

## **Introduction of the CATR White Paper on the Asian Security Landscape after the War in Iraq**

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Good Afternoon Ladies and Gentlemen:

I am privileged to have the opportunity to introduce the White Paper on “The Asian Security Landscape after the War in Iraq” on behalf of the membership of the Council for Asian Terrorism Research or more commonly known at CATR. I see the white paper as a major milestone and proud achievement in our journey as CATR.

As Katy mentioned in her introduction of CATR, this is a very unique forum which brings together experience and expertise from across South and South East Asia. Many of our member organizations have first hand experience of living in conflict situations and face the ravages of terrorism almost on a daily basis. So the input our membership brings is real and not an abstract view of terrorism. The dimensions and perspectives around the table are never homogeneous as the CATR membership comes from a diverse spectrum of countries with ethnic and religious differences and ideological differences. As you know Asia is a fusion of ethnic and religious diversity amply reflected in our membership. This richness of diversity is not limited to the cultural

background, our colleagues enrich this process by the multidisciplinary nature of our professional backgrounds. We have amongst our midst, a former Minister of Police, retired Army Generals, a retired Navy Admiral, University Professors, a Presidential Advisor, a diplomat, journalist, terrorism researchers and regional specialist. The bottom-line is that CATR unlike any other organization is epitomized by the diversity and intellectual wit to vigorously debate effective counter terrorism strategies.

In the past the experience we gained individually from our CATR deliberations influenced the policy realm through the individual standing of our membership in the respective countries. The launch of the white paper augments this process further by inducting a sense of professionalism to our product.

The white paper on “The Asian Security Landscape after the War in Iraq” is a result of the collaborative research strength of this group. We as a collective research forum has the capacity to draw on local strengths of our member organizations and respond with on-the-ground realities in 11 Asian countries. So when we undertake collaborative research it is in fact mobilizing the capacity of 14 research centres and several non-affiliated regional experts feeding into this process. This in my view the most unique and most valuable asset that CATR has, and what’s more after three years and seven biannual symposiums we engage not as colleagues but as friends.

The white paper on "The Asian Security Landscape after the War in Iraq" culminated the extensive deliberations we had during the sixth biannual symposium in beautiful Sydney, Australia in May this year. I am not sure when we got the time to discuss these because in Sydney we had some fun times. There is a serious side to all this, and in Sydney as part of our symposium we had two roundtable hypothetical sessions. The hypothetical sessions were based on two worstcase scenarios:

- Following a U.S. troop withdrawal, Iraq becomes an ungovernable failed state, creating security conditions similar to those that prevailed in Afghanistan during the 1990s and facilitated the rise of the Taliban and the establishment of safe havens within which Al Qaida and other *jihadist organizations* trained cadres and developed terrorist strategies and tactics.
- Continuing instability in Iraq contributes to a broader Sunni-Shi'a power struggle in the Persian Gulf region that expands Iranian influence and threatens to destabilize key Gulf States including Saudi Arabia.

The objective was to examine in detail the impact of each hypothetical scenario on the individual CATR member countries. The brainstorming that took place to assess the fallout from each hypothetical was intense. The participants went back and submitted a data collection form tabulating comparative information from each country.

In June, our research centre in Australia, the Centre for Policing, Intelligence and Counter Terrorism (PICT) at Macquarie University, hosted our colleague from IDA Dr Caroline Ziemke. During her two week stay in Sydney, we undertook the task of collating the country level submissions into a first draft of the white paper. No doubt Dr Ziemke put in a lot of time and effort into getting the first draft off the ground. The draft was circulated among the members and feedback incorporated. In September, when I visited IDA in Washington DC, the document was reaching a degree of finality. Today we have this glossy publication, thanks to all the valuable contributions made by our members and the untiring efforts of Dr Caroline Ziemke, Dr. Katy Oh Hassig and Ms. Amy Cohen, the IDA team.

Let me now get into some of the substantive findings of the white paper. During the discussions we had in Sydney, four important elements emerged as concerns for the rest of Asia if Iraq declined into an ungovernable situation. As many have highlighted the "Military Security" fallout from Iraq, the dominant view that emerged views post-Iraq very different to the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan. Two key factors tend to be prominent, firstly during the Afghan war against the Soviet forces foreign large number of foreign fighters from Southeast Asia traveled to Afghanistan. After the Soviet withdrawal these fighters returned bringing with them a potent ideology of religiously motivated violence.

I quote - *"The roughly 1,000 Southeast Asian mujahideen who fought in Afghanistan (out of some 35,000 foreign fighters from 43 countries) had a profound ideological impact on the evolution of Islamist political ideologies and contributed to the emergence of a number of violent extremist groups in the region through the 1990s. Whether they returned home to participate in peaceful political activity or chose to engage in terrorist or extremist violence, the Southeast Asian mujahideen's involvement in the jihad in Afghanistan during the 1980s fundamentally shaped the character of Southeast Asia's radical Islamist leadership in the 1990s."* - Unquote

The Iraqi scenario at least by facts available to us seem very different, the extent of foreign fighters from Southeast is believed to be negligible. Therefore, it is not necessarily returning veterans influencing radicalization rather, the current capabilities of Iraqi and Afghan to develop high-quality video productions that can reach Asia and other regions disseminating a message of violence.

I quote - *"The ability of groups in Iraq and Afghanistan to broadcast high-production-quality video of successful local attacks against Western forces, suicide bomber "martyrdom statements," and beheadings of hostages is a valuable force multiplier for extremists of all ideological stripes. Terrorists and the extremist groups that recruit and support them operate on the cutting edge of online marketing, psychological operations, and strategic*

*communications, and the increasing technical sophistication of extremist Web sites makes them more attractive to an online audience." - Unquote*

The second area of concern that emerged in the discussion was the growing sectarian divide in Iraq with a possibility of spilling over to Asia. It was felt that a dominant Shia influence over Iraq with Iranian support could fracture sectarian relations between Sunni and Shia in South Asia. However, given demographics, the Shia population except for Pakistan, is relatively small in the rest of Asia to make significant impact.

The CATR discussions went beyond the military realm, to examine the impact on energy security from a collapse of governance in Iraq. The high dependency on middle-east petroleum is evident throughout Asia. Even some of the developed countries such as Japan and to a less extent Australia have a dependency on middle-eastern oil.

I quote – *"much of the growth in energy demand in Asia comes from China and India, those countries can diversify their sources of supply to reduce their dependence on Middle Eastern oil and are already taking steps to do so. The majority of countries in South and Southeast Asia, however, do not have such medium- to long term diversification efforts underway, meaning their dependence on Middle Eastern oil will continue for some time to come. Should regional instability rise to the level that enabled maritime piracy and maritime attacks in the Straits of Hormuz and the Persian Gulf as it did off*

*the Horn of Africa, the economic consequences for Asia could be dire. Severe disruption of the Middle Eastern oil supply would likely create a rush to find alternate suppliers in Southeast Asia, most notably in Malaysia, Indonesia, and Vietnam. These producers, however, have neither the reserves nor the production capacity necessary to ensure continued economic growth in the region without the reliable flow of Middle Eastern petroleum." Unquote*

In terms of economic security, the dependency on middle-eastern petroleum has a twofold impact. Again several Asian economies are reliant on thermal power generation capacity. A rise in petroleum prices or supply difficulties could hike electricity costs would render exports uncompetitive and crippling several smaller economies in south Asia.

The foreign remittances from expatriate migrant workforce is a vital component of several Asian economies. In a large part, most of the expatriate migrant workers are in the Middle East. If Iraq causes instability in the Middle East, the security situation may require a expatriate workers to leave the middle east drying up this vital revenue of Asian economies.

I quote - *"On the macro-economic level, the inflow of foreign Exchange from expatriate workforces in the Middle East provides a vital means of sustaining reserves of foreign currency for South and Southeast Asia's highly import dependent economies. On the micro-economic level, the remittances from expatriate workers are often the sole income source for extended family*

*networks and the only means of obtaining capital to pay off debts or undertake local business development.”*

*If a U.S. withdrawal from Iraq leads to an escalation of sectarian violence in the Persian Gulf region that renders Iraq ungovernable, the spillover effects could endanger expatriate workers in Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE, likely resulting in outmigration, whether voluntary or compelled,. Moreover, if Iran increases its active involvement in the internal affairs of its neighbors (either overtly or covertly) or escalates its nuclear weapons program to trigger military retaliation by Israel or the United States, expatriate workers might also seek to leave the region. A sudden exodus of foreign workers and the resulting ballooning unemployment in their home countries would have severe economic and social consequences across the CATR region.”* Unquote

It is evident, the CATR white paper undertakes a comprehensive assessment of the likely impact on Asia if a post-US withdrawal Iraq leads into an ungovernable situation.

CATR also has ambitious plans to develop a CATR Crisis Index as a tool that can give early warning of a crisis build-up. However, these plans need further discussion to better determine the core and peripheral indicators for such an index.

I believe the timing of the CATR White Paper is very opportune. I am confident that the collective insights expressed by the CATR membership will feed into the decision making process in Washington DC and other capital cities. At present the Status of Forces Agreement with Iraq is under negotiation. A critical phase in defining the future security landscape of Iraq.

The US presidential elections gave a clear mandate to President Elect Barack Obama for what is perceived as a change from the past. The timing of the CATR white paper is important as the policy of change overwhelms the entire US, and it is imperative that such change should be undertaken not at the expense of Asia.

Recently the phrase "sustainable security" has been spoken of as the Obama strategy for international security. We are hopeful that Asian concerns will find a place in this policy and the CATR white paper which is a collective view of experts from the region, on the region, be a catalyst towards this end.

I have enjoyed my visit to Japan and very grateful to the wonderful hospitality and warm friendship extended all the CATR participants.

Thank you