



“Ten Years after the Asian Crisis: Assessing the Economic and Political Landscape in Southeast Asia”

19-21 April 2007
Siem Reap, Cambodia

PROGRAM

Background

This year marks the 10th year since the currency crisis hit the Asian economies. The crisis started in July 1997 with a severe depreciation of the Thai baht. This depreciation triggered a domino effect and caused the plunging of currencies, stock markets, and other asset prices throughout East and Southeast Asia. Many businesses collapsed and as a consequence, millions of people fell below the poverty line. Thailand and Indonesia were the Southeast Asian countries most affected by the crisis. Though currency speculation was widely blamed as a major reason for the off-set of the crisis, the causes can be traced back to a set of interrelated problems. Excessive real-estate speculation by the local financial institutions in question, risky lending practices, inefficient business practices and over-reliance on the regulation of the state to protect institutions and industries from competition were the primary culprits. The crisis triggered a series of reforms in the economical and political landscape and gave rise to a variety of regional initiatives and cooperative efforts in the years following the crisis.

Ten years later Asian economies have charted a strong recovery. Current accounts are mostly in substantial surplus, and the majority of governments have bolstered their external positions with unprecedented reserves. Asian companies have also reduced their foreign currency debt exposure or hedged against exchange risk, with many banking systems having regained the economic role they played before the crisis. Vulnerability to a 1997-style financial crisis in the region is thus much reduced, but have the weaknesses that caused the crisis been successfully tackled? What challenges still lie ahead for Southeast Asian countries to achieve sustainable economic growth and democratic consolidation?

Objective

The conference aims to examine the political and economic landscape in Southeast Asia ten years after the Asian financial crisis. After taking stock of the current situation it will focus on the economic and political changes that were triggered by the crisis. It will furthermore look into the measures taken to address the causes of the crisis as well as their sustainability. Finally, it aims to identify the further challenges that lie ahead for the Southeast Asian region to achieve sustainable growth and democratic consolidation.

Program Outline

Thursday, 19 April 2007

Arrival of Participants

Friday, 20 April 2007

09h00-09h40 Opening Session

[Welcome remarks by Chap Sotharith](#)

*Executive Director of the Cambodian Institute
for Cooperation and Peace*

Keynote Speech:

Ten Years after the Asian Crisis; Taking Stock

Speaker:

[HRH Prince Norodom Sirivudh](#)

*Supreme Privy Counselor to His Majesty the King of Cambodia
Chairman of the Board of Directors, Cambodian Institute for Cooperation and Peace*

*Assessment of the political and economic landscape in
Southeast Asia ten years after the financial crisis.*

09h40-10h00 Tea Break

10h00-12h30 Session I: Towards Economic Sustainability?

Chair :

Malayvieng Sakonhninhom

*Acting Director General, Institute of Foreign Affairs,
Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Lao PDR*

Speaker:

[Suthiphand Chivathivat](#)

Former Dean, Faculty of Economics, Chulalongkorn University

Discussant:

Charles Adams

Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, Singapore

Titik Anas

Senior Researcher, Indonesian Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS),

Vo Tri Thanh

*Head of Department for Economic Integration, Central Institute for Economic
Management (CIEM, Vietnam)*

Hank Lim

Director for Research, Singapore Institute of International Affairs (SIIA), Singapore

This session will discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the East Asian model, with the benefit of hindsight. It will focus on the micro-economic aspects of the crisis (close bank-industry-government ties, poor corporate governance, etc.), as well as macroeconomic factors (foreign debt accumulation, government finances, etc). The session will furthermore examine the policy responses to the Asian crisis, focusing both on internal policy responses (fiscal, monetary and structural policies) and external factors (IMF stabilization programs and bailouts). Special emphasis will be given to the lessons and good and bad practices.

12h30-14h00 **Lunch Break**

14h00-16h30 **Session II: The Asian Crisis and its Political Aftermath**

Chair : **Axel Schmidt**

Head of Office, Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, Singapore

Speaker: **Julio Cabral Teehankee - Philippines**

Chair, Political Science Department, De La Salle University, Philippines

Discussant: **Thitinan Pongsudhirak**

Director, Institute of Strategic and International Studies, Thailand

Pham Sanh Chau

- Ambassador, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

- Deputy Director General, Institute for International Relations, Vietnam

Chandran Jeshurun

Executive Committee, Malaysia International Affairs Forum, Malaysia

Kang Won Taek

Dept of Political Science, Soongsil University, Seoul, South Korea

The Asian crisis ended the Asian Values debate used to legitimise the authoritarian style of several Southeast Asian governments. Subsequently, a discourse on questions of political reform, change and democratisation emerged. In Indonesia the crisis led to the collapse of the long-reigning Suharto authoritarian regime, the independence of Timor Leste, a regime change in Thailand and in the Philippines it resulted in the ouster of elected incumbent president Estrada through the initiative of a broad array of civil society organizations and movements. This session will look into the changes in the political landscape in Southeast Asia since the beginning of the Asian Crisis. It aims to critically assess the political reform and democratisation process that took place in the region. Furthermore, it shall identify the current rationale to legitimize democratic or authoritarian style of governance.

16h30-17h00 Tea Break

17h00-18h00 **Session III: What Challenges lie Ahead?**

Chair : ***Chap Sotharith***
Executive Director, CICP, Cambodia

Speaker: ***Faisal Basri Batubara***,
- *Chairman, Pergerakan Indonesia,*
- *Rector at the Perbanas Business School, Jakarta*
- *Commissioner of the Supervisory Commission for Business Competition, Indonesia*

Discussant ***Stephen Leong***
Assistant Director-General, ISIS Malaysia

Carolina Hernandez
President, ISDS Philippines

Followed by General Discussion.

This session will be dedicated to recommendations for sustaining and improving economic and political reform processes.

Closing remarks : ***Axel Schmidt***

Head of Office for Regional Cooperation in Southeast Asia, Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, Singapore

19h00 Dinner

Saturday, 21 April 2007

Departure of participants