

Southeast Asia from Scott Circle

Volume V | Issue 24 | November 26, 2014

Jokowi Spells Out Vision for Indonesia's "Global Maritime Nexus"

ADELLE NEARY

Adelle Neary is Visiting Thawley Fellow with the Sumitro Chair for Southeast Asia Studies at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington, D.C.

November 26, 2014

The economic and security conundrum posed by Indonesia's archipelagic geography is not new. The combination of 17,000 islands with an underfunded navy and poor port infrastructure results in widespread piracy, illegal fishing, and smuggling. The extraordinarily high costs of transporting goods domestically makes it cheaper for Indonesians to consume foreign goods than domestic ones, and makes the nation function more as a **collection of weakly integrated economies** than as a unified market.

Successive Indonesian leaders have struggled with these economic and security challenges. Indonesia's new president, Joko "Jokowi" Widodo, wants to tackle them and embrace Indonesia's geography as an asset, not a disadvantage. Maritime policy will be a top priority for Jokowi's first few years in office, which offers the United States and other partners opportunities for cooperation with Indonesia on maritime security.

Since his inauguration in October, Jokowi's public remarks to a range of audiences, both domestic and international, have made reference to his vision for Indonesia as a "global maritime nexus." The content of this policy remained largely rhetorical until Jokowi's speech to the East Asia Summit (EAS) in Naypyidaw, where he explained the five underlying pillars of the policy:

Inside This Issue

BIWEEKLY UPDATE

- Obama ends Myanmar visit with call for more reforms
- Jokowi cuts fuel subsidies, raising prices more than 30 percent
- Court hears challenge to U.S.–Philippines defense agreement

LOOKING AHEAD

- Malaysia as Incoming 2015 ASEAN Chair
- Strategic Asia book launch
- Implementing Human Rights as a Path to Democracy in Vietnam

Jokowi Spells Out Vision for Indonesia's "Global Maritime Nexus" (*continued*)

1. A revival of Indonesia's *maritime culture*, recognizing the link between the country's archipelagic geography, identity, and livelihood;
2. Improved management of Indonesia's oceans and fisheries through the development of the country's fishing industry and building *maritime "food sovereignty" and security*;
3. Boosting Indonesia's *maritime economy* by improving the country's port infrastructure, shipping industry, and maritime tourism;
4. *Maritime diplomacy* that encourages Indonesia's partners to work together to eliminate conflict arising over illegal fishing, breaches of sovereignty, territorial disputes, piracy, and environmental concerns like marine pollution; and
5. Bolstering Indonesia's maritime defenses, both to support the country's *maritime sovereignty* and wealth, and to fulfill its role in maintaining safety of navigation and *maritime security*.

Jokowi has appointed Indonesia's first coordinating minister for maritime affairs, Indroyono Soesilo, who will assume oversight for the ministers for transport, tourism, energy, and fisheries. Indroyono, a U.S.-educated technocrat, returned from a posting as the director of fisheries at the United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organization to take up the coordinating post. On paper, Indroyono's maritime affairs portfolio looks to have real clout, but realizing its potential will be tricky because it cuts across ministries in which institutionalized self-interest and rent-seeking will prompt resistance to integration and change.

Funding for the five maritime policy pillars will need to be redirected from other areas of government spending. Jokowi has eased some of the budget pressure by recently cutting expensive domestic fuel subsidies. But while some of the \$8 billion saved by raising fuel prices will be available for infrastructure construction, much of it is earmarked for the government's health, education, and agriculture budgets.

Indroyono has said that Indonesia needs to invest an estimated \$6 billion to transform its inadequate port infrastructure. Jokowi used his [Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation summit speech](#) to implore foreign investors to provide the funding required for vital upgrades to the country's ports. The government hopes that foreign firms will be tempted by Jokowi's

Jokowi Spells Out Vision for Indonesia's "Global Maritime Nexus" *(continued)*

"open for business" sales pitch as its own coffers will be able to contribute only part of the cost of these massive projects.

The new coordinating ministry is important, but changing the lines of reporting within the cabinet will not be enough to make ministries work together. Jokowi must be indefatigable in coaxing the notoriously glacial bureaucracy to work collaboratively, strategically, and in an integrated manner to realize his maritime infrastructure goals. The cabinet also needs to remain circumspect as to how much domestic integration is economically efficient. Integration is not a panacea, and there must be consideration of cases in which regions may trade more efficiently internationally than with Java.

On the maritime security and diplomatic aspects of Jokowi's new policy, Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi will play a leading role. She has signaled her intention to deploy a more assertive, bilaterally driven, and self-interested approach to Indonesian diplomacy.

Retno has said she plans to continue to press [for the completion of a code of conduct](#) in the South China Sea between China and ASEAN. The United States has been more explicit in recent months about its desire to see a code of conduct finalized and a freeze on provocative acts in the South China Sea implemented. Washington will welcome more forceful Indonesian leadership on efforts within ASEAN to reduce tensions in the disputed sea.

In his EAS speech, Jokowi said Indonesia is "obliged" as a "fulcrum between two oceans" to bolster its maritime defenses both to protect its own sovereignty and for regional safety of navigation and maritime security. [Indonesia's navy will benefit](#) from a targeted funding boost, as part of a planned increase in overall defense spending to around 1.5 percent of gross domestic product within five years from 0.9 percent at present. Coordinating Minister for Politics, Law, and Security Tedjo Edy Purdijatno, a former navy chief, has said the navy will acquire new submarines and other patrol and combat vessels.

Tedjo has also [signaled his plan](#) to create a new coast guard to "make sure businesses that use sea transportation are not harmed." Indonesia



Trucks line up for unloading at Jakarta's Tanjung Priok port. President Joko "Jokowi" Widodo has called on foreign investors to help fund much-needed upgrades to Indonesia's maritime infrastructure—one of the five pillars of his maritime nexus policy. <https://www.flickr.com/photos/cifor/5236260637/>

Jokowi Spells Out Vision for Indonesia's "Global Maritime Nexus" *(continued)*



U.S. secretary of state John Kerry meets Indonesia's president Joko "Jokowi" Widodo on October 20 during Jokowi's inauguration in Jakarta. Jokowi's maritime nexus policy presents intriguing opportunities for the United States and other partners to work more closely with Indonesia on issues of maritime security and diplomacy. <https://www.flickr.com/photos/statephotos/15395677629/>

has long aspired to create a unified branch to replace the motley group of agencies that handle different aspects of maritime and port security. An adequately resourced coast guard will be well-placed to tackle the illegal smuggling of commodities, in which the Indonesian police and military have taken part in occasionally violent competition.

With Indonesia looking ready to flex more diplomatic and strategic muscle, it will be important that it continue to channel sensitive issues, including with China over the waters and seabed off the Natuna Islands in the South China Sea, through regional security apparatuses.

For Indonesia's trading and security partners, Jokowi's maritime policy presents interesting opportunities for collaboration. The U.S. and Indonesian navies have cooperated on a range of issues in recent years including anti-piracy efforts; joint training activities like the Komodo Multilateral Exercise, Cooperation Afloat Readiness and Training, the Rim of the Pacific, and those under the ASEAN Defense Ministers Meeting-Plus (ADMM+); and forums such as ADMM+ and the Expanded ASEAN Maritime Forum. The habits of cooperation are becoming more established and could now be leveraged in bilateral areas to support Jokowi's maritime vision. ■



*President Barack Obama gives a joint press conference with opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi after visiting with her in her home in Yangon. The president hailed Myanmar's reform progress but warned that it is not "complete or irreversible."
<https://www.flickr.com/photos/statephotos/15791182182/>*

MYANMAR

- **Obama ends Myanmar visit with call for more reforms.** President Barack Obama on November 14 ended his three-day visit to Myanmar with a call for the government to hasten its political reform process. Obama held a joint press conference with opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi in Yangon in which he warned that reforms are not "complete or irreversible," alluding to possible repercussions from the United States should Myanmar backslide. The message was more pointed than that delivered to President Thein Sein a day earlier in Naypyidaw, in which Obama praised Myanmar's reform progress.
- **Parliament speaker says no constitutional changes until after 2015 elections.** Shwe Mann, speaker of Myanmar's parliament, said November 18 that proposed amendments to the constitution, including removing a clause that prevents opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi from serving as president, would not be considered by the legislature until after elections in late 2015. He said that a nationwide referendum on possible amendments could be held by next May, but the elections will need to be held under the current constitution.
- **Army fires on Kachin military academy, killing 23.** Twenty-three Kachin Independence Army (KIA) soldiers were killed on November 19 when government troops shelled an academy in the northern border town of Laiza. More than a dozen others were reported injured. A military official in the Kachin State capital, Myitkyina, said November 21 that the military regretted the loss of life and intended the attack as a warning after Kachin rebels assaulted government troops constructing a road in the area. The KIA has denied that report. Representatives from a number of ethnic groups are warning that the shelling threatens to derail ongoing talks for a nationwide cease-fire.
- **Peace Corps to open in Myanmar in 2015.** The White House on November 13 announced that the United States will launch a Peace Corps program in Myanmar for the first time. The announcement came while President Barack Obama was in Naypyidaw for the East Asia and U.S.-ASEAN summits. The first Peace Corps volunteers are expected to arrive in late 2015, two years after Myanmar submitted a formal request for a program.
- **Students threaten more protests over education law.** Students in Yangon on November 18 threatened a nationwide protest over a law barring students from engaging in political activities and limiting academic

freedom. The law, passed in September, put education policy solely in the hands of an unelected body that includes government ministers. Student groups have accused the body of using its new authority to crack down on student unions and block the teaching of classes in local, non-Burman languages.

INDONESIA

- Jokowi cuts fuel subsidies, raising prices more than 30 percent.** President Joko “Jokowi” Widodo on November 17 cut government subsidies on gasoline and diesel fuel, precipitating a price jump of more than 30 percent. The subsidy cut will free up some of the \$20 billion the government was expected to spend on the subsidies. The president has been rolling out social welfare programs to blunt the cost of the price increases on the poor. Finance Minister Bambang Brodjonegoro said the government expects inflation for 2014 to jump 2 percentage points, to 7.3 percent, as a result of the price hike.
- Jokowi unveils new maritime doctrine.** President Joko “Jokowi” Widodo elaborated on his foreign policy vision of Indonesia as a maritime axis during a November 17 speech at the East Asia Summit in Naypyidaw. Jokowi said the new doctrine consists of five pillars: (1) reviving Indonesia’s maritime culture, (2) building maritime food security, (3) boosting the maritime economy, (4) engaging in maritime diplomacy, and (5) supporting sovereignty and maritime security. Jokowi specifically addressed the South China Sea issue, calling on all parties to exercise restraint and seek a solution based on international law.
- Japanese, Korean banks to finance \$1.5 billion LNG project in Indonesia.** A group of Japanese and Korean lenders have banded together to provide \$1.5 billion in financing for the planned Donggi-Senoro liquefied natural gas (LNG) project on the Indonesian island of Sulawesi, according to a November 14 Bloomberg report. Japan’s Mitsubishi will run the facility, which will begin operations in mid-2015 with an annual production capacity of 2 million tons of LNG. Japan and South Korea are the world’s top importers of LNG, accounting for 37 and 17 percent of international demand respectively.
- Rights group says over 700,000 Indonesians are slavery victims.** The Walk Free Foundation on November 17 released a report on modern slavery showing that more than 700,000 Indonesians are victims of slavery or human trafficking. Indonesia ranked 102nd out of 167 countries in the Global Slavery Index, which measures the size of the slavery problem, existing responses, and contributing factors in each country. Walk Free



Jakarta gas seller moving a cart full of empty fuel canisters. Indonesia’s government recently slashed its costly fuel subsidies in a move that is expected to have widespread effects on fuel consumption in the country. <https://www.flickr.com/photos/killerturnip/5798883896>

assigned the Indonesian government a “B” grade for its slavery response, which has included improvements to government coordination and increased capacity building to combat the problem.

- **Jokowi appoints graft buster as head of oil and gas regulator.** President Joko “Jokowi” Widodo on November 18 appointed Amien Sunaryadi, a former deputy chairman of the Corruption Eradication Commission, as head of the Upstream Oil and Gas Regulatory Special Task Force, known as SKKMigas, which oversees the operation of oil and gas companies in Indonesia. Energy and Mineral Resources Minister Sudirman Said said Sunaryadi was chosen to reform the notoriously corrupt agency. The previous chairman, Rudi Rubiandini, was sentenced to seven years in prison in April for accepting bribes.

THAILAND

- **Military spokesman says “boat people huge burden for Thailand.”** Thai military spokesperson Col. Banpot Phupian said November 13 that the massive influx of asylum seekers and migrants arriving by boat in Thailand from places such as Myanmar and Bangladesh is placing a financial burden on the country. Phupian said Thailand finds it difficult to provide shelter and food for these “boat people” by itself and called on human rights groups and nongovernmental organizations for assistance. Thailand has been criticized for its spotty record in dealing with boat people, with authorities at times forcing arriving vessels back out to sea and being complicit in trafficking migrants.
- **Thailand cuts expected annual growth as quarterly numbers disappoint.** Thailand’s National Economic and Social Development Board has slashed its prediction for 2014 economic growth to just 1 percent from 1.5-2 percent, according to a November 17 Reuters report. The reduced estimate followed news that the economy grew a disappointing 1.1 percent in the third quarter, well short of the 1.8 percent predicted by economists polled by Reuters. Experts blamed drops in exports and tourist arrivals for the slow growth, which has cast doubt on the junta’s promises to revitalize Thailand’s flagging economy.
- **Constitutional committee to meet with political parties for input.** The junta-appointed Constitution Drafting Committee on November 11 invited political parties to meet with it on November 24–25 to propose ideas for the new constitution expected in 2015. Democrat Party leader Abhisit Vejjajiva on November 12 asked authorities to ease an ongoing ban on political gatherings so that parties could fulfill the committee’s request. The junta’s National Council for Peace and Order responded that it will



A Toyota factory in Thailand. A slump in exports and tourism is dragging down Thailand’s economic growth, which is now expected to total just 1 percent for 2014. <https://www.flickr.com/photos/joshsjackson/3572867051/>

consider on a case-by-case basis requests by political parties to conduct meetings.

- **Junta to keep martial law for foreseeable future.** Justice Minister Gen. Paiboon Koomchaya on November 21 told Reuters that martial law in Thailand will remain in place for the foreseeable future. The government had repeatedly promised to lift martial law once order was reestablished and its failure to do so has drawn increasing criticism both at home and abroad. Those in the tourism sector have been especially eager to see martial law lifted, as its continuation has contributed to an ongoing slump in tourist arrivals.
- **Web editor sentenced to prison for lèse-majesté.** A military court on November 24 sentenced Nut Rungwong, editor of the now defunct Thai E-News website, to four and a half years in prison for lèse-majesté. Nut was convicted for defaming King Bhumibol Aduyadej by publishing an article in 2009 written by political scientist Giles Ji Ungpakor, who fled to the United Kingdom that year. Nut's conviction was the second for lèse-majesté in November and the latest in an ongoing crackdown by the military government.

PHILIPPINES

- **Court hears challenge to U.S.-Philippines defense agreement.** Opponents of the U.S.-Philippines Expanded Defense Cooperation Agreement on November 18 called on the Philippine Supreme Court to rule the pact unconstitutional. They argue that the agreement, signed in April, would allow foreign troops and foreign bases on Philippine soil, which would require a treaty approved by the Philippine Congress. Manila maintains that a rotational U.S. troop presence is legal under the existing Visiting Forces Agreement between the two countries and therefore a treaty is unnecessary. A Supreme Court spokesperson said it would likely take several months for the court to issue a ruling.
- **Violent clashes in southern Philippines leave 20 dead.** A regional military spokesperson on November 14 confirmed reports that increased clashes between the army and militants in the southern Philippines have left as many as 20 dead, including five plantation workers, six soldiers, and nine members of the militant group Abu Sayyaf. The increasing violence is being attributed to a new push by the Philippine military and law enforcement to crack down on the extremist organization.
- **Filipino allegedly among ISIS fighters in beheading video.** The Daily Mail Online on November 18 reported that a Filipino national was among



U.S. Navy sailors train Philippine counterparts during the annual Cooperation Afloat Readiness and Training exercises in June. The Supreme Court of the Philippines is hearing a challenge to the constitutionality of the U.S.-Philippines defense pact signed in April. <https://www.flickr.com/photos/compacflt/14373005667/>

a group of Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) fighters seen in a video beheading 18 Syrian soldiers. A Philippine military spokesperson could not confirm the authenticity of the video, but said that the military was working with local leaders to prevent any ISIS recruitment efforts. Members of the southern Philippine terrorist groups Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters and Abu Sayyaf publicly pledged their support for ISIS in August.

- **Remittances up nearly 8 percent in September.** The Central Bank of the Philippines on November 16 reported that remittances from overseas Filipinos reached \$2.1 billion in September, up from \$1.9 billion during the same period in 2013. Money sent home from Filipinos living abroad is a major source of economic growth for the Philippines, significantly outpacing other forms of overseas investment. The biggest sources of cash remittances were from Filipinos living in the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Japan, Hong Kong, and Singapore.
- **Aquino announces additional \$2 billion in defense spending by 2017.** President Benigno Aquino on November 17 gave a speech at the Philippines' Department of National Defense in which he outlined plans for an additional \$2 billion in military spending by 2017. Most of the procurement spending is expected to go toward the modernization of the Armed Forces of the Philippines. Aquino said the funds will also be used to increase maritime capabilities to protect national sovereignty amid ongoing disputes with China in the South China Sea.

VIETNAM

- **Prime Minister bounces back in second parliamentary confidence vote.** Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung on November 15 won confidence votes from 64 percent of the National Assembly in what was the second vote of confidence on top officials in the one-party communist state. Dung received the lowest approval rating in a similar confidence vote from lawmakers in 2013. President Truong Tan Sang, often described as Dung's political rival, won confidence votes from 76 percent of lawmakers. The vote is believed to carry broad implications for officials seeking positions at the next Vietnamese Communist Party congress in early 2016.
- **Vietnam Airlines stock market listing fails to attract foreign investors.** Vietnam Airlines raised \$51.3 million in a stock market listing on November 14, but failed to attract any foreign institutional investors. Foreign investors have bought \$173 million in Vietnamese shares in 2014, but have avoided new listings of state-owned enterprises. The government plans to



Vietnamese prime minister Nguyen Tan Dung, who received a higher approval rating from National Assembly members in a recent parliamentary confidence vote than he did in 2013. <https://www.flickr.com/photos/worldeconomicforum/14057052828>

sell shares of more than 400 companies by the end of 2015, but a lack of investor enthusiasm could pose challenges to ongoing efforts to privatize the debt-ridden state-owned sector.

- **U.S. confectionary company pays \$370 million for stake in Vietnamese snack food company.** U.S. confectionary company Mondelez International on November 10 announced it will pay \$370 million for an 80 percent stake in Vietnamese snack food company Kinh Do. The deal will give Mondelez a range of top-selling snacks and a distribution network throughout Vietnam. Mondelez is seeking growth in Asia-Pacific markets, which made up 14 percent of the company's revenue in 2013, given sluggish demand in the United States. The deal is subject to approval from Kinh Do's shareholders in December.
- **Thai tycoon looks to buy stake in Vietnam's largest brewer.** Thai Beverage, which is owned by Thailand's third-richest man, Charoen Sirivadhanabhakdi, has approached the Vietnamese government to buy a stake in Vietnam's largest brewer, Sabeco, according to a November 14 *Wall Street Journal* report. Sabeco is valued at about \$2 billion and controlled 46 percent of Vietnam's beer market in 2013. The government reportedly considered selling its stake in the company in the past but decided to postpone that move due to a number of procedural issues.
- **WTO announces final ruling on Vietnam's shrimp antidumping lawsuit against the United States.** The World Trade Organization (WTO) on November 17 ruled that aspects of the U.S. Department of Commerce's antidumping duties on Vietnamese frozen shrimp exports are in violation of international trade laws. The Department of Commerce has long accused Vietnamese shrimp exporters of dumping practices and maintains a 25.7 percent tariff on imported Vietnamese shrimp. The Vietnamese government requested consultations on the matter with the United States in 2012 and asked the WTO settle the dispute in 2013.

MALAYSIA

- **Malaysia's economy grows at slower pace as sluggish global demand hurts exports.** Malaysia's central bank on November 14 reported that economic growth slowed in the third quarter of 2014 as sluggish global demand hurt exports. The economy grew 0.9 percent in the third quarter, compared to 1.9 percent in the previous quarter. The central bank said it expects public- and private-sector investment to drive growth in 2015 as consumer spending remains moderate. The government expects economic growth of between 5 and 6 percent and inflation of between 4 and 5 percent in 2015.

- **Malaysia monitoring returning Islamic State fighters.** Deputy Home Minister Junaidi Tuanku Jaafar on November 17 said police are closely monitoring Malaysians who are trying to return home to spread their extremist ideology after fighting for the Islamic State in Syria and Iraq (ISIS). Malaysian media reported that five militants have returned to Malaysia, three of whom have been arrested. Malaysia has identified 39 citizens fighting for ISIS and arrested 23 people allegedly involved in Islamic State activities this year.
- **Work starts in Ukraine to collect wreckage of Malaysia Airlines Flight 17.** Recovery workers in rebel-controlled eastern Ukraine on November 16 started collecting debris from the crash site of Malaysia Airlines Flight 17 four months after the crash. Dutch investigators and officials from the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe supervised the operation to move the debris to the city of Kharkiv, which is controlled by the Ukrainian government. The investigation into the cause of the crash is being conducted in both Kharkiv and the Netherlands.
- **Falling commodity prices hit Malaysia's currency and stock market.** Falling prices for oil, rubber, and palm oil have dealt a blow to Malaysia's currency and stock market, according to a November 17 *Wall Street Journal* report. The Malaysian ringgit recently hit a four-year low against the U.S. dollar as investors pulled \$2.5 billion out of Malaysian stocks and bonds in October. Weak commodity exports have hurt the government's revenue and budget, given that Malaysia derives 30 percent of its revenue from the oil and gas sector.



A memorial at Amsterdam's main international airport for the passengers killed on Malaysia Airlines Flight 17. Wreckage from the crash is only now being recovered. http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Bloemenzee_op_Schiphol_voor_slachtoffers_MH17_2.JPG



Ships make their final approach to Singapore. The supply of fuel to ships in the city-state's ports may be disrupted due to the bankruptcy of a key supplier. <https://www.flickr.com/photos/39551170@N02/6349813718>

SINGAPORE

- **Bankruptcy of shipping fuel supplier sends shockwaves through Singapore's port.** The bankruptcy of giant Denmark-based shipping fuel supplier OW Bunker on November 7 could potentially disrupt operations at Singapore's busy port. Suppliers to the company are worried they will not be paid while buyers struggle to find other sources on short notice. The cause of the bankruptcy was an alleged \$125 million fraud at the company's Singaporean subsidiary. The bunker fuel industry in Singapore is worth \$20 to \$25 billion in sales annually.
- **Singapore offers to help India develop smart cities.** Singapore senior minister of state Masagos Zulkifli on November 15 told visiting Indian journalists the city-state is ready to help develop New Delhi and other Indian cities into "smart cities." Indian prime minister Narendra Modi, who aspires to develop 100 smart cities across India, has said Singapore's

approach to urban planning is a model for India. Singapore has helped authorities in several Chinese cities with urban planning.

- **Singapore maintains ranking as best place in the world to do business.** Singapore remains the best place in the world to do business, according to the Economist Intelligence Unit's annual survey released on November 19. Singapore has topped the ranking for seven consecutive years. The survey ranked Malaysia 19th, Thailand 34th, the Philippines 53rd, Indonesia 56th, and Vietnam 59th. Singapore also topped the World Bank's Ease of Doing Business report released in October.

SOUTH CHINA SEA

- **Chinese reclamation work could lead to first airstrip in Spratlys.** Airbus Defense and Space satellite imagery taken on August 8 and November 14 revealed that China recently undertook significant reclamation work on Fiery Cross Reef that appears geared toward establishing China's first airstrip in the disputed Spratly Islands, according to IHS Jane's 360. Fiery Cross is currently the largest facility operated by the Chinese Navy in the Spratly islands. The reclamation project is the fourth undertaken by China in the past year according to Jane's, though the Philippine government has accused China of reclamation on at least five other features.
- **Philippine court convicts nine Chinese fishermen for poaching.** A Philippine court on November 24 found nine Chinese fishermen guilty of poaching endangered sea turtles but imposed no jail time. The fishermen were arrested in the disputed Spratly Islands in May. The court ordered each to pay a fine of more than \$100,000 for violating Philippine fishing laws. China had pressured the Philippines to release the fishermen, claiming they were fishing in Chinese territorial waters, but the Philippines maintains that they were within its 200 nautical mile exclusive economic zone and therefore violated Philippine law.

CAMBODIA

- **Opposition party activists arrested.** Authorities in mid-November arrested four members of the opposition Cambodian National Rescue Party (CNRP) in connection with a July 15 protest in Phnom Penh that turned violent. Two have been released, but CNRP information head Meach Sovannara and youth wing leader Tep Narin—arrested on November 11 and 13, respectively—remain in custody. Critics have decried the arrests as politically motivated, accusing Prime Minister Hun Sen and his ruling Cambodian People's Party of trying to pressure the CNRP to give way in contentious negotiations over a new National Election Committee law.



A 2013 demonstration in support of the opposition Cambodian National Rescue Party (CNRP). Authorities arrested four CNRP activists in November, allegedly for their involvement in July protests, in what is widely seen as a politically motivated move. <https://www.flickr.com/photos/jacquicollis/10439378344/>

- **Former Khmer Rouge leaders' trial postponed due to boycott.** The UN-backed court handling the trials of former Khmer Rouge leaders Khieu Samphan and Nuon Chea for genocide and other crimes adjourned proceedings on November 24 until January 8 due to a continuing boycott of the proceedings by Samphan's lawyers. Both defense teams launched a boycott on October 18 after filing a motion to disqualify judges in the case over alleged bias. But Chea's team returned to court on November 10 after that motion was dismissed. The court has threatened to assign Samphan a new defense team if the boycott continues.

ASEAN

- **Four U.S. trade missions to visit ASEAN in 2015.** President Barack Obama on November 13 announced that four U.S. trade delegations will travel to ASEAN countries in 2015. He made the announcement following the U.S.-ASEAN Summit in Naypyidaw. The first delegation will be led by a senior U.S. official and will focus on the health sector in the Philippines and Indonesia. Subsequent trips are planned to Vietnam and Malaysia, including a delegation accompanying the Extraordinary Meeting of the Friends of the Lower Mekong, which will highlight regional energy security and sustainability.
- **Japan joins in first talks with ASEAN defense ministers.** Japanese defense minister Akinori Eto on November 19 for the first time attended an unofficial meeting with the defense ministers of all 10 ASEAN countries in the city of Bagan in southern Myanmar. The ministers reached a consensus agreement on regional security issues, including disaster response and maritime security, according to Kyodo News. During the meeting, Eto also expressed the need to think beyond peaceful means of defending the region.

LAOS

- **Laos launches bid to immunize 1.6 million children against rubella, measles.** President Choummaly Sayasone on November 12 launched the National Measles and Rubella Immunization Campaign, which aims to vaccinate 1.6 million children ages 9 months to 10 years in order to eradicate rubella and measles in Laos by 2017. The campaign began in Vientiane and moved to the southeastern province of Xekong where 30,000 children received measles and rubella vaccinations on November 15. The campaign will continue across the country over the course of November.
- **Government sets healthcare reform targets.** The Ministry of Health on November 15 outlined a plan to reform Laos's healthcare system between



President Barack Obama delivering a speech on November 14 at the Young Southeast Asian Leaders Initiative Town Hall in Yangon, Myanmar. The president announced during his trip to Myanmar that four U.S. trade delegations will visit Southeast Asia in 2015. <https://www.flickr.com/photos/statephotos/15170178953/>

2016 and 2020. The ministry hopes to make improvements in five priority areas: infrastructure and service quality; human resource development; health financing; governance, organization, and management; and modernizing the health information system. The ministry estimates the cost at approximately \$2.8 million.

MEKONG RIVER

- **Mekong River Commission holds strategy forum.** The Mekong River Commission held a regional forum in Siem Reap, Cambodia, on November 20-22 to involve stakeholders in the process of updating its Basin Development Strategy. The forum brought together experts, nongovernmental organizations, civil society, the private sector, regional and international organizations, and government officials to discuss food security, climate change, hydropower, regional cooperation, fisheries, tourism, and other issues affecting development along the river. The Mekong River Commission includes Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, and Vietnam. ■



A fisherman in Luang Prabang, Laos, casts his net in the Mekong. The Mekong River Commission held a strategy forum on November 20-22 to gather input on issues facing the river and those who rely on it for their livelihoods. <https://www.flickr.com/photos/latigi/4367826633>

Looking Ahead

- **Malaysia as Incoming 2015 ASEAN Chair.** The ASEAN Studies Center at American University will host a symposium on December 2 looking at what to expect from Malaysia as ASEAN chair in 2015. The all-day event will feature presentations by prominent Southeast Asia scholars, U.S. government officials, and members of the nongovernmental community. The event will be held from 9:30 a.m. to 4:45 p.m. in the McDowell Formal Lounge, 4400 Massachusetts Ave., NW. To RSVP, e-mail Ruth Duersch at aseanstudiescenterAU@gmail.com.
- **Strategic Asia book launch.** The National Bureau of Asian Research will host a launch event on December 2 for the latest volume in its Strategic Asia series, *Strategic Asia 2014-15: U.S. Alliances and Partnerships at the Center of Global Power*. Evan Medeiros, special assistant to President Barack Obama and senior director for Asian affairs on the National Security Council, will give a keynote address. The event will take place from 8:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. at the Naval Heritage Center, U.S. Navy Memorial, 1957 E St., NW. [Click here](#) to RSVP.
- **Brown Bag: Rethinking the Asia Pivot.** The Institute for Policy Studies will host a discussion of U.S. policy in the Pacific on December 8 featuring South Korean peace activist Ko Youkyoung and former Philippine congressman Raymond Palatino. The speakers will focus on how recent social movements are affecting militarism in the Asia Pacific. The event will take place from 12:00 p.m. to 1:55 p.m. in the IPS Conference Room, Suite 600, 1112 16th St., NW. For more information, [click here](#).
- **Implementing Human Rights as a Path to Democracy in Vietnam.** The International Forum for Democratic Studies at the National Endowment for Democracy will host a presentation on December 11 on human rights and democracy in Vietnam by human rights lawyer and former political prisoner Cu Huy Ha Vu. The presentation will center on the need for human rights laws in Vietnam and will also feature comments by regional expert Zachary Abuza. The event will take place from 3:00 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. in Suite 800, 1025 F St., NW. [Click here](#) to RSVP. ■

SOUTHEAST ASIA FROM SCOTT CIRCLE

CSIS Sumitro Chair for Southeast Asia Studies contributors:

Ernest Z. Bower, Senior Adviser and Chair
Murray Hiebert, Senior Fellow and Deputy Director
Gregory Poling, Fellow
Phuong Nguyen, Research Associate
Nigel Cory, Researcher
Dylan Kean, Researcher
Joshua Simonidis, Researcher
Nathan Patrash, Researcher

For more details on our programs and to follow CSIS with real-time updates, follow the CSIS Chair for Southeast Asia Studies:



On Facebook at <http://www.facebook.com/CSISSoutheastAsia>



On Twitter at [@SoutheastAsiaDC](https://twitter.com/SoutheastAsiaDC).



On our blog, [cogitASIA](http://cogitASIA.com) at <http://cogitASIA.com>

Thank you for your interest in U.S. policy in Southeast Asia and the CSIS Sumitro Chair for Southeast Asia Studies. Join the conversation!

This newsletter is published by the Sumitro Chair for Southeast Asia Studies at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) in Washington, D.C., a private, tax-exempt institution focusing on international public policy issues. CSIS's research is nonpartisan and nonproprietary. CSIS does not take specific policy positions; accordingly, all views, positions, and conclusions expressed in this publication should be understood to be solely those of the author(s).

© 2014 by the Center for Strategic and International Studies. All rights reserved.