We hereby invite researchers (including doctoral students) and other specialists with particular interest and insights into Asian security aspects to participate in: **The Second Annual Nordic NIAS Council (NNC) Conference**

Culture and the Configuring of Security
Using Asian Perspectives to Inform Theoretical Direction
6-9 November 2007, Höör, Sweden

Mission of the conference

Security is currently one of the most resonant concepts on the global political agenda. The mission of this conference is to bridge gaps between macro- and micro-perspectives and bring culture to the fore in debates concerning security. The objective is to break new theoretical ground by exploring a plurality of discourses and practices of security, and discussing ways of theorizing their embeddedness in social and cultural matrices.

The conference will present keynote addresses focusing on the macro- and micro-level and invites speakers from **international relations, anthropology, political science, economics, law, linguistics and others** to engage contemporary theory from **all** fields in an investigation of empirical data from Asia and, conversely, to bring insights from Asian contexts to bear upon theories of security.

Examples of topics: gender, historical memory, identity, justice, migration, militarization, natural disaster, violence.

Keynote speakers – Macro perspectives

- *Ole Wæver*
  Department of Political Science, University of Copenhagen

- *Muthiah Alagappa*
  Senior Fellow and Director, Center for the Study of Politics and Security, East-West Center, Honolulu, Hawaii

Keynote speakers – Micro perspectives

- *Caroline Hughes*
  The Department of Political Science and International Studies, The University of Birmingham

- *Shamsul Amri Baharuddin*
  Institute of The Malay World and Civilization, University Kebangsaan, Malaysia

"Power" and security

A primary concern of this conference is the issue of power, which, in the Asian context has to do with far more than political authority alone. The way in which power is harnessed to the maintenance of social and moral order in different Asian environments may reveal much about how security is conceived of and practiced according to cultural schemes. These schemes may make the transposition of ideas about national boundaries, human rights agendas, peace-building initiatives, development programmes that arise from other cultural settings problematic. Understanding how power is constituted through socio-cultural process requires also paying attention to issues such as gender, trust and social networks. Indigenous conceptualizations of power and order may shape "security" in particular, dynamic ways and they should, we propose, be brought to bear on the security debate.

Theoretical background and implications

The concepts of security that have until now enjoyed political and academic currency have come mainly from the field of security studies. Throughout the Cold War the focus of security studies was upon political and military measures with which to address international threats to state security. With the end of the Cold War, however, new perspectives began to emerge. The state-centrism that had characterized earlier theory now began to be called into question by more society-centric analyses focusing on the reduction of suffering, violent conflict and structural violence, and the enhancement of the welfare of the individual and the family. While the role of the state remains important, perhaps increasingly so within Asian mainstream security studies, post-Cold War theoretical developments have meant that the centrality of the state in security theorizing can no longer be assumed. Security is now also being approached from alternative angles. Economics, environmental degradation and health risks as well as the relationship between individual security and the community have become legitimate concerns in the security debate.

Bringing *culture* into the field of *security*

Proponents of the new approaches have argued that states may not always provide security but may in fact endanger their citizens. Efforts have therefore been made to analyse the power relationships within which the idea of security is socially constructed. The broadening of the concept of security has opened the way for novel approaches, such as viewing security as a kind of political speech-act—"securitization"—in which a securitizing actor persuades their audience that a threat to existence looms and that emergency politics are required to address it.

Recent historical developments, such as terrorism, conflicts over identity and historical memory and widespread experiences of new kinds of vulnerability have given the security debate further momentum for theoreticians and policy-makers alike. The debate about what security comprises and how it should be achieved has become increasingly complex. Silent and subsumed security issues, particularly embodied and often gendered practices of (in)security have been highlighted in an effort to move us beyond *a priori* concepts and definitions that exclude important voices. Only recently, however, has the question of the ethnocentricity of much security theory been posed. Although moves are now afoot to begin examining the cultural shaping of security, this contribution to the debate is still in its infancy, making a conference of this kind is particularly timely.

This conference attempts to bridge gaps between various approaches to security by examining how they are interrelated, and how they may inform one another. It asks questions about the ways in which discourses and practices of national/international perspectives, as well as their propagators, relate socially and culturally to local security efforts and experiences. The conference is academic in nature and scope but recognizes the need to communicate academic findings to politicians and practitioners. The conference will chart new ground and it is therefore hoped that it will help in the development of more culturally sensitive strategies for dealing with security and insecurity locally as well as globally.

Design of the forum

The conference will run over two and a half days. The first half day will be devoted to a plenary session in which four keynote speakers, two presenting macro-perspectives and two presenting micro-perspectives, will set the intellectual stage for the workshops to follow. A series of parallel workshops will then take place and the outcome of these will be systematically collated. The concluding session will consist of a forum at which the outcome of the various panels will be presented for all the delegates. This conclusion is intended to pave the way for new theoretical directions that will inspire theoreticians as well as practitioners interested in security in time to come.

The conference is included in the Asian Century Research School Network's (ACRSN) programme. Therefore, doctoral candidates from the Nordic countries and elsewhere are invited to submit papers. Students are expected to earn ECTS-points for their contributions after agreement with their respective institution.

All participants are expected to play an active role either as presenter, discussant or chair.

Time and place

The conference will take at *Frostvallen* in Höör northeast of Lund in Sweden:

6-9 November 2007

The venue can be reach by train from Copenhagen Airport (1 hour). The organizers will arrange transportation from Copenhagen, Lund and Höör station. More information to follow.

Frostavallen Hotel & Conference
Box 3, 243 21 Höör, Sweden
Phone +46 413 55 33 00
Fax +46 413 55 33 39
www.frostavallen.se
info@frostavallen.se

Deadlines

Submission of abstracts: **Monday 2 July 2007**

Selection of papers: **Monday 20 august 2007**

Submission of papers: **Monday 22 October 2007**

Abstracts and papers can be submitted either via the conference website:

www.asiansecurity.niasconferences.dk

or via email to:

asiansecurity@niasconferences.dk

Board, accommodation and travel support

The organizers anticipate paying for board and accommodation but not for participants travel expenses. However, if funding is available it may be possible for PhD students to apply for travel support from the organizers.

Rooms are available from 6 November 16.00. In the evening 6 November there will be a welcome dinner. The conference begins in the morning 7 November and will be concluded with lunch 9 November.

For more information

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Practical information: Martin Bech, Project coordinator, **martin.bech@nias.ku.dk**

Conference website: www.asiansecurity.niasconferences.dk

Conference organizing committee

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- Roger Greatrex, Centre for East and South East Asian Studies, Lund University - www.ace.lu.se
- Alexandra Kent, NIAS Nordic Institute of Asian Studies - www.nias.ku.dk
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- Helle Rydström, Centre for East and South East Asian Studies, Lund University, and Department fro Social Anthropology, Linköping University - www.ace.lu.se

Organizers

The Nordic NIAS Council (NNC) works in partnership with *Copenhagen Business School*, *Copenhagen University* and *Lund University*