

Session: Southeast Asia and LIO

Date/Time: April 25, 2018 / 13:30-15:00

Rapporteur:

Jeanne Choi, Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies, Johns Hopkins University

Moderator:

Lee Jaehyon, The Asan Institute for Policy Studies

Speakers:

Ernest Z. Bower, BowerGroupAsia

Adriana Elisabeth, Indonesian Institute of Sciences (LIPI)

Mohamed Jawhar, Institute of Strategic and International Studies
Malaysia

Ravi Velloor, *The Straits Times*

Session Sketch:

Session 4, Southeast Asia and LIO, examined the role of ASEAN in maintaining the LIO in Southeast Asia in the face of domestic challenges and growing great power rivalry in the region. Panelists discussed their views on what the LIO means to the countries of Southeast Asia and what future challenges ASEAN and its member countries would have to address.

Ernest Bower began the session by asserting the important role Southeast Asia would increasingly play, as the center of geopolitical and economic gravity shifts towards where the Indian and Pacific Oceans meet. He argued that while ASEAN is sometimes criticized

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as being too soft without legally binding mechanisms of enforcement, that is the institution’s strength. Adriana Elisabeth continued the discussion by describing the diversity of ASEAN member countries with regards to democracy, but contended that it was perhaps not accurate to say that ASEAN was a part of the illiberal world order just because not all members had implemented every universal principle of the liberal order. Mohamed Jawhar pointed out that the core of the LIO is a rule-based order and argued that ASEAN has been one of the best adherents to a rule-based order, as codified in its foundational Declaration and Charter, as well as in its actions. He continued by outlining the challenges that ASEAN faces, including good governance, equitable and sustainable growth, security, corruption, and major power rivalries. Ravi Velloor contended that Southeast Asia as a region was one of the biggest beneficiaries of the LIO, but now would need to face the emergence of new challenges, including the rise of China, human rights violations, and changing American foreign policy. He cautioned the countries in the region to remember the lessons of history and recall that whenever Southeast Asia ignored the rules of the LIO in favor of expediency, it had suffered.

Panelists wrapped up the discussion by responding to questions regarding ASEAN’s role in the wider security community, the future of ASEAN leadership, and what ASEAN can do to strengthen and maintain the LIO.

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