

Southeast Asia from the Corner of 18th & K Streets

Volume IV | Issue 12 | June 13, 2013

Recommendations from the CSIS South
China Sea Conference

GREGORY POLING

Gregory Poling is research associate for the Sumitro Chair for Southeast Asia Studies at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington, D.C.

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The CSIS Sumitro Chair for Southeast Asia Studies hosted its third annual conference on the South China Sea disputes on June 5-6. This year's event was titled "[Managing Tensions in the South China Sea](#)." During five expert panels and a [keynote speech](#) by the State Department's acting assistant secretary for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, Joe Yun, recommendations were tabled to this end. What follows are a few of the most salient and frequently raised.

RATIFY THE LAW OF THE SEA

This is well-trod ground. The need for the United States to ratify the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) becomes more pressing each year. Nearly every relevant stakeholder supports joining the treaty. When then-chair of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee John Kerry held hearings on the treaty last year, this was crystal clear.

Representatives from the military testified that the treaty would support U.S. national security interests, protect U.S. vessels at sea, expand U.S. sovereignty claims, especially in the Arctic, and ensure that the United States holds a seat at the table when the rules governing the world's oceans are made. They were joined by representatives from the shipping, telecommunications, and oil and gas industries. UNCLOS is a rarity in

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U.S. Pacific Commander Adm. Samuel J. Locklear testifies along with a panel composed of the vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the commandant of the Coast Guard, and other four-star officers in support of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea before the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations in June 2012. The United States' need to ratify the treaty grows more pressing every year. <http://www.flickr.com/photos/34975434@N08/7376630218/>

today's political atmosphere: it draws support from industrialists and environmentalists, generals and diplomats, and sober-minded Democrats and Republicans.

Unless the United States joins the treaty, U.S. calls for management and eventual resolution of the South China Sea disputes according to international law ring hollow. China scoffs at the hypocrisy in such statements, and, even to regional partners, Washington's calls to respect international law amount to a prescription of "Do as I say, not as I do."

DITCH THE AMBIGUITY

A prevalent theme during the conference was the need for all the South China Sea disputants to clarify just what it is they are claiming. This is a frequent refrain about China's and Taiwan's ambiguous 9-dash-line claim. As expected, the Chinese participants at the conference offered no clarity on the subject. Disappointingly, the Taiwanese participant did not either.

But China and Taiwan are not the only claimants being ambiguous. None of the Southeast Asian claimants have fully declared what it is they are claiming. The Philippines received plaudits for bringing its domestic legislation into line with UNCLOS in 2009. But Manila has yet to declare its extended continental shelf or which of the Spratlys it considers islands and which rocks.

Hanoi, meanwhile, has not redrawn its territorial baselines, which in southern Vietnam violate the rules of UNCLOS. Nor has it declared all of its continental shelf or clarified the status of features in the Paracels and Spratlys.

Malaysia has not officially issued territorial baselines or the remainder of its continental shelf, nor has it clarified the status of the Spratlys it claims. And Brunei has yet to outline its extended continental shelf, despite having declared in 2009 its intention to do so.

Without clarification, it is impossible to define what waters are actually in dispute. And without that definition, agreeing on areas of joint development or joint conservation is a tall order. It also means that the Southeast Asians are squandering an opportunity to seize the legal and moral high ground and place the onus on Beijing to bring its claims

Recommendations from the CSIS South China Sea Conference *(continued)*

into accord with UNCLOS or place itself firmly outside the bounds of international law.

PURSUE REASONABLE JOINT DEVELOPMENT

The call to jointly develop disputed resources in the South China Sea as a means of managing the disputes is not a new idea. The last major multilateral effort to do so, the 2005 China-Philippines-Vietnam Joint Marine Seismic Undertaking, was a resounding failure. But the notion is gaining increasing popularity, with a recent call to do so by Malaysian prime minister Najib Razak and repeated statements of interest from the Philippines' Philex Petroleum Corp.

One obstacle is the failure of claimants to agree on what areas are actually disputed and therefore ripe for joint development. This year's conference sparked a debate on whether clarification is really necessary for joint development, but arguments to the contrary were greeted with skepticism. What is clear is that the pursuit of joint development must be reasonable.

Discussion of joint development of oil and gas as a tool to manage tensions in the Paracel and Spratly groups is itself a pipedream. Surveys by the U.S. Geological Survey have made it clear that there are little or no commercially viable hydrocarbons beneath those features. This was made even more explicit by the International Energy Agency's report on the topic earlier this year. If oil and gas resources are to be jointly developed, whether bilaterally or multilaterally, the potential areas to do so are limited.

More promising would be pursuit of joint development and joint conservation of fisheries in the South China Sea. Run-ins between maritime surveillance vessels and fishermen account for the vast majority of violent incidents in the area. Pursuing a multilateral framework to conserve fish populations in the South China Sea offers a vehicle to help tamp down tensions and could be less politically sensitive than oil and gas development. It would also remove a serious bone of contention between Beijing and its southern neighbors: China's unilateral fishing ban for areas of the sea above the 12th parallel.

The Southeast Asians have taken baby steps toward this goal with the Southeast Asia Fisheries Development Center. The center focuses on research and reporting catches in the hopes of better monitoring



Chinese ships sit at anchor during the annual three-month South China Sea fishing ban. Joint fisheries development and conservation offer a potential opportunity for the South China Sea claimants to manage tensions. <http://www.flickr.com/photos/47716247@N00/3709039144/>

Recommendations from the CSIS South China Sea Conference *(continued)*

shrinking fisheries, and its reporting requirements are voluntary, resulting in very uneven compliance. It is open to accession by outside powers, though only Japan has joined. Claimants should consider inviting Chinese participation in the center and strengthening its mandate. If that vehicle proves unsuited to the task, claimants could pursue an alternative framework under the ASEAN umbrella.

CONCLUSION

An important lesson that ran through the conference was the need for the United States to stay involved but recognize its limits. Ratifying UNCLOS would do the most to advance Washington's cause in the South China Sea. In the case of the other two recommendations raised above, there is little that the United States can do directly.

It should continue to urge states to clarify their claims in accordance with international law. The State Department has long issued opinions on and objections to other countries' maritime claims. It should do so in this case. It should also support any joint development initiatives by claimants, especially in the case of fisheries where Washington could play a supporting role as a dialogue partner of ASEAN or a potential member of the Southeast Asian Fisheries Development Center.

The recommendations above are only three of the suggestions raised most frequently at the CSIS South China Sea conference. They are far from exhaustive, but they tackle some of the issues at the heart of the disputes. Each of the speakers at the conference put forth their own recommendations, which can be found in the videos of their panels and in the [papers they submitted](#). ▀



President Thein Sein opens the 22nd World Economic Forum on East Asia on June 6 in Naypyidaw. <http://www.flickr.com/photos/worldeconomicforum/8967980266/>

MYANMAR

- **Kachin group signs seven-point agreement with Myanmar government.** Representatives of the Myanmar government and the Kachin Independence Organization signed a seven-point preliminary peace agreement in the Kachin state capital Myitkyina on May 30. The agreement includes pledges for further talks, resettlement of nearly 100,000 people displaced by the fighting, and the establishment of a joint monitoring committee to facilitate communication between the two parties. Fighting between the two sides had escalated since a 17-year cease-fire broke down in July 2011.
- **Myanmar pledges to free all remaining political prisoners.** President Thein Sein pledged on June 5 that he would soon free all remaining political prisoners in Myanmar. The government has established a committee, composed of official and nongovernmental representatives, to review cases and identify all remaining political prisoners. The quasi-civilian government has released hundreds of political prisoners since coming to power in March 2011.
- **Aung San Suu Kyi publicly confirms presidential ambitions.** Opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi confirmed during a panel discussion at the June 6-7 World Economic Forum on East Asia in Naypyidaw that she wants to seek the Myanmar presidency in 2015. The admission was the opposition leader's first clear public statement about her presidential ambitions. The Lower House speaker and chairman of the ruling Union Solidarity and Development Party, Shwe Mann, also confirmed on June 7 his interest in running for the presidency. Aung San Suu Kyi is barred from running for president due to her children's and late husband's British citizenship, but she is seeking a constitutional amendment to allow her to do so.
- **Britain's chief of defense visits Myanmar in move to renew military relations.** Britain's defense chief, Gen. David Richards, visited Myanmar in early June in a first step to renewing military ties between the two countries. Under an engagement program proposed during his trip, the United Kingdom, which colonized Myanmar until 1948, will offer Myanmar assistance on police training, security sector reform, and broader governance support. General Richards met with his Myanmar counterpart as well as opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi and Lower House speaker Shwe Mann. The visit was the first by a Western military chief to Myanmar in decades.



Freeport-McMoran's Grasberg mine in Papua, Indonesia. Accidents at the mine have sparked an investigation by the Indonesian government, which has shuttered the mine for two months. <http://www.flickr.com/photos/47684393@N00/3611304559/>

INDONESIA

- **Government closes Freeport mine amid investigation.** The Indonesian government on June 3 suspended U.S.-owned Freeport-McMoran's mining operations in Papua for two months amid a pending investigation into the May 14 collapse of a training tunnel at the Grasberg mine that killed 28 people. Freeport had reopened limited production at the mine on May 28 but closed it after a separate accident killed an underground worker three days later. The incidents are among Indonesia's worst industrial accidents, further straining relations between Freeport and trade unions that have lobbied for higher wages since 2011.
- **Strikes paralyze main Indonesia port.** Nearly 600 transportation companies protested against Indonesia's state port operator, Pelindo, on June 3 over its alleged attempt to monopolize the Tanjung Priok Port by providing its own trucks to run a port transportation business. The protest halted operations at Indonesia's busiest port and cost businesses \$214 million. The Indonesian Chamber of Commerce and Industry responded on June 4 by urging the government to develop a new management system for the port, with Pelindo providing port facilities while routing and shipping would be left to the private sector.
- **Indonesia eyes increase in coal production, royalties amid potential Chinese import ban.** Indonesia on June 3 announced that the government would increase coal exports to other countries and encourage domestic consumption in response to a potential ban by China on low-quality coal imports. China has not commented on the potential ban. Indonesia also plans to raise royalties imposed on mining companies to 13.5 percent of net sales from the current 5 percent-7 percent per year in an attempt to increase state revenue from the mining sector, which has been dampened by falling global prices.
- **Papua political prisoners refuse government clemency offer.** Twenty-six Papuan political prisoners rejected President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono's offer to grant them clemency as part of the government's new special autonomy program allowing the local government of Papua to enter discussions with the armed separatist Free Papua Organization. Separately, about 50 political prisoners in the province will be granted freedom during an August visit by Yudhoyono to commemorate the new autonomy program. Many of the prisoners were arrested on May 1 during a protest held on the 50th anniversary of Papua's integration into Indonesia.

- **Suicide bomber fails in attack on Poso police station.** A suicide bomber blew himself up in a failed attack on a Poso police station in Central Sulawesi on June 3. There were no other casualties. Police suspect the man was part of a terrorist group responsible for a series of attacks against security officers in the restive province in late 2012. Indonesian counterterrorism officials on October 31 arrested five terrorist suspects and killed one in Poso as part of a heightened counterterrorism effort.

SINGAPORE

- **Singapore tightens Internet censorship laws.** Singapore imposed new licensing rules on 10 news sites run by Yahoo Singapore and state-owned Singapore Press Holdings and MediaCorp, requiring them to remove objectionable content within a day's notice and put up a \$40,000 bond before they publish content that undermines racial or religious harmony. Additional local and foreign media could be subject to the rules in the future. Activists, who staged a rare protest on June 7, have criticized the new requirements, arguing they are redundant and meant to stifle Internet-based media, which are often critical of the ruling People's Action Party.
- **Singapore to set up vocational training institute in Myanmar.** Singapore announced on June 6 that it has found a location to set up a vocational training institute in Yangon. The initiative is an effort to prepare the country's workforce for an expected surge in demand for local talent as Myanmar's economy opens up. Classes will focus on hospitality, mechanical skills, and engineering. The initiative builds on a package of measures focusing on the training of government officials that Singapore announced in 2012.
- **Singapore finalizes Boeing-Airbus jet order.** Singapore Airlines announced on June 7 plans to order 60 new planes amounting to \$17 billion from the United States' Boeing and Europe's Airbus companies. Orders were evenly split between the two manufacturers. The city-state said it would take deliveries from Boeing starting in 2018 based on the production schedule of the new 787-10X and will order Airbus A350-900 planes beginning in 2016. Singapore faces increasing competition in Asia from low-fare airlines including Indonesia's Lion Air and Malaysia's AirAsia, which have also announced large aircraft orders recently.

VIETNAM

- **Dung fares poorly in confidence vote.** Vietnam's legislature held the country's first-ever confidence vote for 47 top officials on June 10.



A Singapore Airlines plane. The carrier's \$17 billion purchase of 60 new airplanes from Airbus and Boeing was finalized on June 7 amid increasing competition in Asia among low-cost airlines like Lion Air and AirAsia. http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:SIA_Boeing_747-400,_9V-SPF,_SIN_5.jpg



Vietnam's prime minister Nguyen Tan Dung. He gave the opening keynote address at the Shangri-La Dialogue on May 31.
<http://www.flickr.com/photos/24633196@N00/1466183627/>

Members of the National Assembly voted on whether they had “high confidence,” “confidence,” or “low confidence” in each official, all of whom received enough support to avoid a no-confidence motion. State bank governor Nguyen Van Binh, Education Minister Pham Vu Luan, and Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung received the most “low confidence” votes, with 32 percent of legislators casting negative votes for Dung. The poor showings by Binh and Dung seem to reflect dissatisfaction with the state of the economy.

- **Dung gives keynote speech at Shangri-La Dialogue.** Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung gave the keynote address at the Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore on May 31, calling on relevant parties to reinforce the “strategic trust” necessary for peace and development in the Asia Pacific. In veiled references to China, Dung said states must abide by international law; meet their responsibilities, especially among the major powers; and work to improve multilateral security cooperation mechanisms, specifically through ASEAN. He also defended Vietnam’s claims to the South China Sea, saying they are in accordance with international law.
- **National Assembly discusses establishment of Constitutional Council.** Members of Vietnam’s National Assembly on June 4 proposed creating a Constitutional Council to ensure the legality of documents issued by government agencies. The proposal was part of a larger discussion of draft amendments to Vietnam’s 1992 Constitution. Opponents of the proposal say it could lead to an overlap of functions with other agencies. Supporters deny this and note that the National Assembly would remain the highest body in the state.
- **Foreign Service officer charged in Vietnam visa fraud case.** Michael Todd Sestak, the former visa chief at the U.S. Consulate in Ho Chi Minh City, appeared in a federal court in Washington on June 4 to face charges of visa fraud conspiracy. Prosecutors allege that Sestak illegally approved visas for Vietnamese citizens at a cost of \$20,000–\$70,000 each, according to court documents. Sestak and his conspirators also advised Vietnamese citizens to enter the United States as tourists, overstay their visas, and remain in the country illegally.

SOUTH CHINA SEA

- **CSIS hosts third annual South China Sea conference.** The Sumitro Chair for Southeast Asia Studies at CSIS held its third annual conference on “Managing Tensions in the South China Sea” on June 5–6. Acting assistant secretary of state for East Asian and Pacific affairs Joseph Yun gave a keynote speech and experts from the United States and the Asia Pacific

offered recommendations during five panels. Videos from the conference and papers by the participants are available [here](#).

- **China, Vietnam to set up naval hotline.** Vietnam's deputy defense minister Nguyen Chi Vinh and Chinese defense minister Chang Wanquan agreed on June 6 to establish a hotline between their respective navies to help manage incidents in the South China Sea, according a June 7 report from *China Daily*. The two officials met in Beijing to discuss boosting defense cooperation, especially ties between naval and border guard forces. China currently has similar hotlines with India, the United States, South Korea, and Japan.
- **Najib pushes for joint development in the South China Sea.** Malaysian prime minister Najib Razak on June 3 urged claimants to the South China Sea to pursue joint development to prevent further conflict in the disputed waters. Najib cited a joint development zone in waters claimed by Thailand and Malaysia as a precedent that could be applied in the South China Sea. He also said that joint development would help to avoid involving "extraregional states"—an apparent reference to the United States.
- **U.S. Pacific commander visits China's South China Sea fleet.** U.S. Pacific Fleet commander Adm. Cecil D. Haney met with the commander of China's South China Sea Fleet, Vice Adm. Jiang Weillie, at the fleet's Zhanjiang headquarters in Guangdong Province on May 30–31. Both admirals expressed the need to continue to strengthen maritime exchange and cooperation between the U.S. and Chinese navies. Haney toured a display of marine equipment and visited the *Lanzhou* guided missile destroyer, the *Hengyang* guided missile frigate, and the *Changbai Mountain* amphibious dock landing ship.
- **Vietnam condemns Chinese attack on fishermen near Paracels.** Vietnamese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Luong Thanh Nghi issued a statement on May 27 accusing a Chinese vessel of attacking a Vietnamese fishing boat off the Paracel Islands. The captain of the attacked vessel said the incident occurred on May 20 when he and 15 crew members were surrounded by a fleet of 18 Chinese ships that forced his boat out of the area. He also said one of the ships crashed into his vessel twice. Hanoi condemned the incident as a breach of international maritime law and demanded that Beijing investigate and properly compensate the Vietnamese fisherman.
- **Philippines demands China withdraw ships from Second Thomas Shoal.** Philippine Department of Foreign Affairs spokesperson Raul Hernandez



Adm. Cecil Haney, commander of U.S. Pacific Fleet, center, and Vice Adm. Jiang Weillie, right, commander of China's South China Sea Fleet, during Haney's recent visit to Zhanjiang. <http://www.flickr.com/photos/56594044@N06/8939115084/>



on May 27 demanded that China withdraw its ships from Second Thomas Shoal. The contested reef is located about 122 nautical miles from the Philippines, well within its claimed exclusive economic zone. China currently has three ships, including a naval frigate, near Second Thomas Shoal, where about a dozen Philippine marines are stationed on a grounded naval vessel. Philippine officials say they fear the Chinese will block supplies to the marines. Manila originally protested the presence of the Chinese ships on May 10, but Beijing has not responded.



PHILIPPINES

- **Aquino vetoes internally displaced persons bill.** Deputy presidential spokesperson Abigail Valte announced on May 29 that President Benigno Aquino has decided to veto the Rights of Internally Displaced Persons Act, which seeks to direct local government officials to protect the rights of persons displaced by armed conflict, violence, and natural disasters. Aquino told Congress that he admires the bill's intent but that its provisions are unconstitutional and impinge on the exclusive powers of the judiciary. Valte also noted that the bill could open the government to "a slew of claims."

Peacekeepers speak with internally displaced persons in General Santos City, Philippines. President Benigno Aquino vetoed a UN-supported bill to protect internally displaced person, saying it was unconstitutional. <http://www.flickr.com/photos/59595591@N08/6119847641/>

- **Senate president resigns post.** Juan Ponce Enrile resigned from his post as Senate president on June 5, more than a month before the official end of his term on July 22. President Pro Tempore Jinggoy Estrada will serve as acting Senate president until the election of new leadership in July. Enrile was a leading figure in the opposition United Nationalist Alliance coalition. Senator Franklin Drilon, a close ally of President Benigno Aquino, is expected to replace him as Senate president.

- **Manila rejects Taipei's fishing pact suggestion.** President Benigno Aquino told reporters at the close of the World Economic Forum on June 7 that Manila and Taipei must resolve ongoing tensions following the May 9 shooting of a Taiwanese fishermen by the Philippine Coast Guard before negotiating a fisheries agreement. Taipei has made the opening of fishery talks one of four demands following the shooting. Taiwanese president Ma Ying-jeou said June 7 that a fisheries pact with the Philippines could be patterned after a recent Taiwan-Japan agreement.

- **Three soldiers die in blast at guerrilla training camp.** A land-mine blast set by suspected members of the communist New People's Army (NPA) in the town of Camalig in central Albay Province killed three government soldiers and injured another on May 20. Nine soldiers had been sent to

track down members of the NPA sighted in the area when the explosion occurred, according to their commanding officer, Lt. Col. Andrew Costelo. The explosion was followed by a volley of gunfire.

MALAYSIA

- **Anwar agrees to work with ruling coalition.** Opposition leader Anwar Ibrahim said on June 3 that he will work with the ruling Barisan Nasional coalition even while challenging the legitimacy of Malaysia's May 5 general elections. Anwar has led several massive rallies decrying the election results, which handed the ruling coalition a majority in Parliament even while it lost the popular vote. The rallies have sparked fears of protracted political instability. Anwar said he will continue to push for electoral reforms and indicated that the opposition plans to challenge poll results in 30 constituencies.
- **Violence between Myanmar nationals in Malaysia leaves at least four dead.** Clashes between Myanmar Buddhists and Muslims in Malaysia since May 30 have left at least four dead and seven injured. Immigration authorities announced on June 6 that they had rounded up 1,000 Myanmar nationals to prevent violence from spreading and had detained 247 for lack of proper documentation. Many Myanmar nationals work in Malaysia's markets and plantations. National carrier Myanmar Airlines has announced that it will offer citizens who wish to return home from Malaysia half-price tickets from June 12 to July 12.
- **Opposition calls for Petronas audit.** The opposition Pan-Malaysian Islamic party (PAS) on May 29 called for a full audit of state-owned energy company Petronas. PAS lawmakers charged that Petronas does not report on its overseas operations transparently, and they raised questions about its \$11-\$13 billion in annual expenditures, criteria for awarding contracts, and licensing arrangements. The company issued a statement on June 5 denying the accusations and insisting it has adhered to international disclosure standards during overseas investment projects, including in Australia, Canada, Iran, and Turkmenistan.

THAILAND

- **Thaksin visits Washington.** Former Thai prime minister Thaksin Shinawatra arrived in Washington on June 10 via a private jet from New York. A group of some 30 Thais gathered that evening to protest outside the Fairmont Hotel, where Thaksin is staying. The former leader was in Washington for private meetings to discuss U.S.-Asia relations, but he was not received by U.S. officials or members of Congress. Thaksin, who was



The Petronas Towers in Kuala Lumpur. The state-owned energy giant is facing accusations that it has failed to transparently report on its overseas operations. <http://www.flickr.com/photos/10745203@N06/3796689264/>

ousted in a 2006 military coup and faces corruption charges should he return to Thailand, is the older brother of and adviser to Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra.



Myanmar refugees along the Thai/ Myanmar border. Thailand has said Rohingya refugees can remain in the country for six months while a third country is found to take them. <http://www.flickr.com/photos/rustystewart/3697797895/>



Opposition leader Sam Rainsy and supporters. Ruling party lawmakers stripped 27 members of the opposition of their parliamentary status, rendering them ineligible to run in upcoming elections. <http://www.flickr.com/photos/65619190@N04/5972840205/>

- **Rohingya refugees in Thailand remain in limbo.** Foreign Ministry spokesperson Manasvi Srisodapol said on June 4 that no third country has so far agreed to accept roughly 2,000 Rohingya refugees who have been detained in Thailand for several months. Bangkok has said it will allow asylum-seekers to stay in the country for up to six months while the government works with the UN High Commissioner for Refugees to find a third country to take them. Meanwhile, a boat carrying migrants from Myanmar sank off Thailand's coast on June 3. Authorities rescued 38, while at least 12 drowned.
- **PTT to supply petrochemicals to Indonesia's Pertamina.** Thailand's PTT Global Chemical reached an agreement on June 4 to sell petrochemical products to Indonesia's state-owned oil and gas company, Pertamina. The deal builds on an earlier joint venture agreement between the two companies to build a petrochemical facility in Indonesia with an eventual production capacity of 1 million tons per year. Both agreements will take effect by the end of 2013.
- **Protestors take to streets in support of ousted official.** Some 300 protestors gathered in front of the offices of Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra on June 3 in support of former National Security Council secretary-general Thawil Pliensri, who they believe was unjustly removed from his post for political reasons. Thailand's Central Administrative Court ordered Thawil reinstated on May 30, but Yingluck has not said whether the government will appeal the decision. Deputy Prime Minister Chalerm Yubamrung has accused the protestors of being "yellow shirts in disguise," referring to supporters of the People's Alliance for Democracy, which opposes the Yingluck government.

CAMBODIA

- **Ruling party strips opposition lawmakers of parliamentary status.** The National Assembly permanent committee on June 6 stripped all 27 opposition parliamentarians of their status and salaries. The decision renders the individuals, who are members of the Cambodia National Rescue Party (CNRP), ineligible to run in the country's July national elections. Members of the ruling Cambodian People's Party (CPP) claim the lawmakers violated election laws by holding membership in multiple parties. Opposition lawmakers say they forfeited their previous memberships when they joined the newly formed CNRP. The U.S. Embassy in Phnom Penh released a statement on June 8 criticizing the decision.

- **National Assembly criminalizes denial of Khmer Rouge crimes.**

Cambodia's legislature passed a law on June 7 banning the denial of crimes committed under the brutal Khmer Rouge regime in the 1970s. The law levies a sentence of up to two years in prison for violators. Opposition lawmakers, stripped of their parliamentary status the day before, were not present for the vote. The legislation came two weeks after the ruling Cambodian People's Party (CPP) circulated parts of an audio tape in which opposition leader Kem Sokha suggested exhibits at an old Khmer Rouge prison were fake. Kem Sokha denied the claims and accused the CPP of political manipulation in the lead-up to the country's July 28 national elections.

- **Police clash with protesters at Nike factory, arrest eight.** Cambodian police arrested eight demonstrators on June 3 during a clash with thousands of protesting workers at a Nike factory east of Phnom Penh. The workers had demonstrated for better pay since May 21. The factory fired 288 of the demonstrators on June 6–7. The dispute is one of many in recent months that underscore growing tensions in Cambodia's garment industry. Clothing is by far the country's largest export and garment factories are major employers in Cambodia due to the country's relatively cheap labor costs.

ASEAN

- **United States invites ASEAN defense ministers to meeting in Hawaii.** Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel, speaking at the Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore on June 1, invited his ASEAN counterparts to attend a summit in Hawaii in 2014. The meeting will be the first time the United States hosts the ASEAN defense ministers. Hagel said it will aim to "discuss a shared vision for a dynamic, peaceful, and secure future for the region." Maritime disputes in the South China Sea are expected to headline the proposed summit.
- **Brunei hosts first ADMM+ joint exercise.** China's largest active warship, the *Kunlun Shan*, arrived in Brunei on June 5 to participate in the ASEAN Defense Ministers' Meeting-Plus (ADMM+) Humanitarian Exercise—the forum's first-ever joint exercise. The 18 members of the ADMM+, including the United States, will take part in disaster relief, military medical operations, and humanitarian search-and-rescue training from June 17 to June 20. The exercises are meant to boost cooperation between countries in the region, and China's participation is seen as a positive step.



Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel speaking at the Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore. Hagel extended an invitation to ASEAN defense ministers to attend a 2014 summit in Hawaii. <http://www.flickr.com/photos/secdef/8907992982/1>



The North Korean Embassy in Vientiane. Laos deported nine North Korean refugees in May, despite widespread criticism from activists. <http://www.flickr.com/photos/princeroy/4963627293/>

LAOS

- **South Korean lawmaker visits Laos following deportation of North Korean defectors.** Kim Jae-won, a lawmaker with South Korea's ruling party, arrived in Laos on June 6 to discuss the country's decision in May to extradite nine orphaned North Korean defectors to China. Kim also met with 20 other defectors, who were recently moved from a safe house in the South Korean Embassy in Vientiane to the South Korean ambassador's residence. South Korean advocacy groups and international rights organizations strongly denounced Laos's repatriation of the nine defectors, as they will likely receive harsh punishments once China repatriates them to North Korea.
- **Laos prepares to break ground on controversial Thai-Vietnam railway.** A representative from the Lao Ministry of Public Works and Transportation said on June 6 that the government plans to break ground on a controversial rail line in a ceremony in August. The railway, which will link the country's borders with Thailand and Vietnam, has sparked controversy due to its cost and the onerous terms of the \$5 billion loan from a New Zealand financial institution that Laos will use to fund it. Laos is also negotiating a \$7.2 billion loan from China to fund a second planned railway to link Vientiane to southern China. ■

Looking Ahead

- **Singapore's ambassador on the city-state's view of the Asia Pacific.** The East-West Center in Washington will host Singapore's ambassador to the United States, Ashok Mirpuri, for a public discussion on June 17. The ambassador will discuss Singapore's view of current dynamics in the Asia Pacific and U.S. engagement with the region. The event will be held from 9:30 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. at the East-West Center, 1819 L St., NW, 6th Floor. Please RSVP [here](#) by June 14.
- **Discussion on Indonesia's 2014 elections.** The United States-Indonesia Society will host Wimar Witoelar on June 17 for a discussion as part of its 2014 Indonesian Elections Open Forum Series. Witoelar, a media personality and former spokesperson for the late president Abdurrahman Wahid, will discuss the current mood in Indonesia ahead of the elections, and what could make them different from their predecessors. The event will take place from 2:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. in the USINDO Conference Room, 1625 Massachusetts Ave., Suite 550. Please RSVP [here](#).
- **Release of report on problems facing Asia Pacific powers.** The East-West Center in Washington will release its latest report, *The Future of the Pacific and its Relevance for Geo-Economic Interest*, on June 18. The study—prepared by three committees, of U.S. lawyers, scientists, and doctors—identifies problems facing political and economic relations between Asia Pacific powers and presents solutions to them. The event will be held from 10:30 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. at the East-West Center, 1819 L St., NW, 6th Floor. Please RSVP [here](#) by June 17.
- **Panel discussion on TPP vs. RCEP.** The Carnegie Endowment for International Peace will host an event on June 18 titled “TPP vs. RCEP: Southeast Asia's Trade Dilemma.” CSIS Simon Chair in Political Economy Matt Goodman, Samuels International's Sourabh Gupta, the National Bureau for Asian Research's Meredith Miller, and the Peterson Institute for International Economics' Arvind Subramanian will share their perspectives on the Trans-Pacific Partnership and the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership. The event will be held from 11:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. at the Carnegie Endowment, 1779 Massachusetts Ave., NW. Please RSVP [here](#).
- **Program on the Trans-Pacific Partnership.** The Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars will host a half-day conference on June 19 on the Trans-Pacific Partnership. Former World Bank president Robert Zoellick will keynote the event, followed by panel discussions on “How the TPP fits into other regional trade agreements” and “Current countries



involved in the TPP and what it will take for a successful negotiation.” The conference will take place from 2:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. at the Flom Auditorium, Woodrow Wilson Center, 1300 Pennsylvania Ave., NW. Please RSVP [here](#).

- **Briefing on 2013 Pacific Energy Summit.** The National Bureau of Asian Research will hold a briefing June 19 on the future of North America-Asia energy trade, drawn from its recent Pacific Energy Summit. Top experts, policy makers, and industry leaders will detail the summit’s core themes. The event will take place from 3:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. at the Rayburn House Office Building, Room B318, 45 Independence Ave., SW. For more information and to RSVP, click [here](#).
- **Discussion on Latin American economic relations with Asia.** The Woodrow Wilson Center will host a panel discussion June 20 on Latin American countries’ growing trade and economic relations with Asia. Inter-American Development Bank president Luis Alberto Moreno will deliver a keynote address followed by three panels. The event will be held from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. at the Woodrow Wilson Center, 1300 Pennsylvania Ave., NW, 5th floor. To RVSP, click [here](#). ▀

SOUTHEAST ASIA FROM THE CORNER OF 18TH & K STREETS

CSIS Sumitro Chair for Southeast Asia Studies contributors:

Ernest Bower, Senior Adviser and Chair
Murray Hiebert, Senior Fellow and Deputy Director
Gregory Poling, Research Associate
Phoebe De Padua, Researcher
Amy Killian, Researcher
Jeremiah Magpile, Researcher
Matthew Hnatio, Researcher
Noelan Arbis, Researcher

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