such a study needed to acknowledge the greatly dynamic interface between the inmates and their prison environment, ever mindful that each had a two-way impact on the other.

Focusing her presentation on Jakarta's Cipinang Prison, the facility with largest concentration of terrorist inmates in the country, Osman examined the daily lives and activities of the inmates. She noted that many regarded their time in prison as an inevitable part of their *jihad* experience for being morally righteous in opposing an un-Islamic political system. Prison time was, in fact, also something they could be proud of as it demonstrated their high dedication to the cause. Further, there were ample networking opportunities behind bars as the inmates were able to congregate among themselves and move about largely unencumbered. The inmates were also allowed not just family members as visitors, but supporters, followers and even fellow militants too, revealing how being behind bars had done little to restrict their reach. Osman argued that the inmates had considerable freedom partly because many among the prison staff were simply too intimidated by them and their fearsome reputation of being "terrorists", so it was at times easier for the staff to leave them to themselves.

Nevertheless, wider dynamics at play, including everyday corruption, also contributed to the apparent hardening of the inmates. The terrorist inmates, for example, had collectively refused to pay "fees" for receiving visitors at the visitors' hall, leveraging on their reputations as both violent and pious men. Accordingly, compared to other inmates, they moved around freer. Further, as money remained a source of power and influence in prison, the more popular extremist figures who would usually have constant access to money from their steady stream of visitors, would attract an in-prison following. Practically, ganging up was as much for access to better services and to greatly limited resources in a harsh overcrowded prison environment.

Osman concluded by noting that the issues surrounding recidivism were multifaceted, and the Indonesian case showed that as much as individuals had an impact on the prison system, the system also had an impact on them. Broader prison reform was therefore necessary to curb prisoner radicalisation. As a way forward, Osman emphasised that the majority of terrorist inmates had not re-engaged in violent activities post-detention, and accordingly, it was just as important to understand the factors that discouraged former inmates from returning to violence as it was to understand why some were driven to take to arms again.

Countering Radicalisation in Indonesia

Bilveer Singh examined the progress made in countering and combating terrorist extremism in Indonesia. The number of attacks had increased in the past year, raising questions regarding the effectiveness of the country's counter-radicalisation programmes. The case of Abdullah Sunata, for instance, demonstrated a failed de-radicalisation endeavour; initially touted as a success case in de-radicalisation and rehabilitation after his release from prison, Sunata returned to his violent roots a few months later.

Singh said that not enough attention was paid to issues surrounding what would push a cognitive radical towards adopting violent tactics, and why. More effort should be made to study the phenomenon. He also argued that more should be done to study methods in delegitimising the process of violent radicalisation as well as the acts of violence themselves. Particular strategies were needed to systematically delegitimise the leaders of violent extremist groups too, along with their messages and/or narratives. Counter-narrative efforts required strong political will, early and active intervention, and a whole-of-government and a whole-of-society approach to stem the spread of extremism.

Singh argued that most of the effort expended to counter violent extremism in Indonesia had been too focused on hard measures such as preventive laws and actions undertaken by security agencies like Detachment 88. Hard measures might be needed to deter and kill terrorists, but at the same time there still existed weaknesses in inter-agency cooperation within the government, in disbursing resources towards education, and in reforming the prisons. Singh posited that only a small percentage of current efforts were channelled into soft measures that dealt with the causes of violent extremism. Soft measures such as engaging former terrorists, public campaigns and inter-agency cooperation in identifying and neutralising radical movements through persuasion should be maintained alongside the hard measures. He believed that much more could be achieved should the country's numerous mass Islamic organisations be included as stakeholders in the de-radicalisation process.

Singh concluded that more needed to be done to tackle what was in effect a multi-dimensional and complex problem. It was necessary to: (a) form a nuanced understanding of the internal and external environments that could give rise to violent extremism; (b) analyse the grievances and dissatisfaction that could predispose an individual towards violence; and (c) examine the underlying motivations that could facilitate susceptibility towards radical ideologies and the joining of radical organisations as well as the dynamics that would push such organisations towards becoming violence-oriented. It was only through a holistic understanding of the dynamics on the ground that effective action could then be shaped to counter violent extremism.

Discussion

As to how to recognise the tipping points that could cause a cognitive radical to behave in a violent manner, a speaker replied that identifying tipping points continued to be an enduring challenge. Nevertheless, there were indicators in manifest behaviours that would assist in identifying those tipping points. In this regard, the recognition of those behaviours required the involvement of the rest of society. Another speaker added that from studies done to address the issue, among the early warning indicators was the presence of a clear sense of us-versus-them thinking combined with the belief that violence was a legitimate means to an end.

To a question whether there could be potential problems for research when ideology, belief and behaviour were mixed, a speaker commented that while every violent extremist was radicalised, not every radicalised individual would commit violence. In this regard, the nexus between belief and ideology existed along the same spectrum, but their link to the realm of action remained separate. One could make that leap from belief to action, particularly if the individual had been greatly radicalised, but a catalyst was still needed. Another speaker added that it was useful to make the distinction between cognitive and behavioural radicalism while recognising that there were also varying degrees of cognitive radicalisation where other factors such as possessing a personality that was susceptible to manipulation might be an added vulnerability unique to the person in question.

ACADEMIC CVE BRIEF:

IRREGULAR WARFARE SUPPORT PROGRAM (IWSP) AND THE MINERVA RESEARCH INITIATIVE

Irregular Warfare Support Program: CVE-Rad Research and Results

Michael Hopmeier gave a presentation on the Irregular Warfare Support Program (IWSP) which operated under the Combating Terrorism Technical Support Office (CTTSO) of the US Department of Defense. Among their work, the IWSP had developed a guidebook aimed to enhance academic rigour in CVE-Rad studies in order to provide scientific grounding for the research done on violent extremism. The initiative began with a study undertaken by a group of Australian researchers who reviewed approximately 500 articles on violent extremism and concluded that only about 5 percent of the articles were based on empirical data and real hypotheses – the preconditions of academic rigour. It was important to note that the objective behind reviewing those articles was not about assessing the results, but rather ascertaining whether a scientific approach was used.

As a result of the review, the IWSP developed a study with researchers from the King's College's International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation (ICSR) that analysed a cross-section of the CVE-Rad literature in the past five years to determine how academically rigorous and effective the science was. The sample included 260 scholarly articles from 675 publications. The outcome or validity of the research was considered irrelevant; the reviewers instead only focused on whether a clearly defined question was asked, whether a well-defined process was used, and whether the authors of the articles followed a valid scientific process and methodology. The reviewers came to the conclusion that the vast majority in the sample could not be considered scholarly research. As far as methodological rigour was concerned, 33 percent were considered highly rigorous, 51 percent considered to be in the medium range and 16 percent in the low range. In terms of empirical rigour, 46 percent scored high, 25 percent medium and 29 percent low. Regarding impact, 21 percent scored high, 21 percent medium and 57 percent low. These scores were considered low in comparison to other academic fields such as sociology or anthropology.

The guidebook was written with three objectives in mind. First, it intended to make project managers – i.e. individuals who would make funding decisions – "smart buyers" of research proposals. Secondly, it intended to provide researchers and investigators a sense of what the important issues were and what was to be expected from a proposal. In this regard, the intention of such a guidebook was not to increase regulation, but to provide a supporting document of best practices for researchers to ask the right questions and use valid methodologies. Finally, the guidebook was meant to help the end-users, namely the investigators in the field, military personnel and intelligence personnel, ask the right questions about research outcomes.

Hopmeier also outlined a study of the CVE-Rad initiatives and strategies of four European countries: the UK, the Netherlands, Norway and Denmark. He concluded that none of the European countries used empirical data to assess the effectiveness of their counter-radicalisation programmes.

In conclusion, Hopmeier said that research on countering violent extremism was based on a number of mature research fields, but as a unique research area itself, it was still in the nascent stage; accordingly, the aim of the IWSP was to accelerate the maturation process.

Minerva Research Initiative: Finding Allies for the War of Words – Salafism as Radicalism and Counter-Radicalism

Mark Woodward spoke about Indonesia's counter-radicalisation measures. He explained that while *Jemaah Islamiyah* (JI) was not as potent as it used to be since its operational capabilities had been severely affected by heavy crackdowns by the authorities, cognitive radicalisation remained a serious issue. Reduced numbers of attacks because of a weak JI did not mean that there were less radicalised people today than before.

Subsequently, Woodward talked about his current CVE-Rad research project. Having concurred that terminologies used in terrorism studies were imprecise, he and his colleagues embarked on a research with a two-fold objective: firstly, they wanted to use analytical language that could be transferred across cases whether from Germany, Indonesia or Niger. Radicalism, for example, was defined based on social science criteria, not in terms of an ideological one. Accordingly, radicalism was understood as political praxis and ideologies that were intended to cause profound changes in culture, religion, politics and society. Using this definition, Woodward opined that even George Washington could be considered a violent radical.

Woodward further explained that social movement theory was difficult to translate across contexts as it was designed in light of the circumstance of industrialised Western countries. However, in coming up with five continuous variables, social movements – understood as political pressure groups that operated outside the established political order – in different cultures and countries could be adequately comparable. The first variable, epistemology, referred to strategies people would use to interpret foundational texts, whether it was the Quran or the US Constitution, in a very fundamentalist way. The second variable was the way and extent to which adherents of groups tolerated diversity. The third was change orientation, the degree to which an individual or group sought change. The fourth was the degree to which groups would reject or support violence. The last variable was the engagement in violent acts. These variables helped in generating orthogonal models that could display the diversity of different groups that shared the same convictions.

The focus of the research was on how groups that shared basic assumptions – in this case, powerful religious convictions – would yet behave differently in terms of their political actions. How their behaviour changed over time was also a point of study. The Anabaptist group from the reformation period in Europe, for instance, served as a good illustration. The only surviving successors of the Anabaptists were the Amish in the US who rejected technology and were absolute pacifists. On the other hand, the Anabaptists in Europe were violent and saw it their religious duty to kill all Christians who were not Anabaptists themselves. Reflecting back on Indonesia, Woodward said many groups claimed to be Salafists, and while some were violent, some others like the *Muhammadiyah* were not. The five-variable model was able to reflect how groups that shared the same religious assumptions could be very different in terms of their actions. In addition, it was also able to measure their distance from one another and facilitate changes in behaviour over time.

Discussion

A participant who was very cautious with the approach, remarked that there were problems in developing metrics for the field of research discussed, particularly since ideologies did not lend themselves very easily to quantification and it was difficult to identify a dependent variable. A speaker agreed with the points raised, but explained that while quantification was not necessary throughout the entire research process, the end results should be quantified. Another aim of the initiative was to make researchers think about how to quantify their research in order to move this field of research from qualitative art to quantitative science.

Another participant, querying about the *Laskar Jihad* group, said that while it was known that some members had given up arms, they might revert to violence again should circumstances change. In response, a speaker said that there was no way to accurately predict the future trajectories that a group, or individuals within the group, would take; at present, there was no absolute measure to assess if individuals who had disengaged from violence might turn to violence again.

ACADEMIC CVE BRIEF:

INTERNATIONAL CENTRE FOR POLITICAL VIOLENCE AND TERRORISM RESEARCH (ICPVTR), RSIS

ICPVTR's Approach to CVE Research

Muhammad Haniff bin Hassan provided a backgrounder to the International Centre for Political Violence and Terrorism Research (ICPVTR). With its roots in the Ideological Response Unit in 2003, ICPVTR was envisioned as a centre that conducted research on religious extremism through a counterterrorism paradigm. Today, the Centre's research was premised on identifying, exposing and countering violent ideologies – an intellectual "counterweight" – poised against the purportedly juristic foundations of the terrorist discourse.

This short introduction then segued into a discussion of ICPVTR's counter-ideology framework. Hassan first stressed the importance of having correct and clear objectives. For the Centre, its counter-ideology framework was premised on immunising and persuading moderate Muslims, fostering doubt amongst extremists, rehabilitating terrorist detainees, and assuaging the anxiety of non-Muslims.

Next, Hassan highlighted the need to identify the correct target groups to engage and their corresponding ideological base. With the subjects of counter-ideology initiatives identified, the appropriate stakeholders could then be engaged. The Centre's key partners in this regard were the *ulamas* and the moderates. The social standing of the *ulamas*, as legitimate interpreters of Islam, was indispensible to counter-ideology initiatives and the support of moderate Muslims meant the appeal of extremist ideologies could be diminished. Hassan remarked that the Centre's counter-ideology approach involved the close reading of classical Islamic texts including the *hadith* as theological discussions were central to the framework.

According to Hassan, the Centre's approach to counter-ideology had led to the successful mobilisation of moderates against the extremist elements. Contributing to the success was the existence of an environment of trust between state actors and the population. This positive milieu was in turn fostered by a sincere effort by the counter-extremist ideologues to address the grievances used by extremists to gain support.

In conclusion, Hassan suggested two main policy recommendations for effective counter-ideology work. First, there must be a deliberate attempt to close the gap between Muslims and non-Muslims. Grassroots initiatives must be in place to promote understanding and provide space for interactions between and among different communities. Secondly, Hassan recommended more positive partnerships with the media, citing its utility in helping to shape public opinion that was averse to violent extremism.

Countering Violent Extremism: The Experience of the Religious Rehabilitation Group in Singapore

Mohamed bin Ali first discussed the three main components that made up a comprehensive de-radicalisation approach: ideological, behavioural, and organisational. He noted that Singapore was one of the very few countries in the world whose de-radicalisation programme involved all three components, constituting a holistic approach.

According to Ali, the Singapore government had embarked on a deliberate de-radicalisation initiative following the December 2001 arrest of suspected *Jemaah Islamiyah* (JI) militants. The strategic response following the thwarted terrorist plot hinged largely on the Religious Rehabilitation Group (RRG). The RRG was started in April 2003 as a voluntary expert resource panel that comprised Islamic scholars and teachers. Its main thrust was the religious counselling of detained extremists and their families, an endeavour which preceded "after-care" initiatives comprising motivational and financial assistance intended to help former detainees reintegrate into society.

In the course of the RRG's work, the Group learned there were five elements central to the radicalisation process. For one, the nature and the process of radicalisation was highly nuanced and personalised; two, the extremist discourse was dependent on misinterpretations of fundamental Islamic concepts such as *jihad* and *ummah*; three, the extremists tended to focus on latent tensions between Muslims and non-Muslims; four, the pivotal concern was over the overt calling by extremists on their supporters to wage armed *jihad*; and finally, anti-Western sentiments appealed to, and worked in favour of, the extremists.

Religious rehabilitation, specifically counselling, was thus expected to address such issues and be similarly multi-faceted. First, misinterpretations needed to be corrected and negated. Next, extremists needed to be made aware of the wrongfulness of engaging in violence; a change in outlook should also be complemented by an appreciation of the benefits of living in a pluralistic and secular state. Ali pointed out that, in general, extremists shared specific characteristics that made them vulnerable to radicalisation in the first place. Extremists would often have a weak religious background that made them susceptible to radicalising influence. These same vulnerable individuals would also often be driven by an innate desire to improve themselves and would often feel disaffected from the rest of their environment. The Internet often provided the means for such extremists to find radicalising materials by way of books or videos.

Ali then underlined a four-step de-radicalisation process the RRG employed on the JI detainees they counselled. The detainees would first be extricated from the radicalising environment they were in. This would be subsequently followed by the negating of the extremist discourse with the RRG members who would highlight its "dangerous, deviant and distorted" nature. The next two steps would be focused on replacing extremist ideas with mainstream ideologies and empowering detainees to return to society.

To conclude, Ali remarked that public education remained the most potent and effective tool for "preventive de-radicalisation"; rather than fixating on countering existing extremists, stakeholders should also funnel similar levels of resources and support to more proactive means of marginalising extremism.

Utilising Moderation in the Battle against Extremism

Taufiq bin Radja Nurul Bahri opened the discussion by explaining the rationale behind using Moderation Studies against extremism. As an emerging paradigm, Moderation Studies complemented the more assertive counter-ideology thrust of counterterrorism. Moderation Studies had a multidisciplinary approach centred on the idea that moderation was a desirable moral value. According to Radja Nurul Bahri, its intrinsically collaborative nature made it relatively more attractive for collaboration with other sectors and could transcend ideological barriers.

Specific research under the rubric of Moderation Studies that was of interest to countering violent extremism fell under two main threads: similar to studying terrorism, Moderation Studies: (a) examined various moderate groups and social movements; and (b) focused on the discourses of moderation with particular attention to local contexts within which they emerged.

Radja Nurul Bahri provided a snapshot of how moderation had been used in countering violent extremism, noting that moderation as a paradigm could currently be seen at the individual, international and institutional levels. At the individual level, Radja Nurul Bahri highlighted the case of former Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf, who largely through state institutions, pushed for the idea of "enlightened moderation", which was intended to showcase the tolerant and pluralistic aspects of Islam. At the more collective or institutional level, Radja Nurul Bahri described the emergence of the "Global Movement of Moderates" who subscribed to an inclusive view of Islam. Closer to home, he then highlighted the existence of a "Promoting Moderation Unit" in ICPVTR as an illustration of how moderation had gained traction at the institutional level.

The discussion on moderation campaigns was followed by suggestions regarding the development of strategic areas for moderation to become a field of theory and practice. First, Radja Nurul Bahri emphasised the need to promote inter-disciplinary synergies and remarked that the focus on Islamist-inspired extremism should give way to discourses that underscored the recurring themes of peace and tolerance found in all major religions. Second, there should be efforts to build up foundational research in order to arrive at consensual definitions that could be used in Moderation Studies. Sharing of best practices among moderates was the next important step. Finally, there should be greater attempts to widely promote moderate ideas among populations.

An Overview of Counter-Radicalisation Efforts in Pakistan

Abdul Basit initiated the discussion by highlighting the genesis of counter-radicalisation in Pakistan. He said that the counter-radicalisation effort was prompted by Pervez Musharraf's promotion of "enlightened moderation" during an Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) meeting in 2002. At the time, the initiative was critiqued as an attempt at social engineering by the Pakistani state. According to his detractors, Musharraf was guilty of exercising double-standards when he cast extremists as undesirable in keeping with the United States' "War on Terror" discourse; that was in marked contrast to the exalted stature accorded to the anti-Soviet *mujahideen*.

Basit then proceeded to list out the sources of extremism in Pakistan, noting the pervasiveness of anti-Western sentiments. The Taliban-led insurgency had further created a radicalising milieu. Beyond these well-known sources of extremism, Basit highlighted other factors such as sectarian divisions, i.e. Sunni versus Shia, ethnic conflict in Karachi, and nationalist separatism in Balochistan.

In response, the Pakistani government implemented a broad swath of initiatives against radicalisation. Basit highlighted the adoption of a National Counter-Terrorist Authority (NCTA) in 2010 as an overarching initiative. Madrassah reforms were also discussed, with Basit emphasising the imperative to accredit the thousands of religious schools in the country. Related to this initiative was the institution of de-radicalisation camps targeting specific regions such as the Swat Valley (*Sabaoon*), families of militants (*Mashal*), and youth (*Rastoon*).

Basit also shared the progress made by the Pakistani armed forces using kinetic means. He pointed out that the Pakistani Army launched twelve large-scale operations in various terrorist enclaves. Aside from neutralising violent extremists, such military activities constituted a test of the Army's capability and will to sustain a campaign. What was apparent in the aftermath of these campaigns was that the "Clear-Hold-Transfer" operational methodology remained problematic in resolving the ideological and ideational underpinnings of violent extremism.

Complementing this discussion on state initiatives was a discussion on civil society initiatives. Basit stressed that groups who met the most success were those who used "faith-based" networks. The distinctively collective and conservative outlook of Pakistanis, Basit cautioned, rendered liberal approaches ineffective. In short, the best civil society counter-radicalisation thrust was often inseparable from a deep understanding of local contexts.

Challenges to counter-radicalisation remained manifold. Basit reiterated the formidable nature of cultural barriers in negating efforts to arrive at a one-size-fits-all counter-radicalisation policy. He pointed out that even with the existence of the NCTA, a comprehensive national strategy for counter-radicalisation had yet to be crafted. Moreover, there was a lack of coordination between state-led and civil society-led counter-radicalisation efforts. Finally, he underlined the recurring problem of ensuring sustainable programmes.

Basit gave two main recommendations: firstly, Pakistan should push for the creation of a comprehensive model for de-radicalisation and expertise from both the government and civil society spheres must be allowed and encouraged to coalesce. Secondly, Pakistan's counter-radicalisation strategy should focus on bottom-up approaches to further bring in more stakeholders into the picture.

Discussion

Asked to elaborate on the content of ICPVTR's extensive counter-ideology work, one of the speakers cited ICPVTR's effort to counter the writings of Imam Samudra. Samudra, one the key planners of the 2002 Bali bombings, was a prolific extremist ideologue who foisted his own interpretations of Islam. Neutralising Samudra's discourse involved refuting his claims on armed *jihad* and relations between Muslims and non-Muslims. To do so, ICPVTR and its partners relied on religious scholars and practitioners to present juristic counter-arguments based on traditional Islamic texts. Among the venues where such ideological solutions were formulated was a major *ulama* convention held in Singapore after the 9/11 attacks.

The next question raised was on the applicability of the RRG's experience to other countries. Singapore, it was pointed out, was a Muslim minority country with internal dynamics dissimilar to Muslim majority countries, i.e. Saudi and Yemen, who also ran religious rehabilitation initiatives. It would be difficult to comparably measure Singapore's experiences to theirs. The Philippines, another non-Muslim majority country in the region, had taken an interest in Singapore's RRG experience. It was too early to tell whether or not the Singapore's counter-ideology initiative constituted the exception or the norm in countering violent extremism.

DAY SUMMARY

In his summary of the day's event, **Kumar Ramakrishna** highlighted the tendency for terrorism studies to be seen as a dismal science, reiterating the need for research into CVE-Rad to boost its academic and scholarly rigour and become more science-oriented. This was not just for the sake of academic interest, but also because practitioners consumed the work of the academic community to make policy decisions that had real impact on the ground. Bad ideas could ultimately lead to bad policy decisions.

Ramakrishna recapitulated central issues that came up during the workshop. The first set of issues was with regard to research methodology, particularly about finding that right balance between qualitative and quantitative analysis of information and data. The second set of issues pertained to discussions regarding cognitive vis-à-vis behavioural violent radicalism. He said it would be constructive to further think about how such a distinction could be made analytically useful and if the distinction could help frame thinking on policy in a productive manner. Linking this to his earlier point, Ramakrishna wondered whether cognitive radicalism could be measured or quantified and also whether behavioural indicators could be identified for each stage in the process of cognitive radicalisation to violence.

The third issue was whether ideological de-radicalisation could be achieved as well as whether the community could learn to live with cognitive radicals among them so long as the radicals did not translate their ideas into violent actions. The fourth point was regarding prisons and what more could be done to prevent such facilities from becoming another node for radicalisation and violent extremism. It was important to identify what kinds of programmes could be implemented to improve prison management and identifying who could be the appropriate people to involve in de-radicalisation programmes of this type.

The fifth set of issues revolved around the mechanisms of cognitive radicalisation and the institutional nodes that served to make the radicalisation processes of acculturation, indoctrination, education and rites of passage conducive. It was recognised that calls for violence were usually not made official in any curriculum, but rather raised at informal gatherings. Grievances formed the sixth set of issues in light of the fact that calls for violence would not find resonance or become so potent without them. Finally, and accordingly, Ramakrishna said efforts should be directed at identifying and rectifying such grievances. He suggested that there was a need for a systematic state-led as well as bottom-up strategic coordination to meet the challenges of radicalisation and violent extremism.

Guermantes Lailari concurred with the issues Ramakrishna highlighted. Adding to the point regarding the challenge of clearly distinguishing between the cognitive and behavioural dimensions of radicalisation, he said it was greatly possible that an individual who stood at the lower end of the ideologically radical scale could still conduct large-scale violence; on the other hand, an individual who had strong ideological conviction could go on to incite violence, and while not commit violence himself, could get others to do so.

Lailari said conflict resolution was another area that deserved attention, highlighting the kinds of initiatives that were needed in Sri Lanka after the defeat of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), including efforts to reintegrate former militants back into society. In addition to that, Lailari suggested looking into counter-cult movements of the 1970s in the US, specifically in areas involving de-programming, exit, counselling and integration, when looking at counterterrorism programmes.

WORKSHOP AGENDA

Monday, 22 October 2012

0800 – 0820hrs **Registration**

0820 – 0830hrs **RSIS corporate video**

0830 – 0900hrs **Welcome, Overview and Introductions** by ***Kumar Ramakrishna***, *Head, Centre of Excellence for National Security (CENS), RSIS, NTU &* ***Guermantes Lailari***, *Subject Matter Expert, Irregular Warfare Support Program, Combating Terrorism Technical Support Office (US)*

Venue : Vanda Ballroom (Level 5)

Attire : **Smart Casual** (Long-sleeved shirt without tie)

0900 – 1000hrs **Academic CVE Brief: National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START) – via Skype**

Venue : Vanda Ballroom (Level 5)

Chairperson : ***Guermantes Lailari***, *Subject Matter Expert, Irregular Warfare Support Program, Combating Terrorism Technical Support Office (US)*

Speaker : **"Introduction to START Data, Methodologies and Findings"** by ***William (Bill) Braniff,*** *Executive Director, National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START), University of Maryland*

1000 – 1015hrs **Tea Break**

Venue : Vanda Ballroom Foyer (Level 5)

1015 – 1200hrs **Academic CVE Brief: Centre of Excellence for National Security (CENS), RSIS**

Venue : Vanda Ballroom (Level 5)

Chairperson : ***Damien D. Cheong,*** *Research Fellow, Centre of Excellence for National Security (CENS), RSIS, NTU*

Speakers : **"Fresh Approaches to Understanding and Countering Violent Radicalisation"** by ***Kumar Ramakrishna,*** *Head, Centre of Excellence for National Security (CENS), RSIS, NTU*

"Radicalisation in Indonesian Prisons" by ***Sulastri Osman,*** *Associate Research Fellow and Coordinator of the Radicalisation Studies Programme, Centre of Excellence for National Security (CENS), RSIS, NTU*

"Countering Radicalisation in Indonesia" by ***Bilveer Singh***, *Associate Professor, Department of Political Science, National University of Singapore*

1200 – 1300hrs **Lunch**

Venue : Pool Garden (Level 5)

1300 – 1500hrs **Academic CVE Brief: Irregular Warfare Support Program and the Minerva Research Initiative**

Venue : Vanda Ballroom (Level 5)

Chairperson : ***Caitríona H. Heinl*** *Research Fellow, Centre of Excellence for National Security (CENS), RSIS, NTU*

Speaker: **"Irregular Warfare Support Program: CVE-Rad Research and Results"** by ***Michael Hopmeier***, *CEO, Unconventional Concepts Inc.*

"Minerva Research Initiative: Finding Allies for the War of Words – Salafism as Radicalism and Counter-Radicalism" by ***Mark Woodward,*** *Associate Professor of Religious Studies, Arizona State University*

1500 – 1515hrs **Tea Break**

Venue : Vanda Ballroom Foyer (Level 5)

1515 – 1700hrs **Academic CVE Brief: International Centre for Political Violence and Terrorism Research (ICPVTR), RSIS**

Venue: Vanda Ballroom (Level 5)

Chairperson: ***Yolanda Chin***, *Research Fellow and Coordinator of the Social Resilience Programme, Centre of Excellence for National Security (CENS), RSIS, NTU*

Speaker: **"ICPVTR's Approach to CVE Research"** by ***Muhammad Haniff bin Hassan***, *Associate Research Fellow and PhD Candidate at RSIS, International Centre for Political Violence and Terrorism Research (ICPVTR), RSIS, NTU*

"Countering Violent Extremism: The Experience of the Religious Rehabilitation Group in Singapore" by ***Mohamed bin Ali***, *Associate Research Fellow, International Centre for Political Violence and Terrorism Research (ICPVTR), RSIS, NTU*

"Utilising Moderation in the Battle Against Extremism" by ***Taufiq bin Radja Nurul Bahri***, *Research Analyst, International Centre for Political Violence and Terrorism Research (ICPVTR) RSIS, NTU*

"An Overview of Counter-Radicalisation Efforts in Pakistan" by ***Abdul Basit***, *Senior Analyst, International Centre for Political Violence and Terrorism Research (ICPVTR), RSIS, NTU*

1700 – 1730hrs **Day Summary** by ***Kumar Ramakrishna***, *Head, Centre of Excellence for National Security (CENS), RSIS, NTU* & ***Guermantes Lailari***, *Subject Matter Expert, Irregular Warfare Support Program, Combating Terrorism Technical Support Office (US)*

Venue : Vanda Ballroom (Level 5)

1730 – 1830hrs **Adjourn**

1830 – 2030hrs **Dinner (by invitation only)**

ABOUT CENS

WHAT IS CENS?

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, strategising 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 strategising 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 three main domains:

Radicalisation Studies

- The multi-disciplinary study of the indicators and causes of violent radicalisation, the promotion of community immunity to extremist ideas and best practices in individual rehabilitation.

Social Resilience

- The inter-disciplinary study of the various constitutive elements of social resilience such as multiculturalism, citizenship, immigration and class. The core focus of this programme is understanding how globalised, multicultural societies can withstand and overcome security crises such as diseases and terrorist strikes.

Homeland Defence

- A broad domain researching key nodes of the national security ecosystem. Areas of particular interest include the study of strategic and crisis communication, cyber security and public attitudes to national security issues.

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 organises 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 radicalisation and counter-terrorism, multiculturalism and social resilience, as well as crisis and strategic communication.

HOW DOES CENS KEEP ABREAST OF CUTTING EDGE NATIONAL SECURITY RESEARCH?

The lean organisational 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 link to "Centre of Excellence for National Security".

ABOUT NSCS

The **National Security Coordination Secretariat (NSCS)** was set up in the Prime Minister's Office in July 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 Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Home Affairs Mr Teo Chee Hean.

NSCS is headed by Permanent Secretary (National Security and Intelligence Coordination). The current PS (NSIC) is Mr Benny Lim, who is concurrently Permanent Secretary (National Development) and Permanent Secretary (Prime Minister's Office).

NSCS comprises two centres: the National Security Coordination Centre and the National Security Research Centre. Each centre is headed by a Senior Director.

The agency performs three vital roles in Singapore's national security: national security planning, policy coordination, and anticipation of strategic threats. As a coordinating body, NSCS ensures that government agencies complement each other, and do not duplicate or perform competing tasks. It also organises and manages national security programmes, one example being the Asia-Pacific Programme for Senior National Security Officers, and funds experimental, research or start-up projects that contribute to our national security.

For more information about NSCS, visit
http://www.nscs.gov.sg/

ABOUT RSIS

The **S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS)** was officially inaugurated on 1 January 2007. Before that, it was known as the Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies (IDSS), which was established ten years earlier on 30 July 1996. Like its predecessor, RSIS was established as an autonomous entity within the Nanyang Technological University (NTU).

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
http://www.rsis.edu.sg

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