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Indonesia's Cybersecurity: An Opportunity for Deeper Cooperation

KATHLEEN RUSTICI

Kathleen Rustici is associate director of the Sumitro Chair for Southeast Asia Studies at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington, D.C.

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The experience of recent years has shown that uncoordinated, individual cyber-attacks have become an inevitable response to real or perceived crises between nations. The actions of individual hackers should not be conflated with those of governments, but they are still harmful and cannot be ignored. States must secure their networks to protect national interests. Indonesia is beginning to seriously develop its cybersecurity capabilities, and this presents a unique opportunity for deeper cooperation with its partners, including the United States.

In the past two years, analysts both inside and outside the Indonesian government have called for the country to boost its cybersecurity and defense networks. Earlier this year, Minister of Defense Purnomo Yusgiantoro and the Defense Ministry's director-general of security potentials Pos M. Hutabarat each raised the idea of a "cyber army"—an elite group, embedded in the navy, army, and air force, that could defend Indonesia's networks against cyber-attacks.

Minister of Communications and Information Technology Tifatul Sembiring said in September that Indonesia "needs to be wary of cybersecurity threats" and called on the government to "include cybersecurity under its national security police."

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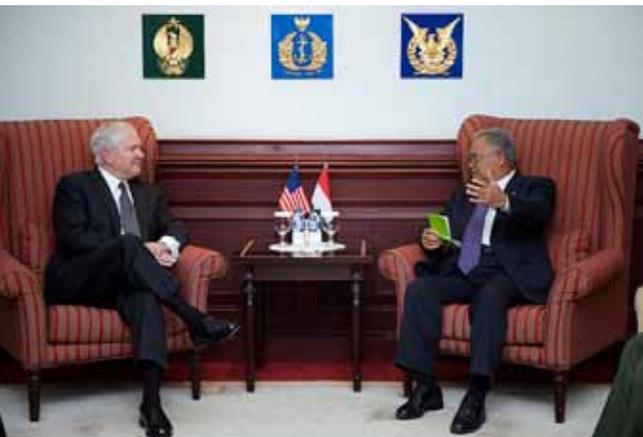
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Indonesia faces numerous challenges in developing its cybersecurity capabilities, including coordinating across a large and diffuse government. Currently, the government has no coordinated strategy for cybersecurity, although it is in the process of developing one. It remains to be seen if Indonesia will promote one branch of its security structure to manage cybersecurity across the government, or if it will develop a coordinating body to allow agencies to manage their own networks autonomously but coordinate efforts when needed.

If Indonesia chooses the latter option, the United States can provide one model of how such a system can work in a federal structure. The United States utilizes a cybersecurity coordinator, currently Michael Daniel, to direct and oversee coordination among federal government agencies, states, local governments, and the private sector. Given Indonesia's federal organization and the tensions underlying the relationship between its police and military forces, this method could be the easiest for Jakarta to put into immediate practice.



Indonesian defense minister Purnomo Yusgiantoro meets with then U.S. secretary of defense Robert Gates in 2010. Purnomo has suggested that Indonesia create a defensive “cyber army” within the military, offering an excellent opportunity for cooperation with the United States.
<http://www.flickr.com/photos/39955793@N07/4818631054/>

A second challenge is cooperation with regional partners. Ongoing dustups regarding information collection in the region make this contentious, but such cooperation is a crucial step in establishing regional norms, protections, and standards as the Asia Pacific grows more interconnected. Issues such as cybercrime can create a jumping-off point for regional efforts. Akamai, a U.S.-based Internet content provider that monitors roughly a third of global Internet traffic, [reported](#) in October that Indonesia overtook China as the number one source of cyber-attacks in the second quarter of 2013. The ability to hijack IP addresses means not all the attacks necessarily originated from Indonesia, but the report demonstrated the country's vulnerability to cybercrime.

Indonesia has recognized the need to establish international norms on cybersecurity. For example, it participated in a 15-member UN group examining norms and state behavior, which agreed to a consensus report in June stating that international law applies to state actions in cyberspace.

Regional cooperation on cybersecurity is becoming more prevalent. Major mechanisms include the Asia Pacific Computer Emergency Response Team (APCERT), which provides technical assistance, best-practice sharing, and training and includes 30 groups from 21 economies, including two from Indonesia. The country's national police opened a second joint cybercrime

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office with their Australian counterparts in Jakarta in April. And while Indonesia has **cut off** cooperation efforts with Australia in response to recent revelations that Canberra used its Jakarta embassy for intelligence gathering, it is likely that cooperation will renew and expand in the future.

The U.S.-Indonesia Comprehensive Partnership includes some initial mechanisms for bilateral cybersecurity cooperation, but these need to be strengthened. The United States has used the ASEAN Regional Forum to engage countries on cyber-threats and security, and is currently seeking to partner with an ASEAN country to conduct a series of cyber workshops, according to the State Department. Such efforts between the United States and Indonesia would help to boost Jakarta's own cybersecurity efforts while building on regional norms and engagement.

Whatever form its cybersecurity takes, Indonesia will require general education and awareness. A strong cyber defense system requires consistent adherence to protective measures across the government. Broad-based education of government officials on basic security techniques and preventative measures would go a long way toward establishing basic security, as would better education for the general population on safe Internet practices. Here the United States can play a role in assisting with training and best practices.

Indonesia's cybersecurity presents a complex challenge, but the country is no stranger to asymmetric security challenges. Coordination across government sectors combined with the development of an elite, anti-terrorism squad, Densus 88, severely disrupted domestic terrorist networks in the years following the 2002 Bali bombings. While terrorist networks, including Jemaah Islamiyah, remain active, their capabilities are greatly reduced and remain at a manageable level.

Cybersecurity presents a similar test. But it also presents an opportunity for greater U.S.-Indonesian engagement through organizational assistance and cooperation. While countries across the globe are on high alert as revelations of information gathering by the United States and its allies mount, best practices and basic joint training can help to reestablish trust among partners. No security system will ever be perfectly secure, but Indonesia can develop one that allows it to manage attacks, mitigate risk, and prevent most infiltration and insecurity. ■



An Internet café in Malang, Indonesia overtook China as the number one source of cyber-attacks in the world in the second quarter of 2013, highlighting the need for the nation to boost its cybersecurity capabilities. <http://www.flickr.com/photos/14671121@N03/9617373671/>

PHILIPPINES

- **International businesses, NGOs commit to typhoon aid relief.** U.S. corporations and nongovernment organizations (NGOs) have provided significant assistance to the Philippines in the aftermath of Typhoon Haiyan, supplementing the almost \$50 million given by the U.S. government. U.S. businesses have contributed \$45 million to the recovery effort, according to the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, with Chevron, PepsiCo, UPS, JPMorgan Chase, Toyota Motors, and the Walt Disney Company giving more than \$1 million each. Companies have also partnered with NGOs to provide aid, especially the International Red Cross, which has pledged to raise nearly \$95 million.
- **U.S. ambassador to Philippines sworn in.** Secretary of State John Kerry on November 21 swore in [Philip Goldberg](#) as the new U.S. ambassador to the Philippines. Goldberg was sworn in ahead of schedule to more quickly assist with relief and recovery efforts after Typhoon Haiyan. The Senate confirmed Goldberg, who previously served as assistant secretary for the Department of State's Bureau of Intelligence and Research, on November 14.
- **Supreme Court declares pork barrel unconstitutional.** The Philippine Supreme Court on November 19 ruled that the Priority Development Assistance Fund (PDAF), popularly known as the "pork barrel" fund, is unconstitutional. The justices voted 14-0 against the PDAF, saying it was inconsistent with the "constitutional mandates of the executive and legislative branches of government." The \$574 million in the PDAF was reallocated to several government departments in the 2014 national budget after it was revealed that legislators had widely misappropriated the fund's money.
- **Abu Sayyaf linked to death of tourist in Malaysia.** Malaysian police chief Khalid Abu Bakar on November 16 said that Abu Sayyaf, a Philippine terrorist group linked to al Qaeda, was responsible for the death of a Taiwanese tourist and the kidnapping of his wife in Borneo. The Taiwanese man, Li-Min Hsu, was shot to death, and his wife, Chang An-wei, was kidnapped by a group of eight men who came to Sabah from the southern Philippines via speedboat. Malaysian and Philippine authorities are working closely to locate the kidnapped woman.



Philippine Supreme Court building. The Philippine Supreme Court ruled that the Priority Development Assistance Fund, popularly known as the "pork barrel" fund, is unconstitutional. <http://www.flickr.com/photos/23269969@N00/10130946644/>

THAILAND

- **Yingluck invokes Internal Security Act.** Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra on November 25 invoked the Internal Security Act (ISA) in large parts of Bangkok and surrounding areas after antigovernment protesters occupied parts of the Foreign Ministry, Finance Ministry, and Public Relations Department. The ISA grants authorities the power to seal off roads, impose curfews, and ban electronic devices in designated areas. More than 100,000 antigovernment protesters began rallying across Bangkok on November 24, calling on Yingluck to resign.

- **Constitutional Court rules charter amendments unconstitutional.** Thailand's Constitutional Court on November 20 ruled that a proposed constitutional amendment bill to change the structure of the Senate was unconstitutional. Parliament on September 30 passed the final reading of the amendment bill that would change the structure of the Senate from a 150-member body, of whom 77 are elected and 73 are appointed by a committee, to a fully elected 200-member institution. The court stopped short of dissolving the ruling Pheu Thai Party, as the groups who brought the case had requested.

- **Senate approves \$70 billion borrowing bill for infrastructure.** Thailand's Senate on November 20 approved a bill that would allow the government to borrow \$70 billion to improve the country's infrastructure over the next seven years. Planned projects include four high-speed trains connecting Bangkok with Chiang Mai, the industrialized eastern seaboard, the Lao border, and Malaysia. The government said the projects are expected to boost Thailand's economy. The opposition Democrat Party on November 20 submitted a petition to the Constitutional Court challenging the legality of the bill.

- **Thailand aims to become telecoms hub in the Greater Mekong region.** Thailand on November 18 hosted Connect Asia-Pacific 2013, a regional summit on telecommunications connectivity attended by government officials and telecommunications business leaders from across the Asia Pacific. Thailand's minister of information and communication technology, Anudith Nakornthap, said that the government plans to spend at least \$125 million to expand the country's broadband coverage with the aim of promoting Thailand as an information and communications technology hub in the Greater Mekong subregion.



Information and communications technology ministers from across the Asia Pacific attend the 2013 Connect Asia-Pacific conference in Bangkok. Thailand expects to spend \$125 million to become a telecoms hub in the region. <http://www.flickr.com/photos/42121221@N07/10925226963/>

- **English education in Thailand inadequate, according to study.** A recent study conducted by Silpakorn University found that English-language learning projects in Thailand “lack clear aims [and] integration into curriculums” in comparison to programs in nearby Malaysia, Singapore, Vietnam, and China. Frequent changes in the country’s education ministers have also led to inconsistencies, according to the study. In the 2013 English Proficiency Index, Thailand ranked 55th among 60 countries in adult English-language proficiency in nations where English is not an official language.

MYANMAR

- **Government releases 69 political prisoners.** The Myanmar government on November 15 granted amnesty to 69 political prisoners and reiterated its promise to free all remaining prisoners of conscience by the end of 2013. Among the prisoners released were Aye Ne Win and Kyaw Ne Win, grandsons of former prime minister Ne Win. They were imprisoned in 2002 on charges of attempting to overthrow the then ruling military junta. The opposition National League for Democracy estimates that about 80 political prisoners remain incarcerated.

- **Former U.S., UK heads of state visit Myanmar.** Former U.S. president Bill Clinton and former UK prime minister Tony Blair gave speeches at Yangon’s Myanmar Peace Center on November 14 and 15, respectively, about ethnic and religious tensions in the country. Clinton and Blair urged the peace center, which includes political, social, and religious leaders, to work toward ending sectarian violence in Myanmar. Clinton met with President Thein Sein, parliamentary speaker Shwe Mann, and National League for Democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi. Blair previously visited Myanmar in October 2012.



Displaced Rohingya in Rakhine state. Representatives from the Organization of the Islamic Conference, United Nations, and U.S. House of Representatives have pushed the Myanmar government for fairer treatment of Rohingya. <http://www.flickr.com/photos/69583224@N05/8488857164>

- **UN, U.S., OIC speak out for Rohingya.** Myanmar presidential spokesperson Ye Htut on November 21 said that the government will not grant citizenship to the Rohingya minority despite a November 19 UN resolution urging it to do so. Meanwhile, Representatives Jim McGovern, Joe Pitts, Trent Franks, and Christopher Smith on November 18 introduced a resolution in the U.S. House of Representatives demanding an end to violence against the Rohingya. The Organization of Islamic Cooperation also advocated for better treatment of the group during a November 14-16 visit to Rakhine state.
- **Senior political, ethnic leaders meet in Thailand for peace talks.** Senior members of 11 Myanmar political parties traveled to Chiang Mai, Thailand, on November 22-24 to meet with the United Nationalities Federation

Council (UNFC), an alliance of 11 ethnic armed groups, as well as with civil society groups. The first-of-its-kind meeting was organized by the government's Myanmar Peace Center. Leaders discussed reaching a possible nationwide cease-fire by the end of 2013 and starting a political dialogue in early 2014. The ruling Union Solidarity and Development Party was invited but did not attend.

- **Parliament amends controversial publishing law.** The Myanmar parliament on November 11 agreed to amend an article of the controversial Printing and Publication Enterprise Bill that would require all media companies to register with the government or risk legal penalties. The lower house decided to abolish prescribed prison sentences and reduce financial penalties for those found to be printing or publishing without registration. An earlier draft of the bill imposed a six-month jail term and a nearly \$12,000 fine for operating without a license. The bill now issues a maximum penalty of about \$300.

INDONESIA

- **Indonesia freezes military, law enforcement cooperation with Australia.** Indonesian president Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono on November 20 ordered a halt to all bilateral military and law enforcement cooperation with Australia following revelations that Canberra used its embassy in Jakarta to collect intelligence, including tapping the phones of Yudhoyono and other top officials. The freeze on joint people smuggling patrols puts special pressure on the government of Australian prime minister Tony Abbott, which has vowed to halt the flow of asylum seekers from Indonesia to Australia. Yudhoyono on November 26 accepted Abbott's explanation of the matter, but said that full ties would not be restored until the two countries reach a new code of conduct on information gathering.
- **Volcanic eruptions destroy crops, send thousands fleeing.** Eruptions from Mount Sinabung in North Sumatra and Mount Merapi in Central Java have caused nearly 20,000 residents to evacuate their homes and destroyed thousands of acres of cropland since late September. Officials have issued the highest safety alert for Mount Sinabung, which continued to erupt on November 25. The government has advised that everyone within three miles of the volcano evacuate. Plumes of smoke rising higher than 26,000 feet have caused the rerouting of flights into and out of Sumatra.
- **Finance minister says economy stabilizing ahead of policy rollouts.** Finance Minister Chatib Basri on November 11 said that Indonesia's economy appears to be stabilizing after months of disappointing data. His

remarks appeared aimed at easing concerns over the ongoing slowdown in economic growth, reduced capital and investment flows, and currency depreciation. Chatib's comments come just ahead of the pending rollout of two fiscal policy packages, scheduled for late November and early December, aimed at repairing Indonesia's current account deficit.

- **Central bank raises interest rates to attract foreign investment.** Bank Indonesia on November 12 raised its benchmark interest rate to 7.5 percent, the highest level since 2009, in an attempt to attract and maintain foreign investment. Higher interest rates are expected to further slow domestic growth, but Bank Indonesia governor Agus Martowardojo said he expects to counter that by reining in the growing current account deficit and encouraging foreign trade. The interest rate hike is meant to combat the capital flight that has struck Indonesia since early 2013 and caused the currency to fall 17 percent.
- **Boediono questioned in Bank Century case.** Indonesia's Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK) questioned former central bank governor and current vice president Boediono on November 23 as a witness regarding the controversial 2008 bailout of Bank Century. Boediono confirmed that he had altered policy to provide nearly \$600 million to Bank Century, which had only a fraction of the capital ratio normally required by the central bank. The KPK has so far charged two former central bank deputy governors with abuse of power in the bailout case, and many have suggested that Boediono, as governor at the time, was ultimately responsible.

ASEAN

- **Obama to visit Asia in April 2014.** National Security Adviser Susan Rice said on November 20 that President Barack Obama will visit Asia in April 2014 as a makeup for the trip to Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines that he canceled in October due to the U.S. government shutdown. Rice, speaking at Georgetown University, did not specify which countries Obama will visit, but he is expected to stop in Japan, Malaysia, and the Philippines. Meanwhile, Secretary of State John Kerry is expected to visit Vietnam and the Philippines in mid-December.



Susan Rice (middle), national security adviser to U.S. president Barack Obama, said on November 20 that the president will visit Asia in April 2014. <http://www.flickr.com/photos/54323860@N06/6122317533/>

- **Japan's summit draft to ASEAN proposes unity on regional security.** Japan and ASEAN will look to unite on regional security issues at the upcoming Japan-ASEAN Summit from December 13 to 15, according to a draft copy of Japan's proposal to ASEAN obtained by Kyodo News. The summit will mark the 40th anniversary of Japan-ASEAN diplomatic relations. Japanese prime minister Shinzo Abe on November 17 wrapped

up visits to Cambodia and Laos that rounded out his travel to all 10 ASEAN countries less than a year into taking office.

- **ASEAN to harmonize frequency band, shift to digital television by 2020.** Telecommunications ministers from the 10 ASEAN countries agreed to intensify cooperation on information and communications technology at a two-day ASEAN Telecommunication and Information Technology Ministers Meeting, which ended in Singapore on November 15. The ministers agreed to harmonize the frequency band within ASEAN to 700 megahertz, enhance the protection of submarine communications and cable systems, and accelerate the shift from analog to digital television, which should free up the bandwidth for 4G mobile devices. The plans are set to be in place by 2020.

VIETNAM

- **Haiyan causes flooding in Vietnam, death toll rises to 41.** Vietnam's National Floods and Storms Control Agency announced on November 19 that heavy rains and flooding in central Vietnam have killed 41 people and forced 80,000 from their homes. An estimated 400,000 houses and 10,000 acres of agricultural land have been destroyed. The floods started after Typhoon Haiyan hit central Vietnam on November 10 and have continued with the arrival of a smaller tropical storm on November 14.
- **Businessmen sentenced to death for corruption.** A Vietnamese court on November 15 sentenced former bank chief Vu Quoc Hao and businessman Dang Van Hai to death for embezzlement of state property. Hao was convicted of stealing \$25 million while he was chief of a state-owned bank subsidiary. Hai, a former construction firm executive, was found complicit. The Vietnamese government is making an effort to end corruption in state-owned enterprises while also attempting to restructure its banking system.
- **Vietnam elected to UN Human Rights Council amid criticism from activists.** The United Nations General Assembly elected Vietnam to the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) on November 12 despite objections from organizations including Human Rights Watch. Vietnam has been criticized for imprisoning bloggers and evicting people from their homes without compensation, among other abuses. Vietnam received the most votes among all the candidates for the UNHRC, garnering 184 votes out of 193.

CAMBODIA

- **Opposition plans more demonstrations for December.** The opposition Cambodian National Rescue Party (CNRP) announced plans on November 18 to hold two mass demonstrations in December in support of garment



Vietnamese dong. Vietnam's government has imposed the death penalty on two businessmen who were found guilty of embezzling \$25 million. <http://www.flickr.com/photos/52042477@N00/5211406814>



Preah Vihear temple in Cambodia. The International Court of Justice ruled that Cambodia has sovereignty over the promontory on which the temple sits, but Thailand has yet to formally accept the ruling. <http://www.flickr.com/photos/50249220@N00/7109281327>

workers who have been on strike for higher wages. CNRP officials said one protest will occur on December 10, International Human Rights Day. The CNRP's announcement follows a violent clash between garment workers and police during a November 12 protest that resulted in the death of a 49-year-old woman.

- **Cambodia to give Thailand time to negotiate implementation of Preah Vihear temple ruling.** The Cambodian government has said that it will not rush Thailand into negotiations over the implementation of the Preah Vihear temple ruling by the International Court of Justice (ICJ), according to a November 18 *Phnom Penh Post* article. Cambodia's minister for information, Khieu Kanharith, said he understands the domestic problems Thailand faces over the ruling, which gave a disputed strip of land around the temple to Cambodia. The Thai government has not officially accepted the ruling and said it will not withdraw troops until it has met with Cambodian officials.
- **Abe reaches military agreement in Cambodia.** Japanese prime minister Shinzo Abe met with his Cambodian counterpart, Hun Sen, in Phnom Penh during a November 15-17 trip to Cambodia and Laos. The two leaders reached a military agreement through which Japanese specialists will train Cambodian soldiers. Abe emphasized Japan's economic commitment to Cambodia and secured a statement from Hun Sen calling for the resolution of regional maritime disputes peacefully and according to international law. Abe has visited all 10 ASEAN countries during his first year back in office.
- **Property rights activist released from prison.** The Cambodian Supreme Court ordered the release of Cambodian housing activist Yorm Bopha on November 22. The court released her on bail and ordered the Appeals Court to review her case. Bopha, along with a group of female activists known as the **Boeung Kak 13**, led protests against the forcible seizure of land around Phnom Penh's Boeung Kak Lake. She was originally sentenced to three years in prison for allegedly being involved in an attack on two men.

MALAYSIA

- **Moody's raises outlook for Malaysian debt.** Moody's Investors Services has raised the outlook on Malaysia's government bonds and issuer ratings from stable to positive, according to a November 21 *New Straits Times* report. Moody's said the change was driven by improved prospects for fiscal consolidation and reform and by continued macroeconomic stability in the country. Competitor Fitch Ratings in July downgraded Malaysia's outlook from stable to negative.

- **Malaysia eyes free trade agreements with Commonwealth of Independent States.** Malaysia is interested in negotiating free trade agreements with members of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), all of which are former members of the Soviet Union, according to a November 20 Bernama report. A senior official of the Ministry of International Trade and Industry said that Malaysia is particularly interested in an agreement with Russia. The government must first complete a feasibility study on such an agreement and then consult with industry and other stakeholders.
- **Malaysia summons Singaporean high commissioner over spying allegations.** Malaysia's Foreign Ministry summoned Singapore's high commissioner on November 26 to answer reports that the city-state helped intercept Malaysia's electronic communications. Dutch newspaper *NRC Handelsblad* on November 23 published a U.S. National Security Agency map leaked by Edward Snowden showing 20 sites worldwide where the "Five Eyes" members—Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and the United States—tapped into communications sent over fiber-optic cables. Singapore reportedly helped intercept those cables that run through the city-state, which carry most traffic from Malaysia.
- **Moderates keep power in PAS elections.** Candidates considered to represent the moderate wing of the Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS) came out on top in the November 22 party elections. Moderate incumbents held onto the deputy presidency and two of the three vice presidencies, while the Central Working Committee split between moderates and hardliners. PAS is largely divided between conservatives, composed of religious scholars and teachers, and moderate professionals. The party is Malaysia's oldest opposition party and a key member of the Pakatan Rakyat coalition that nearly took power in May 5 general elections.
- **Sultan of Johor changes weekend to Friday, Saturday.** The sultan of Johor has decreed that weekends in the state will be changed to Fridays and Saturdays as of January 1, 2014. The sultan said the switch from Saturdays and Sundays will allow citizens, most of whom are Muslim, to participate in Friday prayers more easily, according to Bernama. Johor's chief executive said the private sector will still be free to choose which days to consider rest days.

TRANS-PACIFIC PARTNERSHIP

- **House Republicans oppose fast-track authority.** Twenty-two Republicans in the U.S. House of Representatives announced on November 12 that they would oppose attempts by President Barack Obama to gain trade



A catfish farm in Vietnam. The Vietnamese government has called on U.S. lawmakers to end unfair inspections of Vietnamese catfish exports. <http://www.flickr.com/photos/78994815@N00/1275812481/>

promotion authority to more easily pass the Trans-Pacific Partnership. The authority, commonly called “fast track,” is a process by which Congress allows the White House to negotiate and speed trade agreements through the legislature without amendments. Emerging opposition from Congress complicates the president’s goal of finalizing TPP negotiations by the end of 2013.

- **Catfish inspection rules pose a problem for TPP.** A controversial catfish inspection program run by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), which acts as a nontariff barrier against Vietnamese catfish exports, has emerged as a problem for Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) negotiators. The Vietnamese government, a party to the TPP negotiations, sent letters to U.S. congressional leaders and agriculture committee members in late October urging them to remove the USDA inspection program from the 2013 Farm Bill. Vietnam has accused the United States of opposing protectionist measures in other countries without addressing its own.

LAOS

- **Lao, South Korean leaders hold historic talks in Seoul.** Lao president Choummaly Sayasone met with his South Korean counterpart, Park Geun-hye, in Seoul on November 21-23, becoming the first president of Laos to visit South Korea since the two nations reopened diplomatic relations in 1995. Park signed agreements to provide credit and grant assistance to Laos, including a fund worth \$200 million from 2014 to 2017, according to a November 25 *Vientiane Times* report.



Japanese prime minister Shinzo Abe arriving for the APEC Leaders' Meeting in Bali in October 2013. Abe has visited all 10 ASEAN nations in his first year back in office. <http://www.flickr.com/photos/apec2013/10129056383/>

- **Abe seeks security dialogue framework, vows to develop infrastructure during visit.** Japanese prime minister Shinzo Abe met with his Lao counterpart, Thongsing Thammavong, in Vientiane on November 17. During their meeting the pair agreed to develop a framework for bilateral security discussions between senior foreign and defense officials. Abe also announced that Japan will provide loans for Laos to develop its airport and improve its infrastructure. The Laos visit capped off a series of visits that took Abe to every country in ASEAN in 2013.

- **Japanese contractor wins hydropower deal.** Japanese general contractor Obayashi Corp. announced on November 14 that it has won an order to build a large hydropower plant in Laos. Obayashi will construct a 485-foot-tall concrete dam and two power generation facilities—one producing 270,000 kilowatts and another 20,000 kilowatts—along the Nam Ngiep River, a tributary of the Mekong, in Laos. The dam will store up to 78 billion cubic feet of water, more than three times as much as the largest dam in Japan.

- **Laos holds meeting with development partners.** Laos held a triennial high-level roundtable meeting in Vientiane on November 19 with representatives from 35 international and national development partners and 37 foreign countries. Development partners pledged new assistance to Laos with a focus on helping the country meet its Millennium Development Goals while addressing the need for better transparency, metrics, and implementation, according to a November 21 *Vientiane Times* report.

SINGAPORE

- **Women's representation in Singaporean boardrooms lags behind peers.** The percentage of women in Singapore's boardrooms is significantly lower than in the boardrooms of the city-state's regional competitors, according to a November 19 report by moneycontrol.com. Just 7.9 percent of board directors in Singapore are women, compared with 11.6 percent in Indonesia, 15.8 percent in Australia, and 9.4 percent in China. The poor gender diversity in the upper management of Singaporean businesses is especially surprising considering the city-state's policies geared toward gender equality in employment and education.
- **Singapore to get tougher on online harassment.** Law Minister K Shanmugam told a November 18 conference hosted by the Institute of Policy Studies in Singapore that the government expects to finalize a bill to combat online harassment in early 2014. According to a 2012 study by Microsoft, Singapore is second only to China for the world's highest rates of online bullying of children.

BRUNEI

- **Brunei, Australia hold Joint Defense Working Committee.** Defense officials from Brunei and Australia convened in Canberra on November 19 for their annual Joint Defense Working Committee, aimed at fortifying defense cooperation between the two countries. The discussions included a review of their current bilateral defense and military cooperation, during which the officials recognized the need for more exercises and training initiatives to foster better defense cooperation. The two countries signed an agreement in 1999 establishing the committee.
- **Sultan calls on youth to support sharia penal code.** Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah on November 21 called on Brunei youth to show their support for an impending sharia penal code, which will come into law in April 2014. The sultan, who was speaking at the annual National Youth Day Celebration, said that understanding sharia law is vital to developing character among the nation's youth. The impending penal code includes stoning for

adultery and amputation for theft, but would apply only to Muslims in the country.

TIMOR-LESTE

- **Indonesian contractor breaks ground on tallest building in Dili.** Indonesia's PT Pembangunan Perumahan broke ground on an \$85 million, 26-story building in downtown Dili on November 16. Timorese officials are hopeful that the project to build the country's tallest tower will attract more international investment in Timor-Leste. The multipurpose mall, hotel, apartment, and office building is located in the most expensive part of the city and will be completed in 2016.
- **Timor-Leste signs \$50 million Asian Development Bank loan for road upgrades.** Finance Minister Emilia Pires signed an agreement with Asian Development Bank (ADB) Pacific Department deputy director Noriko Ogawa on November 18 for a \$50 million ADB loan to upgrade and expand Timor-Leste's road network. The loan will be used to connect the town of Manatuto in the north with Natarbora to the south via a wide weatherproof road. Timor-Leste hopes to boost its economy by connecting markets and reducing travel time with reliable and safe roads.

SOUTH CHINA SEA

- **Vietnam, India to expand oil exploration in the South China Sea.** Vietnamese Communist Party general secretary Nguyen Phu Trong and Indian prime minister Manmohan Singh on November 20 signed eight agreements, including one in that offered India's ONGC Videsh Ltd. (OVL) five offshore oil and gas exploration blocks in the South China Sea. State-owned PetroVietnam and OVL also signed an agreement for joint exploration, development, and production of petroleum resources for new OVL investments in oil and gas blocks in Vietnam. The specific terms of the agreements have not been disclosed.

MEKONG RIVER

- **Lao government targets destructive fishing practices near Mekong dam.** The Lao government will no longer allow fishing traps to be placed along Mekong channels near the Don Sahong dam in the southern part of the country, citing concerns about overfishing and destruction to migration routes, according to a November 18 *Vientiane Times* report. Instead of the fishing traps, the government is encouraging villagers to breed fish for commercial purposes. Laos has come under criticism for the negative ecological effects of its recent dam projects. ■



Indian prime minister Manmohan Singh meets Vietnamese Communist Party general secretary Nguyen Phu Trong in New Delhi on November 20. The two signed an agreement on oil and gas exploration in the South China Sea. <http://www.flickr.com/photos/meaindia/10956844375/>

- **Discussion of Europe's role on the world stage.** The Hudson Institute on December 2 will host Jean-Francois Cope, leader of the French opposition and one of France's best-known political figures, to examine Europe's role on the world stage in the midst of the Eurozone crisis and the U.S. rebalance toward Asia. Cope will also discuss what policies France must implement to reclaim its status as Europe's copilot along with Germany. The event will be held from 6:00 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. at 1015 15th St., NW, 6th Floor. [Click here](#) to RSVP.
- **CSIS roundtable on South China Sea arbitration case.** The Sumitro Chair for Southeast Asia Studies will host an on-the-record roundtable discussion on December 3 with Paul Reichler, lead legal counsel for the Philippines in its arbitration case against China's claims in the South China Sea. Reichler has specialized in the representation of sovereign state disputes for more than 25 years. The event will be held from 9:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m. at the CSIS Concourse Level, Room 115, 1616 Rhode Island Ave., NW. Please e-mail southeastasiaprogram@csis.org to RSVP.
- **Panel discussion on the TPP.** The Atlantic Council will host a panel discussion on December 3 on the continuing negotiations regarding the Trans-Pacific Partnership and what it means for Taiwan and the Asia Pacific. Panelists will include Richard Bush, director for East Asia Studies at the Brookings Institution, and Clyde Prestowitz, president of the Economic Strategy Institute. The event will be held from 2:00 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. at 1030 15th St., NW, 12th Floor. [Click here](#) to RSVP.
- **Conference on Myanmar's ASEAN chairmanship.** American University will host a conference on December 4 on the challenges and opportunities facing Myanmar as ASEAN chair in 2014. State Department and Defense Department officials, key figures in the academic, think-tank, business, and diplomatic communities, and representatives from most East Asia Summit member countries are expected to participate. The event will be held from 9:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. at 4400 Massachusetts Ave., NW. Please e-mail Holly Luu, Holly.Luu@american.edu, to RSVP.
- **Discussion on the TPP.** CSIS's Sumitro Chair for Southeast Asia Studies and Scholl Chair in International Business will host a discussion on December 5 with three of the cochairs of the Congressional Friends of the TPP Caucus. Representatives Charles W. Boustany (R-LA), Gregory W. Meeks (D-NY), and David Reichert (R-WA) will discuss what the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) will mean for the U.S. economy. The event will be held from 9:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m. at 1616 Rhode Island Avenue, NW, 2nd Floor Conference Room. [Click here](#) to RSVP. ■

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
Kathleen Rustici, Associate Director
Gregory Poling, Research Associate
Phuong Nguyen, Research Associate
Noelan Arbis, Researcher
Phoebe De Padua, Researcher
Brian Kraft, Researcher
Kyle Springer, Researcher
Kathryn Tinker, Researcher

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