

The **Asia Pacific Research Network** is network of leading research NGOs across the region.

As Framework Partner Agreement signatory organization with the European Commission, APRN is implementing the Action "Building Peoples Organizations' Capacities to Claim their Rights and Sustainable Development". This Action aims to empower communities and people's movements to face globalization and claim their rights through building their capacities on people's research, education and information, advocacy, and development effectiveness.

In order to contribute towards this over-all objective, APRN sets out the following immediate objectives:

- individual and collective advocacy to influence development policy at all levels
- knowledge building and information-dissemination through people's research, information and education, and advocacy on emergent issues along the following themes: Trade and Development, Regional Integration and Connectivity, Natural Resources, Peace and Security, and Development Effectiveness
- People's organizations/Civil Society Organizations own Development Effectiveness

Building evidence-based information through research to ensure that policy analysis and alternative policy proposals are rational and relevant to the grassroots and marginalized; training and other capacity development interventions; and advocacy and multi-stakeholder dialogue inform the methods of implementation towards achieving the immediate objectives.



PEOPLE'S RESISTANCE IN ASIA PACIFIC IN A MULTIPOLAR WORLD

APRN Research Conference on Military
Conflicts in the Asia Pacific Region

November 3-6, 2019 | Bangkok, Thailand



co-funded by the
European Union



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APRN Biennial Research Conference 2019 Statement

*Defend Lands, Sovereign Rights, and Territories against
Militarism and Aggression!*

*Reclaim Shrinking Civic Spaces and Struggle for People's Rights!
Resist Imperialist Plunder and Strengthen Communities that
Advance Development Justice!*

We, the participants from 33 people's organizations working with workers, women, farmers, fisherfolk, Dalits, indigenous peoples, migrants, refugees, youth, human rights defenders, and anti-war activists in 14 countries across the Asia Pacific region, gathered in Bangkok, Thailand from November 5 to 7, 2019 for the Asia Pacific Research Network (APRN) Biennial Research Conference on "People's Resistance in a Multipolar World" collectively assessed and analyzed people's movements challenging the intensifying aggression of the catastrophic crisis of imperialism manifested by the competition of old and new social hegemonies in the race for economic, political, cultural, and military dominance. We stand as one with the aim of consolidating evidence-based people's research to strengthen our campaign initiatives against imperialist aggression and plunder.

Today, the people of the world witness the United States, China, Russia, and the European Union contend for the most resource-rich and secure trade deals. Although the US remains dominant in the region, China's volume of trade with the ASEAN trumps that of the US. Australia's inclination towards the US as a deterrent to China's deployment of soft power diplomacy in the Pacific; India's jingoistic nationalism at the expense of the rights of Kashmir and

Jammu; and Japan's deployment of forces to foreign territory in the name of upholding sovereignty indicate that there are no longer two centers of power in the unfolding multipolar world order. The fight for control over resources, trade routes, markets, and other critical assets for amassing super-profits is now gaining momentum.

Under these circumstances, countries in Asia Pacific have allocated huge amounts for military spending in order to secure their own territories as the US and China have turned the region into their battleground. Fifty percent (50%) of the national budget of Indonesia, for instance, is dedicated to national defense. This is in response to the increased military cooperation between Australia and Japan. Vietnam's military spending spiked by 400 percent from 2005 to 2014 mainly for maritime security against Chinese incursions in disputed waters.

The trend in increased spending for national defense has not stopped the unilateral incursions of competing powers in Asia Pacific. Beefing up in terms of armaments, however, has facilitated invasion in the name of national security and fanned the flames of territorial and cross-border conflicts.

The Philippines is caught between the ongoing US and China conflict for military dominance in the South China Sea while the Okinawans in the south of Japan fight against the construction of Henoko base, an addition to the existing US military bases. Indian-occupied Kashmir has been locked down by Indian military in a tussle for supremacy over China's control in the region.

These contending powers continue to ensure their political and economic niches by redefining the concept of integration to facilitate neoliberal trade agreements for their own convenience and harness the resources of the region for their own benefit. Asia Pacific governments, on the other hand, have become subservient to unfair trade deals that siphon off labor, agricultural products, natural resources, minerals, and energy to transnational corporations.

National armies have become appendages to international corporations as they facilitate resource grabs in violation of people's sovereignty. Illustrative of this is the case of the Rohingya. The military forces of Myanmar have killed thousands of Rohingya; committed forms of sexual violence against women and children; and burned villages causing the diaspora of about 700,000 to Bangladesh and other neighboring countries since 2017. In 2018, the military were reported to have built bases on razed Rohingya villages. This is against the backdrop of systematic land grabbing perpetrated by the state after the annulment of the 1963 Peasant Law which provided protection to the tillers' right to land and the promulgation of the New Foreign Investment Law that allowed total foreign ownership and lease periods of up to 70 years in 2012.

Resource plunder and land grabbing adversely affect the survival, culture, and future of indigenous peoples and peasants. In Manipur, India, the construction of the 105-megawatt (MW) Loktak Multipurpose Hydroelectric Project has submerged more than 50,000 acres of agricultural land and 2,000 hectares of forest land, drastically affecting the lives of the indigenous peoples residing in the valleys and hills of Mapithel.

Needless to say, women face the bulk of the state and non-state violence. Women are usually relegated to low-skilled and relatively low paying jobs. Majority of women do not have access to benefits and social protection. In areas of conflict, rape and assault are the primary weapons of choice.

We are concerned about how religion is haphazardly used by the elites to further sow division and provoke cleavages in fragile societies. This leads to disunity among the people, blindsiding them from the real enemies - the imperialists - who stand to take full advantage of the chaos that ensues after the local elites pit national identities and religions against each other.

Amidst the rise of militarization in the Asia Pacific region and attacks against the marginalized and the environment, there is intense rage and struggle to defend and assert rights and sovereignty.

People's resistance has grown stronger, more vibrant, and more dynamic. The genocide of the Indonesian government in the land of West Papua has not dampened the struggle for self-determination. People power in Hong Kong, the Philippines, Kashmir, Lebanon, among others have burned brightly and for more sustained periods to lend fire to the growing pockets of resistance the world over.

APRN unites with the people in building communities that assert development based on justice and human rights. APRN stands with the people in bold defiance against imperialist plunder and corporate greed, the sources of conflict and strife. The Network believes that lasting peace can be achieved if we struggle with the people for the absence of the causes of war.

Stop the attacks against activists, human rights defenders, and environmental rights defenders!

No to imperialist plunder and militarism!
Long live international solidarity!

