

34TH ASIA-PACIFIC ROUNDTABLE

Disruption Redux

17-18 August 2021

Online via (*platform to be determined*)

Time Zone: Kuala Lumpur time, GMT+8

DRAFT OF PROGRAMME

(As of 19 March 2021)

Day 1

TUESDAY, 17 AUGUST 2021

(All times in GMT+8)

- 0900–0920 **REGISTERED PARTICIPANTS AND ROLE-PLAYERS TO BE ADMITTED TO “NETWORKING/WAITING ROOM”**
- 0920–0930 **WELCOMING REMARKS BY THE CHAIR OF THE ASEAN-ISIS NETWORK**
- 0920–0930 **WELCOMING REMARKS BY THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OF ISIS MALAYSIA**
- 0930–0955 **KEYNOTE ADDRESS AND OFFICIAL OPENING BY THE PRIME MINISTER OF MALAYSIA**
- 0955–1000 **BREAK**
- 1000–1100 **SESSION 1 – THE PANDEMIC AND GLOBAL REALIGNMENT**
The COVID-19 pandemic has been a global litmus test putting governance competency, economic resilience and adaptability, and socio-cultural cohesion on full display. While all countries have been affected by the pandemic, different systems have responded differently, each with its own longstanding repercussions. Despite several problems, the Asia-Pacific region is seen to have managed the pandemic relatively well, in contrast to Europe and North America. How would these changes in perception impact the ongoing global realignment of power and influence? What would be the role of RCEP, the world’s biggest FTA, in facilitating recovery and realignment? Could a faster recovery rate lead to higher enthusiasm in the Asia Pacific for more regionalism? Finally, would Asia Pacific acquire a bigger influence in the framing and conduct of multilateral mechanisms and organisations?
- 1100–1105 **BREAK**
- 1105–1205 **SESSION 2 – ENTRY NOT ALLOWED: THE COST OF BORDER SHUTDOWNS IN SOUTHEAST ASIA**
The forced closure of borders has been among the most significant impact of the global pandemic to Southeast Asia. These shutdowns have posed challenges to the interdependence among ASEAN Member States, ranging from labour and supply chains, to services and capital, and to human mobility. Meanwhile, citizens of a Member State stuck in another may have to face significant socio-economic, if not also political, pressures on top of the difficulties brought about by the pandemic. What are the economic and human costs of border shutdowns in Southeast Asia? How have ASEAN and its Member States moved to address these challenges? As vaccinations pick up in 2021 and 2022, could we see more regularised travel for those already vaccinated?
- 1205–1210 **BREAK**

1210-1310 **SESSION3 - MANAGING DISRUPTED TRADE: GOING DIGITAL**
Lockdown measures have disrupted trade in many economies and created long-term impacts for global and regional supply chains. An increasing number of people are working, shopping, connecting, and meeting remotely, a trend that is likely to persist at some level even as vaccines become more widely available. The pandemic has also accelerated pre-existing trends including increased digital trade and shifts to Industry 4.0 technologies, creating greater impetus for developing countries to digitise their economies and upskill their labour force. Yet progress on these fronts have been deeply uneven between countries and even within different groups and regions in a country. How can countries leverage digital trade to alleviate the impacts of the pandemic and increase the pace of economic recovery? How can different countries make digital trade more inclusive for its micro, small and medium enterprises? What are the challenges faced by different countries in the region in strengthening their digital trade platforms and activities? Is there a role for regional cooperation on these initiatives?

Day 2

WEDNESDAY, 18 AUGUST 2021

(All times in GMT+8)

0900-0930 **REGISTERED PARTICIPANTS AND ROLE-PLAYERS TO BE ADMITTED TO “NETWORKING/WAITING ROOM”**

0930-1030 **SESSION 4 - SIMMERING WATERS AND UNSETTLING UNDERCURRENTS: THE NEW NORMAL OF THE SOUTH CHINA SEA DISPUTE**
The Code of Conduct for the South China Sea was supposed to be completed by 2021, but would likely to be delayed by the ongoing pandemic. At the same time, the previous year saw rising tensions in territorial dispute with high profile reports of harassment of fishing and hydrocarbon exploration activities. This in turn has further aggravated the risk of the dispute being subsumed under the US-China competitive dynamics. Beyond the strategic and territorial disputes, the maritime ecosystem of the South China Sea also continues to suffer from sustained degradation. How has recent developments impacted ASEAN and its claimant states? How close are China and ASEAN to reach a Code of Conduct, and what are the main points of progress and hurdles? What are the impacts of these developments on coastal communities and how could they be mitigated?

1030-1035 **BREAK**

1035-1135 **SESSION 5 - INFLEXIBLE AND UNPREPARED: THE NEED FOR INNOVATIVE AND AGILE GOVERNANCE IN A RUPTURED ORDER**
The disruptive impact of the pandemic has obliged governments across the Asia Pacific to radically adapt how they design and execute policies. Not all have responded equally, with some struggling, or unwilling, to innovate long-ingrained processes. Yet the need for more agility in governance might be a permanent feature for policymakers, given the multitude of disruptive crises on the foreseeable horizon. This include future pandemics and global crises emanating from the water-energy-food nexus. What are the main causes of governments’ inflexibility in responding to a crisis? What options are available to incentivise governments to adopt innovation and technology? Is there a space for Future Studies to contribute a solution in this context? Aside from public health and food security, what are the ongoing issues and future crises that necessitate governments to adopt agile governance right now?

1135-1140 **BREAK**

1140-1240

SESSION 6 - TECHNOLOGY AND RECOVERY IN THE NEWNORMAL

Technology plays a significant role in facilitating governance, economic activity and education during the COVID-19 pandemic. Technologies that enable surveillance, contact tracing, telemedicine, delivery services and digital platforms have each seen an uptick in deployment in this challenging period. While high rates of technological adoption could deepen the digital maturity of a nation, the risks of exploitation of technologies and its wealth of data remain, especially with an ill-prepared regulation environment and the general uncertainty on pandemic recovery. What technologies could boost national recovery in the emerging new normal? How would the gaps between developed and developing states impact the process of a global recovery? Are there limitations to the positive trajectory of surveillance and would there be challenges to implementing limitations to surveillance? How could regional institutions such as ASEAN and the EU leverage on technologies to support recovery in Member States?

1240-1300

CLOSING REMARKS BY THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OF ISIS MALAYSIA

END