

- **Conclusion and Recommendations**

- **Consortium of NTS Studies in Asia Website**

- **RSIS Centre for NTS Studies Website**

Recommended Citation: Hangzo, Pau Khan Khup and Manpavan Kaur, 2011, 'Pro-government Armed Groups: A Source of Peace or Multipliers of Conflict?', *NTS Alert*, March (Issue 2), Singapore: RSIS Centre for Non-Traditional Security (NTS) Studies for NTS-Asia.

**MacArthur
Asia Security Initiative Blog**
Click here for updates!

5,000 strong state-sanctioned 'private army' of the politically influential Ampatuan family (Human Rights Watch, 2010). The Ampatuan family is headed by Andal Ampatuan, Sr, Maguindanao's Governor from 2001 to 2009. The massacre was allegedly ordered by his son Andal Ampatuan, Jr, who was contesting the post of governor against Ismael Mangudadatu.

In light of this incident, this edition of the NTS Alert takes a critical look at the use of armed groups by states against insurgents in Southeast Asia, using case studies of three countries with active internal armed conflicts, namely, Thailand, the Philippines and Myanmar. Known estimates of such armed groups are as follows: in Thailand, there are more than 3,000 rangers, more than 10,000 Village Protection Volunteers (*Or Ror Bor*), and more than 25,000 Village Development and Self-Defense Volunteers (*Chor Ror Bor*) (ICG, 2007); in the Philippines, the Civilian Armed Forces Geographical Units (CAFGUs) alone number 50,000 volunteers (Special Forces, 2010) and there are an additional 132 private militias with a combined strength of 10,000 (Tan, 2009); in Myanmar, although precise estimates of government-supported armed groups are unavailable, their numbers are believed to be in the tens of thousands.

Despite their significant presence, pro-government non-state armed groups, unlike anti-government non-state armed groups, remain an understudied phenomenon with little attention given to how and why these groups are used and the wider political and security implications of their deployment.

This NTS Alert reveals that non-state armed groups (NSAGs), in general, are widely used by states as force multipliers, to augment a government's armed capability against insurgents. The advantages offered, however, are mostly tactical in nature. On the whole, their contribution to bringing about a lasting solution to armed conflicts is limited. Their widespread use increases the risk of harm to civilians and complicates efforts to negotiate a peaceful solution to long-running internal armed conflicts.

[^ To the top](#)

Understanding Non-state Armed Groups (NSAGs)

NSAGs have a basic command structure, use violence to achieve political ends, are independent from state control and act in opposition to governments (Bruderlein, 2000; Geneva Call, n.d.; ICHRP, 1999). They include terrorists, rebels and insurgents. NSAGs however are not limited to these groups. They also include pro-government armed groups (PGAGs), defined as armed groups that are pro-government or sponsored by the national government, are not part of the regular security forces, are based on some level of organisation and operate in support of government strategies (Carey et al., 2009b; Small Arms Survey, 2010). In all, an estimated 373 PGAGs have been identified worldwide as of 2007. According to Carey et al. (2009a:5), a government surrenders its monopoly on violence and delegates its use to PGAGs for the following incentives:

- *Force multiplier incentive*: PGAGs add to the armed capability of a government, often at less expense than regular forces.
- *Force divider incentive*: Forming an alliance with a group might be perceived by the government as a better alternative to fighting it. The group might not contribute much offensively, but the government perceives the costs of paying the compensation required for an alliance as superior to the costs of confrontation.
- *Force substitute incentive*: Under certain conditions, notably in a post-revolutionary period, governments may not trust their agents that are organised in the regular forces. Non-state actors, normally regarded as less reliable, may under these conditions be seen as more trustworthy than the regular forces with their links to an earlier regime.
- *Knowledge and skills incentive*: Locally recruited volunteers have better local knowledge of the terrain, language and culture than troops brought in from outside.
- *Political incentive*: Where governments face ethnic or secessionist rebellion, they may seek to recruit from among the rebellious populations. Not only do such recruits offer local knowledge, their recruitment also serves to affirm government claims of public support for their cause.

The effectiveness of PGAGs in addressing long-running internal armed conflicts remains debatable. As noted earlier, the advantages that they offer are mostly tactical in nature and, on the whole, their contribution to bringing about a lasting solution to armed conflicts is limited. This is because PGAGs are generally poorly trained and equipped. They also lack the discipline and professionalism of regular forces. As a result, their widespread use increases the risk of harm to civilians. Moreover, the presence of numerous armed actors complicates efforts to negotiate a peaceful solution to long-running internal armed conflicts.

[^ To the top](#)

Pro-government Armed Groups (PGAGs) in Southeast Asia

Southeast Asia is home to a bewildering array of PGAGs. Citizen militias and paramilitary groups are the most common forms of PGAGs in the region. Citizen militias are armed groups comprising ordinary citizens. Paramilitary forces on the other hand are armed groups whose function and organisation resemble those of professional military forces, but are not considered part of a nation's formal military force (ICG, 2007). Table 1 shows NSAGs in countries with active internal armed conflicts in Southeast Asia.

Table 1: A typology of non-state armed groups in Southeast Asia.

Country	Non-state armed groups	
	Pro-government non-state armed groups	Anti-government non-state armed groups
Myanmar	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Border Guard Force (BGF) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ National Democratic Army-Kachin (NDA-K) ○ Democratic Karen Buddhist Army (DKBA) ● Mong Tai Army (MTA) ● Pa-O National Army (PNA) ● Mark Kieng militia 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Karenni Army (KA) ● Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) ● Karen National Defense Organization (KNDO) ● Karen National Union (KNU) ● Karenni National Progressive Party (KNPP) ● Shan State Army-South (SSA-S) ● Kachin Independence Army (KIA) ● Mon National Liberation Army (MNLA) ● Rebellion Resistance Force (RRF) ● KNU-KNLA Peace Council ● Chin National Front (CNF)
Philippines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 'Private armies' (There are an estimated 132 'private armies' with a combined strength of 10,000.) ● Christian militias including the <i>Reform Ilaga Movement</i> (the 'Rats') ● Civilian Volunteer Organizations (CVOs) ● Civilian Armed Forces Geographical Units (CAFGUs) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● New People's Army (NPA) ● Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) ● Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) ● Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG)
Thailand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>Thahan Phran</i> (Ranger force) ● <i>Or Sor</i> (Volunteer Defence Corps) ● <i>Ruam Thai</i> (Thais United) ● <i>Or Ror Bor</i> (Village Protection Volunteers) ● <i>Chor Ror Bor</i> (Village Development and Self-Defense Volunteers) ● <i>Tor Sor Por Chor</i> (National Defense Volunteers) ● <i>Or Por Phor Chor</i> (Civil Defense Volunteers) ● <i>Luk Sua Chaoban</i> (Village Scouts) ● <i>Ruam Thai</i> (Thais United) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>Bersatu</i> (United Front for the Independence of Pattani) ● <i>Barasi Revolusi Nasional</i> (BRN) ● <i>Gerakan Mujahideen Islam Pattani</i> (GMIP) ● Pattani United Liberation Organization (PULO) ● <i>Runda Kumpulan Kecil</i> (RKK)

Source: Human Rights Watch/Asia (1992); The Mong Tai Army (1996); ICG (2000, 2007); Mai (2011); Project Ploughshares (2010); Human Rights Watch (2010).

Note: The table includes only countries with active internal armed conflicts.

Myanmar

Myanmar has long been using breakaway armed groups as proxy militias against opposing armed factions. For example, the Democratic Karen Buddhist Army (DKBA) allied itself with the military after it broke away from the Karen National Union (KNU) in 1994 and has since fought armed groups including the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA). Likewise, the Mong Tai Army (MTA), the strongest opposition army in the Shan State, surrendered to the regime in 1996 (The Mong Tai Army, 1996) and has since served as a state-backed militia. Similarly, the Pa-O National Army (PNA) transformed itself into a regime militia force in 2009 and has been fighting the Shan State Army-South (SSA-S) ever since (Mai, 2011). Myanmar is also in the process of institutionalising its militias. The 2008 Constitution, for example, stipulates that all armed forces in the country must be placed under central military command (Union of Myanmar, 2008: Section 338, Chapter VII). It specifically states that 'the strategy of the *people's militia* shall be carried out under the leadership of the Defence Services' (emphasis added) (Union of Myanmar, 2008: Section 340, Chapter VII). In accordance with this directive, the regime announced in April 2009 its plan to convert certain ethnic group militias into Border Guard Forces (BGFs) under central military control. Under the plan, the ceasefire groups would become state-controlled BGFs subordinate to the military's regional commanders, ceding the right to manage their day-to-day affairs. While some smaller ethnic armies were forced to join, the major ceasefire groups along the border refused to do so. Although information on the number of armed groups that have joined the BGF is sketchy, a senior military general was quoted as saying that 'seventeen ceasefire and small groups have been working together with the state, the army and the people for national development' (Democratic Karen Buddhist Army, 2010).

Thailand

PGAGs have played significant roles in policing and counter-insurgency activities throughout Thai history, particularly against communist and separatist guerrillas during the 1970s and 1980s (ICG, 2010). Their continued expansion is due to the increasing lethality of the separatist violence in the south and the inability of the Thai armed forces to handle the conflict effectively. PGAGs currently in operation in the south consist of both paramilitary forces and citizen militias. Paramilitary forces include the ranger force (*Thahan Phran*) and the Volunteer Defence Corps (*Or Sor*), whereas citizen militias include the Thais United (*Ruam Thai*), the Village Protection Volunteers (*Or Ror Bor*), the Village Development and Self-Defense Volunteers (*Chor Ror Bor*), the National Defense Volunteers (*Tor Sor Por Chor*), the Civil Defense Volunteers (*Or Por Phor Chor*) and the Village Scouts (*Luk Sua Chaoban*) (Sarosi and Sombutpoonsiri, 2009; ICG, 2010). These PGAGs are formed to strengthen internal security, conduct counter-insurgency operations or protect the Buddhist communities in the south who feel threatened by the Muslim-majority population.

Philippines

The Philippine government's twin battles against communist and Muslim insurgencies have opened up space for a plethora of 'private armies' to emerge. 'Private armies' is an umbrella term for paramilitary forces and citizen militias currently in operation in the Philippines. These include the CAFGUs and Civilian Volunteer Organizations (CVOs), among others. As of December 2009, there are an estimated 132 private militias in the country with a combined strength of 10,000 (Tan, 2009; Private Armies, 2010). These groups operate throughout the Philippines, primarily but not exclusively in rural areas, and often but not always where there is an active insurgency. They are considered indispensable and valuable 'force multipliers' (Aben, 2010) by the country's armed forces as they help relieve the overstretched regular forces. However, as the Maguindanao massacre revealed, private armies are also used by powerful politicians to serve their private, and not public, interests.

[^ To the top](#)

Conclusion and Recommendations

The continued reliance of countries in Southeast Asia on poorly trained and loosely supervised PGAGs is an indication of the inability of regular military forces and law enforcement agencies to cope with insurgencies and secessionist movements. However, the effectiveness of these PGAGs is in doubt because they are often equated with predatory tactics and indiscriminate violence. The indiscriminate use of civilian militias, especially those organised around a particular religion or ethnic group, could escalate ongoing low intensity insurgencies into full-blown ones. For example, Thailand's citizen militias are comprised almost exclusively of Buddhists and they are tasked primarily with protecting their communities in southern Thailand. As a result, citizen militias such as the Village Protection Volunteers (*Or Ror Bor*) are viewed with suspicion by the non-Buddhist communities. Similarly, in the southern Philippines, Christian militias such as the Reform Ilaga Movement (the 'Rats') risk escalating the conflicts into open religious and communal violence (Maitem, 2008). In Myanmar, efforts by the military government to incorporate the numerous armed ethnic groups into a single BGF risk a wider conflict between ethnic armed groups and government troops on the one hand, and between ethnic armed groups on the other.

Governments in Southeast Asia must therefore refrain from considering PGAGs solely from the perspective of the short-term tactical military advantages that they offer. They should also consider the long-term socio-economic-political consequences of deploying such armed groups. PGAGs, in the long term, hinder more than they help address conflicts (ICG, 2010). However, dissolving PGAGs has proven to be a tough challenge given the continued inability of the police and regular military to cope with mounting insurgencies in Southeast Asia. For example, even after the Maguindanao massacre, President Benigno Aquino has rejected calls to disband state-funded militias because

'the government did not have enough money to rely solely on overstretched regular military and police forces to fight insurgencies, and as such had to use the cheaper alternative of state-backed paramilitary forces' (Philippines Militias, 2010). In light of these challenges, this NTS Alert concludes with the observation that dissolving PGAGs in a phased manner, rather than all at once, is a better approach as it will give time to governments to improve the capacity of their regular forces. The gradual phasing out of PGAGs thus requires the adoption of a two-pronged strategy, both short-term as well as long-term. They are explained in greater detail below:

Short-term Measures

In the short term, Myanmar, the Philippines and Thailand should attempt to do the following:

- **Impose stricter military, police and legal supervision over paramilitary groups and citizen militias.** The lack of transparency and oversight over the recruitment, training, force structure and deployment of PGAGs has resulted in poorly trained and undisciplined militias and paramilitary forces that commit human rights abuses in the context of counter-insurgency operations. Such abuses take the form of extrajudicial executions, disappearances and arbitrary arrests, among others. Imposing stricter military, police and legal supervision, and imparting additional training, not only in military skills but also in human rights and humanitarian law, are important to improve discipline and curb abuses.
- **Tighten controls on guns and gun licences.** One of the factors that contributed to the rise of NSAGs (both pro- and anti-government) is the ease with which guns can be obtained in Southeast Asia. One key way to regulate NSAGs, therefore, is to implement current gun control laws across the region.

Long-term Measures

In the long term, Myanmar, the Philippines and Thailand should attempt to do the following:

- **Strengthen regular armed forces and police.** Paramilitary groups and militias offer some advantages but neither perform a role that could not in the longer term be carried out as well or better by a professional police or military force. Resources currently devoted to poorly trained and ill-disciplined paramilitary forces and militias that are not held accountable for their actions would be better utilised rationalising and consolidating these PGAGs so that they are co-opted into the regular armed forces and police, thus professionalising and strengthening these forces.
- **Abolish and dismantle all PGAGs.** The implementation of the short-term measures discussed above could pave the way for the eventual abolition of paramilitary forces and militias. The Philippines, for example, have undertaken renewed efforts to dissolve private armies. Although Section 24, Article XVIII of the 1987 Constitution of the Republic of Philippines, calls for the abolishment of all private armies and other armed groups, and the assimilation of paramilitary forces into the regular military force, it is the Maguindanao massacre that has given the abolition of private armies a renewed sense of urgency. In the aftermath of the massacre, the Philippine government set up the Independent Commission against Private Armies (ICAPA) on 24 March 2010 to study the phenomenon of private armies and to find ways to eventually dismantle them (Calica, 2010). Measures along these lines, however, have not been similarly implemented in Myanmar and Thailand. The abolition of PGAGs is a challenge. At the very least, however, the selective abolition of poorly regulated PGAGs can still have a significant effect and assist in conflict resolution in Southeast Asia.

[^ To the top](#)

References

- Aben, Elena L., 2010, 'PNP Disbands CAU; AFP Retains CAFGU', *Manila Bulletin*, 24 November. <http://www.mb.com.ph/node/289317/pnp-di>
- Alave, Kristine L., Jocelyn Uy and Alcuin Papa, 2008, 'New Ilaga Revives Fears of Mindanao in '70s', *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, 29 August. <http://newsinfo.inquirer.net/inquirerheadlines/nation/view/20080829-157470/New-Ilaga-revives-fears-of-Mindanao-in-70s>
- Bruderlein, Claude, 2000, *The Role of Non-state Actors in Building Human Security: The Case of Armed Groups in Intra-State Wars*, Geneva: Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue. [http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/lib.nsf/db900sid/LGEL-5EAAZ5\\$file/hd-security-may00.pdf?openelement](http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/lib.nsf/db900sid/LGEL-5EAAZ5$file/hd-security-may00.pdf?openelement)
- Calica, Aurea, 2010, 'Palace: Private Armies to Be Dismantled', *PhilStar*, 6 July. <http://www.philstar.com/Article.aspx?articleId=590848&publicationSubCategoryId=200>
- Capie, David, 2004, *Armed Groups, Weapons Availability and Misuse: An Overview of the Issues and Options for Action*, Armed Groups

Project Working Paper No. 4, Calgary: Latin America Research Centre, University of Calgary.

http://www.armedgroups.org/sites/armedgroups.org/files/AGP_Working_Paper_4_-_Capie__May_04_.pdf

Carey, Sabine C. and Neil J. Mitchell, 2009, 'Explaining the Nature & Behaviour of Pro-government Armed Groups', Paper presented at a conference on *Pro-Government Armed Groups and Militias*, University of Nottingham, UK, 9–10 July.

http://www.abdn.ac.uk/~was017/uploads/files/PGAG_pres_July%2009.pdf

Carey, Sabine, Bronia Flett and Neil J. Mitchell, 2009a, 'The Nature, Structure and Environment of Pro-government Militias: Notes from Peru, Spain, and the Former Yugoslavia', Paper presented at a workshop on *Understanding Order, Cooperation, and Variance among Non-state Armed Groups*, Queens University, Canada, 19 September. <http://www.esrc.ac.uk/my-esrc/grants/RES-062-23-0363/outputs/Outputs/Download/5dd1b9f8-37dd-4e2b-a6a0-1fed699a2711>

Carey, Sabine, Neil J. Mitchell and Will Lowe, 2009b, 'A New Database on Pro-government Armed Groups', Paper presented at the *Annual Meeting of the ISA's 50th Convention on Exploring the Past, Anticipating the Future*, New York, 15–18 February.

<http://www.abdn.ac.uk/~was017/uploads/files/Carey%20et%20al%20ISA%202009.pdf>

'Democratic Karen Buddhist Army (DKBA) (Myanmar), Groups-Asia-Active', 2010, *Jane's World Insurgency and Terrorism*, 18 November.

<http://www.janes.com/articles/Janes-World-Insurgency-and-Terrorism/Democratic-Karen-Buddhist-Army-DKBA-Myanmar.html>

Fuller, Thomas, 2007, 'Southern Thai Towns Increasingly Rely on Militias', *The New York Times*, 19 March.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2007/03/19/world/asia/19iht-thai.4958722.html>

Geneva Call, n.d., 'About Us'. <http://www.genevacall.org/about/about.htm>

Government of the Philippines, 1987, Executive Order No. 264, *Providing for the Citizen Armed Force*, 25 July.

http://www.lawphil.net/executive/execord/eo1987/eo_264_1987.html

Human Rights Watch/Asia, 1992, *Bad Blood: Militia Abuses in Mindanao, the Philippines*, New York.

<http://www.hrw.org/en/reports/1992/04/01/bad-blood-militia-abuses-mindanao>

Human Rights Watch, 2010, '*They Own the People: The Ampatuans, State-Backed Militias, and Killings in the Southern Philippines*', New York. <http://www.hrw.org/en/reports/2010/11/16/they-own-people-0>

International Council on Human Rights Policy (ICHRP), 1999, *Ends & Means: Human Rights Approaches to Armed Groups*, Geneva.

http://www.ichrp.org/files/reports/6/105_report_en.pdf

International Crisis Group (ICG), 2000, *Burma/Myanmar: How Strong Is the Military Regime?*, ICG Asia Report No. 11, Bangkok/Brussels, 21 December. <http://www.crisisgroup.org/~media/Files/asia/south-east-asia/burma-myanmar/Burma%20Myanmar%20How%20Strong%20is%20the%20Military%20Regime.ashx>

International Crisis Group (ICG), 2007, *Southern Thailand: The Problem with Paramilitaries*, Asia Report No. 140, Jakarta/Brussels, 23 October.

http://www.crisisgroup.org/~media/Files/asia/south-east-asia/thailand/140_southern_thailand___the_problem_with_paramilitaries.ashx

International Crisis Group (ICG), 2010, *Stalemate in Southern Thailand*, Asia Briefing No. 113, Bangkok/Brussels, 3 November.

<http://www.crisisgroup.org/~media/Files/asia/south-east-asia/thailand/B113%20-%20Stalemate%20in%20Southern%20Thailand.ashx>

Mai, Jai Wan, 2011, 'Shan Troops Raid Pa-O Militia Bases; Weapons, Chemicals Seized', *Mizzima*, 3 March.

<http://www.mizzima.com/news/inside-burma/4960-shan-troops-raid-pa-o-militia-bases-weapons-chemicals-seized.html>

Maitem, Jeffrey, 2008, '"Ilaga" Vigilantes Resurface, Warn MILF', *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, 27 August.

<http://newsinfo.inquirer.net/breakingnews/regions/view/20080827-157158/Ilaga-vigilantes-resurface-warn-MILF>

McIndoe, Alastair, 2009, 'Behind the Philippines' Maguindanao Massacre', *TIME*, 27 November.

<http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1943191,00.html>

'Philippines Militias to Remain Despite Abuses', 2010, *Channel NewsAsia*, 23 November.

http://www.channelnewsasia.com/stories/afp_asiapacific/view/1095079/1/.html

Policzer, Pablo, 2005, *Neither Terrorists nor Freedom Fighters*, Armed Groups Project Working Paper No. 5, Calgary: Latin America Research Centre, University of Calgary. http://www.armedgroups.org/sites/armedgroups.org/files/AGP_Working_Paper_5_

'Private Armies in the Philippines: Guns and Goons', 2010, *The Economist*, 7 January. <http://www.economist.com/node/15213347>

Project Ploughshares, 2010, *Armed Conflicts Report 2010*, Ontario, Canada. <http://www.ploughshares.ca/libraries/ACRText/ACR-TitlePage.html>

Republic of the Philippines, 1986, *1987 Constitution of the Republic of the Philippines*, 15 October.

http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_protect/---protrav/---ilo_aids/documents/legaldocument/wcms_126176.pdf

Sarosi, Diana and Janjira Sombutpoonsiri, 2009, *Rule by the Gun: Armed Civilians and Firearms Proliferation in Southern Thailand*, Bangkok: Nonviolence International Southeast Asia.

http://www.humansecuritygateway.com/documents/NVISEA_ArmedCiviliansFirearmsProliferation_Thailand.pdf

Small Arms Survey, 2010, *Small Arms Survey 2010: Gangs, Groups, and Guns*, Geneva: Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies. <http://www.smallarmssurvey.org/publications/by-type/yearbook/small-arms-survey-2010.html>

'Special Forces to Train CAFGUs', 2010, *abs-cbnNEWS.com*, 27 October. <http://www.abs-cbnnews.com/nation/regions/10/27/10/special-forces-troops-train-cafgus>

Tan, Kimberly Jane, 2009, '132 Private Armed Groups Exist Nationwide – DND Chief', *GMA News.TV*, 12 August.

<http://www.gmanews.tv/story/178831/132-private-armed-groups-exist-nationwide-dnd-chief>

'The Mong Tai Army Strikes a Deal with the SLORC', 1996, *Shanland.org*, 3 January. <http://www.shanland.org/oldversion/index-1062.htm>

Union of Myanmar, 2008, *Constitution of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar*, Ministry of Information.

United Nations Treaty Collection, n.d., 'Text and Status of the United Nations Conventions on Terrorism', New York: United Nations.

http://treaties.un.org/Pages/DB.aspx?path=DB/studies/page2_en.xml&menu=MTDSG

Wai, Moe, 2009, 'Border Guard Force Plan Leads to End of Ceasefire', *The Irrawaddy*, 31 August. http://www.irrawaddy.org/article.php?art_id=16691

[^ To the top](#)

Terms of Use:

You are free to publish this material in its entirety or only in part in your newspapers, wire services, internet-based information networks and newsletters and you may use the information in your radio-TV discussions or as a basis for discussion in different fora, provided full credit is given to the author(s) and the Centre for Non-Traditional Security (NTS) Studies, S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS). Kindly inform the publisher (NTS_Centre@ntu.edu.sg) and provide details of when and where the publication was used.

About the Centre:

The Centre for Non-Traditional Security (NTS) Studies of the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies was inaugurated by the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Secretary-General Dr Surin Pitsuwan in May 2008. The Centre maintains research in the fields of Food Security, Climate Change, Energy Security, Health Security as well as Internal and Cross-Border Conflict. It produces policy-relevant analyses aimed at furthering awareness and building capacity to address NTS issues and challenges in the Asia-Pacific region and beyond. The Centre also provides a platform for scholars and policymakers within and outside Asia to discuss and analyse NTS issues in the region.

In 2009, the Centre was chosen by the MacArthur Foundation as a lead institution for the MacArthur Asia Security Initiative, to develop policy research capacity and recommend policies on the critical security challenges facing the Asia-Pacific.

The Centre is also a founding member and the Secretariat for the Consortium of Non-Traditional Security (NTS) Studies in Asia (NTS-Asia). More information on the Centre can be found at www.rsis.edu.sg/nts.