

# INTERNATIONAL SECURITY IN THE ASIA-PACIFIC

*Transcending ASEAN towards  
Transitional Polycentrism*

EDITED BY ALAN CHONG



# International Security in the Asia-Pacific

Alan Chong  
Editor

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Transcending ASEAN towards Transitional  
Polycentrism

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*Editor*

Alan Chong

S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies

Nanyang Technological University

Singapore

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The idea for this edited volume was born from my teaching commitments to the Singapore Armed Forces' (SAF) Goh Keng Swee Command and Staff College (GKSCSC) between 2010 and 2015. Part of the curriculum for middle and senior ranking military officers comprised sequenced lectures and tutorials on current Asia-Pacific international security topics. It was felt that the officers' learning would be enhanced by instituting an annual GKSCSC Seminar that served as a capstone learning event that would be co-organised by the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies of the Nanyang Technological University in Singapore, the SAF-NTU Academy, and GKSCSC itself. Officers completing their GKSCSC stints would thus be fully imbued with awareness of the geopolitical contexts in which they would be engaged in defence diplomacy and multinational exercises. I am grateful to all three aforementioned organizations for hosting the event known as 'GKSCSC Seminar 2014: International Security in the Asia-Pacific' and providing the logistics for it. As with most aggregated academic projects, a meeting of minds has to take place before the idea of an edited project becomes sufficiently refined for feasible publication. Given the multinational composition of the authors in this volume and its thematic focus on scrutinizing ASEAN's centrality for Asian security, this book is in itself an invitation to an open-ended dialogue for building confidence in Asia-Pacific security arrangements through awareness of multiple perspectives.

My editorial liaisons at Palgrave Macmillan, Sarah Roughley and Samantha Snedden, have been extraordinarily helpful in facilitating the conclusion of this project, encouraging precision in editing, and promoting it to a

worldwide audience. For this, I owe them a debt of gratitude. Last but not least, Phidel Marion G. Vineles lent crucial eleventh-hour support for the compilation of the Index.

Finally, I wish to state that while some of the topics were presented at the GKSCSC Seminar 2014, the respective authors have since done further research and their papers have been significantly revised for this book. Some contributors from the 2014 seminar had also dropped out. Moreover, four additional authors were invited to contribute fresh insights on food security, defence diplomacy and India's great power role. In sum, this has evolved into a vastly strengthened and very different book from the papers premiered in 2014. I trust it will engage the reader for years to come.

*Associate Professor, Centre for Multilateralism Studies  
S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies  
Nanyang Technological University, Singapore  
June 2017*

*Alan Chong*

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# International Security in the Asia-Pacific: Transcending ASEAN Towards Transitional Polycentrism—An Introduction

*Alan Chong*

Transitional polycentrism is intrinsically awkward as a description of the security of states and their populations. It implies the loosening of state control and the emergence of newly asserted authority by mixed constellations of intergovernmental organizations and non-state actors. It could *also* imply a competition of agendas between threats to the integrity of borders and the amorphous range of human security threats such as natural disasters, airliner crashes, displacement by man-made pollution, and food scarcity. More conventionally, it could *also* refer to the decline of ASEAN (the Association of Southeast Asian Nations) as the collective security actor that once enjoyed primacy as the lowest common denominator reference for the great powers in Asia to establish community with the weaker states of the region. *Conversely*, polycentrism could *equally* imply a return to a more neo-realist-oriented international order where great powers ignore ASEAN and steer regional order according to their

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A. Chong (✉)

Centre for Multilateralism Studies, S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Singapore, Singapore

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perceived interests and relative military superiority. If this is the recurring reality, then Southeast Asia appears doomed to reprise its historical trajectory of struggling for autonomy from outside influences. It is not surprising that the international security situation in the Asia-Pacific in the second decade of the twenty-first century lends itself to overwhelming and occasionally contradictory analyses of centrifugal and centripetal trends. Authoring and editing a textbook on Asia-Pacific security is therefore a risky endeavour in this context where there is no tangible clarity to what most observers take to be an obvious ‘security disorder’ in the neo-realist sense of the term. This book however embraces these contradictory trends as a foundation of analysis. It accepts that disorder can be re-described from the perspective of studied detachment as poly-centric order.

In the past two decades, two types of events have come to crystallize the increasing drift of the idea of ASEAN centrality steering Asia-Pacific security: the frequent re-ignition of the South China Sea island dispute and other forms of direct great power rivalry; and the increasing frequency of the so-called non-traditional security threats to states along the Indo-Pacific Rim heralded by the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami. These events contain new features that seriously undermine two pre-existing critical pillars of the regional security order. The first pillar is the idea that sovereign borders must be kept sacrosanct at all costs. The second pillar is that ASEAN can artfully manage the pace of evolution and agenda setting for a pan-regional security architecture whereby persistent Great Power bilateral deadlock invites ASEAN states to act collectively as an indispensable security manager operating according to a lowest political common denominator (Ba 2009, pp. 176–192; Chong 2011). The emerging security order dilutes ASEAN’s centrality by exposing the critical weakness and non-sustainability of the original intramural ASEAN ‘contract’ that maintained that a comprehensive respect for sovereignty is the centrepiece of a long lasting regional peace for national development and self-determination. Additionally, the increased unilateral behaviour of Asia’s emerging great powers of China, India, and Japan have imposed strenuous demands on the ASEAN-managed security order that call attention to the political and economic weaknesses of the organization (Goh, Winter 2007/2008; Buzan 2003; Foot and Walter 2010).

## GREAT POWER RIVALRIES AND ASEAN: THE CHALLENGE OF MANAGING TERRITORIAL DISPUTES AND THE RISING TEMPTATION OF UNILATERALISM AND BILATERALISM

Take the South China Sea dispute for instance. Its temperature was raised when China began, from 2010 onwards, to patrol more aggressively the disputed Spratly islands using a combination of quasi-civilian maritime surveillance vessels, oceanic survey ships, the occasional naval ship, and most recently the tendentious movement of oil rigs in and out of islands and waters claimed by Brunei, Malaysia, the Philippines and Vietnam. At the ASEAN summit in Phnom Penh that preceded the East Asia Summit of 2012, China successfully goaded Cambodia, an ASEAN member and non-claimant, to declare without prior consultation within ASEAN that the grouping had decided not to ‘internationalize’ the Spratlys dispute. This led Philippine President Benigno Aquino to break ASEAN protocol by openly demurring: ‘For the record, this was not our understanding. The ASEAN route is not the only route for us’ (Torode 2012). Consequently, the Philippines decided to formally lodge a case at the Permanent Court of Arbitration at The Hague to treat the Spratlys as maritime territories in dispute with China. The Philippine ploy was intended to compel China under international law, to desist from further provocations in the South China Sea. These provocations ranged from arresting fishermen from rival claimant states, harassing the patrol and naval vessels of the Philippines and Vietnam, building permanent settlement and transportation structures upon China’s claimed islets and moving oil rigs throughout the disputed area without prior permission (Ramzy 2014). Between May and August 2014, the movement of a Chinese manned oil rig known as HD981 stirred a fresh row between Hanoi and Beijing over the ownership of the Spratlys. At one point, the row provoked what appeared to be Hanoi’s officially sanctioned rioting against Chinese owned factories in Vietnam’s industrial parks. The rioters unfortunately did not distinguish Chinese investments and workers from those operated by Taiwanese, Japanese, South Korean and Singaporean firms. It was also known that despite the soured atmosphere over the Spratlys, Sino-Vietnamese oil exploration was undisturbed in another bilaterally disputed corner of the South China Sea—the Parcel Islands. Through a combination of private channels and indirect public statements, the ASEAN states, Japan, and to some extent India as well, coaxed the USA to up the ante on the Spratlys dispute.

Repeating a historical pattern, the script that emerged from Washington did not however completely match the preferences of its Asian allies and neutrals (Godement 2003; Mastanduno 2009). In 2011, the Obama presidency finally responded by announcing a significant rebalancing of US forces to Asia. This was fleshed out in stages with the deployment of US Marines to a permanent base in Darwin, Australia, and the rotational deployment of four of the US Navy's Littoral Combat Ships (LCS) to Singapore for patrolling the adjacent sea lanes. In 2015, the US Navy daringly sailed into the vicinity of Chinese controlled islets in the archipelago in a dramatic gesture of underscoring the freedom of navigation within waters understood by the majority of Asia-Pacific states, including its ASEAN claimants, to be contested waters. The Obama Administration began to mention Chinese predatory behaviour in the Spratlys as a key obstacle to US–China ties along with cyber espionage and human rights practices. Apart from the Philippines and Japan, no other Asian state openly praised the form of American 'gunboat diplomacy' in the Spratlys. The US Navy and other analysts preferred a politically correct term for the American naval patrols—the freedom of navigation operation patrol (FONOP) (Sa and Resnick 2015; Douglas 2015). Both terms mean the same thing: the American naval vessels flew the flag to assert the right of innocent passage in tense geopolitical situations whereby American-leaning neutrals and allies were hedging against Chinese non-military and military retaliation by not going beyond loud diplomatic protests against Beijing's aggressiveness. The Trump Administration's evolving foreign policy position towards China appears to be a continuity with Obama's, notwithstanding the short-lived euphoria that accompanied the first Trump–Xi summit in 2017. The American security role therefore deserves scrutiny by two very contrasting chapters authored by Philippine scholars. One explores how successfully Southeast Asian states 'arm twist' Washington to do their bidding *vis-à-vis* China by manipulating discourses. The other argues that the weak states and great power rivals of China need only to actively link the spokes of the pre-existing 'hub and spokes' security alliances forged by the USA and its Asian allies during the Cold War.

It is helpful that the contributors to this book are deliberately and provocatively neo-realist, neo-liberal or constructivist in their occasionally undeclared assumptions *vis-à-vis* empirical analyses. The US–China relationship is complex and unpredictable as it pertains to the security situation in the Asia-Pacific or Indo-Pacific arenas (Simon 1996; Foot and Walter 2010). David Shambaugh has helpfully cast doubt on the straightforward definition of a Cold War between Beijing and Washington, preferring to

describe the relationship as one of ‘coopetition’, characterized by simultaneous cooperation and strategic competition (2014, pp. 15–16). While both great powers are at loggerheads over China’s military assertiveness all around its maritime peripheries from the Sea of Japan to the South China Sea and into the Indian Ocean, Beijing is performing a useful service for the American economy by holding large amounts of US official debt in the form of Treasury Bonds. Sino-US trade is also another linchpin of collaboration between the world’s two largest economies. The fact that Apple Incorporated outsourced most of its iPhone and iPad manufacturing to China speaks volumes of the reality of liberal economic interdependence between the two powers. Moreover, Chinese consumers have developed an almost insatiable demand for high end luxury goods from the USA even as Chinese factories fulfil orders for low technology consumer products found in US department stores. The USA and China have from time to time collaborated at the UN Security Council, and forged common cause in fighting terrorism especially after the events of 11 September 2001. Significant levels of Sino-US student flows cement the complex relationship between the two powers at a people-to-people level. Duke, Johns Hopkins, New York and Harvard Universities currently maintain collaborative arrangements with educational partners in China. Moreover, even as both powers are antagonistic over the issue of undeclared cyberattacks launched by one against the other, major US software firms such as Microsoft, Yahoo, Cisco and Intel are heavily invested in the China market and have no intention of withdrawing anytime soon.

Ironically, it may also be claimed that in many indirect ways, the ASEAN-pioneered ‘regional security architecture’ appears to have succeeded in habituating the great powers to initiating conversations amongst themselves without waiting for intermediation through ASEAN (Gill 2005; Yahuda 2005; Goh, Winter 2007/2008). It is no surprise that presidents Xi Jinping of China and Barack Obama of the USA have felt comfortable enough to initiate their own bilateral summits. China, South Korea and Japan too have taken initial steps since 2010 to participate in an annual trilateral summit notwithstanding on-going tensions amongst themselves over island disputes. Likewise, India’s Prime Minister Narendra Modi has gone out of his way to openly court Chinese investment by hosting the first state visit by a Chinese President in eight years, while also creating the impression of having built up a special relationship with Prime Minister Shinzo Abe of Japan by spending five days in that country on his first official visit. While in Tokyo, Prime Minister Modi signalled, to the pleasure of his hosts, that the world order was currently being divided into two camps, that of believers in ‘expansionist



policies', and that of believers in development, and hence there was a need for India and Japan to show leadership towards steering likeminded states on the path to development (Barry 2014). Hence, it was necessary for some contributors to this volume to address the question of great power initiatives to forge cooperative relationships amongst themselves *outside* of the ASEAN-driven framework.

On its own, China seems to have taken on a more activist orientation in its foreign policy in pursuit of its national interests as an emerging great power (Zhang and Tang 2005). This was particularly pronounced under the current President, Xi Jinping. Notwithstanding China's domestic challenges of a widening gap between the rich and poor, environmental degradation and increasingly a nexus between non-Han ethnic separatism and Islamic fundamentalism emanating from the Middle East, Xi's government proposed the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) as a rival to both the World Bank and Asian Development Bank. Xi's government encompassed the AIIB vision within a 'One Belt One Road' initiative that sought to capture the twenty-first-century vision of China embracing its 'manifest destiny' as an economic locomotive for reinvigorating a pan-Asian economy. This One Belt initiative was intended to tap on the imagined geo-economic potential in the ancient precedent of the much storied 'Silk Road' linking Europe to East Asia through Central and South Asia. Beijing was hoping to positively compare the potential of linkages of peace, trade and cultural interchange in the age of sail, horse, and camel between the Roman and Chinese empires and the kingdoms in between with the untapped present-day dynamism of a pan-Asian economy in the era of modern container ships, high speed rail, booming air travel links, cyber connectivity and newly enriched middle-class populations that featured China as a benign Asian leader. In this picture, ASEAN becomes a secondary player, and the USA and Japan peripheral partners. What Xi left unstated in the One Belt initiative was that Asian states should no longer perceive the USA as *primus inter pares* among great powers in the Asia-Pacific. China mattered more as a boost to Asian states' national development since recipients of its aid, loans, investments and tourists could afford to augment economic growth without having to put up with 'Washington Consensus' style strictures on budget balancing, cultivating friendship with Washington, human rights probity and politically charged debates about official development assistance in the US Congress. Historically, communist China has since 1949 developed very diverse and bilaterally specific relations with most of its Asian neigh-

bours ranging from the two Koreas to Southeast Asia, India and Pakistan. There is scant possibility of a unified political and military alliance among Asian states coalescing against a rising China. Some studies label Asian reactions to China as ranging from ‘accommodation’ to deference, to enmeshment and balancing (Stuart-Fox 2010; Yuan 2010; Vuving 2010). This range of policies will certainly forestall any containment of China. Moreover, as a number of chapters treating Chinese foreign policy behaviour in ‘Part 1: The Great Powers: Going Their Own Way or Tempering Rivalry with Some Reference to ASEAN?’ observe, China’s highly flexible use of coercion will ensure that its neighbours will face a deep dilemma in alienating Beijing either economically or diplomatically. As Beijing has demonstrated through its massive infrastructural construction projects in Southeast Asia, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, and the Maldives, and further afield in Africa, Chinese state-linked companies deliver on their promises efficiently and tangibly with minimal politicization. The relatively uncompetitive nature of Japanese companies in bidding for railway projects in Indonesia and elsewhere in Indochina vis-à-vis Chinese proposals signal the growing strength of Beijing’s developmental blandishments. In tandem with this momentum of confidence, China’s official position on the Spratly island claims has hardened. It has literally fortified the islets it physically controls by building harbours, airfields, living quarters and administrative buildings to mark out its territory in plain sight of rival claimants, principally from ASEAN. Beijing appears to have consolidated its strategic hold on the Spratlys through a crash programme of constructing structures for human habitation and defence, notwithstanding the 12 July 2016 ruling by the Permanent Court of Arbitration granting the Philippines and other claimant states the right to conduct fishing activities in the area by declaring the islands as under contestation (Dyer 2016). The 12 July 2016 ruling also notably refused to issue any judgment on the ultimate sovereignty controlling the islands. Interestingly, Chinese foreign policy spokespersons have had the audacity to claim that not only are Chinese historical claims inviolable, Chinese airstrips and harbour infrastructure on the islands were also intended to enhance navigational safety and provide humanitarian assistance and disaster relief to vessels in transit (Wong and Perlez 2015).

Chinese and American behaviour over the South China Sea disputes clearly manifest the potential of great powers to act unilaterally with little regard for ASEAN even if the latter apparently encouraged the Americans to hold the line against Chinese aggressiveness through diplomatic and

military means (Shambaugh 2005; Zhang and Tang 2005). It is possible that the absence of a ‘common enemy’ on either side of a Cold War divide has removed the constraints on great powers going it alone on pursuing national interests in a fluid geopolitical environment. The latter might even be termed a security disorder, minus an effective and willing hegemon. ASEAN’s almost permanent post-Cold War task is to demonstrate to the great powers that the organization can remain helpful as a diplomatic buffer or a safety valve should the great powers fail in maintaining a minimal level of diplomatic civility. These themes of tension between ASEAN centrality and great powers going their own way in managing regional security will be examined in some detail through contrasting perspectives in ‘Part I: The Great Powers: Going Their Own Way or Tempering Rivalry with Some Reference to ASEAN?’

Likewise, Japan and India are reacting to China’s rising ambitions through a combination of unilateral measures and neo-realist bandwagoning with the USA, once again with less and less reference to ASEAN as an intermediary. India’s foreign policy has been cast in terms of containment and counter-containment of an assertive China. In fact, as Manjeet Pardesi’s chapter argues, India has yet to fully embrace a hegemonic role that places it on an equal footing with China as an Asian great power on the ascendance, notwithstanding New Delhi’s steps in rivalling Beijing in just about every category of military weaponry. In the still active strategic triangle between China, India, and Pakistan, China enjoys Pakistan’s *de facto* support against India in the context of Islamabad’s perennial aspiration to deny Indian hegemony in the South Asian region. Moreover, China has apparently all but announced a doctrine of encircling India with *de facto* strategic relationships forged through development-oriented ‘friendships’ with Sri Lanka, the Maldives, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and elsewhere in Central Asia, right down to India’s eastern flanks in Myanmar, Malaysia and Indonesia. The multifaceted defence, energy, and economic cooperation with Pakistan appears to be the linchpin that completes China’s containment of India. Bilaterally, India has tried to develop a constructive relationship with Beijing through the fields of trade, development, and joint diplomacy through the BRICS and G20 frameworks. Under the current government of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, China has been invited to upgrade India’s domestic economic and transportation infrastructure. At the same time, Modi’s government continues to occasionally denounce Chinese military infractions across their disputed borders in the Himalayan region, and especially in Arunachal Pradesh.

The bitter border legacies of the 1962 Sino-Indian war have continued to bedevil relations between both sides.

Japan, often regarded as China's historic 'enemy', has of course borne the brunt of an assertive rising China. Their longstanding bilateral dispute over the Senkaku/Diaoyutai islands in the East China Sea mirrors for the most part China's difficulties in relation to the Spratlys in the South China Sea. Both are claimed in part using historical, legal and emotional arguments. However, in relation to Japan, China faces a technologically advanced rival with whom it carries 'political baggage' from the Second World War. Japan's nationalists have unilaterally politicized the dispute with the right-wing Governor of Tokyo, Shintaro Ishihara, announcing plans to use his authority to buy the islands from a renowned Japanese construction tycoon in 2012, stoking China's ire. Months later, the Japanese government decided to pre-empt further tensions with China while allowing a tighter rein for diplomatic manoeuvre vis-à-vis Beijing by buying the islands under its sovereign authority. Thereafter, a number of respectively China-supported and Japan-supported 'civil society organized' civilian boat excursions have been conducted in the vicinity of the islands to the acclaim of one another's nationalistic media. Military incidents followed between patrol vessels of both coast guard and naval insignia. Cat and mouse encounters between Chinese fishing vessels and Japanese coast guard ships have also become the norm. In one serious incident in February 2013, a Chinese naval vessel 'painted' a Japanese destroyer with its fire control radar in an obvious game of brinkmanship. Incidents of this nature suggest that today, more than ever, confidence-building measures are needed on the seas and in the air to avoid accidental firings that might escalate into an unintended war (Fackler 2015). This is the subject of a case study within Collin Koh's chapter in the section on defence diplomacy. Japan has clearly signalled that it wants a more liberal interpretation of the US-Japan security alliance to focus on joint operations between the US military and Japan's Self-Defense Forces (Bendini 2015, pp. 6–16). Premier Abe has coined Japan's new defence doctrine 'proactive pacifism' in overt reference to standing up to China while keeping to the spirit of its post-1945 Constitution that prohibits large-scale rearmament. Tokyo has also openly signalled that it would tap on its alliance with Washington to speed up ballistic missile defence against North Korea's potentially threatening missile capabilities. This was equally applicable to a comparable Chinese threat. Additionally, despite the Edward Snowden revelations of cyber espionage by American intelligence agencies, the Japanese government has announced plans to tighten intelligence shar-

ing with Washington vis-à-vis threats from North Korea and China (Bendini 2015, p. 8). Notably, Japan has signalled in October 2015 that it has no qualms about permanently joining the annual US–India bilateral naval exercise known as Exercise Malabar. India and the USA have of course applauded Tokyo’s more muscular naval initiative. In the 2007 instalment of Exercise Malabar, even the navies of Australia and Singapore were involved in the exercise. In further hedging against the ‘strategic panic’ triggered by an assertive China, Japan’s Prime Minister Shinzo Abe has assiduously courted ASEAN with plans for Japanese corporate investment and other infrastructure projects to rival China’s bids. This was announced at the 2015 ASEAN–Japan Summit. Earlier at the 2013 ASEAN–Japan summit in Tokyo, Abe obtained an open-ended commitment by ASEAN members in tandem with Japan to adhere to international law in resolving territorial disputes as well as to strengthen relations between Japan and its ‘friends’ in Southeast Asia.

Therefore, in these myriad ways, the great powers of China, India, Japan, and the USA are both acting unilaterally in relation to their perceived security interests while *also* selectively involving ASEAN as a hedge against dependence on completely bilateral and trilateral security arrangements amongst themselves. Polycentrism clearly means that ASEAN may not have lost all clout, but it is collectively being marginalized given the tenor of highly nationalistic orientations of security amongst the great powers.

### NEO-REALIST DEFENCE DIPLOMACY STRETCHING TOWARDS COUNTER-TERRORISM

Understandably, one measure of the extent to which the great powers are going it alone without factoring in ASEAN’s preferences can be seen in the tenor of military-to-military diplomacy, better known as defence diplomacy. Conventionally, the military as a national institution is trained for the interchangeable, kinetic roles of offence and defence. These are wartime functions. In peacetime roles, conventional thinking places the military in a deterrence posture, namely to ward off any temptation by a putative adversary to engage in offensive action. The military is therefore closely associated with one-dimensional territorial defence on land, sea, and air. According to a heavily cited Adelphi Paper authored by Andrew Cottey and Anthony Forster, defence diplomacy came into fashion since the 1990s and is considered to be a mission that ‘involves

the peacetime cooperative use of armed forces and related infrastructure (primarily defence ministries) as a tool of foreign and security policy' (2004, pp. 5–6). As Cottey and Forster elaborated it, western democracies found their military establishments to be useful diplomatic conduits for not only expanding cooperative relations between longstanding allies, they could also serve as avenues for 'cooperation with new partners and engagement with states undergoing difficult democratic and post-conflict transitions' (2004, p. 6). In this original western idiom, defence diplomacy includes bilateral and multilateral contacts amongst senior military and civilian defence officials, the offering of training facilities and courses to 'engaged' military parties, sharing of expertise in defence management and other military technical fields, provision of expertise in maintaining the democratic control of the Armed Forces, as well as joint participation in military exercises and the corresponding exchange of observers. The Asia-Pacific states, especially under the aegis of ASEAN-related forums such as the ASEAN Regional Forum and the ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting Plus, have performed all these roles except for the democratization function. Moreover, defence diplomacy has been honed by ASEAN members themselves as an informal channel for building confidence in one another's declared commitments towards the peaceful mitigation of bilateral and multilateral disputes (Tan 2012). During the Cold War, for instance, the original five ASEAN founding members staged bilateral exercises at a basic level just to assure one another that they were not planning to fight one another, but to confront a more serious collective enemy in their vicinity—armed communism. Subsequently, defence diplomacy practiced by states that were temporarily or permanently ruled by military juntas, such as Thailand, Indonesia, and Myanmar, served as a means of shoring up external legitimacy and ensuring that their immediate ASEAN neighbours would be discouraged from interfering in their domestic politics. In fact, intra-ASEAN defence diplomacy ensured that the region remained peaceful despite immense ideological diversities since the late 1960s through to the present. Once ASEAN extended defence diplomacy towards the great powers of the USA, China, Japan, and India, it served as an additional layer of safeguards for what ASEAN ministers called the open and inclusive regional security architecture that excluded neither great power nor 'pariah state' so long as each dialogue partner was willing to treat their defence establishments as players in constructive peaceful diplomacy (Emmers and Tan 2011).

In today's context, the degree of inclusion or marginalization of a great power in defence diplomacy has become politicized as a signal of hostile strategic intent short of armed hostilities. The earlier-mentioned Exercise Malabar, featuring the navies of the USA, India, Japan and Australia, has apparently signalled to Beijing that a hostile maritime coalition may be already in the making. The Malabar exercises are infrequently conducted in tandem with all four navies but it did rile Beijing in 2007 and again in 2015. In the latter instalment, while Japan dispatched a single destroyer, the US Navy coordinated with the Indian Navy on 'full-spectrum operations' ranging from simulated hostile combat to humanitarian relief operations. Following the exercise, the US Navy declared its intention to sail within the 12 nautical mile economic zone that China claims in the South China Sea (Migliani 2015). Exercise Malabar was officially a peaceful activity consistent with Asian defence diplomacy, but this apparently can be tuned to send a stern message to great powers that plan to disturb the *status quo*. Hence, this book includes a set of three chapters in 'Part 2: Defence Diplomacy in the Asia-Pacific' that address the state of defence diplomacy under conditions of transitional polycentrism.

It will also be very interesting to observe that defence diplomacy will increasingly be attuned to the rapidly evolving strategic priority of fighting the ISIS terrorist threat that has drawn in China, Japan, and increasingly India and South Korea too, into the messy transnational insurgent politics of the Middle East. The citizens of these four Asia-Pacific states have been targeted for kidnappings, and worse beheadings, by ISIS militants as much as the latter have previously singled out Americans and Europeans for such publicized atrocities. The USA had already established an early precedent in this regard through joint intelligence sharing and cooperation with Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, Philippines, Cambodia and Singapore in the years immediately following the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks and the terrorist bombings in Bali, Jakarta and various Philippine cities. In this regard, Bilveer Singh's chapter deliberately inserts a short case study of Indonesia where the national armed forces, the Tentara Nasional Indonesia (TNI), have begun to actively spearhead an aggressive campaign to exterminate terrorist leaders with the often unannounced cooperation and intelligence support of foreign partners. It is therefore possible to argue that, to a limited extent, a kinetic military role has been activated. At sea, this can be illustrated by the multilateral Malacca Straits Sea Patrol that has been active since 2006, complemented by an 'Eyes in the Sky' maritime aerial surveillance patrol, arising from American and Japanese fears that Al Qaeda, utilizing its local proxies such as the Jemaah Islamiyah, might be tempted to stage

seaborne hijackings and suicide missions into the many commercial ports in the Southeast Asian waters. ASEAN states such as Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore, and Thailand collaborated to establish these patrols in quick order as a direct response to American pressures. In June 2017, a comparable sea patrol was instituted by Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines in the Sulu and Sulawesi Seas following the bold takeover of the southern Philippine city of Marawi by ISIS-linked Islamic militants. It was openly speculated by the three countries' defence ministries that the militants were being resupplied by sea in a brazen military-style operation.

### NON-TRADITIONAL SECURITY THREATS: AN EMERGING FRONT FOR INTERNATIONAL RIVALRY, INSTITUTIONAL GOVERNANCE AND MANOEUVRES AMONG NON-STATE ACTORS

From another direction, the increasing salience of non-traditional security threats calls into question the practical meaning of an ASEAN security community and its national capacities to respond to those threats. As some scholars have pointed out, ASEAN deals with security by imposing a blanket freeze on explicit traditional security cooperation such as initiating formal alliances, building collective security roles in Southeast Asia, or even contemplating peacekeeping interventions in the territory of a member state without the unequivocal consent of that member (Collins 2013, pp. 2–7). Practical security cooperation and implementation in ASEAN can only be achieved in the areas of 'low politics', namely projects in enhancing education opportunities, engendering food security, ensuring equitable and comprehensive transnational labour policies, pandemic preparedness collaboration, bilateral and trilateral police cooperation, and one might add, belatedly, tsunami and earthquake early warning systems. Most of this agenda of low politics overlaps with what scholars of non-traditional security label 'human security'. The latter principally means that the central referent object of security is the individual human being (Hampson 2008; Hathaway and Wills 2013). The idea of a state-centric national security can still co-exist with the protection of the human being only insofar as national security becomes an instrumental tool, and a subsidiary one at that, for securing the human person. The December 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami demonstrated in a graphic and brutal fashion the idea that those members of ASEAN most vulnerable to the tsunami had to accept that they were rendered interdependent by physical geography. The shift in tectonic plates and the corresponding displacement of



oceanic waters in the Indian Ocean made a mockery of the sovereign distinctions and levels of development of Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand and Myanmar. Indeed, the bitter lesson learnt by these ASEAN members was that a region wide tsunami and earthquake alert network needed institutionalized cooperation that involved the scientific and palliative expertise of non-ASEAN authorities. Cyclone Nargis' impact on Myanmar in 2008 should have logically added fuel to the urgency of intra-ASEAN collaboration on non-traditional security but it did not. The government in Nay Pyi Taw perceived offers of foreign relief contingents on Myanmar soil as tantamount to an invasion by proxy. This lingering realist mindset towards humanitarian intervention is addressed in the chapters by Alan Chong and Il Woo Lee, and Jeffrey Engstrom.

Moreover, the recurring annual haze emanating from Indonesia's Sumatra province that blanketed Peninsular Malaysia, Singapore and Southern Thailand was always discussed in relation to the sovereign borders of Indonesia. The latest attempt in 2013 to assist Indonesia in tracing the commercial perpetrators of forest burning foundered upon Jakarta's reticence about revealing land concession maps which would have had an unintended economic consequence for its national competitiveness. The unusually prolonged haze season in September–October 2015 threw an equally sharp spotlight on Jakarta's tardiness in arresting the sources of forest burning once again. This time, the combination of the prevailing El Niño dry weather phenomenon in Asia coupled with underground peatland fires sent the pollutant standards index (PSI) in many parts of Indonesia's Sumatra island into the ultra-hazardous 1000-plus range. Across the borders from Sumatra and Indonesian Kalimantan, the PSI readings in Indonesia's neighbours reached hazardous levels of 200 and more, prompting school closures, flight restrictions, curbs on outdoor activities, reduced tourist arrivals and medical advisories. This forced Jakarta to evacuate a number of its own citizens from the most intense hotspots, and prompted sharp criticism not only from Malaysia and Singapore but also from Thailand and the Philippines. This time, Indonesia was compelled to accept fire-fighting help not only from its ASEAN neighbours but also from Australia and Russia. Since the haze coincided with Indonesian President Joko Widodo's visit to the USA, even President Obama weighed in on the issue and called on Indonesia to combat the haze more effectively as part of an on-going USA–Indonesia pledge to tackle climate change issues thoroughly (Kapoor and Edwards 2015). Food security, often neglected in the regional news headlines, is also reflective of the same complex

interdependence that drives the effects of air pollution into a large swathe of Southeast Asia. This is the subject of a whole chapter by Tamara Nair, which analyses the food *problematique* in the Greater Mekong Subregion while positing why food security ought to be on the agenda of regional organizations. At the same time, civil society organizations have, for the past decade and a half, been pushing for the creation of an institutionalized ASEAN Peoples' Assembly to restrain unethical and anti-social intramural ASEAN state behaviours. The ASEAN Peoples' Assembly has gone nowhere and ASEAN governments have yet to substantively embrace the idea of human security in holistic and practical terms. The plethora of chapters in 'Part 3: Non-Traditional Security Threats as Security Interdependence and the Challenge to Military Missions in East Asia' examine the range of political and technical responses by ASEAN and other Asia-Pacific states to human security issues through the lenses of Realism, Liberal Institutionalism and Constructivism in order to cover the extremely varied range of policy responses to non-traditional security.

#### ORGANIZING THE STUDY OF ASIA-PACIFIC SECURITY: ACKNOWLEDGING POLYCENTRISM IN THEORY AND PRACTICE

Existing frames of international security in the Asia-Pacific are therefore inadequate as explanatory vehicles. There is a widespread sense that with ASEAN marking its 50th anniversary in 2017, it is inadequate in dealing with transnational threats to physical population security, as well as psychological threats to the daily operation of national economies, transportation systems, health facilities, multiracial nation-building, post-disaster recovery and urban normalcy. What ASEAN has excelled at is in containing conventional interstate disputes over land, sea and air boundaries under the rubrics of its Treaty of Amity and Cooperation, and the various declarations on codes of interstate conduct. These 'excellent practices' are little more than conflict mitigation efforts: they involve the deliberate temporization on conflict resolution and the subtle avoidance in assigning blame for state provocations. ASEAN also dealt with great powers by striving to be inclusive of them in regional processes. Increasingly too, in the wake of Cyclone Nargis, Typhoon Haiyan and the MH370 airliner mishap, the arena of Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) is emerging as the latest field of intra-ASEAN and great power rivalries. Therefore, going into the twenty-first century, ASEAN has to address non-traditional threats that draw attention to conflated domestic and external

conditions of distress and poor governance, while still paying attention to the manoeuvres of interstate rivalry over great power spheres of influence and territorial disputes (Hathaway and Wills 2013; Shambaugh 2014). This book has therefore invited its contributors to discuss the frictions arising from two very divergent patterns of security: whether the ASEAN-centred security order remains relevant and its substitution by a pronounced return to neo-realist competition; and the clamour of the national security implications of non-traditional security issues.

‘Transitional polycentrism’ is necessarily the broad category under which the following authors have been asked to commit themselves to examining. Following this chapter’s introduction, the term should be defined as a form of international order that is fluid, mixed with all three Neo-realist, Liberal and Constructivist traits, and potentially challenging state-centric security order all at once. It is order in the first sense that there are highly prominent patterns of security problems caused by identifiable factors such as great powers’ national interests and their corresponding military postures. In a second sense, it is order that is contested by attempts at calculated disorder, where certain Asia-Pacific states and non-state actors, such as terrorists and movements for self-determination, attempt to revise the *status quo* on the basis that it disadvantages them. In a third sense, transitional polycentrism conveys order that is on the cusp of taking definitive shape: the state-centric *realpolitik* of the ASEAN and great power varieties will encounter competition for political attention from food crises, natural and man-made disasters that challenge states to adopt less nationalistic policy responses. This is indeed a difficult task in reading order out of polycentrism, hence the original conference call that invited the authors of this volume from mostly policy-oriented think-tank institutions.

This carefully selected background offers the advantage of insights that straddle the academic-policy-maker divide. As Christopher Hill (1994) has pointed out, academics and policy-makers do not perceive and act in international relations from the same page. Policy-makers are likely to be sceptical of academics’ obsession with generalizing patterns of behaviour across different cultural, political, and economic contexts. People actually working in government wish to act in the world as it is. Problems are expected to be defined and resolved within mostly practical and local horizons. As a result, policy-makers claim themselves to be *primus inter pares* in ‘performing’ international relations, in contrast to academics who have to follow the former’s lead in interpreting events. More often than not, academics build theory retrospectively. This fact of a knowledge lag inhibits

their utility in informing policy-makers in time. Hill has suggested that three gaps exist between academic and practitioner. The first is the ‘history question’: how far should the academic preoccupy his research with the current news agenda and whittle down the emphasis on studying broad patterns of international behaviour across time and space? The second is the ‘ideology question’ which revolves around whether policy-makers are reasonably empathetic towards the academic concern with moral questions in world politics. Hill identified a third gap—the ‘professional question’: how far should academic independence be valued by both academic and policy-maker? (Hill 1994, pp. 5–19) Joseph Lepgold (1998) has suggested that these gaps between practitioner and academic be recast as a relationship between different possessors of comparative advantage in both marshalling knowledge and the analysis of that knowledge. It is often observed that wise decisions arise in the mirror of incisive readings of past experiences. Conversely, policy-makers *as practitioners* often do not have the luxury of time or mental capacity in the heat of a crisis to generate comprehensively thought out responses. This is where academics can justify their ‘professional independence’ as an asset in driving thinking and research that takes in the aforementioned ‘history’ and ‘ideology’ questions. Their research outcomes and opinion pieces can be read by policy-makers as feasible supplements while they are ‘on the go’. More sophisticated national foreign policy establishments would of course attempt to institutionalize a regular roundtable between academics and practitioners where the latter can tap the brains of the former for improving policy-making performance or positively rectifying unintended policy outcomes.

In pondering the *international security of the Asia-Pacific*, the contributors hail mostly from backgrounds that blend both policy advisory and policy-making roles in addition to wearing the academic robes in regular university faculties and graduate schools that function simultaneously as think-tanks. Increasingly, when one begins to think about where to start in locating the roots of research on the subject, one cannot avoid looking up doctorate holders who have spent time working in research institutes. Some may have left research institutes for normal universities, and *vice versa*, exited normal university departments to take up appointments in think-tanks, in order to pursue interests in writing on security. A handful of the contributors to this volume have even spent their entire careers in a think-tank, or an associated network, while pursuing interesting research projects published in major internationally refereed journals and books. Many of our contributors also

capitalize on the luxury of ambiguity in their proximity to the formal organs of government. Therefore, when they share insights in the course of their writing, it may well be accurately revealing of official thinking, or conversely internal debates, even if their discourse does not admit to such intents. More interestingly, since this whole project was sired by a large number of contributors based at the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, it naturally benefits from the networks of perspectives that regularly connect this leading Asian think-tank cum graduate school to the rest of Asia. A glance at the list of contributors and their short biographies will attest to this unique angle in which this book situates itself. In many ways, most of the contributors manifest the peculiar pattern of think-tank diplomacy in the pan-Asian region (Soesastro et al. 2006; Tan 2007, 2013). Governments fund think-tanks and promote their use as relatively freewheeling proxies for diplomatic exchanges on an academic level while ostensibly trying to set agendas and float trial balloons for pacific cooperation. These should serve as tangible reasons to take this book seriously as an entry point for the study of Asian international security, and into its nascent transnational dimensions as well. It is as much about states as it is about non-state formations that affect states and their populations' well-being.

Therefore, drawing upon the various threads of the security landscape in the Asia-Pacific region, I have derived a number of research questions to guide the various authors. To ensure some coherence across the various chapters scrutinizing ASEAN Centrality as the linchpin of security order, great power unilateralism and defections from ASEAN-centric order ('Part 1: The Great Powers: Going Their Own Way or Tempering Rivalry with Some Reference to ASEAN?'), and attempts to preserve some semblance of stability within transitional polycentrism through defence diplomacy ('Part 2: Defence Diplomacy in the Asia-Pacific'), the respective authors in these sections have been instructed to address at least TWO of the following research questions:

- (a) What are the pillars of an 'ASEAN Peace', and how have these weakened since 1967 when the organization was founded?
- (b) How viable is it for great powers to pursue 'go it alone' strategies for regional security short of engaging in armed conflict?

- (c) Has defence diplomacy merely served as an instrument for prolonging the ASEAN Peace or has it proven dexterous enough for great powers to build confidence amongst themselves with little reference to ASEAN?

For authors in ‘Part 3: Non-Traditional Security Threats as Security Interdependence and the Challenge to Military Missions in East Asia’, the umbrella question of ASEAN-driven norms will already be embedded in the backgrounds of their arguments. Northeast Asian humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HADR) issues may of course have little connection with ASEAN, if at all, but some authors have been encouraged to case study and make reference to them for purposes of fresh insights into the emerging non-traditional security ‘order’. Most importantly, authors in Part 3 have been tasked to address at least two of these additional questions as closely as possible:

- (d) How might non-traditional security bolster or undermine ASEAN centrality within the regional security architecture?
- (e) Are non-traditional security issues essentially a challenge to Asia-Pacific governments’ conceptualization of defence roles?
- (f) Are Asia-Pacific militaries already prepared for tackling non-traditional security threats because their conventional military capabilities have already been technologically engineered for dual use even if these have not been openly declared?

Notably, these questions are intended to capture the complex theoretical and empirical layers of the international security of the Asia-Pacific. One popular starting point is the trial of Realism against Liberalism, or more specifically neo-realism against neo-liberalism. Realism is immediately relevant given the Asia-Pacific region’s innumerable bilateral and multilateral jousts over territorial claims and the obvious arms racing obscured by assorted politically correct labels. The absence of thick European Union-like supranational institutions reinforces the impression that power politics and exclusivist nationalism rule most ministries of defence and foreign affairs across the region (Colbert 1977; Huxley 1996; Tow 2001; Odgaard 2007). Nuanced voices such as those of Michael Leifer, Amitav Acharya,

Sheldon Simon and Alan Collins have argued that reality is more complicated since governing elites are experimenting with what are conventionally labelled security communities and neo-liberal institutions (Leifer 1989; Acharya 2001; Simon 1995; Collins 2003). ASEAN and its associated congenital institutions, such as the ASEAN Regional Forum, the ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting Plus and the East Asia Summit, all exemplify an earnest attempt by Asian states to surmount national suspicions and recognize the benefits of measured forms of collective security assurances. (Leifer 1999) Amongst the interpreters of security community in the Asia-Pacific, Acharya has also attempted to invoke constructivism to explain why norms for cooperative security arise principally via ASEAN's formation and aspiration for 'centrality' in Asia-Pacific security (Acharya 2009). Barry Buzan's outlying application of security complex theory to account for ASEAN-driven security cooperation can be annexed to constructivist accounts as well (1988, 2003). That said, these accounts are not up to date in accounting for the phenomenon I label as transitional polycentrism. The latter may persist for an indefinite long term simply because of the persistence of neo-realist competition among great powers, alongside the diplomatic 'middle ground' appeal of the spaces afforded both great powers and weak states alike by ASEAN centrality. As will be seen, when states tackle non-traditional security threats they will also reprise the pluralistic coexistence of neo-realist competition with neo-liberal attempts at building looser institutions that celebrate voluntary adherence to a set of fairly flexible norms of conduct. Non-state actors will of course enjoy the luxury of defying state preferences if and when they choose to pioneer alternative modes of conflict mitigation on the ground. Taking the long view, ASEAN centrality is probably exemplary of an unusual Asia-Pacific mode of norm building that is emphatically unaccompanied by specific sanctions even if ASEAN's very centrality is enduring a significant degree of neglect (Emmers 2012; Buzan and Zhang 2014). The conclusion to this book will appraise the reality that ASEAN centrality might not need to be measured in a zero sum manner within polycentric order. ASEAN merely needs to perform consolatory functions where neo-realist competition marks out the shape of the peace.

### ASEAN'S CENTRALITY AND CROSSROADS

Some stock-taking is necessary at the start for ASEAN's security roles in order that the emergence of a polycentric order might be perceived as an incremental rather than a sea change. As Ooi Kee Beng's chapter treats

it, the formation of ASEAN represents the modern culmination of a club of newly sovereign and postcolonial nation-states pursuing separately the quest for the basic security of peaceful coexistence amongst themselves. Southeast Asia did not arrive at a peaceful regionalism by design. It was instead, quite by accident, more like trial and error. The new nation-states were led by nationalist movements seeking to both inherit the borders confirmed by European imperial design and drawing their populations into a quixotic campaign to adjust those boundaries according to crude notions of local justice. In short, the colonial legacy left a veritable administrative and ethnological mess. The new states were animated by the somewhat naïve nationalistic visions espoused by their indigenous leaders. It took these leaders quite some time to appreciate that the banishment of conflict between new neighbours, each claiming utmost sovereignty at home and overseas, required a sense of moderation. Sovereignty at home through material deliverance and stability increasingly meant that foreign policy ventures had to be diluted in order that budgets and popular energies could be diverted to development. This was how ASEAN came into being as a catch-all security organization that avoided naming itself as such in its formal documents.

At the same time, ASEAN sought autonomy from interventions by foreign powers, especially those regarded as ‘great powers’ with the military and economic reach to re-colonize Southeast Asia through indirect means. The renowned Treaty of Amity and Cooperation, the two versions of the Bali Concord and now, the ASEAN Charter, spell out this aspiration to regional autonomy in no uncertain terms. Ooi however warns that this historical trajectory towards peace is neither natural nor inevitable. It increasingly has to take into account the nationalistic and centrifugal attitudes of China, India, Japan and the USA, while also minding the fact that it is no longer a peripheral theatre of security to others. ASEAN’s external interlocutors can therefore be expected to question ASEAN’s existential coherence, and to criticize its lackadaisical pace of integration. Meanwhile, ASEAN states continue to struggle against the so-called non-traditional security issues that challenge the intrinsic artificiality of the region’s post-colonial borders in respect to population movements, climate change, pandemics and enmeshment with a global economy.

See Seng Tan’s chapter scrutinizing ASEAN’s centrality in defence and security cooperation in East Asia critically examines the widely circulated notion that ASEAN was and remains central to Asia-Pacific security. As Tan argues, ASEAN ‘permitted a gradual regionalization of defence relations among its member countries’ right from its inception during the



Cold War. This set off an incrementally unplanned embrace of its centrality in the progress towards Asia-Pacific security regionalism. ASEAN's institutionalized culture of caution and making haste slowly in building institutional apparatus matched the pattern of pre-existing national security suspicions entertained by the vast majority of Asia-Pacific states, including the great powers. If ASEAN led only by lowest political common denominator, the rest of the Asia-Pacific could hardly quarrel with such a logic given the absence of a single overarching consensus on security regionalism following the end of the Cold War.

Tan identifies and interrogates four understandings of 'centrality', and hence of ASEAN's utility to the great powers in 'leading' on security matters. The first version of centrality followed the logic that in the hypothetical absence of ASEAN, no single great power or association of Asian states could lead. A second interpretation of ASEAN centrality is to appraise the organization as a *convener extraordinaire*. Since most of the Asia-Pacific states have proven unable to agree on a sufficiently neutral venue for discussing bilateral and multilateral disputes, it fell to ASEAN to fill a niche of serving as the meeting place. Better still, ASEAN counts no great power amongst its formal membership and is instead comprised of weak and small states, and possibly one potential middle power—Indonesia. It follows that if this club of weak states and one potential middle power can pose no viable threat to the rest of the Asia-Pacific in the strictest neo-realist sense, ASEAN could therefore serve a third central role—that of a hub or fulcrum of diplomatic communication for the entire Asia-Pacific. As Tan points out, East Asia's regional architecture comprising the ASEAN Regional Forum, ASEAN Plus Three, the East Asia Summit and the ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting Plus have little alternative than to follow ASEAN's tried and tested *modus operandi* of forging diplomacy through lowest common denominator principles. The fourth possible meaning of ASEAN centrality is that ASEAN members are expected to solemnly uphold the various interstate documents that define their membership: the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation, and the two Bali Concordats of 1976 and 2003. All of these documents collectively commit their signatories to forego the use of force as the primary tool for resolving disputes among themselves, tolerate political pluralism in international relations as an article of good conduct, and maximize channels for dialogue between governments. Some of these elements of the ASEAN formula are relatively unremarkable upon closer scrutiny but as Tan points out, 'as a grouping of relatively weak states that, with the blessing of the great powers, has had the temerity to walk among giants, ASEAN's achievements are by no

means small or insignificant' and are in fact 'astounding' in inverse proportion to neo-realist measures of power.

Kriengsak Charoenwongsak's chapter is by contrast the critical voice of an ex-practitioner who has served as both consultant to and inquisitor of the ASEAN Secretariat. He takes the view that while ASEAN's best years appear to have lain in the Cold War, the fluid challenges of the post-Cold War era have exposed its organizational limitations. He takes a fine scalpel to probe at the practical outcomes, and costs, of preserving consensus and the fabled ASEAN practice of non-interference. These apparently superficial successes are those of conflict avoidance instead of conflict conciliation and resolution. ASEAN's dispute settlement mechanism has been rendered irrelevant by conflict avoidance. Charoenwongsak highlights the 2013 episode of the Southeast Asian haze crisis and the on-and-off Thai-Cambodian dispute over the Preah Vihear temple to make this point. He calls for a fresh attempt to transcend ASEAN as a wholly intergovernmental venture by acting decisively to institutionalize consultation with civil society. ASEAN should also be minded to encourage grassroots support for deepening its conflict mediation and resolution roles in all interstate, domestic and transnational dimensions, notwithstanding the need to honour instruments such as the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation. Charoenwongsak's vision is ultimately a humanistic one advocating a more people-oriented regional community that consults below the level of sovereign governments and looks after the welfare of its ultimate constituencies, the developing populations of all ten member states. Above all, he opines it is time to reinterpret the meaning of non-interference. At this point, it is clear that ASEAN's centrality embraces typically neo-realist security issues tangled with territorial disputes and military rivalries, while at the same time, the chapters by Ooi and Charoenwongsak strongly suggest that ASEAN has arrived at a crossroads but has yet to find a way of forging a common will to deal with non-traditional or amorphous security issues that defy intergovernmental closed door face-saving and other elitist conflict avoidance measures.

## PART I: THE GREAT POWERS: GOING THEIR OWN WAY OR TEMPERING RIVALRY WITH SOME REFERENCE TO ASEAN?

If ASEAN is less in control of steering security regionalism, it may be because the others are stealthily filling the vacuum either by design or by default. The Asia-Pacific region is witnessing a rising China asserting

its primacy amidst its so-called peer competitors of Japan and India (Shambaugh 2005). Until the Obama Administration declared its so-called pivot and ‘rebalancing’ to Asia from 2011, the Chinese had attempted a charm offensive to secure Southeast Asia as a firmly pro-Beijing constituency under the shadow of an American foreign policy distracted by the ‘War on Terror’ and military interventions in the Middle East. China’s rise is of course the subject of multiple tests against Realist power transition theory, neo-liberal institutionalism and social constructivism.

International Relations theory has however yet to tackle the possibility that order may be accidentally generated in the tussle between China and ASEAN. The latter two cannot be described as embroiled in relentless enmity, even at the zenith of the current row over the Spratly islands. Chinese economic investments, labour flows and technological largesse have been crucial in propelling ASEAN’s economic growth, ever since Deng Xiaoping encouraged his comrades to look southwards for economic inspiration and Beijing steadfastly refused to devalue the Renminbi during the Asian Financial Crisis of 1997–8. Beijing’s policies therefore pose a policy enigma to observers, while enmeshing Southeast Asia in a pragmatic multidimensional relationship (Zhang and Tang 2005; Stuart-Fox 2010). Nonetheless, most observers would concur that China’s increasingly unbridled nationalism could potentially unhinge the pragmatism that holds the China-ASEAN relationship together. China’s security role in Southeast Asia reinforces its already critical role in occasionally buffering and admonishing North Korea vis-à-vis the latter’s policies towards South Korea, Japan and the US. While it is also fairly widely speculated that China’s influence is not as strong as it was under Kim Il Sung’s reign as North Korean president, North Korean leaders of the post-Kim Il Sung era are not likely to wish upon themselves a complete isolation during their struggle to retain regime legitimacy through nuclear weapons acquisition. China is useful as an occasional advocate and go-between with the US. China’s ambivalent yet integrated foreign policy position is surprisingly analogous to the ASEAN Way of managing consensus with dissension. Ironically, at a moment when ASEAN centrality appears to be weakening, China’s behaviour enjoys the position of succeeding *de facto* to the role of regional security manager.

In this regard, Hoo Tiang Boon’s chapter titled ‘Flexing Muscles Flexibly: China and Asia’s Transitional Polycentrism’ examines the role of China in shaping and animating this very transitional polycentrism. It argues

that from 2013 onwards, Beijing had been crafting and implementing a strategy of 'flexible assertiveness' in Asia. This was a nuanced but deliberate policy with two discernable prongs: one is a tougher and more uncompromising, and increasingly more revisionist, approach towards what China regards as its core interests; the other is a more flexible, more negotiable, and altogether more magnanimous approach towards those regional interests that are perceived as less crucial. Through these approaches, Beijing hopes to forestall the possibility of a united bloc of Asian opposition to its interests. Ironically, Asia-Pacific states at the receiving end of 'flexible assertiveness' are left wondering which Chinese government they are consistently dealing with. As neighbouring states like the Philippines, Vietnam and Japan have found out, Chinese assertiveness is hardly flexible when it comes to using pressure tactics to establish a *de facto* controlling presence in jointly disputed territorial zones.

Huang Xiaoming's chapter is even bolder in questioning where ASEAN fits under China's new assertiveness. He argues that much as China's unilateralism is partly derived from a self-confidence born of decades of economic growth and experience in multilateral participation in Asia, it appears to have been reinforced by US actions in regard to its much advertised rebalance to Asia. The security landscape in the Asia-Pacific has thus been reinterpreted by Beijing to favour a more neo-realist-oriented behaviour by China to achieve its national interests. Moreover, the US pivot effectively marginalized ASEAN by openly redefining its regional security responsibilities in collaboration with its key regional partners, or, indeed, its traditional allies, in the region. Potentially, the impact of this American fall-back on alliances will be subtle and not clearly defined for some years to come. But a transition to something beyond an ASEAN-mediated order appears under way. When ASEAN is no longer perceived, at least in the eyes of China, as a principal security provider for her, the ASEAN-centred security infrastructure will mean less for China. Consequently, China will be more inclined to 'take the law into its own hands' to secure its interests in the region. China's policy of '*tao-guang-yang-hui*' (i.e. avoiding the limelight, quietly bide one's time and build strength) will then have assumed a meaning that will potentially prove inimical to ASEAN's interests in preserving a prosper-thy-neighbour *status quo*.

Takeshi Yuzawa's chapter 'ASEAN in the Era of Japan-China Tensions: Diplomatic Opportunities or Strategic Dilemmas?' is a little more sanguine about ASEAN's position in the middle of Sino-Japanese rivalries.

Yuzawa argues that ‘the two major powers have begun to exhibit explicit counterbalancing behaviour, drawing ASEAN states more directly into strategic competition. While these new trends have still provided huge material benefits to individual ASEAN states, the risk of an ASEAN divide is now more real than ever before’. That said, ASEAN remains ‘central’ in being the object of both Beijing’s and Tokyo’s tussle for Asian influence. China and Japan are jostling over drawing ASEAN into their respective economic orbits. This competitive stage was established since the 1990s with a raft of proposals and counterproposals over the shape of economic regionalism, specific free trade agreements and even the rivalry between Japan and China over whether the ASEAN Plus Three meetings should eclipse the East Asia Summit as the premier forum for shaping Asian economic integration. Additionally, China’s disputes with ASEAN over the Spratlys were deliberately linked by Japan as part of a strategy to encourage Asia-wide opposition to Chinese abrasiveness. Moreover, Japan has assiduously attempted to pursue a value-based diplomacy that emphasized human rights and respect for democracy in contradistinction to the so-called Beijing Consensus. Tokyo has also made it a point to respond readily to HADR needs across the earthquake and typhoon prone Southeast Asian region. It has even gone as far as to assist Vietnam, Indonesia and the Philippines in bilateral capacity building aid packages that showcase a soft power dimension to Tokyo’s campaign for greater influence. In contrast, China’s infrastructural diplomacy of generous loans, grants and construction projects have endeared its political and economic presence across much of Indochina. Beijing’s AIIB and One Belt One Road proposals are the most advanced signposts of Beijing’s economic campaign to marginalize Japan. Yuzawa warns that since Tokyo and Beijing are trying to cultivate ASEAN states bilaterally, unilaterally, and occasionally through the collective ASEAN itself, their actions may cumulatively repoliticize ASEAN as a battleground for their rivalries, notwithstanding the founding aspirations of ASEAN. The latter’s only hope, as Yuzawa sees it, remains in staying the course of institution building, transforming into concrete reality projects such as the ASEAN Community in its economic and politico-security manifestations. This looks to be a tall order for an organization that drifted into centrality by offering the example of a political currency of integration through the lowest common denominator.

In her turn, Charmaine Misalucha takes on the scrutiny of the US alliance system and offers her take on whether they would live up to their intent with or without ASEAN. Her starting point is that states accu-

mulate power and engage in balances of power in order to minimize the effects of anarchy and ensure their security. One way to do this is by forming alliances based on states' threat perceptions. However, once states determine whom to ally with, they face problems of defection in the form of either abandonment or entrapment. Abandonment spells realignment, de-alignment, repealing the alliance contract, or failing to deliver on explicit commitments. Entrapment means being forced to join an ally's war efforts for the sake of preserving the alliance. The issue becomes that of alliance management. How do states calculate the risks of abandonment and entrapment? How are hard alliances maintained?

In order to address these questions, Misalucha turns to the unconventional use of language as an analytical method and its use by American allies as an alliance-maintenance tool. Linguistic tools like representational force can capture the fluidity of power politics in alliance relationships. As a communicative strategy, representational force is deployed to stabilize the collective identity of a relationship that is facing an external crisis. Moreover, representational force recognizes the power differentials of states and can therefore trace how weaker members end up acquiescing to the demands of the stronger powers. This shadow puppetry notwithstanding, the logic of representational force allows weaker powers to do the same and make stronger states comply with their representations. This framework can be applied to the USA's alliances in East and Southeast Asia. Indeed, these alliances are the backbone of the region's regional security architecture. With China as a variable in threat perceptions, how are the risks of abandonment and entrapment calculated in the US-Japan and US-Philippine alliances? Misalucha argues that in the face of crises, alliances' exercise of representational force in order to stabilize their relationship takes precedence in the short term over addressing the actual threat. In this manner, the US is expediently 'activated' by its allies to confront China's aberrant behaviour in Southeast and Northeast Asia short of triggering armed hostilities.

Manjeet Pardesi's chapter on India reveals that the biggest single player in the South Asian region is fixated upon China as a rival and a threat for reasons of its own. In Pardesi's perspective, a rising India is unlikely to be able to establish a hegemonic order in South Asia or the Indian Ocean Region for two important reasons. First, India's on-going rivalry with Pakistan—a nuclear-armed sub-continental power with significant military, nuclear, and financial links with China and the United States—means that Islamabad will contest any Indian attempts at regional hegemony.

Second, the simultaneous rise of China and India is slowly merging the traditional boundaries between South Asia and the Indian Ocean Region on one hand and East (Northeast with Southeast) Asia on the other. This larger strategic Asia will have both continental and maritime dimensions. The power politics of this larger strategic Asia will also include the system's pre-eminent power, the United States, in South Asian and Indian Ocean affairs. The presence of two other great powers—China and the United States—in South Asia and the Indian Ocean will make an India-centred hegemonic order impossible by definition as India will not be the only great power in its home region. Instead, India will attempt to establish a regional order based on Indian primacy in the strategic affairs of South Asia and the Indian Ocean. While primacy implies precedence as opposed to dominance, as Pardesi explains it in his chapter, India's quest for such a hierarchic order in South Asia and the Indian Ocean will be a dynamic process with uncertain success. This is something that ASEAN definitely cannot count on as a reliable buffer against China's security designs.

Above all, Part 1 paints a potentially dire scenario for ASEAN's fortunes going into the rest of the twenty-first century. The increased unilateralism by the great powers allows ASEAN at best a tenuous hold on shaping great power behaviour via its lowest common denominator strategy. While Misalucha holds out the diplomatic technique of 'representational force' as the strongest tool in ASEAN's diplomatic kit, the China-centricity of the other chapters treating the great powers suggests that it is the PRC that holds the initiative in 'dictating' the moves of the other pre-existing and potential 'great power peer competitors'.

## PART 2: DEFENCE DIPLOMACY IN THE ASIA-PACIFIC

Defence diplomacy, as I have set out in earlier sections, is primarily intended to cultivate confidence amongst erstwhile hostile states, and ultimately to forge peace between them through the creation of practical areas of cooperation. ASEAN was a huge practitioner of it, and to a lesser extent, some of the great powers. The chapters within this section not only take stock of developments in this area, but also posit that defence diplomacy can be tuned to conventional realist usages, as well as to build bridges to great power rivals in those very tense areas of competition. This is all consistent with the definition by Andrew Cottey and Anthony Forster that defence diplomacy is a mission that 'involves the peacetime cooperative

use of armed forces and related infrastructure (primarily defence ministries) as a tool of foreign and security policy' (2004, pp. 5–6). In this light, Renato Cruz de Castro's chapter examines the Philippines' efforts to connect the separate U.S. bilateral alliances in the Asia-Pacific region as an expedient coalition to counter Chinese unilateralism on the South China Sea Dispute. This serves to compensate for the Philippine Armed Forces' limited border protection capabilities, as well as cope with other non-traditional security concerns. De Castro starts by exploring a central question: How does the Philippines establish defence relations with Japan, South Korea, and Australia under the common US defence umbrella? It also raises the following corollary questions: What is the Philippines' game plan in co-opting these three American allies? Basically, the Philippines is attempting for its own purposes to 'leverage' on the post-1952 'San Francisco system' of the US-centred hub-and-spokes system of alliances for its security needs. In classic network theory formulation, Manila is encouraging Tokyo, Seoul and Canberra to be bolder in confronting Chinese 'aggression'. Moreover, it is also locking in defence ties with all three by negotiating weapons purchases, participating in joint exercises and highlighting its defence partners' coordinated responses to humanitarian needs in the aftermath of Typhoon Yolanda in 2013 as a precursor of joint operations in potential 'wartime' situations. De Castro's analysis marks a potentially significant departure from the passive, lacklustre, and informal form of defence diplomacy hitherto practised under ASEAN Centrality (Tan 2012).

Taking after a more dovish direction, Collin Koh's chapter treats an under-explored dimension to on-going Sino-Japanese naval tensions: the practice of Confidence and Security-Building Measures (CSBMs) on a unilateral basis. Nearly three years have passed since Tokyo nationalized the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands in late 2012, thereafter Sino-Japanese relations evidently took a turn for the worse with regular incidents of maritime confrontations in waters surrounding the isles. A negotiated form of bilateral CSBM, in particular the proposed crisis management mechanism, will probably take time to materialize and will continue to be fraught with uncertainties. In the meantime, while the spotlight has been on the recurring confrontations between the two countries' naval forces, little has been written about the unilateral restraint at sea exercised by both governments. Koh argues that this unilateral restraint at sea manifests a sincere attempt by both sides to balance competing national interests.



On the one hand, the resort to limited threat and use of force at sea—better known as gunboat diplomacy—remains perceived as a necessary form of political expression in relation to factors of domestic legitimacy and their governments' standing with nationalistic public opinion. But, on the other hand, such recourse can be calibrated by the two governments to ensure that sustained tensions do not escalate and spin out of control. Koh's chapter empirically highlights the modest, incremental series of official and semi-official bilateral exchanges that have potentially played a role in facilitating the promulgation of the Four-Point Agreement between Beijing and Tokyo in November 2014. This brought about a limited measure of Sino-Japanese rapprochement despite on-going headline grabbing strategic tensions between the two Asian great powers. In this sense, Koh's chapter hews to the original neo-liberal spirit of defence diplomacy as it evolved out of Cold War and post-Cold War Europe.

Rounding off this section on security measures manifested through defence diplomacy is Bilveer Singh's chapter addressing the emergence of an Asia-Pacific diplomacy of counter-terrorism. This is still defence diplomacy insofar as it requires achieving border protection through collaborative arrangements between the armed military and police forces of Asia-Pacific and Indo-Pacific states. While historically, Islamist terrorism, especially driven by the Al Qaeda, had tended to affect Central, South and Southeast Asia, this has fundamentally changed with the rise of the Islamic State, or in short, ISIS/ISIL/DAESH. In the Asia-Pacific today, ASEAN, China, the United States, Japan and even Russia are increasingly focused on countering the threat posed by the Islamic State. It is no longer a South or Southeast Asian phenomenon but also an East Asian one especially since Chinese and Japanese citizens working in the Middle East have been abducted and murdered by ISIS. ISIS have also grown bolder in directly issuing open-ended threats to attack Northeast Asian states for targeting Muslims at home and in tandem with western states. South and Southeast Asia have of course been implicated in the terrorism politics of the Middle East since 9/11 by either unwittingly supplying recruits from their populations, or inadvertently providing soft alternative targets to those in the Middle East, Europe and North America. The impact of this strategic confluence has been manifold. First, as never before, non-traditional security issues, especially the threat of terrorism, have come to dominate national and regional defence concerns. It also provides a new point of convergence for countries in the region to cooperate through new regional and global mechanisms to overcome the threat despite wide

divergences on conventional security concerns, including the rising tension over the South China Sea. Clearly, no single country can counter the threat of ISIS as it is a globalized phenomenon with foreign fighters coming from more than 90 countries supporting the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria. Second, while hard approaches are important in safeguarding national security, there is also the increasing importance of soft approaches in undertaking counter-radicalization and de-radicalization measures, something conventional militaries are ill-suited to undertake. This will either require the militaries in the region to undertake a role expansion for a full-spectrum ‘war on terror’, or signpost the increasing importance of non-military assets in national defence, including the increasing importance of law enforcement agencies in countering the threat of national and regional terrorism. In addition to issues relating to governance, there will be the increasing need to undertake counter-ideology measures, something militaries are not always equipped for. As such, the emergence of the non-traditional threat of terrorism posed by the Islamic State in the Asia-Pacific poses new challenges for conventional militaries in the region. What Asia-Pacific militaries can help with—as the Indonesian case shows—is to act as the executing arm of law enforcement against terrorist networks on national soil and in bilateral border areas. How well counter-terrorism is juxtaposed and synergized at the national and regional levels will determine the success of overcoming this danger.

### PART 3: NON-TRADITIONAL SECURITY THREATS AS SECURITY INTERDEPENDENCE AND THE CHALLENGE TO MILITARY MISSIONS IN EAST ASIA

When it comes to non-traditional security issues, the scope of that very *security* is pan-regional in nature even if national governments publicly task themselves to protect their respective territorially delimited populations. Non-traditional security is a manifestation of a very fundamental meaning of interdependence. The source of a contagion or a food scare is traceable to some pollutant or other biological miscreant in the realm of universal biology. These sources cross political boundaries through the carriage of wind, animal host, plant host, human host, or worse, the very food system that was designed to sustain national populations across a number of national markets. This security interdependence is also integrated into the larger ‘alternative’ security paradigm flagged out earlier as ‘human security’, namely that paradigm where the central referent object

of security is the individual human being. Protecting the human being is a tall order indeed (Hathaway and Wills 2013). It encompasses everything from food security, medical security, social welfare policy to supply security, market stability and the assurance of basic human rights of expression and protest under a framework of democracy. Some Asian governments would rather re-house democracy as a sub-unit of ‘good governance’, a notion that could theoretically be expanded to harmonize authoritarian doctrines with the rule of law. This tall order of managing non-traditional threats clearly challenges ASEAN’s sensitivity towards maintaining hard sovereignty. It also challenges the sovereignty of China, India, and Japan, and the USA, as long as the causes and symptoms of non-traditional security disasters invite simultaneous international and domestic scrutiny and comparisons. Moreover, the very idea of human security also contains the salient component of morality and compassion. When human security is invoked, morality tends to translate into doing something to assist the materially less fortunate or the victim of unfortunate circumstance. Mother Nature, or ‘Gaia’, along with misgovernment, can equally be blamed for generating insecurity. Hence, the study of non-traditional security in Asia is particularly vexing in a mostly developmental context where governing capacities vary tremendously from highly developed Japan, South Korea, Taiwan and Singapore to the middle developed Vietnam, Thailand, Malaysia, and Indonesia, and the less developed Cambodia, Laos, and Myanmar. Governance as the source of insecurity, or security, is thus put squarely under the spotlight as the ensuing chapters by Nair and Quayle argue. The remaining chapters by Cook, Chong and Lee, and Engstrom offer an even more focused appraisal of the role of governance in producing security or insecurity by throwing the spotlight on defence institutions in mitigating disaster.

Tamara Nair’s chapter begins by warning that ‘food security is often intertwined with other human insecurities such as unequal economic growth, unemployment, and even unfair economic competition’. For instance, countries in the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS) face the prospect that equal access to resources opens up problems that can only be collectively addressed through the deliberate inclusion of not only governments, but also of local communities, welfare organizations, women’s groups and cooperatives, and human rights advocates. An overarching issue in food insecurities and potential conflict that deserves attention is the effectiveness of regional level institutions and their role in addressing such issues of human security. This is where ASEAN’s effectiveness, and

by extension, its centrality to tackling non-traditional security is put under severe scrutiny. Nair's chapter treats the Greater Mekong Subregion as a case study to answer three questions of inquiry. Firstly, will issues of food availability and access lead to forced environmental migration in the GMS? Secondly, will such movements create potential conflict scenarios both within the country (between marginalized communities and those that might fare better) and across state borders, (neighbouring countries), and invite the entry of agents of traditional security? And, thirdly, in synthesizing the two questions above, can such events threaten ASEAN centrality in the long run? Nair cautions that 'the longer gestational periods of the effects of climate change make it more likely that studies can only rely on available empirical data and literature to some extent. It is almost as if we are travelling without maps and our best indicators are current physical (natural), social, economic and political scenarios'. Her chapter strongly suggests that non-traditional security *qua* food security merits a longer term study of the capacity for national level security governance as global climate change impacts on food production. This is both troubling and promising for research since 'Asian security' specialists will increasingly have to globalize their research ambit.

Next, Linda Quayle's chapter discusses the non-governmental organisation (NGO) dimensions to tackling NTS issues on a subnational plane. To Quayle, subnational conflict, both overt and latent, remains a serious challenge for Southeast Asia, posing threats to its economic progress, its extra-regional relations, and its community aspirations. Yet ASEAN, despite several laudable initiatives that have a bearing on conflict mitigation, is still groping for a meaningful role in this area, and most of the load is currently shouldered by individual regional states, external players, and civil society entities of various kinds. ASEAN confronts two challenges in this area. Firstly, civil society is a vital component of subnational conflict mitigation. Yet ASEAN is still in the process of working out the terms of its relationship with regional civil society, let alone with the many smaller local players that animate the peace support arena. Secondly, on the issue of conflict mitigation, as on so many others, ASEAN is still balancing desired outcomes with available means and political will. Thirdly, and interestingly, Quayle argues that 'subnational conflict mitigation occupies an awkward position between traditional and non-traditional security. It fits neither with ASEAN's historic international peace-promoting *raison d'être*, nor with the transnational non-traditional security issues that have gained such prominence in recent security outlook documents. As such, subnational

conflict has become something of a Cinderella in ASEAN's security landscape'. In order to flesh out the context in which ASEAN is trying to find its conflict-mitigation niche, Quayle's chapter focuses on the subnational conflict areas of Mindanao and Aceh. Conflict scenarios are notoriously different, making it difficult to extrapolate patterns and recommendations from single cases. Nevertheless, these case studies serve two purposes. The first is to highlight the innovations that have characterized the work of these networks, particularly in the areas of hybrid mediation support initiatives, civilian peacekeeping, and education for peace. The second is to unpack some of the highly complex networks that state and non-state actors have created around conflict mitigation efforts, noting that the roles of 'non-state' and 'state' actors in the realm of conflict mitigation are often very blurred. In fact, Quayle's arguments serve as a fine counterpoint to recently published embryonic research on the so-called displaced widows and poor people's politics in Timor Leste (Hughes 2015). On the basis of these networks and innovations, Quayle's chapter discusses some possibilities for ASEAN's future involvement in what is not only a fraught issue but also a tangled operational environment that is consistent with the wide open field of human security.

Taking up the theme of complexity of roles in tackling non-traditional security, Alistair Cook's chapter puts under the microscope the complex agencies undertaking HADR. His chapter, titled 'Siloes, Synergies and Prospects for Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief in Southeast Asia', deliberately examines institutional overlaps and inadequate organizational capacities that hamper effective HADR. His write up also notes that the entire Asia-Pacific region is highly exposed to natural hazards such as storms, floods, drought, earthquakes, landslides, volcanic eruptions, wildfire, and epidemics. On a global scale, these events account for 14% of the total number of worldwide disasters in the period 2001–9. It is even more disturbing that these 14% of disasters take place in ASEAN which is home to 9% of the global population, or approximately 584 million people. Consequently, the Asia-Pacific accounts for 40% of global casualties as a result of natural hazards, which means that countries in the region are disproportionately affected when the disasters occur.

This urgency to create institutions to manage natural disasters has not been lost on ASEAN which has developed a regime-like ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Relief and the ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on Disaster Management, better known as the AHA Centre, in 2011. The AHA Centre

has dispatched a number of relief teams to hotspots in the Philippines, but their efficacy is under-assessed. National emergency response teams are more than often featured in the headlines of news reports on disaster relief. Moreover, Cook notes that a United Nations Framework is already fairly robust with a UN Office of the Commissioner of Humanitarian Assistance (UNOCHA) acting as an almost one-stop clearinghouse for global humanitarian emergencies. In the ASEAN region, it is also known that the AHA Centre holds a prominent place within the welfare-oriented vision of the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community. The AHA Centre is in turn 'governed' by the respective Heads of the National Disaster Management Offices in each sovereign ASEAN member state. As if these were inadequate, the Singapore government took the initiative to moot and fund the Regional Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief Command and Control Centre (RHCC) in September 2014 leveraging on the already operating Information Fusion Centre which was set up several years earlier as part of inter-military confidence and security building in Southeast Asia. It was perhaps no coincidence that the RHCC was created in the wake of an assortment of typhoon related disasters such as Nargis and Haiyan/Yolanda, and roughly six months after Malaysia Airlines' MH370 went missing in the Indian Ocean. Cook's chapter suggests that while the mere existence of this latticework of HADR institutions seems impressive, their actual efficiency remains cramped by bureaucratic politics, frictions in civil-military relations and the lack of 'synergies' between the various Asia-Pacific militaries working in tandem with the AHA Centre, RHCC or even UNOCHA.

Alan Chong and Il Woo Lee's piece follows nicely by drawing critical attention to the 'neo-realist' accents behind the noble cause of HADR. Drawing on an earlier publication, Chong and Lee characterize HADR operations influenced by national security considerations as 'security competition by proxy'. Following Cyclone Nargis in Myanmar, Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines and more recently the MH370 incident, HADR has emerged as a new field of security competition in Asia. While dominant analytical narratives seem to treat HADR as an avenue for hard power to transfigure itself into soft power, Chong and Lee assert that HADR does not fit neatly into a liberal security paradigm. HADR is actually a form of security competition by proxy, implying that there are neo-liberal and neo-realist possibilities in states engaging in HADR campaigns. HADR allows states to promote images of national technological superiority, models of good governance, and low risk yet high signature contingency deploy-

ments of both armed forces and civilian forces. This is perhaps a security competition that allows national rivalries to play out without the risk of outright war. The three illustrative cases mentioned in this chapter support the argument that militaries and their security mindsets do place a premium on doing HADR well because national pride is at stake.

Finally, using a number of case studies from his chosen countries of specialization, Jeffrey Engstrom offers the supplementary insight of treating military involvement in HADR as a form of complex defence diplomacy among erstwhile adversaries. HADR as defence diplomacy could be neither realist nor liberal, but a pragmatic combination of both, directed to a purpose of exercising one's national military capability. This is a lesson he draws from Northeast Asia. While participation in international disaster relief by the militaries of South Korea, China, Taiwan, and Japan is a relatively new phenomenon, these operations are now a regular facet of each country's military diplomacy. In Engstrom's view, 'this type of intervention is possibly the most benign form of intervention currently conceivable as the intervener is both invited by the host state and the intervention itself is not directed towards a third party (whether internal or external)'. The Asia-Pacific need not witness the resort to war as a trial of national military capabilities. HADR deployments draw the curtain wide open on announced and potential capabilities. Militaries can also enable their political masters to signal intent short of armed hostilities. Engstrom's chapter explores the varying national factors that shape initial decisions to commit military forces in this role, as well as those that continue to condition military contributions. These include evolving national motivations prompting military participation in international disaster relief, internal political hurdles in initiating disaster operations, and various military challenges (organizational, doctrinal etc.) that exist when carrying out these disaster operations. HADR as that extension of human security that dovetails closest to sovereignty-bound traditional security offers tremendous potential for Asian nation-states to practise national security by proxy without the evident malice of *realpolitik*.

### THE SECURITY IMPLICATIONS OF TRANSITIONAL POLYCENTRISM

In sum, the contributions to this volume shed light on the contours of a security transition with three characteristics. Firstly, ASEAN centrality, and the very notion that the regional body's *raison d'être* can be extended

in logic to cover the rest of the Asia-Pacific, is under grave threat from both increasingly confident great powers and the challenges of an amorphous non-traditional security disorder. The only way that ASEAN can retain wider relevance beyond Southeast Asia is to act more cohesively as more than a diplomatic community. Secondly, great powers with interests across the Asia-Pacific are establishing through acts of both omission and commission a virtual security order that builds fleeting zones of restraint after a series of diplomatic and military collisions whether they involve maritime craft, aircraft, soldiers or territorial disputes. In fact, the counter-intuitive observer will argue that the very last category of collision will ironically engender restraint amongst the peer competitors in the circle of great powers on the strength of their mutual interest in avoiding full scale hostilities that would be severely counterproductive to complex ties of economic interdependence.

Thirdly, and finally, Asia-Pacific states will have to find a way to align national interest with human security. It is only through this realignment that threats posed by transnational environmental causes can be mitigated. Yet, as the final slate of chapters in Part 3 examining non-traditional security issues within statist policy frames show, national security thinking is often the reference point for even the most elementary responses to non-traditional security threats. In this regard, non-traditional security threats may yet reproduce the 'traditional' rivalries between great powers, middle powers and weak states in Asia, masking the urgency of protecting populations by parlaying international collaborative efforts into discourses of national defence/interests. For the foreseeable twenty-first century, transitional polycentrism may continue indefinitely as the dilemmatic pattern of Asian security. It is likely to be simultaneously order for some occasions, opportunities for creatively tweaking perceived disorder to one's advantage, or simply a pluralistic disorder that repeatedly resurrects the political value of ASEAN Centrality just after the political pundit frequently pronounces its imminent decline.

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**Alan Chong** is an associate professor at the Centre for Multilateralism Studies, S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Nanyang Technological University in Singapore. He has published widely on the notion of soft power and the role of ideas in constructing the international relations of Singapore and Asia. His publications have appeared in *The Pacific Review*, the *Review of International Studies*, and *Armed Forces and Society*.

# Southeast Asia: No Longer Peripheral to Global Events

*Ooi Kee Beng*

## INTRODUCTION

Eyeing Southeast Asian integration through the security lens provides insights beyond what general concern over socio-cultural and economic matters may do. Most notably, in considering international relations over time—and there is no better way of understanding these than within broad historical settings—Southeast Asia’s uniqueness and persistent strategic circumstances come sharply into focus.

To be sure, security issues have been central to the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) since the organisation’s founding in 1967, and especially since 2003 after the body adopted three intertwined blueprints for regional integration to be realised by 2020, later brought forward to 2015. Significantly, this came in the wake of a series of milestone events: the Asian Financial Crisis of 1997–1998 which saw major ASEAN members suffering the devastating, and in some cases revolutionary, consequences of the financial crisis of 1997–1998; Cambodia joining the organisation in 1999 as the last country in the region to do so (Timor Leste had its independence restored only in 2002) and the stabilisation of Southeast Asia’s security delineations following the end of the Cold War.

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K.B. Ooi (✉)

Executive Director of Penang Institute, Malaysia

How Southeast Asia's contemporary strategic issues are defined by its historical configuration, by great external powers and by the tentative nature of post-colonial state- and nation-building is what this chapter attempts to shed light on. Most obviously, this conflation of forces and forms of human organisation and interaction conjure a situation that is fluid where understandings of nationhood, statehood and international relations are concerned. The polycentric nature of the region is obvious, and since that has been the region's historical condition, how transitional that mandala-like structure is in the face of international forces wishing for their own ends to stabilise the political leanings and alliances of the region's new countries is more in question than the region's polycentrism itself.

Comparisons are often made between, on the one hand, the peaceful situation that Southeast Asia finds itself in today notwithstanding South China Sea tensions and, on the other, how conflict-ridden the region was in the 1970s. No doubt the contrast is stark and the development largely positive, and the credit for this is often claimed as the success of ASEAN's special brand of regionalism.

Without taking any acclaim away from ASEAN, an alternate perspective can be attained by considering that the difficult 1950s, 1960s and 1970s were in fact a historical anomaly where military conflicts are concerned, and that the relatively peaceful situation throughout the region today is closer to what may have been its historically natural state.

Polycentrism, understood as a stable condition in Southeast Asia, stands as a weighty challenge and conceptual resistance to the assumption commonly made in contemporary global political analytics that international stability and security depends on power being as concentrated, and societies being as regimented, integrated and regulated as possible (Dellios 2003; Manggala 2013).

The cultural and political diversity of Southeast Asia can be argued to have resulted from the region's landmasses being dissected and defined by seas, and the whole region being peripheral to the decisive lines of political development and conflicts that historically raged in continental Asia. This diversity, formed of isolation and of remoteness from major historical arenas, gained especial relevance only when disparate parts were drawn together conceptually, politically and economically, and with much haste and trepidation, in modern times (Ooi et al. 2015). It also helps account for the recent rise in concern and relevance of the so-called non-traditional security threats to the region, which will be summarily discussed later.

## NEW NATIONS SEEKING PEACEFUL NEIGHBOURS

Analysing regionalism in Southeast Asia as we know it today requires that two perspectives be constantly kept in mind. First, for a historical understanding of its origins and development, the founding members of ASEAN—namely Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand and the Philippines—must be placed on centre stage and the ASEAN process studied as a story about its constitutive parts embarking separately on a perplexing course of country construction. Second, it must ruminate over the significance of the sudden manifestation of Southeast Asia as a region.

Let's start with Singapore. It was only a matter of time after the city-state achieved self-government in 1959 that serious negotiations for it to merge with Malaya, its northern neighbour granted independence only two years earlier by Whitehall, would take place. Lee Kuan Yew met with Tunku Abdul Rahman in August 1961 to formulate a preliminary agreement on this matter; the British dependencies of North Borneo and Sarawak joined in negotiations only in 1963 after municipal elections gave convincing victories to the Sabah (North Borneo) Alliance and the Sarawak Alliance, both of which were supportive of a Malaysian configuration that included the two territories (Andaya and Andaya 1982, pp. 271–272).

What is significant here is the tentative situation and the nascent political status of all the parties involved. All had of course recently suffered over two years of military occupation by the Japanese, with Northern Borneo and Sarawak coming under direct British Colonial Office control only in 1946, and Singapore becoming a crown colony that same year during which process the rest of the peninsula constituted the newly formed Malayan Union that was already by 1948 converted into the Federation of Malaya.

In all these territories, as was the case in the whole Southeast Asian region, communist forces were during this period struggling fervently to fill the expanding power vacuum created by the fast diminishing power of the colonialists.

Two countries opposed the idea of Malaya expanding to become Malaysia—the Philippines and Indonesia. Indonesia under Sukarno had declared itself independent once the Japanese surrendered in August 1945 which led to conflict with the Dutch that ended only in December 1949. Indonesian opposition to the Malaysia project ended only with the signing of a peace agreement in August 1966. The Philippines, in turn, had gained final independence on 4 July 1946. Under President Diosdado Macapagal, it

considered North Borneo to be traditional territory by virtue of the Sulu Kingdom having only leased it to the British company that came to run it. Manila's diplomatic battle against the formation of Malaysia ended in mid-1966, a year after President Ferdinand Marcos came to power.

All this brings to the fore the unsettled nature between 1945 and 1965 of Southeast Asian politics, with nascent nationalism moving to replace colonialism. The immediate challenges faced by these new polities centred on ascertaining borders, securing national leadership, managing inter-ethnic ties and fighting the Cold War.

The fifth member of the ASEAN-Five that founded the organisation is Thailand. As often mentioned, Thailand was the only polity in the region not colonised by the Europeans. Difficult historical relations with its immediate neighbours, that is, Burma and Vietnam, however, "left residual perceptions of threat among the Thai people", in the words of a Thai historian, and these were of course worsened by these two countries adopting communism as their national ideology (Eksaengsri 1980, p. 33).

Thailand's troubled ties with neighbouring peoples degraded badly during the Second World War. The switch from absolute monarchy to parliamentary democracy following the coup of 1932 would see the country come under military dominance for six decades. By 1938, both the monarchy and parliament were "reduced very nearly to impotence" (Wilson 1970, p. 27). When France fell to Hitler in 1940, anti-European nationalism grew to become the commanding sentiment in Thailand. Even as Japan forced its way into Vietnam, Bangkok managed to regain territories from French Indochina. On 8 December, Prime Minister Colonel Phibun Songkhram granted Japan the right to pass through Thai territory and to base troops there. He assumed dictatorial power and declared war on Britain and the United States. A treaty of alliance with Japan was also signed.

With the fall of Japan, it was the United States, however, that came to Thailand's help. Although Thailand had to return territories it had intruded into in Laos, Cambodia, Burma and Malaya, it escaped the fate of being mercilessly treated as a defeated enemy. As with the United States, Thailand did not wish to see the reestablishment of European power in its immediate neighbourhood (Wilson 1970, pp. 29–31).

General Aung San in Burma was calling for Southeast Asian regional collaboration at the time of his assassination on 19 July 1947. Earlier that same month, Thai Premier Thamrong Nawasawat had announced that Thailand and France would jointly sponsor a Pan Southeast Asian Union



initially embracing Thailand, Cambodia, Vietnam and Laos, then expanding to include Burma, Indonesia, Borneo and India. However, strong criticism that this was a French ploy to retain power in the region killed this idea almost immediately. In September 1947, the communist-sponsored Southeast Asian League was formed in Bangkok, comprising important figures from Thailand, Burma and the Vietminh (Vandenbosch and Butwell 1958, pp. 249–250). This attempt lasted only until December of that year, when Phibun returned to power. Further feelers sent out by the Thais to its neighbours to form a body for regional cooperation came to naught, and it was only with the establishment of the Anglo-American collective defence initiative in September 1954—the Southeast Asian Treaty Organization (SEATO)—that regional cooperation took form, for Thailand and for others.

Other Southeast Asian leaders had no doubt also been actively seeking regional ties of their own, such as Vietnam's Ho Chi Minh, who had after the war sought in vain for Indonesian President Soekarno's support in laying the groundwork for a regional body to facilitate tighter regional relations, and General Carlos P. Romulo of the Philippines who was advocating a Pan-Malay union. While Ho was seeking to create an anti-colonialist network, Romulo was trying his best to form an anti-communist one.

Throughout the first two post-war decades, it was in fact Indonesia, among the major countries, which had seemed most lukewarm to regionalist initiatives. In light of this, the forming of ASEAN in 1967, with Indonesia as a founding member, should all the more be considered a historically substantive and masterfully timed achievement. In fact, its establishment at the height of the Cold War and its rapid expansion after the fall of the Berlin Wall to include all Southeast Asian countries, testify to persistent and fundamental geostrategic concerns deriving from the post-colonial and post-war conditions of the region's new governments, which in the long run not only overshadow domestic anxieties but also reveal the region's inescapably challenging relationship with external powers.

### REGIONALISM TO FILL A POWER VACUUM

The historical diversity of the region did not allow for easy collaboration among the array of governments coming into being there. Ideological tensions in the form of the left-right global divide were running high in the region, and inter-ethnic distrust had been magnified by the formation of new nation-states. Nationalism was generally styled the sentiment

needed for resisting colonial power, but it could not effectively dissolve the troubled ties that existed between different ethnic groups now living within new and rigid boundaries. The ethnic hierarchy that colonialism relied on no longer existed, and the various groups had to find new ways of relating to each other. Inter-ethnic equality in the post-colonial period became a bloody and contentious issue.

Independence also saw these nationalistic governments not only having to deal with matters of nation-building, they had also to negotiate their way in a bipolar world mired in conflicts throughout the world. With colonialism retreating in the midst of the Cold War, Southeast Asia tended by default to be a power vacuum into which external forces would necessarily intrude.

Early regionalist initiatives were all doomed to fail. Ideologically, there was no neutral ground, and any collaboration involving outside or residual colonial powers simply aggravated neighbourly distrust. For ASEAN to have come into being in 1967, right in the middle of the Vietnam War, was the result of masterful statesmanship on the part of its founders.

SEATO was created as a collective defence mechanism in 1954, following the final defeat of the French by the Vietminh at Dien Bien Phu. Although only two of its members were from the Southeast Asian region, namely Thailand and the Philippines, the “treaty area” professed to cover “the general area of South-east Asia” (SEATO’s other members were Australia, Britain, France, New Zealand, Pakistan and the United States).

In a kind of confirmation of Parkinson’s Law, SEATO developed an increasingly elaborate organizational structure, mostly based in Bangkok, its headquarters, while it was losing the support of its members and was becoming increasingly irrelevant as a security organization. It never had much relevance in terms of regionalism in Southeast Asia, even though it presumably focused on this region. It is a leading reminder of the problems of developing a really effective collective security arrangement with disparate membership, lacking the essential bases and incentives for cooperation, and of trying to promote any significant regional cooperation from the outside. (Palmer 1991, pp. 27–28)

Without ever showing much effectiveness, this ill-starred treaty organisation was dissolved in 1977, ten years after ASEAN was formed. Another attempt at cross-regional cooperation was the Asian and Pacific Council (ASPAC), formed in Seoul in 1966. It had four Southeast Asian mem-

bers—Malaysia, South Vietnam, Thailand and Laos (with observer status). Again, Indonesia refused to participate. This South Korean initiative officially came to an end in 1973, with the non-communist world normalising relations with the People's Republic of China.

Given the political sensitivities of the times, for a regional body to succeed in Southeast Asia, it must clearly be without outside influence. Only from that point of departure could any semblance of collaboration and trust be possible. That may have been a necessary condition, but it was still far from sufficient. So, starting off with a minimal number of members was an attractive option.

On 31 July 1961, the Association of Southeast Asia (ASA) was established by the foreign ministers of Malaya, the Philippines and Thailand. This first attempt at an Asians-only international organisation failed to take off in the wake of the project undertaken at the same time by Malaya, Singapore and Britain to subsume the latter's remaining colonial territories in northern Borneo under one national umbrella, namely the Federation of Malaysia.

Equally doomed was MAPHILINDO. Founded in July 1963 by Malaya, the Philippines and Indonesia, it fell victim just a month later to the confrontation between the three members over the formation of Malaysia as well.

It was however, the trauma of this *Konfrontasi* that in the end convinced the governments in maritime Southeast Asia, plus Thailand, that a broader organisation was needed if the region was to have any chance of self-determination and economic progress at all.

Once Manila and Jakarta had governments that accepted the reality of Malaysia, by which time Singapore had become a sovereign state separated from Kuala Lumpur's control, new discussions began on establishing a regional body to facilitate discussions and collaboration between the various countries. Just after the Philippines and Malaysia finally signed an agreement to end hostilities on 8 May 1966, Tun Dr Ismail Abdul Rahman, Malaysia's Home Affairs Minister, stated:

We look forward to a regional association embracing Thailand, Burma, Indonesia, Singapore, Malaysia, Philippines, Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam. [...] We have no choice. We, the nations and peoples of South-East Asia, whatever our ethnic, cultural or religious backgrounds might be, must pull together and create, with hand and brain, a new perspective and a new framework. And we must do it ourselves. We must create a deep,

collective awareness that we cannot survive for long as independent peoples – as Burmese, Thais, Indonesians, Laotians, Vietnamese, Malaysians, Cambodians, Singaporeans and Filipinos – unless we also think and act as South-east Asians. (Straits Times 1966)

Producing a Southeast Asian consciousness out of the culturally and historically disparate polities in the region is of course easier said than done. But forming a regional body that seeks over time to include all countries bounded by India, China and Australia, and that would relate to outside powers as a grouping exhibiting common values and strategic interests, would indeed be a big first step. Such a step was taken on 8 August 1967, when the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, ASEAN, came into being.

While guerrilla warfare raged openly in Indochina, the highest level to which tensions in Maritime Southeast Asia reached did not go beyond the military incidents of the *Konfrontasi*. As stated in correspondence between the British High Commission in Kuala Lumpur and the Commonwealth Relations Office on 28 November 1961, the decision to end that conflict on 12 August 1966 between Malaysia and Indonesia provided the impetus and the possibility to achieve ASEAN as “an idea to obviate all future *Konfrontasis* in the region” (DO 169/74, PRO, cited in Liow 2005, p. 112). Despite cultural kinship, the two new countries of Malaysia and Indonesia—the former having gained independence from the British through negotiations and the latter by throwing out the Dutch—had found it hard to trust each other. Until the very end, Indonesia’s leaders needed to be appeased. As Ghazali Shafie, the Malaysian Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of External Affairs apparently told the Australian High Commissioner Tom Critchley, “Bangkok Accord had been deliberately drafted so as to enable Djakarta to put on best domestic face on it” (Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade 2005, p. 587).

Symptomatic of the measure of Malaysian and regional deference to benign Indonesian primacy within ASEAN was the decision to hold the first ASEAN ministerial meeting and house the ASEAN Standing Committee in Jakarta. (Liow 2005, p. 113)

Six months after ASEAN was officially founded, Tun Dr Ismail Abdul Razak, formerly Malaysian Home Affairs Minister and now parliamentary backbencher, put forth his suggestion in light of British plans to withdraw

from the region that the region should become a zone of peace, freedom and neutrality. Up to the time when the idea to make the region a neutral zone was tabled and accepted at the ASEAN Foreign Ministers' meeting in November 1971, ASEAN's prehistory had not been an encouraging one, and its first years were tentative where new initiatives were concerned. Only after nine years of existence did it hold its first summit. This was in Bali, in February 1976, during which the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia, was signed. This key document's Article 2 poignantly and significantly states (ASEAN home page):

In their relations with one another, the High Contracting Parties shall be guided by the following fundamental principles:

- a) Mutual respect for the independence, sovereignty, equality, territorial integrity and national identity of all nations;
- b) The right of every State to lead its national existence free from external interference, subversion or coercion;
- c) Non-interference in the internal affairs of one another;
- d) Settlement of differences or disputes by peaceful means;
- e) Renunciation of the threat or use of force;
- f) Effective cooperation among themselves.

What is striking is that the points are more about keeping peace in the region than anything else. This was not merely a reflection of the war in Vietnam at the time but also of the adolescent nature of most of the participating countries. In a longer perspective, this is indicative of the historical distance that had existed between the disparate parts, a condition that is not merely due to the jealous territorialism of colonialism but also of the maritime remoteness that characterised politics in the region. Finding a comfortable distance between the region's newly formed nations and making global and external powers respectful when dealing with the region were major considerations informing the genesis of ASEAN, and these concerns would persist as part and parcel of the organisation's genome.

### GEOPOLITICAL ISOLATION

The recent history of Southeast Asia described through the throes of the Cold War, through the birth process of countries adopting the nation-state ideal in most cases, and through the demands of decolonisation provides a framework for understanding the nature of regionalism in this very

diverse part of the world. Limiting external influences and pressures was necessary if each of the countries in the region was to be able to put its house in order and to produce a political economy that would spur its development as a modern polity among modern polities.

While such an approach may be illuminating, a clearer idea of the degree of difficulty that these countries struggle with will require continuous cognisance of the long-term historical nature of the region's human, political and cultural diversity. In relative terms, the region as a rule had enjoyed over the centuries a relatively peaceful existence, partly because of its archipelagic nature and partly because, for a long time, it lay outside the main theatres of world events.

In a phrase, the region was *peripheral* to the main dynamics of history, whether in the Asian or the global context.

Inevitably, Southeast Asia was a thoroughfare for goods, people and religions. It was certainly a haven of products, a supplier of all sorts of exotic goods such as cherished spices for Europe and invigorating bird nests for China. That was before it developed into an archipelago of plantations and mines in the later colonial period.

Before becoming Southeast Asia, the region had many names, not because it was a beloved child but because it lay for ages beyond the sphere of influence of powerful polities on the Euro-Asia landmass. The Chinese called the region "Nanhai" or "Nanyang", and the Japanese likewise referred to it as "Nanyo", all meaning South Seas. From the West, names like Further India were used. Later in the day, the northern part of the region was most appropriately titled Indo-China by the French. The southern part of the region was simply the Indian Archipelago, that is, "Indonesia", or in Javanese and Malay, Nusantara, literally meaning "Archipelago".

Whichever way one looks at it, the southern part of Southeast Asia has been a territory of coastlines, islands, ports, river mouths and harbours. And it lay beyond and between great civilisations, with much of it functioning as borderlands, be these continental or maritime.

Not surprisingly, the cultures that developed in the region were strongly affected by strong cultural impulses, human migration and economic dynamics from outside. And given its maritime nature of coasts, river mouths and islands, decentralised polities and isolated settlements characterised the region.

Such is the human geography within which Mother Nature had placed Southeast Asia.

In truth, “Southeast Asia”, as a concept and a unit of analysis, is a recent creation coined for strategic reasons by the West during the Second World War. As the British and the French retreated westwards away from the advancing Japanese, Southeast Asia became a front, a buffer, for limiting the war. American perspectives, on the other hand, were more focused around East Asia than to the region further to the south, even today.

In the history books, the British tellingly recollect and regret the surrender of Singapore by General Arthur Percival in February 1942, while the Americans prefer to focus on General Douglas MacArthur being ordered by his superiors to leave the Philippine island of Corregidor in March 1942 and on his heroic return to the island of Leyte in October 1944. In this simple comparison, not only do we observe a difference in strategic and geographic orientation between the two superpowers where what we have come to call Southeast Asia is concerned but we also have to note that the global power equation was shifting. Shifts of that nature continue to our day.

During the Second World War, for the British, other battlegrounds were far more important, as was also the case for Japan whose major battles were fought on land in China and out in the Pacific Ocean. For the Americans, the Asian theatre during the Second World War was in fact largely a maritime one. Proper land fighting on East Asian territory for the Americans began only during the Cold War, in the Korean War and in the Vietnam War, both significantly taking place on the periphery of China. The strategic concern for Washington would until today remain China regardless of whether it is communist in substance or only in name.

In 1943, the Southeast Asia Command (SEAC) was created at the First Quebec Conference in August 1943 by American President Franklin D. Roosevelt and British Prime Minister Winston Churchill. Tellingly, this embraced only Burma, Thailand, Malaya/Singapore and Sumatra. Indochina was part of the China theatre while the rest, namely the Philippines and Indonesia, were part of the Americans’ Southwest Pacific Area. But even before 1943, the term “Southeast Asia” was already being used in research reports done in 1940, 1941 and 1942 by the Institute of Pacific Relations in Honolulu. Just as the war was ending, the Allies reconceived the boundaries of the SEAC to include all of what we now know as Southeast Asia, minus northern Indo-China, the Philippines and the island of Timor.

Certainly the emerging perception of Southeast Asia as a region in military and political terms in connection with the Second World War should not be underestimated. Indeed, the Japanese conquest of the entire area

contributed to the regional concept, for it destroyed the colonial partition of Southeast Asia among Western powers and necessitated under the circumstances an allied approach towards the expulsion of the Japanese and to a lesser degree towards early postwar problems. Yet it is quite likely that the regional concept of Southeast Asia would have emerged, though much more slowly, without the benefit of the highly stressed Southeast Asia Command. (Fifield 1975, reprinted in Sandhu et al. 1992, pp. 20–24)

For what it's worth, there seems on hindsight enough resilient factors at work to suggest that the region, despite its diversity in culture and history, would have inevitably taken on an international character as a unit in the end. The fact that clearly defined powerful civilisations surround it made its role as a maritime thoroughfare for trade and a cultural backyard in ancient times, and as a buffer zone and war zone in modern times inevitable, and explains not only the defensiveness exhibited of post-colonial regimes but also the gravity of the security aspect underlying relations between them. Just as relevantly, all of the countries there except Indonesia are relatively small countries, which clarifies Jakarta's key position in any kind of regionalist endeavour.

### HISTORICAL SCHISMS

Where polities in the region are concerned, we can not only traditionally cut up the region into a Buddhist, a Muslim and a Catholic area at the very least, but also distinguish a continental Southeast Asia from an archipelagic Southeast Asia. We can also separate maritime economies in the south from riverine political economies and agricultural economies in the north, with the type of polities differing accordingly. Conflicts on Mainland Southeast Asia also varied markedly in nature from those fought in Maritime Southeast Asia.

And then we have the colonial territories as dissected by the Spanish, Portuguese, Dutch, British, French and Americans. European Colonialism came by sea, and therefore it is the south and the coastal areas that bear its mark most deeply.

Emigration and trade from China affected the north of the region, traffic from India and Arabia affected the south, and European influences washed over both. That is a common description of the region's history. It may be correct enough but it is a simplification nevertheless. One also needs to consider what the indigenous situation was. Even if the major



cultural aspects of the region came from outside, we still have to consider the internal dynamics of change and adaptation.

The point to retrieve here is that by the very fact of being peripheral to the main dynamics of human history for so long, Southeast Asia developed its own unique character. To an extent, the region functioned like a continent in that it incorporated great diversity in politics, culture, religion and history even if the connectivity was not as deep as in many other parts of Asia. This gave the region an operative level of cosmopolitanism before the word came into fashion. Being peripheral to world events not only allowed for ethnic and social pluralism, it also made it imperative to be compromising in daily life and in the political arena.

In fact, the enormous diversity of the region does make us wonder why we call Southeast Asia a region at all, which of course is one reason why treatises on regionalism in this part of the world are so numerous. And we have not even begun discussing the incredible mix of ethnicities yet.

Of course, having been peripheral is a quality that is recognised only when that condition starts coming to an end. And Southeast Asia began being less peripheral the stronger Western penetration into China became. The Second Opium War (1856–1860) saw Britain and France properly forcing China to open its doors, and, in the wake of that event, the territories between India and China gained strategic importance in the global scheme of things, often to the detriment of its peoples. Anthony Reid notes:

In the half-century which followed 1860, isolationism in any form proved useless, and all of Southeast Asia was humbled by the stark fact of European power. The choice between military defeat and political accommodation in practice meant only the difference between direct and indirect rule. (Reid 2000, p. 251)

No polity in the region could follow what the Japanese managed to do in their homeland, namely implement comprehensive reforms that transformed the whole of society into one that was capable of resisting foreign intervention and invasion. The Meiji Restoration was not something the Southeast Asians could imagine doing. They were simply too disparate and politically immature for that.

In short, once the Western world went maritime, human history gained a whole new arena. It now plays itself out both on the continental landmass

and in the seas. Horses and roads are now overtaken by ships and sea routes, and, as technologies developed, these have been joined by planes and flight paths. This is modernity, and this was what drew Southeast Asia into global politics (Ooi et al. 2015, pp. 233–235). For starters, this meant colonialism. It also meant passive and reactive roles in the globalising context within which its peoples and its leaders now found themselves.

And it is the wish to escape this subordinate, undignified and vulnerable fate that has been the key project for them ever since.

Western colonialism was replaced in a flash in 1942 by the Japanese invasion of the whole region. In 1945, after the atom bombs were dropped on Japan, the return of the Western powers turned out to be no easy matter except for the British. By then, nationalism had taken hold in the whole region. The Japanese had shown it possible to kick the Western powers out, and cries for independence became the order of the day.

With the victory of the Vietminh over South Vietnam and its American supporters on 30 April 1975, the political configuration in the region took the apparently stable form that it has today. Southeast Asia was now a region of sovereign “nation-states”—proud, insecure and proud because insecure. To be sure, the colonialists were not passive actors in their own defeat. The political structures left behind—even today—are very much the legacy of their rear guard actions and their retreat strategies.

Today, for these new nations, handling the major powers of the post-Cold War, post-colonial era has become their chief concern.

### NON-TRADITIONAL SECURITY

The recent advent of non-traditional security (NTS) issues as major threats is undoubtedly due to the mobility of persons, goods, animals and plants, and various materials, which inform the very process of globalisation. In Southeast Asia, these are worsened by—and are in fact illustrative of—the special historical, political and geographical conditions that inform the region, and that have been discussed above.

Summarily, the boundaries that define nation-states in the region were largely decided by colonial contingencies, and often in contradiction to indigenous ties and priorities. These colonial needs also constructed and decided the economic centres around which peoples and rural territories fenced in by those boundaries would be attached. The coming into being of national boundaries thus placed a formal political structure and orientation over—and thus blurs—the network of

political and economic hubs that serve as capitals and as secondary cities for newly proclaimed national territories but which now survive through their extra-regional connections as much as they do through their intra-regional ones.

The archipelagic and maritime nature of much of Southeast Asia also made for porous national borders, making the illegal movements of people and goods a big concern for national governments. Having 11 countries with 640 million people cramped into what is really a relatively small land surface makes for difficult administration over such matters as well. Beyond that, natural catastrophes and human-made disasters in such a region tend to affect more than one country at a time. These clearly polycentric conditions portend greater relevance for the region of NTS threats than of traditional ones.

The Consortium on Non-Traditional Security Studies in Asia (NTS-Asia) has tried to identify NTS issues to be “those challenges that affect the survival and well-being of peoples and states that arise primarily out of non-military sources, such as climate change, resource scarcity, infectious diseases, natural disasters, irregular immigration, famine, people smuggling, drug trafficking and transnational crime” (Cabellero-Anthony and Cook 2013, pp. 5–6). These have been criticised for being too broad, but given Southeast Asia’s stable polycentric reality, such an approach, besides being a vital comment on the limitations of nation-state capacity in general and specifically of governments in Southeast Asia, is nevertheless a necessary one.

### MASTERS OF THEIR OWN FATE

Just as the world has run out of territories that can be effectively called “No Man’s Land”, no region today has the luxury of going its own way and having its own pace of development. It is in this context that the boldness—and the necessity—of the ASEAN project should be considered. Conceived by countries newly independent but painfully aware that they were still not masters of their own fate, regionalism in Southeast Asia began as a forum for dialogue and for the building of mutual trust.

Being peripheral to world events had not only allowed for ethnic and social pluralism and openness to grow in the region, it also made it imperative for the region’s peoples to be compromising in daily life and in political interactions.

Today, the conflicts of the Cold War have been replaced by the low-level tensions afforded by a growing global multipolarity. We see this change reflected in ASEAN's priorities as well. As mentioned, ASEAN started out largely for intra-regional dialogue and for security cooperation, but its agenda has shifted in the last two decades to include a long string of non-traditional security issues, and to focus strongly on economic integration.

In other words, ASEAN has evolved over time a stronger coherence, a greater global relevance and, most importantly, *a deeper sense of purpose*. The ASEAN Way, defined by consensus and unanimous decisions, now appears the only path for the region—given how diverse the region is, how insecure its governments feel, and how fast each country's economy is growing—for projecting stable unity and for magnifying its significance on the global arena.

In essence, the region's present struggle is to become—and to be seen to become—as pro-active and progressive a power as possible, and as significant an economic market and producer as possible. This is a tall order but when all is said and done, the level of success has been impressive.

ASEAN centrality is a new phase in the region's history, in that it reflects how governments in the region—if not its peoples—are trying to have a greater say in their own fate.

What this also means is that strategic thinking in the region can no longer be as leisurely done as it once could be. Events move faster now, and a multipolar world means more competition. The region has therefore to adapt to the pace of others, while its pluralistic nature can be a heavy burden if not handled well.

Making regional goals overlap with national interests on one side and with those of global powers on the other is how ASEAN aims to develop. ASEAN has not only to relate to each great power separately, it has to be much more agile than it is used to being. ASEAN may have attained significance and regional centrality; but keeping that centrality is not going to be easy since the big powers tend to move faster than the ASEAN Way allows ASEAN to move.

And things are indeed moving in the world. The BRICS bank in Shanghai and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank in Beijing, together with the Maritime and Continental Silk Roads initiatives coming from China will all alter the geo-economic picture substantially. The United States, as we know, had been very busy in other parts of the world,

but its interest in Southeast Asia has been somewhat unpredictable. Other powers such as Japan, South Korea and India are in the meantime all angling for strategic space and economic advantages in the region.

The perspectives these powerful countries have of the Southeast Asian region are in variance with each other, and it is therefore ASEAN's task to uphold stubbornly its own perspective.

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**Ooi Kee Beng** is the Executive Director of Penang Institute, Malaysia. He was the Deputy Director of ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute, Singapore (2012–2017). He is a columnist for *The Edge Malaysia*; editor of *Trends in Southeast Asia*; and founder-editor of *ISEAS Perspective* and *Penang Monthly*. His most noted books include *The Eurasian Core: Dialogues with Wang Gungwu on the History of the World*; *The Reluctant Politician: Tun Dr Ismail and His Time*; and *In Lieu of Ideology: An Intellectual Biography of Goh Keng Swee*.

## Defence and Security Cooperation in East Asia: Whither ASEAN Centrality?

*See Seng Tan*

For a region whose early formative experience in regionalism has primarily been non-military and development-oriented—the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), as a kind of ‘first mover’ in institutionalized regional cooperation, comes most readily to mind—East Asia’s proliferation in recent times of intraregional defence ties has been particularly striking. To be sure, the region historically has played host to a number of collective defence arrangements which emerged during the Cold War years: America’s long-standing alliances with Australia, Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, the Philippines and Thailand; the Five Power Defence Arrangements (FPDA) comprising Australia, Malaysia, Singapore, New Zealand and the United Kingdom; and the now defunct Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO). However, although the troubles that led to the demise of SEATO prove instructive when the region began experimenting with an indigenous regionalism—with ASEAN making clear to all and sundry, despite communist Vietnam’s protestations throughout the Cold War, that it (ASEAN) was not a collective defence arrangement but an institution devoted purely to intramural economic cooperation and social development—the security landscape of contemporary East Asia paints quite a different picture.

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S.S. Tan (✉)

S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Singapore, Singapore

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Not only are regional countries like Australia, China, India, Indonesia, Japan, Singapore, Malaysia, South Korea and Vietnam establishing and enhancing bilateral defence and security ties between and among themselves (as well as with the United States) (Cronin et al. 2013), but region-wide multilateral defence forums—beginning with dialogues conducted under the aegis of the 27-member ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), the non-official Shangri-La Dialogue (SLD) and, subsequently, the ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting (ADMM) and ADMM-Plus (the ten ASEAN countries plus Australia, China, India, Japan, New Zealand, South Korea, Russia and the United States)—have also become commonplace features in East Asian security.

Against this backdrop, this chapter will assess the place and role of ASEAN in these burgeoning—and, according to one account, tangled (Tow 2008)—web(s) of defence relations that crisscross the East Asian region, many of which are not tied explicitly to ASEAN. To the extent that the principle of 'ASEAN centrality' is central to the multilateral facets of East Asia's evolving security architecture—for which ASEAN ostensibly serves as the 'fulcrum', according to various pundits (Bower 2011a; Harrison 2013)—how, if at all, does it relate to the defence-oriented facets of that architecture (or indeed to facets not necessarily part of that architecture)? Put differently, what does ASEAN centrality mean in a transitional polycentric context, where ASEAN is but one among several competing international actors? While local factors, bilateral concerns and non-traditional security challenges account in no small measure for the shared penchant of many regional countries in their quest for build defence cooperation with their neighbours and extra-regional partners and to strengthen their own capacities to deal with complex challenges, the apprehension many countries share over the rising military might of China and the recent diplomatic assertiveness it seems to have assumed vis-à-vis its East and South China Seas disputes have equally and presumably spurred the region-wide rise in defence regionalization as some regional countries respond willingly to overtures from great powers like Japan and the United States in their respective 'rebalances' to the region (Tan and Kemburi 2014). As an ostensibly 'neutral' institution, ASEAN has never articulated its position on bilateral defence relations between regional countries nor, for that matter, multilateral defence initiatives of which it is not officially a part. With these concerns in mind, this chapter will review and discuss forms and patterns of defence regionalization in East Asia and assess the place of ASEAN's ostensive centrality therein.



## DEFENCE REGIONALIZATION IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

Although ASEAN is not a military organization, it has nonetheless permitted a gradual regionalization of defence relations among its member countries beginning from the Cold War period (Simon 1992). As Ghazalie Shafie (1982, pp. 161–2), the former foreign minister of Malaysia, once noted about ASEAN, ‘The limitation of regional cooperation within a formal framework should not prevent countries of the region from trying to forge the closest possible links on a bilateral basis with one another.’ For the five founding members of ASEAN (Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand), SEATO became the antithesis of what indigenous regionalism ought to be. As Carlos Romulo, the former foreign minister of the Philippines explained regarding the *raison d’être* behind ASEAN, ‘We did not phase out SEATO in order to set up another one’ (cited in Acharya 1990, p. 3; Dreisbach 2004). On his part, Amitav Acharya has identified the rejection of any form of multilateral security and defence cooperation, whether with or without great power sponsorship, as a historical ‘path-dependent’ disposition that undergirds regionalism in East Asia.<sup>1</sup> Be that as it may, the explicit rejection of collective defence as the institutional form and *raison d’être* for ASEAN by its member countries did not prevent Vietnam from seeing ASEAN as a defence alliance during the Cold War. As noted earlier, while at that time Vietnam did not find ASEAN’s prescriptions for regional order—particularly those stipulated in the latter’s Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (TAC)—acceptable because the Vietnamese saw ASEAN as essentially a US-sponsored organization and a closet SEATO through which Washington could continue to exert its influence over Southeast Asia.<sup>2</sup> Notably, the Vietnamese were not the only people to view ASEAN in this fashion. According to Chintamani Mahapatra, Washington could be considered the ‘midwife’ in the birth of ASEAN. As Mahapatra (1990, pp. 6–7) noted, ‘ASEAN was the product of Asian initiative. But it was hardly an Asian creation. Behind the Asian initiative was the American “support” and “discreet guidance”.’ As such, from its inception in August 1967, ASEAN has assiduously avoided being identified as a defence organization in order to preclude allegations that it is a Western-sanctioned alliance aimed, at least indirectly, at preserving the West’s neo-colonialist domination of Southeast Asia. In this respect, ASEAN leaders apparently felt this reasoning to be sufficiently justified, so long as a clear distinction existed between defence bilateralisms (i.e., alliances, in particular) and regional multilateralism (i.e., ASEAN).

As far back as 1976, several ASEAN countries have sought to establish bilateral border security agreements and intelligence exchanges among themselves to deal with communist insurgencies in their respective domestic domains (Acharya 1992). Bilateral collaboration persisted despite open political squabbling between leaders of the cooperating countries in question (Acharya 1990, p. 15). In the face of the emerging Soviet–Vietnamese partnership and the looming Soviet naval presence in the region in the early 1980s, the then Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew of Singapore even raised the prospect—unsupported at the time by his ASEAN counterparts—of upgrading and expanding extant bilateral military exercises conducted among ASEAN states into trilateral and quadrilateral enterprises (Acharya 1990, p. 7). By 1989, bilateral military exercises between ASEAN states had become sufficiently thick—with as many as 25 if not more exercises (Tan 2012, p. 5)—to merit being described by then Indonesian armed forces chief (later vice-president) Try Sutrisno as a ‘defence spider web’ (cited in Tow 2001, p. 266). By the mid-1990s, trilateral military exercises among Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore, the three ‘core’ member states of ASEAN, had become commonplace (Katzenstein 1996, p. 32; Stubbs 1992). Foremost among their aims of creating this web of military ties was the building of confidence and trust among themselves and their respective defence establishments. As Indonesian analyst Dewi Fortuna Anwar (2000, p. 91) once observed, ‘These military ties and exercises serve many purposes, the most important being to get to know and understand each other, thus removing suspicions and misunderstandings.’ In a sense, they heralded the rise of what has been termed as ‘defence diplomacy’, or cooperative activities and initiatives pursued by the defence establishments of states aimed at establishing and enhancing peaceful ties with one another (Cottey and Foster 2004; Tan and Singh 2012; Tan 2015a). ASEAN also took advantage of the opening provided by the conclusion of the Cold War to formally introduce regional security issues to its institutional agenda. At the Fourth ASEAN Summit in 1992, ‘political and security cooperation’ ranked first among the list of issues identified in the 1992 Singapore Declaration, which laid out ASEAN’s post-Cold War agenda.

As we shall see below, thanks to a serendipitous confluence of factors—the end of Cold War bipolarity, a relative stable albeit uncertain regional environment, a perceived need to engage a rising China, and America growing receptivity to multilateral diplomacy in the region—

ASEAN, with help from its external partners and the extraordinary concession and privilege as *primus inter pares* (first among equals) granted the regional organization, would go on to foster an East Asia-wide architecture of institutions over the next two decades. But it would not be until 2003, with the Bali II Concord's endorsement for the creation of an ASEAN Security Community (ASC) and, in 2004, with the release of the ASC (or Vientiane) Plan of Action, that the plan for an ASEAN defence ministerial forum began to take shape. In May 2006 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, ASEAN leaders inaugurated the ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting (ADMM). Described in one instance as 'an important milestone for ASEAN' (Thayer 2010a), the formation of the ADMM was seen as the first step towards in the eventuation of the ASC (subsequently renamed the ASEAN Political-Security Community or APSC). The ADMM's fourfold remit comprises the promotion of regional peace and stability through dialogue and defence and security cooperation, the provision of 'strategic-level guidance' for defence and security cooperation within ASEAN, the promotion of mutual trust and confidence through enhancing transparency and openness, and contribution to the establishment of the APSC and promote the implementation of the APSC's Vientiane Action Program (VAP), which comprises ten action items oriented towards, one, strengthening and integrating the ASEAN members into a cohesive single entity, and, two, the narrowing the developmental gap between old and new ASEAN members through practical assistance furnished by dialogue partners (ASEAN 2004).

Beyond its important availability of a forum for high-level discussions among ASEAN defence ministers—to that end, the ADMM has also since 2009 added annual leaders 'retreats' to its process—the ADMM has hitherto focused principally on select non-traditional security issues such as humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HADR), maritime security, military medicine, peacekeeping and defence industrialization, and fostering intra-ASEAN cooperation on these areas (Tan 2012). Whether these developments will eventually translate into conventional or 'hard' defence collaboration, much less collective defence, among ASEAN states remains to be seen. However, even though most regional observers do not see that happening anytime soon (Baldino and Carr 2016). That said, with the formation of the ADMM, there appears to be a collective sense of finality shared among ASEAN leaders, who see it as a key piece of the architectural puzzle without which the regional organization cannot become a

single community. Crucially, the ADMM is not conceived as a standalone arrangement but rather, in the words of the ADMM concept paper, ‘an integral part of ASEAN’ (ASEAN, undated)—one that adds value to and complements the overall ASEAN process.

The regionalization of defence relations in Southeast Asia also includes activities, some of which had been initiated as early as 2000, such as the ASEAN Chiefs of Army Multilateral Meeting, the ASEAN Chiefs of Defence Forces Informal Meeting (ACDFIM), the ASEAN Military Operation Informal Meeting (AMOIM), the ASEAN Military Intelligence Informal Meeting (AMIIM), the ASEAN Navy Interaction, the ASEAN Air Force Chiefs Conference, the ASEAN Chiefs of Military Medicine Meeting, the ASEAN Armies Rifles Meeting, the Expert Working Group and the Workshop on the Use of ASEAN Military Assets and Capacities in HADR. Although these initiatives have officially been described by ASEAN as ‘outside the ASEAN framework’ (ASEAN, undated), the ADMM could arguably be seen as an implicit and/or informal overarching framework under which some if not all of these disparate activities can now be gathered. Whichever the case, it is nonetheless noteworthy that some of their aims and activities are entirely consistent and congruent with those of the ADMM, thereby suggesting a reasonably high level of coordination or the possibility for such between and among them. For instance, the ACDFIM, the annual gathering of defence forces chiefs, plays a significant and direct role in guiding all activities aimed at achieving effective practical cooperation among ASEAN militaries. For example, the ACDFIM concluded at its 2010 edition that ASEAN militaries ought to pursue closer collaboration in response to non-traditional security challenges. To that extent, the ACDFIM has sought to establish a dialogue and/or cooperative mechanisms for HADR and military medicine and adopted work plans on information and capacity exchanges in intra-ASEAN maritime security, peacekeeping operations and counterterrorism (MINDEF Brunei 2012; Thayer 2010b). Moreover, the 2012 AMOIM took an important step towards furthering HADR interoperability among ASEAN militaries through its endorsement of standard operating procedures on the use of military assets for HADR via the framework of the ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response (AADMER).

The cooperative efforts by littoral states of the Malacca Straits in combating piracy deserve mention as well. Concerns harboured by Indonesia

and Malaysia over the potential strategic ramifications of the US Pacific Command's (PACOM) proposal for a Regional Maritime Security Initiative (RMSI), which would rationalize the involvement of extra-regional powers in the straits, led them, together with Singapore, to form Operation MALSINDO (Malaysia-Singapore-Indonesia). Launched in 2004, the operation involved trilateral maritime patrols by their respective navies—with each navy restricted to patrolling its own nation's territorial waters—that sought to interdict piracy and smuggling activities in the straits. With Thailand's participation from 2008 onwards, MALSINDO was renamed the Malacca Straits Sea Patrols. An air element, the 'Eyes in the Sky' initiative, was included in 2005, augmenting the naval patrols with maritime patrol aircraft sorties. Unlike the naval patrols, however, the air sorties, which had on board each aircraft a Combined Maritime Patrol Team (CMPT) containing a military officer from each of the participating countries, are permitted to fly over the waters of the countries involved. Together, the naval and aerial elements make up the Malacca Straits Patrols (MSP) (Ho 2009, pp. 173–5). Other components of the MSP include the Intelligence Exchange Group (IEG), which subsequently developed the Malacca Straits Patrols Information System (MSP-IS) aimed at improving coordination and situational awareness at sea among the participating countries (Storey 2009, p. 41).

Conducted both under the auspices of ASEAN as well as outside of it, defence relations in Southeast Asia have regionalized to the point that they have become relatively institutionalized even if they do all not link together in any coordinated and coherent fashion. It remains to be seen whether and how they contribute as building blocks, formally and informally, for the APSC envisaged to be established by 2015—an improbable outcome, given the many political limitations within ASEAN states as well as the problems between them. As early as 1989, Malaysian foreign minister Abu Hassan Omar mooted the idea of an ASEAN 'defence community' that presumably would 'take the ASEAN states to new heights of political and military cooperation', whilst his Indonesian counterpart, Mochtar Kusumaatmadja, made a similar appeal for an ASEAN 'military arrangement' (cited in Acharya 1990, pp. 1–2). Indeed, what was equally surprising was their readiness to publicly promote a vision for a regional defence community even before the materialization of the 'One Southeast Asia' notion—all ten Southeast Asian countries coming together under one institutional roof—with the entry into ASEAN of Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Vietnam (the so-called CLMV countries)

in the mid-1990s (Chin 1997). To the extent the APSC or other vision of regional defence-security community in Southeast Asia is to be realized, it will likely have to be based in part on the aforementioned existing and still evolving patterns of defence relations.

### DEFENCE REGIONALIZATION IN EAST ASIA

Before we consider the ADMM-Plus or the ARF, it is worth noting non-ASEAN-based forms of defence multilateralism in Asia. Among the fastest growing are multilateral military-to-military exercises, many of which had been initiated by the United States. They include CARAT (Cooperation Afloat Readiness and Training), a bilateral maritime exercises held between America and various Asian states; Cobra Gold, a Thai-US bilateral army exercise that has since grown to include Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore from ASEAN as well as other Asian countries; Cope Tiger, a trilateral air exercise involving Singapore, Thailand and the United States; SEACAT (Southeast Asia Cooperation Against Terrorism), a maritime counterterrorism exercise held between America and various ASEAN members; and, RIMPAC (Rim of the Pacific Exercise), the world's largest international maritime exercise involving the United States and a big number of East Asian countries including some ASEAN members and, for the first time during the 2014 edition, China. Ironically, despite the received wisdom that ASEAN states favour security multilateralism over America's long-standing preference for bilateralism, the participation by ASEAN militaries in some of the aforementioned exercises with the US military, it has been reported, is in fact quite the opposite: the ASEAN states have tended to prefer bilateral rather than multilateral military exercises and exchanges with the United States because of the perceptibly higher level of knowledge and technology transfers they stand to receive from bilateral engagements with the United States (Simon 2003). The Western Pacific Naval Symposium, which comprises the navies of over 20 member countries, has met on a biennial basis since 1987. Together with extant collective defence arrangements like the Five Power Defence Arrangements (FPDA) and America's alliances and security partnerships with a number of East Asian states, these initiatives have proved critical to enhancing the region's ability to handle HADR challenges such as the Indian Ocean tsunamis in 2004, Cyclone Nargis that struck Myanmar in 2008, and Typhoon Haiyan that affected the Philippines in 2013 (Storey et al. 2011; Yuzal and Vebrey 2014). Other arrangements include ini-

tatives like the US-led Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI), which is directed at interdicting the flow of weapons of mass destruction and strategic materials critical to their development, and the Trilateral Security Dialogue comprising Australia, Japan and the United States (Durkalec 2012; Miller 2013).

Quite possibly the most prominent expression of non-ASEAN-based defence multilateralism is the Shangri-La Dialogue (SLD), an annual gathering for defence leaders, practitioners and intellectuals convened in Singapore by the London-based International Institute for Strategic Studies (Capie and Taylor 2010). Its express purpose is to provide 'a forum in which defence ministers could engage in dialogue aimed at building confidence between their military establishments, while at the same time fostering practical security cooperation' (Ball 2012, p. 19). The SLD 2012 made waves with then US Defense Secretary Leon Panetta's revelation that the United States would deploy 60 per cent of its naval assets to Asia by 2020, 10 per cent more than its existing forces in the region, as part of its rebalance that, the secretary insisted, was not aimed at China. ASEAN had long held to the supposition that East Asia is simply not ready to host a regular defence ministerial—an assumption challenged by the success of the SLD, which, despite being a non-official dialogue, has shown it is indeed possible to bring defence and military chiefs together annually. That said, ASEAN's concern has proved even more basic: in 2002, ASEAN did not support the proposal by then Japan Defense Agency director and current defence minister, Nakatani Gen, to convert the SLD into a formal 'Asian Defence Ministerial Meeting' (Hook et al. 2001, p. 263), presumably out of concern that such a move would threaten not only the ARF's default position as the only multilateral security forum servicing the entire region, but indeed the very centrality of ASEAN in the existing regional architecture. A plausible attraction of the SLD for international defence elites is precisely because it is not an official event, which allows senior defence leaders to offer articulations at the SLD that approximate their governments' positions without official attribution as such (Capie and Taylor 2010). At any rate, it has undercut ASEAN's long-held assumption that the region is not yet ready for a ministerial-level defence forum.

The establishment of the ADMM-Plus in 2010 underscores the importance which the ASEAN countries assign to engaging the external powers—a security-oriented expression, if you will, of the open and inclusive regionalism which ASEAN has long espoused (Acharya 1997). According to the ADMM Joint Declaration issued at its inaugural meeting, the aim



of the ADMM-Plus is to ‘enable the ADMM to cooperate with the non-ASEAN countries to build capacity and better prepare ASEAN to address the complex security challenges’ (ADMM 2010). Similar to the ADMM, the ADMM-Plus is oriented towards enabling and enhancing the region’s ability to respond better to non-traditional security threats.<sup>3</sup> Crudely put, a key purpose for involving the ‘Plus’ dialogue partners is to have them help ASEAN help itself. While the arrangement involves the participation of eight extra-regional powers, the reference point is effectively Southeast Asia. The second meeting was held in Brunei Darussalam in 2013. It was initially agreed that the ADMM would continue to meet annually but that the ADMM-Plus meetings would be held only every three years. However, it has already become widely accepted that this interval is far too long for the organization to have any direct effect on unfolding security issues. Since 2013, the ADMM-Plus has become a biennial gathering.

Importantly, ASEAN’s multilateral defence engagement with dialogue partners did not begin with the ADMM-Plus, but has its origins in a number of defence-oriented activities and modalities that began in the ARF in the 1990s—the ARF Senior Officials’ Meeting (ARF-SOM), ARF Inter-Sessional Group on Confidence Building Measures (ARF-ISG-CBM), the ARF Security Policy Conference (ASPC) and the ARF Defence Officials’ Dialogue (ARF-DOD)—which collectively comprise what officials refer to as the ‘ARF defence track’. In 1997, the ARF-SOM introduced a luncheon for defence officials from ARF countries attending the meeting to discuss defence-related matters. There it was agreed that the leaders’ retreat of the ARF-SOM in 1999–2000 should accommodate participation by defence officials (ARF 1998/1999, p. 20). In 2001, ARF foreign ministers invited defence officials to join yet another luncheon, this time at the ARF-ISG-CBM which later became the ARF-ISG-CBM/PD when preventive diplomacy was added to the grouping’s remit.<sup>4</sup> At these combined gatherings, ARF defence officials reportedly ‘exchanged views and information on their respective defence policies, including defence conversion, and reviewed their political-military and defence dialogues, high-level defence contacts, joint training and personnel exchanges with fellow ARF participants’ (ARF 1998/1999, pp. 1–2). These preliminary tie-ups with defence officials paved the way for the establishment of the ARF-DOD in 2001. In 2002, the first formal ARF-DOD took place in Bandar Seri Begawan, Brunei. Since then, ARF-DODs have been convened regularly, meeting at least three times a year, before every ARF-ISG-CBM/PD, ARF-SOM and the ARF



Ministers' Meeting itself. Much like other dialogue processes in general, ARF-DODs are venues for regular discussions and exchanges of views on regional and international situations and the common security issues facing the ARF, and proposals on measures to increase the effectiveness of security and defence cooperation among ARF members. That ASEAN's own defence track leading to the formation of the ADMM in 2006 started later than the ARF defence track reflects arguably the contribution, if indirect, which the ARF made to the enhancement of defence regionalism in Southeast Asia.

### WHITHER ASEAN CENTRALITY?

Perhaps no concept underscores better the significance of ASEAN to regional cooperation and governance in East Asia than the organization's ostensible *centrality* in the architectures and conventions of regionalism. Before considering ASEAN's role and place in the various expressions of defence regionalization and regionalism discussed above, a review of the debate on ASEAN centrality is in order.

There is no question ASEAN has played a key role in creating the region's institutional architecture. Since the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) trade forum was established in 1989—whose modality ASEAN, while not the originator of APEC, nonetheless played an influential role in shaping—ASEAN has gone on a spawning spree, birthing one institution after another in an *ad hoc* way: the ARF in 1994, the ASEAN Plus Three (APT) in 1999, the East Asia Summit (EAS) in 2005 and the ADMM-Plus in 2010. East Asia's regional architecture as such has been described variously as a 'complex', an 'ecosystem', a 'multiplex' and/or a 'patchwork' of institutional arrangements (Acharya 2014; Cha 2011; Haggard 2013; Pempel 2010). The experiences with all these formations leave one with the conclusion that any promotion of ideas for new regionalism in East Asia, if it is to succeed, has to have the endorsement and support of ASEAN (Stubbs 2014, p. 530). However, neither the pride nor place of ASEAN within a regional multilateral architecture that has emerged essentially through an *ad hoc* process of institution-building presumably came by way of a preconceived strategic vision and plan which ASEAN might have harboured. Rather, the increasingly central role played by ASEAN in East Asian regionalism has emerged more as 'an outcome of its pragmatic approach to problem-solving and its own evolution' in response to the changing international

political and economic environment (ADBI 2014, p. 191). Be that as it may, the fundamental challenge confronting ASEAN's ostensible stewardship of Asia's architecture today is the purported disillusionment of non-ASEAN countries over not only their place in that architecture but ASEAN's apparent inability to drive regional economic integration and broker intraregional disputes.

If the Cold War aim of NATO, as its first Secretary-General Lord Hastings Lionel Ismay famously said, was 'to keep the Russians out, the Americans in, and the Germans down' (cited in Wheatcroft 2011), then it could presumably be said that the broad aim of Asian regionalism, as envisaged and executed by ASEAN, has arguably been to keep the Americans on board, the Chinese in check, and ASEAN in charge (Tan 2013, p. 1). The ASEAN Charter, established in 2007 and ratified by all ten ASEAN member countries in late 2008, stresses the need to 'maintain the centrality and proactive role of ASEAN as the primary driving force in its relations and cooperation with its external partners in a regional architecture that is open, transparent and inclusive'.<sup>5</sup> In the organization's report of its Forty-third ASEAN Ministerial Meeting in Hanoi in July 2010, much was made about ASEAN's dialogue partner countries reaffirming 'their unequivocal support for ASEAN Centrality', as well as their declared hope that 'ASEAN would continue to play a central role in the emerging regional architecture' (ASEAN 2010). The centrality of ASEAN is therefore best understood as the perceived default mechanism—a perception ASEAN, above all, has laboured long and hard to maintain (Ba 2009; Katsumata 2014)—for regional order and stability in the absence of a single power or a group of powers which could be accepted by one and all to lead the formation of an East Asia-wide agenda, promote regional cooperation and integration and drive the provision of public goods for the entire region (ADBI 2014, pp. 191–2; Katsumata 2014, p. 247; Dobson 2011). It is also viewed as a benchmark for the shaping of external relations with other powers and international bodies (Petri and Plummer 2013, p. ii). As Ernest Bower has put it, ASEAN 'is the glue that binds key actors together, either through direct membership or via regional structures' (Bower 2011b).

The most common conception of centrality is in terms of ASEAN as regional leader.<sup>6</sup> This conception is most commonly associated with the notion of ASEAN as the driver of regionalism (Kanaev 2010; Jones 2010; Lim 2003; Sukma 2010). In contrast to most regions where global and/or regional great powers are the key drivers and shapers of regional order

and architecture (Buzan and Wæver 2003; Katzenstein 2005; Lake and Morgan 1997; Solingen 1998)—Germany and France in Europe with the European Economic Community (EEC) and the European Union (EU), America in North America with the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) or Brazil and Argentina in South America with Mercosur—it is not the great powers but ASEAN which has led the way in building East Asian regional cooperation (Stubbs 2014, p. 524; Acharya 2007).

A second conception of ASEAN centrality is to understand ASEAN in terms of its contribution to East Asia's stability and security as the region's convenor or facilitator through providing an assortment of multilateral mechanisms—'meeting places' (Goh and Acharya 2002)—which bring together great powers, regional powers and small and/or weak states in East Asia for regular consultation and confidence-building. Arguably, ASEAN's menu of modalities has also helped to facilitate the institutionalization of relations between China and the United States, the most crucial bilateral relationship in international security today in the view of many (Tan 2013). In security terms, for instance, the ASEAN region has provided multiple locales where the militaries of China, America and other ADMM-Plus countries gather regularly for multilateral exercises. At the most recent ADMM-Plus exercise in maritime security and counterterrorism held in Brunei and Singapore in early May 2016, a total of 3500 personnel, 18 naval vessels, 25 aircraft and 40 special forces teams from all 18 countries participated in shore-based activities in Brunei and in exercises that simulated terrorist attacks at sea en route from Brunei to Singapore and on land in north-western Singapore (Tan 2016). On the other hand, it has been argued that 'ASEAN's central role as East Asia and the Asia-Pacific's regional convenor has not been matched by ASEAN regional leadership' (Cook 2011, p. 1). ASEAN's insistence on remaining neutral is a bone of contention for its critics, who argue that the organization ought to take a stance on key concerns such as the South China Sea disputes. If anything, ASEAN's very weakness, seen as a bane by critics, has equally been a boon in terms of making it the default regional leader by virtue of the mutual strategic distrust among the great powers. However, as recent developments—such as China's claim regarding the consensus it allegedly struck with three ASEAN member countries over the South China Sea disputes in April 2016—have shown, a combination of institutional weakness and disunity could seriously put at risk the very relevance of ASEAN centrality (Ghosh 2016).

Viewing ASEAN as the hub and/or prime node of Asia's regional architecture is a third way to understand centrality. Arguing that ASEAN's engagement with the wider regional groupings it has helped spawned has less been about wanting to lead and drive them than avoiding being marginalized by their more powerful non-ASEAN stakeholders, it has been suggested that it is far more accurate to speak of ASEAN as the hub—or, as former US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton has it, 'fulcrum' (Clinton 2010)—of East Asia's regional architecture than as its leader (Acharya 2009). Another way to think about this is in terms of nodes. According to Caballero-Anthony, social network theory emphasizes the place of particular nodes in networks and their relations with other nodes (Caballero-Anthony 2014; Kahler 2009). This is best conceptualized by way of the image of overlapping concentric circles of memberships of various regional institutions in Asia, where ASEAN is more often than not pictured as the common point where all those circles intersect and converge. So too, it could be said, the position of ASEAN within each wider regional grouping, which purportedly allows ASEAN to dictate the shape and substance of each grouping. 'Despite its lack of material power', as Caballero-Anthony (2014, p. 563) concluded, 'ASEAN has been able to claim centrality because of its position as a node in a cluster of networks, and this condition of "high between-ness" allows ASEAN to exercise influence in regional processes with the tacit acceptance of the major powers.'

A fourth way to understand ASEAN centrality emphasizes the need for ASEAN member states to take seriously the implementation of the stated aims and plans in the organization's concords and roadmaps. In tacit agreement with the criticism that ASEAN-led regionalism is all process and devoid of progress (Jones and Smith 2007), former ASEAN officials like Sundram Pushpanathan (2010) have argued that 'To maintain ASEAN's centrality in the region and to achieve the goal of AEC [ASEAN Economic Community] by 2015 it is imperative that ASEAN shifts aggressively towards "result-based regionalism".' Finally, a fifth and considerably more negative way of understanding ASEAN centrality is to see it as about maintaining ASEAN's pride of place and little else by way of substance—'clinging to the driver's seat', according to one formulation (Emmerson 2009, p. 11). Here the perceived concern has to do with ASEAN doing what is required to ensure it does not become a marginal actor in a region full of big powers.

Against this backdrop, is ASEAN at all central in and to defence regionalization in East Asia, and if so how? As we have seen in the

earlier sections, a considerable number of regional defence initiatives do not include ASEAN even if a number of its member countries and their militaries might be participants. Is ASEAN's putative centrality lessened as a result? Arguably, this is a moot point since—as this chapter has shown—at no instance in its history has ASEAN ever aspired to be a defence actor or be seen as one. In this sense, ASEAN has little if any formal connection to the proliferation of bilateral defence engagements, much in the same way as extant alliances and collective defence arrangements, even ASEAN and the FPDA share a number of similar security concerns (not least the collective desire to ensure that the genie of Indonesian militarism and expansionism is kept well corked in the bottle of regional frameworks and agreements). If at all, its contribution to security in East Asia has essentially been normative (Katsumata 2010).

Where centrality, in the first instance discussed above, is understood in terms of ASEAN's purported leadership of the region, it has been recognized, by realist analysts (for whom great powers, not small, matter most) no less, that ASEAN's *primus inter pares* position in the ARF as a 'structural flaw' (Leifer 1996)—an anomaly that flies in the face of conventional wisdom on regional order and power, where the world's most powerful nations have volitionally deferred to a grouping of developing nations where deciding the diplomatic-security agenda and convention of the Asia-wide security institution are concerned. As Evelyn Goh (2014) has noted, 'ASEAN's vital contribution to regional order was in persuading the great powers to commit to a supplementary supporting structure of multilateral confidence-building at a critical juncture of strategic transition after the Cold War ended.' Be that as it may, it is also ASEAN's apparent inability—whether by dint of its inherent weakness or its disunity and incoherence, or both—to broker great power consensus that has led to the ARF turning moribund (Fukuyama 2005; Emmers and Tan 2011). 'Increasingly', as Goh (2014) has also noted, 'ASEAN's approach to enmeshing the great powers in regional multilateral institutions may be out-dated, as it cannot help to bring about the negotiation of *modus vivendi* among the great powers themselves so necessary to managing regional stability over the medium- to long-term.' Yet where the ARF has seemingly failed to engender great power consensus, the ADMM-Plus seems a whole lot less dysfunctional in this regard, possibly because it emphasizes functional interstate cooperation in areas where that consensus does exist.

The key role ASEAN has played as the region's convenor cum facilitator for the institutionalized meetings among East Asian countries has been critical. Yet as the preceding discussion has shown, the readiness of other players to convene regional gatherings that attract world and regional defence leaders—the SLD in Singapore being the prime example—has raised questions about ASEAN's relevance in this regard. For example, in the debate between two pundits over Panetta's statements on the US rebalancing strategy at the 2012 SLD, tacit allusions over whether the SLD or the ADMM-Plus was the more 'relevant' forum emerged (Cossa 2012; Rogin 2012; Thayer 2012). The effort in 2008 by former Australian leader Kevin Rudd to promote an alternative regional architecture—one not centred on ASEAN, at least according to the preliminary versions of his 'Asia-Pacific Community' idea (Acharya 2010)—also served as an implicit challenge to ASEAN centrality as understood in this manner. However, according to veteran Singapore diplomat Tommy Koh, the neutrality of ASEAN is a key reason why the regional institution is 'acceptable to all':

For the past two decades, ASEAN has taken the initiative to bring these key powers, as well as other regional countries, together in various ASEAN-centred institutions and forums. The objective has been to develop mutual confidence, to reduce mutual suspicions, to deepen economic linkages and to nurture a culture of cooperation. *ASEAN is acceptable to all the stakeholders as the region's convenor and facilitator because it is neutral, pragmatic and welcoming.* (Koh 2009, emphasis added)

Nor is it evident that ASEAN, according to the third interpretation of ASEAN centrality offered above, necessarily a hub or node of defence regionalization. On the one hand, given ASEAN's stewardship of regional institutions that focus on regional defence and security—ARF, ADMM-Plus, EAS—it makes good sense to see ASEAN, as did Hillary Clinton, as a fulcrum of East Asia's evolving regional security architecture. On the other hand, that there are other defence webs in the region not connected to ASEAN implies that the latter is at best a hub/node but not necessarily the key one in East Asian security, particularly if regional leaders persist in seeing (and perhaps dismissing) ASEAN-based institutions as 'talk shops' of limited relevance to the real questions of traditional or 'hard' security concerns. That being said, it is interesting to note Japanese leader Shinzo Abe's use of the 2014 SLD to advance the EAS as the place to promote the need for mutual military transparency and defence confidence-building among East Asian states (Abe 2014).

Regarding the fourth conception of ASEAN centrality—the need for ASEAN to prove itself as a results-oriented organization—there is no question ASEAN faces an uphill task here. That ASEAN officials past and present who highlight this issue have focused their remarks solely on the AEC—to the near exclusion of the APSC and the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC) projects, even though these also shared the same 2015 deadline as the AEC—is, in a tragic sense, a silent but no less powerful indictment of the absence of progress on those latter fronts. The endorsement by ASEAN leaders of the ‘ASEAN 2025: Forging Ahead Together’ vision at their summit in Kuala Lumpur in November 2015 underscored the failure of member countries to achieve the AEC goal by 2015. Moreover, the fact that ASEAN has had to endure challenges to its leadership, as evidenced by the Rudd proposal and other efforts, suggests the region’s loss of confidence in ASEAN centrality. For instance, it has been argued that great powers ‘continue to pay increasingly superficial homage to the ASEAN process, all the while knowing that ASEAN’s insistence on consensus decision-making too easily leads to paralysis’ (Lee 2014). Indeed, many hold privately to the view (as discussed above) that ASEAN centrality—notwithstanding their own public support for it—is but an expedient device used by ASEAN to keep its privileged—increasingly undeserved, in the view of many—place and role in regional architecture for as long as it can do so. However, the silver lining here could well be the hitherto relative success of the ADMM-Plus and the hopes many regional leaders have pinned on the EAS.

## CONCLUSION

As an organization that has formally rejected collective defence as its *raison d’être*, that ASEAN has historically wielded a measure of influence over regional security architectures and conventions in East Asia is rather astounding. But whether this influence can rightly be regarded as constituting *centrality*, or something close to it, is considerably less evident for the reasons—at least some of them—discussed above. As a grouping of relatively weak states that, with the blessing of the big powers, has had the temerity to walk among giants, ASEAN’s achievements are by no means small or insignificant. Increasingly unable to forge consensus among great powers on regional security, ASEAN has sought, not without some success, to carve a niche in the area of non-traditional security cooperation. As we have seen, regional changes have proceeded so far apace

that ASEAN, with all the limitations that beset it, might not be able to keep up with despite its best efforts. Yet the inability of the great powers to establish among themselves the requisite *modus vivendi* that ASEAN increasingly finds so difficult to forge might well prove the justification for the continuing relevance of ASEAN's centrality.

## NOTES

1. Acharya (2003, p. 219) identified two other path-dependent dispositions: One, the general acceptance of Westphalian norms of sovereignty, non-interference and territorial integrity; and two, a preference for 'soft' or non-legalistic and formalistic regional cooperation.
2. Vietnam's view of ASEAN during the Cold War is discussed in Nguyen (2002).
3. According to China's defence minister, Liang Guanglie, 'Non-traditional security threats are transnational and unpredictable, and require joint response. We support ADMM-Plus in focusing on non-traditional cooperation' (Xinhua 2010; also see Huisken 2010).
4. The ARF-ISG-CBM/PD serves as a clearinghouse and catalyst, so to speak, for proposals on confidence-building and preventive diplomacy. It constitutes the third tier of the pyramid of ARF activities at the intergovernmental (or Track 1) level, with the Ministers' Meeting and the ARF-SOM (senior officials meeting) make up the first and second tiers respectively.
5. See, paragraph 15 of Article 1 of the ASEAN Charter.
6. The following discussion on different conceptions of ASEAN centrality draws partly from chapter 3 in Tan (2015b).

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**See Seng Tan** is Professor of International Relations and Deputy Director of the Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies at the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore. A student of Asian security, his recent books include *Multilateral Asian Security Architecture* (2015) and *The Making of the Asia Pacific* (2013).

## ASEAN's Limitations in Conflict Resolution

*Kriengsak Chareonwongsak*

After looking at the overall political and security picture of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) throughout the 40 years since its inception, one can conclude that major conflicts of interests or values that could lead to war between ASEAN countries have been few. Examples of such kinds of inter-state conflicts are the disputes over the Temple of Preah Vihear, the South China Sea issue, and the Haze Crisis. Additionally, there has been some domestic or intra-state unrest in Myanmar, Papua province in Indonesia, and Mindanao in the Philippines. All such problems are covered by the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (TAC). Furthermore ASEAN, in the early years of its establishment, succeeded in its cooperation in the area of politics and security in fighting against Communism during the period of the Cold War. As a result, the cooperation in the areas of politics and security among ASEAN members has often been raised and appraised by academics as an example of promoting the mutual relationship and strength of amity among her members. However, after the Cold War, the political climate and situation in Southeast Asia caused more tensions on a variety of issues to arise. A number of cases reflected the fact that ASEAN has limitations in solving its internal conflicts.

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K. Chareonwongsak (✉)  
Harvard University, Cambridge, MA, USA

Institute of Future Studies for Development, Bangkok, Thailand

This chapter addresses some of the limitations that have constrained ASEAN in solving conflicts among its member countries and has thus caused it to seek help from mechanisms/powers and agents outside the region to settle their conflicts. This certainly reduces the potentials of ASEAN in solving its internal conflicts. The first part of the chapter addresses the constraints of ASEAN on regional conflict resolution and prevention and the latter part includes recommendations on overcoming those constraints.

## ASEAN'S LIMITS

### *Formal Mechanism for Conflict Resolution in the Region*

Even though there are formal mechanisms for solving internal conflicts between ASEAN members, such as (1) mechanisms in the form of treaties, and (2) various ASEAN meetings, these mechanisms are considered inefficient and are unable to resolve the conflicts between member countries effectively. Analysis of the prevailing mechanisms can make it clear why they are not effective.

#### *Formal Mechanisms in the Form of Treaties*

The Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia is considered to be an important mechanism which prescribes approaches which can be used in solving conflicts, including how ASEAN countries relate to one another. The fundamental principles of the Treaty are as follows (ASEAN Division 2012):

- (1) Mutual respect for the independence, sovereignty, equality, territorial integrity and national identity of all nations;
- (2) Non-interference in the internal affairs of one another;
- (3) Settlement of differences or disputes by peaceful means;
- (4) Renunciation of threat or use of force;
- (5) Promotion of cooperation among members, including the guidelines for settling disputes peacefully through the functioning of the High Council in order to strengthen peace and confidence in the region.

The first four principles are for deterring the conflicts between the two parties concerned and to prevent its expansion to other member countries. The fifth principle refers to the High Council's role in implementing



measures to settle disputes when concerned parties are unable to settle their conflicts through their own negotiations.

However, never once was the High Council set up since the start of the Treaty even though there were some important disputes between member countries, such as disputes relating to Sabah between the Philippines and Malaysia or the dispute between Thailand and Cambodia on the issue of the Preah Vihear temple. This situation may imply that the work of the High Council may not be in line with the principle of non-interference. It is possible that the multi-lateral approach to settle disputes could make member countries see the disputes as extensive thus causing unnecessary distrust among member countries and even negatively affecting their national interests. Furthermore there is no guarantee that the decision of the High Council would be enforced. The settling of disputes in the past was mostly done bilaterally (Thepchatrī 2012). It could then be said that the concept of the High Council is neither suitable nor practical in settling disputes between ASEAN member countries.

#### *The Mechanism of ASEAN Meetings on Different Levels*

ASEAN formal meetings are considered to be at the highest level of the ASEAN. There are more than 200 meetings held annually. The meetings comprised the ASEAN summit, ASEAN Ministers Meeting (AMM), ASEAN Economics Ministers (AEM) Meeting, and other ministerial meetings under the umbrella of AMM.

Although there were opportunities for member countries to discuss the settling of disputes and the resolution of conflicts in every meeting, these venues still contained limitations in resolving disputes in the region. For example, at the ASEAN Summit in 2012, Cambodia in its role as ASEAN Chair decided that the vexing issue of South China Sea would not be on the agenda for that particular Summit (Chen 2012). The reason of not wanting to raise this issue in that Summit could be due to Cambodia having to favour China. Cambodia had a close relationship with China, coupled with the massive direct investment coming from that country to Cambodia. As a result, although the mechanism was available for settling disputes in the region, the challenges of practical constraints were always a source of interference in every summits. In addition, the Superpowers had influential roles in internal ASEAN security issues as well, thus member countries could neither resolve their regional disputes or conflicts independently nor effectively.

### *Consensus*

ASEAN was established based on the strong desire to settle peace, build consensus, and promote stability through regional cooperation and integration. Although during the early decades of ASEAN, the Association was successful in managing intra-regional tensions, yet since the end of the Cold war, ASEAN has been facing challenges and hardships in sustaining collective consensus among its member countries due to the expansion of membership, from five at its initiation to ten members at present, in order to represent the whole region of South East Asia (Acharya 2001). Although the principle of consensus plays a key role in cooperation amongst ASEAN member countries without leading to conflicts, the principle also implies that any policy and decision within the regional context needs to be agreed upon by all member countries prior to the passing of any resolution. Such conditions lead to limitations in obtaining conflict resolutions. Limitations of the principle of consensus can be observed from The Protocol to the ASEAN Charter on Dispute Settlement Mechanisms.

The 2010 Protocol to the ASEAN Charter on Dispute Settlement Mechanisms was drafted in accordance with the ASEAN Charter on peaceful conflict resolution. It emphasizes the means of consultation, conciliation or mediation, and arbitration in solving disputes, excluding economic disputes. If any concerned party does not agree on setting up arbitrators, the other party can request the ASEAN Coordinating Council (ACC) to consider suggesting to the litigant an alternative means to settle the disputes, such as appointing arbitrators.

If the above-mentioned procedure did not succeed or the ACC could not come up with any means of dispute resolution, it would lead to that particular dispute being considered as an 'Unresolved Dispute' and the member nations concerned could raise the issue in the summits. However, till date, the ASEAN Charter on Dispute Settlement Mechanisms has never been observed due to the lack of consensus of ratification of the Protocol document. In conclusion, ASEAN has been trying to find effective mechanisms for solving disputes and conflicts between member countries, yet the principle of consensus is like a two-edged sword that hinders ASEAN in developing effective and practical dispute resolution mechanisms (Conflict Resolution Mechanisms ASEAN 2013).

If ASEAN could develop the Protocol to the ASEAN Charter on Dispute Settlement Mechanisms to enable the enforcement of the arbitration, then this mechanism could well be an alternative way to solve

intra-regional conflicts without needing to appeal to the International Court of Justice, unlike past precedents which were forced to take such steps. The latter pattern included the dispute between Thailand and Cambodia on the Temple of Preah Vihear.

### *Non-interference*

The desire for peace is constrained by both the internal framework of ASEAN, which protects the sovereign rights of its members from external interference, and its reluctance on the regional level to open itself up to third-party involvement, especially from non-ASEAN countries. While this is a universally recognized principle, it has been noted that ASEAN appears to deem the principle of non-interference as being more superior to other regional institutions. ASEAN generally perceives crises in its member states, such as the events in Myanmar, Papua, and Mindanao, as domestic problems which are covered under the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (TAC). The TAC stipulates non-interference in the domestic affairs of member countries. Therefore the principle of non-interference brings about limitations to conflict resolution in the region (Wandi 2010). The following cases are examples for such an observation.

### THE HAZE CRISIS

In June 2013, Southeast Asia, especially Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore, suffered for approximately one week from a record-breaking haze pollution. The haze and toxic smog, which occurred due to fires set on land to be cleared for agriculture in Sumatra, Indonesia, exceeded by almost three times the hazardous limit of air quality. People in Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore and some southern areas of Thailand had to wear face masks, schools were closed, and the economy took a dive as businesses suspended work. Events were cancelled, tourists stayed clear of the area and hospitals faced a surge of respiratory illnesses. The fires also impacted climate change since it produced large amounts of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from the burning of carbon-rich lands and forests. The land-clearing fires which cause trans-boundary haze are also the biggest contributor to Indonesia's overall GHG emissions. The year 2013 may have been the worst haze crisis in the region's recorded history, but similar occurrences have been the norm during 'haze season' every year since the 1980s.

In 2002, ASEAN member countries addressed the environmental issue by adopting the world's first regional agreement against haze—the ASEAN Agreement on Trans-Boundary Haze Pollution. The Agreement is a legally binding regional environmental treaty that aims to prevent and mitigate haze pollution ‘through concerted national efforts and intensified regional and international cooperation’. Unfortunately, two major problems reduce the effectiveness of this Agreement. The first is that Indonesia, the only ASEAN member state yet to ratify the Agreement, is also the main polluter. The second problem concerns the design of the Agreement, which has a weak mechanism for dispute settlement and punishing non-compliance.

It can be seen that one of the weaknesses of the haze agreement is that Indonesia declines to ratify the Agreement, and while ASEAN upholds the principle of non-interference, no member state can compel Indonesia to do so otherwise, or intervene in the administration of the Indonesian Government to implement means, measures or policies that would alleviate air pollution in Indonesia. Furthermore, there is no non-compliance penalty stipulated in the Agreement, therefore even problems which vastly affect a number of countries in the region which was caused by one country cannot be dealt with, because other countries will be unable to intervene in the internal administration of the problem-originating country. Problems have to be solved voluntarily by the government of the country concerned even though that country alone may not be able to solve the problem. Therefore, if ASEAN wants to be effective in solving haze pollution, it should reconsider how to apply the principle of non-interference to this particular context before this haze crisis aggravates political tempers in the future (Stratieva 2014).

### DISPUTES ON THE TEMPLE OF PREAH VIHEAR

As the armed conflict at the Thai-Cambodian border raged, Cambodia sent its protest to the United Nations Security Council. However, the UN Security Council sent the case back into ASEAN's court and asked it to mediate in the squabble between two of its own members.

Sporadic gunfights continued until Cambodia took the case to the International Court of Justice. In order to prevent further violence, the Court asked both sides to withdraw their troops from the disputed areas while waiting for a verdict. Shortly afterwards, in mid-2011, the situation improved after Thailand saw a change of governments—from one led by

the Democrat Party to one led by the Pheu Thai Party. The latter has a better relationship with the Cambodian government of Prime Minister Hun Sen.

However, this bilateral dispute had led to something previously unexpected by ASEAN member countries: ASEAN agreed to act as a mediator in an attempt to resolve the conflict. It is this role which is creating a challenge for ASEAN, which has been viewed as a 'paper tiger' throughout the four decades of its existence due to the principle of non-interference. ASEAN is not formally a dispute settlement body which is why ASEAN should not be expected to sit down in judgement about issues between its member countries. It is also important to remember that many of the issues between ASEAN countries are issues that are political (internal) on both sides, and there is very little ASEAN can do about it.

As both countries did not seem to resolve the conflict bilaterally and Thailand did not agree with the result of the mediation provided by some ASEAN foreign ministers, it became very difficult to resolve this conflict. This is one of the reasons why Cambodia needed the World Court to settle this dispute (Kanparit 2013).

In conclusion, formal mechanisms used in conflict resolution in ASEAN are not able to resolve all of the intra-state and inter-state conflicts. Moreover, this methodology provides only peaceful means of dispute resolution and thus can be considered 'positive peace'.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations for ASEAN are that it should start with reinventing some new things and integrating the economic and socio-cultural dimensions in the conflict resolution equation. This section proposes some recommendations to enlarge ASEAN's capacity in conflict resolution in the region.

### *Partner with Civil Society in the Region*

The reason why ASEAN should work more with the civil society is because many groups within civil society are more experienced in the field of conflict resolution than governments are. Learning from the civil society on how to mediate conflicts and work with strong networks which already exist and are in their control is very important for ASEAN (Wandi 2010). Moreover, there are a number of networks of experienced experts in

ASEAN countries who could be made responsible as a facilitator for peace negotiations throughout ASEAN.

One example to learn from is the case of Conciliation Resources, an organization that played an effective role in resolving problems in the Lord's Resistance Army conflict in Africa by working with civil society organizations (The Lord's Resistance Army [n.d.](#)). The Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) conflict affected tens of thousands of people in Africa. Originating in northern Uganda in the late 1980s, it had spread to the neighbouring countries of South Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), and the Central African Republic (CAR), where continuing political instability contributed to the perpetuation of violence. Conciliation Resources worked at both the community level with civil society organizations and at a national political level, to influence regional and international decision-makers. This organization had been working on the LRA conflict since 1997. Civil society organizations had a huge role to play in finding ways of dealing with the conflict and supported Conciliation Resources in helping those affected people and to find innovative ways to address the day-to-day issues they experienced. The methods they used, such as encouraging abductees to leave the LRA and return home, and then supporting communities to reintegrate them, had produced a significant impact. Conciliation Resources also engaged with national and international decision-makers to encourage them to prioritize issues surrounding conflict in LRA-affected areas and looked for non-violent local solutions.

### *Build More Institutions to Support Peace*

ASEAN's potential role in conflict mediation can be accelerated by the clear presence of regional institutions that deal with conflict mediation and prevention issues (Wandi [2010](#)). ASEAN's political and security blueprint has recommended the establishment of an ASEAN Centre for Peace and Reconciliation which could focus on research about social crises in the region and provide recommendations for conflict mediation activities and internal mechanisms for managing and preventing conflicts. It could also become a secretariat advocating for peace, which would then require building the capacity of the ASEAN joint secretariat in taking a proactive role in conflict prevention work.

An example of a recent established institution with a mission in peace building is the ASEAN Institute for Peace and Reconciliation (AIPR) (ASEAN [2013](#)). The AIPR held its first Governing Council (GC) meeting

at the ASEAN Secretariat in December 2013. The meeting discussed, among others, the work plan of the AIPR, the recruitment of an Executive Director, funding, and the reporting mechanism of the AIPR. This institute works towards fulfilling its role to provide ASEAN as well as regional and global partners with recommendations, research and analysis in the areas of peace, conflict management and conflict resolution. So, building more institutions that support peace in the region is what ASEAN needs to work on, especially in order to proliferate the culture and the knowledge of peaceful negotiation and mediation within the region.

### *Develop a Conflict Mediation Programme*

A conflict mediation programme should be established with a clear allocation of resources for funding conflict mediation activities ranging from research, training and advocacy in mediation and negotiation to regular forums and strategic meetings and monitoring conflict mediation activities across Southeast Asia (Wandi 2010). Emphasis should be placed on initiating a peace campaign through media in various ASEAN countries as well. This project should be set up for a reasonably long period of time, for at least five years, in order to organize a sufficient number of activities for society to focus on. The programme should focus on strategic issues relating to conflict resolution in the region—concerning both present conflicts as well as potential ones that are likely to arise in the future. The outcomes of the programme should be clearly set, measurable, as well as having a great impact on preventing potential future conflicts.

### *Re-interpret the Concept of 'Non-interference'*

ASEAN's principle of non-interference has allowed the member states to concentrate on nation-building and regime stability while maintaining cooperative ties with other states. ASEAN's principle has never been absolute, and has often been used as a tool for legitimizing state-behaviour in the interests of the dominant political and economic elite (Molthof 2012). ASEAN should build upon the consensus model for decision-making already employed by the institution and develop a new framework on constructive engagement. If ASEAN wants to take on a proactive role in the region, it has to forge a consensus regarding its policy of non-interference in the domestic affairs of other states. ASEAN could reflect upon the principle of constructive engagement in the context of proactive engagement. Facilitating dialogue to re-interpret

the concept will be crucial in adjusting non-interference approaches, which had in the first place prevented positive engagement in conflict resolution. In the case of the dispute over the Preah Vihear temple, Indonesia, as the mediator of ASEAN could not effectively engage in conflict resolution as evidenced by a statement made by Mr Abhisit Vejjajiva on 22 August 2010. The former Prime Minister of Thailand declared his confidence ‘that both sides will eventually talk to each other.... There is no need to engage any international organization or a third country’ (Kanparit 2013). Therefore, a new interpretation of the principle of ‘Non- Interference’ is needed in order to ignite momentum for effective mediation by other ASEAN nations. If it is left as it is, ASEAN as a mediator could still be comparable to a ‘paper tiger’ that can barely resolve conflicts in the region.

To be effective in re-interpreting the new concept of ‘Non-interference’, all the members must consent to lose a small part of their sovereignty in order to form a non-state body to re-define the meaning of ‘Non-interference’.

### *Become More People-Oriented*

For ASEAN to become more unified with fewer intra-regional conflicts, it must change its political paradigm to a more people-oriented entity (Wandi 2010). Improving ASEAN as a regional community, instead of a community of governments, will contribute to the development of long-term peace in the region. Therefore, enhancing its links in the area of education and culture will be crucial for the promotion of peace and stability in the region. ASEAN should promote the value of connecting with one another at the people-to-people level. Due to the fact that there are vast differences in cultures, languages and religions among member countries, creating close relationships and mutual trust cannot be possible without well-thought out schemes. The value of regional security should be promoted along with national security. Besides promoting channels for learning about one another’s culture and politics through media, actual interpersonal connection and interaction should be encouraged. One specific measure is to omit the requirement of issuing visas for tourists from other ASEAN countries so that intra-regional travelling within ASEAN would become easier and more convenient. Once people get to know one another and there is a sense of belonging to ASEAN, conflict and disputes between countries can be reduced. Transportation infrastructures that make it easy and convenient to travel are also of importance.



*An ASEAN Regional Development Fund for Regional  
Public Goods*

In the region, there are many issues which ASEAN should work more closely on, and develop collaborative measures for, in order to tackle issues such as human trafficking, drugs, terrorism, and so on. Such measures could be considered as 'regional public goods' which all countries involved will mutually benefit from. In order to effectively manage such issues regionally, a regional development fund is one critical factor for such an initiative. To create more regional public goods in ASEAN, ASEAN should establish a new ASEAN regional development fund or ASEAN development bank, whose major role would be to provide funds for creating regional public goods in the region. Apart from the benefits that the ASEAN regional fund renders directly to the cause of regional development through regional public goods, it can be used as an informal mechanism for conflict resolution in the region as well. It can be used as a sanction measure against member states that do not comply with mutually agreed agreements. For example, they can lower the credit limit for receiving support from the ASEAN regional development fund, or decrease the access to other regional public goods. However, the challenge of implementing this mechanism will be how to ensure that the measures used will not in turn cause more or new kinds of conflicts in the region.

*Develop Informal Relationships in the Elite Group*

Elites are the decision-makers of the society whose power is not subject to control by any other body in the society. They are the sole sources of value creation in the society and constitute the integrating force in the community without which it may fall apart. In ASEAN, elites can be found in the form of potential political leaders and policy makers from member countries as well as the top leaders of national security agencies of ASEAN member countries. There are two kinds of relationship—formal and informal relationships. A formal relationship is not too difficult to develop. In contrast, informal relationship engagements, or interactions among people outside the established structure of any organization, is difficult to establish but often lasts longer than a formal relationship. One of the advantages of informal relationships is that it helps in the development of cultural and social values which contribute to mutual understanding between two parties. Informal relationships offer a sense of belonging, social status

and satisfaction, unlike in a formal set-up where the relationships are purely work oriented. The other advantage is that it allows each member to understand the other more which leads to trust. Based on this premise, informal relationships among elites from ASEAN member countries should be fostered. There should be systematic arrangements for these people to meet and interact with one another. This could in turn result in mutual trust and understanding between members of the elite group.

One example of a systematic arrangement for informal interaction is a short-term programme for ASEAN leaders, modelled after executive programmes in which attendants not only learn academically but also get to connect with colleagues in the same programme. Cordial relationships formed during the time spent together should be able to make mutual efforts in cooperation and solving conflicts easier and smoother. This concept is particularly suitable for the ASEAN context due to the fact that Asians value a highly personal and informal relationship which is why it can be a key component in cooperative efforts in the future.

### *Develop Constructive Engagement*

As we analysed earlier, the principle of non-interference may have hindered conflict resolution all along, yet if the interventions are constructive and beneficial to the parties concerned, while maintaining the principle of voluntary decision, this principle can be more favourable to all concerned. Countries directly involved in the conflict or dispute may be more congenially disposed towards other member countries' engagement. For example, keeping in mind the problem of haze pollution in Indonesia, member countries can use constructive engagement such as giving financial or technical support, and providing personnel to Indonesia to fight the problem instead of pressuring Indonesia to solve the problem alone. Constructive engagements should be something viewed favourably by the countries concerned.

### *Develop Existing Mechanisms to Make Them More Effective in Solving Conflicts*

#### *Treaty of Amity and Cooperation*

The High Council is a key mechanism for settling disputes in ASEAN, yet it has never been implemented due to the condition defined by the principle of non-interference. If the aforementioned proposal of constructive

engagement is to be implemented, the High Council, which is comprised of senior representatives of all ASEAN countries, should be able to play an important role in proposing constructive measures for conflict resolution, while maintaining its role of serving as Good Offices or as a Committee of Mediation and Conciliation. An adjustment of the role of High Council should be beneficial to conflict resolution in ASEAN.

*Enforcement of an Arbitral Tribunal Through Protocol to the ASEAN Charter on the Dispute Settlement Mechanism*

The reason that the Protocol to the ASEAN Charter on Dispute Settlement Mechanism cannot be used to settle disputes is because there has not yet been a consensus among ASEAN members on the ratification of the Protocol. When there is even one member country that declines to ratify the Protocol, the Arbitral Tribunal, which is one of the mechanisms in solving conflicts, cannot function. Apart from that, some countries are afraid that the mechanism of the Arbitral Tribunal may be detrimental to their countries. To overcome these hindrances, ASEAN needs to build trust among member states as well as build an ASEAN corporate identity to the extent that the withholding countries decide to comply with and ratify the Agreement. It is only then that the mechanism of the Arbitral Tribunal can function as a tool to settle disputes in the region.

*Monitor ASEAN Conflicts by Establishing Conflict Warning Indicators*

ASEAN should be able to prevent conflicts from erupting in the region by having an effective conflict monitoring system. This system is based on a supplying a checklist of root causes of conflict and early warning indicators. The system will enhance pre-emptive initiatives to take strategic measures to prevent conflicts from gaining momentum. ASEAN can learn from the European Commission, the EU Secretary-General, and their High Representative, who have developed a check list of root causes of conflicts and early warning indicators that increase awareness within the EU decision-making forums relating to such problems. The monitoring system helps increase efforts to ensure that EU policies contribute to conflict prevention and resolution. Through the monitoring system, countries receiving the highest scores would come under the attention of the authority responsible for security issues through a confidential 'watch list'. However, ASEAN needs to adapt the monitoring system to make it suitable to the context of ASEAN so that trust among member countries could be fostered without any agitation.

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**Kriengsak Chareonwongsak** is a senior fellow at the Harvard University. Kriengsak was also an advisor to the Prime Minister of Thailand and an elected Member of Parliament. He has published more than 200 books and numerous articles, presented over 500 academic papers and 5000 newspaper and magazine articles.

PART 1

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The Great Powers: Going their Own  
Way or Tempering Rivalry with Some  
Reference to ASEAN?

## Flexing Muscles Flexibly: China and Asia's Transitional Polycentrism

*Hoo Tiang Boon*

A curious state of disordering order marks the Asia-Pacific region today. This state of affairs—transitional polycentrism—bespeaks a regional context where several of its earlier assumptions and facets are coming under increasing strain from new, emerging dynamics. Among the ‘adjusting’ developments, they include the decreasing salience of ASEAN centrality, the increasing unilateralism of Asia’s great powers and the growing significance of non-traditional security threats. These shifts are seen as embodying a more uncertain and power-centric regional order, one animated by a growing number of state and non-state forces.

China, as the world’s second largest economy and with its own hegemonic designs, is undoubtedly one of those forces of change. This chapter analyses China’s part in shaping this transitional polycentrism, with particular focus on its perceived rising foreign policy assertiveness in the region. It argues that since at least 2013, Beijing has been applying a strategy of ‘flexible assertiveness’ in Asia. This is a nuanced but deliberate policy with two discernible prongs: one is a tougher and more uncompromising approach towards what China regards as its core interests, or connecting to its core interests; the other is a more flexible and cooperative

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T.B. Hoo (✉)

S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore

approach towards other more negotiable interests that, while significant, are of relative secondary importance to Beijing.

The chapter contributes to existing literature in the following ways. First, it builds on the extant debate on Chinese assertiveness in international relations, a subject of growing academic and real-world relevance. Second, in addressing this debate, it attempts to inject more conditionality to the idea of China's assertiveness. Many studies either make a priori assumptions of China's assertiveness or make sweeping generalizations of China as an assertive power. But as this chapter will show, Chinese assertiveness is not a uniform phenomenon. It is in fact conditioned by an important variable understated in the existing literature: the idea of China's core interests, a concept that is evolving at the same time. Third, through engaging evidence from the recent writings of Chinese analysts, speeches of Chinese leaders and field work in Beijing, it is suggested that there are linkages between China's assertiveness and its regional strategy. In doing so, the chapter updates scholarship on developments in Chinese strategic thinking since the advent of the Xi Jinping regime.

In the next (second) section, the chapter will review the evolving debate on China's diplomacy, particularly its perceived foreign policy assertiveness. Following that, it addresses two drawbacks of this existing debate and, further to that, fleshes out the notion of China's flexible assertiveness. The fourth section examines the emerging Chinese narrative of the utility of flexible assertiveness, while the following section looks at related discussions that connect to the flexible assertiveness discourse. The sixth section probes the notion of Chinese core interests which is central to understanding the conditions in which Chinese assertiveness becomes more evident. In the penultimate section, Beijing's behaviour is examined in the context of a regional strategy of flexible assertiveness. The last section discusses the conclusions.

## EVOLVING DEBATE

China's foreign policy behaviour in recent years, in particular in East Asia, has generated debate among scholars and observers of the region. For many analysts, the region is basically witnessing the emergence of a more muscular (some say more revisionist) form of Chinese diplomacy (Yahuda 2013; Swaine and Fravel 2011; *The Economist* 2011). Michael Swaine (2010), for example, argues the idea of a 'more confident, assertive...anti-

status quo power that is pushing back against the West, promoting its own alternative norms policies...and generally seeking to test the leadership capacity of the United States' is increasingly dominating external perceptions of China. In another study, Andrew Scobell and Scott Harold (2013) argue that there have been at least two 'waves' of Chinese assertiveness since 2008–2009, with the first being driven by a putative sense of Chinese 'triumphalism' and the second being prompted by Chinese defensiveness and insecurity towards the US rebalance to Asia. That Scobell and Harold draw their conclusions from extensive field interviews in Beijing and Shanghai suggests that, to an extent, even Chinese analysts agree that China has acted more strongly than usual in recent years. Indeed, survey data from the 2013 annual conference of the Chinese Community of Political Science and International Studies reveal that a majority (69%) of Chinese scholars 'strongly agree' or 'somewhat agree (with reservations)' that China's foreign policy has become more assertive (Feng and He 2014).

Some scholars dispute this notion of an assertive 'turn' in Chinese foreign policy. Subjecting the newly or more assertive China narrative to an empirical examination, Alastair Iain Johnston contends that such a perception is ultimately 'problematic' and exaggerates, on the one hand, the degree to which China's recent actions have been newly assertive and, on the other, discount past episodes of Chinese assertiveness; although concerning China's regional maritime claims, he concedes that Beijing's recent conduct does appear to have been tougher than in the past. What informs such supposed perceptual inaccuracies? Johnston (2013) blames, among other reasons, the problem of 'discursive bandwagoning' for what in his view is a general uncritical acceptance of the assertive China narrative. Bjorn Jerden (2014), who similarly notes several empirical examples that challenges the assertive China argument, suggests epistemological reasons—that is, 'information cascade, discursive determinism, realism's prejudices'—for the perpetuation of such a narrative.

A further development to the debate is illustrated by Chen Dingding and Pu Xiaoyu's response to Johnston's assertions. Taking issue with Johnston's understanding of assertiveness, which in their view emphasizes only the coercive aspects of state behaviour, Chen and Pu argue that foreign policy assertiveness should be seen in a 'broader' sense and include positive characterizations that encompass 'standing up for [one's] rights and expressing thoughts, feelings and beliefs in direct, honest and appro-



priate ways which do not violate [another's] rights.' This understanding leads to their conceptualization of assertiveness as a mutually non-exclusive typology of (i) offensive assertiveness, (ii) defensive assertiveness and (iii) constructive assertiveness. The first category relates to a coercive form that seeks a unilateral expansion of state interests; the second relates to an assertiveness that seeks primarily to defend, rather than expand, state interests; while the last category refers to a sense of activism to provide global common goods or resolve global problems. In Chen and Pu's view, while Chinese diplomacy has indeed been more muscular in recent times, it should be more accurately interpreted as a form of defensive assertiveness, a 'confident' way of defending China's rights (Chen et al. 2013).

Setting aside the question of their typology's cogency, Chen and Pu's arguments point to the definitional issues that complicate the concept of assertiveness in international relations (IR). For one, it remains a contested notion. There is little consensus within the literature on what constitutes assertiveness in foreign policy. In fact, in terms of usage within the field, the concept is often ill-defined or taken for granted; neither is it a commonly applied category in IR theories. Analysts often use the term without prior definition, using it interchangeably with overlapping vocabulary that range from 'aggression,' 'belligerence,' 'truculence,' 'bullying' to 'confidence,' 'vigour' and 'constructive activism,' while it is often assumed that one recognizes assertive state behaviour when one sees it (Johnston 2013).

A second complication relates to the fact that perceptions of assertiveness encompass a degree of inherent subjectivity that cannot be objectively eradicated. Moreover, this subjectivity may be influenced by factors exogenous to the judgement. For example, in organizational theory, Mile's Law (i.e. 'where you stand depends on where you sit') proposes that beliefs of agents tend to correspond to those of their organizations (Miles 1978). If Mile's Law is being extrapolated to the international politics, then one would imagine that Chinese officials might dispute the idea of an assertive China (which seems the case in reality, although as mentioned, some survey results show that several Chinese scholars agree with assessments of Chinese assertiveness). In social psychology, experiments have also shown that processing fluency, that is 'the subjective experience of ease which people process information,' affects the way in which one judges assertive behaviour (Atler and Oppenheimer 2009). These are relevant complications to bear in mind.

## THE DIFFICULTY IN CHARACTERIZING CHINA'S RECENT FOREIGN POLICY BEHAVIOUR

In continuing the conversation, this chapter suggests the discourse may have been focusing on the wrong question. Rather than to ask whether or not there has been a recent or newly assertive turn in Chinese foreign policy, it suggests a more nuanced question: How can we make better sense of China's behaviour in recent years (especially since the advent of the Xi Jinping regime)?

The logic is informed by two reasons. First, it is inaccurate to think of assertiveness in Chinese foreign policy as a recent or novel phenomenon. After all, 'countries can fluctuate in their degree of assertiveness over time or be selectively assertive depending on the issue or geographic region.' One can argue that in the post-Mao era (since 1978), Beijing has behaved relatively less assertively as compared to the Maoist period (Scobell and Harold 2013). But even during the post-Mao period, during the Jiang and Hu eras, one can find several examples of heightened Chinese rhetoric and actions that were stronger than usual. There were, for instances, (i) China's sabre-rattling in the 1995–1996 Taiwan Straits crisis when it conducted a series of threatening military exercises near Taiwan's coastline, (ii) its enraged reaction including allowing protestors to attack the American embassy, when the Chinese Belgrade embassy was bombed by US air strikes in 1999 and (iii) its unusually robust response to Washington during the April 2001 crisis when a Chinese J-8 fighter jet collided with a US EP-3 surveillance plane (Johnston 2013). In recalling these episodes, it is not to make a judgement about whether or not these Chinese actions were legitimate or appropriate, but rather to underline the fact that Chinese assertiveness is hardly an unprecedented development. As a proud civilization with a long and colourful history (including a perceived century of humiliation that fosters a victim mindset), and with its rising power and stature in post-Cold War international society, it would be peculiar indeed for China to behave equably at all times. Past and recent history has shown that Beijing will act or react in ways that are deemed assertive when it perceives the need to do so.

Second, it is also inaccurate to characterize Chinese foreign policy as being uniformly assertive. To say that China's diplomacy has now 'turned' assertive not only overlooks past instances of Chinese assertiveness, it also overlooks the several recent occasions when China has acted in more cooperative and beneficent ways; or reacted with restraint and compromise.

For example, in 2014, Beijing worked together with other BRICS countries (Brazil, Russia, India and South Africa) to establish the New Development Bank to facilitate and promote growth in the developing world. That year also saw an unprecedented pact between the USA and China on climate change, with China pledging to peak its CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, as well as improve its share of non-fossil fuel consumption to about 20%, by 2030 (Zheng and Lye 2015). More recently in 2015, in an unusual move, the White House singled out Beijing for praise, expressing ‘appreciation’ for its role in facilitating the historic nuclear deal between the P5+1 and Iran (White House 2015). These examples demonstrate why it is less useful to probe whether there has been an assertive shift in Chinese diplomacy: China has evidently acted in ways that are more forceful than usual on various occasions, but in several other situations it has responded in ways that not only confound the ‘assertive China’ narrative but are clearly more collaborative or constructive.

This chapter argues that China’s diplomacy in Asia—and its shaping of the transitional polycentric order—can be better understood from the lenses of what is termed flexible assertiveness. Flexible assertiveness refers to a two-pronged foreign policy strategy that combines two particular aspects: One, a tougher and more uncompromising approach towards issues which China regards as its core interests, or connecting to its core interests. The other is a more flexible and cooperative approach towards other more negotiable interests (such as regional economic interests) that, while significant, are of relative secondary importance to Beijing. This dual approach is described in Chinese by the axiom, ‘*yingde gengying, ruande gengruan*’ (i.e. hardening the hard, softening the soft), a phrase that is gaining wider currency in Chinese strategic lexicon as we will see later.

In many respects, the assertiveness displayed by China reflects a form of carrot-and-stick approach. That big powers like China would resort to positive and negative inducements to influence others is not entirely surprising (Hoo and Ardy 2017), but what is more novel are two elements. First, China’s flexible assertiveness represents a *heightening* of costs and benefits (i.e. bigger ‘carrots’ but also bigger ‘sticks’) to greater *accentuate* the difference between cooperating with Beijing and working against it. Second, it is conditioned by the notion of China’s core interests, an important variable understated in the existing literature.

Some caveats are in order. First, the focus here is on China’s diplomacy in Asia because to broaden the examination of Chinese foreign policy to other geographical domains would be to extend this study beyond its

intended scope. Second, the chapter focuses on the period from around the time Xi Jinping took over power in China. The basis is that the past few years have witnessed considerable shifts in Chinese foreign policy-making (both subtle and distinct) to warrant a fresh appraisal (Hoo 2017). Moreover, in doing so, it may provide valuable insights to the overall trajectory of China's diplomacy under Xi, someone who has consolidated domestic power at an unprecedented pace, is seen as the most significant Chinese leader since Deng Xiaoping, and is expected to remain in office at least until 2022.

### FLEXIBLE ASSERTIVENESS AND CHINESE DIPLOMACY: AN EMERGING NARRATIVE

The dialectical art of combining hard and soft approaches in a concerted stratagem has a long tradition in China, and purportedly dates back to the reign of Han Wu Di (Emperor Wu, 141–87 BC) when the latter successfully used the strategy to repel the Xiongnu invaders and expand the Han empire (Xu 2014). In more contemporary times, this notion of accentuating (not just using) both the hard and soft aspects of Chinese power to influence outcomes has most frequently been used to describe Hu Jintao's China policy towards Taiwan. Chinese commentators cite the passing of 2005 Anti-Secession Law and the strong language in Hu's report to the 17th Party Congress as clear examples of the PRC strengthening the assertive arm of its Taiwan strategy to deter Taiwanese independence. At the same time, they laud the increasing, 'flexible' use of economic sweeteners to enhance cross-strait economic integration and draw Taipei closer to Beijing. It is claimed that this two-pronged approach is an effective strategy because it correctly draws a 'distinction' between Taiwanese compatriots and pro-independence extremists, allowing China to both suppress the pro-independence movement, as well as appeal directly to the hearts and minds of the Taiwanese populace (Li 2008; Shi 2007; Zhu and Xu 2006; Qu 2008; Zeng 2007).

In the Xi Jinping era, the language of flexible assertiveness has continued to depict China's Taiwan policy (Hoo 2014). More significantly, the apparent success of this strategy in managing the Taiwan question has led to an increasing number of calls for it to be applied to other regional policy issues. One ostensibly relevant area is China's management of its maritime disputes. Chinese commentators argue that a more differenti-

ated and calibrated approach is the ‘key’ to the successful resolution of the South China Sea (SCS) territorial disputes, noting that China can do more to accommodate other claimants within the framework of joint development while also emphasizing that China is ‘not afraid to resort to force’ to uphold Chinese sovereignty. The fundamental message is that opposing China will lead to a ‘cul-de-sac’ while cooperating with China will bring greater benefits (南海解局的关键 2012). Peking University’s Wang Yizhou, a leading Chinese scholar, is less hard-line but offers a similar policy advice. Resolving China’s maritime crises, Wang (2012, 2013a) muses, requires China to be ‘creatively involved.’ This calls for China to buttress the assertive aspects of its maritime policy and develop at the ‘military and physical levels’ several types of ‘assassin’s mace’; while further softening the benign aspects of this policy by contributing more to maritime commons (e.g. protecting sea lanes of communication; combating piracy, maritime conservation).

Wang would later connect the flexible assertiveness approach to the PRC’s broader diplomacy. In a *People’s Tribune* interview re-circulated widely on the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) news network, Wang (2014) argues that one of the defining features of Xi’s steering of China’s diplomacy since the 18th Party Congress has been to ‘harden its hard aspects while softening its soft aspects.’ He cites the declaration of a Chinese ADIZ in the East China Sea, the establishment of an unprecedented State Security Commission, and Xi’s vision of the PRC as a maritime power as illustrations of a more assertive China that is not shy of exhibiting the ‘style’ of a great power. Conversely, he notes a China that has been more willing and flexible in providing public goods in international affairs, the exemplar being the ‘One Belt, One Road’ initiative. In another CCP publication, *Party and Government Forum*, Wang (2013b) writes that ‘new’ thinking on Chinese diplomacy should focus on how to ‘better exercise’ the flexible assertiveness strategy.

Another prominent Chinese scholar, Fudan University’s Chen Zhimin concurs with Wang’s observations. In a 2014 publication in the influential Chinese IR journal, *World Economics & Politics*, Chen (2014a) notes:

If we say in the past Chinese diplomacy emphasized a soft strategy...then in the recent few years, Chinese diplomacy has emphasized the combination of hard and soft strategies, elevating an ‘attraction’ strategy alongside a greater emphasis on the utility of ‘countering’ and ‘pressure’ strategies, effecting the ‘hard to become harder, and the soft to become softer.’

Highlighting Xi's calls for other nations to 'free ride on the Chinese growth locomotive'—the so-called China's theory on free ridership, a sardonic reply to American accusations of Chinese free-riding in international society—Chen (2014a) recommends the use of Chinese economic power to boost the PRC's 'attractiveness.' But when certain 'key national interests' are being challenged, China should not hesitate to counter and respond strongly.

Such arguments correspond with the growing, wider attention on the pursuit of the flexible assertiveness strategy in China's external relations. In November 2014, Fudan University released a *China National Security Strategic Report* advocating the idea of 'effective security,' which among other policy recommendations, calls for 'the application of attraction and compelling [security] strategies....that merges the hard and the soft, interchanges between them, and differentiates the two' (Chen 2014b) In December 2014, the Central Party School organized the second *50 Young Scholars Forum on International Studies*, where the work of Chinese Academy of Social Sciences scholar Wang Junsheng was singled out for mention in the *People's Daily*. In reviewing Chinese periphery diplomacy since the 18th Party Congress, Wang Junsheng argued that China had in effect incorporated a flexible assertiveness approach in managing its regional issues, pushing for greater regional integration and connectivity on the one hand, and conversely, exhibiting a tougher posture regarding its maritime territorial disputes (Yang and Li 2014).

### ASSOCIATED STRATEGIC DISCOURSE

The emerging narrative of the utility of flexible assertiveness is also supported by related discussions of Chinese diplomacy under Xi. One is the question of whether Deng Xiaoping's strategic guideline of *Tao Guang Yang Hui* (TGYH) is still relevant for China's present international context. *Tao Guang Yang Hui* or 'hide brightness, cherish obscurity,' first explicitly articulated by Deng in 1992, is often referred to as China's putative foreign policy strategy of 'keeping a low profile' in the post-Cold War era. The basic assumption is that a low global profile would help China's development priorities. While the concept later morphed into a '24-character' or '28-character' dictum that includes the influential phrase '*yousuo zuowei*' (i.e. get some things done), it is the idea of maintaining a low profile that is most commonly associated with the TGYH principle (Chen and Wang 2011).

Domestic debate on the TGYH concept, of course, has been going on for some time. And in the Xi era, unsurprisingly, this has not abated. Those who argue for the enduring relevance of TGYH cite, among others, the following justifications: (i) the global strategic balance remains fundamentally one of ‘west strong, east weak’; (ii) as a latecomer to global society, China remains in the ‘sensitive’ period of growth and should avoid ‘attracting the target onto itself’ and (iii) Chinese development still has several difficult challenges to address (Guan 2014). That said, with the PRC’s improving power conditions as well as a changing international environment, a number of Chinese thinkers have questioned the applicability of TGYH, arguing that China should assume a more proactive role in international affairs, with strategic emphasis on the latter phrase of ‘*yousuo zuowei*’ (YSZW). While not necessarily jettisoning the TGYH principle, these thinkers argue that Chinese foreign policy, depending on the ‘circumstance and emphasis of the time,’ should be about establishing an appropriate balance between TGYH and YSZW. And in the current period, this balance has shifted towards YSZW (Cheng and Wang 2014). In October 2013, at the CCP’s first Foreign Affairs Work Conference on periphery diplomacy, the YSZW argument received further fuel when Xi added his own conceptual modification, adjusting ‘*yousuo zuowei*’ (i.e. get some things done) to ‘*fenfa youwei*’ (i.e. striving for achievement). According to Xu Qin (2013) of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, this reflects a greater emphasis on a more proactive Chinese diplomacy. ‘Striving for achievement is now the new normal of Chinese diplomacy,’ he contends.

Xu’s observations conform to the growing perception among many Chinese analysts that, under Xi, China’s foreign policy has become more ‘confident’ and proactive, and is less passive and inhibitive of risk-taking. Indeed, Chinese foreign minister Wang Yi uses the term ‘*jiji qinqu*’ (i.e. forging ahead actively) to describe present Chinese diplomacy, a phrase which Chinese analysts have echoed (Yu 2015; Zhu 2014). Some of these analysts point to Xi’s ideas of ‘a new type of international relations,’ ‘Asian security concept’ and ‘major country diplomacy with Chinese characteristics’ as reflecting this new more active phase in Chinese diplomacy. It is also not lost on them that there is a notable absence of the TGYH rhetoric in Xi’s speeches.

Another related discursive development is the increasing evocation of the notion of ‘baseline thinking’ (*disian siwei*). Baseline thinking in Chinese foreign policy, according to a number of Chinese scholars, encom-

passes a few aspects. First, it entails consideration of the 'worst-case scenarios' and making preparations on that basis. Second, it brooks no crossing of China's baselines; typically, these allude to China's core national interests. Third, it commits China to respond accordingly if these baselines are violated (Chen 2014c; Yang 2015; Qi 2014).

According to Jin Canrong of Renmin University, Chinese diplomacy has always observed the baseline principle. But under the Xi government, the articulation and practice of this principle have become clearer and more pronounced (Guo and Liu 2013). Many in the Chinese strategic community appear to welcome this emphasis. Shanghai Institutes for International Studies' Chen Dongxiao (2014c) contend that baseline thinking 'effectively' helped China contain its regional maritime disputes from escalating. For critics who worry that baseline thinking contradicts and may jeopardize China's declared road of peaceful development, Wang Yizhou (2013a) has this retort: 'peace does not mean one cannot use tactics, cooperation does not mean one cannot fight for one's interests.' Furthermore, as Tsinghua University's Zhao Kejin (2014) adds, baseline thinking does not imply that other aspects of Chinese foreign policy cannot exhibit 'flexibility' to complement the baseline principle.

### CHINA'S CORE INTERESTS

The preceding discussion of Chinese baseline thinking lends itself to an important question: What are these Chinese baselines? More specifically, what are China's core interests? The notion of flexible assertiveness is predicated on a tougher posture towards questions on, or connecting to, Chinese core interests while assuming a more flexible position towards other more negotiable interests. It is therefore useful to discuss Chinese understanding of their nation's core interests.

In general, the Chinese understand core interests as those national interests that China would never 'compromise or trade.' They are seen as interests that take 'first priority' in a hierarchy of China's national interests, with repercussions for the 'entire system' (Wang 2011). Indeed, some CCP members consider the defence of core interests as the 'benchmark' to distinguish between a patriot and traitor (Huai 2011). The imagined sacrosanct nature of the core interests suggests that these are the interests which Beijing would be willing to resort to force to defend. This is not to say that China would necessarily use force, though the consideration of force would be an option (a possible last option).



The rhetoric of core interests first appeared in Chinese diplomatic discourse around the 2003–2004 period as an expression and response to China’s concerns over Taiwan’s growing independence movement (Campbell et al. 2013). By 2007, the concept became more formalized, becoming part of the official language of Chinese foreign affairs documents and activities. Around this time, in addition to the Taiwan issue, the Tibet and Xinjiang questions also became linked to, or were included in, the notion of China’s core interests. However, it was only at the China–US Strategic and Economic Dialogue in July 2009 that the concept was given more specific description for the first time. The then state councillor Dai Bingguo identified China’s core interests as the ‘safeguarding of China’s political and economic systems; its national security, sovereignty and territorial integrity; and its sustainable economic and social development’ (Beijing Review 2013). To be sure, Dai’s articulation remains relatively vague and broad. Moreover, these interests appear to be defined in a way that suggests some degree of overlap. Nevertheless, given the context of the announcement, these interests are commonly interpreted as clarifying three particular areas of paramount importance to Beijing, which Washington should ‘respect’: (i) the continuity and perpetuation of the Chinese Communist Party’s political leadership, that is, socialism with Chinese characteristics; (ii) ensuring China’s economic and social progress and (iii) ensuring the non-violation of China’s sovereignty and territorial whole. These themes would later gain a broader significance when they were further reiterated in Dai’s 2010 article, ‘Stick to the Path of Peaceful Development,’ and the 2011 White Paper on ‘China’s Peaceful Development’ (Dai 2010; 2011).

The current Xi government has continued with the engagement of the rhetoric of China’s core interests. In fact, the concept has actively featured in several of Xi’s speeches, which unsurprisingly results in further echoing within Chinese policy discourse. At a 30 January 2013 group study session of the CCP Politburo, Xi emphasized that:

No country should presume that we will trade our core interests or that we will swallow the bitter fruit of harm to our sovereignty, security or development interests.

Around six months later, at another Politburo study session on 30 July 2013, Xi appeared to connect the notion of China’s maritime interests to

the core interest concept for the first time. In a speech underlining the importance of 'enhancing China's capacity to protect its maritime rights and interests, and resolutely safeguarding the nation's maritime rights and interests,' Xi also declared that even as China 'sticks to the road of peaceful development, it will never give up its legitimate rights and interests, and never sacrifice the national core interests' (Beijing Review 2013). In a 11 March 2014 speech addressing the People's Liberation Army, Xi would again reiterate a similar message and exhorted the PLA to 'expedite defence and military modernization,' stressing that 'under no circumstances' would China sacrifice its core national interests (BBC Chinese News 2014). At the Party's highest-level annual foreign policy meeting on 29 November 2014, a similar pledge was made by Xi: no sacrifice of the core national interests even as China pursues major country diplomacy with Chinese characteristics (Zhang 2014).

A number of reasons have been cited for this continuing promulgation of the core interest concept. First, there needs to be a better prioritization of China's national interests given that its resources and attentions are finite. This is all the more critical given that as China rises, its interests will continue to expand. Second, in an increasingly uncertain security environment, a clearer enunciation of China's core interests will help reduce misjudgements and the possibility of conflicts, and in so doing, prevent further erosion of those interests. The assumption here is that in delineating China's most vital interests, others are less likely to impinge on these interests since these are the interests that Beijing is willing to incur the highest costs to defend. The third reason is connected to the growing public attention paid to such interests, in particular, China's territorial interests. It is suggested that rising public 'consciousness' of China's territorial claims puts greater pressure on the Chinese government to protect those interests (Beijing Review 2013).

Not surprisingly, it is this aspect of the core national interests—that is, safeguard national sovereignty and territorial integrity—that has seen the most expression of China's purported assertiveness in recent years. By implication, this would suggest that Chinese territorial claims in the East and South China Seas are being considered by Beijing as part of the core interests since these areas unquestionably relate to the matter of national sovereignty and territorial integrity.

The reality is actually more complicated because unlike the Taiwan, Tibet and Xinjiang issues, Chinese leaders have 'neither publicly con-

firmed nor denied' China's maritime claims as a core interest (Campbell et al. 2013). Indeed, there is an evolving debate within China about whether the East and South China Sea issues constitute a core national interest. Some scholars caution against a broad definition that encompasses the maritime claims because they believe that (i) the contexts and strategic aims of these claims differ from those of the Taiwan, Tibet or Xinjiang issues; that (ii) it reduces the room for strategic flexibility as well as compels China to consider force as an option to defend these interests; and that (iii) it may have the counter-productive effect of drawing greater American involvement in the disputes (Jia Qingguo 2015a). Others meanwhile consider the East and South China Sea issues as a de facto core interest, short of only an explicit declaration. Proponents cite, inter alia, a number of justifications: (i) a matter of consistency with the principle of sovereignty and territorial integrity; (ii) a more threatening regional maritime environment with growing security pressures, in particular, from the USA and (iii) the criticality of China's maritime peripheries to vital strategic objectives such as the recovery of Taiwan, its energy security, its ambitions as a maritime power and the protection of the sea lanes of trade (Zhang 2011). These reasons may yet find (or may have already found) greater resonance with Beijing since the Chinese definition of core interest encompasses ample room for its contents to 'evolve and adjust according to the circumstances and times' (Zhang 2011). A 2013 research report for the US–China Economic and Security Review Commission drew a similar observation, noting that China's definition allows its policymakers the 'flexibility to highlight specific issues—including but not limited to Taiwan, Tibet and Xinjiang—as they become salient' (Campbell et al. 2013).

Developments in the last few years suggest that China's maritime territorial interests in East Asia have grown in gravity for Beijing. For Chinese analysts, while these maritime claims are not yet seen as core interests on par with the Taiwan or Tibet issues, they are considered as, at the minimum, 'vital issues relating to China's core interests.'

Evolving evidence from official and semi-official sources appears to lend some credence to this claim. On 17 January 2012, the *People's Daily*, the CCP's official newspaper and mouthpiece, described for the first time Japanese activities near the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands as 'brazenly damaging China's core interests' (Zhongsheng 2012). This was followed by the unprecedented September 2012 national White Paper on the Diaoyu Islands, which stated in no uncertain terms:

Diaoyu Island and its affiliated islands are an inseparable part of the Chinese territory. Diaoyu Island is China's inherent territory in all historical, geographical and legal terms, and China enjoys indisputable sovereignty over Diaoyu Island. (State Council Information Office 2012)

The following year, on 26 April 2013, in response to a question on the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands, the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesperson reportedly affirmed that the Diaoyu Islands issue 'is China's core interest.' The published transcript of the press conference released on 28 April eventually records the spokesperson as saying the dispute 'concerns' the PRC's core interests (Campbell et al. 2013; Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC 2013). In June 2013, the *Xinhua News* network also circulated an external report of the Xi–Obama California meeting, in which the Chinese president reportedly informed his American hosts that the Diaoyu Islands 'involve China's unyielding core interests' (Xinhua News 2013).

Regarding the territorial claims in the SCS, the evidence has been more indirect. *Xinhua News*, for example, ran reports on the SCS dispute which included Xi's familiar quotes on how China will never sacrifice its core interests or incorporated third-party comments that link the SCS dispute to China's core interests (Ren and Wang 2012; Ren and Wang 2015). The China Institute of International Studies, the Foreign Ministry's think-tank, has also published articles which alluded to or described the SCS issue as 'involving China's core interests' (Cao 2015; Jia Xiudong 2015b).

While the existing evidence stops short of explicitly flagging these maritime territorial claims as China's core interests, it is relevant to note that the language of these maritime claims suggests that these interests are just as non-negotiable as the core interests. For example, in a typical statement in May 2015, foreign minister Wang Yi asserted that China's will to uphold its maritime sovereignty is 'rock-hard and unquestionable' (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC 2015). In similar vein, the Ministry of National Defense has declared that '[China's] determination and will to defend national territorial sovereignty and maritime rights and interests are unswerving; on this issue there is absolutely no room for bargaining, and any provocative actions will not be tolerated' (Pang 2014). Moreover, in the run-up to as well as the aftermath of the July 2016 SCS tribunal ruling, the Chinese rhetoric on these maritime claims, particularly relating to the SCS, became noticeably heightened. About six months before the ruling, the *People's Daily* contended that, regardless of the decision from

Hague, ‘China’s sovereignty over the South China Sea islands brooks no denial’ (Huaxia 2015). The day after the ruling, the *People’s Daily* employed for the first time the term ‘baseline’ to describe the SCS claims, implicitly referencing those interests as China’s core interests (Commentator 2016). The stronger language corroborates the US–China Economic and Security Review Commission research report’s observation about the dynamic character of the core interest concept, and suggests that if Beijing’s insecurity over its SCS claims grows—similar to its earlier concerns about Taiwan’s independence drift—these claims may come to be explicitly labelled as a core interest.

### REGIONAL BEHAVIOUR

There have been indications of a general pattern of behaviour in Chinese recent regional diplomacy that alludes to a flexible assertiveness strategy. As mentioned, the PRC’s maritime territorial interests have been increasingly depicted as a matter that not only relates closely to the core national interest, but is also just as non-compromisable as the latter. Not surprisingly, it is this domain where Beijing has been mostly perceived to be acting assertively or more assertively (Forsyth 2017). Indeed, Johnston’s 2013 study of Chinese assertiveness finds that the one area where Beijing’s actions have been arguably more assertive is its maritime disputes (Johnston 2013).

Such robustness in asserting Chinese maritime territorial rights and interests—or in the words of some observers, ‘tailored coercion’—have intensified in the Xi era (Cronin et al. 2014). For instance, in November 2013, China unilaterally declared an Air Defence Identification Zone in the East China Sea (ECS), a move which raised tensions in the ongoing row with Japan over the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands. China also stepped up its use of the unified Chinese Coast Guard—frequently accompanied by PLA naval vessels over the horizon—to better patrol and enforce its claims in the ECS (Jakobson 2014). One such patrol purportedly led to the PLA vessel locking its weapons-guiding radar (implying an impending assault) onto Japanese naval vessels (Hayashi et al. 2013).

These patrols have also been stepped up in the SCS. In one incident in December 2013, a Chinese warship, which was part of the *Liaoning* aircraft carrier group that was operating in the SCS for the first time, nearly caused a collision in its insistent shadowing of the US cruiser USS *Compens* in international waters of the SCS (Alexander and Sweeney 2013). In another incident in March 2014, a Chinese blockade prevented Filipino

vessels from re-supplying the small Filipino force at the disputed Second Thomas Shoal. In May 2014, accompanied by a huge patrol fleet, a Chinese oil company relocated the HYSY-981 oil rig to waters near the disputed Paracel Islands in the SCS, leading to skirmishes between Chinese and Vietnamese vessels which resulted in the sinking of a Vietnamese ship, sparking virulent anti-China protests in Vietnam (Jakobson 2014).

Meanwhile, China has expanded its physical presence in the SCS, creating artificial outposts out of the Subi, Gaven, Hughes, Cuarteron, Johnson and Fiery Cross reefs. The expansionary activities include the construction of airstrips and deeper vessel berths, facilities that could have dual military uses (which Beijing does not deny), leading to claims of China 'militarizing' the SCS and unilaterally altering facts on the ground. Infrastructure work in the SCS is not unique to China of course, since Vietnam, Malaysia and the Philippines have pursued similar work, but the scale and speed of Chinese construction activities in the SCS are unprecedented. According to one report, by June 2015, China accounted for around 95% of all reclaimed land in the Spratlys, which is more than 1500 football fields (Lubold 2015; Marcus 2015). These actions are now seen as even more illegitimate in the wake of an international tribunal ruling declaring these activities as essentially illegal. But within China, the response has been increasingly defiant, with Beijing insisting the ruling is 'nothing more than a piece of paper' and that it will consider 'all necessary measures'—an allusion to the potential use of force—to defend its SCS claims (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC 2016; China Daily 2016). Such measures have already included the start of 'regular' nuclear-capable H-6 K bomber flights over the SCS airspace within a week of the tribunal ruling (Huaxia 2016).

In highlighting some of the more notable cases, the aim is not to cast aspersions on the aims or legitimacy of Chinese actions in its maritime periphery. From the Chinese perspective, such behaviour is not necessarily assertive since by increasing Chinese physical presence in these contested maritime spaces, Beijing is only doing what it should do to better protect the country's sovereignty and territorial integrity. China's foreign ministry is quick to remind international audiences that the PRC is only merely catching up on activities that had long been practised by other claimants, or that other claimants had first acted in ways that are equally, if not more, 'unconstructive' (e.g. Philippines' unilateral referral of its SCS claims to a UN tribunal). But the point here is not whether China has the right to pursue such actions; rather it is that China believes it has that right and that this belief is leading to more tenacious efforts in asserting its maritime claims.

In other areas, however, this assertiveness is replaced by a more beneficent and collaborative approach in China's regional diplomacy (i.e. 'softening the soft'). Under Xi, Beijing has been exercising a sophisticated economic statecraft that is keen to display a China that is more willing to extend the benefits of its growth to its neighbours. As opposed to its territorial interests, Beijing sees more room for flexibility and inclusion in its regional economic interests. To this end, the Xi government has been active in promoting and implementing a number of major politico-economic initiatives. The centrepiece has arguably been the ambitious 'One Belt, One Road' (1B1R) plan that seeks to revive and modernize the historical overland and maritime Silk routes. The objective, with China as the focal point, is to better connect the economies and peoples along these trans-regional spaces, enhancing interregional trade, investment and infrastructure. To facilitate this goal, in November 2014, China established the US\$40 billion Silk Road Fund to provide financing for related 1B1R regional and country projects (Zheng and Lye 2015). The seriousness in which Beijing treats its 1B1R plan is evinced by the specific creation of a supra-ministerial committee, the Leading Group for the Construction of the One Belt, One Road, to oversee the implementation (Lei 2015). More than 50 countries have agreed to participate and are 'ready to align their respective development schemes' with the 1B1R initiative, Beijing has claimed (Wang Yi 2015).

Another Chinese initiative that has attracted considerable interest is the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), which is seen to be part of, or complementing, the 1B1R plan. First proposed by Xi in October 2013 in Jakarta, and later concretized in June 2015 when 50 prospective founding members (PFM) signed the Articles of Agreement, the China-led AIIB (with a capitalization of US\$100 billion) is envisioned to provide much needed capital for regional infrastructure and development needs. The establishment of this new institution is notable for its success in attracting 37 regional PFMs, including countries like Philippines and Vietnam which have seen troubled relations with China in recent years; as well as 20 extra-regional PFMs that include American allies like the UK, Israel and Germany, despite palpable US pressure to shun the institution (Aiyar 2015). Chinese scholars credit this success to the apparent lure of the softer aspects of China's regional strategy.

This softer face is also seen, to some degree, in specific relationships in China's regional diplomacy, including the China-ASEAN relationship. In part counter-intuitive because there have been more tensions in China's

relations with ASEAN (and some ASEAN states) because of the SCS territorial disputes, it is also logical because the problems in these relationships lend greater incentive for Beijing to use other means to influence the cost–benefit calculus of ASEAN governments. Hence Beijing has stated that Sino-ASEAN relations now represent the ‘priority direction’ in China’s regional policy, with the aim of elevating the previous ‘golden’ relationship to a ‘diamond’ partnership for the next decade (Yan 2013; Chen et al. 2014). More concretely, the Xi government has (i) agreed to upgrade the existing China–ASEAN Free Trade Agreement; (ii) pushed for the signing of an ambitious treaty on good-neighbourliness and friendship that seeks ‘an institutional framework and legal guarantee for peaceful co-existence between the two sides’; (iii) intensified efforts on concluding the China-centric trade pact, the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP); (iv) begun widening the scope for bilateral currency swaps in ASEAN countries; (v) enlarged the China–ASEAN Investment Cooperation Fund by another US\$3 billion dollars and (vi) stepped up its preferential loans to ASEAN states, including pledging an additional US\$20 billion for regional connectivity projects and US\$480 million for poverty reduction causes (Yang 2014).

It should be pointed out that this more beneficent regional economic statecraft is not unconnected to the perceived benefits for China’s own development and big power aspiration. These might include helping China to obtain a larger voice in shaping the regional order; better address the issues of the structural reforms and overcapacity of the Chinese economy by opening up foreign markets and production bases; spur the growth of its lesser developed western and interior provinces; diversify its capital outflow destinations as well as better utilize its burgeoning reserves; and promote greater internationalization of the RMB (Li 2015). Yet while important, these interests clearly encompass more leeway for elasticity and negotiation; foreign minister Wang Yi has indicated as much. Referencing Chinese regional economic interests, he insisted that China should ‘never solely seek profits and haggle over the gains’ (Pei and Wang 2013).

## CONCLUSION

The security order in the Asia-Pacific is undergoing a marked recalibration. The evolving consequences suggest an order that is moving away from older patterns but has yet to consolidate into more stable configurations, as well as an order shaped by increasing multiple sources of change.



This chapter has tried to tease out China's role as part of and in driving this change, drawing attention to its brand of flexible assertiveness diplomacy. The calibrations in Chinese regional strategy have been both a matter of degree and scope: One, a *more* assertive component towards the core interests combined with a *more* beneficent policy towards relative secondary interests; and two, a wider regional application of a strategy typically associated with China's approach towards Taiwan. Indeed, there has been an emerging narrative on the utility of the flexible assertiveness approach within China, supported by related discussions of a more proactive Chinese diplomacy and the 'bottom line' in Chinese foreign policy.

This flexible assertiveness strategy should not be seen as comprehensively explaining specific cases of Chinese regional actions. For example, a range of other contingent considerations also account for why Beijing has decided to unilaterally declare an ADIZ in the East China Sea, or move its HYSY-981 oil rig, accompanied by a large paramilitary fleet, to waters near the disputed Parcel Islands in the SCS. Yet, seen in the broader context of a more conditioned form of foreign policy assertiveness, these actions become less surprising because Beijing is likely to act more robustly or respond in an uncompromising way, whenever it perceives threats concerning its core interests.

What might be some reasons for exercising such a regional strategy? Beyond the basic logic of enhancing incentives for neighbouring states to cooperate with China while heightening the costs for working against vital Chinese interests, a number of rationales have been cited by Chinese analysts. First, flexible assertiveness is seen to be effective in managing the territorial question of Taiwan. *Ergo*, the same 'solution' could be extended to the PRC's broader regional diplomacy, which is similarly confronting challenges to its maritime sovereignty. Second, in the wake of the US rebalance to Asia which is perceived to create a more threatening environment for China's security, it behoves Beijing to adopt a more nimble regional approach that both advances China's 'dream' of national rejuvenation as well as protects its legitimate interests and rights. Third, the global balance of power is perceived to be shifting increasingly in China's favour. And while China will not pursue regional hegemony, there is little reason why China should not be vigorous or 'bold' in defending its rightful interests, especially since its capacity to do so is growing. At the same time, China's economic muscle is its most influential advantage and should be leveraged more purposefully. Fourth, there is a need to find a balance between, on the one hand, meeting rising domestic expectations to better safeguard China's

territorial interests, and on the other, addressing growing international expectations for China to play a bigger contributory role in the region.

The jury is still out on whether the flexible assertiveness strategy will enable China to achieve its main goal of rising peacefully. While Beijing believes its muscular posture towards its territorial claims will enable it to better protect these interests, the kinetics of a security dilemma—where what one perceives to be a defensive, self-help action is seen by others as a concomitant reduction in their security—may well result in an overall more destabilizing regional environment that will be less conducive for China's continued growth (Hoo 2016). Indeed, several regional states are disquieted by this stronger face of Chinese diplomacy and have been receptive to the overtures of the American rebalance or stepped up their strategic engagement of the USA. At the same time, China's more generous economic statecraft has yet to fully alleviate regional uncertainty (distrust, in some cases) of its longer term intentions. All these could be interpreted as part of China's larger and sometimes difficult 'bargaining' process with international society as it rises (He and Feng 2014).

Prominent Chinese scholar Yan Xuetong (2014) is confident, however, that China will have increasing sway over this bargaining. As he notes:

In the future, China will decisively favor those who side with it with economic benefits and even security protections. On the contrary, those who are hostile to China will face much more sustained policies of sanctions and isolation.

Perhaps that future is already here.

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**Hoo Tiang Boon** is Assistant Professor with the China Programme and Coordinator of the M.Sc. (Asian Studies) Programme at the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore. His latest book is *Chinese Foreign Policy under Xi* (ed.) (2017) and his articles have appeared in several international journals, including the *Journal of Strategic Studies*, *Asian Security* and *Journal of Contemporary China*.



# The Emerging Security Landscape in the Asia-Pacific: Where ASEAN Fits Between the United States and China

*Xiaoming Huang*

## THE POST-COLD WAR NEW SECURITY MOVEMENT: COMMUNITY BUILDING AND MULTILATERAL PLATFORMS

The security landscape in the Asia-Pacific has seen visible change in the past few years. On the surface, the end of the Cold War in the Asia-Pacific was not as drastic and abrupt as it was in Europe. The old sources of security concern were still there: the inter-Korean tensions, cross-strait relations, post-conflict Indochina; and key stakeholders and players capable of exerting significant security influence in the region were still the same, the United States, China, and their allies and partners. Over time, however, we have seen significant shifts in the region's security relations. Indochina was brought into ASEAN; Beijing and Taipei gradually moved into rapprochement; the two Koreas held summits among themselves in 2000 and 2007; and Japan and China were looking to joining hands for greater East Asian cooperation.<sup>1</sup> More significantly, ASEAN and China, the primary security concern to ASEAN during the Cold War, outreached to each other. China's rapidly transformed relations with ASEAN became a catalyst

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X. Huang (✉)

Victoria University of Wellington, Wellington, New Zealand

in the development of ASEAN-centred multilateral platforms for tension reduction, confidence building, security enhancement, economic cooperation and indeed community building: the ASEAN Regional Forum (1994), ASEAN Plus Three (1997), and East Asian Summit (2005), CSCAP (1992), ADMM Plus (2010) and so on.

At a deeper level, the post-Cold War developments seemed to suggest a profound shift in our thinking of the nature of international security in the Asia-Pacific and the causes for conflicts and tensions and therefore paths to sustainable security; and consequently shift in the practice of countries in the region in approaching and conducting security matters. This shift, or the underlying logic of the post-Cold War international relations in the region, has been clearly articulated, with a mixture of celebration and promotion, by some of our leading writers in this field.<sup>2</sup> The idea of “new security,” “security community,” “cooperative security,” or “common security,” is built possibly on a particular reading of the new post-Cold War international relation in the Asia-Pacific. First, the end of the Cold War suggested the diminishing of the Communist threat to ASEAN from the North. Without security threats, and, consequently, with no clearly identifiable enemies, the conventional security arrangements and strategy lost their justification and left security interests and relations open for redefinition. Second, as an overall approach to regional security, it is important that a sense of community can develop in which we can identify with each other for common security interests and develop effective institutional mechanisms to ensure the development of common interests and the “instrumental and normative” (Alagappa 2003) effects on countries’ behaviour and policy.

The new security theory and practice in some way is connected to the idea that the new security is moving beyond “traditional” security, and that non-conventional security issues can be a basis for shared, common security interests. Non-traditional security issues, human security, transnational security, have been and will continue to be an important part of the security landscape in the Asia-Pacific. The cooperative and common security theory and practice is also connected with the idea that “it’s the economy, stupid.” As the hard core, Cold War security issues became increasingly elusive, trade and investment issues started to dominate regional politics and international relations. Tangible achievements in regional community building and in the development of multilateral institutions are seen largely in the areas of trade and investment.

There is a possibility that beyond the broadening and expansion of the scope of “security,” the new security theory and practice is indeed a different security concept that informs an alternative approach and strategy to security. It is about a more effective method, strategy and institutional arrangement for regional security. Analysts of Asian security noticed the two different security orders and potentially the tension between them. G. John Ikenberry and Jitsuo Tsuchiyama noted, for example, two alternative security orders, “an order based on balance is one where the power of the leading state is counterbalanced by other states,” and “a community-based security order is one where binding security institutions and shared political interests and values exist to shape and limit how power can be exercised.” While they insisted “the prevailing security order in the Asia-Pacific region at the time is a mixture of bilateral alliances, multilateral dialogues and ad hoc diplomacy... this messy and layered regional order is somewhere between a balance-of-power and community based system,” (Ikenberry and Tsuchiyama 2002, p. 72, p. 90). While challenging the precise nature of the regional security order in the Asia-Pacific, Acharya Amitav and See Seng Tan share with Ikenberry and Tsuchiyama on the two alternative security orders, one based on balance of power and one based on community (Acharya and Tan 2005).

One key feature that defined the security structure in the region during the Cold War is the “hub and spokes” alliance system on both sides of the crescent<sup>3</sup> that separates the Asia-Pacific into mainland East Asia and maritime East Asia. There is a great amount of literature on the US-centred “hub and spokes” alliance system during the Cold War in the Asia-Pacific (see for example, Ikenberry 2004, For this in the post-Cold War era, see Cha 2010, 2011; Zhao 2012; Ott and Ngo 2014; Åberg and Novak 2014). It is a multilateral structure built on formal bilateral alliances of the United States with Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, South Vietnam, the Philippines, Thailand and Australia. While there is less attention to a similar system on mainland East Asia, there was a kind of the “hub and spoke” alliance system in action on the other side of the Cold War divide as well. The hub in this system though was a bit more complicated than that in the case of the US-centred one. The USSR was the hegemonic power dominating the system, with China having a strong desire to form a “hub” on its own. China had formal alliance with North Korea, North Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos; and USSR had the same with all of them as well. Regardless of the circumstances, the method used was similar: with a clear security threat and enemies, China and USSR developed a bilaterally organized collective force in Asia as the primary platform for security in the region.

The new security theory and practice however rely on multilateral institutions and an envisaged security community to nurture common security interests and to influence, if not regulate, the countries' security policy and practice. This difference in approaching and strategizing security is shown no more clearly than in the claimed successful coaching of China into multilateralism in the Asia-Pacific, which is much evidenced, substantiated in China's transformed relations with ASEAN. Significantly, China's relations with ASEAN is a core element in the building of the regional security community and the working of the multilateral institutions for regional security. It is a cornerstone of the new security landscape in the Asia-Pacific.

Seen in this framework, of these two contending approaches to regional security, we have a better understanding of the problem of international security in the Asia-Pacific. Perhaps, the post-Cold War security "landscape" was yet to take shape in full in the early years of the post-Cold War when a great enthusiasm for a new security thinking and approach found great room to develop. At least, it was not clear whether the new security movement in the Asia-Pacific then was aimed to broaden our thinking of the logic of regional security, or to seek alternative approaches, platforms and strategies for regional security in the post-Cold War Asia-Pacific.

### THE US PIVOT TO ASIA AND CHINA'S "SECURITY THROUGH FORCE" IN MARITIME EAST ASIA

Two sets of major developments in recent years can probably help us to ponder the precise nature of the problem of regional security in East Asia, its logic and required instruments. The first is the United States' fallback to its traditional methods and platforms for international security in the Asia-Pacific and the second is China's hardening on its approach to traditional security issues in maritime East Asia. It is a huge point of debate whether these two are related,<sup>4</sup> or whether they constituted a qualitative change in the regional security environment. But their implications for the issues we are concerned with here are clear and significant.

The purpose and effect of the US pivot to Asia has been a point of debate from the very beginning (see Campbell and Andrews 2013; Ross 2012; Lieberthal 2014; Chen 2013; Economy et al. 2013). Whether claimed or accused, the US pivot to Asia is said to rebalance its global priorities and structure of resources deployment to make up the "strategic

deficit” in Asia it has accumulated over the years since the end of the Cold War. It is also said to be a strategy aimed at containing China. It is accordingly a strategic posture on “two legs”: a deployment of 60% of its global forces to Asia and a TPP without China (nor ASEAN). These may all well be true—we can easily gather and interpret evidence in support. Beyond the surface of conflicting claims, clarifications and accusations, however, one thing seems to be clear that the US pivot to Asia is a “rearrangement” of its strategy posture and required resources structure<sup>5</sup> in Asia as part of the “rebalancing” of its global priorities, commitments and resources 20 years after the end of the Cold War. This is not unprecedented in US international policy. A brief revisit to the Nixon Doctrine in 1969, 20 years after the end of World War II, will see the larger picture.<sup>6</sup> The Nixon Doctrine and the US pivot to Asia seem quite opposite in proposing whether and how much the United States should be fully committed to Asia. But in “rebalancing” the United States’ global priorities, commitments and operational arrangements and what they mean for Asia, they are almost the same: while the United States rationally rationalizes its global leadership, commitments and resource requirements, it shifts more responsibilities to its allies and partners in the regions.

In a way, it seems natural that the United States revitalizes its alliances as a core element for its security order in the Asia-Pacific. The hub and spoke alliance system is more effective; institutionally more flexible, compared to multilateral platforms, or even the more formal collective security arrangements such as NATO.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, the US alliance system has worked before, therefore requires less investment to make it work again. The updated and perhaps more sophisticated alliance arrangements that emerged under the US pivot to Asia sees more of a “partnership” of the United States with its core allies in the region: Japan, Australia and a set of mutual assistance relationships with countries such as South Korea, the Philippines, Singapore and others. The first-tier allies have great stakes in the shaping of regional security and are capable of sharing responsibilities and providing substantive material, political and policy contributions to regional security order. They are partners in policy planning and coordination, forces collaboration and synchronization, and commitment to the regional security order. The second-tier alliances are more for providing resources and facilities in the resources structure.

China came out of the Cold War in East Asia with the complete collapse, not just the loss of their relevancy as in the case of the US-led one, of its Cold War alliance “system.” Vietnam had war with China in 1979;

North Korea decided to go its own way since 1992 when South Korea normalized its relations with China. Politics in Myanmar and Cambodia made China's alliance with them unable to be real and effective, or useful. China broke with the Soviet Union in the 1960s, long before the current post-Cold War security landscape shaped up in East Asia. Even the quasi-alliance between China, Japan and the United States in the 1970s and 1980s was no longer relevant once the Soviet Union was gone. As commented by East Asia watchers, looking around Asia 20 years after the Cold War, China seems to have no single ally in the region. There are different reasons in each case for why China lost its allies, but it is beyond doubt that China has not taken its Cold War assets seriously and has not made efforts to transform its Cold War alliance of mutual assistance into political capital and strategic assets for regional security, as the US pivot to Asia seems to have achieved. In fact, it has constantly complained about the United States' "Cold War mentality" in revitalizing its alliance system.

At a more profound level, there is the matter of China's overall reading of the evolving problem of international security in the post-Cold War Asia-Pacific and consequently its conviction of the most appropriate methods, platforms and strategy to achieve a regional security order. There is a large literature on how China has transformed itself since the end of the Cold War and embraced the ideas and initiatives of multilateralism, cooperative security and regional security community (Wu 2007; Wang 2000; Gill 2004; Wuthnow et al. 2012).<sup>8</sup> China engaged with and contributed to ARF, CSCAP, ADMM Plus and the Shangri La Dialogue in more recent years, along with China's active, and an almost leading role in APEC, ASEAN Plus 3 and EAS. This seems in tune with the policy makers' vision of China's overall international posture of *tao-guan-yang-hui*.<sup>9</sup> One can argue whether this is an intentional strategy or a short-term tactics of a rising power (Goldstein 2003; Zhao 2013). but all of these led China to invest more in multilateral engagement and promoting cooperative security.

China's enthusiasm and active participation in multilateral platforms, however, has two built-in stoppers. First, the collective bargaining and hence constraining power of multilateral institutions always works in favour of smaller countries. This implication is true for China as well as for the United States. There are different methods for major powers to go around the power of multilateral institutions: either to make multilateral institutions less "institutionalized" and therefore less effective in constraining in the first place (e.g. soft, or Asian regionalism), or to seek

alternative arrangements such as the hub and spoke alliance system. China seems to be comfortable with the ASEAN way, or soft/Asian regionalism it has found itself in, but has no alternative arrangements to fall back on. Second, for multilateral institutions to be effective and useful, it must be built on common security interests. However, it is rare that common interests can arise over traditional security issues among the members.

Traditional security issues, however, die hard. Increasingly, China has found itself in conflict-prone situations over traditional security issues with Japan, Vietnam, the Philippines and India, and many others where issues are there but have not inflated into “conflict” at the moment: Korea, Taiwan. The ASEAN security community has over the decades accumulated rich experience in how multilateral platforms manage traditional security issues among its members. In some way, compromise between national interests on traditional security issues and multilateral institutions in promoting collective interests and solutions shaped significantly the unique ASEAN way (Acharya 2001; Narine 2002; Johnston 2003). Traditional security issues among stakeholders in larger multilateral platforms for regional security, such as the AFR, the Shangri La Dialogue, ADMM Plus and the EAS, put the ASEAN way in real test. Whether these issues can be and should be dealt with through multilateral platforms is not that convincingly clear, at least to China.

While China has kept itself relevant to the multilateral processes and platforms, it does not see that the multilateral institutions have established themselves as effective or even credible institutions operating on common security interests. This is perhaps being exacerbated more so by the effects of the US pivot to Asia engaging with the multilateral platforms in the emergent alliance arrangements. When China sees Japan declared at the Shangri La Dialogue this year that the “US–Japan alliance is the cornerstone for regional peace and security” and “Taking our alliance with the United States as the foundation and respecting our partnership with ASEAN...,” it must have wondered whether this is turning the Shangri La Dialogue into a platform for dialogue and to forge common security interests, or a platform for security alliance and making it part of the security order. This seems not a trivial question for China. This is a key point of rationale for China to have embraced multilateralism, common security and security community.

China of course is not sitting idle waiting to be incorporated into the emergent security order. The developments of the past several years or so must have led China to rethink some aspects of the new security theory

and concepts, and the interpretations of the security structure and dynamics that have been popular among those in some parts of the public policy sector in China and influencing China's shift towards multilateralism and security community in recent years. It perhaps added to China's long suspicion that the gun and money matter in international relations, and institutions are man-made rules to shape others. It must have led China to consider a wider range of different methods and platforms for international security in the region.

More specifically, the limits in China's institutional resources in pursuing regional security interests and the lack of traditional allies to fall back on, will move China to further rely on its economic means and ways to shape regional order and hopefully to reduce the tensions arising from the traditional security issues. This includes deepening of economic relations with countries in the region, more investment and more innovative forms of trade, financing and people's movement, connecting them directly to economic growth and social development of countries in the region. The current state of the Chinese economy requires and enables this in the Asia-Pacific. We have seen China intensify its move in that direction, and rapid development and progress on China-ASEAN FTA upgrading, the trans-Asia railway system, the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), the China-HK-Taiwan FTA areas, Japan-Korea-China FTA areas, RCEP (TPP) leading towards a FTAAP. There is potentially space for some forms of economic collaboration in South China Sea, and East Sea. This perhaps is a modern-day instance of Kant's idea of "trade to peace" in action.<sup>10</sup>

Facing significant difficulties, costs and risks in developing a China-friendly security environment in its East and Southeast oceanic front and with dubious returns from its political investment in the new, multilateral security community, China is broadening its strategic horizon, taking countries on its North (Eurasia, Russia), Central Asia (Shanghai Cooperation Organization, CICA), West (India, Pakistan and Afghanistan), and Southwest (India-Bangladeshi-Myanmar-China corridor) fronts for a more comprehensive "security environment" where security pressure on the East and southeast front can be lessened, risks can be neutralized, and assets and political capital can be utilized across a wider spectrum of countries, relations, stakes and assets.

Finally, China "demanded" the United States to give up its Cold War thinking and alliance-based platform for regional security. It doesn't seem to have had any effect. China might as well think, in the long term, how to develop "allies" of its own for security in the region in the twenty-first



century. More importantly, China has learnt some lessons from its past experience of building alliances, shall invest in strategic relations, institutionalize partnership, and develop a sense of interests as well as purpose and values. This indeed is an important part of the process of China becoming a world power.

### ASEAN AND THE EMERGENT SECURITY LANDSCAPE

Now how ASEAN fits in all of this? More specially, what these great power dynamics mean for ASEAN? In particular, if there are shifts in the regional security landscape where both multilateral institutions and alliance structures are employed to bringing about and maintaining peace and security in the region, and where both the United States and China are seeking more effective arrangements and platforms to protect, promote and advance their security interests in the region? The first part of the question is relatively easy. The existing literature speaks volumes on the role of ASEAN in great power politics, particularly between China and the United States, and between China and Japan (see for example Cronin and Zhou 2014; Wong 2007; Dent 2008). In an ideally constructed power structure in the region—Southeast Asia, Northeast Asia and external powers, ASEAN, as a collective entity standing for Southeast Asia, is an important player in power politics itself. In reality, for ASEAN to be an effective player, it requires ASEAN to be able to act as a unitary entity itself, with definable common interests as well as the capacity to shape interests and relations.

On each of these counts, however, ASEAN is insufficient. ASEAN does not have a common interest on some key critical issues (maritime security or territory disputes for example). ASEAN doesn't have the capacity to advance its interests and agenda. ASEAN's GDP collectively was about 20% of China's in 2013,<sup>11</sup> changing from 87% in 1990, 175% of Japan's (46%), 33% of the United States' (19%). Its annual gross capital formation collectively is about 20% of China's (from 87% in 1990), 175% of Japan's (47%), 53% of the United States'(28%); ASEAN's total consumption is 49% of China's (from 116% in 1990), 102% of Japan's (51%) and 27% of the United States' (17%); its total export is 67% of China's (from 292% in 1990), 506% of Japan's (200%), 140% of the United States' (89%), and import is 70% of China's (from 368% in 1990), 387% of Japan's (226%) and 110% of the United States' (80%). There are trends increasingly not to take ASEAN collectively as a stakeholder in regional politics and

economy. TPP, the Asian Pacific Community of Kevin Rod, and the East Asian Community of Yukio Hatoyama, and China's well-known position of not approaching territory issues with ASEAN as a collective body, are just some of the evidences. Even with the current programme of the ASEAN community and integration, it would still be miles away for ASEAN to be an effective player in regional power politics. Conversely, power politics between the United States and China is hardly aimed at ASEAN as a party to their great power politics.

ASEAN can then be seen as a “balancer” in the classical balance of power scenario. This seems to better depict ASEAN's role, reflecting its historical experience and position in the strategic structure. Precisely because of ASEAN's much smaller stakes and capacity, ASEAN can play a balancer's role. ASEAN's practice in regional security since the Cold War has been a balancer between two major powers, China and the United States, and between China and Japan, at least that's so often narrated. The balancer is not of equal distance from the contending great powers. A balancer rather dynamically maintains the balance of power with neither of the major powers to dominate over the other. In this regard, in both Beijing and Washington, there is always an ambivalent feeling about ASEAN, particularly some of its leading members, with hate and love, so to speak.

The ability to play a balancer role between the major powers is the foundation of the ASEAN's centrality and this has worked well in an unstructured geopolitical environment. It does not work well in a geopolitical environment where an alliance system dictates. For a period of time, South Korea, under Roh Moo-hyun's presidency, once declared it wanted to be a balancer in East Asia, presumably between China and Japan, and between China, and the United States/Japan (Kim 2005; Pastreich 2005). In reality, this has proven to be a difficult task—not least because of South Korea's unsettling alliance with the United States and Japan which left little room for it to be a balancer. The working of an alliance system exerts pressure on related countries to take sides. If ASEAN is not taken into the alliance system, individual ASEAN member states are. To be an effective balancer, one will need potentially to be able to balance its asymmetric relations with the major powers in a hope to neutralize each other. The purpose of balancing through a balancer is for an equilibrium among the powers so that the balancer will be indispensable for either power's strategic arrangements and deployment. As history teaches us, the more great powers involved, the much easier for the balancer to play. In the

setting of two major opposing powers, the chance is higher that the balancer can play but also be played with.

It is here that much of the recent shifts in the regional security landscape become relevant. These shifts confirmed the United States' long-held lack of confidence in the role of multilateral institutions for regional security in Asia. If this was unclear or ambivalent in the early post-Cold War years, the movements around the US pivot to Asia have been made clear and firm. The preferred and assumingly the most effective platform for the United States in international security in the Asian Pacific is the hub and spoke alliance system.

The above has two implications for ASEAN and its role in regional security. First, the realignment of the strategic relations in the region under the US pivot to Asia reduced the number of great powers for ASEAN to play with as a balancer. ASEAN could have potentially played with not just the United States, China, but also Japan, Australia, India with which ASEAN can find more room to act and have influence on the shaping and direction of the balance of power and thus regional security. Policy debates and political discourse and narratives however have effectively shaped ASEAN's strategic relations into the narrow two great power scenarios. The US pivot to Asia has formally realigned Japan, Australia and the United States into a coordinated group in regional security. This significantly limits the strategic choices and options ASEAN has been able to exploit in the past. Second, the strategic realignment under the US pivot to Asia does not take ASEAN as a collective entity, as it is primarily a network of bilateral arrangements, some of which are involved with some individual ASEAN members. The same is seen in the economic and trade area where TPP or the Asia-Pacific Community cut through the ASEAN members. This has further marginalized the role of ASEAN.

The shifts in the regional security landscape have also reinforced, if not revitalized, China's long-held ambivalence of the role of multilateral institutions in regional security. Over the years, China has built up and invested significantly in multilateral institutions for regional security, as well as in regional economic cooperation and integration, hoping these multilateral institutions can be a platform for China's voices to be heard, and views understood, given that misunderstandings and the lack of trust and confidence are a major source of security tensions; and a process or a platform where countries' interests and motivations can be reshaped—a sign of strong influence of the new strategic thinking and new security concept.

China however has never taken an underlying dimension of the multilateral institutions seriously that smaller and weaker countries rely on multilateral institutions as devices of collective power of bargaining and constraining to influence major powers and therefore the shaping of the large strategic structure. In Beijing's view, China has intensified disputes and conflicts on traditional security issues in South China Seas. There have been efforts to pressure China to take ASEAN on collectively in solving these issues. The revitalizing and upgrading of the alliance system under the US pivot to Asia has effected to influence regional multilateral platforms and connect security issues across East, Southeast and South Asia into a regional security order. All of these must have led China to rethink its interests in regional security, as well as most effective strategy and platform for their security.

ASEAN comes right in the heart of China's adjusting/upgrading in its security thinking and responding to the rapidly evolving security environment in the region. First, ASEAN will continue to be a very important partner and the ASEAN-centred regional processes and platforms will continue to be important for China's reaching out to the region, confidence and trust building, particularly with countries in Southeast Asia. However, there is always a question of the value of ASEAN for China's interests and efforts in the region. Because of the historically close nexus between ASEAN, multilateral institutions in the region, China's post-Cold War transformation in the regional security setting, and increasingly the great power politics in the region, China will be more careful not to let itself to be forced into an "ASEAN trap" it has been trying to avoid: that to deal with traditional security issues with individual countries through the collective power of ASEAN; not to allow security issues to be connected across the wider Asia-Pacific region where Japan and ASEAN could possibly join hands, and where China can find itself forced into the jurisdiction of a collective body such the EAS; and not to allow itself to be played into the hands of the balancer in the larger great power politics.

Second, ASEAN members, ASEAN and ASEAN-centred multilateral processes and institutions are to be more clearly separated in China's regional policy thinking and activity. Material substance in China's relations with ASEAN is relatively weak in comparison with China's relations with other parts of the world, or even with other parts of the Asia-Pacific. There are more of asymmetry in size and benefit. China will probably continue to expand its relations with ASEAN. When the multilateral institu-

tions and platforms become ineffective and unfavourable, China has no alliance system to fall back on, economic activities, relations and projects seem to be a way to move forward. On the other hand, more efforts by China are expected to invest diversely in the institutional infrastructure for regional security, and economic cooperation and integration. In tune with the large trend in the region to approach regional institutional building in a bottom-up and piecemeal fashion,<sup>12</sup> this will see China build regional frameworks and platforms in more manageable sub-regional blocs such as the greater China area (CEA ECPA); mainland East Asia (Korea and greater China); Northeast Asia (Japan, Korea and China); Eurasia (Russia and Central Asia-SOC, CICA, the New Silk Road); South Asia; BCIM Economic Corridor; Indochina (Trans-Asian Railway; Greater Mekong Sub-region).

While dealing with matters and relations in Southeast Asia becoming increasingly complicated for China, China will probably focus on cultivating relations with individual ASEAN countries. ASEAN is striking to achieve economic, political and social integration by 2015. But in reality, ASEAN countries have significant differences in the levels of economic development, security interests and national politics and policy, to form a formidable collective presence in the regional security structure. Many of the countries are more “integrated” with China, Japan or the United States than with one another themselves in economics, politics and/or security matters. As the layers of alliances, partners and friends in the emergent new alliance system become more sophisticated, China will find it more effective in setting out relations with countries directly in the region.

Consequently, China will see ASEAN as one of the platforms in its broad security agenda and vision, and the ASEAN-centred processes and platforms will be but one of many for China, given the limits and complications that China sees in their function and utilities. This goes directly to affect the basis of ASEAN-centrality. Moreover, not only the emergent strategic landscape will complicate and perhaps compromise the role of ASEAN and ASEAN-centred multilateral processes and frameworks; the emergent strategic and security landscape itself is dynamic, and part of the evolving global strategic and security structure. The US–China relations of the twenty-first century is often seen as a rising power challenging the hegemonic power, into which perspective, the narratives of the US pivot to Asia and China’s more assertive posture seeking status, power and influence in the region fit well.

However, US–China strategic relations could well be a normal instance of great power politics in modern international relations. There has been quite a discernible pattern of rhythm in US–China strategic and political relations over the twentieth century, effected by developments in the global strategic structure. One could only go back as far as to World War II where the United States aligned with a much weaker China then in its global military and geopolitical campaign against the Japanese. In the 1970s and 1980s, the strategic competition between the United States and USSR pushed the two fellows of different dreams, the United States and PRC, into the same bed. In more recent times, in the aftermaths of the 9/11 in the 2000s, China and the United States seem to be able to tolerate, if not accept, each other’s role in the global geopolitical structure.

It is not unthinkable that, with the increasingly unruly global security challenge in the Middle East, which is intensified with the ISIS taking its shape, and in East Europe, with Russia reclaiming its role in the global and regional geopolitical structure, the United States may finally accept “the new type great power relationship” with China, paving the way for their working together to root out the Islamic extremism as a primary global security threat. It may sound like each time it was a marriage of convenience. But in a broad historical perspective, China has come out of the strategic partnership much stronger each time in terms of its position in the relationship and in its stakes and influence in the global strategic structure. Moreover, each time, there was also a set of smaller players associated with the relations effected and often comprised. This large, global security dynamics and structure fundamentally limit the strategic choices of ASEAN and the basis upon which ASEAN can play a balancer role in regional security. It also spells out a much smaller space for ASEAN to hedge for the continual shaping of power balance in the region.

## CONCLUSION

This chapter has examined the significant shifts in the security landscape in the Asia-Pacific, particularly how the great power politics between the United States and China affect the role of ASEAN and ASEAN-centred multilateral processes and platforms. The US pivot to Asia and China’s taking more traditional *realpolitik* approach to security issues in the region reflect an ambivalent view of both the United States and China over the role of ASEAN-centred multilateral processes and platforms for regional security and for the potential security scenarios in the years to come. These

shifts have seen the more traditional, but upgraded, bilateral alliance system to revitalize for the United States; and management of security issues through bilateral frameworks and mechanisms in *realpolitik* as China insists.

This diversification in the processes, mechanisms and platforms for regional security and the new strategic posture of the United States and China, have “shrunk” the institutional and material basis for ASEAN to be effective in the shaping of regional security. The US–China relations are first and foremost global and structural, and great power politics in the global structure defines the parameters on the regional security structure, and the role of various stakeholders. The space for ASEAN to an effective balancer is more limited than many have thought.

This does require a more realistic thinking on the position and thus the role of ASEAN in international security in the region. There are several areas where ASEAN can invest to retain or enhance its role in regional security. First, a more substantive material basis needs to develop for ASEAN itself as a stakeholder in regional security. ASEAN’s political, economic integration and community building therefore is critically important. One needs to play a role from strengths and for a coherent set of interests. Second, rich, deep and solid material relations are built with China, the United States, Japan, Australia, India and others. Strong and rich material basis for the bilateral relations serves as a stabilizing force for the relations to sustain structural shifts that take place from time to time. More numbers of great powers involved provide a better security environment for ASEAN as it diffuses the power of the powers and increases the costs, material and institutional, of structural shifts in great power politics for the powers themselves. Third, there is an art of playing power politics by smaller players. Neutrality and equal distance do not provide the same set of benefits of stability and security for small players. ASEAN-centrality needs the support of neutrality. Equal distance or even “leaning to one side” limits its capacity and influence, and weakens the trust it has built with the parties, which is essential for any ASEAN-centred multilateral institutions to be effective.

## NOTES

1. The late 2010s appeared to be a time when internal politics in Japan was yet to settle between two different visions of Japan’s move to become a normal state: one through Japan working with China for a greater East Asian economic integration and cooperation and the other through Japan working with the United States for an Asia-Pacific political and economic

community. Japan under then Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama proposed a Japan–China–Korea FTA in 2009, a major policy initiative on the part of Japan to work with China and Korea for an East Asian economic community.

2. Amitav Acharya and Muthiah Alagappa, for examples, have significantly influenced the shaping of the whole paradigm of analysing and explaining Asian security as a problem of institution, ideas, norms, identity and community building (see Alagappa 2003; Acharya 2001, 2002; as well as some early seminal works, Acharya 1995, 1999).
3. A crucial area crescent shape that divides Northeast and Southeast Asia, and indeed defines the Cold War geopolitical landscape, a line along which we fought war in Korea, across the Taiwan Strait, and in Vietnam and broad Indochina, for much of the Cold War years.
4. See for example Justin Logan who argues “the main factor driving Washington’s interest in the region is the growing economic and military power of the People’s Republic of China,” (Logan 2013). On the other hand, Bonnie S. Glaser observes “the U.S. Asia ‘pivot’ has prompted Chinese anxiety about U.S. containment and heightened regional worries about intensified U.S.-China strategic competition” (Glaser 2012). See also (Zhu 2012).
5. Forces deployment; facilities and accesses; and allies and partners and their roles.
6. At the height of the Vietnam War in 1969, US President Nixon declared in Guam a major policy shift that the United States should maintain sufficient forces readiness for one major war in Europe and a half war anywhere else around the world, presumably in Asia where the half war means the United States shall consolidate its commitments to Asia, and instead, take the overall responsibilities but leave actual operations on the ground to local allies. “The Nixon Doctrine properly includes more than the declaratory policy orientation. As explained then, the Nixon Doctrine comprises ‘the revised worldwide security strategy of “1½ wars” and the new defence decision-making processes such as ‘fiscal guidance budgeting’” (Ravenal 1971, p. 201). Nixon Doctrine signalled the US retreat from its two-war readiness forward deployment and combat strategy and resources structure in the early decades of the Cold War, a scaling-down of commitments to Asia and the beginning of Vietnamization of the Vietnam War.
7. The hub-and-spoke alliance system is a network of bilateral alliances and is an alliance system. The large literature on “why there is no NATO in Asia” has an effect of leading people to think there was no alliance system in Asia. It is culture/identity that complicated institutional building or development of a NATO-like alliance system there (see Hemmer and Katzenstein 2002; Acharya 2005). There was no NATO in Asia, but there was an alli-



ance system that worked. This hub and spoke alliance system was not a result of the failure of a NATO in Asia and thus the function of local culture, norm and identity, but the success and effectiveness of US strategy and platform preferences at the time. As Victor Cha explains, “bilateralism emerged in East Asia as the dominant security structure because of the ‘powerplay’ rationale behind U.S. postwar planning in the region” (Cha 2010. Also He and Feng 2011).

8. Not only China considers itself an important part of the security community, it has in fact become a champion of the new security concept on its own terms. So much so China has reformulated much of the elements of cooperative security, security community and multilateralism into its own New Security Concept, and includes its efforts at ASEAN+3, ARF, SCO all as part of the working of the New Security Concept. It takes this to the Shangri La Dialogue and CICA (Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia) this year (see Thayer 2003; Cohen 2014; Tiezzi 2014).
9. Fareed Zakaria makes this Chinese phrase as [China] “kept its head down in an effort, as Deng put it, to ‘hide its light under a bushel.’ This policy of noninterference and nonconfrontation mostly persists” (Zakaria 2009, p. 105).
10. For Kant’s liberal peace thesis, see Buchan 2002; Hegre et al. 2010; and more broadly, Doyle 1983.
11. In PPP, 2011 current price, World Bank WDI data, the same with the rest of the data cited below.
12. The ineffective experiences of building regional institutions top down starting with mega giant platforms such as APEC, CSCAPE, ARF, EAS have led to the rapid development of smaller projects bottom up with bilateral alliances and regional groupings of small scope and membership: TPP, RCEP, hoping this might be a more effective way of building up into a large regional institution eventually into a FATAAP.

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**Xiaoming Huang** is Professor of International Relations at Victoria University of Wellington, and founding Director of the New Zealand Contemporary China Research Centre. His research focuses on Asian political economy and the politics and international relations of the Asia-Pacific. He teaches political science and international relations. He is the author of *Modern Economic Development in Japan and China* (Palgrave 2013) and *China and the International System* (Routledge 2013).

# ASEAN in the Era of Japan-China Tensions: Diplomatic Opportunities or Strategic Dilemmas?

*Takeshi Yuzawa*

## INTRODUCTION

The early twenty-first century has witnessed growing tensions between Japan and China. Despite deepening economic interdependence between the two countries for the past two decades, the bilateral relations have been increasingly dominated by prolonged disputes over territorial and historical issues. In the early 2010s, the level of the bilateral antagonism seemed to reach its highest point since the end of the Cold War as the two countries were unable to hold a bilateral summit despite the emergence of a new administration on both sides. For members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), tensions among major powers are not always an unwelcome phenomenon as they can provide greater diplomatic leeway and opportunities. Indeed, it is this continuing distrust and rivalry that has allowed smaller ASEAN states to assume the “driving seat” of regional institutions in East Asia, exemplified by their leading role in the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), the ASEAN Plus Three (APT), the East Asian Summit (EAS), and the ASEAN Defense Ministers Meeting Plus

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T. Yuzawa (✉)

Department of Global and Interdisciplinary Studies (GIS), Hosei University,  
Tokyo, Japan

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(ADMM-Plus) (Er 2012). These “ASEAN-centered” regional institutions are a symbol of ASEAN’s successful strategy of enmeshing all major powers in its own normative structures and thus provide ASEAN with a legitimate voice in the management of regional political, and security affairs in East Asia (Goh 2011b).

Yet, the growing power struggle between Japan and China over the South China Sea and ASEAN’s apparent disarray on the issue cast doubt on the continued validity of the above argument. A series of internal confusions over the issue of a joint statement on the South China Sea within ASEAN and ASEAN-led institutions seem to indicate that the Association’s power and influence over regional agenda-setting is on the wane, while the intrusion of the major powers into this prerogative task of ASEAN has become more evident. There is little doubt that this would inevitably undermine the credibility of ASEAN as the driving force for regional institution-building in East Asia.

Why has the risk of ASEAN’s disunity become more significant in recent years? What are the implications of growing strategic tensions between Japan and China for ASEAN? In order to address these questions, this chapter attempts to illuminate the nature, the causes and effects of the regional power struggle between Japan and China. The first section of this chapter looks at the major causes of bilateral friction that has greatly influenced the geopolitics of Southeast Asia; these include differing views on the legitimacy of the US-led order in East Asia, competition for economic and political supremacy in East Asia, and rising tensions over the South China Sea disputes. The second section explores new trends in Japanese and Chinese approaches to ASEAN. It argues that with mounting strategic tensions, both Japan and China have increasingly expended their energy on a counterbalancing approach to Southeast Asia; most notably strengthening strategic partnerships with specific ASEAN countries and promoting multilateral cooperation based on an ASEAN+I framework. The third section then assesses opportunities and dilemmas for ASEAN arising from the new power game between Japan and China. It contends that while ASEAN states have still enjoyed enormous material benefits arising from their competition, it has increasingly worked against the credibility of ASEAN and ASEAN-centered institutions, rather than contributing to the overall maintenance of its diplomatic centrality. Indeed, the escalation of their power struggle has put ASEAN states more directly into strategic competition, and hence making it more difficult for the Association to maintain its fragile political solidarity. It has also

muddled the already onerous task of regional institution-building by turning ASEAN-centered institutions into an arena for power politics. This means that in the era of “transitional polycentrism”, ASEAN is losing its relevance for the management of regional order, which leaves the fate of Southeast Asia at the hand of the great powers. The concluding section discusses the ways forward for the management of risks pertaining to growing strategic tensions between the major powers.

### GROWING STRATEGIC TENSIONS BETWEEN JAPAN AND CHINA

The growing antagonism between Japan and China has developed to such a degree that it has become part and parcel of daily life in East Asian international relations. The bilateral relations have significantly worsened in recent years, largely due to historical and territorial disputes, ranging from rancor over official visits to the Yasukuni Shrine to jurisdictional challenges over the control of Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands. Although these historical and territorial issues have remained at the core of Japan-China frictions, the bilateral relations have increasingly been strained by broader strategic considerations involving Southeast Asia. There are three major sources of bilateral frictions that greatly influence the prospects of ASEAN.

The first factor is the contention over the legitimacy of US presence and its centered order in East Asia. The changing power distributions in East Asia have generated deep uncertainty about prospects for regional stability. Rapid growth in the economic and military capabilities of China, coupled with the relative decline of both American and Japanese power have opened a window of opportunity for China to reshape regional order in accordance with its preferred norms and rules. While Japan has long supported the continuity of the existing US-led regional order, in which the United States and its allies play a key role in providing “public goods” in the form of freedom of navigation, political stability, and access to the US market (Goh 2011a, p. 890), China has increasingly gained confidence in projecting its own political and economic systems, which are incompatible with Western values and norms, as they have increasingly acquired international legitimacy, at least among the autocratic countries (Schweller and Pu 2011, pp. 60–2). Washington’s stiff posture toward Beijing’s non-negotiable claims over “core national interests”, such as reunification with Taiwan and territorial claims in disputed areas have further reduced the incentives for China to endorse the US-led order.

Indeed, whether China is a revisionist challenger or not, it has already begun to challenge the legitimacy of the US presence in the region, further straining relations between Japan and China. Since the late 1990s, China has called for the building of a multipolar world and questioned the legitimacy of US-centered bilateral alliance networks, seen as the manifestation of “Cold War thinking” (Foot 1998, p. 435). China’s soured view of the United States is based on a series of US initiatives for upgrading its alliance networks since the mid-1990s. Many Chinese policy-makers have regarded US moves as an attempt to inhibit China’s rise (Christensen 1999). The Obama administration’s “rebalancing” strategy that aims to enhance the American military presence in Western Pacific and military cooperation with its security partners has served to bolster China’s concern.

As a part of its efforts to dilute US regional presence and influence, China has endeavored to promote a regional political and economic entity excluding the United States, as will be discussed in more detail below. China’s diplomatic offensive against the US regional presence has raised concerns from Japanese policy-makers who regard it as the linchpin of regional order. Combined with China’s growing military strength and its assertiveness in the East and South China Seas, such Chinese moves have driven Japan’s efforts toward reinforcing the US presence and existing order in the region.

Since the beginning of the 2000s, Japan and China have also engaged in intense competition for regional economic and political supremacy. Unlike political and security relations, economic relations between Japan and China have been relatively stable due to a rapid development of economic interdependence over the past few decades. However, although Japan has realized the critical importance of China’s continuing economic growth for its own economic development, China’s economic rise has also raised concerns on the part of Japanese policy-makers that Beijing will eventually displace Tokyo as the economic capital of East Asia (Hook et al. 2012, p. 226). Such anxieties began to surface in 2000 when China floated a proposal for the China-ASEAN FTA (CAFTA) at the APT Summit. According to Terada (2010, pp. 78–80), Japanese policy-makers saw this Chinese proposal as a significant challenge to Japan’s economic presence in Southeast Asia and were worried that Beijing could use the CAFTA as a tool to erode Tokyo’s extensive investment networks and trade ties with Southeast Asian countries.



China's CAFTA proposal partly reflected its intention to offset Tokyo's economic influence over Southeast Asia. In the late 1990s, Chinese officials witnessed the excess of Japan's economic influence on Southeast Asia, moving beyond trade and investment to financial and monetary affairs. This Chinese perception stemmed in part from Japan's leadership role in combating the 1997 Asian financial crisis, represented by its proposal for an Asian Monetary Fund in 1997, and in the formation of the Chiang Mai Initiative (CMI) in 2000. Japan's active financial leadership provoked not only China's suspicions of Tokyo's intention but also the geopolitical rivalry between them (Chin and Stubbs 2011, p. 284).

The Japan-China competition for economic supremacy in East Asia soon spilled over into the political domain when the two countries began to project competing visions of East Asian regionalism and regional community-building. Their competition in this regard is closely related to their disputes over the legitimacy of the US-led order in East Asia and centers around the two different models of regionalism: inclusive or exclusive regionalism. During his official visit to Singapore in January 2002, Japan's Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi proposed the creation of a regional community through "expanding East Asia cooperation founded upon the Japan-ASEAN relationship" (Terada 2010, p. 72). While stressing the importance of Japan-ASEAN partnership as a basis of a regional community, Koizumi made it clear that his concept of an East Asian Community (EAC) was an inclusive entity, consisting not only East Asian countries but also Australia and New Zealand. Japan's inclusion of the two developed democratic countries into the EAC reflected its fear that China could easily occupy the center stage of the EAC if its membership was dominated by non-democratic developing countries whose preferred values and norms were relatively congruent with that of China (Terada 2010, p. 80).

In 2004, Beijing responded to Koizumi's proposal by presenting the idea of launching the EAS based on the APT framework, consisting of the ASEAN states, Japan, China, and South Korea (Hamanaka 2008, pp. 68–9). China also acceded to the ASEAN's Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (TAC) in 2004 for reassuring its ASEAN neighbors (Saunders 2007, p. 135). In 2005, regional countries agreed to the formation of the EAS in 2005, comprised of the APT countries and three non-East Asian countries: India, Australia, and New Zealand. The emergence of the EAS, however, was not the result of the convergence between two competing

visions of regionalism. In fact, China has steadfastly pushed the APT as the main platform for an EAC and has seemingly diluted its commitment to the EAS especially after the United States formally joined in 2011. The EAS has merely encouraged Japan's initiative for inclusive regionalism, exemplified by its proposal for the Comprehensive Economic Partnership (CEPEA) in 2007, a regional FTA consisting of all members of the EAS (Terada 2010, p. 72).

While Japan-China strategic tensions gradually grew for the first decade of the twenty-first century, it is the escalation of the territorial disputes in the South China Sea since the late 2000s that has sparked greater power struggle between the two major powers. Until recently, the South China Sea did not play a significant role in the status of Japan-China relations. However, since 2009, as unease over the South China Sea has dramatically risen, the Japanese government has begun to publicly voice its concerns about the situation, in particular targeting China's assertive behavior, despite its status a non-claimant state. For instance, reflecting on the oil rig incident in the South China Sea in May 2014, in which Chinese vessels rammed Vietnamese patrol ships trying to prevent Beijing from putting its oil drilling rig near the Paracel Islands, Japan's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe commented that "I am concerned about tensions in the region resulting from China's unilateral drilling activity" (*Kyodo News Agency* 22 May 2014). Japan's Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga also echoed the view that "We recognize this incident to be part of China's unilateral and provocative maritime activities" (Kin 2014).

Chinese reactions to these Japanese verbal interventions in the South China Sea are hostile enough to raise bilateral anxieties, since Beijing sees these instances of interference as a serious challenge to Chinese sovereignty. For instance, in response to Abe's aforementioned comment on Chinese behavior, China's Foreign Ministry Spokesman argued that "the real purpose of his comments is to get involved in the South China Sea dispute to pursue his own hidden political objectives" (*BBC Monitoring Asia Pacific* 23 May 2014). A similar skirmish also occurred in 2014 at the Shangri-La Dialogue meeting, in which China's top military delegate criticized Abe's indirect remark about China's assertiveness in the South China Sea as "a provocative challenge to China", (*BBC Monitoring Asia Pacific* 23 May 2014).

There are two central reasons why Japan has reacted sharply to the growing instability of the South China Sea. First, any conflicts in the South

China Sea could disrupt Japan's regional sea-lines of communications (SLOC). As a trading state, Japan's economic prosperity greatly depends on the safety of navigation in its SLOC, which assures its access to global markets and overseas energy. Given that around 70% of Japan's oil imports come through the South China Sea, ensuring the safety of navigation in the Sea is vital for Japan's economic prosperity as well as its national security (Storey 2013, p. 146).

Second, Japanese policy-makers believe that the situation in the South China Sea is closely linked to that of the East China Sea. It is a common understanding within Japan's security policy community that China's basic strategy toward its maritime disputes is designed to incrementally expand its de facto authority over the disputed area by pressuring and coercing rival claimants through the deployment of its superior navy and other maritime agencies. In 2012, Japanese policy-makers were able to observe such Chinese behavior in the South China Sea, exemplified by its blocking of Filipino fishermen from approaching the Scarborough Shoal, located within the Philippine's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). They thereby worry that the expansion of China's de facto authority over the South China Sea could encourage the Chinese navy and other maritime agencies to take more assertive actions in the East China Sea (Storey 2013, p. 146).

In addition, Japan's increasingly candid expressions of concern about Chinese behavior in the South China Sea are partly triggered by a recent deterioration of situations in the East China Sea. In September 2010, Japanese authorities detained the captain of a Chinese fishing boat that had collided with two Japanese Coast Guard vessels near the Senkaku Islands, generating a dangerous standoff between Tokyo and Beijing. Those tensions further rose in September 2012 when the Japanese government nationalized the Senkaku Islands. This Japanese decision provoked anti-Japanese demonstrations in hundreds of cities across China, with rioters destroying many Japanese shops and production facilities. China's increased presence in the area has generated the serious risk of an accidental clash between the two armed forces, exemplified by the direction of a fire control radar at a MSDF destroyer by a Chinese frigate in 2013 and Chinese fighter jets flying unusually close to a Japanese OP-3C surveillance plane (Cordsman 2014, p. 253). These incidents significantly exacerbated the perception of the Chinese threat.

Hence, by the early 2010s, the level of strategic tensions between Japan and China reached unprecedented level. As will be discussed below, in

order to increase their leverage over the rival state and to attain an advantageous position in those strategic issues involving Southeast Asia, both Japan and China have begun to move toward a more aggressive counterbalancing approach to ASEAN.

## NEW DIMENSIONS IN JAPANESE AND CHINESE APPROACHES TO ASEAN

### *Japan*

One of the noticeable changes in Japan's approach toward Southeast Asia in recent years is its attempts to construct a cohesive security relationship with specific ASEAN countries that more or less share Japan's concern over the rise of China, while trying to strengthen its strategic relations with ASEAN based on "universal values". The emergence of this new strategic approach largely reflects Tokyo's realization of the need for a more proactive approach to counter China's growing power and influence in the region.

Japan's strong interest in deeper security cooperation with ASEAN surfaced in the 17th Japan-ASEAN summit meeting in November 2011. At the meeting, Japan and ASEAN adopted a new joint declaration for the first time in eight years, placing "the strengthening of political and security cooperation" at the top of the list of new proposals for enhancing their strategic partnership (dubbed as the Bali Declaration). What is significant in the Bali declaration is that it specifies the promotion of "defense and military cooperation", for the first time in the history of Japan-ASEAN relations. For example, the ASEAN-Japan Plan of Action 2011–2015, adopted at the same summit meeting, specifies the promotion of defense cooperation through a number of measures, such as mutual visits, information sharing, training, and capacity-building (ASEAN Secretariat 2011).

Moreover, at the Japan-ASEAN Commemorative Summit held in Tokyo in December 2013, Japan and ASEAN adopted "Implementation Plan of the Vision Statement on ASEAN-Japan Friendship and Cooperation", which outlined a detailed list of their security cooperation. Reflecting this statement, at the same summit meeting, Prime Minister Abe announced Japan's decision to provide a total of US\$19.2 billion in Official Development Assistance (ODA) to ASEAN states, including funding to assist ASEAN's infrastructure development and capacity-building

in the area of maritime security, disaster relief and the rule of law (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan 2013a).

While Japan-ASEAN summit meetings have provided Tokyo with an opportunity to define the direction and scope of their cooperation, actual defense cooperation has largely taken place on a bilateral basis. The Philippines, Vietnam, and Indonesia have been the main targets of Japan's new security initiative, as Japanese policy-makers see them as countries sharing common strategic interests.

Since the beginning of the 2010s, the Philippines has become the top target of Japan's new approach to Southeast Asia due to the existence of shared strategic interests between the two countries. These include combating China's assertiveness in the South China Sea and the maintenance of the American military presence in East Asia, among other things. Since the cementing of their strategic partnership in 2011, Tokyo's focus has increasingly been centered on the development of maritime security cooperation, in particular the enhancement of the maritime capability of the Philippines. At the bilateral summit held in September 2011, Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda and Philippine President Benigno Aquino agreed to not only upgrade their coast guard cooperation, including training and capacity building, but also promote defense cooperation between their armed forces (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan 2011). This was followed by Japan's decision to provide around 12 patrol ships to the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) through ODA in March 2012 (Midford 2015, p. 541).

In addition, in January 2015, Japan and the Philippines signed "the Memorandum on Defense Cooperation and Exchanges" in order to "elevate the bilateral defense cooperation and exchanges to a new phase based on their strategic partnership". Among other things, the memorandum specifies Japan's capacity-building efforts for the Philippines military in the field of maritime security, upgrading their capacity-building cooperation from the coast guard to the military level. Based on this agreement, the Japanese government planned to provide TC-90 training aircrafts and a large patrol ship to the Philippines in the aim of strengthening the Philippines' maritime surveillance capability to check China's activities in the South China Sea (*The Japan Times*, 20 November 2015).

The two militaries have also begun to conduct bilateral exercises. In May 2015, Japan and the Philippines held the first joint naval exercise in the South China Sea. Japan's Maritime Self-Defense Forces (MSDF) dispatched two destroyers and conducted a "passing exercise" with the

Philippines navy (*Associated Press International* 2015). Moreover, in June 2015, the MSDF and the Philippine Navy conducted the second joint exercise, in which Japan's P-3C surveillance aircraft flew in airspace above open sea near the disputed Spratly Islands, an area where China has conducted provocative reclamation activities (*The Japan News*, 25 June 2015).

Japan has also been forging a strategic relationship with Vietnam, another country confronting China in the South China Sea. At the bilateral summit meeting held in Hanoi in October 2010, Japan's Prime Minister Naoto Kan and Vietnam's Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung agreed to expand their strategic partnership in a comprehensive manner and thus to launch the sub-cabinet level "Japan-Vietnam Strategic Partnership Dialogue", involving the top ranking foreign and defense officials, with the main objective of discussing defense and security issues on a regular basis (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan 2010). This resulted in the issuing of "the Memorandum of Understanding on Japan-Vietnam Defense Cooperation and Exchange" in October 2011. In this pact, the two sides agreed to initiate high-level exchanges, regular vice-minister level dialogues, and bilateral cooperation on humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (Ministry of Defense of Japan 2012, pp. 291–2).

Reflecting the acute Vietnamese need to strengthen its maritime patrol capability owing to the intensification of Vietnam-China tensions over the South China Sea issue, Tokyo decided to offer its capacity-building support to Hanoi. In December 2013, Japan agreed to provide second-hand ships that could be used for patrol by the Vietnamese Coast Guard. (*Nihon Keizai Shimbun*, 21 November 2015, p. 4). As their coast guard cooperation has steadily grown, Japan and Vietnam have begun to elevate their maritime security cooperation to a military level. In November 2015, Japan's Defense Minister Gen Nakatani and his Vietnamese counterpart Phung Quang Thanh signed the agreement that would enable Japan's MSDF vessels to make port calls at a Vietnamese naval base at Cam Ranh Bay. At the same meeting, they also agreed to conduct the first exercise between the two navies in 2016 (*BBC Monitoring Asia Pacific*, 6 November 2015).

Finally, Japan has moved toward stronger security ties with Indonesia. Tokyo's interest in Jakarta as a strategic partner has rested on its view that Indonesia as the largest democratic power in the region shares strategic interests with Japan, such as the promotion of an open and rule-based order in East Asia (Wallace 2013, p. 502). Although concern about the rise of China has not necessary been shared to the same degree between

the two countries, Indonesia has strongly backed Japan's efforts to deflect China's bid for strategic dominance, represented by its support for the expansion of the EAS membership to include Australia, New Zealand, and India (Terada 2006, p. 8). Indonesia was also the first ASEAN country that formally challenged the legal basis of the nine-dash line map, used by Chinese government as an official document to justify its territorial claims in the South China Sea (Storey 2013, p. 48).

Like its relations with the Philippines and Vietnam, Japan's search for a closer strategic partnership with Indonesia has become intense, especially since the beginning of 2010. At the bilateral summit meeting in June 2011, Japan's Prime Minister Kan and Indonesian President Bambang Yudhoyono agreed to enhance the strategic partnership between the two countries by initiating ministerial-level talks on political, economic, and security issues on a regular basis (*Asahi Shimbun*, 18 June 2011, p. 4).

Furthermore, at the bilateral summit meeting held in Tokyo in March 2015, Prime Minister Abe and Indonesian President Joko Widodo agreed to establish a "Japan-Indonesia Maritime Forum" for advancing bilateral maritime cooperation, in particular focusing on the enhancement of Indonesia's maritime capabilities. At the same meeting, Joko also acknowledged Abe's suggestion to launch "the Joint Foreign and Defense Ministerial Consultation" (so-called two-plus-two security talks) between the two countries, aimed at beefing up their political and security cooperation (*Yomiuri Shimbun*, 24 March 2015, p. 7). In addition, during Joko's visit to Tokyo in March 2015, the two sides signed "the Memorandum on Cooperation and Exchanges in the field of Defense", which stipulates bilateral cooperation in a number of fields, such as capacity building, exchange of defense-related information, international peacekeeping activities, defense equipment and technology, and logistical support (Ministry of Defense of Japan 2015, p. 285).

Another new aspect of Japan's approach to ASEAN is its attempt to strengthen a strategic relation with ASEAN based on "universal values" such as democracy, human rights and the rule of law. This new orientation of Japan's approach to ASEAN became particularly evident in January 2013 when Prime Minister Abe outlined the five major principles of Japan's ASEAN diplomacy. The first principle called for Japan-ASEAN cooperation on the protection and promotion of "universal values, such as freedom, democracy and basic human rights" while the second principle stressed the promotion of "the rule of law to govern the free and open seas" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan 2013b).

Japan's emphasis on universal values in its ASEAN diplomacy originated from the concept of "values-oriented diplomacy" developed by Japanese officials during the first term of the Abe administration (2006–2007). Although Japanese leaders had already stressed the importance of universal values through their foreign policy addresses as early as 2000s, their attachment to those values became more apparent to the public with the delivery of a major foreign policy speech by Foreign Minister Taro Aso in November 2006. In that speech, Aso emphasized the significance of "values-oriented diplomacy" as Japan's new diplomatic approach aiming to establish "the arc of freedom and prosperity", consisting of democratic countries that "line the outer rim of the Eurasian continent" (Aso 2006).

It is the rising tensions and rivalry between Tokyo and Beijing that has given strong impetus to Japan's shift toward values-oriented diplomacy. China's increasingly serious challenges to Japan's strategic interests have led Japanese policy-makers to consider ways of increasing its political leverage over ASEAN states vis-à-vis China necessary for establishing a diplomatic coalition to counter China's challenges. Indeed, given the relative decline of Japan's economic clout over East Asia vis-à-vis China, Japanese policy-makers have found the projection of universal values to be a promising instrument for attracting ASEAN countries. As Yoshimatsu argues (2009, p. 85);

The universal values were convenient vehicles for Japan's regional diplomacy. On the one hand, the advocacy of these values enabled Japan to show clearer leadership in looking ahead to the future of East Asia. On the other hand, Japan could use them as a tool to reduce the influence of China, which has difficulty in realizing these values.

It is the Japanese expectation that Japan could attain an advantage over China in their competition for political influence over ASEAN by appealing to the values that ASEAN has increasingly placed emphasis on.

### *China*

Until 2008, China had steadily consolidated its relations with ASEAN and individual ASEAN member states by displaying relatively restrained behavior, hence successfully enhancing the credibility of a "China's peaceful rise" discourse in Southeast Asia. However, China's growing assertiveness in the South China Sea since 2009 has cast doubt once again on the



validity of this argument (Sanders 2014). Rising tensions in the South China Sea have alarmed many Southeast Asian countries, thus providing Japan and the United States with golden opportunities to intensify their rebalancing efforts. Given that situation, Beijing has begun to redouble its effort to strengthen its relations with several ASEAN states for expanding its relative influence over the region vis-à-vis Japan and the US. This is evidenced by a series of successful Chinese initiatives aimed at forging or upgrading its strategic partnership with several ASEAN countries, including Laos (2009), Cambodia (2010), Myanmar (2011), Thailand (2012), Malaysia (2013), and Indonesia (2013). Among these countries, it may be said that Thailand, Cambodia, and Laos are the three where China has succeeded in enlisting their sympathies for its diplomatic position.

Maintaining a close relationship with Thailand has been as a top priority for Beijing's diplomacy toward Southeast Asia. China regards Thailand as a reliable friend, through which it attempts to ease regional concerns about China's rise and construct cooperative relations with ASEAN (Storey 2011, p. 143). Recent years have witnessed the consolidation of the bilateral relations, especially in its economic dimension. Since the conclusion of the Sino-Thai Free Trade Agreement in 2003, bilateral trade has grown rapidly, making China Thailand's largest trading partner in 2014. In 2012, the two countries pledged to further bolster their economic relations by signing the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on Agricultural Trade Cooperation and a five-year development plan for the period of 2012–2016 under the Agreement on Expanding and Deepening Bilateral Economic and Trade Cooperation (*Thai News Service 2012a*).

China has also attempted to more strongly promote its military security cooperation with Thailand. Since 2007, the Chinese and Thai armies have conducted joint military exercises on a regular basis, mainly focusing on counterterrorism operations. In 2010, a new regular military exercise started between the Chinese and Thai Marine Corps. These bilateral exercises are significant in a sense that they represent China's first attempt to hold regular military exercise with a foreign country. In addition, in 2015, China and Thailand further expanded the scope of their security cooperation by engaging in the first ever joint exercise between the two air forces.

With steady progress on their economic and security cooperation, the two countries embarked on the development of a renewed partnership. At the summit meeting held in Beijing in April 2012, Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao and Thai Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra agreed to upgrade their bilateral relations to a "comprehensive strategic coopera-

tive partnership”. Under this new agreement, the two countries pledged to expand bilateral cooperation in 13 fields, including among other things, promoting greater security cooperation in both traditional and non-traditional security spheres, expanding bilateral trade to US\$100 billion by 2015, advancing cooperation on the development of land and water transportation in the Mekong River and high-speed railway construction, and the development of tourism industries (*Thai News Service* 2012b).

Their deepening strategic ties have enabled China to successfully elicit Thailand’s sympathy for China’s diplomatic position regarding the South China Sea dispute. During the official visit of China’s Prime Minister Li Keqiang to Bangkok in 2013, Thailand’s government expressed its support for the Chinese mantra that “the South China Sea issues should be resolved peacefully by the sovereign states directly concerned”, indirectly backing China’s critique of Japan and US verbal intervention in the issue (*BBC Monitoring Asia Pacific*, 13 December 2010).

China has also reinforced its partnership with another old friend, Cambodia. The Chinese government has strongly backed the Hun Sen regime since its inauguration in 1997 by providing financial and military support necessary for its survival. In December 2010, Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao and Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen signed a comprehensive strategic partnership, stipulating the strengthening of bilateral cooperation in 13 fields, including trade, energy, infrastructure, finance, and military (*BBC Monitoring Asia Pacific*, 13 December 2010). This renewed partnership was concluded amid a sudden increase in China’s financial aid to Cambodia. In December 2009, Chinese Vice President Xi Jinping visited Phnom Penh and announced that China would provide Cambodia with a US\$1.2 billion of aid and grants for the construction of government and legislative office buildings. Furthermore, during his visit to Phnom Penh in April 2010, Chinese Vice Premier Hui Liangyu pledged the provision of US\$1.8 billion in loan and aid to Cambodia for supporting its major infrastructure projects (Chheang 2012, p. 166).

There has also been an intensification of China’s military aid to Cambodia. At the summit meeting in April 2010, Chinese President Hu Jintao announced a new package for military aid, consisting of the provision of 257 military vehicles, 50,000 uniforms, and US\$15 million. Moreover, in May 2012, the two countries signed a military cooperation pact, in which China planned to provide Cambodia with US\$120 million

for the construction of military hospitals and military training schools (Pheakdey 2012, pp. 66–7).

Like the case of Thailand, these financial and military incentives have greatly contributed to the maintenance of Cambodia's unfailing diplomatic support for China's international position, especially regarding the South China Sea. During the official meeting with the UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon in October 2010, Prime Minister Hun Sen opposed the internationalization of the South China Sea issue, arguing that "the parties concerned should use existing mechanisms to solve the problem through consultation and should not try to put pressure on China by allying with the United States or Japan" (*BBC Monitoring Asia Pacific*, 28 October 2010).

China has also embarked on the further strengthening of its relationship with Laos. Since the beginning of 2000s, China has successfully expanded its political and economic influence over Laos mainly through strategic use of its financial aid and active investment in Laos's major industrial sectors, including mining, hydroelectric, and agribusiness (Storey 2011, p. 170). China's political and economic engagement with Laos became more robust in September 2009 when Chinese President Hu Jintao and Lao President Choummaly Saygnasone agreed to establish a "comprehensive strategic cooperative partnership" between the two countries. The joint statement stressed the expansion of the bilateral cooperation on the four areas; (1) promoting frequent exchanges between leaders of the two parties and countries, (2) promoting deeper exchanges of experience regarding the management of the party and the state, (3) widening the areas of trade and economic cooperation and raising the level of cooperation, and (4) strengthening of bilateral cooperation in regional frameworks, including the APT, the ARF, and the Greater Mekong Sub-Region (*BBC Monitoring Asia Pacific*, 9 September 2009).

Along the line of the comprehensive strategic partnership, visits between political leaders of the two countries, especially visits to China, have become more frequent. For instance, Lao President Saygnasone has visited Beijing almost every year since 2010. In his visit to Beijing in September 2013 and July 2014, China and Laos issued a joint statement for the expansion of political and economic cooperation (Ku 2015, pp. 215–6). Progress has also been made on their economic cooperation, in particular the fields of trade and investment. For example, from 2009 to 2013, the bilateral trade volume increased from US\$744 million to US\$2.7 billion while the value of Chinese investment in Laos rose from

US\$932 million to US\$5 billion. China is now the second largest trading partner and investor for Laos (Jönsson 2010, p. 245. *The Nation*, 22 June 2016). In addition, the two countries have begun moving toward close military ties. During the visit of the Lao Defense Minister Sengnuan Saiyalath to Beijing in July 2015, the two governments expressed their wiliness to promote practical defense cooperation (Ku 2016, p. 150).

Last but not least, like Japan, China has also outlined a new strategy for promoting a closer relationship with ASEAN. At the ASEAN-China Summit held in Brunei in October 2013, in which two sides celebrated the 10th anniversary of the establishment of ASEAN-China Strategic Partnership, China's Prime Minister Li Keqiang put forward the "2 + 7 cooperation framework" as a blueprint for China-ASEAN cooperation over the next decade, suggesting the advancement of bilateral cooperation in seven fields. The proposed cooperation included; (1) concluding the Treaty of Good-Neighborliness and Friendly Cooperation between China and ASEAN countries, (2) improving the China-ASEAN defense ministers meeting and strengthening non-traditional security cooperation, (3) upgrading the CAFTA to increase the amount of the bilateral trade to \$1 trillion by 2020, (4) establishing an Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) to accelerate the construction of connectivity infrastructure, (5) broadening the scale and scope of the currency swap arrangement to enhance regional financial cooperation and immunity to risks, (6) building a Maritime Silk Road (MSR) to promote cooperation on maritime economy, maritime connectivity, and environmental protection, (7) accelerating exchanges in culture, technology, environmental protection, and other areas (*BBC Monitoring Asia Pacific*, 10 October 2013).

Contrary to Japan's new ASEAN strategy stressing the significance of security and normative dimensions of strategic partnership, China's ASEAN strategy puts a considerable emphasis on economic cooperation, indicating Beijing's aspiration to fully utilize its world second largest economic power for attracting ASEAN members. Indeed, Chinese economic initiatives are designed to fulfill ASEAN's immediate economic needs. For instance, there has been high expectation among ASEAN states that the AIIB would supply much-needed financial assistance to their national infrastructure projects (Tiezzi 2014). ASEAN leaders have also welcomed the Chinese proposal for reviewing the CAFTA, especially in the area service and investment, in the expectation that it would not only address their concerns about trade deficits with China and but also facilitate Chinese investment in Southeast Asia. These economic initiatives would greatly

increase China's economic and political influence over Southeast Asia, further increasing asymmetrical interdependence between China and ASEAN states.

These economic initiatives can also be seen as Beijing's effort to enhance its economic and political influence over East Asia vis-à-vis Tokyo and Washington. For instance, the formation of the AIIB would considerably dilute Japan's economic and financial clout in the region since it would pose a significant challenge to the *raison-d'état* of the Asian Development Bank (ADB) led by Japan and the United States. The AIIB is also expected to facilitate not only the penetration of East Asian markets by Chinese firms but also the internationalization of the Yuan, thus further enhancing China's economic presence in the region (Tortajada and Biswas 2014).

### ASSESSING OPPORTUNITIES AND RISKS FOR ASEAN

What are the implications of the new power struggle between Japan and China for ASEAN and its member states? Two major opportunities spring from the above examination of their new approaches to ASEAN. First, it has drawn greater political and economic engagements with ASEAN from Japan and China. As we have seen, in order to increase their political and economic leverage over the rival state and to attain comparative advantage in the aforementioned strategic issues, the two major powers have engaged in competition for a closer strategic partnership with ASEAN. These renewed strategic partnerships have helped enhance ASEAN's diplomatic position and bargaining power in relations to each of the major powers, hence generating ample economic incentives in the form of financial aid and investment for ASEAN's integration projects.

Second, their new power game has brought further material benefits to individual ASEAN states. As discussed above, while the littoral ASEAN states, including the Philippines, Vietnam, and Indonesia, have gained a great amount of maritime security related assistance from Tokyo (especially capacity-building support), Beijing has provided more opportunities for financial and military aids to Cambodia and Laos, which are now two ASEAN members who strongly back China's diplomatic positions.

However, looking at the other side of the coin, risks pertaining to their strategic tensions have also become visible in recent years. For ASEAN,

the persistent tensions are beneficial as long as their counterbalancing game draws stronger commitment to ASEAN and ASEAN-centered institutions from the major powers. However, as we have seen, their recent approaches to ASEAN are increasingly selective and exclusive, focusing on the strengthening of bilateral cooperation with specific ASEAN countries sharing common political or security interests. Given the apparent power asymmetry between the major powers and ASEAN, these exclusive approaches are likely to reduce the diplomatic autonomy of individual ASEAN states, making it extremely difficult for them to escape from the political side-effects of their dependence. Considering differences in interests and strategic orientation among ASEAN states, this would significantly undermine ASEAN's political unity—essential for demonstrating a unified stance on acute regional problems involving the major powers. ASEAN's division in this way would only facilitate great power intrusion into Southeast Asian political and security affairs.

Recent disunity within ASEAN over the South China Sea disputes clearly demonstrates the serious nature of the aforementioned risks. The risk of “ASEAN's divide” appeared on the surface in July 2012, when at the 45th ASEAN Foreign Minister Meeting, ASEAN states failed to issue a joint communiqué for the first time in the 45-year history of the Association. This was due to a heated confrontation between Cambodia and the Philippines (backed by Vietnam) over the issue of whether the final communiqué should include a critical statement against China's behavior in South China Sea. Cambodia, having close political and economic ties with China, rejected the Philippines' proposal for the inclusion of the statement, trying to save China from international embarrassment (De Castro 2013, p. 165).

A similar incident occurred again at the ASEAN-China Special Foreign Minister Meeting held in Kunming in June 2016. The meeting ended with ASEAN's internal confusion over the issue of a joint statement on the South China Sea. According to a newspaper report, during the meeting, ASEAN states had unanimously agreed to issue a joint statement, expressing their concerns over ongoing developments in the South China Sea. However, ASEAN's planned initiative was eventually blocked by China's successful lobbying of Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, and Brunei to express a last-minute opposition (*Yomiuri Shimbun*, 8 July 2016, p. 7). These two cases indicate how China's economic diplomacy has been so effective that it has even dictated ASEAN's agenda-setting.

ASEAN's inability to address China's claims to the South China Sea has led to sheer frustration on the part of the Philippines and Vietnam, and this has further encouraged them to move toward closer security ties with Japan as well as the United States. However, like China's close political ties with Cambodia and Laos, the growing strategic relations between Japan and the two claimant countries, in particular the Philippines, would make it more difficult for ASEAN to forge concerted efforts, encouraging them to take a bold action toward the South China Sea issue, on which a genuine consensus is unlikely to emerge. For instance, while Japan provided its strong diplomatic support for the Philippines' submission to the United Nation's Permanent Court of Arbitration in January 2013, which challenged the legal validity of the nine-dash line, the Philippines' unilateral initiative was not entirely welcomed by other ASEAN countries, except Vietnam, out of fear that this would provoke a hostile response from China and thus undermine ASEAN's collective efforts to establish a Code of Conduct (COC) for the South China Sea (Thayer 2013, p. 80; Heng 2015, pp. 76–7). In response to the Philippines's public announcement about its legal action, Singapore Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesman expressed some frustration with it, stating that “what the Philippines has done is a national decision. Singapore first knew about it from media reports” (cited in Heng 2015, p. 77). In addition, whereas the ruling from the permanent court was overwhelmingly in favor of the Philippines' claim and hence punching holes in China's nine-dash lines, the responses by other ASEAN members, including claimant countries, were prudent. After the ruling, several ASEAN countries issued statements, but none of them explicitly called on both parties to abide by the ruling (Storey 2016).

The clear shortage of ASEAN's internal cohesion over the South China Sea issue has led many observers, both in and outside ASEAN, to cast a serious question mark over the Association's credibility and relevance for the management of regional security affairs in Southeast Asia, that they have had a huge responsibility for (Johnson 2016). Some ASEAN high-ranking officials, including Vietnamese President Tran Dai Quang, have even begun to call for the revision of ASEAN's operational rules, in particular the ASEAN way of consensus decision-making so that ASEAN can effectively tackle contentious issues in the region (Yoshida 2016).

In addition, the upsurge of Japan-China tensions has indirectly undermined the legitimacy of ASEAN's diplomatic centrality in regional institutions. As discussed above, throughout 2000s the legitimacy of ASEAN's

centrality was strengthened by their contest for regional leadership, exemplified by their competing vision of the EAC based on ASEAN-centered regional institutions. Although both Japan and China more or less utilized ASEAN-led institutions for counterbalancing purpose, their engagement with those institutions meant that they basically acknowledged ASEAN's status as a driver of East Asian regionalism. In this regard, it can be said that ASEAN diplomatic centrality will persist as long as Japan and China continue to engage ASEAN-led institutions as a basis of a regional community for any reason.

However, this does not mean that ASEAN can keep exploiting the political opportunity arising from their frictions. While the "legitimacy" of ASEAN's leadership role relies on continued tensions among the major powers as mentioned above, its "credibility" largely depends on its ability to lead major agendas for regional cooperation within regional institutions. In this regard, the recent upsurge of Japan-China tensions can be considered counterproductive, since regional institutions are unlikely promote meaningful cooperation under the condition in which deep distrust and antagonism remain among the major powers.

The intensification of their counterbalancing diplomacy has increasingly hampered the progress of major agendas in ASEAN-led institutions. While both Japan and China have initiated drastic economic and security initiatives within the ASEAN+1 frameworks, regional institutions have increasingly become a venue for the self-assertions and confrontations of the major powers rather than for seeking for their security collaborations. For instance, during the past several years, the ARF has been caught up with the major powers' frictions over the South China Sea issues. While Japan and China have been contesting their diplomatic maneuver to manipulate the wording of the chairman's statements according to their interests, the major agendas for regional security cooperation—such as preventive diplomacy and maritime security—have been stalling. The prospect for the EAS has also been overshadowed by the upsurge in Japan-China tensions as their skirmish over the South China Sea has intruded into EAS meetings. During the past a few years, the EAC has seldom become the subject of their foreign policy debate although both Japan and China proclaimed to be the champion of the EAC, at least until the late 2000s.



## CONCLUSION

Japan-China relations have been increasingly strained by their contest over broader strategic issues involving Southeast Asia. Until recently, ASEAN states successfully managed the risks arising from the major powers' competition, enmeshing them into region-wide institutions operating under the Association's norms. However, since the late 2000s, an imbalance between opportunities and risks has developed, gradually shifting toward the latter. Indeed, as these bilateral anxieties escalate, both Japan and China have exhibited explicit counterbalancing behavior, most notably strengthening strategic partnerships with specific ASEAN countries. While these new trends have still provided huge material benefits to individual ASEAN states, the risk of an ASEAN divide is now more real than ever before. ASEAN's apparent disarray over the South China Sea issue indicates that ASEAN has even lost control of its own agenda. The relentless tensions between the two major powers have also overshadowed the prospect for ASEAN-led regional institutions, hence further undermining ASEAN's credibility as a driver of East Asian regionalism. In short, their strategic tensions have already gone beyond the line that ASEAN's enmeshment strategy can somehow help manage.

For ASEAN, perhaps the only means for escaping from these risks is to make a more tangible contribution to the maintenance of regional stability. Chiefly, as the regional grouping aiming to promote a security community in Southeast Asia, ASEAN needs to play a greater role in tackling acute regional security issues, most notably the South China Sea territorial disputes. Likewise, as the driver of East Asian regionalism, ASEAN needs to embark a more serious effort to promote meaningful multilateral cooperation that can truly contribute to the enhancement of mutual trust between the major powers, especially through the ARF and the ADMM-Plus, rather than merely providing venues for multilateral dialogues. This would not only enhance the credibility of its leading role in institution-building but would also bolster the prospects for regional stability.

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**Takeshi Yuzawa** is Professor of International Relations at Hosei University, Tokyo, Japan. His current research interests include the prospects of international

rule-making and regional order in East Asia. He is the author of *Japan's Security Policy and the ASEAN Regional Forum: The Search for Multilateral Security in the Asia-Pacific*. He has also published articles in international journals as well as numerous book chapters in edited volumes.

# The Role of the United States' Quasi-Alliances in Asia: Shadow Puppetry or Hard Alliances?

*Charmaine G. Misalucha-Willoughby*

## INTRODUCTION

The United States' alliances with Japan and the Philippines are a core feature of the Asian security architecture. Both arrangements were reached in the early stages of the Cold War and persist to this day. To this end, one can argue that alliances are one of the pillars of the so-called Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) peace. The maintenance of peace and security in the region indeed hinged on partnerships between great powers and regional states. Logically then, we can argue that great powers realize that “go it alone” strategies for regional security are not viable. This can explain why the cornerstone of the US presence in Southeast Asia is its alliances not only with Japan and the Philippines, but also with South Korea and Thailand. It is these alliances that likewise became fertile ground for ASEAN and its auxiliary arrangements. The regional order that emerged from the ASEAN peace, however, has weakened significantly. This is evident in the centrality not of ASEAN, but of the great powers in their establishment of temporary security orders in the region. Far from demonstrating that defense diplomacy has

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C.G. Misalucha-Willoughby (✉)

International Studies Department, De La Salle University, Manila, Philippines

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failed, it behooves us to put the spotlight on the alliances that have been the key in the maintenance and perpetuation of the regional security architecture. It is critical to ask the extent to which the United States-Japan and United States-Philippine alliances have been involved in the casting and recasting of the region's trajectory. Equally important is to ask how these arrangements survived despite the issues and crises they have faced along the way. It is to these questions that this chapter focuses on.

The current strategic environment of the United States-Japan alliance involves North Korea's nuclear and ballistic missile development programs, as well as China's military build-up. In response to these, the alliance now covers a range of areas for security and defense cooperation, including surveillance and reconnaissance, ballistic missile defense, extended deterrence, space, cyberspace, trilateral and multilateral cooperation, humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, information security, and cooperation in equipment and technology. Meanwhile, the United States-Philippine alliance operates in an environment where China's assertive moves inevitably result in the insecurity of its neighbors. In this regard, the Philippines welcomes the United States' rebalancing strategy, as well as the recently concluded Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement (EDCA). In these alliances, the strategic environment colors threat perceptions and the mode of strategic convergence, which complicate and test the bounds of their partnerships. The region continues to be shaped primarily by bilateral relationships with the great powers. As a result, confidence is built between the bigger states, but less so between the members of the ASEAN. Interestingly, these alliances endure despite the odds. Endurance, however, needs to be understood as the result of effective alliance management. How this is achieved is the purview of this chapter.

States accumulate power and engage in balances of power in order to minimize the effects of anarchy and ensure their security. One way to do this is by forming alliances. States enter into these arrangements because of the realization that "go it alone" strategies are insufficient in guaranteeing security. Once states determine whom to ally with, they face problems of defection in the form of either abandonment or entrapment. This is the scope of alliance management. How do states calculate the risks of abandonment and entrapment? How are hard alliances maintained?

In addressing these questions, I turn to the use of language as an analytical method. Linguistic tools like representational force can capture the fluidity of power politics in alliance relationships. As a communicative strategy, representational force is deployed to stabilize the collective identity of a relationship that is facing an external crisis. Moreover,

representational force recognizes the power differentials of states and can therefore trace how weaker members end up acquiescing to the demands of the stronger powers. This shadow puppetry notwithstanding, the logic of representational force allows weaker powers to do the same and make stronger states comply with their representations. In short, using language as a method of analysis permits a reexamination of alliance management.

This framework can be applied to the United States' alliances in East and Southeast Asia. I argue that in the face of crises, alliances deploy representational force in order to stabilize their relationship. In the short term, this takes precedence over addressing the actual threat. The United States-Japan alliance faced a crisis during the War on Terror. Given Japan's constitutional restrictions at the time, how did the United States convince or persuade its ally to join the campaign? Moreover, what factors determined the modality of Japan's role in the US-led campaign? The United States-Philippine alliance likewise faces a crisis in the South China Sea. What role does the US rebalance play in this environment? With the Philippines' military limitations, what strategies are employed to guarantee the continued presence of the United States in regional security? How does the Philippines' win in the arbitration case against China color their relations? How does this affect United States-China relations? In both cases, representational force is used, first and foremost, to stabilize the alliance. Doing so is necessary for both sides to attain convergence and address the crisis at large.

The chapter proceeds in three main parts. The first section makes reference to alliances in extant literature and offers how representational force can complement our understandings of the management and preservation of this security cooperation mechanism. The last two sections consider each of the alliances in turn. The United States-Japan alliance is set against the backdrop of the War on Terror, while the United States-Philippine arrangement is analyzed with China as a variable. In both cases, the argument is that representational force is necessary to maintain the cohesion of the alliance. In this sense therefore, the use of representational force is a management strategy. The chapter closes by considering the unique circumstances where alliance management succeeds, and by extension, where it fails.

## ALLIANCES IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Current understandings of the origins and nature of alliances owe much to the works of Glenn H. Snyder (1984) and Stephen M. Walt (1987). Both premise their analyses on the existence of anarchy, which breeds



insecurity among states. In order to minimize the effects of the international system, states accumulate power and engage in balances of power. Bandwagoning is one way to do this. This occurs among weaker states that form alignments with the source of the threat. In other words, alignments are formed with the stronger side in order to appease the source of danger (a defensive position) or “to share the spoils of victory” during wartime (an offensive position) (Walt 1987, p. 21). The reasoning behind this move is that weak states are more vulnerable to pressure. Also, they do not have sufficient resources to offer more powerful states. Although bandwagoning does occur, Walt claims that balancing via alliances is more common. This is because bandwagoning’s presupposition is that aggression is rewarded precisely because security is so scarce (Walt 1985). For this reason, states prefer forming alliances over joining the bandwagon.

Another way in which states minimize the effects of anarchy is to balance by way of alliances. In contrast to bandwagoning, alliances are characterized by alignments with the weaker side. These are arrangements among weaker powers against, instead of with, a prevailing threat. The main motivation of balancing is to prevent stronger entities from dominating others. In deciding whom to ally with, states consider several factors. The level of threat is measured by a state’s aggregate power, its geographic proximity, offensive power, and aggressive intentions (Walt 1987). States must likewise consider aligning with or against the power that has the greatest capabilities (Mearsheimer 2001). In the same manner, alliance formation involves states’ calculations of payoffs and trade-offs. Doing so entails the identification of shared interests and ideologies, internal political configurations, and bargaining as the basis of estimates of benefits, costs, and risks (Snyder 1984). Added to these are determinants of choice, which include levels of dependence, the strategic interests of the parties, the degree of the explicitness of the alliance agreement, whether the parties’ interests are in alignment (or not) with the adversary, and their behavioral record.

States engage in balancing and form alliances to ensure their survival. The pursuit of “go it alone” strategies exacerbates rather than mitigates the effects of anarchy. Entering into arrangements with others can likewise increase states’ influence within the alliance: “...joining the weaker side increases the new member’s influence within the alliance, because the weaker side has greater need for assistance. Allying with the stronger side, by contrast, gives the new member little influence (because it adds relatively less to the coalition) and leaves it vulnerable to the whims of its partners. Joining the weaker side should be the preferred choice” (Walt 1987, pp. 18–19).

Assuming that alliance formation is accomplished, this mode of security cooperation begs the question of how to manage and sustain the relationship. Alliances are at risk of defection in the form of abandonment or entrapment (Snyder 1984). Abandonment spells realignment, de-alignment, repealing the alliance contract, or failing to deliver on explicit commitments or to render support where it is expected. Entrapment means being forced to join an ally's war efforts for the sake of preserving the alliance. In multipolar systems, the risks of abandonment are higher. Meanwhile, risks of entrapment are rife in bipolar structures.

Allies promote strategic convergence in order to narrow the differences in their objectives, priorities, and means (Snyder 1997). Nevertheless, it is taken for granted how strategic convergence is achieved. Alliances assume that power dynamics are directed outward, that is, toward an external threat. It is nonetheless as important to examine how the same struggle for power operates *within* alliances. After all, if power politics is pervasive in international relations, then why should states that are parties to alliances be any less immune to it? The fact that the risks of abandonment and entrapment are acknowledged implies the operation of power politics within alliances, albeit the non-physical expressions thereof. This can be best captured through a specific kind of power called representational force. This concept can complement our understandings of alliance management.

Representational force is a communicative strategy that can be launched during times of crisis in order to, first and foremost, stabilize the alliance. This ensures that the members are on board—and indeed, are on the same page—in terms of the threat in their midst. In this sense, the deployment of representational force is a prerequisite to alliances' response to crises. Most importantly, it depicts power struggles and demonstrates the ability of one actor to influence or persuade another. Its unique quality, however, is that it does not resort to physical force. Instead, representational force is “wielded through language [and] enables a perpetrator to bluntly, self-interestedly and nonnegotiablely compel his victim to abide by his version of some contested story. It accomplishes this by brandishing a threat, which traps the victim with no real option but to comply” (Mattern 2001, p. 351).

A story or one version of a truth acquires representational force when an agent structures a narrative in a way that threatens the audience's ontological security (Mattern 2005). It carries within it a threat that capitalizes on the delicate strands—even the vulnerabilities—of the sociolinguistic realities

that make up the target audience's identity. It likewise carries within it an element of a non-choice between submitting to the agent's viewpoint and undermining the audience's own subjectivity. The choice is indeed no choice at all, and this is precisely what makes representational force an effective tool for agents to ensure that their narrative representation of reality becomes *the* truth.

In the crafting of an interpretation, an agent forms words and sentences into a narrative, the structure of which can take various genres, such as an argument, a negotiation, a metaphor, or a direct challenge. Furthermore, in conveying an interpretation to an audience, an agent must take note of his chosen genre, and then deploy this via different communicative strategies, such as persuasion, framing, bargaining, manipulation, and so on. These methods, however, are risky because the audience has room to refuse since the threat of or the use of force is absent. This is unlike the use of verbal fighting (genre) via the deployment of representational force (strategy), where the audience is left with no room to maneuver and no chance to refuse. It works like a trap and is in many ways similar to coercion: there is an appearance of a choice, but it is in fact a non-choice because the audience's options are either to cooperate with the agent or risk physical harm. What makes representational force different, however, is that the threats to the audience are aimed at their "*subjectivity* rather than physicality" and this is conveyed not in explicit or direct reference to material factors, but in the way the agent structures his narrative (Mattern 2005, p. 602). This suggests that the agent's narrative involves a reconfiguration of the realities that constitute the very identity of the audience. The audience's ontological security, after all, rests on a certain configuration of different realities. For an agent to change that configuration—either by exploiting the contradictions and inconsistencies in which the audience's subjectivity depends—therefore equates to the destabilization of what constitutes as reality for the audience. Indeed, it may even mean the reconfiguration of the audience's notion of itself.

The value of using representational force in analyses about alliance management is it demonstrates how the risks of abandonment and entrapment are calculated. Furthermore, it shows how strategic convergence is achieved. In this regard, the use of representational force questions the automaticity of strategic convergence between and among allies. I now turn to two cases where representational force was used in the face of crises. The first revolves around the United States-Japan alliance during the War on Terror, and the second is centered on the United States-Philippine alliance with the rise of China as a backdrop.

## THE UNITED STATES-JAPAN ALLIANCE AND THE WAR ON TERROR

The alliance logic of abandonment and entrapment entangled both Japan and the United States to respond toward each other in the way that they did. Japan's offer and provision of help to its ally via non-combat missions was a function of its efforts at "normalization," which in itself is a hedging strategy to minimize the risks borne of the alliance. At the same time, this is a manifestation of how the United States sold the idea of the War on Terror to its ally. By deploying the communicative strategy of representational force, the United States backed Japan in a corner thereby leaving it with no choice but to join the Afghan and Iraqi campaigns. While Japan indeed bought into the idea of the War on Terror as a response to the September 11 attacks, its response was carefully crafted to meet certain Constitutional constraints. In short, the crux was how Japan managed to align its international and domestic commitments to engage—and yet still be able to disengage—from the War on Terror. These moves are Japan's version of representational force.

The United States' rhetoric after the September 11 attacks was to convince, persuade, even bully an audience (the international community writ large) into agreement about the correctness and validity of its interpretation, that is, that terrorists were out to wreak havoc on the free world unless they were stopped. In framing the response to the September 11 attacks, a set of narratives converging on what we now know as 9/11 was constructed, which then became the basis for the crafting of the War on Terror as a foreign policy. The moves that the United States made on this account were not simply knee-jerk reactions to a clear and present danger. For instance, in calling the campaign a war presupposes the United States as the defender of the world and that it is a strong, responsible leader. Furthermore, a line was drawn, albeit arbitrarily, in the United States' very binary "Either you are with us or with the terrorists" pronouncements. Upstanding members of the international community would negate what makes them "good" if they took the "wrong" side in the United States' ultimatum. They would, in effect, be destroying the "very 'realities' that author them into existence in the first place" (Mattern 2005, p. 600). The presentation of the options of being with the United States or with the terrorists is the prime example of the deployment of representational force. The United States was offering a representation of reality that warranted a military campaign in defense of the international community, and that punishment, both in the physical and subjective form, would be

meted out should its partners and allies disagree or veer away from this interpretation. The choice, therefore, is actually a non-choice.

This notwithstanding, Japan cleverly found room to maneuver in terms of the modality of its response. It was already a given that as a “good” member of the international community and as an ally of the United States, Japan would indeed join the campaign against terrorism. Two things are worth keeping in mind at this point. First, Japan’s Constitution constrained it from mobilizing a military response in the War on Terror. Second and despite legal limitations, Japan was gearing toward “normalization” to minimize the risks of abandonment and entrapment. “Normalization” is also a result of Japan’s growing self-confidence and a realization that its dependence on the United States increases its vulnerabilities (Bisley 2008).

Japan’s immediate responses to the September 11 attacks can be plotted along three axes. First, Japan offered rhetorical support to the United States. Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi said the day after the attacks that his government would “spare no effort in providing the necessary assistance and cooperation” (Prime Minister’s Office, 12 September 2001a). Later on, he issued a 7-point measure and said that “Japan [would] take its own initiative towards the eradication of terrorism, in cooperation with the United States and other countries concerned” (Prime Minister’s Office, 19 September 2001b). Here, Koizumi committed the deployment of Japan’s Self-Defense Forces (SDF) to lend support in the form of medical services, transportation and supply, and information gathering.

Second, Japan gave economic support. This included US\$10 million directly to the victims’ families, US\$10 million for rescue and cleanup operations in the United States, and emergency economic aid to India and Pakistan (Midford 2003). From early to mid-October 2001, Japan also provided refugee assistance by giving tents and blankets to Afghan refugees in Pakistan. Likewise, it funneled US\$120 million to international organizations. Third, Japan emphasized the value of multilateral engagements by meeting with China, South Korea, and APEC countries. It also co-chaired the Senior Officials Meeting on Reconstruction Assistance to Afghanistan in Tokyo in January 2002 where it pledged US\$4.5 billion to the new Afghan government (Ito 2004).

Japan’s motivations for joining the War on Terror were that it shared with the United States an abhorrence and condemnation of terrorism. More than that, however, was its inclination to avoid a repeat of the humiliation and exclusion it experienced in the wake of the 1991 Gulf War. Also, Japan realized that a late reaction at best and inaction at worst would risk

US abandonment. At the same time, however, Japan had doubts about the utility of military power as the principal instrument for defeating terrorism, which was why it wanted its role to revolve around the use of economic power, post-conflict reconstruction, and state-building practices (Hughes 2004a). It managed to do this by creating a set of institutionalized responses.

Japan's institutionalized responses took the form of two new legislations, both of which were crafted specifically for mobilizing non-combat units in Afghanistan and Iraq. The Anti-Terrorism Special Measures Law (ATSML) was enacted in October 2001 and was designed to allow the SDF to provide logistical support for the intervention in Afghanistan. The ATSML further tasked the SDF to conduct surveillance and intelligence operations outside of Japan, as long as the SDF was not part of a military force used by any country. Finally, the ATSML's mandate allowed the SDF to use weapons but only for self-defense purposes and for defending people under their protection (Katzenstein 2003). Apart from Ground SDF, the ATSML's mission included Maritime SDF flotillas and Air SDF transport aircraft to provide refueling and logistical transport and medical and maintenance support to United States and other forces in the Indian Ocean and Arabian Sea.

The ATSML set a precedent in that it extended the definition of permissible non-combat operations for the SDF. At the same time, however, it set caps on the range of Japan's support. In particular, it limited support to non-combat areas only. Also, it limited the supply and transport of weapons and ammunition on foreign territory in much the same way that fueling or performing maintenance on aircraft preparing for combat missions was not permissible. One loophole, however, was that such activities were otherwise allowed on the high seas and in international air space (Midford 2003).

The other legislation that Japan came up with in regard to the War on Terror was the Law Concerning Special Measures on Humanitarian and Reconstruction Assistance (LCSMHRA), which was enacted in July 2003 and designed specifically for Japan's contribution to the Iraqi campaign. It was contentious because it was the first time that the SDF was to be sent to a conflict zone, and without a UN mandate at that (Bisley 2008). It was eventually passed in the Japanese Diet but only until after the UN Security Council passed a resolution calling all members to assist in Iraqi reconstruction. The LCSMHRA's mandate was the dispatch of Ground SDF and Air SDF units to Iraq for one year from December 2003. This mandate was extended until mid-2006. The Ground SDF conducted reconstruction activities in Samawah in the southwest of Basra, while the

Air SDF flew supplies from Kuwait to the Ground SDF and likewise transported US troops from Kuwait to Iraq (Hughes 2004b).

The domestic dynamics in designing both legislations hinged on Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution. This is the heart of Japan's pacifist stance as it renounces war and the use of force in dealing with international disputes. In the intra-governmental discussions regarding the parameters of the ATSM and the LCSMHRA, the Ministry of Defense and the Liberal Democratic Party wanted to use the Revised United States-Japan Defense Guidelines and the definition of the areas surrounding Japan as the framework for providing support to the United States. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, meanwhile, wanted a new legislation because the Defense Guidelines were both and at the same time overly and under restrictive. They were overly restrictive in the sense that the Indian Ocean was out of their scope, and that they limit SDF support to sea and air efforts, thereby ruling out the option of sending ground forces, which was MOFA's primary recommendation. The Defense Guidelines were also under restrictive because they could likely set a precedent that would undermine Japan's previous attempts to minimize the geographical and functional scope of the SDF. The inability to do this would mean an increase in the risks of entrapment.

Hence, there was an observable desire to avoid any breach of constitutional prohibition on the exercise of collective self-defense. Japan could have easily invoked the need for individual self-defense due to the deaths of Japanese citizens in the September 11 attacks, but this would entail a combat role for the SDF. Matters were further complicated in the run up to the Iraq intervention because it was without the backing of the UN. Japan insisted on a non-combat role based on UN resolutions. A way out of this dilemma was achieved by linking the issue to the Constitution's Preamble instead of Article 9, that is, that Japan should work with international society for the preservation of peace. The implication of this move was that Japanese support was not just on behalf of the United States, but also for the rest of the international community's fight against terrorism. In short, circumventing constitutional prohibitions required a focus on reconstruction efforts by citing the Preamble instead of Article 9.

The idea behind the War on Terror and what such a campaign entailed in terms of support from the United States' partners and allies around the world was sold through a communicative strategy called representational force. The United States, as the author of the campaign, created a response to the September 11 attacks, framed it as the narrative we know as 9/11, and launched it as the War on Terror. The success of this policy was contingent upon the support and cooperation of the "good" members of the

international community. The strength of the strategy of representational force is such that the choice of being “with the US” or “with the terrorists” is in actuality a non-choice. To side with the terrorists not just means expecting the full force of the United States’ military, but also that a state that makes such a choice would negate its own identity about what it means to be a worthy member of international society. In short, the choice has been made for the United States’ partners and allies: the choice is to support the War on Terror and to do otherwise is the unthinkable.

Such was the case with Japan. Given the origins of its pacifist stance, its experiences during the 1991 Gulf War, and most importantly, its alliance with the United States, the choice was not so much if it would join the War on Terror, but *how*. Its Constitutional constraints and intra-governmental debates played into the crafting of two new legislations that spelled out Japan’s engagement and disengagement in the US-led War on Terror. It can be argued that the idea of launching the War on Terror was indeed sold to Japan, but this was done on Japan’s terms. Similarly, it can be argued that the ATSMML and the LCSMHRA are a testament to Japan’s hedging attempts to minimize alliance-related risks.

### THE UNITED STATES-PHILIPPINE ALLIANCE AND THE RISE OF CHINA

The relationship of the United States and the Philippines likewise demonstrates alliance dynamics and the value of representational force in stabilizing the partnership vis-à-vis China’s rise. The United States launched its rebalancing strategy in the context of China’s assertive moves in the South China Sea. The strategy was persuasive to the United States’ Asian allies primarily because it was cloaked in representational force. For the Philippines, in particular, the lack of regional support and a modern military made it all the more welcoming to the United States’ strategy. In the same way, its move to seek arbitration is an effort to use representational force: in trying to internationalize the issue, it is at the same time articulating its desire for a rules-based regional security architecture. Not supporting the Philippines’ cause therefore is tantamount to not desiring a peaceful region. In this sense, the respective moves of the United States and the Philippines can be seen as a way to ensure the stability of the alliance in the face of a rising China.

In 2010, the Obama administration announced that the United States was shifting its attention away from Iraq and Afghanistan and toward Asia. This rebalancing, it has been argued, was “a natural trend” of turning



toward and focusing on the up and coming, dynamic region of the world (Cronin 2012, p. 12). At the same time, the policy was seen as a counter-narrative to US decline, as well as a way to balance the rapid growth, strength, and influence of China in the region (McDevitt 2012). While the strategy has various aspects, tensions in the South China Sea overshadowed its diplomatic and economic rationales and made it “a decidedly *military* effort...” (Bitzinger 2012). The strategic moves that were the hallmarks of the rebalancing strategy included the deployment of 2500 US Marines for training purposes in Australia, the stationing of four new littoral combat ships at the Changi Naval Base, plans for a temporary basing access in the Philippines, and increasing the percentage of ships in the Pacific Fleet to 60 percent. Of late, crises in the Middle East involving Iraq/Syria, Gaza, and Ukraine required substantial US resources. Nevertheless, the Obama administration underscored the updated emphases of the rebalance: Southeast Asia’s centrality and ASEAN’s key role, as well as the building of maritime defense capacities of the United States’ allies and partners (Simon 2014).

The United States’ justification for the rebalancing strategy was framed against the logic of needing to move alongside dynamic Asia, which could only be achieved through a continued and deepened engagement with the region. The main references for the rebalancing were former US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton’s November 2011 article in *Foreign Policy*, and US President Barack Obama’s speech to the Australian Parliament, also in November 2011 (Clinton 2011; White House, 17 November 2011). In both, the message was clear: the United States was reprioritizing toward the Asian region. The main objectives were to sustain the United States’ leadership, to secure its interests, and to advance its values. The instruments required to achieve these objectives were strengthening bilateral security alliances, deepening working relationships with emerging partners, engaging with multilateral institutions, expanding trade and investment, forging broad-based military presence, and advancing democracy and human rights. Crucial in the narrative of the rebalancing strategy was the demonstrated fact that the groundwork had already been laid; efforts and initiatives have already been taken toward closer ties between the United States and Asia.

One cannot ignore the role of China herein. Considering China’s rise, US strategy is, of course, about China, but to single it out as the sole driving force of US decisions in the region is, at best, inaccurate. Still, China enriches the narrative of the United States-Philippine alliance, given its assertions in the South China Sea that have, of late, turned more vigorous

and involved naval confrontations (Simon 2012). China claims historical precedence over these areas, while others, including the Philippines, rely on definitions laid down by the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) on territorial waters and exclusive economic zones.

Traditionally, the United States has been seen as beefing up or reviving its relations with the Philippines every time a crisis occurred (De Castro 2009, 2010). In the mid-1990s, the Mischief Reef incident helped revive the United States-Philippine military ties. In 1995, the US Navy Seals held a combined exercise with Filipino counterparts, with a larger military joint combined exercise with air, land, and naval operations the following year. Also in 1996, the negotiations on the Status of Forces Agreement began, which led to the ratification of the Visiting Forces Agreement in 1999. Moreover, the United States dispersed military stations in the littorals of southern Mindanao and developed Cooperative Security Locations in the Philippines (De Castro 2009).

However, the 2011 standoff between the Philippines and China over the Scarborough Shoal demonstrated a more measured US response. The United States is not a claimant in the South China Sea, and hence it is understandable that it does not and cannot support one claim against another. By implication, explicit support for the Philippines cannot possibly be forthcoming. In March 2011, two Chinese patrol boats were said to have harassed a Philippine survey ship while the latter was conducting oil explorations in the Reed Bank. The Philippines immediately filed a protest with the Chinese embassy in Manila. However, the embassy responded by insisting that China has sovereignty over the Nansha (Spratly) Islands and adjacent territories (De Castro 2012). By June, China disclosed plans to construct an oil rig within the Philippines' exclusive economic zone, and that any oil exploration activities required Chinese permission, even if said explorations were well within the Philippine EEZ. China's argument was based on a map it presented to the UN that showed its "9-dash line," which in essence, allows it to claim sovereignty over most of the South China Sea.

At this point, the Philippines launched all possible diplomatic means to address the issue, including lodging a legal case with the Permanent Court of Arbitration in January 2013. Instead of offering a definitive answer to the question of sovereignty and boundary delimitations between the parties involved, the Philippines asked the Court to rule on the role of historic rights and the source of marine entitlements in the South China Sea. This move entailed the clarification of the status of maritime features, which

would then pave the way for the definition of the entitlements said features can generate. To this end, the lawfulness of China's actions could then be determined. The unanimous award was issued in favor of the Philippines in July 2016 (Permanent Court of Arbitration 2016). The Court concluded that China's claims on historic rights were incompatible with the exclusive economic zones that are enshrined in the UNCLOS. Moreover, there was no historical evidence that China had exercised exclusive control of the South China Sea or the resources therein. Given this, there was no legal basis for China's nine-dash line. Similarly, the maritime areas that China claims in the Spratlys were incapable of generating an exclusive economic zone. In fact, the Court declared that some areas fall within the exclusive economic zone of the Philippines because they do not overlap with any possible entitlement of China. In this context then, China's actions were found to have violated the Philippines' sovereign rights in its exclusive economic zone. Largely due to the land reclamations and the construction of artificial islands at seven features in the Spratly Islands, the Court considered the damage to the marine environment and ruled that China failed to protect the ecosystems in the waters.

The arbitration was one way for the Philippines to internationalize the issue, given that coopting ASEAN proved limited (Raine and Le Mière 2013). In 2011, the Philippines proposed the creation of a Zone of Peace, Friendship, and Cooperation, which garnered lukewarm reactions. Similarly, ASEAN issued no statement of support in the wake of the 2012 standoff in Scarborough. These therefore bolstered the Philippines' decision to refer the dispute to seek arbitration, albeit this move is more symbolic than substantive (Raine and Le Mière 2013). Perhaps another manifestation of the limitations of the regional architecture is that the so-called ASEAN peace has been challenged in the wake of great power politics and a range of non-traditional security issues. Hence, the Philippines, as well as the great powers that converge and have interests in maintaining regional peace and security have had to build confidence among themselves with little reference to—although by no means bypassing—ASEAN.

Progress in the United States-Philippine alliance includes the EDCA, which features the development of a minimum credible defense posture and aims to boost the partners' individual and collective defense capabilities. Two petitions have been filed that challenged the constitutionality of the arrangement, but in January 2016, the Supreme Court voted its constitutionality. The Supreme Court likewise ruled that the EDCA is an executive agreement that does not require the concurrence of the Senate.

It was further argued that the EDCA merely complements the 1951 Mutual Defense Treaty and the 1998 Visiting Forces Agreement by carrying out their provisions. The EDCA allows the US military access to some facilities of the Armed Forces of the Philippines for security cooperation exercises, as well as training activities for the promotion of interoperability and capacity building (Amador and Pabeliña 2014).

Undergirding the EDCA is the acknowledgement that the Philippines badly needs to modernize its military in order to develop a minimum credible defense. This is also a function of the shift of the country's strategic culture from internal security to territorial defense (De Castro 2014). The overarching goals of the drive to modernize the Philippine military are to equip the AFP with capabilities to protect the country's territorial integrity, to offset the evolving foreign defense challenges, and to ensure the attainment of strategic maritime interests in the South China Sea (Chalk 2014). Furthermore, the innovations over the short- and medium-terms are the establishment of "appropriate strategic response forces" in the three branches of the AFP to undertake integrated defense missions, the enhancement of the command, control, communication, computers, intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (C4ISR) system to support joint strategic defense operations, and the development of a modern satellite communications network to work alongside improved C4ISR platforms (Chalk 2014).

The victories of the arbitration case and the constitutionality of the EDCA notwithstanding, the United States-Philippine alliance is being tested with the onset of the administration of Rodrigo Duterte. His binary view of the world informs his policy approach on law and order. On the campaign trail, he promised a crackdown on crime and corruption, which he promised to accomplish within six months of coming into office. This anti-crime crusade is backed up by his bounty offers for the deaths of drug traffickers (Ranada 2016). Even journalists are not exempt from assassinations (Agence France-Presse 2016). To date, an estimated 1800 alleged criminals have died in extrajudicial killings (Domonoske 2016), which prompted criticisms from international partners and allies. When the United Nations urged the Philippines to end the wave of extrajudicial killings in the context of major drug crackdowns (2016), Duterte threatened to leave the UN. The United States likewise expressed concern about the situation, and led Duterte to accuse US Ambassador to the Philippines Philip Goldberg of meddling with the domestic affairs of the country (United States Embassy in the Philippines 2016).

Hence, in the wake of the issuance of the award and the current trend of the United States-Philippine alliance, the Philippines must be reminded of the value of engaging regional entities, despite divisions within ASEAN. Likewise, the Philippines needs to maintain good relations not just with the United States, but also with the United States' other allies in this part of the world, particularly Thailand, Japan, South Korea, and Australia. Refusing to work with or threatening to cut ties with the outside world is a fatal strategy and will only serve to alienate the Philippines. In this sense, the United States' rebalancing strategy remains attractive and persuasive from the point of view of the Philippines. Under the umbrella of the rebalancing strategy, the Philippines can work on a constructive relationship with China and at the same time, be guaranteed of US presence and engagement in the region. Also, the United States' rebalancing strategy in Asia permits the Philippines to align its own program of territorial defense with the United States' agenda in the region (Amador 2013). This can likewise be interpreted as burden sharing within the aegis of the Mutual Defense Treaty (Thayer 2013).

## CONCLUSION

Alliances are indeed one way of guaranteeing security in an anarchic environment. Despite this, they are not without risks. Abandonment and entrapment calculations are common in alliances. Balancing these is the key to effective alliance management. In this regard, using the communicative strategy called representational force is helpful in identifying and tracing how states manage the risks of being in alliance relationships. The cases of the United States-Japan and United States-Philippine alliances demonstrate that when faced with an external crisis, members of the alliance made certain moves by using representational force with the goal of stabilizing the relationship before the actual threat could be addressed.

The utility of alliances rests on members' ability to ensure that they are on the same page before a threat can be addressed. This is feasible if the external threat is unprecedented, such as in the War on Terror and in China's rise. However, certain conditions may lead this strategy to flounder. The current overtures of the United States to form a coalition against the Islamic State are an example, where persuasion is difficult and convergence is less than optimal. In order to avoid strategic divergence, states in alliance relationships need to raise the ante on representational force. Clearly, the fact that there is divergence in allies' policies toward a common threat is an indication that the communicative strategy is launched

prematurely or incompletely. In this instance, it is neither impractical nor infeasible for quasi-allies to step out of the shadow puppetry and form hard alliances themselves.

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**Charmaine Misalucha-Willoughby** is Associate Professor in the International Studies Department of De La Salle University in Manila, Philippines. Her areas of specialization are US-Southeast Asia relations, ASEAN, and alliances. She is one of the 2017 recipients of the Joint Fellowship of the Institute of East Asian Studies and the Centre for Global Cooperation Research at the University of Duisburg-Essen in Germany.



# Order in South Asia and the Indian Ocean Region: Indian Hegemony or Indian Primacy?

*Manjeet S. Pardesi*

## INTRODUCTION

India is currently the world's third-largest economy when measured by purchasing power parity (PPP) and the seventh-largest economy at market prices (The World Bank 2015). India also boasts the fourth-largest military expenditure globally (IHS 2016). Since 2015, India has taken over from China as the world's fastest growing major economy (Khan 2016). It is widely believed that India will emerge as the world's third-largest economy (whether measured at market prices or by PPP) by 2030 and will be the world's fourth-largest defense spender by 2020 (PwC 2015; LaGrone 2013). How will a rising India attempt to shape the strategic environment in its immediate neighborhood in South Asia and the Indian Ocean Region (IOR)?

This chapter argues that a rising India is unlikely to be able to establish a hegemonic order in South Asia or the IOR for two important reasons. First, India's ongoing rivalry with Pakistan—a nuclear-armed

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M.S. Pardesi (✉)

Victoria University of Wellington, Wellington, New Zealand

subcontinental power with significant military, nuclear, and financial links with China and the United States—means that Islamabad will contest any Indian attempts at regional hegemony. Second, the simultaneous rise of China and India is slowly merging the traditional boundaries between South Asia and the IOR, on one hand, and East (Northeast and Southeast) Asia, on the other hand. This larger strategic Asia will have both continental and maritime dimensions. The power politics of this larger strategic Asia will also include the system's preeminent power, the United States, in South Asian and Indian Ocean affairs. The presence of two other great powers—China and the United States—in South Asia and the Indian Ocean will make an India-centered hegemonic order impossible by definition as India will not be the only great power in its home region. Instead, India will attempt to establish a regional order based on Indian primacy in the strategic affairs of South Asia and the Indian Ocean. While primacy implies precedence as opposed to dominance as will be subsequently explained, India's quest for such a hierarchic order in South Asia and the Indian Ocean will be a dynamic process with uncertain success. While this conclusion supports the larger thesis of "transitional polycentrism" of this volume, it will be shown that India's quest for primacy in South Asia and the Indian Ocean will increase the salience of India's East Asian neighbors, especially Japan and Southeast Asia, in Indian foreign policy.

The remainder of this chapter is organized into four sections. The next section will discuss the hegemonic system established by the British Raj in the Indian subcontinent as it relates to both continental and maritime issues. This will be followed by an overview of India's approach toward its neighborhood from independence until the 1980s as it was informed by this British legacy. The subsequent section with its focus on the late 1980s and the post-Cold War period will demonstrate how the traditional boundaries between South Asia/Indian Ocean and Southeast/Northeast Asia have begun to disappear as a larger strategic Asia is taking shape. The implications of this larger strategic Asia for India's preferred regional order of primacy will be discussed here. This chapter concludes by arguing that whether or not India is able to establish its primacy in South Asia and the Indian Ocean will be a function of the US-China-India triangular relationship.

## THE “PARAMOUNTCY” OF THE RAJ

Beginning with the Battles of Plassey (1757) and Buxar (1764) that made Britain a territorial power in the Indian subcontinent (through the East India Company) as a result of the conquest of Bengal, it took Britain almost 100 years to completely dominate the subcontinent at the end of the Second Anglo-Sikh War (1848–49). However, contrary to widely held perceptions, Britain did not rule a unitary state/empire in the subcontinent for the next 100 years until the independence of India (and Pakistan) in 1947. While close to 60% of the landmass of the subcontinent was under direct British colonial rule, the remainder of the subcontinent (with almost 25% of the subcontinent’s total population) was divided into several hundreds of monarchies with varying degrees of autonomy vis-à-vis the British Raj. The British Raj emerged as the subcontinent’s “paramount power” and the so-called princely states (that numbered 562 according to tradition) differentially ceded parts of their foreign affairs, defense, and communications to the Raj while maintaining domestic autonomy (Ramusack 2004).

Martin Wight, the noted English School scholar, characterized this as a “suzerain states-system” since one power—the British Raj—asserted its dominance over all other ‘princely states’ and had no local challenger to its authority (Wight 1977, pp. 23–4). While many princely states continued to have an international personality and maintained autonomous militaries and limited foreign policy independence (Beverley 2015; Butcher and Griffiths, *forthcoming*), none were able to contest the power of the British Raj that stood “paramount” above them all. In other words, British paramountcy was tantamount to hegemony as it met two important criteria. First, no other power in the subcontinent could stand up to the Indian Army of the British Raj on the battlefield. This is the very definition of hegemony in the offensive realist worldview (Mearsheimer 2014; Kindle Location 874). Second, the Raj used various strategies from political coercion to the stationing of British Indian agents in the capitals of the princely states in order to prevent them from taking any foreign policy measures inimical to its interests. This is the English School approach to hegemony as it prevents others from taking foreign policies deemed harmful by the dominant power that is able to punish the system’s lesser states through the threat or use of force (Watson 1992, p. 15).

In other words, the British hegemonic order in the subcontinent was based on preventing the emergence of any subcontinental power hostile to the interests of the Raj. The presence of such a hostile power would be particularly worrisome if it were actually able to forge a political and military relationship with Britain's extra-regional great power rivals, especially Russia and France (Kavic 1967, pp. 8–20). Notably, the British Raj consciously emulated this hegemonic strategy of “paramountcy” from the erstwhile Mughal Empire (as the British viewed themselves as the successors to India's Mughal rulers) (Bucker 1923, pp. 403–7). However, British hegemony in India also differed from that of the Mughal Empire in two significant ways.

First, the British created a system of states subordinate to British Indian strategic interests around the periphery of the subcontinent in Nepal, Sikkim, Bhutan, and Kalat (Baluchistan). At the same time, they also cultivated a number of “buffer states” around this periphery in Iran, Afghanistan, Tibet, and Thailand through various agreements—explicit or implicit—with Russia and France to protect their Indian domains while keeping the other great powers away from the subcontinent (Embree 1989, pp. 117–32).<sup>1</sup> Second, Britain's continental dominance in India was backed by its naval power. After successively defeating the Dutch and the French, the British navy had come to control Colombo (1796), Cape Town (1806), Singapore (1819), and Aden (1839), thus transforming the Indian Ocean into a British “lake” (Pearson 2003, pp. 190–248). Both of these factors—subordinate and buffer states around the periphery of India as well as naval dominance in the Indian Ocean—helped sustain the British hegemonic order in the region.

### INDIA: FROM INDEPENDENCE UNTIL THE 1980s

After independence in 1947, Indian conceptions of security were informed by this long legacy of the Raj. This was a consequence of two important factors. First, the Dominion of India (that became a Republic in 1950) saw itself as *the* successor state of the Raj having inherited all of its treaty obligations. In fact, the partition of the subcontinent “cast Pakistan in the role of the ‘seceding’ state” while the “Union of India” continued to exist (Bose and Jalal 2004, p. 155). This interpretation was accepted both by the British and the leaders of the Indian nationalist movement, including Jawaharlal Nehru, who became the country's first Prime Minister as well as Foreign Minister.

Second, the senior civilian administrators who rose to leadership roles as independent India's diplomats and senior foreign policy officers had begun their careers in British Indian civil services. Similarly, the military forces of independent India emerged from the partition of the British Indian military (with India inheriting the bulk of the personnel, equipment, and the subcontinent's defense-industrial centers) (Brobst 2005; Wainwright 1994). India even retained the services of several dozen senior British military officers for many years after independence. In fact, ethnic Indian officers began to command the Indian army, air force, and navy only in 1949, 1954, and 1958, respectively (while British officers continued to command India's naval aviation arm until 1962). Therefore, it is not surprising that independent India thought of itself as the subcontinent's paramount power and sought to establish a hegemonic order. This was the result of historical path dependency as well as the ambitions of India's nationalist leaders.

### *The Continental Dimension*

Independent India emerged as the most industrialized state in the vast post-war and post-colonial region between Turkey and Japan (Wainwright 1994, p. 43). The Indian Army had also played a very significant role in World War II, especially in Southeast Asia, East Africa, and Italy (Khan 2015). At the same time, the viability of Pakistan as a separate state was not clear to India's political leaders for a number of political, economic, geographic, and military reasons, and that they believed that "sooner or later the areas which had seceded would be compelled by force of circumstances to return to the [Indian] fold" (Brecher 1959, p. 377). While Nehru did harbor such feelings immediately after independence and partition, there is no evidence of India actually pursuing any political or military strategies to undo the partition of the subcontinent. However, it is reasonable to infer that independent India did not (immediately) believe that the existence of Pakistan would be a constant challenge to India's preference for a Raj-inspired hegemonic order in the subcontinent.

At the same time, India sought to integrate most of the "princely states" of the subcontinent into the Indian Union. With the exception of a dozen or so (that lay within the territories of what became Pakistan), almost all of them joined the Indian Union as they were surrounded by India on all sides. While most of these states were peacefully integrated, Nehru's India did not hesitate to wield military force—euphemistically labeled as "police

action”—when they resisted India or threatened to join Pakistan instead as the accession of the “princely states” of Hyderabad and Junagadh with India demonstrates (Raghavan 2010, pp. 26–100). Jammu and Kashmir was the only significant “princely state” that resisted accession with both India and Pakistan, and continues to remain an issue between them.

After the accession of the “princely states,” Nehru chose to continue with the Raj-inspired security treaties with the Himalayan states of Nepal, Sikkim, and Bhutan in 1949–50, which effectively made New Delhi in-charge of their foreign affairs and defense. With these treaties, India became the only post-war and post-colonial Asian state with its own protectorates. In fact, Nehru categorically stated that as far as India’s “security” was concerned, “we [India] consider the Himalayan mountains as our border. ... Therefore much as we appreciate the independence of Nepal, we cannot risk our own security by anything not done in Nepal which permits either that barrier to be crossed or otherwise leads to the weakening of our frontiers” (Levi 1952, p. 108).

Further north, independent India attempted to maintain Tibet as a “buffer state” between the subcontinent and China by trying to diplomatically argue that China was a “suzerain” power in Tibet as opposed to a sovereign power,<sup>2</sup> and by supplying Tibet with small arms beginning in 1946 (under the interim government of India during the transfer of power) in order to build-up Tibetan morale to resist Chinese encroachment (at least until 1950) (Shakya 1999, pp. 12–3). Notably, K. M. Panikkar, the eminent scholar-diplomat who served as India’s second ambassador to Nationalist China and the first ambassador to Communist China, publicly articulated at the time of India’s independence that even more so than the Himalayas, the large Tibetan plateau that stood at an average elevation of 15,000 feet and was surrounded by mountains on all sides provided “the most magnificent *defence in depth* imaginable,” and that “no centre of dynamic power” should be allowed to “be created” in that region (Panikkar 1947, pp. 233–8). For Panikkar, only this would have allowed India to develop its defense-related potential and project power in the Indian Ocean and beyond.

In other words, inspired by the experience under the Raj, independent India attempted to establish a hegemonic order in South Asia. However, two developments undercut India’s efforts to do so. First, the outbreak of the First Kashmir War in 1947–48 demonstrated to the Indian leaders that Pakistan would continue to remain a separate state independent of India (Ganguly 2001). The mere existence of Pakistan was not necessarily

a challenge for India's quest for subcontinental hegemony—the power differential between the two was substantial.<sup>3</sup> However, Pakistan's use of its military forces and other non-state actors to change the status quo in Kashmir in 1947–48 in its favor demonstrated to New Delhi that any Indian strategy to counter Pakistan would certainly have to include a military component (Das Gupta 1958). Notably, the two sides came close to war in 1950 and then again in 1951.

Second, and more importantly, the Chinese invasion and annexation of Tibet in 1950–51 put in doubt whether or not Tibet would remain autonomous and if Chinese military presence there would be minimal and symbolic. While Nehru was of the opinion that the exigencies of political consolidation and economic reconstruction in China along with Tibet's forbidding geography would guarantee its status as a *de facto* “buffer” between India and China (Garver 2001, pp. 32–78), political developments in the form of “communist reforms” in Tibet were to completely alter Tibet's status within a decade or so. Given that the Tibetan-Indian frontier became the Sino-Indian frontier after 1950–51, and that this frontier was either unmarked in some sections (as in Kashmir/Aksai Chin) when the British departed, or because China refused to accept the border between British India and Tibet in other sections (as in the McMahon Line in the region between Bhutan and Burma), the Sino-Indian border became militarized after the Dalai Lama escaped into exile to India after the 1959 Lhasa Revolt along with tens of thousands of ordinary Tibetans. After 1959, Tibet effectively disappeared as a buffer between India and China.

The Pakistan and China factors meant that independent India's strategic environment was fundamentally different from that of the British Raj. Ever since its emergence as a new state in 1947, Pakistan has been searching for allies and partners to balance Indian power in the subcontinent. As a consequence of major policy differences between India and the United States, including those related to India's policy of non-alignment, Pakistan and the United States signed a mutual defense assistance agreement in 1954, and Pakistan also joined the US-led Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) that year.<sup>4</sup> India was clearly perturbed by these developments for it was feared that American-supplied weapons would embolden Pakistan and be used against India. While the United States tried to reassure India that American-supplied weapons to Pakistan were only meant to help contain communism as opposed to targeting India, John Foster Dulles, American Secretary of State, also informed Nehru that “the Pakistan army would soon be of the same size as the Indian army and with superior equipment” (Gopal 1979, p. 275).

While the US-Pakistan military pact undercut India's natural dominance in the subcontinent, at least in the Indian worldview, Pakistan also informed China during the 1955 Bandung Conference that its membership in SEATO was not directed against Communist China. On its part, China reassured Pakistan that there was no fundamental clash of interests between China and Pakistan although the same could not be said for China-India ties (Gopal 1979, p. 243). This set the stage for the for the Sino-Pakistani entente that has been described by a leading scholar of China as "arguably *the most* stable and durable element of China's foreign relations" (Garver 2001, p. 187). In other words, India's subcontinental rival, Pakistan, has challenged Indian attempts at hegemony by externally balancing Indian power through its relationships with the United States and China. While neither of these two powers has overtly intervened in any India-Pakistan war, their diplomatic, financial, and military support of Pakistan has prevented the emergence of Indian hegemony in South Asia.

Throughout the Cold War, India could not ignore the fact that any war with one of its rivals—China or Pakistan—had the potential to become a two-front war with the involvement of other given the China-Pakistan entente. During the 1962 Sino-Indian War, India had deployed more than half of its troops "on the front facing Pakistani troops" (Heimsath and Mansingh 1971, p. 171). It is also noteworthy that China attacked India in 1962 after accusing New Delhi of militarily trying to restore Tibet's status as a buffer state between the two countries (even as New Delhi had no such military policy in place) (Garver 2006, pp. 86–130). However, India's disastrous military defeat against China in 1962 was a severe blow to India's quest to be seen as the dominant subcontinental power as India itself had to seek help from other states—most notably the United States—in the face of Chinese aggression.

Similarly, China threatened to open a second front against India during the Second Kashmir War in 1965 and during the 1971 Bangladesh War in support of its Pakistani ally. In fact, India's 1965 war with Pakistan was preceded by a Pakistan-sponsored insurgency in Kashmir for which Islamabad received political and military support from Beijing (Garver 2001, pp. 194–204). China's strategy toward India seems to be guided by the logic of balance of power politics. Chinese strategists believe that left to its own devices, India may be able to dominate Pakistan by creating a hegemonic order in the subcontinent, and then use its thus enhanced position to challenge Chinese power in the wider Asian region. Therefore, after 1965 when the United States imposed military sanctions on both



India and Pakistan, China emerged as Pakistan's "major armorer" and also "expanded its aid to Pakistan's military industrial base" (Garver 2001, p. 205). Notably, Chen Yi, then China's Vice Premier and Foreign Minister, openly announced the creation of a "profound militant friendship" with Pakistan in 1966 (Unna 1966).

The 1965 Chinese threat to open a second front against India had come barely a year after China's first nuclear test in October 1964. Under these circumstances, New Delhi chose to pursue the nuclear option (Pardesi 2014, pp. 337–54), and conducted its first nuclear test in 1974. By 1976, China had also begun clandestinely helping Pakistan with nuclear and missile technology related assistance (in addition to their continuing conventional military relationship) (Paul 2003, pp. 1–9). With the vivisection of Pakistan and the creation of Bangladesh in 1971, China was determined to prevent the relative balance of power tilting further in favor of India in the subcontinent. During the formal opening of the Karakoram Highway connecting Pakistan's Gilgit-Baltistan region (claimed by India as a part of Kashmir) and China's Xinjiang in 1979, China's Deputy Prime Minister Li Xiannian noted that the highway allowed China "to give military aid to Pakistan" (Topping 1979).

With the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in late 1979, Pakistan once again became a frontline state in America's Cold War struggle against the Soviet Union. Consequently, Pakistan not only began to receive significant financial and military assistance from the United States (as American aid was supplied to Afghanistan via Pakistan), but the United States also ignored the proliferation of Chinese nuclear weapons and missile-related assistance to Pakistan until the end of the Cold War (Kux 2001, pp. 227–321). According to a senior American scholar of South Asia, this was significant because "Pakistan would not have become a serious military power without U.S. equipment" (Cohen 1980, p. 104).

As such, until the 1970s and 1980s, India was unable to establish its preferred Raj-inspired hegemonic order in South Asia for two main reasons—the presence of a subcontinental rival, Pakistan that was willing to militarily challenge India's regional dominance; and because of the foreign policy preferences of the system's great powers, China and the United States. China sought to directly undermine any Indian attempts at regional hegemony because of its own rivalry with India over territory as well as for power and status in Asia, while the United States did so indirectly as a consequence of its relationship with Pakistan that was guided by the logic of the Cold War (and was not directly aimed at India). While it is true that

India was tacitly aligned with the former Soviet Union after 1971, this was not a full-fledged alliance. More importantly, while the Indo-Soviet alignment did help both sides meet their immediate political and/or security interests, it did not extend to shared perceptions of international order whether in South Asia, Asia at large, or globally. After all, despite its public silence at the 1979 Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, India was deeply perturbed by this development and privately informed the Soviet Union of its unhappiness. India had also rejected earlier Soviet attempts to create a Soviet-led India-centered Asian security order (Mastny 2010).

### *The Maritime Dimension*

India's nationalist elite were very cognizant of the fact that the British had come to dominate the subcontinent through their command of the Indian Ocean while the former Mughal Empire (and the post-Mughal successor states in India) did not possess a naval force of any consequence. Around the time of the departure of the British in the mid-1940s, Panikkar noted that India's "position in the world...and her freedom" will be "at the mercy of any country capable of controlling the Indian Ocean" (Panikkar 1945, p. 92). Therefore, it is not surprising that Nehru, who had witnessed the important role that Indian resources and manpower had played in Britain's empire east of the Suez and during the two World Wars argued that India's geographic "position" as well as its actual and latent power will help it "develop as the *centre* of economic and political activity in the Indian Ocean area" from the Middle East to Southeast Asia, and onto the Pacific (Nehru 1985, p. 536).

While Nehru envisaged India as playing the central role in the Indian Ocean region, Panikkar, who was influenced by the American naval strategist Alfred Thayer Mahan, argued that India's "long term policy" should be the maintenance of "supremacy in the Indian Ocean area" (Panikkar 1945, p. 95). However, given that the Royal Indian Navy of the Raj was a minor force, and because India and Britain departed on cordial terms, Panikkar recommended an Indo-British "Monroe Doctrine for the Indian Ocean Region" after India's independence (Panikkar 1946). While independent India's policy of non-alignment meant that such a formal agreement was impossible (Thomas 1979), India did retain the services of senior British naval and naval aviation officers in India's naval forces for more than a decade after independence as noted earlier.

In spite of these lofty goals of Indian centrality and supremacy in the Indian Ocean, which were tantamount to Indian hegemony, independent India devoted very limited resources for naval development in the early decades for two main reasons. First, the most significant threats that India faced—from Pakistan and China—were continental in nature, not maritime. Second, a Mahanian navy required India to be a significant commercial/trading power. However, independent India's autarchic economic policies meant that New Delhi did not feel the need to create a large merchant marine. In any case, Britain continued to remain the dominant Indian Ocean power in the early Cold War decades as a result of its air and naval bases in South Asia (in Sri Lanka until 1957–62, and in the Maldives until 1976) and the greater Indian Ocean (in Aden until 1967, and in the Seychelles, Mauritius, and Singapore until 1976) (Harkavy 2000). While the presence of these bases did create some political uneasiness in New Delhi, they were not considered deleterious to Indian security interests as senior officers of the Indian navy, India's naval equipment, and naval doctrine were of British (or Western-origin) during these years. As such, at least during these early years, the "Indian government saw its navy as an implicit part of a [British] Commonwealth-United States naval defence" in the Indian Ocean Region (Kavic 1967, p. 123).

It is noteworthy that neither the First Kashmir War (1947–48) nor the Sino-Indian War (1962) had a naval dimension, and that India did not undertake any naval modernization programs after 1962 even as other services of the Indian armed forces began a major modernization drive after military defeat at the hands of China. While the Second Kashmir War (1965) and the Bangladesh War (1971) did see some naval campaigns, India did not perceive any significant threats from Pakistan or China during these years (Pardesi 2016). However, the emergence of the *USS Enterprise* (believed to be nuclear-armed by strategists in New Delhi) in the Bay of Bengal during the 1971 Bangladesh War did begin to change India's security calculus, especially as India saw the emergence of a US-Pakistan-China alignment in its neighborhood (Ganguly 2001, pp. 66–73). In the early 1970s, the United States also began the process of establishing a major military base in Diego Garcia, a British island territory in the India Ocean about a thousand miles to the south of India. With this, the Cold War superpower rivalry entered the Indian Ocean region (Harrison and Subrahmanyam 1989).

While this was a significant setback to India's ambitions of becoming the preeminent Indian Ocean power, New Delhi responded with three significant military developments. First, India conducted a "peaceful" nuclear test in 1974 that was at least partly aimed at the United States in response to the *USS Enterprise* incident (Cohen 2001, p. 168). Second, India began to rapidly expand its military power (including naval power) in the 1970s and 1980s in terms of weapons acquisitions and qualitative upgrades (Smith 1994). Third, India started upgrading its military facilities on the Andaman and Nicobar Islands at the mouth of the Strait of Malacca beginning in 1972, and the project came to be known as FORTAN or Fortress Andaman and Nicobar in the 1980s (Gordon 1995, pp. 293–5). The military logic behind these developments was to raise the cost of any American (or extra-regional) military adventure against Indian interests in the subcontinent and the Indian Ocean while politically recognizing that Indian hegemony was no longer tenable in the region.

### THE 1980S AND THE END OF THE COLD WAR

It was under these circumstances (in the 1970s and 1980s) that New Delhi gradually adopted a strategy based on primacy instead of hegemony under Prime Minister Indira Gandhi after recognizing the difficulties of establishing a hegemonic order on land (in South Asia) or on the high seas (in the IOR). Primacy is distinct from hegemony in that it calls for the state in question to be the *primus inter pares* in strategic affairs as opposed to excluding other great powers altogether. A strategy based on primacy recognizes that even weak powers can challenge a much stronger power. Therefore, it prescribes the establishment of "a clear lead in virtually every dimension of power" vis-à-vis the regional states, while sending a signal to the extra-regional great powers that the aspiring state is the "first in order, importance, or authority" in its home region and therefore its own interests must be given preference.<sup>5</sup>

In the Indian context, this subtle but significant shift from hegemony to primacy came to be known as the "Indira Doctrine". According to this doctrine that was never officially articulated, India would tolerate the intervention of extra-regional great powers in the subcontinent only if they gave precedence to Indian interests. At the same time, India reserved the right to intervene in the affairs of other South Asian states if regional developments adversely affected India's security (Sen Gupta 1983). While this doctrine was most forcefully practiced in the late 1980s as is subsequently discussed, it has survived in a modified form in Indian strategic thinking up to the present time.

In the 1980s, India used its naval power to intervene in the domestic politics of Sri Lanka (1983–90) and the Maldives (1988–89) for a complex mix of domestic and international factors, including the need to prevent any extra-regional great power from doing so. Toward the end of the decade, India also implemented a blockade of landlocked Nepal (1989–90) after being upset with Nepal's arms acquisition from China (Hagerty 1991). While Pakistan continued to defy India and maintained a robust relationship with China, India modified the Indira Doctrine after the end of the Cold War. This modification emerged in the form of the so-called Gujral Doctrine named after Prime Minister I. K. Gujral. According to this doctrine, India argued that while it respected the sovereignty of its neighbors and wanted to maintain peaceful relations, it was not seeking "reciprocity" in its relations with its South Asian neighbors (except Pakistan) as India wished to give and accommodate what it could "in good faith and trust" (Gujral 1997). While the exigencies of domestic politics in India have hindered the implementation of this policy, the basic premise of the Gujral Doctrine is that India is the larger player in the region and can afford to be magnanimous toward its smaller neighbors who should refrain from pursuing policies detrimental to Indian interests.

Such an articulation of Indian primacy in the region was made possible as a result of India's newfound confidence after the launch of India's economic reforms under Prime Minister Narasimha Rao and Finance Minister (later Prime Minister) Manmohan Singh in 1991. India's gradual embrace of the market began to transform it into one of the world's fastest growing economies and slowly increased the asymmetry of power between India and its subcontinental rival, Pakistan. The Indian economy that was six times as large as Pakistan's in 1991 became almost seven times as large by 2001 and is close to eight-and-a-half times its size today (2014). On the other hand, the Indian defense budget, which was about two-and-a-half times the Pakistani defense budget in 1991 became almost four times as large in 2001 while it stands at three-and-a-half times its size today (2014) (World Bank 2015). These figures indicate that while the economic differential between the two has grown rapidly, Pakistan has tried to keep up with the Indian military. Although Pakistan's much larger defense expenditure (proportional to its economy) than India's raises questions about its ability to continue doing so in the long-run, there is no evidence that Islamabad has changed its approach toward New Delhi. On the contrary, after openly going nuclear in 1998 in the immediate aftermath of India's own nuclear tests, Pakistan has continued with its asymmetric (including

sub-conventional and terrorist) attacks on New Delhi, and even precipitated a limited conventional war against India in 1999 (Kapur and Ganguly 2012).

Pakistan's implacable hostility and India's inability to devise political or military strategies to contain the Pakistani challenge means that Islamabad has continued to challenge New Delhi's bid for primacy, especially as it relates to the continental dimension. It should also be noted that the presence of Pakistani nuclear weapons has also rendered any residual Indian ideas for regional hegemony impossible, thereby making primacy more attractive for Indian strategists.<sup>6</sup> At the same time, Pakistan's entente with China that has its origins in their common rivalry with India remains enduring. After helping Pakistan with nuclear technologies in the late 1970s and early 1980s, China supplied Pakistan with ballistic missile technologies beginning in the late 1980s. Sino-Pakistani nuclear and missile cooperation has continued after Pakistan's 1998 nuclear tests and even as China has become a member of several global nonproliferation regimes (Kan 2015).

At the same time, the Sino-Pakistani conventional military links remain strong, and Pakistan has emerged as the largest buyer of Chinese arms (including high-end platforms like fighter jets).<sup>7</sup> Notably, Indian strategists now believe that any war with one of its two main rivals will become a "two-front war" with both China and Pakistan (Unnithan 2010). Equally disturbingly from New Delhi's perspective, the US-Pakistan relationship, although complicated, received a significant boost after Pakistan became a frontline state in America's "war against terrorism" after the 9/11 attacks. "Since 1948, the United States has pledged more than \$30 billion in direct aid [to Pakistan], about half for military assistance, and more than two-thirds appropriated in the post-2001 period" (Epstein and Kronstadt 2013, p. 1). American assistance to Pakistan, while not directed against India—at least from the American perspective as it is rooted in America's larger global interests—has the same effect on Pakistan as China's assistance for it enables Pakistan to keep up its strategic competition with India in spite of the latter's size advantage, thereby undercutting India's regional primacy.

### THE MERGING OF SOUTH AND EAST ASIA

In the meanwhile, the simultaneous rise of China and India after the end of the Cold War has also begun to blur the strategic boundaries between South Asia/Indian Ocean Region on the one hand and East Asia

(Southeast and Northeast) on the other. India launched its “Look East” policy in 1991 more or less in tandem with its economic reforms (which was upgraded to “Act East” policy in 2014). While it is widely believed that economics was the driving factor in India’s greater engagement with its East Asian neighbors, strategic concerns were equally important from the very beginning (Pardesi 2010). New Delhi has been upgrading its naval and air bases on the Andaman and Nicobar Islands since the end of the Cold War, and India has its only tri-service command in Port Blair at the mouth of the Strait of Malacca.

On the other hand, given its acute dependence upon global trade and energy imports for economic growth—a large portion of which traverse through the Strait of Malacca—General Zhao Nanqi, Director of the Chinese Academy of Military Sciences, stated as early as 1993 that China was “not prepared to let the Indian Ocean become India’s Ocean” (Roy 1998, p. 170). In more recent years, China has launched its so-called Silk Road initiative that envisages an overland route through Central Asia and (northern) South Asia into the Middle East and beyond, and a maritime route connecting the South China Sea with the Indian Ocean Region (Yan 2014). Again, Pakistan has emerged as a crucial link in this Chinese initiative with the \$46 billion China-Pakistan Economic Corridor that aims to connect China’s Xinjiang region with Pakistan’s Gwadar port at the mouth of the Strait of Hormuz (Hourelid 2015). In fact, the commercial port at Gwadar was built with Chinese funds, and a Chinese firm has received the contract to manage it for the next 40 years (The Nation 2015).

Given that the China factor lurks to India’s north (in Tibet) and northwest (in Pakistan), Southeast Asia is likely to become more important for New Delhi as India rises through the international order because it is the only region that shares immediate borders with India but is not dominated by China. Consequently, New Delhi is determined to play a more proactive strategic role in Southeast Asia. In 2005, India’s then Defense Minister (and now President) Pranab Mukherjee had noted that India’s Look East policy was based on the principle of “the maintenance of an equitable strategic balance” in this region to India’s east (Mukherjee 2005, p. 24). In addition to contributing to the maintenance of a balance of power in Asia, a rising India is also contributing to the provision of “public goods” as evidenced through the coordinated patrols of the Malacca Strait and the surrounding waters along with the littoral states of Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore, and the neighboring state of Thailand (Pardesi 2015, pp. 17–9). India is also helping a number of Southeast Asian

states with their military capacity-building such as Singapore (with anti-submarine warfare capabilities) and Vietnam (with its defense-industrial base). Given its complicated South Asian/Indian Ocean neighborhood (and its developmental challenges), a rising India will continue to depend upon regional institutions centered on the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) to shape Asia's emerging institutional architecture. The Indian leadership believes that "ASEAN-centrality is essential in the evolving regional architecture" (Singh 2012) as it prevents India from ceding strategic ground to China.

At the same time, India has ramped-up its links with Japan and the United States, given that they contribute to the emerging balance of power in Asia. US-India relations have been radically transformed since the end of the Cold War, and especially after the 2008 civil nuclear deal (Tellis 2015). That Washington and New Delhi see a synergy between India's Look/Act East Policy and America's pivot/rebalance to Asia was made clear earlier this year when the United States and India released a "joint strategic vision" for the Asia-Pacific and the Indian Ocean Region (The White House 2015). The United States and India also plan to start a dialogue at the level of their foreign ministers in a trilateral setting along with Japan, while also including the latter in their annual naval exercises on "a permanent basis" from this year (Parameswaran 2015). Finally, India has also become vocal about the freedom of navigation in the South China Sea, and is currently exploring offshore energy resources along with Vietnam in a region of that sea which is claimed by China as its own but is Vietnamese territory according to India and Vietnam (Thayer 2014).

While the strategic situation in Asia is likely to remain in flux for some time to come, it is quite possible that India's foray into East Asia is at least partly driven by the desire to convey to China that even as India may not be able to stop China's emergence as a South Asian/Indian Ocean power, Beijing needs to remain sensitive to New Delhi's security interests in India's home region or else India could complicate China's strategic calculus in East Asia. On its part, the United States has already begun to see India as a "net provider of security" in the Indian Ocean Region (DoD 2010, p. 60), although India is unlikely to be able to play this role by itself in the short- to medium-term. In other words, while Washington seems willing to cede primacy to India (at least in the IOR), it remains unclear whether China will do so.



## CONCLUSION

India inherited the security conceptions of the British Raj after independence and attempted to create a regional order based upon Indian hegemony in South Asia and the Indian Ocean Region. It was only slowly that India realized that the partition of the subcontinent (and the consequent creation of a hostile Pakistan) and the Chinese invasion and annexation of Tibet had completely altered its strategic environment. At the same time, Cold War geopolitics and the consequent US-Pakistan relationship made any Indian attempts at hegemony almost impossible. It was with this realization that India slowly transformed its quest from hegemony to primacy in South Asia and the Indian Ocean. However, the emergence of Indian primacy in this region is not a foregone conclusion and will depend upon the interaction of three factors. First, India needs manage its relations with Pakistan. In spite of India's growing quantitative asymmetry with Pakistan in the economic and military domains, India has not been able to formulate political or military strategies to deal effectively with its subcontinental rival. Pakistan's entente with China, and periodic military and economic aid from the United States, further complicate India's efforts at regional primacy.

Second, the Sino-Indian rivalry and China's rise as a South Asian and Indian Ocean power will also challenge India's quest for regional primacy. Whether or not India will be able to use its own "Look/Act East" policy as a strategic leverage vis-à-vis China in having Beijing concede to Indian primacy in South Asia and the Indian Ocean depends upon the how fast India will be able to close the economic and military gap with China. Third, the growing US-India partnership and America's own vision of India as a security provider in the Indian Ocean is likely to help India in its bid for regional primacy. Although the US-India relationship will give New Delhi a leverage vis-à-vis China (as well as Pakistan), the bilateral relationship between the world's largest democracies is still subject to the vagaries of domestic politics in both the countries. As a result, India's quest for primacy in South Asia and the Indian Ocean will have to be constantly negotiated and renegotiated. It cannot be guaranteed a priori and across all issue areas, and will continuously test Indian diplomacy.

## NOTES

1. Burma was an exception as it was conquered by British India and governed as a province of British India.
2. The historical status of Tibet is beyond the scope of this chapter. Suffice it to say that the British Raj had maintained the legal fiction of Chinese suzerainty in Tibet that implied a token acknowledgment of Chinese authority there coupled with a large degree of Tibetan autonomy and British Indian influence (including limited military influence).
3. For example, in 1950, India's Composite Index of National Capability score was almost 4.5 times the score of Pakistan's (COWP 2015).
4. Pakistan also became a member of the US-backed but UK-led Central Treaty Organization in 1955.
5. While Walt discusses primacy at the global level, I have modified it to make it applicable to a region—South Asia/Indian Ocean (Walt 2005, pp. 31–32).
6. In the offensive realist worldview, nuclear weapons make the quest for hegemony impossible.
7. In the last five years, Pakistan purchased 41% of China's arms exports (Clover 2015).

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**Manjeet S. Parsesi** is Senior Lecturer in International Relations and an Asia Research Fellow at the Centre for Strategic Studies, Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand. His research interests include great power politics, strategic rivalries, Asian security, Indian foreign policy, and international relations in world history. He is the co-editor of *India's Military Modernization* (Oxford, 2014) and has published widely in international journals.

PART 2

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## Defence Diplomacy in the Asia-Pacific

## Fostering Military Diplomacy with America's Bilateral Allies: The Philippine Policy of Linking Spokes Together

*Renato Cruz De Castro*

In November 2013, Haiyan (locally known as Yolanda), a category-5 typhoon, ravaged the central part of the Philippines with torrential rain and maximum sustained winds of 150 miles per hour. Dubbed a super-typhoon, Haiyan killed more than 6000 people and left more than 3 million Filipinos without homes in five major island provinces—Leyte, Samar, Panay, Cebu, and Palawan. It destroyed nearly 550,000 residential houses and devastated several farmlands and fishponds in these island provinces, which account for about 12% of the country's gross domestic product (Cuneta, December 2013: 1). Consequently, it was predicated that the destruction and wrought by the typhoon could adversely affect the country's economic growth.

The aftermath of the typhoon raised questions regarding the Aquino Administration's preparedness and capability to deal with major natural

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R.C. De Castro (✉)  
De La Salle University, Manila, Philippines



calamities. In the most affected island provinces of Samar and Leyte, the first humanitarian and relief efforts were conducted by international relief agencies and foreign governments such as the USA, Australia, Israel, and Japan, and not by the Philippine government (Piling, November 2013: 1). The nearly total destruction of a Philippine city (Tacloban) and the extensive damages to the five aforementioned island provinces tested the Armed Forces of the Philippines' (AFP's) limited capacity for airlift and sea transport in an archipelagic environment. A few days after the typhoon hit the country, the AFP's relief efforts were still hampered by a shortage of all-weather communication facilities such as satellite phones and weather-safe radios. The *New York Times* reported that the Philippine Air Force (PAF) could not deploy its aging fleet cargo/transport planes because of lack of spare parts and technical maintenance. The 3 C-130s and 28 operational helicopters exposed the Philippine government's and its military's limited and deplorable capacity for Humanitarian Assistance Disaster and Risk Reduction (HADR) operations. In particular, the brunt of complaints and criticism fell on the AFP—an overstretched, poorly funded military—for its late arrival to the disaster zone (Jacobs, November 2013a: 4).

Within 48 hours after the onslaught of the typhoon, the Philippine government requested for international assistance. Immediately, the US military launched Operation *Damayán* (assistance)—a massive global humanitarian assistance and disaster relief operations for the typhoon victims. The American forces were also supported by several military contingents from other US allies in the Asia-Pacific region. During the first week after this natural calamity devastated the central Philippines, Japan, Australia, and South Korea joined forces with the USA. The massive multilateral humanitarian relief operation affirmed US commitment to its ally, and the relevance of hub-and-spokes system not only in addressing the new geo-strategic security challenge of the twenty-first century but also in the conduct of HADR. It showed as well the merit of the Philippine government's diplomatic strategy of linking the US's hub-and-spokes system of bilateral alliances together.

On account of its inadequacies, the AFP relies on cooperation and relationship with its allies and other security partners in pursuing its mandated missions and objectives (Rodulfo-Veril 2014: 132–154). Thus, the Philippine military depends on its security engagements with foreign militaries to effectively address and respond to security challenges. This course of action could be traced back to 2011 when the Philippines adopted a delicate balancing policy in the face of an emergent and assertive China in

the South China Sea. The Aquino Administration acknowledges the need for US diplomatic support and military assistance relative to its territorial row with China. Furthermore, it starts establishing defense linkages with other three American allies in the region—Japan, South Korea, and Australia. Militarily weak, the Philippines finds it imperative “to leverage” on the USA and its other bilateral alliance partners to enhance its security and develop the AFP’s capabilities for territorial defense (Office of Plans and Program 2010: 2).

This chapter examines the Philippines’ efforts to connect the separate US bilateral alliances in the Asia-Pacific region as it forges security arrangements with Japan, South Korea, and Australia. It explores this main question: How does the Philippines establish defense relations with Japan, South Korea, and Australia? It also raises the following corollary questions: What is the Philippines’ game plan in co-opting these three American allies? What is the implication of this move on the US allies in East Asia? And how can the Philippines and the USA maximize this move to link the spokes of the San Francisco system of bilateral alliances?

### HARNESSING AND LINKING THE SPOKES TOGETHER

For more than four decades, the member states of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) have congratulated themselves for ensuring the regional organization’s cohesion and integrity during and after the Cold War. More significantly, they also take pride that ASEAN has fostered peace and stability in Southeast Asia through the peaceful settlement of dispute through the 1976 Treaty of Amity and Cooperation, the avoidance of military alliance with one another, and the institutionalization of the “ASEAN Style” consultation to pursue a collective response to regional crisis. This style primarily seeks to limit the role and clout of the big powers and to prevent the formation of any supranational institutions. As a collection mainly of small powers, these states see and exercise their collective capabilities not in terms of getting other states to do something they would not otherwise do. Rather, they view and apply their power in terms of developing the capacity and ability to resist external attempts to exert pressure on them to do what they do not want to do (Stubb 2004: 223). The ASEAN states pursue this goal by strengthening themselves through the provision of a predictable pattern of interstate interactions by dialogues and constant consultations, and not to evolve or

manage a regional strategy or initiative. Describing the foreign policy orientation of ASEAN member states in the 1970s, two scholars wrote:

Members are expected to consult within the group before undertaking any major foreign policy initiatives, and they are to avoid any action that increases external or internal political pressure on another member. In return, the association provides political and diplomatic benefits which can be subsumed under the general headings of “free rides,” broader communications, status, and collective political defense. (Morrison and Suhrke 1978: 272)

Consequently, ASEAN and its offspring organizations such as the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) possess no significant centralized mechanism to enforce agreements signed by their members, monitor domestic events in member countries, or anticipate emerging problems. The bottom line of the “ASEAN Way” in foreign affairs is moral suasion (Simon 2008: 267). This orientation restricts the forum’s ability to maintain the status quo or effect a gradual and peaceful change in the regional system. Many regional security problems cannot be solved through ARF’s dialogues and the ASEAN method of consensus-building because of the historical origins of and the stakes involved in these disputes. As a case in point, the ARF can only conduct general discussions on major and lingering disputes in East Asia such as the potential crisis in the Taiwan Straits and in the Korean Peninsula, Sino-Japanese rivalry, the Sino-Japanese territorial conflict in the East China Sea, the South China Sea dispute, and the growing regional tension generated by China’s emergence as a regional power in East Asia.

ASEAN and its regional security forum, the ARF, are ineffectual and do little to resolve these contentious and highly volatile regional problems. Clearly, the forum reflects ASEAN’s general preference for avoiding controversies rather than confronting or resolving them (Tan 2004: 188). The ARF only builds transparency and confidence among member states and does not get embroiled in politically charged situations that can rock the regional system and undermine the status quo. The ASEAN and the ARF assume that most interstate disputes arise because of misunderstanding and lack of trust among states. Thus, these squabbles can be mitigated by more intense interstate communication and confidence-building measures. In reality, however, many historic and lingering conflicts stem from competition over scarce resources, territorial disputes,

strategic advantage, control over a certain population, tilting the balance of power, or from the desire to be the major hegemonic power in East Asia. These issues can only be resolved when the states involved (usually the great powers) agree to compromise or settle them through a systemic conflict or a hegemonic war (Vasquez 1993: 63). Communications nor confidence-building, by themselves, will never redefine what vital interests are involved nor will they resolve the clash of national interests.

Conscious of the limitation of the ASEAN Way in resolving territorial disputes and in managing tensions generated by the emergence of a great power in its backyard, the Philippines has found it necessary to rely on its alliance with the USA. The Philippines' current need for American diplomatic and military support in the face of China's expansionist actions in the South China Sea proves the continuing strategic relevance of Philippine-US security partnership in particular and of America's bilateral alliance network in East Asia in general.

The Philippine-US defense ties are part of a network of bilateral alliances—often called the “hub-and-spokes system”—that has sustained US strategic leadership in East Asia since the Korean War in the early 1950s. During the Cold War, the USA developed a system of separate but distinct bilateral alliances with Japan, South Korea, Thailand, and the Philippines, and a trilateral security arrangement with Australia and New Zealand. The Korean War in 1950 triggered the creation of this alliance system, which led the USA to sponsor a series of defense commitments to these countries that could ensure American participation in Asian security affairs (Simon 1988: 4). These security arrangements were formalized after the signing of a peace treaty with Japan in September 1951, and signing military alliances with the aforementioned Asia-Pacific countries. During the Eisenhower Administration, they were part of an overall US design to surround the Eurasian landmass with American and Allied military power (Greene 1968: 71–78).

The USA signed separate defense agreements with Japan, South Korea, Thailand, the Philippines, New Zealand, and Australia. These alliances, however, constituted a system in a number of ways. Firstly, they extended the American strategic deterrence from Western Europe to East Asia providing a Western military buttress against the Soviet Union and China, and the imminent process of regional decolonization (Tow and Feeney 1982: 2). Secondly, these treaties allowed the USA to maintain a credible military presence through the basing structures for American forward

deployment in East Asia. Thirdly, they enabled the USA to act as Asia's primary security guarantor and common contact for the region's non-communist armed forces. Fourthly, these so-called America's alliances made the USA dominate the terms and their conditions of these security pacts, and their dynamics. A significant feature of these alliances is that when they were formed, the USA bore the burden of sustaining them, while the allies were initially "free-riders." The partnership reflected power asymmetry in which the USA became the hub of the East Asian security wheel, with its spokes pointing to the individual allies in the region. The USA was able to control the separate agenda of each relationship without too much debate and sans the danger of being "ganged-up" on by its allies in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Consequently, to some degree, the Asian allies resented American domination of these alliances. Nevertheless, these alliances had an enduring effect on the USA and on the allies' foreign policies. They created an inertia or stasis born out of shared interests and bonds of anti-communism, which caused these security relationships to outlive the Cold War.

The Philippines' security ties with the USA were revitalized in the late twentieth century and became cohesive and relevant in the twenty-first century. History, however, shows a pattern of alliance disintegration as allies' interests and purposes change in the face of emerging threats or new global conditions. Interestingly, this trend does not apply to the Philippine-US alliance, as well as to US security relations with Japan and South Korea. These durable alliances have evolved from mere expedient and mechanical aggregations of national capabilities directed at a specific threat to something qualitatively different. Since the end of the Cold War in the early 1990s, the USA and its three Asian allies have institutionalized their efforts to minimize their competitive and divergent interests. They have developed a series of interactions to preserve their bilateral relations, and/or to form new patterns of security ties among them. Individually and collectively, they have devised diplomatic/strategic processes and built structures that create islands of stability amidst a sea of changes in the twenty-first-century regional security environment. In other words, they have designed new approaches as to security/political management to counter the centrifugal forces weakening their *raison d'être*, maximize their mutual benefits and minimize alliance cost, and promote their unity and cohesion. These innovations enable the alliances to adjust to a changing politico-security milieu (Snyder 1997: 165–166).

## THE GOAL: BALANCING AN EMERGENT CHINA

On 2 March 2011, two Chinese patrol boats harassed a survey ship commissioned by the Philippines' Department of Energy (DOE) to conduct oil exploration in the Reed Bank (now called Recto Bank), 150 kilometers east of the Spratly Islands and 250 kilometers west of the Philippine island of Palawan. The Aquino Administration was stunned by the Chinese action since this maritime encounter happened east of the Spratlys and within the country's adjacent waters. Two days after the incident, the Philippine government filed a protest before the Chinese embassy in Manila. In early June 2011, the Philippines sought clarification on the sightings of China Marine Surveillance (CMS) and People's Liberation Army's Navy (PLAN) ships near the Kalayaan group of islands. The Aquino Administration expressed serious concerns over Chinese encroachments into the country's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) to stake China's territorial claim and to possibly construct an oil rig on the uninhabited Iroquois Bank. According to the Philippine foreign affairs and defense departments, these Chinese actions "are clear violations of the China-ASEAN 2001 Declaration on the Conduct of Parties on the South China Sea" (Thayer 2011: 563). In response, the Chinese foreign ministry sternly told the Philippines to stop "harming China's sovereignty and maritime rights and interests, which leads to unilateral actions that can expand and complicate the South China Sea dispute" (BBC Monitoring Asia-Pacific, June 2011b: 1). It was Beijing's reaction to the Philippines' diplomatic protest against China's planned oil rig deep within the Philippines' EEZ. Consequently, President Aquino realized that the Philippines is potentially on a direct collision course with China regarding the South China Sea issue.

The 2 March 2011 incident at the Reed Bank and China's arrogant response to the Philippines' diplomatic queries prompted the Aquino Administration to hasten the development of the AFP's territorial defense capabilities. In June 2011, the executive branch of the Philippine government and the AFP agreed on a multi-year, multi-billion peso defense upgrade spending and military build-up. The Department of Budget Management (DBM) released a Multi-Year Obligation Authority (MOA) to the DND, allowing the AFP to enter into multi-year contracts with other governments or private arms and military hardware manufacturers. The DBM also committed Php40 billion (estimated US\$800 million) in the next five years (2012–2016) to develop the AFP's capabilities for greater domain awareness of the Philippine territorial waters and EEZ.

In the proposed “rolling” program, the executive branch would allocate through the Philippine Congress Php8 billion (an estimated US\$160 million) annually for the procurement of air-surveillance radar, surface attack aircraft, close air-support aircraft, combat utility helicopters, and long-range patrol aircraft (Depasupil, June 2011: 1). Also covered are current upgrade programs such as the installation of a radar and communication network along the coast of Palawan and East Mindanao under the Coast Watch South Project and the acquisition of three refurbished US Coast Guard *Hamilton*-class cutters for the Philippine Navy. These undertakings, according to former AFP Chief-of-Staff General Eduardo Oban Jr., prioritize territorial defense over domestic security.

In October 2011, DND Secretary Voltaire Gazmin released the Defense Planning Guidance (2013–2018) restructuring the AFP to a “lean but fully capable” armed forces to confront the challenges to the country’s territorial integrity and maritime security. It envisions the development of an effective force projection capability to monitor the Philippines’ territorial waters and EEZ. It contains the following measures (Gazmin, October 2011: 11–16):

- (a) Reduction of infantry and marine battalions and redirection of limited financial resources to key priorities such as theater mobility, close air support, air surveillance, and air defense;
- (b) Acquisition of naval assets for off-shore patrol, strategic sea-lift, and accompanying base support system and platform to sustain the deployed maritime assets;
- (c) Development of the AFP’s long-range maritime air patrol and surveillance through the acquisition of necessary assets and accompanying base support system; and
- (d) Reactivation of the Philippines’ Air Defense System (PADS) through the acquisition of air surveillance radar and a squadron of air defense/surface attack aircraft to provide air defense coverage over areas of high concern.

The Philippines’ short-term territorial defense goal is to establish a modest but “comprehensive border protection program.” This program is anchored on the surveillance, deterrence, and border patrol capabilities of the PAF, the PN, and the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) that extend from the country’s territorial waters to its contiguous and eventually to the country’s EEZ (National Security Council, April 2011: 39). This objec-

tive requires prioritizing the AFP's material and personnel requirements for territorial defense. However, the long-term goal, according to the 2011 *AFP's Strategic Intent*, is to develop the force structure and capabilities enabling the Philippine military to maintain a "credible deterrent posture against foreign intrusion or external aggression, and other illegal activities while allowing free navigation to prosper" (Office of the Deputy Chief-of-Staff 2011: 27).

Despite its determination to shift the AFP's focus from internal security to territorial defense, the Aquino Administration is constrained by insufficient financial resources even with its modest defense acquisition goals. Since 2011, the Philippine government could only acquire two former US Coast Guard cutters. It could not readily purchase such war materiel such as blue-water missile-armed ships, search-and-rescue vessels, naval helicopters, strategic sea-lift ships, and top-of-the-line interceptors that can be deployed to protect its oil exploration projects and territorial claims in the South China Sea. To acquire the necessary equipment for territorial defense, the AFP waited for the Philippine Congress to legislate the extension of the AFP modernization law (Republic Act 7898) after it expired in February 2010. In December 2012, the Philippine Congress passed and President Aquino signed Republic Act No. 10349 authorizing the extension of the original AFP modernization law. The law, however, allots only Php75 billion (US1. 5 billion) for the next five years. This amount is miniscule for the purchase of modern fighter planes, missile-armed frigates, sea-and-land-based missile systems, patrol vessels, and long-range reconnaissance planes along with support facilities such as radar sites, forward operating bases, hangar, communication, maintenance, and command and control facilities.

In 2012, the Center for New American Security (CNAS) released a study on Philippine defense requirements in the face of China's growing assertiveness in the South China Sea. The study argues that for the Philippines to have a credible defense capability, the AFP should acquire 48 upgraded F-16 fighter planes, several corvette or frigate-type surface combatants, and 4–6 midget submarines (Asia News Monitor, July 2012c: 1). However, this necessity is beyond what the AFP is planning for and how much the government is willing to finance with its scarce defense budget. Moreover, the AFP's current build-up for territorial defense capabilities is a very expensive undertaking because, in many cases, the military has to start from scratch. For example, the Philippine air defense capability is actually zero because the PAF is practically a helicopter air force without



any fighter planes. It has only one operational radar with a very limited coverage area (Kintanar 2012: 35–48). The PAF needs to develop and acquire radars, hangars, forward operating bases, maintenance, as well as command and control facilities. The PN plans to acquire two state-of-the-art frigates which require communications and weapons systems and mission essential devices such as day/night electronic navigational equipment, communication suites, safety of life at sea, propulsion and seamanship and ship-handling gears, and corresponding logistic support packages.

### LEVERAGING ON THE HUB

A significant factor behind the Aquino Administration's bold moves to confront China in the South China Sea dispute, despite its military inadequacies, is the country's alliance with the USA. The Aquino Administration is aware that no amount of financial resources will enable the Philippines to face an assertive China in the South China Sea. The AFP's maritime border patrol system is designed for limited deterrence and asymmetric combat but not for naval warfare. Specifically, the PN's and PAF's capabilities for early warning, surveillance, and command, control, and communication are directed toward maritime defense and interdiction operations. This current military build-up merely complements the deterrence provided by the US forward deployment and bilateral alliances in East Asia. In the final analysis, the Philippines' territorial defense stance is predicated upon the US's assertion of its position as the dominant naval power in the Pacific.

Prior to 1992, the Philippine-US security relations were kept intact by several bilateral defense arrangements. The two countries became formal allies in 1951 upon signing of the RP-US Mutual Defense Treaty (MDT). They also became members of the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) in 1956. However, the most important of these bilateral defense arrangements is the 1947 RP-US Military Bases Agreement, which facilitated the hosting of major American naval and air facilities in the Philippine territory. These US military bases in the Philippines extended vital logistical support to American forward-deployed forces operating in Southeast Asia, the Indian Ocean, and even in the Persian Gulf during the Cold War. Furthermore, these air and naval assets acted as *de facto* armed forces against external threats since the Philippine military was primarily involved in internal security operations (AFP Modernization Board 2007: 1). With the withdrawal of these American military facilities in the country in 1992,

the alliance assumed a form different from the previous alliance configuration.

The US global war on terror in 2001 and the tension in the US-China relation after 2008 augured well for the Philippines' security agenda vis-à-vis an expansionist China. The revitalized Philippine-US alliance achieved two strategic objectives. One, the Philippine government received US support for its counter-terrorism/counter-insurgency campaigns. Two, the USA deepened its alliance with the Philippines not only to neutralize terrorist groups, but also to counter Beijing's political and economic influence in the country. Consequently, the USA regularly provides technical and military assistance to the AFP to firm up its security partnership with the Philippines against China's naval might and assertiveness.

The Philippines maintains strong security ties with the USA through the 60-year-old Mutual Defense Treaty (MDT). The Philippines regards the American military presence in the Asia-Pacific as a stabilizing force, considering the growing complexity of security challenges confronting the region (National Security Council, April 2011: 16). In 2010, China's bullying behavior in the South China Sea caught the attention of the US-Philippine Mutual Defense Board (MDB), the liaison and consultative body that oversees the Philippine-US defense posture against external threats. The MDB annual meeting on 18 August 2010 discussed the security challenges that the allies face such as terrorism, domestic insurgency, and potential flashpoints specifically the maritime dispute in the South China Sea. Both countries decided to complement each other's military capabilities, enhance interoperability between their armed services, and strengthen the AFP's territorial defense capabilities with tangible US security assistance, and joint training exercises. These joint exercises are as follows<sup>1</sup>:

- (a) *Amphibious Landing Exercise (PHILBEX0)*—an annual, bilateral training exercise conducted by the US Marine and Naval Forces with the AFP in order to strengthen interoperability and working relationships in a wide range of military operations from disaster relief to complex expeditionary operations. An estimated 3500 US marines and sailors from the Third Marine Expeditionary Brigade (3rd MEB) and approximately 1200 AFP counterparts conduct joint training activities in several parts of the Philippines.
- (b) *Balikatan Exercise (Shoulder-to-Shoulder)*—an annual the Philippine-US military bilateral training exercise and humanitarian assistance

mission. The annual *Balikatan* exercise focuses on the training of both armed forces for HADR and other humanitarian crises that endanger public health and safety. It also helps develop a high-level of interoperability between the US military and the AFP, and enhances military-to-military relations and combined combat capabilities. The Philippine and US armed service members perform humanitarian and civic assistance projects in various parts of the Philippines.

- (c) *Cooperation Afloat Readiness And Training (CARAT)*— a series of bilateral military exercises between the US Navy and the armed forces of several South and Southeast Asian armed forces including the AFP. Each phase of the CARAT Exercises is based on the shared goal of the host country. However, the US Navy makes sure that all CARAT exercises have the common theme of developing maritime security capabilities, and increasing interoperability among the participants. Skill areas conducted during CARAT include Maritime Interception Operations; riverine, amphibious, and underwater warfare operations; and diving and salvage operations, naval gunnery and maneuvering events along with HADR operations.

The Philippines and the USA also hold a bilateral strategic dialogue annually. The dialogue provides an opportunity for the foreign and defense departments of the two countries “to affirm the strength of the Philippine-U.S. alliance and the dynamic [security] partnership for peace, security, and stability” (Targeted News Service, January 2011: 1–2). In late January 2011, the first bilateral strategic dialogue discussed current security challenges and identified new areas for cooperation. The allies also agreed to upgrade their mutual capabilities in maritime security through the following (Co-Chair’s Statement, January 2011: 10): (a) USA funding support to the AFP’s Capability Upgrade Program (CUP), especially in the acquisition of equipment, and refurbishing and maintenance of existing AFP materiel; and (b) the provision of additional funding of (US\$40 million) for the Coast Watch South project to boost the Philippine military’s surveillance, communication, and interdiction capabilities in the South China Sea.

In November 2011, the Philippines and the USA signed a joint communiqué on the 60-year-old MDT, declaring their mutual interest in maintaining the freedom of navigation, unimpeded lawful commerce, and

the transit of people across the seas (Asia News Monitor, November 2011: 2). The allies expressed their adherence to a rules-based approach to resolve competing maritime claims through peaceful, collaborative, multi-lateral, and diplomatic processes within the framework of international law. The communiqué also stated that the MDT has never been stronger and will continue to expand in the twenty-first century to enhance the Philippine military's defense, interdiction, and apprehension capabilities in the country's maritime domain.

The two allies held the second bilateral strategic dialogue was held in Washington, D.C. in January 2012. It was aimed to "shift the [security] partnership into a higher gear at a time when the two countries' ties have become broad-based, modern, mature, and resilient" (Esplanada, 28 October 2011: 1–2). During the talks, Philippine foreign affairs and defense officials asked their counterparts for increased in US military presence in the country. They decided to streamline the diplomatic clearance process for US personnel and ships entering the country for combined training and interoperability (Whaley, 27 January 2012: 1 and 3). The two countries completed negotiations on the "Framework Agreement on Increased Rotational Presence and Enhanced Agreement (IRP)." The IRP facilitates the deployment of American troops and equipment on a rotational basis, thus circumventing the sensitive issue of re-establishing US bases in the country. Interestingly, the negotiations were conducted amidst escalating tension between the Philippines and China over the South China Sea dispute. With its small and obsolete naval force and an almost non-existent air force, the Philippines relies on US assistance to improve the AFP's defense posture through short-term regular visits by US forces that conduct military training as well as humanitarian and disaster response operations. More importantly, the Philippines banks on the deterrent effect of the temporary deployment of US forces and equipment in its territory.

On 28 April 2014, Defense Secretary Voltaire Gazmin and US Ambassador to the Philippines Philip Goldberg signed the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement (EDCA) a few hours before President Obama arrived to Manila for his first state visit. Actually, EDCA is not a new agreement since it merely updates and enhances the 1951 Mutual Defense Treaty (Philippines News Agency, 28 April 2014: 1). This executive agreement provides the framework by which the Philippines and the USA can develop their individual and collective (defense) capabilities. Such task can be accomplished through the rotational deployment of

American forces in Philippine bases (Garamone, 28 April 2014: 1). The EDCA allows American forces to utilize AFP owned and controlled facilities, but the Philippine base commander has unhampered access to those locations. Likewise, the US military can build or improve the infrastructure inside these installations: Nonetheless, the AFP can jointly use them. Furthermore, any construction and other activities within in the Philippine bases require the consent of the host country through the MDB and the Security Engagement Board (SEB).

Through the EDCA, US forces can implement innovative forms of access arrangement in the Philippines, namely<sup>2</sup>: (a) forward operating sites—expandable warm military facilities with limited US military support presence; and (b) cooperative security locations—facilities with little or no permanent American presence and are maintained by the host nation. These less expensive, less visible, and less vulnerable access arrangements offer greater strategic and operational flexibility. They are less likely to create local political problems and are expected to promote long-term security cooperation between the USA and the Philippines. More importantly, these operationally flexible facilities located all over a sprawling archipelagic country located near China can complicate the PLA's anti-access/area/denial strategy. Moreover, the use of air and naval infrastructure all over the country will facilitate the rapid and massive deployment of American forces in case of an armed confrontation in the South China Sea, and possibly even in the East China Sea. Though the maritime row in the South China Sea will be a long-term security challenge and will never be solved solely through force, the potential for an armed conflict requires the presence of an effective US deterrent force in the region. The EDCA is aimed to generate this kind of deterrence.

### LEVERAGING ON THE SPOKES

A dynamic partnership with the USA enables the Philippines to strategize its territorial/maritime defense through domain awareness. Therefore, the Philippines persistently develops its military interoperability with the USA and executes naval diplomacy, targeted engagement, and security assistance arrangements to improve the country's maritime security (Office of the Secretary of National Defense, 11 October 2011: 18). Enhanced strategic engagements with the USA also necessitate the linking of the Philippines with other American allies in East Asia such as Japan, South

Korea, and Australia. The Philippines' *2011 National Security Policy* underscored the need to maintain security ties and to reaffirm its alliance with the USA since the American military presence is a major stabilizing factor in the region (National Security Council, 38). It also proposed that the Philippines must pursue its cooperation arrangements with ASEAN, Japan, South Korea, India, and Australia, among others. Meanwhile, the AFP's *2011 Strategic Intent* stated that while the Philippines has only one formal defense treaty (the 1951 MDT with the USA), it will be beneficial for it to engage and strengthen its relationship with 17 countries that have signed security cooperation agreements with the AFP. Australia, Japan, India, and South Korea are among those countries (Office of the Deputy-of-Staff, 34).

The Philippines' efforts to forge security ties with Japan, South Korea, and Australia are hedged on its strategic bets in the light of its limited military capabilities. They likewise augment the country's alliance with the USA that serves as a major deterrence against external threats. The *2010 Strategic Direction of AFP International Military Affairs* indicated that the Philippine military shall maximize gains from the alliance with the USA, while seeking security arrangements with other potential allies such as Australia, South Korea, and Japan which are key players in the Asia-Pacific region (Office of Plans and Program, May 2010: 2). The document also confirmed that the Philippines intends to develop relations with them to enhance the country's security and develop its military (specifically territorial defense) capabilities (Ibid., 2).

The Philippines' strategy of linking the spokes of the bilateral alliances together jibes with Washington's agenda of revitalizing America's well-established alliances in Northeast Asia and deepening America's security relationship in South and Southeast Asia (Denmark and Burton 2010: 58). This is Washington's positive response to the geo-strategic significance of the littoral states of East and Southeast Asia (from the Sea of Japan to the Bay of Bengal) which is rapidly emerging as the most politically, economically, and strategically important area. With the US strategic pivot to Asia, linking the bilateral alliances is one way of reassuring the allies (especially those that are confronted by increased Chinese assertiveness on maritime disputes over the Senkaku Islands in East Asia and the Spratly Islands in the South China Sea) that the USA has the ability and will to fulfill its security commitments in the Asia-Pacific region for decades to come (Saunders 2013: 9).

*Engaging Japan in Fostering Maritime Security*

Historically, the Philippines and Japan have maintained vigorous economic and transnational relations. Both countries adhere to democratic governance, civil and political liberties, free trade, freedom of navigation, and respect for human rights. Furthermore, they are US allies whose maritime security is threatened by China's renewed aggressiveness in its maritime domain (National Institute for Defense Studies 2012). In 2005, the two countries started the yearly Political-Military Dialogue which tackles several security issues of common interests such as the situation in the Korean Peninsula, China's arms build-up, the South China Sea dispute, nuclear proliferation in Asia, and maritime security.

However, Japan's ability to forge closer security relations with the Philippines is restrained by its pacifist 1947 constitution. Despite this restriction, the two countries cooperate bilaterally by (a) enhancing maritime security through joint activities by their respective Coast Guards; (b) conducting joint counter-terrorism and UN peacekeeping trainings; (c) countering nuclear-arms proliferation; and (d) facilitating the rotational deployment of forward-deployed US forces in East Asia. Since 2011, Japan has closely monitored China's increasingly heavy-handed behavior in the South China Sea in which initially, it has no direct interest.

In July 2011, then Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda and President Aquino agreed to bolster security relations between Japan and the Philippines. After President Aquino's third visit to Japan, Tokyo and Manila announced the holding of an elevated dialogue on maritime and oceanic affairs, exchanges between Filipino and Japanese defense and maritime officials, as well as Japan's capacity-building training of the 3500-strong PCG (Jane's Country Risk Daily Report, 09 September 2011: 1). In September 2011, then Japanese Prime Minister Naoto Kan and President Aquino issued a joint statement in Tokyo, "affirming that the South China Sea connects the Asia-Pacific to the world, and that peace and stability therein is of common interest to the international community" (Esguerra, 28 September 2011: 1). Prime Minister Kan also instructed the Japanese Coast Guard (JCG) to train the PCG, hold consultations with Filipino naval officers, and increase joint coast guard exercises (Hookway and Koh, 28 September 2011: 1).

The Obama Administration's Strategic Rebalancing to Asia provides further impetus for Japan to balance China in the South China Sea. This policy initiative occurred when China was moving beyond its initial

strategic focus on Taiwan toward developing its naval capabilities that generates regional tension by challenging the claims of smaller littoral states over parts of the South China Sea. In November 2011, President Obama announced before the Australian Parliament that with the American involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan coming to a close, the USA was refocusing on the fast-growing but pervasively Chinese influenced Asia-Pacific region (Nicholas and Parson, 19 November 2011: 1). This new policy involves a substantial reorientation of US global strategy and a shift from the post-9/11 focus on the war of terror to a rebalancing of American attention, efforts, and resources to meet the challenges and to seize opportunities in East Asia. Succinctly, it implies that the USA is prepared to ensure stability in Asia, protect its allies, and strategically balance, and not confront, an assertive China.

The shift also requires strengthening US strategic presence in Japan and South Korea, which will remain the strategy's cornerstone, even as Washington also builds up its security relationship with other states in the region, especially those in and around Southeast Asia (Flournoy and Davidson, July/August 2012: 59). Specific to the South China Sea issue, the Obama Administration has accentuated its vital interest on ensuring the freedom of navigation on the sea lanes in the South China Sea that can only be guaranteed if it remains a global common, that is, it belongs to all states and is not subject to a sovereign control by a single powerful regional state. In line with this policy, the Obama Administration supports the formation of a maritime coalition in the South China Sea to balance China. To complement the US initiative of the coalition, Japan currently pursues defense cooperation and naval exchanges with these the Philippines and Vietnam (Ross, November/December 2012: 79).

In April 2012, at the start of the two-month stand-off between Philippine and Chinese civilian ships at Scarborough Shoal, Japanese Ambassador to the Philippines Toshio Urabe emphasized the "close-knit triangular relationship among Japan, the Philippines, and their closest (mutual) ally—the U.S." (Asia News Monitor, 11 April 2012d: 1). Then in May 2012, three MSDF surface combatants arrived in Manila for a four-day port call (Ibid., 1). The visit came after Tokyo announced its plans to provide the Philippines with ten new patrol vessels to bolster the latter's maritime patrol capability. The newspaper *Yomiuri Shimbun* linked the ship visit to the on-going Scarborough Shoal stand-off and editorialized that Japan could not just stand idly by and wait for China and the Philippines to clash openly (Ibid., 1). It also stressed that it is in "Japan's



national interest to ensure that its sea-lanes remain safe” (Ibid., 1). Interestingly, the MSDF’s ship visit to the Philippines happened just a few days after the US Navy’s Virginia-class attack submarine, the *USS North Carolina*, made a supposedly port call at Subic Bay in Luzon. Actually, these ship visits were routine port calls. However, they were made during the Scarborough stalemate and were extensively publicized. In a sense, Washington and Tokyo were insinuating that they would not hesitate to act jointly if the Philippines were threatened by any form of Chinese armed aggression (Almazan, 18 May 2012: 1).

In July 2012, then Japanese Defense Minister Satoshi Morimoto and his Filipino counterpart, Voltaire Gazmin, inked a bilateral agreement on maritime security (Jane’s Country Risk Daily Report, 4 July 2012: 1). The agreement calls for high-level dialogues between defense officials and reciprocal visits by the MSDF chief-of-staff and the PN flag commander. It also features various security related activities such as the Multinational Cooperation Program in the Asia-Pacific (MCAP); Multilateral Logistic Staff Talks (MLST); Training Exchanges and Subject Matter Exchanges on HADR and Logistics; and Exchange Visits and Student Exchanges in the two countries’ respective Staff Colleges. A few days later, Philippine Foreign Affairs Secretary Albert del Rosario announced that Tokyo was likely to provide the PCG with ten 40-meter boats as part of Japan’s ODA to the Philippines by the end of the year (Esplanada, 9 July 2012: 1). Newspapers also reported that two additional bigger vessels are being considered for transfer to the Philippine government under a grant.

In January 2013, Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida announced the provision of essential communication system equipment to PCG for maritime safety (Asia News Monitor, 14 January 2013c: 1). On 27 June 2013, Japanese Defense Minister Itsunori Onodera and his Philippine counterpart, Voltaire Gazmin, confirmed the continuous “exchanges of information aimed at strengthening Philippine-Japan defense relations and on working together to make U.S. strategic rebalancing a reality in Asia” (BBC Monitoring Asia-Pacific, 27 June 2013: 2). To further defense cooperation the Asian allies undertake these activities (Embassy of Japan, 27 June 2013: 1): reciprocal visits between the Chief of Staff of the Japanese Maritime Self-Defense Forces (JMSDF) and the Flag Officer if the Philippine Navy (PN); the holding of the Japan-Philippine Maritime Chief of Staff Meeting; Port calls in the Philippines by JMSDF vessels; and active participation in the Pacific Partnership 2012. The two defense ministers also extended the two countries’ security cooperation to the field of

aviation which was highlighted by the visit to the Philippines by the Chief-of-Staff of the Japanese Air Defense Force (JASDF). During the same meeting, Secretary Gazmin also raised the possibility of allowing the Japanese SDF access to the former American military bases in the Philippines if Tokyo is interested in such arrangement (Ibid., 2).

In December 2013, President Aquino met Prime Minister Abe in Tokyo and discussed China's establishment of an Air Defense Identification Zone (ADIZ) in the East China Sea (Jiji Press, 13 December 2013: 1). President Aquino was worried that China might extend the zone into the South China Sea, adversely affecting Philippine security. Prime Minister Abe assured President Aquino that Japan would not allow China to change the regional status quo by force, and would cooperate with the Philippines to ensure that the freedom of flight and navigation will not be infringed (Ibid., 1). To cap their one-on-one meeting, the two leaders signed the agreement on the yen-based soft loans to finance the 10 Japanese patrol boats for the PCG.

In June 2014, President Aquino and Prime Minister Abe met in Tokyo and discussed China's ambition to become a major naval power in East Asia (Gulf News, 25 June 2014: 1). Areas of possible cooperation were explored to enhance the recently forged Philippine-Japan Strategic Partnership (Ibid., 1). President Aquino followed up the PCG's request for ten brand new 40-meter-long multi-role patrol boats that are financed through a US\$184 million soft loan from the Japan International Cooperation Agency (Ibid., 1). Prime Minister Abe told President Aquino that three of the vessels would be delivered in 2015 while the other seven will be made available for the PCG in 2016. The PCG declared that the ten new boats will be used to patrol the waters around the seven islands claimed and occupied by the Philippine forces in the Spratlys. They will also be deployed to monitor the presence of foreign naval vessels in the several reefs and shoals within the country's EEZ that are currently occupied by Chinese forces. Prime Minister Abe also promised to provide VSAR and Inmarsat communication systems to the PCG for its maritime domain operations.

### *Engaging South Korea as a Long-Time Security Partner*

The Philippines and South Korea have a long history that had been forged in blood. The Philippine-South Korea diplomatic relations were formally established in 1949. The strength of this relationship was tested during

the Korean War when the Philippines deployed the Philippine Expeditionary Forces as part of the US-led UN forces that defended the Republic of Korea against the aggression of the communist North Korea. The Philippines was the only Southeast Asian state that sent a sizeable force to fight in the Korean War. Both countries are also US allies that share common interests in maintaining security and stability in Northeast Asia, and in ensuring that North Korea behaves responsibly in the interest of regional peace.

In May 1994, the Philippines and South Korea signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on Logistics Cooperation and Defense Cooperation which was amended in July 2007. It specifically directs both countries to identify specific firms in their respective defense industry that will participate in a cooperative defense project. The two countries' militaries conduct various defense-related activities such as sharing of and intelligence information; mutual exchange of visit by military personnel and experts; military education and training; and humanitarian assistance and international peacekeeping activities. They also hold regular annual meetings such as the following<sup>3</sup>: (a) The Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP)-Republic of South Korea Armed Forces (ROKAF) Intelligence Exchange Conference; (b) The Army-to-Army Intelligence Exchange Conference; and (c) the Joint Committee Meeting on Logistic and Defense Industry Cooperation between the Republic of the Philippines and the Republic of South Korea. In 2008, the DND acquired various types of ammunition for its light artillery units from Poongsan and Hanwa Corporations, two well-known South Korean arms manufacturers.

In November 2011, President Aquino announced the PAF's planned purchase of two squadrons of second-hand F-16C/D through the US Excess Defense Articles (EDA) (Grevatt, 1 January 2012: 1). This acquisition, however, might cause tremendous financial strain to the AFP which is still actively engaged in internal security operations. In fact, relative to its role in Oplan *Bayanihan*, the PAF still carries certain counter-insurgency/counter-terrorism functions: (a) intelligence-surveillance-reconnaissance (ISR); (b) precision-attack to minimize collateral damages in its ground support operations; and (c) education and information dissemination campaign to win the people's hearts and minds. In the same month, then South Korean President Lee Myung Bak and President Aquino discussed recent developments in the Korean Peninsula and in the South China Sea. They expressed hope that their security cooperation

could produce peaceful solutions to these two separate conflicts according to international law, norms, and standards. President Aquino reiterated the AFP's need to acquire specific defense materiel such as surface combatants, and training aircraft.

In May 2012, President Aquino hinted that the PAF might acquire brand new lead-in jet trainers that could be converted into fighter planes by modifying their air-frame (Calica, 17 May 2012). In an interview, President Aquino admitted that the government found it too expensive to buy, much more to maintain, second-hand fourth-generation jet fighters, which only have five serviceable years. A sound alternative, he said, is to buy cheaper new fighter aircraft from the United Kingdom, France, or Italy, or South Korea.

In 2012, the Philippine government started negotiating a government-to-government procurement agreement with South Korea for the purchase of 12 Korean Aerospace Industries (KAI) F/A-50 Golden Eagles. The F/A-50's design was largely patterned after the US-designed Lockheed Martin F-16 "Fighting Falcons." Both fighter planes have similar features: single engine, speed, size, cost, and the range of weapons system. These interceptors could secure the Philippines' air-space and function as trainer planes to develop the PAF pilots' "air command maneuvering (ACM)" skills (Asia News Monitor, 21 October 2013b: 1). Talks on the F/A-50's price, weapons and navigation systems, and technical and logistic support ensued. During his two-day state visit in South Korea on 17–18 October 2013, President Aquino said that both governments were finalizing the deal worth Php18.9 billion (estimated US\$450 million). Once turned over to the Philippines, these jet fighters would serve as the PAF's interim interceptors until the defense budget could afford to purchase and maintain fourth-generation fighter planes.

Eventually, after nearly two years of hard and tedious negotiations, the Philippines finally signed a contract with Korea Aerospace Industries (KAI) for the acquisition of 12 F/A-50 fighter planes for the PAF in March 2014. Under a government—to—government contact guaranteed by the state-owned Korea-Trade Promotion Agency (KOTRA), the KAI would deliver the fighter planes to the PAF in the next 38 months. During the negotiations, the KAI persuaded the PAF that the F/A-50 fighter jet is best suited for its requirement for a fighter jet plane capable of air-to-air mid-distance attack and night fighting capabilities (BBC Monitoring Asia-Pacific, 28 March 2014: 1). The 12 F/A-50s "Fighting Eagles" will act as interim jet fighters while the PAF waits for proper funding and training

which will allow it to procure fourth-generation multi-role combat interceptors.

This was the PAF's first major aircraft acquisition after the Philippines bought 25 F-8 Crusader fighter-bombers from the USA in 1979 to supplement its squadrons of pre-Vietnam War F-5 aircraft. However, due to wear, tear, and lack of spare parts, the PAF F-8s and F-5s were decommissioned in 1988 and 2005, respectively. This long-awaited acquisition was a key event in the country's strategic history. This was the AFP's first major ticket item acquisition since it came out with its modernization plan in the early 1990s.

### *Jump-Starting the Philippine-Australia Security Relations*

The 1995 Philippine-Australia Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperative Defense Activities provides the legal basis for the Philippine-Australian security relations. It enables the Australian Defense Force and the AFP to undertake several defense-related activities in the holding of mutually beneficial cooperative defense activities such as the MTA *LUMBAS* (2001), the First Philippines-Australia Maritime Surveillance Exercise (MARSUVEX), and the Australian hosted multilateral Fleet Concentration Period Exercise *KAKADU* (International Affairs Division, June 2014: 1). Aside from these military exercises, there are regular exchange visits by Filipino and Australian defense and high-ranking military officials to boost confidence-building measures and regular intelligence exchanges on various security issues. Consequently, in a 2006 bilateral review, the Australian government described its security relations with the Philippines as "very strong" and based on friendly ties, as well as common strategic interests in a secure, stable and prosperous region (Xinhua News Agency, 25 August 2006: 1).

The Philippines and Australia are formal US treaty allies that are also engaged in joint security training. The two countries' navies hold an annual naval exercise labeled Philippine Navy-Royal Australian Navy Exercise *LUMBAS* to enhance their interoperability and readiness. The Philippine Army and the Royal Australian Army conducted Land Activity Dawn *Caracha* which focused on the training of Special Forces units. The Australian military has trained senior AFP officers in Australian military schools, and the provided 28 flat-bottomed airboats for combat and disaster relief operations. Both countries also cooperate in counter-terrorism training under the Philippine-Australia Capacity Building Project, which

began in July 2001 during the term of former Australian Prime Minister John Howard. The project provides financial and technical assistance to the Philippines for law-enforcement, immigration, and port and transport security. Since 2005, Australia has provided financial and technical support to the Coast Watch South project.

In 2007, the Philippines and Australia signed the Philippine-Australia Status-of-Forces Agreement (SOFA). The agreement follows the format of the Philippine-US Visiting Forces Agreement (VFA) signed in 1997. The SOFA provides legal guarantees to Australian forces conducting joint counter-terrorism exercises in the Philippines. It also commits the ADF to advise the AFP on its logistics, and acquisition policy. The SOFA, however, does not oblige either party to assist the other in case of an armed attack by a third party. Merely, it covers issues of jurisdiction over Australian troops during training exercises in the Philippines and vice-versa. In October 2011, then Australian Foreign Minister Kevin Rudd discussed with Foreign Affairs Secretary Del Rosario key regional and bilateral matters. They also talked about enhanced cooperation on disaster response, consolidation of defense-counter-terrorism measures, and crucial on maritime security concerns, such as the South China Sea dispute. Although Australia is not a claimant state in the South China Sea dispute, it shares with the Philippines the strategic interest of “unimpeded access to the region’s maritime commons” (BBC Monitoring Asia-Pacific, 20 October 2011a: 1).

In July 2012, after five years of intense debates and deliberations, the Philippine Senate finally ratified the agreement. As mentioned earlier, the SOFA contains the detailed legal framework for the Philippine-Australian military activities such as the Coast Watch South project and the Joint Maritime Training Activity *Lumbas*. After the Philippine Senate ratification of the SOFA, the DND announced that Australia looked forward to joining the annual Philippine-US *Balikatan* (Shoulder-to-Shoulder) joint military exercise (Asia News Monitor, 13 November 2012a: 1). In October 2013, the two countries’ defense ministers created the Joint Defense Cooperation Working Group (JDCC) and the Defense Cooperation Working Group (DCWG) to enhance their countries’ defense relations through the annual conduct of the previously mentioned Army-to-Army exercise Dawn *Caracha*, Dusk *Caracha*, and the Navy-to-Navy Maritime Training Activity *Lumbas* and *Kakadu* and the Air Force Training Pitch Black (International Affairs Division, 1). Eventually, the Australian Defense Force sent 68 participants to the Philippine-U.S. *Balikatan* Exercise 2014.

With improving Philippine-Australian security relations, President Aquino offered Australia a strategic partnership similar to what the country has forged with the USA and Japan (Asia News Monitor, 19 October 2012b: 1). He commented that both countries have been usually on the same side of issues that confronted them during World War II, the Korean War, and the Vietnam War (Ibid., 2). He added that Australia and the Philippines share the same values, and have similar forms of government, as well as face the same regional and global challenges.

### THE HUB-AND-SPOKES SYSTEM IN ACTION: THE CASE OF OPERATION *DAMAYAN* (SHARING)

Given the Philippines' geographic predisposition to natural calamities such as typhoons volcanic eruptions, and earthquakes, the AFP becomes the government's crucial conveyor of humanitarian assistance and disaster relief. From the Philippine military's perspective, the deployment of military personnel and equipment across the archipelago allows the AFP to be the first responders after a natural disaster (Gomez 2014: 142–152). However, the widespread destruction of lives and properties in the aftermath of Typhoon Haiyan exposed the AFP's weakness in terms of HADR operations. Although the government immediately ordered the deployment of troops to the typhoon-devastated areas, the AFP's HADR operations were hampered by the shortage of large troop carriers, the lack of basic provisions including food, heavy equipment, reliable communication technology, helicopters, and strategic sea and airlift capabilities (Jacobs, 1–2). Consequently, 48 hours after Typhoon Haiyan made a land-fall in the island provinces of the Visayas, the Philippine government had no other recourse but to request for American assistance.

Promptly, then US Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel directed the Pacific Command to support the US government's humanitarian assistance and disaster relief operations in the Philippines (US Department of Defense, 11 November 2013: 1). The morning after Typhoon Haiyan's onslaught, the Joint Special Operations Task Force—Philippines (JSTOF-P) conducted aerial reconnaissance missions over the disaster-ravaged areas. As the full extent of the devastation became apparent, the JSTOF-P quickly launched HADR operations (Anonymous, January–March 2014: 53–58). In subsequent days, lead elements of the Third Marine Expeditionary Brigade from Okinawa arrived in the Philippines. With the support of the US Marines, the American HADR operations



shifted to surface maritime search and rescue (SAR), airborne maritime SAR, medium-heavy helicopter lift support, fixed-wing lift support, and logistic enablers (US Department of Defense, 1). The US Marines also brought 22 MV-22 Ospreys to deliver relief assistance, ferry passenger, and survey damages and devastations in areas inaccessible by other means of transportation. On 15 November, the *USS George Washington* and its escorts arrived in the Philippines upon the order of Secretary Chuck Hagel. On board the ship was Carrier Wing 5, which was designated for HADR. In the next four days, the US Pacific Command deployed 2150 Marines and sailors ashore, and some 50 ships and aircraft to help distribute food, water, and other supplies, and speed up the delivery of relief supplies; facilitate the movement of AFP/PNP units by reopening roads, ports, and airports (Asia News Monitor, 27 November 2013d: 1).

Other US allies joined in the HADR operation in the aftermath of Typhoon Haiyan. The Australia Defense Force (ADF) deployed a C-17A Globemaster and a C-130 that airlifted doctors, paramedics, and logistic support staff to the disaster areas. After delivering the ADF's HADR contingent to Leyte, the two planes were used for delivering relief supplies and transporting more than 5800 passengers, including 3500 internally displaced persons. Australia also sent the *HMAS Tobruk* to deliver 110 tons of humanitarian assistance and Australian engineers from the Third Combat Engineer Regiment to Leyte (Mena Report, 19 December 2013: 1). Japan sent three Maritime Self-Defense Force (MSDF) destroyers carrying nearly 1000 Ground Self-Defense Force to deliver emergency supplies to the remote areas of Samar and Leyte (Obe et al., 21 November 2013: 1). Japan also dispatched three CH-46 transport helicopters, three UH-1 utility helicopters, transport vessel *Osumi*, two KC-767 air tankers, seven C-130 transport aircraft, and U-4 utility support aircraft to assist multilateral forces involved in the massive international HADR operations in the Central Philippines (Asia News Monitor, 27 November 2013a: 1). Finally, the Republic of Korea deployed two C-130s and sent a 529-military contingent consisting of engineers, doctors, and technical specialists for relief and recovery operations. Members of the ROK contingent were deployed in several towns in Leyte and Samar where they remained for six months (Gulf News, 29 December 2013: 1).

The allies' combined efforts demonstrated how the hub-and-spokes system of bilateral alliance can operate in peace and possibly, even in a wartime situation. For the Philippines, the involvement of the USA and its allies affirmed American commitment to its security partners and the reli-



ability its bilateral system of alliances. From a strategic perspective, the massive HADR operation labeled *Damayyan* in the Philippines offered tangible benefits—the ability to operate in far-flung places, build military-to-military relations, and get first-hand training or experience on interoperability. All this flurry of activities can be applied in the alliances’ primary mission—fighting and winning wars (Talmadge, 18 November 2013: 1). The out-pouring of America’s and its allies’ humanitarian efforts and assistance to the thousands of Filipinos left homeless, sick, and hungry by Typhoon Haiyan was a monumental show of support to the Philippines, and an impressive expression of the hub-and-spokes system’s cohesion and ability to respond even to a crisis situation that China might trigger in the region (Jacobs, 15 November 2013b: 9).

### LINKING SPOKES IN A BALANCE?

The future of this Philippines’ policy of balancing China by leveraging on America’s bilateral alliances in East Asia, however, is on the balance in the light of the election of Davao City Mayor Rodrigo R. Duterte as the president of the Philippines. During the presidential campaign, then Mayor Duterte was critical of the Aquino Administrations’ foreign policy agenda of challenging China’s maritime expansion in the South China Sea by fostering closer security relations with the USA and Japan (Steinbock, 20 May 2016: 1). He declared that he is willing to have bilateral talks with China over the West Philippine Sea/South China Sea dispute (Rauhala, 10 May 2016: 1). He also suggested the possibility of joint exploration with China of the South China Sea’s natural resources. Mayor Duterte was highly critical of the Philippine-US alliance as he said that he has little confidence that the USA would honor its treaty commitment to the Philippines when it comes to the South China Sea dispute (Feith, 18 May 2016: 2).

After the election, however, President Duterte altered his tune. On Election Day, Mayor Duterte announced that if became president he would settle the territorial disputes in the South China Sea through multilateral negotiations that would include allies such as the USA, Japan, and Australia as well as (other) claimant states. This was a volte-face of his earlier statements about relying on bilateral negotiation and joint developments with China to resolve the territorial rows in the South China Sea. President Duterte also announced that he “will never surrender the Philippines’ sovereign right over Scarborough Shoal” after holding talks

with China's ambassador to Manila Zhang Jianhua. He also revealed that he did not discuss the South China Sea dispute with the Chinese envoy because the Philippines is still anticipating the arbitral tribunal's decision on the Philippines' claim against China in the Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA) in the Hague.<sup>4</sup>

The Duterte Administration's turnaround from its earlier pronouncements on improving the Philippines' relations with China at all cost is shown by its behavior in the aftermath of the PCA's award to the Philippines. On 12 July 2016, the Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA) under the United Nations Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) ruled in favor of the Philippines in its 14 claims against China's expansive territorial claims in the South China Sea is a violation of international law.<sup>5</sup> The PCA declared that China's claims—defined by the nine-dash line—to an expansive maritime zone and its underwater resources as illegal.<sup>6</sup> It also maintained that Chinese land reclamation and construction projects in the land features in the South China Sea violate the Philippines' territorial rights. The ruling also found China guilty of destroying the maritime environment by building artificial islands and illegally preventing Filipinos from fishing and oil exploration in the South China Sea.

Beijing immediately declared that it was ready to start negotiations with Manila on the South China Sea dispute if the latter ignores the 12 July 2016 PCA award (Associated Press, 19 July 2016: 1). China also threatened the Philippines with possible confrontation if it insists on using the PCA decision as the basis for the bilateral negotiation (Viray, 19 July 2016: 1). The Philippines immediately rejected China's pre-condition for bilateral negotiation citing that it was not consistent with the country's constitution and national interests (Ibid., 1).

On 21 July 2016, Presidential Spokesperson Ernesto Abella announced that the Philippines would consider the views of its allies in its engagements with China, whose expansive territorial claim in the South China Sea was declared void by the PCA (Romero, 21 July 2016: 1). These developments revealed, that despite its earlier pronouncement about reviving the bilateral negotiations with China and conducting joint developments in the South China Sea, the Duterte Administration might end up reluctantly pursuing its predecessor's geopolitical agenda of challenging China's expansive claim in the disputed waters. This means that it might also adopt the same policies of the Aquino Administration, such as shifting the AFP's focus from domestic security to territorial defense, bolstering closer Philippine-US security relations; seeking from Washington an

explicit security guarantee under the 1951 Mutual Defense Treaty (MDT); and promoting strategic partnerships with America's other bilateral allies in the region—Japan, South Korea, and Australia.

With the Duterte Administration's current efforts to establish rapprochement with China, it should also consider it both crucial and urgent to engage the U.S. and its other bilateral allies diplomatically and strategically. Former Foreign Affairs Secretary Albert Del Rosario states: "the administration should nevertheless reconsider its strategy in terms of potentially alienating established economic and security partners. The Philippines should maintain its good relations with trusted friends and economic and security partners." He further added that "as for the plan to pursue closer relations with China, it doesn't have to be a zero sum game; you can pursue the friendship of other nations without having to sacrifice those who all the time had been there to help us." (De Vera 2016)

## CONCLUSION

With China's maritime expansionism in the South China Sea, the Philippines considers it both crucial and urgent to engage the USA strategically. This partnership enables the Philippines to address its pressing security concern of territorial/maritime defense through domain awareness. Noteworthy, too, is its desire to develop the AFP's interoperability with the US armed forces, and to enhance its territorial defense capability. Significantly, this revitalized security relationship involves the Philippines' linking with other US allies in East Asia such as Japan, South Korea, and Australia.

The Philippines taps the JCG in providing technical and material assistance to the PCG. As part of its security arrangements with Japan, Tokyo will provide 12 patrol boats for the PCG. A well-developed PCG is extremely important in deterring Chinese intrusion into the country's EEZ. Likewise, the plan to purchase 12 F/A Golden Eagle fighter planes from South Korea is a signal of deterrence to China. These interceptors are the next best alternative to the more expensive F-16 jet fighters from the USA. Moreover, the government's defense priorities and limited budget only allow the purchase of these interim interceptors until the PAF can afford the fourth-generation fighter planes. The Philippines has also signed and ratified a SOFA with the Australian Defense Force to enhance security cooperation that includes the Coast Watch South project and the joint Maritime Training Activity *Lumbas*. All these efforts are aimed to

strengthen the Philippines' territorial defense posture. By establishing informal security ties with the USA, Japan, South Korea, and Australia, the Philippines harnesses the military know-how and resources of these allies against a pressing strategic concern in maritime Southeast Asia—China's expansionist moves in the South China Sea. To boot, these engagements enable the Philippines to address just as well another crucial security matter—the AFP's inadequacies in conducting HADR operations—through the support and help of the USA and its allies in the Asia-Pacific region. In the light of the renewed tension between the Philippines and China in the aftermath of the 12 July 2016 PCA award to the Philippines, the Duterte Administration might find it necessary to continue fostering the Philippines' security ties with the USA and its other allies in order to constrain China's illegal expansion in the South China Sea.

As the Duterte Administration pursues its economic alliance with China, it should also take note on how these bilateral security partners have helped the Philippines in its times of need. The Philippines' alliance with the United States enables the Philippines to address its pressing security concerns such terrorism and territorial/maritime defense through domain awareness. Noteworthy, too, is its desire to develop the AFP's interoperability with the U.S. Armed Forces, both in counter-terrorism and territorial defense capabilities. Significantly, the Philippine security relations with the U.S. enable it to cooperate with other American allies in East Asia such as Japan, South Korea, and Australia.

## NOTES

1. Interview with an anonymous U.S. Defense Attaché, US Embassy in Manila, September 2014.
2. For details regarding this new forms access arrangements see Robert Harkavy, "Thinking about Basing," *Naval War College Review* 58. 3 (Summer 2005). pp. 12–42.
3. Interview with the Defense Attaché of the Republic of Korea, (25, September 2014).
4. In January 2013, the Philippines directly confronted Chinese expansive claim in the South China Sea by filing a statement of claim against China in the Arbitral Tribunal of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. In its Notification and Statement of Claim, the Philippines asked the arbitral tribunal to determine the country's legal entitlements under the UNCLOS to the Spratly Islands, Scarborough Shoal, Mischief Reef, and

other land features within its 200-mile EEZ. These entitlements are based on the provisions of the UNCLOS specifically to its rights to a Territorial Sea and Contiguous Zone under Part II, to an Exclusive Economic Zone under Part V, and to a Continental Shelf under Part VI. Department of Foreign Affairs, “Notification and Statement of Claim to the United Nations Convention of Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) Arbitral Tribunal, Manila (22 January 2013). pp. 12–14.

5. Permanent Court of Arbitration, “The South China Sea Arbitration (The Republic of the Philippines versus the People’s Republic of China)” *Press Release* (12 July 2016). p. 1.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 1.

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**Renato Cruz De Castro** is a professor (on sabbatical leave) in the International Studies Department, De La Salle University, Manila, Philippines, and holds the Charles Lui Chi Keung Professorial Chair in China Studies. Professor De Castro's research interests include Philippine-US security relations, Philippine defense and foreign policies, US defense and foreign policies in East Asia, and the international politics of East Asia.

# Reasons for Optimism? China, Japan and Unilateral Naval Restraint in the East China Sea

*Collin Koh*

## INTRODUCTION

The South China Sea (SCS) tensions have recently taken centre stage. By contrast, the East China Sea (ECS) receded to the background. This could be attributed to the de-escalation of tensions—the ramming of a Japan Coast Guard (JCG) vessel by a Chinese trawler off the disputed Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands in September 2010, followed by Tokyo’s move to nationalise the isles in September 2012—following the Four-Point Agreement (4PA) reached between the two countries in November 2014 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China 2014; Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan 2014a), and, later, a brief meeting between President Xi Jinping and Prime Minister Shinzo Abe on the side-lines of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Summit. Since then, the otherwise chilly Sino-Japanese relations began to thaw and bilateral official exchanges, suspended in late 2012, were gradually restored. This rapprochement should not have come across as surprising. Fravel (2010), for

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C. Koh (✉)

S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Singapore, Singapore

example, argued that the US-Japan alliance has deterred China from using force, while active dispute management by China and Japan has limited the potential for escalation, yet the perceived value of the islands and the limited benefits to be gained through compromise create strong incentives to avoid efforts to settle the dispute; therefore, both countries adopt a delaying strategy that defers settlement to the future.

Yet this form of active dispute management appears to be unique in itself, unlike what could be observed elsewhere within the broader, so-called Asia-Pacific security architecture revolving around the centrality of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). Notwithstanding Tokyo's attempts, for instance, having a joint statement with ASEAN which included calls for freedom of overflight after Beijing promulgated an air defence identification zone (ADIZ) in November 2013 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan 2013), there had been no inroads to address Sino-Japanese differences using ASEAN-centric platforms. In no small part this is also due to China's insistence towards keeping problems with Japan off the ASEAN agenda, for example, opposing Tokyo's raising of SCS issues with ASEAN—a move which Beijing views as meddling. It is therefore not presumptuous to assess that regional institutions, such as ASEAN, may not wield influence over Sino-Japanese rapprochement. One other area of difference has been both countries' tendencies towards habitual application of gunboat diplomacy, defined by Cable (1994, p. 14) as “the use or threat of limited naval force, otherwise than as an act of war, in order to secure advantage, or to avert loss, either in the furtherance of an international dispute or else against foreign nationals within the territory or the jurisdiction of their own state”—which was not observed within ASEAN. The last such serious ASEAN analogue took place in 2009 between the naval forces of Indonesia and Malaysia over the disputed Ambalat hydrocarbon block in the Celebes Sea. Since then, both governments had refrained from repeating this episode. Finally, it needs pointing out that the Code for Unplanned Encounters at Sea (CUES), reached in the Western Pacific Naval Symposium (WPNS) in 2014 as an instrument to mitigate close-proximity naval encounters, is well outside ASEAN's purview even though it involves some of the regional bloc's navies, and those of China and Japan.

Mutual wariness continues to plague Sino-Japanese relations. While neither Beijing nor Tokyo seriously contemplates armed confrontation over deep-seated, intractable differences that see no sight of being satisfactorily resolved in the foreseeable future, none of them wishes to back down either.

The post-4PA rapprochement continues to be punctuated with political rhetoric and exercise of gunboat diplomacy in the ECS. Notably, the proposed “Maritime and Aerial Communication Mechanism” (hereafter the Mechanism)—first mooted in 2012 before tensions brewed up—as a means of ameliorating the risk of inadvertent Sino-Japanese incidents remains in limbo at the time of writing. Clearly, however, even at the height of tensions, Sino-Japanese provocations did not escalate into outright shooting war despite the suspension of official exchanges including those in the defence realm. How was that possible? This chapter argues that given the ECS dispute constitutes a symptom of broader, longstanding Sino-Japanese mutual suspicions and rivalry, prospects of realising and effectively implementing negotiated confidence- and security-building measures (CSBMs) appear bleak. Therefore, both countries would likely persist in practising a loose combination of CSBMs—through “backdoor diplomacy” and unilateral naval restraint—as a means of containing tensions.

It needs pointing out that this chapter does not comprise a historical background of the Sino-Japanese dispute; there is a rich, existing plethora of literature on that.<sup>1</sup> This chapter also focuses only on more recent developments following September 2012. The discussion unfolds in the following manner. First, the current ECS situation post-4PA will be outlined, before examining the limitations of defence diplomacy and the much broader notion of CSBMs, thereby viewing the prospects of realising the Mechanism in perspective. This leads to an examination of unilateral naval restraint—an area which is often overshadowed by negotiated CSBMs—and how this combines with “backdoor diplomacy” to foster stability in the ECS. The chapter concludes by briefly looking at those broader issues that have long bedevilled Sino-Japanese relations and putting into question the possible realisation and efficacy of negotiated CSBMs.

### STILL UNEASY SITUATION IN THE ECS: WHITHER 4PA?

The promulgation of 4PA in November 2014 marks a turning point in the tense, post-September 2012 Sino-Japanese relations. It led to a gradual, albeit cautious, restoration of official contacts and exchanges, as Table 11.1 shows. But the formal Abe-Xi summit—repeatedly requested for by Japan—proved elusive. There seems to also be an issue of “face” concerning who takes the first step to initiate it. For example, in October 2015, president of the China-Japan Friendship Association and former Chinese State Councillor Tang Jiaxuan revealed that Beijing has received

**Table 11.1** Post-4PA Sino-Japanese official contacts and exchanges till December 2015

<i>Date</i>	<i>Event</i>
January 2015	Third round of high-level consultations on maritime affairs (first promulgated in May 2012) held
March 19, 2015	13th Bilateral Security Dialogue (first promulgated in 1993)
April 9, 2015	Ji Bingxuan, Vice-Chairman of the National People's Congress Standing Committee, led a parliamentarian group to Japan, reviving the Japan-China Parliamentary Exchange Commission suspended post-September 2012
April 14, 2015	Premier Li Keqiang met former Chief Cabinet Secretary Yohei Kono
April 2015	Tourism ministers from both countries met in Tokyo for the first time since 2011
May 22, 2015	A 3000-strong delegation, comprising heads of local governments and major enterprises, led by Chairman of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) General Council Toshihiro Nikai visited Beijing—the largest ever since 2002 when 13,000 Japanese tourists visited China
May 25, 2015	Junichi Ihara, Head of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Asian affairs bureau, reportedly met his Chinese counterpart Kong Xuanyou in a low-profile session
June 6, 2015	Finance ministers of both countries met
July 16, 2015	State Councillor Yang Jiechi and Head of National Security Council (NSC) Shotaro Yachi agreed to hold regular high-level political dialogue—modelled on the Sino-US strategic dialogue—making the visit the first of its kind and around the same time as the Lower House of Japan's National Diet passed the controversial security bills that may see an enhanced overseas role for the SDF. They also agreed on the need to “control differences”
October 13, 2015	While co-chairing the second bilateral high-level political dialogue with Shotaro Yachi in October 2015, Yang Jiechi said that bilateral ties improved while urging Tokyo to adhere to its 4PA commitments and properly handle sensitive issues
November 1, 2015	Li Keqiang and Shinzo Abe agreed to revive high-level economic dialogue—suspended in 2010 after the trawler ramming incident—at an early date in 2016
November, 2015	China and Japan held their first defence ministers' talks—last held in June 2011 and later suspended post-September 2012—on the side-lines of the ASEAN Defence Minister Meeting-Plus (ADMM-Plus) in Kuala Lumpur

*(continued)*

**Table 11.1** (continued)

<i>Date</i>	<i>Event</i>
December 4, 2015	Visit to Beijing by a delegation from the Japanese ruling coalition, under the initiative of Chinese Communist Party (CCP) fifth-ranking leader Liu Yunshan in October, marking the restoration of inter-ruling party exchanges (first promulgated in 2009). CCP's fourth-ranking leader Yu Zhengsheng urged Tokyo to refrain from overreacting to China's SCS activities. They worked out a four-point proposal urging both countries to avoid threatening one another
December 2015	Fourth round of high-level consultations on maritime affairs held, touching on Beijing's ECS gas development and the proposed Mechanism

Source: By author drawing from and corroborating multiple sources

Tokyo's proposal for Xi to visit in the spring of 2016, followed by Abe's reciprocal visit in autumn (Jiji 2015a). However, Tokyo later denied this (Yoshida 2015).

Even though both countries were back on talking terms, the ECS situation did not experience any significant change. Beijing has not suspended its maritime activities, especially regular coastguard forays in waters surrounding the isles. Less than a year after 4PA, JCG Commandant Yuji Sato lamented that the situation has “not changed” (Jiji 2015b). China is not about to give up such useful tool as gunboat diplomacy to pressure Japan to acknowledge the existence of the dispute and to demonstrate displeasure towards perceived offensive moves by Tokyo. All the more so given that now Chinese forces have already “normalised” presence in the waters. From the political standpoint, to abandon such activities could be regarded by both domestic and external audience as a sign of meekness or weakness. Table 11.2 documents a record of China's exercise of gunboat diplomacy in the ECS, ranging from force build-up to intrusions into the Senkaku/Diaoyu waters.

From 1980 till the September 2010 trawler incident, 70 such instances were logged. Following which, as a demonstration of displeasure Beijing applied gunboat diplomacy 47 times—a high frequency within barely two years compared to 70 over three decades. However, 182 instances were logged after Tokyo nationalised the isles in September 2012—more than 100 per cent increase over the preceding period. Even after China and Japan revived official contacts and exchanges post-4PA, Beijing did



**Table 11.2** China's gunboat diplomacy in the ECS, 1980–2015

	<i>1980—before trawler ramming incident in September 2010</i>	<i>After trawler ramming incident in September 2010</i>	<i>After Japan's nationalisation of the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands in September 2012</i>	<i>After the Four-Point Agreement in November 2014 until the end of 2015</i>
Total number of instances	70	47	182	58
Civilian	34	37	149	46
Naval	49	19	57	16

Source: By author drawing from and corroborating multiple sources

**Table 11.3** Japan's gunboat diplomacy in the ECS, 1980–2015

	<i>1980—before trawler ramming incident in September 2010</i>	<i>After trawler ramming incident in September 2010</i>	<i>After Japan's nationalisation of the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands in September 2012</i>	<i>After the Four-Point Agreement in November 2014 until the end of 2015</i>
Total number of instances	90	36	132	39
Civilian	73	25	97	31
Naval	18	15	40	10

Source: By author drawing from and corroborating multiple sources

not scale back on gunboat diplomacy. Within slightly over a year post-4PA, 58 instances were logged, demonstrating China's clear intent to utilise coercion at sea as a bargaining chip in future negotiations and as a "pressure valve" to vent displeasure at Tokyo whenever expedient. In response, Japan maintained its own gunboat diplomacy, primarily comprising coastguard responses to Chinese intrusions off the isles and also Tokyo's defence build-up in the remote Southwestern Islands. Seemingly taking a leaf off China's SCS playbook, Japan also reclaimed land to turn Okinotorishima—a rock—into an island, to China's consternation (Jiji 2015c). Table 11.3 documents Japan's gunboat diplomacy in the ECS.

The application of gunboat diplomacy in the ECS has become habitual, accompanied by "tit-for-tat" rhetoric by both governments. In

March 2015, Beijing rejected Tokyo's protest against a website created for the Diaoyu Islands (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China 2015). The following month, Japan in its newly approved history textbooks asserted ownership over the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands (Ko 2015). Later in August, Tokyo slammed Beijing over a PLAN recruitment video, in which aerial views of the isles were shown and without naming Japan, proclaimed no tolerance towards "occupation" of the isles (Kyodo 2015a). Even though no armed clashes have erupted so far, potential risks exist. Naturally, both countries were expected to ameliorate the risks of close-in encounters between their maritime forces.

### LIMITS OF DEFENCE DIPLOMACY: TURNING BACK TO CSBMs

One way to ameliorate the risks of Sino-Japanese armed confrontation is to foster mutual understanding and transparency between their defence establishments. Defence diplomacy, a popularly touted concept in recent times, refers to the peacetime cooperative use of armed forces and related infrastructure (primarily defence ministries) as a tool of foreign and security policy (Cottey and Forster 2004, pp. 5–6). It encompasses a wide range of activities that might in the past been described as military cooperation or military assistance (Cottey and Forster 2004, p. 7):

- Bilateral and multilateral contacts between senior military and civilian defence officials
- Appointment of defence attaches to foreign countries
- Bilateral defence cooperation agreements
- Training of foreign military and civilian defence personnel
- Provision of expertise and advice on the democratic control of armed forces, defence management and military technical areas
- Contacts and exchanges between military personnel and units, and ship visits
- Placement of military or civilian personnel in partner countries' defence ministries or armed forces
- Deployment of training teams
- Provision of military equipment and other material aid
- Bilateral or multilateral military exercises for training purposes

The concept of defence diplomacy is useful but inadequate. Even though some maritime law enforcement agencies fall under defence ministries, many others exist as purely civilian agencies. The JCG, for instance, is subordinate to the Transport Ministry. These agencies may work in conjunction with defence establishments. As Tables 11.2 and 11.3 show, following the September 2010 trawler incident, coastguards in particular have become workhorses in the exercise of gunboat diplomacy. This aspect is well-exemplified in the bilateral high-level consultations on maritime affairs—the key platform on which the proposed Mechanism was discussed—which comprise not just senior Chinese and Japanese defence officials but also counterparts from civilian authorities such as China’s State Oceanic Administration (SOA) and JCG (Nikkei 2011a, b). During the May 2012 inaugural consultations, Japanese defence and civilian representatives inspected a SOA unit that operates research vessels and was often accused of unauthorised surveys in Japanese EEZ waters close to the isles (BBC 2012a).

Moreover, past antecedents, dating way before recent ECS tensions, also expose the limits of Sino-Japanese defence diplomacy. For instance, in November 2007—the inaugural year of the Sino-Japanese mutual naval port visit programme—Japan’s Maritime Self-Defense Force (MSDF) cancelled plans to host visiting People’s Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) personnel on board the Aegis destroyer *Kirishima* for fear of provoking Washington’s protest (Kyodo 2007).<sup>2</sup> It was only until 2009 that MSDF finally hosted a Chinese defence delegation, led by Defence Minister Liang Guanglie, on board sister ship *Chokai*, though the visit was limited only to the deck and bridge to maintain operational security (Tritten and Sumida 2009). Bilateral defence diplomacy was often held hostage by historical baggage, for instance Tokyo’s cancellation of plans for the Air Self-Defense Force to deliver relief to Sichuan earthquake victims in May 2008, following strong protests amongst Chinese netizens against Japanese military stepping onto Chinese soil (Kyodo 2008). Instead, an MSDF warship delivered the supplies while visiting the following month (Jiji 2008). And more importantly, when defence diplomacy should have come in handy, it fell victim to political squabbles and suspended to spite the other party. After the September 2010 trawler incident, China and Japan suspended the mutual naval port visit programme. The following month, an MSDF training flotilla completed its round-the-world voyage—visiting 11 countries but not China (Kyodo 2010).<sup>3</sup> This programme was resumed with the visit to Qingdao by MSDF destroyer *Kirisame* (Jiji 2011a).

Then, in May 2012, following Tokyo Governor Shintaro Ishihara's vow to purchase the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands and Japan's hosting of the World Uyghur Congress—which it considers as an exiled “anti-China” separatist grouping, Beijing cancelled a high-level military visit supposed to be led by Guo Boxiong, vice-chairman of the Central Military Commission (Kyodo 2012a). Following Tokyo's nationalisation of the isles, in October 2012 the Nippon Foundation abolished a Sino-Japanese defence exchange programme that included annual reciprocal visits by SDF and PLA field-grade officers (Kyodo 2012b).<sup>4</sup> This came after a PLAN delegation attended an MSDF-hosted meeting of military officers from 19 countries to discuss joint rescue and maritime safety collaboration earlier the same month (Choi 2012). The suspension of Sino-Japanese defence diplomacy persisted into 2014. In March that year, during a WPNS preparatory meeting held in Nanjing, an MSDF officer said Japan was not invited to the upcoming International Fleet Review, commenting that “it's strange some countries are invited and others are not” (Japan News 2014).

Given the prevalence of multi-agency maritime operations, as exemplified by Chinese and Japanese coastguards rising to the forefront of action, as well as limitations to defence diplomacy, it would instead be more useful to examine the preceding, much broader, concept of CSBMs which refer to arrangements designed to enhance assurance of mind and belief in the trustworthiness of states and the facts they create (Hill 1989, p. 185). CSBMs constitute a form of operational arms control, in that unlike structural arms control they do not seek to impose limits on the type and quantity of armaments acquired but only targeted at restraining freedom of military action and entail certain limitations on the use of military force (United Nations Department for Disarmament Affairs 1982, p. 27). First entered public discourses during the Cold War, CSBMs relates to the concept of cooperative security which envisages “security with, not against, adversaries” under a presupposed scenario of interstate rivalries that carries the potential of use of force, based on the assumption that states share fundamentally compatible security objectives and recognise one another's security concerns, thus seeking collaboration, reassurance and peaceful coexistence (Acharya 2007, p. 23; Nolan 1994, p. 5; Evans 1993, p. 16; Dewitt 1994, pp. 7–8). CSBMs encompass such general principles and objectives: (1) constitute a distinctly psychological process that attempts to reduce or eliminate misperceptions of and concerns about potentially threatening military activities; (2) fundamentally based on the concept of openness or transparency; in other words, on the exchange of information

though the concept of constraining military activities is also considered to be of value; (3) undertaken by states with a reasonable expectation that fellow participants do not have hostile intentions, through the communication of credible evidence of the absence of feared threats and (4) can be promulgated at the bilateral or multilateral level (United Nations Department for Disarmament Affairs 1990; Holst and Melander 1997, p. 147; Borawski 1986). Three main CSBM categories are adopted in this study: declaratory; transparency and constraint (also known as “stabilization” or “security-building” (Borawski 1986, p. 13), hence the broader term CSBM as opposed to just CBMs) measures. These are presented in Table 11.4.

These three categories may be ranked in an ascending order of difficulty and comprehensiveness in the process of negotiations and implementation (Lodgaard and Holdren 1990, pp. 16–17).<sup>5</sup> Declaratory measures do not entail technical-operational restrictions. Transparency measures require comparatively greater commitment towards actual implementation and in many cases, involve defence establishments down to operational field units. Information measures are perhaps most commonly practised. Communication, notification and observation/inspection measures are by nature more challenging. In fact, information measures being the only ones with much hope of being agreed, albeit at best of limited value (Lutken 1990, p. 145), continues to ring true today. Constraint measures are most difficult to negotiate and implement. They are the most intrusive CSBMs due to restrictions on personnel, equipment and activities, which may clash with national preferences and priorities. This creates potential hurdles during negotiations, since it involves verification instruments for compliance, running counter to parties’ sovereignty and freedom of action.

In view of the daunting challenges faced in structural measures, CSBMs appear most feasible for maritime forces and activities (Fieldhouse 1990, p. 35). But there are also criticisms regarding their utility if political elites see greater incentives to resort to force; and whether they could even be effectively implemented in a climate of non-détente and lack of political will; not to mention transgressions, for example, selective compliance and deception.<sup>6</sup> While some CSBMs are legally binding, many are not. This means that signatories may renege on their commitments. Typical of arms control negotiations, processes involving CSBMs are time-consuming, fraught with uncertainties and not necessarily guaranteeing results.

**Table 11.4** Typology of CSBMs

<i>Categories</i>	<i>Declaratory measures</i>	<i>Transparency measures</i>	<i>Constraint measures</i>
Sub-categories	General principles that promote interstate amity and concord National politico-legal acceptance of international laws, e.g. UNCLOS III Non-aggression pacts Nuclear weapon-free pacts	<i>Information measures</i> Dialogues Participation in arms registry Navy-to-navy contacts Seminars and workshops Personnel exchanges Exchanges of calendar on naval activities <i>Communication measures</i> Common inter-navy communication procedures Crisis management communication links Conflict prevention centres Mandatory consultation on unusual or dangerous naval activities <i>Notification measures</i> Naval force manoeuvres or movements Military alerts Mobilisation of reserves Weapon test-launches Naval accidents at sea Scientific activities in disputed zones <i>Observation/inspection measures</i> Invitation of observers to naval exercises Surveillance and control zones Open skies treaties Naval force separation and monitoring Sensors/early-warning stations	<i>Risk reduction measures</i> INCSEA-type pacts Special communication procedures Emergency communication procedures for ships and aircraft crossing or entering disputed maritime boundaries Submarine underwater communications for close-contact contingencies <i>Exclusion/separation measures</i> Demilitarised zones Disengagement zones Keep-out zones (air/sea) Nuclear weapon-free zones <i>Constraints on personnel, equipment and activities</i> <i>Personnel:</i> national limits; category limits and zone limits <i>Equipment:</i> deployment limits (by geographical area or numbers); category/type limits; storage/monitoring limits; and nuclear weapons types/deployment <i>Activities:</i> manoeuvre/movement limits (by geographical area or force size); advance notification for movements, exercises and alerts; limits on force readiness; bans on simultaneous exercises/alerts and/or certain force/unit types; nuclear weapons

Source: Based on: United Nations Department for Disarmament Affairs 1982; Borawski 1986, pp. 11–13; Fieldhouse 1989, p. 164; Lacy 1991, pp. 28–29; Mack 1993, p. 93; Weeks 1996, pp. 88–89; Medcalf et al. 2011, pp. 26–30

## THE MECHANISM: MIRAGE IN THE SINO-JAPANESE DESERT?

The Mechanism best exemplifies those typical CSBM problems. It traces its roots to an agreement between Abe and then Premier Wen Jiabao in April 2007 to create this instrument. Following the September 2010 trawler incident, in January 2011, both countries agreed their defence officials would contact each other swiftly in the event of a maritime incident (Jiji [2011b](#)). In September the same year, both governments agreed to formally establish the Mechanism. The May 2012 inaugural high-level consultation on maritime affairs helped kick-started the process (Nikkei [2011b](#)). There seemed to be a momentum thereafter; in July the same year, both countries' defence authorities informally drafted the Mechanism and sought to conclude and implement a formal agreement as soon as possible (Kyodo [2012c](#)).<sup>7</sup> However, the whole process screeched to a halt four months later, following the isles nationalisation move, thus besetting original plans to operationalise the Mechanism by end of 2012 (BBC [2012b](#)).

After PLAN warships reportedly locked their fire-control radars onto MSDF patrols in two separate incidents in January 2013, Chinese and Japanese defence authorities began to realise the gravity of the potentially explosive situation. The following month, at an MSDF-organised Tokyo seminar, former Defence Minister Satoshi Morimoto and a senior PLAN colonel agreed on the need for the Mechanism (Kyodo [2013a](#)). Despite the suspension of official contact, both countries' defence officials later met in Beijing to discuss measures to avoid accidental military clash in the ECS (Kyodo [2013b](#)). During this low-profile meeting, they agreed to continue talks on the Mechanism (Kyodo [2013c](#)). This was further affirmed during an unofficial director general-level discussion held on the side-lines of Singapore-hosted Shangri-La Dialogue (SLD) in June 2013 (Kyodo [2013d](#)). But little came out of such pronouncements until 4PA was signed and after Abe and Xi, during their brief APEC side meeting, agreed for working-level talks on the Mechanism to continue (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan [2014b](#)). This injected new hope for the near-moribund initiative.

In March 2015, Qian Lihua, political advisor and PLA general who once headed the Defense Ministry's foreign affairs office, revealed that both countries' defence establishments have reached consensus on the Mechanism in January, including a title change from "maritime liaison mechanism" to "maritime and aerial liaison mechanism" (Xinhua [2015a](#)). This reflected mutual concerns about close-proximity Sino-Japanese aerial

encounters, especially after Beijing declared an ADIZ over the ECS in November 2013. In the same month, there were talks that the Mechanism would be discussed in May at the vice-ministerial level, to potentially be upgraded to ministerial level if an agreement was deemed certain (BBC 2015a). Even though the meeting did not materialise, on the SLD-2015 side-lines the PLA Vice Chief of Staff General Sun Jianguo and Japan's Defence Policy Bureau Director General Tokuchi Hideshi expressed hope to sign a memorandum on the Mechanism at an early date (BBC 2015b). June 2015 fuelled further anticipation, when Chinese and Japanese defence officials reached "common understanding" on technical matters such as agreeing for both forces to communicate in English during emergencies and to establish naval and air force chiefs' hotlines. But they have yet to decide whether, besides activities in the declared ADIZs, EEZs and open waters in the ECS, territorial waters and airspaces fall within the scope of the Mechanism (Kyodo 2015b). As part of this "common understanding", Tokyo would be notified whenever Chinese aircraft and warships go near Okinawan waters in the future (Want China Times 2015). At this meeting, Beijing sounded out Tokyo on inking the deal at the vice-ministerial level in as early as July and the latter responded positively (Kyodo 2015c; Reuters 2015; Chen 2015).

However, July 2015 came and went without any formal agreement. By October, discussions effectively stalled after both governments refused to budge on their disagreement over the geographical scope. Beijing reportedly rejected Japan's draft agreement which proposed excluding territorial waters and airspace from areas covered by the Mechanism. This doomed any hope of realising the Mechanism before end of 2015, instead promising a long-drawn tussle over such teething points as China's insistence to include territorial waters and airspace—a move Tokyo interpreted as Beijing's attempt to justify its presence in the disputed waters and airspace, on the pretext that they could continue such intrusions so long they could still communicate with Japan via this Mechanism (Japan News 2015; Kwok 2015).<sup>8</sup> Again, as 2015 was coming to a close, both countries' defence ministers agreed to expedite the launch of the Mechanism (Jiji 2015d). This was further affirmed during the fourth high-level consultations on maritime affairs in December (Xinhua 2015b). Suffice to note, talks over the Mechanism has taken on a recurring pattern—mostly hot air and little concrete actions.

At the time of writing, talks on the Mechanism has been suspended since June 2015, according to Japanese foreign ministry authorities who



remarked that both countries “do not have the kind of relationship of trust to overcome differences” (Jiji 2016a). Prospects of realising it soon appear bleak and at best uncertain. What is certain, however, is the continued coastguard and military build-ups by China and Japan in the ECS. Most prominently, Beijing regularised its “routine sovereignty patrols” in waters surrounding the isles, much to Tokyo’s chagrin. In fact, the exercise of gunboat diplomacy has become so habitual, to the point that even near-miss incidents might no longer have provided strong impetus for the Mechanism. The increasing non-state dimension would also potentially undermine the Mechanism while heightening the risks of confrontation, as highlighted by the Japan Fisheries Agency’s decision in May 2016 to subsidise the upgrading of Japanese trawlers to counter China’s fishery competition in the ECS (Noguchi 2016). Further aggravating this was the exchange of threats for military action. For example, *Global Times* (2016) a CCP-affiliated nationalist tabloid, warned of “countermeasures” in response to Tokyo’s threat to send warships to the isles. Not to be outdone, Tokyo pledged to “respond effectively” to Chinese attempt to occupy the isles (Sieg 2013). If recent incidents, such as the alleged aerial encounters involving the use of fire-control radars by fighters (Mo 2016), presence of about 230 Chinese fishing vessels escorted by 6 coastguard vessels—3 of which appeared to be armed—in the contiguous zone of the disputed isles (Reuters 2016), and China’s radar installation on one of its 16 offshore gas drilling rigs in the ECS (Jiji 2016b; Kyodo 2016a), were of any indication they demonstrate that the situation is worrisome. Without the Mechanism, what could have helped ameliorate the underlying dangers?

#### BACKDOOR DIPLOMACY AND UNILATERAL NAVAL RESTRAINT: ALTERNATIVE “PRESSURE VALVES”?

The most pertinent question to ask is whether Beijing and Tokyo desire war. The powerful CCP Central Committee Politburo’s Standing Committee, led by Xi, reached a consensus that China has “no intention of fighting with Japan and Japan does not have the courage to fight with China” and thereby endorsed a basic principle of preventing military clash with Tokyo (Kyodo 2014). NSC chief Shotaro Yachi opined that some on the Chinese side were thinking in a “realistic and rational” way, though he also cautioned that given the lack of transparency in Beijing’s decision-making

process “maybe China will not go along with that (realistic and rational) policy, so we have to prepare” (Sieg 2013). But even if both governments stuck to their guns regarding their differences, they clearly have no intention to escalate the situation to a point of no return. Economic interdependence constitutes an enduring disincentive against war. A good example was the anti-Japanese demonstrations which broke out in China amid calls to boycott Japanese products after Tokyo nationalised the isles, resulting in the shuttering of businesses by some Japanese firms in the country. The economic consequences were keenly felt, such that within barely a year bilateral economic ties regained normalcy. Slightly over a year after tensions flared up, Chinese tour groups to Japan during National Day holidays swelled by up to 130 per cent from the previous year (Kyodo 2013c). Leading Japanese automakers saw surging sales in China; Toyota’s sales in November 2013, for example, increased by 40.7 per cent, even better than results before bilateral ties soured post-September 2012 (Agence France Presse 2013). Japanese megabanks expanded in China in July 2014, following temporary decline in loans in the latter half of 2012 (Nikkei 2014).

Evidently, both governments judged there is more to lose if their dispute escalates beyond control. The economic stakes involved meant that war is unthinkable. Given the intractability of bilateral differences, suspension of official contacts and exchanges, and challenges in negotiating CSBMs such as the Mechanism, there needs to be alternative “pressure valves”. These come in the form of a loose hodgepodge of CSBMs, comprising semi-official, often “behind-the-scenes” exchanges by officials or key politicians (i.e. “backdoor diplomacy”) and unilateral naval restraint. The first is often overlooked but played a crucial role in facilitating present rapprochement. It is not presumptuous to highlight that both 4PA and the Xi-Abe meeting in November 2014 were attributed to “backdoor diplomacy” as shown in Table 11.5. Notwithstanding Beijing’s insistence that official contacts were being suspended, some of these “unofficial contacts” were in fact official given the capacities of many of these emissaries. The issue of what constitutes “official” is therefore debatable.

Equally important has been both countries’ attempt to exercise unilateral naval restraint in their application of gunboat diplomacy, an observation often overshadowed by the limelight on negotiated CSBMs such as the Mechanism. Existing studies on arms control and CSBMs mainly focused on negotiated measures, but there has been much less attention on unilateral measures—a kind of tacit arms control comprising struc-

**Table 11.5** Sino-Japanese backdoor diplomacy post-September 2012 until 4PA

<i>Date</i>	<i>Event</i>
September 24, 2012	CCP delegation led by former Foreign Ministry Director General for Asian Affairs Yang Yanyi visits Tokyo to meet members of the ruling LDP and main opposition parties
September 25, 2012	Vice Foreign Minister Zhang Zhijun held consultations with his Japanese counterpart Chikao Kawai in Beijing and exchanged views on the isle dispute
September 26, 2012	Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi met his Japanese counterpart Koichiro Gemba on the side-lines of the UN General Assembly, but failed to achieve any breakthrough
September 27, 2012	Jia Qinglin, chairman of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, met a visiting Japanese delegation, led by Yohei Kono, former speaker of the House of Representatives, and made up of lawmakers and business leaders
Early October 2012	Luo Zhaohui, Director General of the Foreign Ministry Asian Affairs Department, reportedly visited Tokyo to discuss about the dispute
October 24, 2012	Chikao Kawai and Zhang Zhijun reportedly held a secret meeting in Shanghai to discuss about the dispute
November 5, 2012	Luo Zhaohui met his Japanese counterpart Shinsuke Sugiyama in Wuhan to discuss about the dispute and agreed to continue with vice-ministerial communications
January 14, 2013	LDP member of the House of Councillors and former Education Minister Kenji Kosaka met Vice Foreign Minister Fu Ying, and they agreed that both sides should focus on developing ties based on mutual benefits
January 21, 2013	Natsuo Yamaguchi, Chief of New Komeito Party—LDP's ruling coalition partner, met Xi Jinping to convey Tokyo's view of shelving the dispute for future generations and proposed a military aviation no-fly zone over the isles
March 31, 2013	Former Prime Minister Tomiichi Murayama said during his Beijing visit senior Chinese officials, including former State Councillor Tang Jiaxuan, assured him that China desires a "peaceful solution" to the dispute
Early October 2013	Senior Chinese and Japanese diplomats reportedly held secret talks aimed at improving ties
October 29, 2013	Vice Foreign Minister Norio Mitsuya held talks with Gu Chaoxi, Vice Minister for Civil Affairs, and they emphasised the need to develop bilateral ties
November 5, 2013	Nagasaki Governor Hodo Nakamura led a delegation of about 100 local political and business leaders to Beijing, where he met with State Councillor Yang Jiechi and both emphasised promoting exchanges between private sector and local communities
November 7, 2013	At a meeting in Seoul, China, Japan and South Korea agreed to intensify trilateral cooperation to promote peace, stability and co-prosperity in Northeast Asia

*(continued)*

**Table 11.5** (continued)

<i>Date</i>	<i>Event</i>
November 11, 2013	Foreign Minister Wang Yi and his Japanese counterpart Fumio Kishida met briefly on the side-lines of the ASEAN-Europe Meeting in New Delhi
November 29, 2013	Yang Jiechi met former Foreign Minister Koichiro Gemba in Beijing, where both agreed to promote economic and sociocultural exchanges despite political tensions
December 20, 2013	Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida and Chinese Ambassador to Japan Cheng Yonghua agreed to work towards restoring bilateral relations through dialogue
April 9, 2014	LDP Vice-President Masahiko Komura met Hu Deping, eldest son of late CCP General Secretary Hu Yaobang, in Tokyo, and sought help in getting Beijing's understanding of Tokyo's push for collective self-defence and help realise a Xi-Abe summit
April 15, 2014	Vice Premier Wang Yang met a delegation of the Association for the Promotion of International Trade—one of seven Japanese groups dedicated to promoting closer Sino-Japanese political and economic ties—led by Yohei Kono. Wang sought to separate political issues from bilateral economic relations
April 24, 2014	Governor of Tokyo Yoichi Masuzoe visited Beijing, at the invitation of the Beijing City Government, where he met his counterpart Wang Anshun
May 5, 2014	Zhang Dejiang, chairman of the National People's Congress Standing Committee and one of the seven Politburo's Standing Committee members, met a bipartisan delegation of Japanese lawmakers from both ruling and opposition parties, led by Masahiko Komura
May 19, 2014	Commerce Minister Gao Hucheng and Trade Minister Toshimitsu Motegi met on the side-lines of APEC forum. Gao hoped for improved ties that can "create favorable conditions for the resumption of Sino-Japanese economic and trade relations"
June 8, 2014	Tang Jiaxuan led a China-Japan Friendship Association delegation to a Fukuoka-hosted meeting, during which a declaration was adopted underscoring the importance of bilateral exchanges at private and government levels
June 27, 2014	Transport Minister Akihiro Ota met Vice Premier Liu Yandong in Beijing, where they discussed bilateral ties and agreed to expand sociocultural exchanges and cooperation in tourism
Mid-July 2014	A senior Japanese official responsible for Asian affairs reportedly conducted a secret visit to Beijing, where he met Xiong Bo, Deputy Director General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Asian Affairs Department, to moot the possibility of holding a leaders' summit on the APEC meeting side-lines in November
August 12, 2014	Wang Yi and Fumio Kishida held talks on the side-lines of the East Asian Summit in Naypyidaw. Wang touted the session as an "informal exchange" specially arranged in response to Tokyo's request

*(continued)*

**Table 11.5** (continued)

<i>Date</i>	<i>Event</i>
August 18, 2014	A supra-partisan delegation of Japanese lawmakers visited Beijing and met Vice-President Li Yuanchao. They agreed to put aside minor differences and promised efforts to help improve relations
Mid-September 2014	Hideo Tarumi, Director of Ministry of Foreign Affairs management division and known to be close to Shotaro Yachi, visited Beijing for possible discussion with Chinese officials to realise the Xi-Abe meeting on the APEC summit side-lines
September 23, 2014	Speaking to a visiting Japanese business delegation, Gao Hucheng expressed concerns about the decline of Japan's direct investments in China (by nearly a fifth in 2013 and a further 40 per cent to just US\$2.8 billion during the first half of 2014), adding that Beijing did not wish for chilly political ties to slow economic activities
September 24, 2014	Wang Yang, in charge of external economic affairs, met a Japan-China Economic Association delegation comprising the Japanese Business Federation (Keidanren) Chairman Sadayuki Sakakibara, and called for resumption of high-level economic talks suspended after September 2010
September 24, 2014	LDP deputy secretaries-general Norio Mitsuya and Asahiko Mihara visited Beijing and met Guo Yezhou, deputy head of CPC Central Committee's International Department, and mooted resumption of ruling parties' exchanges
September 26, 2014	Chinese and Japanese foreign ministers held "informal meeting" on the side-lines of UN General Assembly in New York, and exchanged views on bilateral ties
September 27, 2014	Chinese and Japanese policy researchers and veteran government officials attended the Tenth Beijing-Tokyo Forum
October 8, 2014	Li Xiaolin, president of the Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries, also the youngest daughter of former Chinese President Li Xiannian and with close ties to Xi, met Abe at a cultural event in Japan, where they agreed to step up cultural exchanges and eventually improve ties
October 11, 2014	Ministry of Foreign Affairs Asian and Oceanian Affairs Bureau Director General Junichi Ihara held talks with Chinese officials about the Xi-Abe meeting on the APEC summit side-lines
Late October 2014	Finance Minister Taro Aso briefly chatted with Vice Premier Zhang Gaoli on the side-lines of APEC finance ministers' meeting
October 27, 2014	A delegation of former ASDF and MSDF officers met Chinese defence officials in Beijing for informal talks, hosted by Tokyo-based Sasakawa Peace Foundation, on preventing the eruption of ongoing disputes into armed conflict

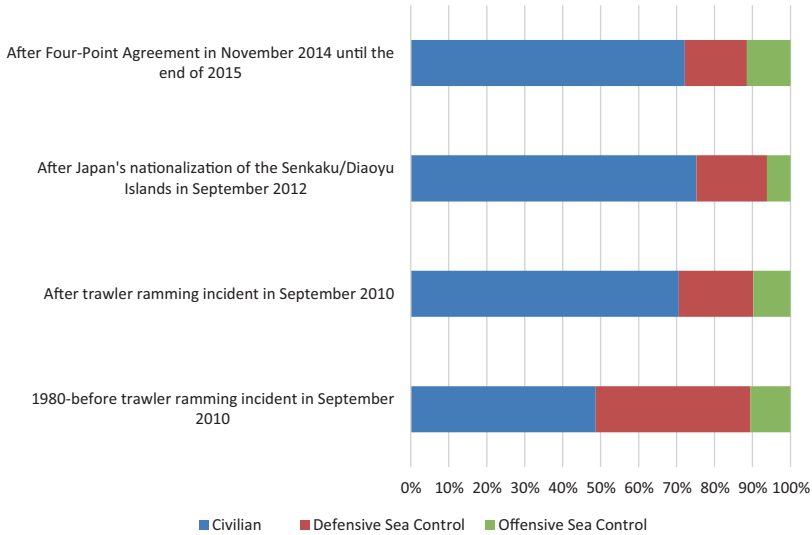
Source: By author drawing from and corroborating multiple sources

tural or operational or mixed measures, and can be adopted by individual states without having to enter into negotiations and restrictive regimes. Fieldhouse (1990, pp. 8–9) suggests unilateral measures as:

National (or alliance) decisions or policies to take or not to take certain action in order to improve the military or political situation with respect to naval forces and international security. These decisions could be communicated or publicized in the hope of encouraging a similar or reciprocal action or self-restraint from another nation or to facilitate arms control. There is a wide variety of options in the naval arena, from national decisions on procurement, force structure or choice of armament, to naval strategies, deployment patterns and policies concerning ‘gunboat diplomacy’.

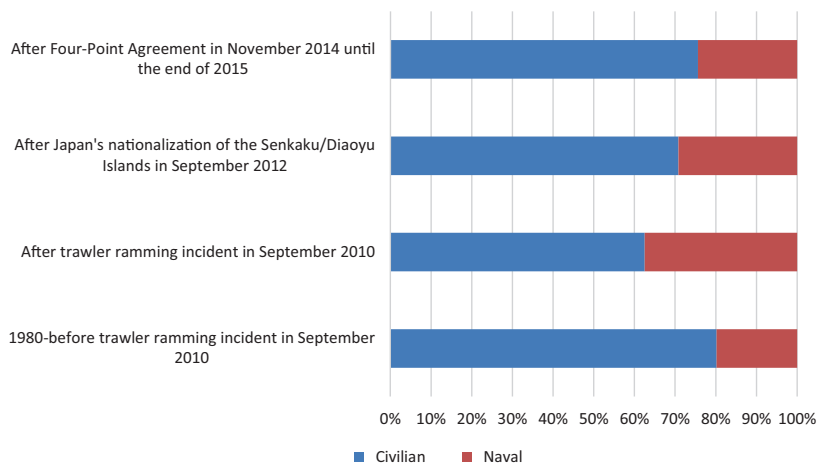
Unilateral measures not only enhance mutual security but potentially pave the way for future negotiated regimes (Fieldhouse 1990, pp. 26–27). But the onus falls on individual states to exercise circumspection in procurement, force structural development pathways and force deployment. Unilateral measures also have problems, such as verification and ease of reversal (to the detriment of other states) (Durch 1992, p. 27; Kulagin 1992, p. 135). Nevertheless, China and Japan practised unilateral restraint in varying degrees as one way of actively managing their disputes. During an interview, Parliamentary Secretary for Defence Masahisa Sato alluded to unilateral measures saying that “we will have those on-site continue to exercise restraint to prevent tensions from escalating”, referring to the maritime forces operating in the ECS (Dow Jones 2013).<sup>9</sup> Chinese coastguard patrols did not immediately challenge the sacrosanct 12-nautical mile territorial waters of the isles after the September-2010 trawler incident; most of the time staying respectfully within the adjacent contiguous zone. Only after Tokyo nationalised the isles, Chinese coastguard patrols began to intrude more regularly into the territorial waters. On Tokyo’s part, JCG patrols issued warnings whenever their Chinese counterparts appeared to sail close to the territorial waters. Even after Chinese coastguards disregarded their warnings, JCG patrols did not escalate to such incendiary actions as ship ramming, much less fire warning shots.

Closer examination of those instances of gunboat diplomacy reveals the deliberate choices of forces employed—akin to a unilateral form of constraint measure which is difficult to negotiate. Civilian forces such as coastguards are arguably less destabilising compared to heavily armed naval vessels. As seen in Fig. 11.1, from 1980 until the trawler incident,



**Fig. 11.1** Chinese forces engaged in the ECS gunboat diplomacy, 1980–2015 (Source: By author drawing from and corroborating multiple sources)

China employed mostly naval forces, mainly attributed to the fact that unlike the PLAN, civilian forces did not then muster adequate capacity to conduct operations in the distant ECS open waters. Following the trawler incident, civilian forces took over the frontline role.<sup>10</sup> At the peak of tensions post-September 2012, coastguards far outweighed naval forces in Beijing’s regularised gunboat diplomacy, and this trend persisted after 4PA. However, a disturbing trend is that although the PLAN was less active post-September 2010, Beijing started employing more destabilising, offensive sea control-type naval assets—even after 4PA, as seen in the sudden increased presence of intelligence-gathering vessels in late 2015 off Japanese coasts and the isles. The presence of such vessels compelled Tokyo to threaten MSDF deployment in the Senkaku/Diaoyu waters (Kyodo 2016b), after a PLAN frigate entered the isles’ contiguous zone for the first time (Mainichi 2016).<sup>11</sup> Undeterred, Beijing even justified as “innocent passage” the sailing of a PLAN intelligence-gathering vessel through Tokara Strait, which it defined as “a strait within territorial waters used for international navigation”, to Japan’s chagrin (Xinhua 2016a; Asia & Japan Watch 2016).



**Fig. 11.2** Japanese forces engaged in the ECS gunboat diplomacy, 1980–2015 (Source: By author drawing from and corroborating multiple sources)

As far as Japan is concerned, after the trawler incident, JCG remained dominant as seen in Fig. 11.2. Since 1945, MSDF is a defensively configured force; unlike PLAN, it is shorn of long-range offensive sea control assets such as nuclear submarines, aircraft carriers, substantial amphibious assault forces and land-attack cruise missiles. Instead, its strengths lay in such sea denial and defensive sea control capabilities as conventional submarines, surface escorts, anti-submarine and mine countermeasures forces. MSDF involvement post-September 2010 was attributed to more frequent activities by MSDF maritime patrol aircraft, often shadowing Chinese coast-guard and naval patrols, and even flying close to the Chinese ECS gas rigs. After Tokyo nationalised the isles, MSDF deployments reduced, and further post-4PA, hinting at deliberate escalation-control. But this may change if China pushes the envelope too far (Jiji 2016c).<sup>12</sup>

## CONCLUSION: BROADER PROBLEMS BEDEVIL RAPPROCHEMENT INTO 2016

The present loose CSBMs in the form of backdoor diplomacy and unilateral naval restraint, some could contend, may not be as reliable and sustainable as institutionalised CSBMs, such as the Mechanism, in ameliorating



future resurgent tensions. But one needs to question whether institutionalised CSBMs would be effective if the underlying problems bedeviling Sino-Japanese ties remain—and the ECS flare-ups merely constitute the symptom of this deeply entrenched schism long shaped by historical baggage and geopolitical rivalry. For example, the People’s Daily (2012) CCP’s official mouthpiece, wrote metaphorically in this regard:

The problem of the Diaoyu Islands *not just involves the territorial sovereignty dispute...* The Diaoyu Islands issue is a *mirror, reflecting* Japan’s mentality against China and regional policy and disclosing the value orientation of Japanese parties... After the Meiji Restoration, Japan chose a wrong militaristic road of expansionism, colonialism and jingoism, which had not been thoroughly eliminated after the Second World War. Therefore, the extreme right-wing forces survived and developed in Japan and were used by some political parties. These political parties became extreme right-wing when treating Japan’s history of aggression, the Peace Constitution and the defense and foreign policies, trying to win the supports and votes of the public by means of tough foreign policy and forming a new right-wing force, which includes both the presidential candidates of Liberal Democratic Party and current Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda of Democratic Party. The combination of the two parties led to the *farce* of “islands purchasing” and sinister trick. (emphasis added)

New developments persisting post-4PA, right through 2015 and into 2016, could further undermine mutual trust. The passage of a new security legislation in late 2015 allowing a more active overseas role for the SDF, the securing of two-thirds of seats in Japan’s National Diet lower and upper houses by the LDP-led ruling coalition following its July 2016 upper house electoral victory, and subsequent appointment of conservative lawmaker Tomomi Inada as defence minister—all heightened Beijing’s unease over Abe’s longstanding desire to revise the post-1945 Pacifist Constitution and remilitarise Japan using the “China Threat” theory as justification (Xinhua 2016b, c). Japan’s newly released *Diplomatic Blue Book 2016* cites concerns about China’s rapid militarisation in the SCS and criticises its ECS maritime activities (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan 2016, Chap. 1, pp. 3–4). Its new defence white paper, which repeated the same criticisms, again raised Beijing’s ire (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China 2016a; Xinhua 2016d). The Permanent Court of Arbitration’s arbitral ruling on July 12 over the Sino-Philippine SCS dispute threw another spanner

in the works. Beijing reacted strongly to Tokyo's remark that the ruling is final and legally binding (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China 2016b). It also accused Japanese judge Shunji Yanai, who was branded "rightist" and "unfriendly to China", for his choice of the arbitration panel members (South China Morning Post 2016; Xinhua 2016e). Notwithstanding the war of words, Tokyo appeared keen to avoid escalation when it said there is no need as yet for the SDF to undertake freedom of navigation operations or joint patrols in the contested waters (Ministry of Defense of Japan 2016).

Therefore, post-4PA rapprochement remains tenuous at best. Without addressing the fundamental root of the longstanding lack of mutual trust underpinning Sino-Japanese relations, any form of institutionalised CSBMs could ultimately prove meaningless; for example, the Mechanism could well amount to no more than mere "window dressing". In other words, political trust constitutes a pre-requisite, notwithstanding promising signs in August 2016 that both countries were seeking to reinvigorate talks on the Mechanism (Cai and Zhang 2016). Notably, Qian Lihua once remarked that it will be launched "soon" so long Japan does not create new obstacles to improving bilateral ties (Xinhua 2015a). In March 2016, a Japanese government poll shows a record high 83.2 per cent of Japanese feeling hostile towards China, an increase from 83.1 per cent in 2014. The percentage of Japanese who feel friendly towards China stood at 14.8, unchanged from 2014 (Kyodo 2016c).<sup>13</sup> In April the same year, Kishida warned that "the deterioration of Japanese public sentiment toward China is very serious", adding that "diplomatic relations not supported by the general public are vulnerable" (Kuroiwa 2016).

Perhaps this is not a unique problem afflicting Sino-Japanese relations, but something generally pervasive across Northeast Asia. The case of the two Koreas where it comes to CSBMs is very much about resolving the underlying roots of political distrust. And more recently, there was the case of Japan and South Korea, which undertook initial steps towards addressing the fundamental root causes of mutual distrust. For example, both signed an agreement depoliticising the 'Comfort Women' issue in early 2016, as part of political measures to gradually improve previously frayed ties before reviving official defence and security links, for example, their naval exchange programme (Yonhap 2016). For China and Japan, the onus still rests on them to continue using the existing loose CSBMs such as backdoor diplomacy and unilateral naval restraint.

## NOTES

1. Read, for instance, Su, Steven Wei., 2005. The Territorial Dispute over the Tiaoyu/Senkaku Islands: An Update. *Ocean Development & International Law*, 36, pp. 45–61; Wiegand, Krista E., 2009. China's Strategy in the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands Dispute: Issue Linkage and Coercive Diplomacy. *Asian Security*, 5(2), pp. 170–93; Schofield, Clive H., and Townsend-Gault, Ian., 2011. Choppy waters ahead in “a sea of peace cooperation and friendship”? Slow progress towards the application of maritime joint development to the East China Sea. *Marine Policy*, 35, pp. 25–33.
2. The Aegis, revolving around a highly advanced phased array radar system, is the world's most sophisticated shipboard air defence combat management system that is capable of tracking and handling multiple targets at once.
3. The flotilla was supposed to make a port call to Qingdao on 15 October but the Chinese defence authorities requested for postponement merely five days before. Given that the Chinese Defence Minister Liang Guanglie had expressed reluctance to accept the visit during a meeting with his Japanese counterpart Toshimi Kitazawa on 11 October, the Japan Ministry of Defence decided to cancel it.
4. This programme was established in 2001 and supported by the Sasakawa Japan–China Friendship Fund and China Institute for International Strategic Studies, following the receipt of a written request from Beijing to postpone the planned visit to Japan by the Chinese delegation. The programme was previously called off in 2010 following the trawler incident after Beijing requested for the postponement of the programme, though both sides reached a pact later to continue with the programme for another five years without being influenced by political issues.
5. Lodgaard and Holdren classified naval CSBM approaches in more or less ascending order of difficulty and comprehensiveness. Of the seven key approaches proposed by them, clarifying rules of behaviour is ranked at the bottom whereas limiting nuclear weapons at sea being at the top.
6. For a good critique of the usefulness of CSBMs, read, for example, Hinds, Jim E., 1986. The Limits of Confidence. In Borawski, John. ed. 1986. *Avoiding War in the Nuclear Age: Confidence-Building Measures for Crisis Stability*. Boulder and London: Westview Press, Inc. pp. 184–98; and Desjardins, Marie-France., 1996. Rethinking Confidence-Building Measures. *Aldephi Paper*, 307. London: Oxford University Press for the International Institute for Strategic Studies.
7. Both sides reportedly agreed informally to establish a hotline, worked out methods to give advance warning of routes used by warships and warplanes of the two countries as well as agreed to employ internationally used radio frequencies for communications.

8. But agreement had been reached on numerous points, including creation of a hotline to link ASDF and MSDF chiefs of staff with their Chinese counterparts, as well as exchange of contacts based on communications guidelines when ships or planes of both sides approach each other.
9. At a Track-1.5 forum held in Singapore in August 2015, a former PLA general and former MSDF vice-admiral said that in fact, those encounters between Chinese and Japanese patrols in the ECS had generally been cordial.
10. During then, the Chinese civilian maritime agencies comprised mainly smaller vessels which were incapable of venturing so far out into the ECS, and were receiving decommissioned PLAN oceangoing assets which were modified to perform coastguard roles.
11. It was said to have been shadowing Russian warships which entered the area—a move which Japanese defence authorities found disconcerting since it could have created a precedent of China “protecting” the isles if MSDF ships failed to track the Russians whereas the Chinese made a concerted effort to monitor them.
12. Japan reportedly decided to deploy the SDF on such maritime policing duties in principle back during a Cabinet meeting in May 2015, if a foreign military ship sails into Japanese waters in a manner that does not fall under the category of innocent passage.
13. But the situation could be deeper than this. According to a researcher at the Chinese Foreign Affairs University, Japanese youths are increasingly hostile towards China. Discussion with Chinese think-tanks, Beijing, July 5, 2016.

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**Collin Koh** Swee Lean is a research fellow in the Maritime Security Programme of the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore. He researches naval affairs in the Indo-Pacific, focusing on Southeast Asia. Collin has published numerous op-eds, policy and academic journal articles as well as chapters for edited volumes covering his research areas.

# The Emergence of an Asia-Pacific Diplomacy of Counter-Terrorism in Tackling the Islamic State Threat

*Bilveer Singh*

## INTRODUCTION

The militaries in the Asia-Pacific region have been largely established to respond to specific threats to national security. As it was the global norm, largely due to the experience of the First and Second World Wars, the build-up of balanced conventional capabilities consisting of the army, navy and air force was something common to most militaries in the region, particularly in China, Japan, USA and most of the ASEAN countries. Yet, due to the specific nature and peculiarities of threats in some countries, the conventional capabilities of some militaries were lopsided and structurally unbalanced. While the USA and Japan developed a balanced force structure, this was not true of China and most of the ASEAN member-states. While Japan's Self-Defence Force largely cloned its structure from that of the USA, the occupying power after Japan's defeat in the Second World

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B. Singh (✉)

Department of Political Science, CENS, RSIS, Singapore, Singapore

Centre for Excellence in National Security, S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Singapore, Singapore

War, China's military capability was mostly army-based with a weak air force and navy. This was mainly due to the concept of 'people's war' developed in response to the Chinese Communist Party's struggle for power in China against the nationalist forces led by Chiang Kai-shek who was eventually defeated and driven to the off-shore island of Taiwan.

In the same vein, the experience of ASEAN member-states was different from that of the USA and Japan. Somewhat more akin to China, most of the ASEAN member-states were afflicted with internal security challenges of one kind or another. The Philippines, Malaya (later Malaysia) and Thailand were threatened by Soviet and Chinese-backed communist insurgencies. To overcome these threats, a largely army-based counter-insurgency mode of military structure was created, with a relatively weak air force and navy. Similarly, due to various separatist threats from within, Indonesia's military structure was largely army-based with a weak navy and air force. It was also a legacy of Indonesia's war of nationalism based on guerrilla warfare against the Dutch from 1945 to 1949. In contrast, following its separation from Malaysia in 1965, Singapore developed national conscription as the basis of its national defence and endeavoured to create a balanced force structure. This was mainly because of the urban character of Singapore and where there was no jungle-based insurgency threat.

The Indochinese states, due to the continuous warfare since the end of the Second World War developed a force structure that was largely army-based with a weak air force and navy. The most powerful military capability was that of Vietnam with a relatively weaker force structure in Cambodia and Laos. Vietnam's forte was guerrilla warfare, mainly army-based to win the war of attrition against the USA and its Cold War allies. Brunei developed a weak military capacity with the force structure dominated by the army. It is also assisted by a strong army-based Gurkha force. Like most of Southeast Asia, Myanmar (formerly Burma) developed a force structure that was loaded in favour of the army. This was mainly to deal with the armed struggle launched by the regional ethnic separatist forces since 1947, something that still characterises Myanmar today. Its air force and navy are relatively weak. All in all, serious budget constraints also led to lesser investments being made for the air force and navy.

Against this backdrop, how can one analyse and conceptualise the Asia-Pacific's diplomacy of counter-terrorism in tackling the threat posed by the Islamic State? This chapter will examine the counter-terrorism policies of Asia-Pacific states and analyse how non-traditional threats such

as that posed by terrorism have been managed by the armed forces of the region.

### THE RISE OF NON-TRADITIONAL SECURITY THREATS IN THE ASIA-PACIFIC REGION

While non-traditional security threats are not new, they came increasingly into focus in the post-Cold War era. While the specific definition of what constitutes non-traditional security threats remain contested, generally it refers to challenges to a state's well-being and survival from non-military sources (Caballero-Anthony 2007). According to one definition, this includes challenges stemming from 'climate change, resource scarcity, infectious diseases, natural disasters, irregular migration, food shortages, people smuggling, drug trafficking and transnational crime' (What are NTS Issues? 2016). These threats have become increasingly important in the post-Cold War era in the context of rising globalisation, environmental degradation and international terrorism. Advances in technology and communications have also facilitated this process. In turn, this has opened up new vistas and facets of security, and its conceptualisation. Equally important, not only are these threats transnational in character but they also require comprehensive solutions involving political, economic, socio-cultural and even psychological dimensions (Caballero-Anthony 2010). Military force alone cannot resolve these threats, in turn, leading to the role expansion of the military with the rise of what has been referred to as the 'humanitarian' use of military power, be it in peacekeeping operations, and humanitarian and disaster relief. The rise in importance of military operations other than war (MOOTW), which aims to deter war, resolve conflict, promote peace and support civilian authorities in response to domestic or post-crisis era, is part and parcel, of the changing role of the military and its deployment, both domestically and internationally (Bonn and Baker 2000).

What has led to the rise of non-traditional security threats is that military power alone might no longer guarantee a state of its existential security. Many new threats are largely non-military in nature and where the use of military power can be counterproductive. These threats are also transnational in character. As was argued by V. R. Raghavan, 'the existing state-centred approach to national security, confined to the defence of a country against territorial aggression, has been widened to the idea of security inclusive of a larger set of threats to the people of the state' (Iqbal 2016). Hence, the widening of the concept of security and the broadening of

what should constitute security studies. Many elements characterise non-traditional security threats. These can arise suddenly from the government or non-government sectors. This makes the threats unpredictable and hence, difficult to address quickly. The transnational character of these threats also make it difficult to neutralise them quickly as was evident from the Asian Financial Crisis of 1997–98, the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) outbreak (2003–04), the H5NI ‘bird flu’ virus outbreak in 2007, the Global Financial Crisis in 2008, the outbreak of Ebola in West Africa (2014), the threat by the Islamic State and its global affiliates since 2014, the Zika virus outbreak (2016), and the recent refugee issue confronting Western Europe (2016).

However, if there is one non-traditional security threat that has engulfed and preoccupied most states in Asia, Africa and Europe today, it is the threat posed by Islamist extremism and terrorism. There are many reasons for the rise of this non-traditional security threat, with many issues of the post-colonial order continuing to bedevil many communities in Asia and Africa as well as serious issues of governance at home and internationally. The lure of Islamist extremism has been further strengthened by the ideological and doctrinal appeal of a supranational radical narrative that is able to link local grievances with global movements, and state and non-state actors that are blamed for the state of affairs in the Muslim majority and minority states. As radical elements coalesce around radical supranational movements and actors such as Al Qaeda and the self-proclaimed Islamic State to target states through wanton acts of violence, law and order forces, especially the police, military and even intelligence agencies are being reinvigorated to respond both within and without the state borders through various cooperative schemes.

### ASIA-PACIFIC AND THE RISE OF THE ISLAMIC STATE THREAT

The rise and expansion of the Islamic State or its Arabic acronym *Da'esh* was a function of struggles within various extremist groups and their affiliates, particularly, Al Qaeda as well as the role of regional states in the Middle East and the external powers, mainly in the West led by the USA (Cockburn 2015; Weiss and Hassan 2015; Stern and Berger 2015). What is termed the Islamic State today would probably not be in existence had the USA not invaded Iraq in 2003. The West and in particular the USA was complicit in the creation and rise of the Islamic State on two grounds. First, by invading Iraq to oust Saddam Hussein and his regime, it created

the conditions for the rise of a Sunni-based terrorist group that was both anti-West, especially American and anti-Shia. Second, later, as part of a strategy to undermine and oust Bashir Assad of Syria, the USA, together with its close allies, both Arabs and in the West, funded a then largely weak ISIS, boomeranging into what ISIS has become today, a Frankenstein Monster, in turn, leading to the flow of more than 35,000 foreign fighters from nearly 100 countries, including from Southeast Asia, to join ISIS in Iraq and Syria. The brutalities and atrocities that the Islamic States have perpetrated are unparalleled in recent history, aimed at provoking counteractions that will only benefit the ISIS to the detriment of the USA, the West and conservative-feudal Arab states.

ISIS began as an Al Qaeda outfit. What is the Islamic State today went through a series of evolution before it metamorphosed into the mega-terrorist outfit it is today in control of swathes of land and population. In response to the US-led invasion and occupation of Iraq that toppled the Saddam Hussein's regime in March 2003 and where a Shia-dominated regime was emplaced, a Sunni-based jihadi-oriented insurgency surfaced. This provided the Al Qaeda with an opportunity to intervene in Iraq. In early 2004, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, a Jordanian, established the Organisation of Monotheism and Jihad (OMJ) that was affiliated with Al Qaeda. Later, the OMJ morphed into the Organization of Jihad's Base in the Country of Two Rivers, commonly referred to as the Al Qaeda Iraq (AQI). In January 2006, the AQI 'iraqized' itself by renaming itself as Mujahidin Shura Council (MSC), also partly to distant itself from Al Qaeda. Abu Musab was killed by the Americans on 7 June 2006 (Cockburn 2015; Weiss and Hassan 2015; Stern and Berger 2015).

In October 2006, the MSC joined forces with four insurgent groups to establish the Islamic State of Iraq (ISI), led by Abdullah al-Rashid al-Baghdadi and Abu Ayyub al-Masri, both of whom were killed in April 2010. The ISI's leadership was taken over by Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi aka Abu Duwa. With the outbreak of a civil war in Syria, ISI took advantage of the Sunni-Shia civil war by fighting against Shia and Assad forces in Syria. On 9 April 2013, Abu Bakr declared the establishment of the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Shaam. On 29 June 2014, the establishment of a new Caliphate with Abu Bakr as the Caliph was announced. ISIS also renamed itself as the Islamic State or *Daulah Islamiyyah*. Thus, even though ISIS originated from Al Qaeda, over time, it distanced itself from the premier terrorist organisation, especially its leader, Ayman al-Zawahiri, viewing Al Qaeda and its leadership as being irrelevant, ineffective and inferior in the

context of the ongoing jihadi struggle in the Islamic World, especially in the Middle East.

What helped the Islamic State to emergence in such a speed was due to a number of factors. It was due to the pro-Jewish, neo-conservative, Bush-initiated invasion, of Iraq that created the necessary and sufficient pre-conditions for radical groups such as ISIS to take root. The regime change imposed on Iraq by the short-sighted invasion, which was more concerned with assisting Israel's security concerns and grabbing the abundant Iraqi oil, destroyed the Baathist secular state and replaced it with a Shia-dominated political-religious-social order that discriminated and marginalised the Sunnis. ISIS was the blowback and backlash to this new political-security order created by the Americans and their clients in Iraq. This led to the exponential growth of a Sunni-driven insurgency that eventually evolved into ISIS. In this context, one can easily concur with Garikai Chengu (2014), a research scholar at Harvard University that:

There are essentially three wars being waged in Syria: one between the government and the rebels, another between Iran and Saudi Arabia, and yet another between America and Russia. It is this third, neo-Cold War battle that made U.S. foreign policy makers decide to take the risk of arming Islamist rebels in Syria, because Syrian President, Bashar al-Assad, is a key Russian ally. Rather embarrassingly, many of these Syrian rebels have now turned out to be ISIS thugs, who are openly brandishing American-made M16 Assault rifles.

One can venture to argue that even the second war, between Iran and Saudi Arabia, if it is a war at all, is in part responsible for the rise of ISIS. This is because the backward-looking and archaic-oriented Salafiyah and Wahhabiyyah orthodoxy of Saudi Arabia, which colours the conservative Saudi regime, was highly responsible in supporting Sunni groups that were anti-Shia, anti-Iran and anti-Assad. This led to Saudi Arabia and a number of conservative pro-American regimes in the Gulf States such as Qatar, Bahrain and Kuwait to bankroll extremist and radical groups that eventually coalesced to form the Islamic States. According to *The Washington Post*, Kuwait, a designated Non-NATO Ally of the USA, 'is the leading source of funding for al-Qaeda linked terrorists [Jabhat al-Nusra] fighting in Syria's civil war' (Glaser 2014). In fact, the US Treasury Undersecretary, David Cohen, referred to Kuwait as the 'epicentre of fundraising for terrorist groups in Syria' (Glaser 2014). Similarly Qatar is believed to be funding extremist group such as Al Qaeda and its affiliate,



Jabhat al-Nusra, and the Islamic State. Interestingly, Jabhat al-Nusra is on the US blacklist of terrorist organisations and yet, the US Government is channelling weapons and money to it to hurt both Assad and the Islamic State. It was in this context that the Syrian Foreign Minister, Walid al-Moallem called on the West, not just to undertake military strikes against the Islamic State but also to cut off its sources of funding for these groups. Otherwise, ‘it will create a whirlpool of which the international community will not exit in decades’ (Alakbar English 2014).

### COUNTERING THE ISLAMIC STATE’S THREAT IN THE ASIA-PACIFIC

There are a number of ways in which the Islamic State is threatening the Asia-Pacific region. The first threat is the ISIS fighters who are fighting as the core or main soldiers of the self-proclaimed Islamic State. These soldiers, numbering more than 30,000 are from Iraq and Syria, the different parts of the Middle East, North Africa as well as from other continents, mainly from Western and Central Europe (mainly Russia), North America, Africa, Australia and Asia. The ISIS core fighters have gain experience in fighting as organised combat units as well as become experts in the handling and deployment of modern weapon systems. The Islamic State has already shown its propensity to launch attacks in Iraq and Syria, and it has the capacity to attack targets of Asia-Pacific region in the Middle East, such as the beheadings of captured Japanese and American civilians. These soldiers are also experts in terrorist attacks, making them doubly dangerous in terms of skills, experience and ideological motivations.

Asia-Pacific’s second security concern stems from the ‘returnees’. While there are many fighters from the Asia-Pacific fighting for the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria, little is known of exactly who these fighters are and the probability of their return is even less known. Many may have returned due to disenchantment with the Islamic State, or due to injuries or even being sent back as sleepers to be activated for attacks when ordered. The ‘returnees’ who are well trained in combat operations, including bomb making as well as fortified with extremist ideology, pose a serious threat to the region.

The third category of threats to the region stems from those who are inspired by ISIS even though they may not have travelled to the Middle East. Unlike the Al Qaeda, ISIS’ social media is very effective in radicalising individuals for recruitment, fund raising, gathering intelligence and

even organising attacks. ISIS is also very adept in uploading manuals for bomb making, making of suicide vests and even on how to kill individuals ‘silently’ which can influence vulnerable youths in the region, including those seeking adventure in the war zone.

Against this backdrop, even though not all states in the Asia-Pacific are directly affected by the threat of the Islamic State, most are. The main states that face what can be described as a serious threat from ISIS are China, Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Thailand, Myanmar and Singapore. Citizens from these countries can be found as foreign fighters in Iraq and Syria, where all of them have sworn allegiance to the Islamic State and its leader, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi.

All of these states have also invoked various hard and soft measures, kinetic and non-kinetic to deal with the threat from the Islamic State. The first major issue is to admit that the Islamic State’s threat exists and only then can appropriate measures be adopted to counter it. Here, the national and international enabling factors must be addressed. According to a Congressional Report (Blanchard and Humud 2016, pp. 4–5), the Islamic State’s expansion has been facilitated by a number of factors. These include:

1. conflicts based on ethnic, sectarian and/or political disputes;
2. foreign fighter recruitment and travel networks related to such conflicts;
3. the weakness of state security forces and the availability of arms;
4. limited international counterterrorism and intelligence cooperation and
5. armed groups and individuals to whom the Islamic State’s specific ideology appeals or for whom affiliation with the Islamic State offers potential material advantages.

Yet, despite the Islamic State’s determination to ‘remain and expand’, there are many factors that have constrained its growth. According to the Congressional Research Service Report (Blanchard and Humud 2016, p. 5), these factors can be enumerated as follows:

1. targeting of civilians, including the use of violence against Muslims and religious minorities;
2. its broad and uncompromising claims of religious/political authority;

3. opposition from local or foreign security forces, other non- state actors, and/or rival salafi jihadist groups;
4. improvements in international counterterrorism and intelligence cooperation and
5. the existence of competing identities, loyalties and agendas among potential recruits.

While the Islamic State's expansion beyond Syria and Iraq has been stalled, except for its ability to take advantage of the ongoing conflict in Yemen and Libya, territorially, it has also shrunk, losing many cities in Iraq and Syria to government forces. Yet, due to its transnational character, its appeal to radical elements worldwide, and the role of 'returnees' and those being inspired by the Islamic State's ideology, the threat from the Islamic State has not diminished but may even become more serious in the near future. According to John Brennan, the CIA Director (cited in Blanchard and Humud 2016, p. 7):

To compensate for territorial losses, ISIL will probably rely more on guerilla tactics, including high profile attacks outside the territory in Syria and Iraq that it currently holds.... Unfortunately, despite all of our progress against ISIL on the battlefield and in the financial realm, our efforts have not reduced the group's terrorism capability and global reach. The resources needed for terrorism are very modest, and the group would have to suffer even heavier losses on territory, manpower and money for its terrorist capacity to decline significantly. Moreover, the group's foreign branches and global networks can help preserve its capacity for terrorism, regardless of events in Iraq and Syria. In fact, as the pressure mounts on ISIL, we judge that it will intensify its global terror campaign to maintain its dominance of the global terrorism agenda.... We judge that ISIL is training and attempting to deploy operatives for further attacks. ISIL has large cadre of Western fighters who could potentially serve as operatives for attacks in the West. And the group is probably exploring a variety of means for infiltrating operatives into the West, including in refugee flows, smuggling routes and legitimate methods of travel. Furthermore, as we have seen in Orlando, San Bernardino and elsewhere, ISIL is attempting to inspire attacks by sympathisers who have no direct links to the group.

The Islamic State is also very adept in compelling governments, in the name of counter-terrorism, to take measures that may eventually backfire and benefit the Islamic State in terms of support, recruitment, funding

and further strengthen its propaganda claims. For instance, its ability to use the social media and various Internet-enabled communications platform has led many governments to react in what can be seen as being undemocratic, abusing various freedoms, thereby weakening the legitimacy of these state. The same can be said of the various attempts to curb the spread of religious sermons in Muslim and non-Muslim countries. While this may be easily undertaken where the Muslims are a minority, say in Singapore, but in Muslim majority states such as Indonesia and Malaysia, this can worsen the relations between the government and its populace who also forms the majority of its electorate. This may confirm the Islamic State's claim that such governments are indeed 'anti-Islam' and should be overthrown, thereby leading to a backlash even though the Islamic State's vitriolic ideology needs to be curbed.

#### THE ROLE OF THE MILITARY IN COUNTERING THE ISLAMIC STATE IN THE ASIA-PACIFIC

Counter-terrorism is mainly a law and order issue, giving the police powers to deal with the threat, which is often presupposed to be internally driven. This is practised in most states including in the Asia-Pacific. Yet, due either to the increasing military power of terrorist groups and the danger they pose, the weakness of the police to deal with the terrorist threat or the fact that the military has always, or on an ad hoc basis, been given a counter-terrorism role, there has been a concomitant increase in the military's role in counter-terrorism, including in the Asia-Pacific region. This is also due to the transnational character of terrorism, driven mainly from outside the territory of the targeted state, such as the Mumbai (India) attacks in November 2008, with the perpetrators coming from Pakistan. Hence, there are many cases where the militaries in the Asia-Pacific are prepared to tackle non-traditional security threats because their conventional military capabilities have already been technologically engineered for dual use or even more important, there has been a historical legacy where the military, rather than simply focusing on external threats, has also been involved in counter-terrorism operations. In Southeast Asia, for instance, there is a long history of the militaries in Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines and Thailand being involved in counter-terrorism operations, be it against groups driven by secular ideologies such as the various communist movements or religiously oriented groups such as the Al Qaeda and the Islamic State. Whether the military's involvement in non-traditional security oper-

ations has bolstered or undermined ASEAN centrality within the regional security architecture is something worth exploring.

How intensely a country's military is allowed to participate in counter-terrorism operations depends on the approach a state adopts towards the threat of terrorism. The Criminal Justice and Enhanced Criminal Justice Models emphasises on law enforcement with the military playing a supporting role to the police. The War and Counter-Terror Models views terrorism as an existential threat to the state, sanctioning the use of military force to terminate the threat. In the literature on the military's role in counter-terrorism, it can be seen as a force with both positive and negative attributes. On the positive side, it can be instrumental in combating terrorism. Successful military strikes can neutralise key leaders of terrorist groups such as 'Operation Neptune Spear' that killed Osama bin Laden in May 2011. Military operations can also disrupt terrorist operations. On the flip side, military operations can prove counterproductive. The death and injury caused by military strikes on innocent bystanders, mostly civilians and to infrastructure, can lead to anger being directed at the attackers. In turn, this can generate support and sympathy for the terrorists, as has happened with the frequent American drone attacks in Pakistan and Afghanistan.

Militaries are established by the state to fight a state adversary even though many militaries are now involved in peacekeeping operations and peace support missions. In the end, whether the military is permitted to participate in counter-terrorist operations also depend on how the threat is perceived. If it is viewed strictly from the law and order perspective, then the police are given the prerogative and priority to neutralise the threat based on laws of the state. However, if terrorism is viewed and based on a war model that views terrorism as something that threatens existential security of the state, then military intervention in counter-terrorism is seen as necessary and legitimate.

According to Geraint Hughes, the military's role in counter-terrorism can be seen from different perspectives. The military can be called into action on grounds of aiding a civilian authority to restore law and order, or to provide disaster relief, including following a mass casualty attack. The military has also been used to deter terrorist attacks through its deployment in public places or to guard critical infrastructure. The military has also been used to interdict, both on air and the high seas, of terrorists or arms shipment. Many militaries are also involved in training friendly foreign forces in counter-terrorism operations. The military,

especially its specialised units, has undertaken hostage rescue. Militaries are also involved in clandestine operation and intelligence gathering. More poignantly, militaries have been involved with various degrees of operations in pre-emptive intervention, targeted killing, retaliation and, in the final analysis, in undertaking regime change (Hughes 2011, pp. 40–59).

### CASE STUDY: THE INDONESIAN MILITARY AND COUNTER-TERRORISM

To what extent militaries in the Asia-Pacific are prepared to tackle non-traditional security threats, and whether the armed forces' involvement in non-traditional security, will or not undermine ASEAN's centrality within the regional security architecture is best analysed by looking at Indonesia's military response to the threat of terrorism. There are many sound reasons for choosing the Indonesian case study to illuminate the nexus between the military and counter-terrorism. Unlike many armed forces, the Indonesian military has been involved in counter-terrorism operations from its very onset in the 1940s, focusing more on internal rather than external threats. It is also adept in dealing with threats emanating from conflicts that are based on race and religion. Unlike other security agencies such as the Police, the Indonesian military was always viewed as the 'senior partner' due to its historical role in helping to win national independence from the Dutch in 1949 through an armed struggle that was led by the Army. Historically, this also meant that the other security agencies were disadvantaged from the perspective of experience in counter-terrorism, intelligence assets as well as a military structure that extended to the entire length and breadth of the Indonesian archipelago. From this perspective, not only is the Indonesian military the most experienced counter-terrorism specialist in the country, it is also the most experienced and with the longest history of involvement in dealing with this particular non-traditional security threat compared to other armies in the Asia-Pacific, especially China, India and Vietnam which were more preoccupied with external threats.

Modern Indonesia's nationhood coincided with the threat of terrorism posed by the Darul Islam, a radical Islamist group bent of establishing an Islamic state in Indonesia (1948–62). In order to combat Darul Islam's low level insurgency and terrorism, the Indonesian Army established the KOPASSUS or Special Forces Command. The Command was critical in putting down various rebellions, including acts of terrorism such as the hijacking of a Garuda plane in March 1981 (Singh 2015).

A people's power revolution brought down the 32-year regime of Suharto in May 1998. A major consequence of this power shift was the 'back to barracks' policy of a democratising Indonesia. Mainly for political rather than operational considerations, the Indonesian military's counter-terrorism role was terminated. The military was also accused of various human rights violations during the Suharto era. The liberal narrative, that a country in transition to democracy should allow civilians to undertake tasks of maintaining law and order with the military concentrating on protecting the state from external threats, also took dominance. This gave the police the sole responsibility for counter-terrorism operations.

This praxis became a reality when Indonesia was threatened by the Al Qaeda-linked Jemaah Islamiyah terrorist group which claimed responsibility for five major bombings. This included the first Bali bombings in October 2002, the August 2003 suicide bombing of the J.W. Marriott Hotel in Jakarta, the September 2004 bombing outside the Australian Embassy in Jakarta, the second Bali bombings in October 2005 and the July 2009 twin bombings of J.W. Marriott Hotel and Ritz Carlton Hotel in Jakarta. Additionally, there have been more than 30 minor bombings in Indonesia since 2000 (Ramakrishna 2009, 2014). As the police gained prominence in counter-terrorism, the Indonesian military, despite much expertise and experience, watched from the side lines.

Following the first Bali bombings, the Indonesian government established various institutions and passed laws to deal with the threat. What developed was a police-led counter-terrorism regime that has remained in place. In 2002, a Coordinating Desk of Counter-Terrorism in the Coordinating Ministry of Politics and Security was established. In June 2003, Special Detachment 88, a specialised counter-terrorism unit from the Indonesian National Police, was tasked to neutralise the rising danger posed by Islamist terrorism. In September 2010, BNPT or the National Counter-Terrorism Agency was established. Generally, the police-dominated counter-terrorism regime did good work in countering the threat of terrorism and, by 2016, it had succeeded in killing and detaining more than 100 and 1000 terrorists, respectively.

Despite this, mainly due to various shortcomings of the police and the rising legitimacy of the military, the latter has successfully reclaimed part of its counter-terrorism role. While the military argued that it was well-endowed to play a counter-terrorism role, political sentiment militated against such a role expansion. Still, the military succeeded in justifying its role expansion on grounds of the need to assist the police in enhancing

national security from the rising threat of terrorism. The first major breakthrough in this regard was the placement of a senior military officer in the BNPT in September 2010.

Since then, there has been a steady induction of the military into the national counter-terrorism regime. In September 2013, the Army was allowed to assist in counter-terrorism by collecting information on terrorist activities domestically (Yang Hui 2013). In March 2015, military personnel began undertaking counter-terrorism training with the police. On 9 June 2015, the military's Joint Special Operations Command was launched, breaking through what had hitherto been a police monopoly in counter-terrorism since 2002. Comprising initially of 90 personnel, the military-led Command brought together elite Special Forces of the army, navy and air force to undertake counter-terrorist operations nationwide. This represented a game changer in Indonesia's counter-terrorism policy, brought about primarily by the rising threat posed by the Islamic State.

While the police-led counter-terrorism policies were effective in countering the Jemaah Islamiyah, new threats called into question past policies, especially one predicated on a police-driven counter-terrorism approach. The approach failed to detect and anticipate the emergence of the Islamic State's threat in Indonesia. This failure played a key role in the re-emergence of the military's role in counter-terrorism. The police have also been criticised for many failures, including the ability of leading terrorists such as Abu Dujana to return undetected from the Philippines, the negative image that Detachment 88 acquired as a killing machine and the inability of the police to protect its own officers, where nearly 40 of them have been gunned down by terrorists.

The improving image of the military, in contrast to the police, which has been tainted with massive corruption scandals, also hurt the police-led counter-terrorism policy. The growth of home-grown terrorists and where the targets are Indonesians rather than foreigners also propelled the military to the forefront of counter-terrorism in view of its strengths on the intelligence front. The military's territorial structure, right down to the remotest village, provides it with a resource, especially intelligence that no other agency has.

The military's all-round strength in counter-terrorism in the past and its possession of well-trained combat units, supported by good intelligence, are strong factors that make it natural for it to be deployed for counter-terrorism duties. Also, the next phase of counter-terrorism in



Indonesia is expected to be more demanding and dangerous with the Islamic State and its supporters possessing well-trained combat units. This is evident from the establishment of the *Katibah Nusantara* in Syria, a Malay-based combat unit made up mainly of Malaysians and Indonesians. Partly in anticipation of a more robust military attack from the terrorists, both home-grown self-radicalised and *Katibah* units, the military's involvement in counter-terrorism is something to be welcomed. Already, beginning in 2015, under the leadership of a charismatic defence minister, Ryamizard, the military launched a six-month military operation in Sulawesi province in eastern Indonesia. This was to terminate the threat posed by the Eastern Indonesian Mujahidin led by Santoso that is affiliated with the Islamic State, and where the police had failed to dislodge the group since 2012. Once the Indonesian military was involved, Santoso's deputy, Daeng Koro, was killed in April 2015 and in July 2016, Santoso himself was gunned down by a joint military task force in the jungles of Central Sulawesi, bringing an end to the saga of a man described as the most dangerous terrorist in Indonesia, with the Indonesian military scoring a major operational success in counter-terrorism.

Despite various reservations, the military's increasing role in counter-terrorism will enhance Indonesia's counter-terrorism capacity. What is being undertaken is not the displacement of the police counter-terrorism tasks but supplementing it. This is all the more necessary as counter-terrorism also involves many non-military tasks such as de-radicalisation and counter-radicalism in various segments of society and where the military does not have access, such as in mosques, schools, prisons and mass media. In view of this, a joint police-military approach to counter-terrorism will go a long way in ensuring that the threat posed by the Islamic State would remain manageable.

## CONCLUSION

It is clearly evident that militaries in the Asia-Pacific region are increasingly prepared to tackle non-traditional security threats. This is necessitated by the increasing dangers countries in the region are facing from non-conventional threats and where the resources, including training of the military personnel, are extremely useful in mitigating such threats to the nation. While the military can play a critical role in alleviating a crisis from natural disasters such as the 2004 tsunami that affected Indonesia or floods in China, militaries are also extremely helpful in assisting the civilian

authorities in confronting threats short of war, such as diseases, piracy and even terrorism.

In the case of Southeast Asia, there has never really been a historical dichotomy of the military being confined to the barracks and tasked only to undertake duties to defend a country from external threats. In fact, the militaries in Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, Philippines and Burma/Myanmar have spent the bulk of their history in overcoming domestic threats, be it from insurgencies led by communists, regional separatists or Islamists as in Indonesia, Thailand and the Philippines even though it is only the Indonesian military that was almost totally preoccupied with internal rather than external threats.

The more effectively militaries are involved in successfully tackling non-traditional security threats in Southeast Asia, the more likely they will be able to enhance ASEAN's centrality within the regional security architecture in the Asia-Pacific. A threat-free ASEAN achieved from within will be able to serve as a more effective security organisation in performing tasks to enhance regional security at the Asia-Pacific level, especially in managing or mitigating rivalries and even conflicts among the great powers, for instance, the USA and China over the South China Sea region. Furthermore, this is not a novel idea or practice as almost every military in the Asia-Pacific is undertaking operations of one kind or another to tackle non-traditional security threats. To that extent, the more effectively Asia-Pacific militaries perform their tasks of tackling non-traditional security threats, at least as far as ASEAN is concerned, the more its centrality within the regional security architecture in the Asia-Pacific will be enhanced and guaranteed.

However, as far as the key issue of counter-terrorism is concerned, the one area of intra-regional Asian diplomacy that can be enhanced and strengthened is in the area of counter-terrorism. Generally, while military cooperation has been growing among Asian states, there are still many areas that can be enhanced and improved. While there are many sensitivities involved in military-to-military cooperation, mainly due to past conflicts and unresolved territorial disputes, defence diplomacy in general and military cooperation in particular, especially in counter-terrorism, is a potential growth area. This is all the more urgent as there is a growing perception of the Islamic State and its terrorism as the common threat to all Asian states. Some of the possible areas of cooperation would involve the Special Forces and Counter-Terrorism Units of various militaries in the Asia-Pacific conducting bilateral and multilateral exercises. This can

later expand to sharing of best practices, intelligence and if need be, when the opportunities avail themselves, for joint operations, especially in the common border regions. Through these endeavours, the importance and centrality of the Asia-Pacific militaries in tackling non-traditional security threats, especially terrorism, can be enhanced.

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**Bilveer Singh** is an associate professor at the Department of Political Science, National University of Singapore. He is concurrently an adjunct senior fellow at the Centre of Excellence for National Security, S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore. He researches Southeast-Asian security challenges, including the role of great powers, regional security architecture, and Islamist extremism and terrorism.

Non-Traditional Security Threats  
as Security Interdependence and  
the Challenge to Military Missions  
in East Asia

## Climate Change and Food Insecurities: Destabilisers of ASEAN Centrality?

*Tamara Nair*

### INTRODUCTION

In today's world, reduced military conflict, post-Cold War, is testament to the effectiveness of diplomatic bilateral and multilateral approaches and understanding in international relations. Unfortunately, this era is still plagued with conflicts of a different nature, those that arise from non-traditional security concerns. Non-traditional security issues are potential or existing threats facing the well-being of people that arise from a non-military nature. For example, infectious diseases, irregular or forced movement of people, food shortages and water scarcity are all considered non-traditional security threats that affect populations. These threats often extend beyond national boundaries and can affect large groups of people both directly and indirectly. They often demand international cooperation and a multidimensional approach (social, economic and political) in order to be resolved. Climate change is one such threat. The risks of climate change is all the more disconcerting given the disproportionate effects it creates on anthropogenic systems such as food production and water management.

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T. Nair (✉)

Centre for Non-Traditional Security, S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Singapore, Singapore

There is an increasing awareness and acknowledgment of the effects on the earth's natural systems attributed to climate change effects, for example incidences of tropical storms or delays in wet seasons. However, as Paul Herman Jr. and Gregory Treverton write, people often miss out on the 'intangible third-order socio-political and institutional effects' that have not been fully recognised (Herman and Treverton 2009: 138). This chapter addresses these 'intangible' effects. It is informed by ideas on how physical changes in the environment, translate to social responses, and beyond that can affect regional governmentality and solidarity. Here, I examine the effects of climate change on something as palpable and important to humans as food production. The possible effects of climate change on food systems have been studied quite closely given the importance of food production to the survival of the species. Furthering the study and moving beyond the effects of climate change on food, I look into the potential for conflict in climate-induced food insecurities and how such events may or may not destabilise regional institutions, especially so in the case of such interdependent and interconnected anthropogenic systems like food production.

In the Asia Pacific, there are numerous on-going studies linking climate and food production. In part, this has been a response to potential climate-induced food insecurities, which can either directly or indirectly impact nations of the region. Add to that the fact that the region experiences more than half of the world's natural disasters, it would seem logical to express keen interest in connections between natural disasters (perhaps of increased occurrence in future climate scenarios) and food production. Although there is no confirmed linkage here, the fifth assessment report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) states, with high confidence, that 'impacts from recent climate-related extremes, such as heat waves, droughts, floods, cyclones, and wildfires, reveal significant vulnerability and exposure of some ecosystems and many human systems to current climate variability' (IPCC 2014: 6). Such pronouncements and resultant preparation would be of prime importance, given the high connectivity and linkages of food production and supply systems, to both food producing countries in the region and import dependent countries such as Singapore and Brunei, and regions such as Hong Kong.

Notwithstanding the coming together of regional pacts to increase growth and trade in the region such as the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC), there is still concern that increasing production and trade in food commodities cannot be the only solution to establish food security in the

region. There is a need to address widening gaps in income and inequality, which can adversely affect access to necessary amounts and types of nutrition. To complicate matters further, in addition to climate variability affecting food production, it is not farfetched to identify nations' territorial claims as threats to future food security in the region; only to be exacerbated by the effects of climate change. A good example here is China's unsustainable fishing policies that can lead to a fishing crisis in the region (Zhang 2015) but also be another way of asserting maritime claims in regional waters (Erikson and Kennedy 2015; Bergenas and Knight 2015). Moreover, an aura of mistrust—a lightly used term here—covertly reflected in interstate dealings in the region, will only serve to intensify existing complications, especially so when food security is threatened.

A number of countries in the region are post-conflict nations and although developing at a fast rate, have large numbers of poor and malnourished amongst their populations. There are well-founded bodies of research on the vulnerabilities of local communities to effects of climate change, especially on how environmental change can be a significant risk factor in human well-being (see, for instance, Chambers 1989; Minnegal and Dwyer 2000; Kelly and Adger 2000; Thomas and Twyman 2005; Najam 2011; among others). Environmental problems brought on by climate change such as weather-related natural disasters, water shortages and loss of productive arable land directly impact people who depend on the land for their livelihood and survival. However, if coping mechanisms, such as access to scientific and technological innovations are intact, there will be greater resilience and a better chance at adapting to the changes. Unfortunately, the majority of communities directly dependent on natural systems tend to be in developing regions of the world. This means access to such innovations may or may not be possible. It might more often be the case that we might see large-scale environmental migration (Myers 2000) to 'greener' pastures as a form of adaptation.

Rafael Reuveny (2007), in his work on climate change-induced migration and conflict, explored 38 cases of environmental migration from around the world. Almost all of them have been the result of climate or weather-related phenomenon that has led to resource-related conflicts. Reduced access to natural resources as a result of climate distortions can result in such conflicts that can start within localities and spread across borders. This is in fact simplifying matters. Access to natural resources is



just the tip of the iceberg. From limited access come obstacles to food production which then can move on to affect economic and health securities among other issues of human well-being. It can also affect the well-being of communities and individuals through potential conflicts that arise from forced migration of communities in search of food.

### *A Regional Study*

The translation of knowledge from sophisticated climate change models to downscaled social impacts of climate change are tenuous at best even if relevant studies have been conducted (Adger et al. 2013; Doherty and Clayton 2011). Judging by Reuveny's work (above), there is a need for greater studies that look at the effects of climate change on the forced migration of people and how that can have socio-political and economic consequences, perhaps even lead to conflicts and the increased role of agents of traditional security. Such studies will be of great interest especially in Asia where large, and in some cases, growing populations are exclusively dependent on natural systems for their survival and livelihoods. There are limited studies on the social impacts of climate change in Asia, especially in relation to potential for conflict despite the fact that this has been the case in Bangladesh (Swain 1996; Homer-Dixon 1999), the Philippines (Cruz et al. 1992; Saith 1997) and Pakistan (Homer-Dixon and Percival 1996; IOM 1996). The grand stage where this study situates itself is the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS), of Southeast Asia. This study identifies a geographic region rather than countries to look at reduced food production as a result of climate change and the possibilities of conflict. The purpose of this is to examine more localised and down-scaled effects where countries share common resources and by virtue of being located within the same climatic zone, are affected by similar alterations to climate. GMS countries include Cambodia, Lao PDR, Vietnam, Thailand and Myanmar.<sup>1</sup>

There is a whole subculture in the GMS with communities that share common resources. The communities that inhabit this region have more in common with each other than with their respective countrymen. The region can be considered as one of the more agriculturally rich lands in the world. It is not surprising then to find a large percentage of the population engaged in food production, that is, cultivation of crops, livestock rearing and fishing as forms of livelihood. However, changing demographics, rapid urbanisation, changing lifestyles and demands for different types of food in

the region, and globally, threaten key ecosystems and potential food production. Combined with environmental stressors such as drought, salinity, heat, and submergence and flooding, and biotic stressors such as diseases and pest attacks further pressurise already stressed resources such as land and water which exacerbate unequal allocation of resources. Such situations present ripe conditions for conflict brought on by food insecurities.

The GMS can be viewed as a microcosm of wider food producing countries in Southeast Asia. Issues of changing demographics, rapid urbanisation, increased and differing demands for food, and significant proportion of population engaged in food production, occurs in other countries in the region such as the Philippines and Indonesia. The difference lies in the degree of occurrence. Similarly, the influence of 'bigger powers' can also be seen in various degrees in the GMS as well as wider Southeast Asia; notably, China's significant footprint on the GMS in food or (hydro) energy production. At times, this influence seeks to even undermine 'joint action' in the region. This is probably best reflected in the regional response to the Permanent Court of Arbitration's ruling on China's claims in the South China Sea; and subsequently China's 'presence' in Laos' interest in the issue. It is also important to note that China imports (and exports) significant amounts of food commodities from the region. Increased or reduced demands for specific food commodities in China can have implications on food production and, by extension, food security, in the region.

Food security is often intertwined with other human insecurities such as unequal economic growth, unemployment, and even unfair economic competition. For countries in the GMS equal access to resources opens up problems that can only be collectively addressed through the deliberate inclusion of, for example, governments, local communities, welfare organisations, women's groups and cooperatives, and human rights advocates. An overarching issue in food insecurities and potential conflict that deserves attention is the effectiveness of regional level institutions and their role in addressing such issues of human security. In Southeast Asia, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (henceforth ASEAN) plays this role.

Established in 1967, ASEAN now has 10 member states: Indonesia, the Philippines, Vietnam, Thailand, Malaysia, Cambodia, Myanmar, Laos, Brunei Darussalam and Singapore, five of which are in the GMS. The aims and purposes of ASEAN are set out in the ASEAN Declaration which includes promoting regional peace and stability through 'respect for jus-

tice and the rule of law in the relationship among countries of the region' (ASEAN Secretariat 2014). The code of conduct in the interactions between ASEAN member states (AMS) is clearly outlined in the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia of 1976. This is of special interest when we look into the role of ASEAN in possible conflict resolution further on in the chapter. ASEAN is a well-established regional unit that has sufficient clout to influence happenings in the Asia Pacific. Much of this has to do with its 'centrality'. The term 'centrality' has various definitions. For now, I define ASEAN centrality as ASEAN's primary position as a mover of economic, social and political actions in the region and Asia Pacific. Given the limited studies in the GMS on food security, the down-scaled social impacts of climate change and the potential for conflict under these impacts, this particular chapter attempts to answer the following three key questions:

- Will issues of food availability and access lead to forced environmental migration in the GMS?
- Will such movements create potential conflict scenarios both within the country (between marginalised communities and those that might fare better) and across state borders (neighbouring countries), and invite the entry of agents of traditional security?
- And, in synthesising the two questions above, can such events threaten ASEAN centrality in the long run?

The longer gestational periods of the effects of climate change make it more likely that studies can only rely on available empirical data and literature to some extent. It is almost as if we are travelling without maps and our best indicators are current physical (natural), social, economic and political scenarios. As such, I lay out some key assumptions that form the provenance of this study. First, I go by the premise that the net effects that climate change-induced weather patterns will result in negative effects in the GMS. Although some areas can become better suited to food production as a result of shifting climatic conditions, the GMS as a food production area will face distorted rainfall patterns, which will worsen their mostly rain-fed irrigation systems. To make matters worse, water availability is already a contested issue in the GMS (Mathews 2012; Sneddon and Fox 2012; Ho 2014; Biba 2012). Increased (night-time) temperatures will also have adverse effects on crop yields (Peng et al. 2004). Second, food is a highly politicised issue in Southeast Asia. From Thailand's rice subsidy

programme (and ensuing scandal) which saw the fall of political leaders associated with it, to Indonesia's plans for self-sufficiency, food availability, access and utilisation (a notion that stems from the nutritional value of food), these are sensitive issues that increase or decrease dependence on external sources for basic staples, affecting overall sovereignty. In domestic politics, it can make or break a party's accession to power. As a result, it is possible that risks to food production and availability, and more importantly, the inequitable distribution of food can lead to conflicts. Lastly, the study is based on the fact that environmental migration and land encroachment exists or will exist in the GMS as a result resource scarcity (in this case, water and land) that will increase the exodus of communities in the region to adjoining countries in search of food, moving further 'inland' away from frontier territories.

The chapter is organised in the following manner. The next section offers an overview of food security issues in the GMS and also addresses existing challenges to access and availability of food. The subsequent section surveys the potential impacts of climate change in the GMS, paying particular attention to how food production in the region might be affected. The effects on food will then serve to illustrate how such scenarios can lead to conflict. The fourth section presents new terrains of study linking details from the preceding sections to arrive at how ASEAN as a regional body might address issues of climate change, food production and potential conflict. Here I wish to draw attention to how ASEAN centrality may be compromised as a result of confrontation. The key question here is: is ASEAN, as a regional unit, cohesive enough to withstand drastic changes that are faced by its individual member states as a result of global climate change and its ensuing effects on anthropogenic systems? The final section concludes the chapter.

## FOOD SECURITY IN THE GMS

The UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) defines food security as a situation that 'exists when all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy lifestyle' (FAO 2001: 49). Over the last decade or so, food security in Asia, in terms of being able to feed the population, has fared better compared to other regions in the world (FAO 2012). In terms of undernourishment, Southeast Asia displays the most impressive improvements from the 1990s

with reductions of undernourished from 29.6 per cent (1990–1992) to 10.9 per cent (2010–2012) (ibid.).

The agricultural sector in the GMS plays a very important role in food security, not only for the region but also through its export potential, in other parts of Asia as well as the wider world. Rice remains Southeast Asia's most important crop. It is cultivated throughout the region and forms the staple in diets. As a matter of fact, ensuring rice security is tantamount to establishing food security in the region and in Asia as a whole. The GMS houses the 'rice bowls' of the Ayeyarwady, Chao Phraya, Mekong and Red River Deltas and most of the poor and vulnerable communities in this region subsist on a diet of rice and fish (Asian Development Bank 2012). Yet another form of food production that is of great importance to the region is fisheries. Both the fisheries and farming sectors can be affected adversely by climate change and this could lead to the loss of economic and food securities (among other hardships) for people of the GMS. This will be discussed in greater detail in the next section.

There has been sustained and impressive economic growth in Southeast Asia, including the GMS, despite global downturns elsewhere. As a matter of fact, economic growth in the GMS has surpassed several other regions in the world. However, despite this growth, the GMS as a whole still remain relatively poor. While there are several successes in terms of establishing food security in Southeast Asia, these do not deflect the fact that massive numbers of hungry and undernourished still exist (see Gayer and Smith 2015; Bloem et al. 2013; Moench-Pfanner and Bloem 2013). This includes the GMS region. Many of the rural and urban poor still go to bed hungry despite growing economies. Addressing the needs of this group of people will require assessing the complex nature of human insecurities that can be tied to unemployment, gender, cultural or ethnic bias and unfair economic competition.

In addition to the challenges above, the growing populations in the GMS countries, combined with changes in dietary preference for example, greater reliance on processed foods (as a result of rural-urban migration) and a shifting preference from cereals to animal products will alter food demands. It has been projected that the demand for food will increase by 25 per cent by the year 2050 (Asian Development Bank 2012). This is significant as the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) projects that more acute effects of climate change will be felt from the second half of the century (IPCC 2014) which can affect food production. This will lead to increased likelihood, *certeris paribus*, of food insecurities occurring in the region in the future.

A large part of bringing vulnerable populations to the fore in discussions of food and nutrition would be to systematically incorporate issues of physical, social and economic access to food into the larger human security discourse to give importance to its relevance to conventional security issues. This includes drawing concrete connections between food security and other areas of concern for Southeast Asia, including economic, energy and environmental (and perhaps even traditional) securities (especially in possible future scenarios). This interconnectedness cannot be stressed enough. The food-energy-water-livelihoods nexus in wider Southeast Asia and Oceania has been assessed comprehensively by Biggs et al. in their work, *Environment Livelihood Security* (Biggs et al. 2014). According to the authors, climate change will be the primary external mechanism that will force change in the abovementioned nexus. The AMS food producers provide a large percentage of key food commodities to the region, including rice, fish and vegetables. Any disruption to this network, whether man-made or otherwise, can be devastating to vulnerable communities in the region.

In the case of the GMS, the challenges faced in establishing food security are complex ones and cannot be examined within the confines of this particular study. Agricultural economist and food and development studies expert, C. Peter Timmer (2014) provides a range of reasons that explains this complexity. To Timmer, the most apparent challenges that will be faced will be (i) volatility of the food system and flexibility of food prices, (ii) the increasing importance of structural poverty and the vulnerability of the near-poor, (iii) growing net rice exports and the threats from rice surpluses, (iv) the increasing role of non-staple agriculture and, lastly, (v) climate change and threats to agricultural productivity (Timmer 2014). Of Timmer's five challenges, climate change (which will be discussed in greater detail in section "Climate Change and Food Insecurities: Potential for Conflict") can also have significant impacts on the other factors mentioned.

### CLIMATE CHANGE AND FOOD INSECURITIES: POTENTIAL FOR CONFLICT

Most people are familiar with conventional wisdom surrounding climate change and its impacts on biodiversity, natural resources, food production, water scarcity, and so forth. In the short and medium terms, although supposed effects might have been felt in places, especially through altered weather patterns and increase in sea levels, these effects are not an immedi-

ate concern for most nations. One reason for this is the prioritisation of national goals, especially so for nations that have other issues to contend with in terms of development, equity and economic growth, all significant issues for governments. Yet another reason might be the fact that supposed effects of climate change might in fact, ‘creep up’ over time rather than be felt as a ‘big blow’ out of nowhere. Such imperceptibility ranks climate change lower in the list of national emergencies compared to events like an economic crisis or civil unrest. Lastly, the foremost authority on enhanced global climate effects, the IPCC, is conservative in making strong connections between climate change and localised changes, both in the present and future scenarios, in issues such as extreme weather events, identified as droughts, floods, fires, hurricanes, severe storms and winter storms. Greater gestational periods for the effects of climate change make it more likely that policy-makers might overlook it for now, in light of more pressing issues. According to the IPCC Fifth Assessment Report,

the observed extreme events have not been attributed to anthropogenic climate change, yet there are climate-sensitive sources of impact illustrating the vulnerability of exposed systems, particularly if future increases in the frequency and/or intensity of such events should materialize. (IPCC 2014: 1450)

Despite these conjectures, the fact is climate change is a real phenomenon and it can certainly affect the ways in which we produce our food. The effects felt can be direct (changes in agro ecological conditions) or indirect (affecting growth and distribution of incomes and hence affecting demand for agricultural products) (Schmidhuber and Tubiello 2007). Extreme weather events are expected to increase in frequency and severity, which will undoubtedly affect food production and increase the volatility in food prices. The grand challenges that face a future (projected) global population of nine billion people are climate change and food security and failure to act on these now will only create more difficult scenarios in the future (Godfray et al. 2011).

There is growing concern in the GMS about the potential adverse impacts of climate change, especially climate variability. One main concern is the growing (transboundary) competition for water and the heavy demands placed on this resource for socio-economic development (and increasingly, hydropower) (Kingston et al. 2011). According to the GMS Atlas of the Environment 2012, although countries in the region are currently above the water stress limit, future challenges like population

growth, rapid urbanisation and climate change can exacerbate water security thus affecting the well-being of people.

Variability in precipitation can also wreak havoc on food production systems. Water stress, as a result of decrease in the number of rainy days and longer dry spells can result in adverse effects on food production in the region. Increased costs of production, from increased water and energy prices can also affect food supplies. In addition to crops, the rearing of livestock and the fishing industries will also be adversely affected. The lower Mekong River Basin is home to the largest freshwater capture fishery in the world (Dudgeon 2011) and supports a population of millions who work as full or part-time fishers. Fish and rice production is the basis for food security in Cambodia and most poor people in the sub region rely heavily on fish as a main source of protein (Asian Development Bank 2012). By 2050, ocean fish catch potential in the Southeast Asian seawaters may be reduced by 40–60 per cent due to fish migration (Porter et al. 2014).

As discussed in the previous section, rice has been, and continues to be, the most important crop in the region where food security is concerned. There have been limited studies that focus on the downscaled impacts of climate change on rice production in the GMS. A study by Peng et al. (2004: 9974) provides ‘direct evidence of decreased rice yields from increased night temperature associated with global warming’. According to the authors, severe heat stress by 2030 can cause major reductions in rice yields in South and Southeast Asia. Kunepong et al. (2001) have suggested that rice systems in Southeast Asian deltas can be disturbed by flooding and storm surges brought on by sea-level rise and increase in precipitation and by 2030, without any intervention, rice production in North-eastern Thailand can be reduced by up to 17.8 per cent from the present baseline. A World Bank (2010) study projects that rice yields in the Mekong River Delta can decline by as high as 12 per cent by 2050.

### *Unearthing Potential Conflict Scenarios*

International security studies have certainly extended to acknowledge threats arising from ever evolving human and physical environments. However, the Independent Commission on Human Security does not strongly suggest a causal link between climate change and threats to security. Hendrix and Glaser (2007), in their work on climate change and civil conflict in Sub-Saharan Africa question this oversight, considering the growing scholarship connecting environmental scarcity and resource



constraints, especially for water and arable land, to conflict. The decrease in environmental stability and predictability as a result of increased climatic variability can affect access to resources and certainly exacerbate existing imbalances in power. Hendrix and Glaser found this to be the case in Sub-Saharan Africa, and I contend that the GMS has the potential to present similar scenarios. Both regions have large rural populations engaged actively in food production and are dependent on natural assets as a principal form of livelihood.

Climate change is generally considered to hit developing nations harder than developed countries (IPCC 2001). One of the reasons for this is that the incidence of poverty in developing nations tends to be higher. To understand the complexities of poverty and vulnerabilities of the poor and very poor to climate change is beyond the scope of this chapter. Suffice to say, populations most dependent on natural resources can be affected directly and indirectly through climate-induced changes and variability. Indirect effects of climate variability will also permeate urban areas and to those that do not depend on the land through food insecurities, either in access, availability, prices. More than 60 million people in the GMS are heavily reliant on natural resources, especially agriculture and fisheries for their well-being (Mekong River Commission 2009).

Threatened economic security, either directly or indirectly, clearly affects other aspects of human security, not in the least, access to food. Climate variability in the future can create such conditions in the GMS. Issues of food availability and access can very well lead to forced migration in the region and such movement can cause potential conflict scenarios both within countries and across state borders. This is evidenced by similar cases globally, as seen in Bangladesh, both within the country (Hafiz and Islam 1993; Lee 2001) and between Bangladesh and India (Homer-Dixon 1999; Swain 1996); within the Philippines (Cruz et al. 1992) and within Thailand (Bilsborrow 2001; Panayotou and Sungsuwan 1994).

The ability of weak states (discussed below) to handle such situations depends on their systems of governance and the level of non-interference from neighbouring countries. For ASEAN to be involved with potential movements and conflicts in the GMS would be a violation of the dictates that govern interstate relations. Moreover, it is not improbable to envision large-scale movement in the GMS especially in the light of climate-induced food insecurity nor can it be said with high confidence that such movement and resultant conflict is unlikely.

## WILL ASEAN CENTRALITY BE COMPROMISED?

ASEAN came to be in August 1967 with five founding member states—Indonesia, the Philippines, Malaysia, Thailand and Singapore. It now comprises ten member states, including Brunei Darussalam (joined 1984), Vietnam (1995), Laos and Myanmar (1997) and Cambodia (1999). According to Chapter I, article II of the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia, 1976, relationships within member states are guided by:

Mutual respect for the independence, sovereignty, equality, territorial integrity, and national identity of all nations; the right of every State to lead its national existence free from external interference, subversion or coercion; non-interference in the internal affairs of one another; settlement of differences or disputes by peaceful manner; renunciation of the threat or use of force; and effective cooperation among themselves. (ASEAN Secretariat 2014)

The above succinctly describes ASEAN's *modus operandi vis-à-vis* interstate affairs—the 'ASEAN way'. As a matter of fact, such a stance can be described as its greatest strength or at times contribute greatly to its weakness as a regional institution. This will be explored in greater detail in this section. Here I investigate if non-traditional security issues like climate change and food security present challenges to ASEAN States' conceptualisation of traditional security roles and more importantly, if climate change-induced food insecurity might threaten ASEAN centrality in the long run?

### *From Traditional to Non-traditional Security: Rise of New Threats and Changing Perceptions*

According to International Relations expert Carlyle Thayer, much of military cooperation in the region can be classified into four distinct groups, three of which highlight cooperation with external powers and one which looks at greater regional cooperation (Thayer 2010).<sup>2</sup> The ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting (ADMM) and the ADMM-Plus, the region's highest military cooperative, prove the relevance of such cooperation in coping with transnational security challenges in the region, for example, counterterrorism, peacekeeping operations and humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (Tran Duc Huong 2014). Climate change and by extension 'threatened' food security is rarely considered a traditional security concern in Southeast Asia. However, instances of food insecurity have seen the deployment of agents of traditional security in Southeast Asia,

albeit under extenuating circumstances and in a non-military capacity. In the 2007–2008 food crises (discussed below), both the Philippines and Indonesian governments deployed their militaries; in the former to act as security escorts during rice distribution outside the National Food Authority warehouse in Manila on 11 April 2008 (FOMCA 2008), and in the latter to prevent the poor from seizing food from fields and warehouses (Agence France-Presse, 13 April 2008, cited in *ibid.*).

Evolving ideas of military cooperation in the region have in recent years been led by non-traditional security concerns. Such transnational threats have had the effect of shifting inter-military relations from bilateral to multilateral levels of cooperation as reflected by ADMM and ADMM-plus and the various ASEAN-plus groupings. There can very well be greater civil-military involvement with impending climate change scenarios and food security issues simply because of the effects climate variability can have on a very important component of food security—the price of food. According to political scientist, Amy Freedman, events surrounding the Arab Spring increased the concern of ASEAN States’ governments over volatility of food prices given the clear connection between food security and political stability (Freedman 2013). The protests in the Middle East and North Africa highlighted the lethal combination of high food costs, decreased economic opportunities and authoritarian regimes without sufficient accountability and growing income disparities and how these can lead to disenfranchisement and power protest movements (Gurr 1970; cited in Freedman 2013: 16). Some, if not all, of the factors above exist in the GMS countries. Unless proper action is taken now, climate change will serve to aggravate existing conditions. It is in these situations that agents of traditional security can ‘infiltrate’ non-traditional security issues that originate in civil society as a result of grievances created by a lack of effective socio-economic policies.

The extent and nature of an increased role of the military in non-traditional security issues will depend on the strength of the state and its capacity to handle ‘crisis situations’. Christopher Roberts best describes this in his writing on state weakness and political values and its ramifications for the ASEAN community (Roberts 2012). According to Roberts, newly developing countries are greatly concerned about nation-building efforts and have greater interests in domestic affairs than regional cohesiveness. The GMS states (with perhaps the exception of Thailand) are newly developing nations and face issues with regime legitimacy (here including Thailand). They exhibit weak state capacities and hence can

fracture regional endeavours. This is very probable in issues such as climate change-induced food insecurity. By focusing on quelling internal strife and gaining political power, weak states will use a series of measures as nationalist calls, including food sovereignty or self-sufficiency to legitimise their rule. The domestic use of force (more common in weak states) (ibid.) to put down protests can have a spillover effect across borders especially if these borders are porous and if newly arriving environmental refugees are a threat to domestic food sources. It is not improbable to envision these scenarios and such scenarios signal a need to put in place strategies for social/community resilience in GMS states and for them to strengthen social security nets. These measures take time to put in place and it is best that states start now.

### *Wither ASEAN Centrality?*

There have been many writings (Caballero-Anthony 2014; Ba 2011; Rolls 2012; Roberts 2012, among others) that discuss ‘ASEAN centrality’ and its effectiveness (or non-effectiveness) in ensuring regional stability. However, none have examined future climate change-induced scenarios and its effects on food production in relation to the effectiveness of regional governance. I purport two reasons for this. Firstly, the putative solution of regional and global trade has downgraded the importance of food security as a potential security threat (although incidences like the food price crisis of 2007–2008 have proved otherwise). As a matter of fact, most discussions on food security appear in the ASEAN Economic Community blueprint with only food safety issues appearing in the ASEAN social and cultural context. Secondly, the effects of climate change have long development periods and therefore do not feature in the immediate concerns of governments.

When examined against existing interstate relations, the ‘ASEAN Way’ can oftentimes be seen as a weakness. Quite possibly, if things remain as is, this setback will also present itself in climate change-induced conflict scenarios. David Arase, in discussing non-traditional security in China-ASEAN cooperation, highlights how ASEAN’s principles of mutual non-interference and non-intervention are of central importance to the institution where decisions are by consensus and not by majority vote (Arase 2012). As discussed above, domestic issues of food insecurity can escalate into international ones as people move across borders in search of sustenance. As it stands, ASEAN has not had a good track record in

handling bilateral or multilateral human security issues of illegal movement, both forced and voluntary, even within the GMS as reflected by the number of illegal immigrants in Thailand from Cambodia or of human trafficking in Myanmar. The events surrounding the longstanding issues of the Rohingya refugees<sup>3</sup> is an example of how a regional body's 'non-handling' of issues can deepen human rights violations of a minority community. The forced movement of people in the future, as a result of climate variability and food insecurity, is not an unlikely scenario and might very well force AMS to 'interfere' considering the number of people and countries that can be involved.

At the regional level, the institution often fails to act as a 'united' entity. The 2007–2008 food (price) crisis is indicative of this behaviour. Rice importing countries such as the Philippines and Malaysia saw a crisis develop in terms of the rising cost of food and domestic unrest as a result of it. By opting to supply the global food demand, in search of greater gain from inflated food prices, and by enforcing export restrictions from rice producing countries such as Thailand and Vietnam, undermined regional solidarity and limited options available for rice importing countries in the region (Chandra and Lontoh 2010). This food crisis already witnessed civil unrest in terms of protests against food prices and government behaviour. This also sets a frightening precedent to the expected behaviour of AMS that are rice producers. Considering the potential volatility of food prices in a 'new' climate scenario and judging from actions to protect self-interests, export restrictions can lead to devastating effects. It is important to note that the main rice producers of ASEAN are in the GMS. In addition to contending with their own domestic issues of food insecurity, interstate relations within the region can also be strained especially with importing countries such as the Philippines—the world's largest importer of rice.

In his writing on ASEAN centrality, Mark Rolls argues that it has been in the interest of major powers to maintain peace in the region (Rolls 2012). For this to continue, there must be sustained interest in maintaining stability in the region. Future climate change scenarios might present a 'food-hungry' China, no longer interested in maintaining stability but being able to extend its reach into the region to ensure that it can meet its growing domestic food demands. China's growing 'appetite' can certainly have significant effects on GMS food production. Rapid urbanisation, increased female employment and increased rural-urban migration have led to changing consumption patterns. This means moving towards more intensive farming practices like cattle rearing with increased consumption

of meat, milk and eggs. This trend is also seen in Southeast Asian nations, including in the GMS, which further complicates the region's ability to manage increasing demands from external powers (*ibid.*).

China's food demands can induce government intervention through rice support schemes that can run counter to liberalisation goals in a bid to protect domestic markets out of fear that their access to affordable rice will be compromised (Ewing and Zhang 2013). Given how such actions have undermined regional stability in the 2007 food crisis situation, similar reactions under a future climate regime might prove disastrous considering the reach of the effects. And when regional stability falters, ASEAN's principal role in manoeuvring economic, social and political actions in the region and Asia Pacific falters as well. For now, one thing is certain and that is China's action in terms of ensuring its own food security will certainly have significant impact on Southeast Asia's food future. However, there remains a possibility that with greater capital flow, better access to technology, higher farmer incomes, efficient and higher yielding rice varieties can provide pathways for addressing regional rice challenges (*ibid.*). This remains to be seen.

If China's current actions in the South China Sea are anything to go by, similar 'insistent' behaviour in times of food insecurity will not be unlikely. The issue of food security can be as charged and politically motivated as the 'claim game' being played out in the South China Sea. What makes the food issue more complicated is the interdependence and interconnectedness of food systems. Although some pressure on ASEAN to maintain its stability is good, too much can compromise ASEAN's centrality. With Cambodia and to some extent Myanmar (with Cambodia's interest in bringing Myanmar in) looking to develop their rice production and trade with the help of China<sup>4</sup> (Freedman 2013), and China investing in land for agricultural production in Southeast Asia, China's footprint in the GMS can escalate and unsettle food issues in the region. The five lower riparian GMS countries already face problems with China over development in the upper stretches of the Mekong that affect their water supplies and hydropower schemes. And as Mark Valencia writes of China's South China Sea forays, and as I see for climate-induced food security challenges in the GMS, 'ASEAN's tried and true method of decision-making based on consensus, consultation and proceeding in a step-by-step manner, while previously a successful method of conflict prevention, may not be appropriate for the tasks ahead' (Valencia 2012: 5).

Proponents of ASEAN will be quick to point out that despite its shortcomings, the institution has successfully maintained its 'centrality'

notwithstanding the many conundrums it has found itself in. AMS together with China, Korea and Japan have signed support for an emergency rice reserve agreement (the ASEAN Plus Three Emergency Rice Reserve or APTERR) where all 13 states will stock a total of 787,000 tonnes of rice to be used in the event of natural disasters or other disruptions to rice supplies. However, climate change has the potential to unleash extreme uncertainties in food production in states of the GMS. In reality, these 'stocks' will not be able to weather long term climate variations that will disrupt production patterns. And certainly quick and even distribution to prevent conflict situations will be almost impossible given the different systems under which GMS states operate. Bearing in mind the earlier discussion on price volatilities and related food insecurities, and the potential for conflict, reassessing ASEAN stability and centrality and its ability to actually do something becomes all the more important.

### CONCLUDING REMARKS

It has been broadly understood that climate change-induced food insecurity is neither a two-dimensional nor a multidimensional event. It is a multilayered issue with multidimensional aspects and a complex topography over which states will have to navigate in the not too distant future. This broad understanding, however, excludes potential for conflict despite some existing skirmishes; water contentions in the Mekong, for instance, which can only progressively worsen in the wake of future climate variability. Also, the idea of food security is being addressed in numerous ways, trade being the main solution followed by more nationalistic ideas of food sovereignty. There are a number of questions that need to be answered at this point: (i) Can GMS states work together to solve existing environmental issues, like that of water in the Mekong? (ii) Can GMS states de-politicise the notion of food security? (iii) Do GMS states have the capabilities to revamp existing social safety nets or introduce new ones that will address future food insecurities? It is the answers to these questions that will determine how climate change-induced food insecurities and resultant potential conflicts might be addressed. The role of ASEAN in answering these questions is vital. It is imperative that, as a regional body, the institution takes an active role in the five countries, including getting 'more involved' in its development process. As a matter of fact, the continuity of the body's relevance in the future depends upon it.

At this juncture, it is important to note that the effects of climate change on natural resources and food production can occur over long time spans

and, given the extraordinary adaptability of humans, might not at all lead to conflict situations. Conflict marks but one potential result and is not the only outcome envisioned. However, using putative solutions of regional or global trade as a means to strengthen food availability and security might not be the best course of action. The availability of this option has in fact downgraded the importance of food security compared to other aspects of human security. It is important to have in place adaptive technologies that allow greater resilience, bearing in mind not only the natural changes that climate change can bring about but also the socio-economic transformations that result. This is where greater regional involvement can help strengthen the stability and centrality of the regional body.

It is a formidable challenge to produce enough food that is nutritious, affordable, easily available, environmentally sustainable and socially acceptable for a region as diverse and yet united in the GMS. It is even more difficult to isolate and pay attention to groups that are particularly vulnerable to food insecurities. Yet here is something that needs immediate attention. There needs to be constructive conversations on cooperation and commitment within ASEAN and greater involvement in the socio-political milieu of member states that should span a broad security agent, including the insertion of traditional security concepts. A study such as this leaves more questions than answers. However if the South China Sea situation is anything to go by, perhaps it is better to address issues of climate, food and conflict now rather than later.

## NOTES

1. GMS countries also include the People's Republic of China, especially Yunnan and Guangxi provinces. For the discussion that follows, I have excluded China as part of GMS because the focus of the paper is on ASEAN nations. However, China's role in the GMS, as an external influencing factor, will be discussed.
2. For a more nuanced description of these groupings by Professor Thayer, see <https://www.aspi.org.au/publications/southeast-asia-patterns-of-security-cooperation> [Accessed 19 May 2015].
3. The Rohingyas are Myanmar Muslims who are not granted citizenship status in Myanmar as a result of, for the most part, bigoted views on race and religion. Facing discrimination in their own countries, many Rohingyas risk perilous journeys across the seas to mostly Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia, in search of better lives. Very often, they fall prey to human traffickers.
4. According to Freedman, Cambodia plans to buy a rice polishing machine from China. Currently much of Cambodian rice is sent to Vietnam for



polishing. It is also looking into setting up a rice storage facility in Kandal Province. Both strategies aim to improve Cambodia's position in the rice trade (Freedman 2013).

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**Tamara Nair** is a research fellow at the Centre for Non-Traditional Security Studies (NTS Centre), S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore. She coordinated the Food Security Research Programme at the centre and now coordinates the Women, Peace and Security Research Programme. Her research interests cover the biopolitics of hunger in Southeast Asia and the disenfranchisement of marginalised communities in local development.

## Subnational Conflict Mitigation: Networks, Innovations, and the Uncertain Place of ASEAN

*Linda Quayle*

Southeast Asia (SEA) is home to a number of internal conflicts, either blatant or latent.<sup>1</sup> While these can take many forms, the examples foregrounded in this chapter involve armed struggle waged against a central government over territorial control.

Exemplifying Asia's 'most widespread, enduring, and deadly form of conflict' (Parks et al. 2013, pp. 1–3, 11–14, 17, 62), such struggles constitute a serious drag on SEA's progress. Aside from the unspeakable human suffering they cause, they complicate the still unfinished task of nation- and state-building in the region; discourage investment across often extensive areas; sour the foreign policy of states who suspect neighbours of supporting rebel causes; at times encourage great-power involvement (in response to border problems or threats of terrorism); and tarnish the prospering, modernizing image that SEA's states want to portray to the international community.

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) is not unaware of this challenge. Yet its history, its political profile, and its lack of internally generated resources complicate the task of forging a meaningful role in

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L. Quayle (✉)

University of Nottingham (Malaysia Campus), Semenyih, Malaysia

mitigating subnational conflict. ASEAN's specific difficulties are threefold. Firstly, civil society is a vital component of subnational conflict mitigation. Yet ASEAN is still in the process of working out the terms of its relationship with regional civil society, let alone with the many smaller local players that animate the peace support arena. Secondly, on the issue of conflict mitigation as on so many others, ASEAN is still balancing desired outcomes with available means and political will. Thirdly, subnational conflict mitigation occupies an awkward position between traditional and non-traditional security. It fits neither with ASEAN's historic *international* peace-promoting *raison d'être*, nor with the *transnational* non-traditional security issues that have gained such prominence in recent security outlook documents (ASEAN 2013a, b, 2014a, 2015c). As such, subnational conflict has become something of a Cinderella in ASEAN's security landscape.

In order to flesh out the context in which ASEAN is trying to find its conflict mitigation niche, this chapter focuses on the areas of Mindanao and Aceh. Conflict scenarios are notoriously different, making it difficult to extrapolate patterns and recommendations from single cases. Nevertheless, these case-studies serve two purposes. The first is to highlight the innovations that have characterized conflict mitigation efforts, particularly in the areas of hybrid mediation support initiatives, civilian peacekeeping, and education for peace. The second is to unpack some of the massively complex networks that animate these efforts, noting that the roles of 'non-state' and 'state' actors in the realm of conflict mitigation are often very blurred.

In both cases, the reality on the ground is markedly disconnected from ASEAN's current capacity and experience, suggesting that subnational conflict in SEA forms yet another indicator of 'transitional polycentrism', as a number of state and non-state players tussle over a variety of configurations of power, and ASEAN is left uncomfortably on the sidelines. The chapter does not end wholly negatively, however. ASEAN does not control the game, but it has not been bowled out yet.

The first section of the chapter stakes out some definitions, traces ASEAN's current profile in this area, and briefly sketches the conflicts that have ebbed and flowed in Mindanao and Aceh. The second section focuses specifically on the innovations and networks mentioned above; and the third, with this complexity in mind, tentatively discusses the future involvement of ASEAN and the embryonic ASEAN Institute for Peace and Reconciliation (AIPR) in what is not only a fraught issue but also a tangled operational environment.

## DEFINITIONS AND PROFILES

### *Conflict Mitigation and Civil Society Organizations*

Conflict mitigation is understood to comprise ‘efforts to contain and if possible, reduce the amount of violence used by parties engaged in violent conflict and to engage them in communication looking toward settling the dispute and terminating the violence’ (CAII 1997; see also Lund 2009).

The term civil society organization (CSO) comprises not only non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and their international equivalent (INGOs), but also community-based self-help organizations (or people’s organizations), faith-based organizations, professional organizations, and so on (Chong and Elies 2011, pp. 22–23).<sup>2</sup>

Conflict mitigation processes in Southeast Asia involve complex webs of actors. Alongside states, inter-governmental organizations (IGOs), donors, academic institutions, and media are found many types of CSOs—ranging from those whose coverage might extend only to the local village to those whose increased prominence, *The Economist* notes (Anon 2011), indicates ‘a shift in the way diplomats and others go about trying to solve conflicts’: a quasi-privatization of certain kinds of diplomacy. This latter evolution has had both positive and negative effects (Jaques 2013; UN 2009). Among the larger players in what is now a busy arena are the Crisis Management Initiative (CMI); the Carter Center’s Conflict Resolution Program; the United States Institute of Peace; and the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (HD). All have had some kind of involvement in SEA.

### *ASEAN, Peace Initiatives, and Civil Society*

ASEAN has up to now played only a minor role in dealing with subnational conflict. While the principle of non-interference is not the all-enveloping explanation that many would imply, it is nevertheless true that ASEAN’s earliest behavioural codes—heavily influenced by the context of decolonization and the Cold War—outlawed involvement in other members’ domestic conflicts. This heritage, combined with still low levels of trust among ASEAN’s members and a continuing emphasis on sovereignty, has resulted in a reluctance to internationalize internal conflicts or entrust too many powers to ASEAN. Most of the conflict mitigation load in SEA has therefore been shouldered by individual regional states as opportunities arise, and by external players and civil society entities of various kinds (Della-Giacoma 2011).



ASEAN is clearly not wholly content with this state of affairs, and has attempted to move forward. Its trademark ambivalence, however, has been very apparent. The ASEAN Charter (2007) includes a provision for ‘good offices, conciliation or mediation’, and calls for dispute resolution mechanisms; both the original Blueprint (2009, pp. 13–15) and its successor (2015b, pp. 40–44) proffer more specific ideas on conflict resolution, the peaceful settlement of disputes, and post-conflict peacebuilding; the ASEAN Peacekeeping Centres Network (2011) aims to ‘help promote regional cooperation to maintain peace and stability’; and AIPR held its first meeting in 2013. Clearly, this is an area where the Association *thinks* it should be more involved. But effectively institutionalizing and operationalizing these aspirations—or even unambiguously spelling out that their scope might be subnational as well as international—is another matter, and ASEAN is still often left a ‘by-stander’ when conflicts break out (Iglesias 2013).

Peacekeeping furnishes one example of ambivalence. Enhancement of ‘the regional capacity and readiness for peacekeeping activities’ figures as a goal in the ASEAN Regional Forum’s Hanoi Plan of Action, and ‘peacekeeping operations’ form one of the areas of ‘practical cooperation’ envisaged by the ASEAN Defence Ministers’ Meeting Plus (ADMM-Plus) (ASEAN 2010, 2015a). Many individual ASEAN members proudly signal their UN peacekeeping profile (ASEAN 2015c), and intra-regional missions have received support from individual regional states (see the summary in Thayer 2014). Malaysia, as ASEAN Chair in 2015, championed an initiative to push an ASEAN peacekeeping force, and resistance was certainly lower than it was when Indonesia broached the idea in 2003 (Bernard 2016).

But further moves in this direction appear to face considerable perception hurdles, especially if such a force were expected to deploy intra-regionally. In ASEAN’s inaugural *Security Outlook*, for example, Indonesia mentions its involvement in Mindanao, whereas the Philippines does not; the same pattern is repeated for Brunei. Malaysia mentions its contributions in Timor Leste and the Philippines, whereas Indonesia and the Philippines do not. The Philippines mentions Mindanao only in the context of counter-terrorism efforts; Thailand mentions nothing at all about the ongoing troubles in the south; and Myanmar stresses (several times) that ‘no foreign troops shall be permitted to be deployed in the territory of the Union’ (ASEAN 2013b, pp. 12–15, 19–20, 25, 31, 36–37, 39–40, 48).

Two years later, little had changed. Myanmar's warnings are even more prominently displayed; Thailand is still utterly silent about the south. Indonesia notes its involvement in ceasefire monitoring in Mindanao, as does Brunei, but—perhaps in light of the obstacles encountered by the peace process there—the Philippines points only to ‘a protracted communist insurgency and a secessionist rebellion in parts of Mindanao’, and Malaysia makes no mention of its contribution at all. Indonesia, ‘having reaped the benefits of successful mediation in the resolution of conflict situations within its borders’, enlarges on its own credentials as a mediator, but makes no mention of playing host to peacekeeping missions itself (ASEAN 2015c, pp. 25, 36–37, 40, 54, 61).

It is as though *contributing* to a peacekeeping operation is a source of prestige, but being open enough to *host* one absolutely is not. Not surprisingly, then, despite ASEAN's brief acquisition of a higher corporate peacekeeping profile in the Aceh Monitoring Mission (AMM),<sup>3</sup> peacekeeping *by* the region *within* the region has made little progress to date, and the ultimate fate of Malaysia's 2015 initiative will be highly indicative of the way the wind is blowing.

The formation of AIPR also illustrates ambivalence. As with so many ASEAN enterprises, the original ideal took something of a battering on the journey to actualization. In 2012, Termsak Chalermphanupap, then head of the ASEAN Political-Security Directorate, noted that AIPR was one of the ‘big ideas’ that ASEAN regularly embraces in order to ensure its forward momentum:

But we're seeing a mutation of this big idea – it's supposed to be an independent think tank, with access to all the ASEAN documents and ASEAN senior officials. But slowly it's being changed. This is what always happens. A big idea – you start with an ambitious idea, and then it has to be adjusted so that anyone will not object. And eventually it becomes what it is going to be.<sup>4</sup>

Lina Alexander, a security analyst in Jakarta, agreed, noting that same year that Indonesia, a notable champion of AIPR,

is still struggling because there is a division of positions among the ASEAN member states. Indonesia wants this institute in its work to also cover intra-state conflicts. But other countries ... are actually reluctant to include intra-state conflicts. They want this institute to cover only inter-state conflicts. ... That's one thing. The second thing is also about the mandate of this

institute. It is still unclear whether this institute would be able to play the function of monitoring certain conflicts in order to gather facts, to gather evidence.<sup>5</sup>

In 2013 the ASEAN Chair's first statement of the year and the foreign ministers' communiqué both adopted the formula that the institute 'would promote research activities on peace, conflict management and conflict resolution in the region' (2013c, d), and the following year, the inaugural meeting of the Advisory Board proposed 'some initial themes for research' (DFAPHL 2014). The ASEAN Chair's statement (2014c) commended AIPR's symposiums (ASEAN 2014b), and noted again that its role is to provide 'recommendations, research and analysis'. Almost two years later, however, ASEAN's foreign ministers were still urging the Institute to 'accelerate its operationalisation [and] enhance its capacity' (ASEAN 2016). While constituting a very welcome development, AIPR is clearly not yet the 'big idea' that some had hoped for.

If ASEAN's regional profile on conflict mitigation is already a complex mix of ambition and reluctance, then adding civil society complicates the picture still further. A broad country-by-country survey of CSOs (Chong and Elies 2011) reveals not only widely disparate backgrounds, constraints, thematic priorities, and levels of connectedness with ASEAN, but also far fewer organizations focused on peace than on human rights, development, and the environment. At regional level, CSOs are still learning how to work together, and ASEAN is still learning how to relate to them (see the discussion in Quayle 2013b, pp. 125–152).

### *Mindanao and Aceh*

ASEAN's challenge is by no means eased by the complicated environments in which its efforts are likely to have to play out. These are amply illustrated by the conflicts in Mindanao and Aceh. The most dramatic presentation of both is as *vertical* conflicts, in which a minority with a distinct history, ethnicity, culture, and identity seeks redress against a distant central government that is perceived as not only failing to represent the interests of the minority but also as practising a form of internal colonialism, including demographic manipulation, resource exploitation, and cultural denigration.<sup>6</sup>

Both Aceh and Mindanao, however, also demonstrate the characteristics of *horizontal* conflicts, in which different sectors of the population are

at odds with each other. Mindanao, which is home to at least six major non-state armed groups, ‘dozens of militia units’, at least six distinguishable but overlapping types of violence, and marked ethnic diversity, has been described as ‘one of the most complex conflict environments in Asia’ (Adriano and Parks 2013, pp. 18, 25, 36–39). Aceh, meanwhile, since the Helsinki Accords brought the vertical conflict to a formal end, has witnessed the emergence or exacerbation of at least three sets of horizontal conflict patterns (Ansori 2012; Barron et al. 2013, pp. 31–42; IPAC 2015b).

Because of its clear international ramifications, vertical conflict is the genre that usually grabs the attention both of regional neighbours and external actors. Yet attempts to mitigate vertical conflict can unwittingly exacerbate horizontal conflict, which, in turn, not only exacts an enormous toll in terms of human lives and economic productivity, but also constantly threatens to reignite the vertical conflict (Adriano and Parks 2013, pp. 28–29). Civil society efforts to deal with this circular phenomenon will be discussed below.

Aceh’s conflict transition has been termed ‘advanced’ (Parks et al., 2013, pp.48-49). Yet even Aceh’s situation offers no cause for complacency. On the one hand, it is ‘arguably the best example in Asia of a long-running violent conflict transforming into a stable enduring peace’; on the other hand, as noted above, the conflict has morphed, rather than entirely disappeared. Aceh has in the past experienced the re-ignition of conflict, often after considerable periods of time, as new elites and/or grievances emerge (Barron et al. 2013, pp. 1, 9, 90–91), and a certain fragility is never far from the surface (see, e.g., Anon 2014b; IPAC 2015a; Linggasari 2015).

In Mindanao, following considerable progress, which culminated in the Comprehensive Agreement on Bangsamoro (CAB) in 2014, violence again spiked and prospects for peace dimmed (for details, see Heidelberg Institute for International Conflict Research 2015, pp. 128, 156–158; ICG 2016). The hiatus brought about by a change of administration in the Philippines makes it difficult, at time of writing, to determine whether and when it will be possible to overcome the ‘major challenges’ identified by the Third Party Monitoring Team (TPMT 2016), the body charged with reviewing and assessing the implementation of agreements between the two sides.

Both the extent and the nature of the roles played by civil society in Aceh and Mindanao are a matter of much debate. From the perspective of

this chapter, however, the key point is that both these conflicts have witnessed the evolution of complex and innovative conflict management initiatives, which intimately entwine civil society and a host of other actors, and complicate ASEAN's attempts to locate a role as a peace facilitator. These developments will be discussed in the following section.

## MINDANAO AND ACEH: INNOVATIONS AND NETWORKS IN CONFLICT MITIGATION

### *Hybrid Groups, Civilian Peacekeeping, and Peace Education*

States, IGOs, and latterly INGOs have played various roles in mitigating the conflicts under discussion. In Aceh, an INGO, the Henry Dunant Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (HD), brokered a 'humanitarian pause' in 2000, and the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement in 2002. Subsequently, another INGO, the Crisis Management Initiative (CMI), successfully mediated the Memorandum of Understanding on which the Aceh settlement is based. The Mindanao peace process has involved facilitators/mediators from states (including Libya and Malaysia) and from IGOs (the Organization of the Islamic Conference).

Particularly interesting, however, is the International Contact Group (ICG), the hybrid body that was established in 2009 by the government of the Philippines and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) to shepherd a new phase in the peace negotiations. Tasked with supporting Malaysia, the official facilitator, and consisting of four states (the UK, Japan, Turkey, and Saudi Arabia) and four NGOs (Conciliation Resources, Muhammadiyah, HD, and initially the Asia Foundation or AF, latterly the Community of Sant'Egidio), the ICG represents an unprecedented iteration of peace support.

Not only did this body offer another way to compromise between internationalizing and not internationalizing, but its disparate membership also meant it was able to provide a very broad variety of expertise and influence. Corporately, it supported the formal negotiations, especially by helping to manoeuvre round impasses; individually, its members met regularly with various constituents of the peace process, including local civil society. While it is hard to know whether the circumstances that enabled the creation of the ICG are replicable elsewhere, its experiences are certainly worth noting for other conflict mitigation undertakings (Herbolzheimer and Leslie 2013; Rood 2013b).

Possibly the least known member of the ICG is Muhammadiyah.<sup>7</sup> One of Indonesia's 'mass organizations', with a membership of at least 25 million, Muhammadiyah has a presence in several countries in SEA. Although the organization had some involvement in the Aceh peace process (Aspinall and Crouch 2003, pp. 30–32; Sudibyo Markus 2007), its peace profile has particularly grown since about 2005, with consultations at the UN, and a role in conflict mitigation attempts in southern Thailand as well as Mindanao (Anon 2010). Muhammadiyah's peace efforts include general peace education as well as mediation in specific conflicts, and aim to promote 'regional stability' and 'a peaceful world order' (Anon 2010; Sasongko 2010).

In Mindanao, Muhammadiyah has played a role in facilitating dialogue, and also plans to be involved in post-conflict rehabilitation and development. The organization already offers scholarships to Moro students (among others), and has long-term plans for community support in Mindanao in areas such as education, social development, health, and civil society consolidation (including the promotion of interfaith networks) (Anon 2014a; Muhammad Zahrul Anam and Surwandono 2013).

Post-2014, the ICG continued to provide support when called on (Herbolzheimer 2015; ICG 2016, p. 21). But another suite of hybrid and/or internationalized bodies also took up the baton in the various domains of the implementation and 'normalization' process. The TPMT, for example, which started work in 2013, was chaired by a former EU ambassador to the Philippines, and comprised two representatives from local NGOs and two from international NGOs (one being the AF); the Independent Decommissioning Body comprised three international members (from Turkey, Norway, and Brunei), alongside four local colleagues (TPMT 2016, pp. 3, 16); and the Transitional Justice and Reconciliation Commission (TJRC 2016) had a Swiss chair and a Swiss adviser, working with local members.

At the opposite end of the CSO spectrum from these international hybrid interventions is a no less innovative series of peace initiatives revolving around the idea of civilian peacekeeping.<sup>8</sup> A striking example of one such endeavour is the creation of 'peace zones' or 'spaces for peace'. As well as directly responding to violence, they often sponsor community participation and developmental activities, and they may be created by spontaneous local initiative or through the facilitation of NGOs and donors (Coronel-Ferrer 2005, pp. 9–14).

While some doubt their effectiveness in times of heightened violence, others argue that they brought an improvement in inter-communal

relations and a degree of security, even if only temporary (Arguillas 2003, pp. 13–14; Iyer 2004; Rood 2005, pp. 24–26). Coronel-Ferrer sees them as the ‘most solid manifestation’ of a peace-focused people’s organization, ‘a concrete initiative coming from the people to regain control and normalcy in their lives’ (2005, pp. 9–14). And, certainly, there is a marked agential difference between standing up to mark out a zone of peace (even if this is later disregarded) and passively waiting for violence to happen. Nor, as peace zones have continued to declare themselves, and continued to draw attention (GMU 2014; Turabin-Hataman 2016; Unson 2014), does the idea seem to have lost its attractiveness.

Along similar lines are the ‘peace-centred communities’ that HD has helped to promote in Sulu. Such local initiatives not only deal with horizontal conflicts that tend to draw little attention in the mainstream peace talks, but also demonstrate the ‘vast array of mechanisms’ local people draw on to overcome the ‘victim trap’ (Oreta and Tolosa 2012, pp. 5, 25, 29–32, 50–53, 56; see also Virola-Gardiola 2012, pp. 41–46). HD, partnered by the European Union, has also promoted the ‘Tumikang Sama Sama’ initiative (‘together we move forward’), with the aim of promoting non-violent conflict resolution (Virola-Gardiola 2012, pp. 7, 11, 19, 28), while the AF and USAID have similarly supported research into ‘rido’, or clan feuding, and associated conflict-resolution mechanisms (Torres III 2014, pp. 3–5, 15–17).

A more specifically targeted initiative was the formation of ‘Bantay Ceasefire’, which found its own niche in the complex peace-monitoring architecture of Mindanao by supplementing the civil-society-trained and -staffed Local Monitoring Teams. The Bantay Ceasefire initiative brought together local and international civil society peace activists and community volunteers, with the aim of supporting the ceasefire, reporting violations, and generally seeking to reduce threats to the civilian population in provinces in south, central, and western Mindanao. After 2009, the group focused on humanitarian protection, producing detailed reports on ceasefire violations and related abuses (Gündüz and Torralba 2014, pp. 28, 31; Rood 2005, pp. 28, 30; Santos 2005, p. 6).

Over the years, new components—humanitarian, socio-economic, and civilian protection—have been added to the overall structure of the International Monitoring Team (IMT). The Civilian Protection Component, set up in 2009, is led by NGOs. Some are local, and have included the Mindanao People’s Caucus, from which the Bantay Ceasefire initiative sprang. The international contribution comes from Nonviolent Peaceforce (NP),

which started its involvement in Mindanao in 2005, at the invitation of Bantay Ceasefire. NP's activities include 'protective accompaniment' of threatened individuals, early warning of danger to local people, and pre-emptive information dissemination to armed actors on both sides (Gündüz and Torralba 2014, pp. 25, 31, 38; Hameed 2008; Rood 2013a).

To hybrid peace facilitation and civilian peacekeeping, a third innovative area can be added: peace education. Classic peace education programmes have a long history in Mindanao (see, e.g., Coronel-Ferrer 2005). Newer, however, is a specific focus on peace education in Islamic idiom. Generally, Rasul Bernardo argues, previous peace programmes, while not necessarily secular, have not 'been designed for Muslims' or 'appropriated Islamic concepts and terms' (2012).

This need had already been identified in Aceh. The response was the production of the 'Peace Education Curriculum', which draws on an Islamic heritage and on traditional Acehnese values (translated by Darni 2001). These explicit origins were reported to be highly regarded by principals, teachers, and students alike, and facilitators registered very positive results from following the curriculum (Ashton 2002, pp. 8–13). The programme expanded substantially, and had the added by-product of fostering an interactive style of learning (Husin 2009, pp. 135–136). Similar projects were then undertaken in Mindanao, with the development of an 'Islamic Peace Education Model' in 2006, and attempts to institutionalize peace education within existing Islamic educational structures (Rasul Bernardo 2012).

There is another element to peace education, however, that deserves discussion. Until comparatively recently, Islamic education in Mindanao could not be obtained within the state system. To gain a state-accredited education, children needed to pursue the state curriculum at a state school and Islamic instruction at one of the many Islamic schools (madaris). In 2004, however, the Philippines Government made madaris eligible for accreditation if they adhered to the Standard Curriculum for Elementary Public Schools and Private Madaris (Abdulkarim 2010). Within such an accredited school, children study national curriculum subjects, but also Arabic, Islamic values, Koran-reading, Hadith, the history of the Prophet, and so on (Republic of the Philippines Department of Education 2011).

A number of external donors—including AusAID, as part of the Basic Education Assistance for Mindanao (BEAM 2011) project—have funded the upgrading of madaris to enable them to reach these standards. This is



not only an exercise in improving basic education standards, with the goal of facilitating development and therefore peace. It also supports peace by promoting self-respect and dignity, and counteracting double standards (Rasul Bernardo 2012).

### *Networks and Cascades*

As is probably already apparent, these various innovations involve extensive clusters or chains of actors, drawn from both the state and non-state sectors. By way of example, the following snapshot of the ‘family tree’ of Conciliation Resources (CR) (captured in 2014, the year the CAB was signed) abundantly illustrates the complexities of the civil society networks engaged in conflict mitigation.<sup>9</sup> CR was requested as an ICG member by a group of local CSOs already familiar with its work (Herbolzheimer and Leslie 2013).

The Muslim Christian Agency for Advocacy, Relief, and Development (MuCAARD), for instance, draws together a complex network of people’s organizations, representing among others fisherfolk, farmers, and urban poor. MuCAARD, along with 35 other groupings, was a member of the Mindanao People’s Caucus (MPC), the group associated with Bantay Ceasefire and membership of the IMT, as noted above.

The MPC, in turn, was a part of Mindanao Peace Weavers (MPW), ‘a convergence of seven networks of peace advocates, which includes NGOs, academics, religious groups, human rights groups, people’s organizations and grassroots communities’ (CR n.d.). Moving up the chain again, MPW (n.d.) was one of the nine ‘partners’ working with CR at that time. And CR, as discussed above, was a member of the ICG.

Though fearsomely complex, this kind of structure has much to recommend it, offering possibilities for small organizations to gain representation at much higher levels of power and influence while still retaining considerable autonomy and flexibility on the ground.

Of interest, however, is the area of funding. In 2013 and 2015, CR’s ‘unrestricted’ income (not tied to a specific project) came from actors such as UK Aid, the Swedish International Cooperation Agency, and the foreign ministries of Norway and Switzerland (in neither year did annual income from ‘donations’ exceed 0.17%). Income specifically earmarked for projects in the Philippines (bracketed with Colombia) came from UK Aid, the European Commission, the Norwegian Foreign Ministry, the UN, and the British Council (CR 2013, 2015). Funding sources for AF’s

projects in the Philippines have likewise included AusAID and the British Embassy (AF 2013, 2015), while the EU has funded the HD, the NP, and the MPC (Vassallo 2014).

These observations imply absolutely no conspiratorial overtones. Conflict mitigation requires funds. Donors allocate funds. And organizations at the bottom of the food chain are no doubt grateful for the small sums that are filtering down via these international conduits to an increasing number of projects (Parks et al. 2013, pp. 62–66).

But the overwhelming proportion of extra-regional, state-originated funding raises questions. State donors, after all, are not wholly altruistic. They will inevitably prioritize projects they regard as supporting their national interests, in places they deem strategic—to the detriment of other projects in other places.

Major state donors are also unlikely to individually commit funds to areas where there is no formal peace process, so the gap tends to be filled by state-funded development banks. In the decade to 2010, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) was the largest donor to areas experiencing subnational conflict (giving an amount almost equivalent to all the bilateral donors put together), and together the ADB and the World Bank ‘are programming at least 61% of all aid flows to subnational conflict areas in Asia’ (Parks et al. 2013, pp. 62–70). There is clearly still plenty of ‘state’ left, even in apparently non-state contributions to conflict mitigation.

### WHICH WAY FORWARD FOR ASEAN?

The challenges for ASEAN in this area are obviously formidable. As noted earlier, every conflict situation is different, and conflict mitigation is an extraordinarily crowded and complex field. These factors alone make both learning and niche-finding difficult. But the previous section has also illustrated a fluid, constantly morphing, and extemporizing arena, replete with endlessly extending civil society networks and big-league funders. By contrast, ASEAN inevitably appears flat-footed, hide-bound, and cash-strapped.

The difficulty of seizing the initiative in this area inevitably impacts on two themes that this book has sought to foreground: governmental conceptualizations of defence roles, and ASEAN’s ambitions to retain its centrality within the regional security architecture. Subnational conflict, this section will argue, finds itself rather differently placed in these debates from some of its non-traditional-security brethren.

The tendency, evidenced in ASEAN's various security outlook documents, for states to expatiate on terrorism, cross-border crime, and disaster relief suggests that—despite their occasionally sovereignty-straining and embarrassing qualities—these are areas where it is acceptable to admit need. Universally, after all, states are beset by these quintessentially transnational problems. Universally, states are looking for solutions.

Subnational conflict, on the other hand, is scarcely mentioned in these documents. There are two possible reasons for this. Firstly, subnational conflict simply might not be perceived as a sufficient threat to the 'stable political and security environment' that it is ASEAN's single-minded mission to pursue (ASEAN 2013b, p. 4). This chapter opened by arguing that this is an extraordinarily short-sighted perspective. But as Barron points out (2014), 'In nations' capitals, the killing is often too distant to arouse widespread indignation'; the problems are knotty, the solutions elusive, the political gains uncertain. The Mindanao and Aceh cases were driven forward by a disparate collection of factors—including (variously) international concerns over terrorist links; the perceived need to free up military resources to focus on external security worries; the perceived need to forge better ties with neighbours who share a religion with the aggrieved subnational group; changed leadership; and/or world attention (Abad 2014; Abuza 2014; Aspinall 2009). Until these perfect storms materialize, subnational conflicts may well be left to moulder.

Secondly, where they *do* figure in security assessments, 'internal conflict(s)' and political 'disputes' (ASEAN 2013b, pp. 21, 23, 24; 2015c, pp. 28, 34) are seen as elements of *traditional* security. As such, they perhaps fail to activate the discursive transnational lift-off noted above—which might, even if only rhetorically, signal a more open attitude towards defence. Instead, subnational conflicts remain in the category of problems that are all too clearly reminiscent of the ASEAN governments' early, Cold-War-pressured days, when non-interference was the way to stop subnational conflicts becoming an existential danger.

There are various factors militating against total inertia, however. The first—highly negative—one is the closer attention that Islamic State (IS) has been paying to SEA (Singh and Jani 2016). While the implications of this covetous gaze are still largely opaque, it can hardly be doubted that an unfinished peace process offers fertile ground for recruitment (ICG 2016, pp. 14–15). Terrorism is a threat that ASEAN members are generally able to rally against. All ten have ratified the ASEAN Convention on Counter-Terrorism, for example, and in the wake of increased activity by the Abu

Sayyaf Group, Malaysia, Indonesia, and the Philippines began drawing up plans for coordinated patrols in the Sulu Sea (although concerns about ‘making sure not to step on each other’s toes’ ensured those plans were not to be speedily operationalized) (Salim 2016). But the blunt instruments wielded against terrorism in the rest of the world are highly unsuitable for the delicate situation of a subnational conflict facing an interrupted peace process. Nor is a heightened sense of threat propitious for the task of disentangling the *causes* of subnational conflict.

More positive spurs to action, as noted above, are ASEAN’s corporate *ambition* to include some sort of conflict mitigation in its remit, and external players’ clear *expectation* that it should. Conceptualizations of defence roles in this area are therefore caught in an awkward eddy of conflicting currents.

And what of ASEAN’s ambitions to retain its treasured *centrality*? ASEAN’s inability to handle subnational conflict, as observed, has left plenty of room for veins of all kinds of influence to burrow their way through the region, in a way that prima facie would seem to ensure ASEAN’s continued infantilization, and cumulatively detract from its pretensions to centrality.

As always, however, in the ‘courtship’ analogies that surround ASEAN centrality, weakness can paradoxically endow strength. While inter-state donor rivalry continues to incentivize the provision of ideational and material goods, willing states continue to benefit from aid and attention (and so, by default, does the region). As long as rival donors are neither totally in cahoots with each other nor totally at odds with each other, the recipient has some room for agential manoeuvre, and if some measure of peace is the result, then so much the better. Left out of this equation are the subnational conflicts that languish far from the international eye. But precisely because they are hidden, failure to deal with them does not overtly threaten centrality either.

With all these disincentives to action, recommendations for a proactive ASEAN commitment to subnational conflict mitigation may seem redundant. Nevertheless, a down-payment in this sector would almost certainly reap dividends in other areas of ASEAN’s community-building project. With this in mind, five suggestions can be made.

Firstly, ASEAN as a whole needs to speed up progress in its relations with civil society. AIPR could be a useful vehicle here. The Advisory Board recommended engagement with CSOs (DFAPHL 2014), and this theme was continued in subsequent ASEAN Foreign Ministers’ joint communiqués

(e.g., 2014c, 2016), which encouraged engagement with ‘relevant stakeholders’, including CSOs.

Secondly, in this area, as with so many other ASEAN agendas, the question of internal regional funding needs to be addressed. A commitment to conflict mitigation means a commitment to funding it, and even the ability to finance small, peace-oriented civil-society programmes could only add to ASEAN’s presence and credibility.

Thirdly, part of the regional ‘stocktaking’ work that AIPR is enjoined to undertake (DFAPHL 2014) could involve the dynamic mapping of peace-oriented CSOs and their complex coalitions and umbrella groups. But the emphasis here should be on fact-finding, not vetting or micro-managing. A perennial tension between ASEAN and civil society is that the former prefers to deal with a relatively small number of identified entities (partly because of its limited administrative capacity), while civil society, almost by definition, consists of a vast number of ever-evolving groupings, subgroupings, and offshoots (and often views gatekeeping functions such as accreditation with considerable scepticism). The cascade structure that was highlighted in the previous section of this chapter is one possible way of reducing the space between these approaches. But locating the groups would be a necessary first step.

Fourthly, a key role for AIPR, as some have already suggested, could be that of ‘gathering and consolidating all the narratives of peace in the region over the decades’ (Quintos Deles 2014). The goal here should be not only to reflect the agential capacity highlighted in the previous section, but also to sensitize the region’s people to the pain engendered by subnational conflict, and mobilize them to push for sustainable solutions.

Fifthly, AIPR could readily take on a peace education role in conjunction with civil society. ASEAN is now thoroughly convinced that it needs to communicate itself more extensively and more clearly, and a peace education component could be part of a broader strategy to disseminate information about ASEAN, the region, and the need to overcome residual tensions and differences. This task needs to be tackled in an inclusive fashion, however, avoiding the whiff of propaganda that sometimes imbues ASEAN communication activities (see the discussion in Quayle 2013a).

The above tentative recommendations are intended to be pragmatic, taking into account ASEAN’s current stage of evolution and the futility of prescribing courses of action that are unlikely to gain the required consensual backing in the near- or mid-term. As such, they inevitably appear painfully slight in comparison with the problems sketched in the first part

of this chapter, and the innovations outlined in the second. This is ASEAN's dilemma. While it takes its small institutional steps forward, the region's problems—problems that ASEAN's structures are not yet equipped to deal with—continue to engender other solutions driven by other actors. ASEAN may still be able to exploit the trajectories of these exotic solutions, but as the stakes get higher, the game gets riskier.

The message is not wholly negative, however. AIPR's trajectory is representative of many ASEAN initiatives, with a clearly observable pattern. A bold idea is launched; on paper it becomes a shadow of its former self, giving rise to relief in some quarters and disappointment in others; but the original idea never quite fades away, so that its spirit continues to animate the project, often in quite creative ways.

Thus, while AIPR's remit looks very modest, it provides—as so often with ASEAN activities—a discursive launching pad for conceptual and behavioural evolution. Concerns about 'non-interference' did not prevent speakers at the first AIPR symposium, for example, from clearly rolling subnational conflicts into their discussions (Quintos Deles 2014; Vassallo 2014), or the Deputy Secretary-General of ASEAN for Community and Corporate Affairs from acknowledging the CAB (ASEAN 2014b). Bagas Hapsoro, the former Indonesian delegate to AIPR, frankly advocated a "UN-plus" regional approach in dealing with local conflict situations', in which ASEAN members would help to deal with their neighbours' problems (Ismira 2014).

This creation of discursive space around a modest, consensually agreed ASEAN provision has seen the Association move forward—slowly, but perceptibly—on a range of issues, from human rights to migration. Such a procedure is hardly ideal. But it does ensure that progress is not reduced to the lowest common denominator.

## CONCLUSION

While the terms conflict mitigation, ASEAN, and civil society have considerable salience in their own right, combining them does not currently produce the super-charged synergistic whole that SEA's challenges demand. The subnational conflict areas of Mindanao and Aceh demonstrate that CSOs can produce innovations, such as hybrid peace facilitation, civilian peacekeeping, and peace education; likewise, they can forge networks that bring small grassroots organizations closer to the negotiating parties and to sources of funding and training. ASEAN, meanwhile, still in the initial

stages of working out its approaches both to conflict mitigation and to civil society, does not easily find ways to connect with these phenomena.

The remedies that can realistically be proposed for this disconnect—persevering with channels to civil society; addressing funding issues; mapping peace networks; recording and analysing peace narratives in a way that ups the ante on the devastation wrought by subnational conflicts; and extending the peace education programmes already in operation in the region—appear puny and inadequate.

But until a regional consensus can be built that supports a more rigorous conflict mitigation role, such modest measures and the increased discursive space they create may increase ASEAN's chances of weathering at least some of the storms of transitional polycentrism.

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## NOTES

1. For an overview, see the Conflict Barometer of the Heidelberg Institute for International Conflict Research (2015).
2. See the discussion in Paffenholz and Spurk (2006, pp. 2–12).
3. The unarmed AMM supervised the implementation of the Memorandum of Understanding between the Indonesian government and the Free Aceh Movement. It drew its 200-odd personnel from Thailand, the Philippines, Brunei, Singapore, and Malaysia, as well as from Europe. The AMM has been dubbed 'the first concrete security EU operation with ASEAN' (italics added, Vassallo 2014); it left 'the EU and ASEAN' in a position to use this experience as a model for future cooperation (italics added, Feith 2007), and the AMM's 'ASEAN' identity has also been suggested as one of the reasons for the oft-criticized brevity of the operation, since ASEAN 'did not want to get bogged down in a lengthy intervention in the internal affairs of a member state' (Schiller 2008).
4. Interview, Jakarta, 2012.
5. Interview, Jakarta, 2012.
6. Many accounts usefully chronicle the history of these conflicts and associated peace processes (see, e.g., Aspinall 2009; Cook and Collier 2006; ICG 2016; IPAC 2015b).
7. For information on Muhammadiyah, see Bush (2014) and Fuad (2002).

8. For broader context on various kinds of civilian peace initiatives, see Jose and Medie (2015) and Furnari et al. (2015).
9. Some of the information in the following paragraphs was drawn from webpages current during the period under discussion but no longer extant. These are: Mindanao People's Caucus ('Brief Background', 'MPC Members', and 'What is Bantay Ceasefire?') and Muslim Christian Agency for Advocacy, Relief, and Development ('About Us').

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**Linda Quayle** is an assistant professor in the School of Politics, History and International Relations at the University of Nottingham (Malaysia Campus). She has previously researched and/or lectured in Indonesia, Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, Australia, and New Zealand. Her current and recent research topics include communication and education within the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), migration in Southeast Asia, Indonesia’s regional and global role, and interpretations of international relations in Indonesian popular culture.

# Siloes, Synergies and Prospects for Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief in Southeast Asia

*Alistair D.B. Cook*

## INTRODUCTION

As 2014 drew to a close, the Philippines confronted Typhoon Hagupit when it made landfall on 4–5 December. Initial reports made by the Joint Typhoon Warning Centre predicted it would reach the intensity of Typhoon Haiyan. Yet, while the devastating impact of Typhoon Haiyan in 2013 was averted, a reported 18 people were dead, 916 injured, close to one million displaced, but caused an estimated US\$75 million in damages by mid-December 2014. As we reflect on Typhoon Haiyan and Typhoon Hagupit in the Philippines, it is important to assess the recent and several advances made in humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HADR) and how better preparedness and awareness channelled limited resources to where they were needed. As the scale of Super Typhoon Haiyan became clear at the beginning of 2014—killing 6300 people, affecting 11 million people and costing an estimated US\$10 billion—many lessons were observed as government agencies and militaries, international and regional

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A.D.B. Cook (✉)

Centre for Non-Traditional Security, S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Singapore, Singapore



organisations, non-governmental organisations, the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement took stock of the international response. One year later, while Typhoon Hagupit was much less intense, the humanitarian response had improved with better warnings around storm surges, advanced placement of food stocks, managed evacuation and medical teams to minimise casualties. How might HADR bolster or undermine Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) centrality within the regional security architecture? Is HADR essentially a site for competition or cooperation between civilian agencies and militaries in the Asia-Pacific? Through an understanding of polycentrism that conceptualises security in the Asia-Pacific as having multiple and overlapping frameworks, it becomes clear that both competition and cooperation coexist in the region through a web of security architectures and arrangements. This is particularly the case when considering humanitarian assistance and disaster relief as an area of increasing activity by both state and non-state actors.

However, Southeast Asian states have organised around two core norms of non-interference in the domestic affairs of another state and consensus-building, which were enshrined in the founding of the regional organisation, ASEAN, in 1967. The impact of disasters on states and societies in Southeast Asia has thus challenged these traditional conceptions of security as these non-traditional security threats have incapacitated local and national governments to carry out the basic functions of a state to provide for its people. As a result, the politics of security in Southeast Asia has shifted from traditional understandings of security as interstate rivalry towards a dualistic approach to security that focuses on non-traditional security threats in addition to traditional security threats. While non-traditional security threats are not limited to disasters, these offer a clear and increasingly prominent threat to states and societies in the region.

Many communities across the wider Asia-Pacific face more frequent and larger disasters. The region is highly exposed to natural hazards such as storms, floods, drought, earthquakes, landslides, volcanic eruptions, wildfire and epidemics. Indeed, all these events account for 14% of the total number of worldwide disasters in the period 2001–2009 in ASEAN, which is home to 9% of the global population or approximately 584 million people. Furthermore, the wider Asia-Pacific accounts for 40% of global casualties as a result of natural hazards, which means that countries in the region are disproportionately affected when the disasters occur. Why is the wider Asia-Pacific home to a disproportionate number of casualties as a result of natural hazards? How are countries and societies

preparing and developing their responses in Southeast Asia? What levels of cooperation occur across and between different levels of government and non-government actors? In addition to more extreme weather events is an increasingly diverse range of international humanitarian responders. One of the core challenges we face today is the absence of appropriate governance mechanisms to make sure efforts are not duplicated, harm is not done and needs of affected communities are met. The 1994 Oslo Guidelines are the foundational document, subsequently updated in 2003 as the MCDA Guidelines to coordinate international humanitarian responses (UNOCHA 2006; 2007). Yet 20 years on since the Oslo Guidelines, there is a need to revisit the guidelines to reflect on the current humanitarian landscape and establish an effective coordination and cooperation mechanism to respond to disasters.

The challenge the global community faces today is how to formulate such an inclusive framework that draws on the strengths of different stakeholders. The Sphere Standards were designed to provide universal minimum standards for humanitarian assistance (Sphere Project 2000). However, these standards are criticised for their overly technical focus and saw some humanitarian responders withdraw from the project. Yet many civilian agencies and academics argue that they remain the most important benchmark for quality assurance in HADR (Lulf and Bremmer 2015). The international humanitarian system is now a crowded field with a diversity and rising number of non-state actors in addition to traditional state-based actors like militaries and international organisations providing HADR. As a result, there is a need for a revised, inclusive and comprehensive HADR framework across the wider Asia-Pacific as a site of frequent disasters and draws global attention and responses. Indeed, while some ASEAN member states are more vulnerable than others, disasters affect the whole ASEAN community because these events influence the region's economic competitiveness, its food security, political stability and quality of life. The regional grouping also provides a well-established forum through which to organise responses not just for Southeast Asia but the wider Asia-Pacific.

### EMERGING HUMANITARIAN LANDSCAPE

Today's humanitarian landscape sees non-state actors providing the majority of civilian assistance. Alongside NGOs, the UN and Red Cross account for a quarter of the response each (ALNAP 2015). At the same time,

the types of disasters communities and states face have diversified and some have collided to create complex humanitarian emergencies. There is an increasing risk of technological disasters including chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear (CBRN) hazards where countries adversely affected by financial crises are unwilling to replace or unable to maintain ageing infrastructure or are built in harm's way of extreme weather events, pre-existing social tensions, poor governance structures or conflicts. Further, the international community faces a multitude of factors such as urbanisation, rapid population growth, climate change and water shortages which impact how communities and states respond. In essence, non-traditional security threats have increased in prominence particularly as an avenue for cooperation. However, the responses needed have become more complex but are faced with glacial changes in approach, particularly across the wider Asia-Pacific.

While the humanitarian landscape continues to evolve, it is essential that the principles of humanitarianism remain intact to ensure civilian protection but new modes of interacting have never been more pressing. The principles of neutrality, impartiality, independence and a commitment to humanity need to form the bedrock of humanitarian assistance the world over (UNOCHA 2012). That is why in 2014 the United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon started an initiative to improve humanitarian action, which culminated in the World Humanitarian Summit in 2016. In the lead up to the world summit, the UN Secretary-General wanted 'to build a more inclusive and diverse humanitarian system by bringing all key stakeholders together to share best practices and find innovative ways to make humanitarian action more effective' (WHS 2014). The 2016 summit convened a space for the key actors to create pathways forward to address the humanitarian challenges related to natural hazards and conflicts.

At the 2005 World Summit of the United Nations, the membership of the global body attached a key role to regional and sub-regional organisations through General Assembly Resolution 60/1 for the management of global peace and security. Regional organisations are widely regarded as the 'building blocks' for global governance and constitutive parts of the global multilateral order (Ruland 2011). The same year saw the highest level of national military involvement in a disaster scenario in the global response to the Pakistan earthquake. While a strong and well-equipped military response can bring benefits, the principles of humanitarianism are at odds with military culture and its core mandate. Resolving or reducing

the tension between humanitarianism and militarism is important to building trust between civilian and military actors in HADR activities. Many relationships are built in the field in response to a particular event. In the 2005 Pakistan earthquake many practitioners noted that coordination and response had measurably improved since the Boxing Day Tsunami. However, it was not clear whether these lessons learnt were individual or institutional. Therefore a key area for development is building institutional memory to ensure that lessons learnt from one HADR response to the next is not lost when personnel move on to new roles and responsibilities. The Pakistan earthquake illustrated that civilian agencies and militaries needed to cooperate. This cooperation was nonetheless controversial. Jan Vandemoortele, the UN Humanitarian Coordinator in Pakistan, noted in a media interview afterwards that ‘of course there was a problem linking with the military. ... Fortunately most partners in the humanitarian communities also took a very pragmatic stand saying: “No, we have not worked with the military before, and we do not normally work with the military, but in this case we will”. And the army were just as much committed emotionally, individually as any of the other relief workers’ (IRIN 2006).

As the world becomes more aware of interconnectivity and the importance of the different levels that make up the global system of governance, regional organisations are increasingly observed to carry important weight in responding to issues of international peace and security. In the Asia-Pacific, the development of ASEAN albeit with its own constraints has supported further interaction among its members, and notably other partner countries to respond to a raft of policy issues. Many of these issues have been in non-traditional security as defined by Southeast Asian nation-states, as states need to respond to transnational security threats like disasters. It is clear that with the saliency and transnational nature of non-traditional security issues such as disasters today, regional organisations are understood as an avenue to overcome collective action problems when the slow pace of negotiations around global agreements are taken into account. While the function and form of regional organisations have often been characterised by local norms, the emergence of HADR as seen by policymakers has offered a new and clear-cut role for regional organisations. Some academics argue that cooperation on non-traditional security threats lead to a wider array of initiatives at the regional level that will compete and overcome apprehension and opposition to collective action over traditional security concerns such as territorial integrity, political independence and state sovereignty (Floristella

2013). Cooperation has built trust and reduced tensions between countries on HADR, yet it remains unclear whether cooperation will trickle into other issue areas or if it is an end in itself.

The explicit policy recognition of security threats beyond interstate warfare has a long history in Southeast Asia. Prior to the Asian Financial Crisis in 1997 the concept of comprehensive security was a mainstay of policy elites in the region. While the concept recognised non-traditional security threats, the notion placed the nation-state as the main referent. In the aftermath of the Asian Financial Crisis and the terrorist attack in Bali, ASEAN member states ramped up their efforts to collaborate and coordinate at the regional level, which saw the signing of the Bali Concord II and the emergence of the ASEAN Political-Security Community (APSC). However, the APSC notably included reference to trans-boundary nature of security threats and the need to address these in a holistic, integrated and comprehensive way and attempted to strengthen regional as well as national capacities through activating multilevel governance (Floristella 2013). This approach was reaffirmed in the 2008 ASEAN Charter and provides the regional organisation with legal status, new powers and an institutional framework and a shift away from the state as the main security referent towards a multidimensional and problem-solving approach to non-traditional security threats in Southeast Asia (Caballero-Anthony 2010). Indeed, as analysts have observed non-traditional security issues are often interlinked, and their impact on the well-being and security of both states and societies can be as severe as those that result from military conflicts and violence. Through the multidimensional and problem-solving approach taken by ASEAN, the concept of non-traditional security identifies the referent as both state and society (Caballero-Anthony 2008; Caballero-Anthony, Emmers and Acharya 2006).

### HUMANITARIANISM IN THE ASIA-PACIFIC

Across the Asia-Pacific, governments and communities are trying to grapple with extreme weather patterns and conflicts. It has been evident for a long time that a coordinated humanitarian response is difficult, and will remain a challenge particularly between civilian and military actors. Within the region, ASEAN has been at the forefront of bringing together key humanitarian responders to develop an effective and coordinated response firstly within Southeast Asia but with the aim of driving cooperation in the wider Asia-Pacific. Through the development of the

ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Relief, the ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on disaster management or AHA Centre for short was established as a regional body to facilitate linkages between national governments, the United Nations and international organisations in times of need. Established in November 2011, the AHA Centre most recently sent its emergency response team and the ASEAN Emergency Response Assessment Team (ASEAN-ERAT) a day before Typhoon Hagupit landed in the Philippines.

The ASEAN-ERAT monitored developments, provided emergency telecommunication support, assisted in rapid assessment of the Philippines national disaster council and provided logistical support for relief item deployment from ASEAN's emergency stockpile in Subang, Malaysia. It also coordinated with other ASEAN member states and regional non-state or private sector actors like the Corporate Citizen Foundation's Swift Emergency Evaluation Deployment (SEED) team. Importantly, however, the AHA Centre sits within the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC) and is mandated to coordinate HADR activities and is governed by the members of the ASEAN Committee on Disaster Management (ACDM), which consists of the Heads of the National Disaster Management Offices (NDMOs).

With the difficulties faced in delivering aid where it was needed most in the aftermath of Typhoon Haiyan, there was recognition that the surge capacity of donor militaries played an important role and is a key stakeholder in the humanitarian landscape of Southeast Asia. The launch of Singapore's Changi Regional Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief Command and Control Centre (RHCC) in September 2014 was to coordinate such a military response with an affected country when the affected state in the Asia-Pacific does not have the bandwidth. However, while the offer of a mobile Command and Control unit was in place during Typhoon Hagupit, the devastation seen by Typhoon Haiyan a year earlier was averted. However, the development of the RHCC in Singapore was the result of interest expressed in military coordination at the ADMM. As a result of these two significant developments, Southeast Asia is now home to two regional coordinating institutions for humanitarian assistance and disaster relief—the AHA Centre and Changi RHCC. It is therefore of critical importance that these two regional institutions work together to build towards an inclusive and coordinated response in the aftermath of a disaster in the wider Asia-Pacific. One of the greatest challenges these institutions face will be for effective communication

between militaries, national governments, regional organisations and civilian agencies. However, the emergence of these two regional bodies signals a clear commitment by governments in Southeast Asia to build capacity to respond to humanitarian emergencies both within the region and the wider Asia-Pacific. These regional institutions will face complex disasters ahead and so while the seeds of cooperation and coordination have been planted, the early years will provide the opportunity to continue to develop disaster preparedness and response in the region.

Like other policy areas, disaster response will be supported by a network of non-official diplomacy with the emergence of unofficial diplomats from epistemic communities as well as ‘track 2’ networks across Southeast Asia (Tan 2005)—such as the ASEAN-ISIS (ASEAN Institutes of Strategic and International Studies), CSCAP (Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia-Pacific), NTS-Asia (Consortium of Non-Traditional Security Studies in Asia), NADI (Network of ASEAN Defence and Security Institutions) and NEAT (Network of East Asian Think-tanks) to name the most prominent. However, the development of track 2 initiatives on HADR remains at an embryonic level of development, particularly regarding the coordination between military and civilian stakeholders, which will continue to be a challenge for the region. While there is increased political will to engage in more cooperative initiatives on HADR in the Asia-Pacific, building the human resource capacity remains a work-in-progress to substantiate the rhetorical commitments with substantive policy and political development.

### *United Nations Framework*

At the global level, there are a series of non-binding agreements regulating HADR between states including the 1991 UN Resolution on strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian emergency assistance of the United Nations, which called for the establishment of the inter-agency standing committee supported by a strengthened UN Disaster Relief Coordinator in UNGA Resolution 46/182, the IDRL Guidelines (IFRC 2007), which was supported by a 2008 UN Resolution calling for member states to uphold them, and the World Customs Organization 2011 Resolution of the Customs Co-operation Council on the Role of Customs in Natural Disaster Relief (Customs Cooperation Council 2011).

In addition to the global frameworks established to further HADR coordination, UN agencies have provided a lead role since the humanitarian reforms in 2005, which established the cluster approach. The cluster approach and the UN OCHA are bridging mechanisms that link the actors in an effort

to establish an interdependent humanitarian system. There are also national coordinators and global-level mechanisms—the inter-agency standing committee and emergency relief coordinator. The cluster approach pools government and non-government agencies into sectors to enhance the coordination of the relief effort and these clusters work hand-in-hand with line ministries. Before the activation of the UN cluster approach, Red Cross national societies are generally the first points of contact for governments requesting additional support from IFRC (in natural disasters) and ICRC (in situations of armed conflict). Once activated, the UN cluster approach identifies a lead agency for the relief effort based on the below designation (Table 15.1):

However, while in theory the UN cluster approach is inclusive, there are non-state humanitarian actors who operate outside these global norms. This can include large international non-governmental organisations and small community-based groups. Some smaller relief agencies may well be unaware or unequipped to buy-into the cluster system, which remains an ongoing challenge to broader relief efforts. This is particularly difficult as the trend within the global humanitarian system has moved away from a UN-dominated system to one in which non-state actors constitute over half the humanitarian actors in the field, 25% from the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, and 25% from the UN (ALNAP 2015). As a result of this changing landscape away from a formalised system of governance, there are significant challenges to ensure that humanitarian assistance reaches those who need it and it upholds the principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence.

**Table 15.1** The UN cluster system

<i>Humanitarian and emergency relief cluster leads</i>	
Food security	WFP and FAO
Health	WHO
Logistics	WFP
Nutrition	UNICEF
Protection	UNHCR
Shelter	IFRC/ UNHCR
Water, sanitation and hygiene	UNICEF
Camp coordination and camp management	IOM/UNHCR
Early recovery	UNDP
Education	UNICEF and Save the Children
Emergency telecommunications	WFP



### *UN Humanitarian Response Depot*

In 2010, the World Food Program signed an agreement with the Malaysian government to establish a UN Humanitarian Response Depot for the region in Subang and it was built in 2012. By 2014, partners using UNHRD's Subang depot included the AHA Centre, Care, Irish Aid, Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), Mercy Corps, Mercy Malaysia, Norwegian Church Aid (NCA), Swiss Red Cross, United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), World Food Programme (WFP), World Health Organisation (WHO) and World Vision International. The depot also facilitates specialised humanitarian operations trainings, emergency drills and other practical exercises with governments, UN agencies and non-governmental organisations for a maximum of 50 participants. In 2013, the Subang depot dispatched 40 consignments on behalf of 13 partners, supporting humanitarian interventions in 14 countries (UNHRD 2014). With the establishment of the UN logistical hub in Malaysia, it is clear that we are now in a period of extensive development of cooperation mechanisms between stakeholders involved in HADR. It is therefore essential that a culture of cooperation between the different stakeholders takes root to ensure humanitarian effectiveness. While the needs of affected communities warrant these regional logistical and coordination centres, the greatest challenge will be for effective cooperation between these different institutions which are oftentimes beholden to different sectoral stakeholders. Many stakeholders have their own agendas which pose a constant challenge to developing a coherent HADR response mechanism. It is clear that while these nascent institutions develop there is prospect for cooperation but it is by no means a foregone conclusion.

### REGIONAL HUMANITARIAN ACTORS IN THE ASIA-PACIFIC

The 2004 Boxing Day Tsunami was a turning point for member states in realising the need for significant improvements in HADR cooperation across the Asia-Pacific. Since then we have seen significant political will generate a stronger commitment to HADR as it affects the political stability of countries in the region as they experience dysfunctional institutions, which oftentimes leads to incapacity to respond to affected infrastructure, food supply routes and communities in which the poorest are often affected the most. However, there is a longer history of regional engagement for disaster response in Southeast Asia. Since the founding

of ASEAN, there has been recognition of the need for mutual assistance on natural disasters, which was explicitly contained in the 1976 ASEAN Concord I and ASEAN Declaration on Mutual Assistance on Natural Disasters (ASEAN 1976a, 1976b, 2003). In 2000 there was also recognition within ASEAN to elevate cooperation on disaster management, which saw the ASEAN Committee on Disaster Management (ACDM) established in 2003 with the goal of attaining ‘disaster resilient’ member states. In the immediate aftermath of the Boxing Day Tsunami, ASEAN member states came together at an emergency meeting to strengthen relief, rehabilitation, reconstruction and prevention (ASEAN 2005).

The following year member states signed the 2005 Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response (AADMER), which came into legal force once it was ratified by all ASEAN member states on 24 December 2009 (ASEAN 2009). The agreement is a proactive regional framework for cooperation, coordination, technical assistance and resource mobilisation in all aspects of disaster management beyond being only a reactive mechanism. It also affirms ASEAN’s commitment to the Hyogo Framework of Action (HFA) and is the first legally-binding HFA-related instrument in the world (UNISDR 2005). Finally in 2011, the ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on Disaster Management (AHA Centre) was established and based in Jakarta. Since the dawn of the twenty-first century, there has been a concerted effort to forge a pathway to cooperation between ASEAN member states and their dialogue partners, which has largely taken a pragmatic approach to responding to the needs of states and societies across the wider Asia-Pacific (OCHA 2006).

### *AHA Centre*

The establishment of the AHA Centre was a significant milestone in regional HADR Cooperation for the institutionalisation of AADMER. It was a clear indication of the implementation of the ADDMER Work Programme 2010–2015 and ASEAN Working Group on HADR. The Work Programme sought to translate AADMER’s spirit and intent into ‘concrete actions and initiatives to be implemented from 2010 to 2015 in order to attain the ASEAN vision of disaster resilient nations and safe communities by 2015 and beyond’. However, it essentially seeks to reassert the role of the state back into humanitarian action where much work is now carried out by NGOs and CSOs. The partnership strategies developed stronger cooperation within the Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA) with governments

engaging a multisectoral approach and implemented the priority areas of action by different stakeholders, including civil society (i.e., NGOs, CBOs and volunteers), the scientific community, and the private sector. This essentially generated support for AADMER and was one avenue to work towards a ‘whole of society’ approach. The work plan established the ADDMER fund, which receives voluntary contributions, commits member states to raise awareness among the public and encourages member states to develop and implement national and local level plans for ADDMER (ASEAN 2010). Natural phenomena such as typhoons and earthquakes need not translate to disaster, or their human impact can be minimised, if states and societies are equipped to deal with them. The AHA Centre was established to be a focal point for this and the communication hub in all humanitarian assistance missions in the region. Establishing the AHA Centre as the central node of information and communication services supporting humanitarian assistance missions and disaster risk reduction principles aims to help ensure the success of AADMER and support the well-being of the people, communities and economies of Southeast Asia.

In late 2014, the AHA Executive Director, Said Faisal, said that the past three years were about getting the AHA Centre up-and-running, saying ‘It is no longer a concept, there is an AHA Centre’ (Said 2014). The executive director foresees the AHA Centre developing in four key ways in the years ahead, which he refers to as AHA Centre 1.0, 2.0, 3.0 and X.0. In the first phase, the AHA Centre experienced teething problems notably in 2012 around its response to Typhoon Haiyan and got ‘visibility damage’, because it focused its efforts on working with the Philippines national disaster management office and was not seen as an active player in the field (Said 2014). In 2015, the AHA Centre entered AHA Centre 2.0 which was launched with the ASEAN Community ‘One ASEAN, One Response’ and aims to bring together stakeholders within the regional grouping. The third wave will be AHA Centre 3.0, which will see the AHA Centre making connections with the rest of the world through organisations like the ASEAN Regional Forum and the East Asian Summit to further develop partnerships with UN OHCA for the centre to be the main coordination centre in the region. Finally, in a future iteration the aim is for the AHA Centre X.0 to coordinate an ASEAN response outside of Southeast Asia to build the sense of ‘we’ with complementary cultures of organisations to respond to disasters (Said 2014). While many analysts and observers of regional cooperation are hesitant about the relevance or importance of ASEAN as a site for cooperation, within the field of HADR there is significant movement to realising cooperation in this area.

*Regional Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief  
Coordination Centre (RHCC)*

The RHCC is based at the Changi Command and Control Centre (CC2C) in Singapore and draws on the facilities available at the CC2C for large-scale multinational operations and exercises as demonstrated through the success of the Information Fusion Centre (IFC) which is also housed there. The RHCC focuses on supporting a disaster affected state's military in coordinating assistance provided by foreign militaries, and support and complement other existing mechanisms like the AHA Centre in Jakarta as part of an overall HADR effort in the wider Asia-Pacific. The RHCC is able to fuse information from regional disaster and early warning centres and distribute the situational picture to partner militaries through its OPERA Command and Control Information System (CCIS) web-portal. Then in collaboration and agreement from the affected state, the RHCC can also concurrently conduct initial planning and scale up for a potential multinational military relief effort. If for example an extreme weather event occurs then the RHCC aims to assist in minimising duplication and identify gaps in military assistance, and deploy a mobile coordination unit to support the affected state's military in coordination efforts on the ground until an affected state's military is able to coordinate the foreign military assistance without external support (MINDEF 2014). However, at present there is an ongoing effort to engage partner countries to provide liaison officers as the human resources needed for the centre and provide the contact points for militaries in responding to HADR efforts.

*Civil–Military Relations*

The establishment of the RHCC and AHA Centre illustrate a significant turning point in HADR in the Asia-Pacific. They are also the coordinating mechanisms for military and civilian responses respectively. One of the greatest challenges yet to be overcome is the effective development of communication and coordination between these two significant types of stakeholders and it will become ever more important in the coming years to build bridges and avoid siloes. One of the significant points of departure between practitioners is over the use of military assets in HADR particularly in countries affected by armed conflict or other violence. Civilian agencies argue that military assets in such circumstances should be a last resort, whereas military practitioners recognise that the surge capacity of

the military makes their response rapid and effective to alleviate suffering. The emergent middle ground between these two positions is that the use of military assets can only be justified by the serious and urgent need for life-saving humanitarian action and when there is no alternative means of taking that action. In other words, the use of the military should be prompted by needs rather than availability.

Within the Asia-Pacific, the capacity of states to respond to disasters remains varied. However, those states most susceptible to disasters like Myanmar and Nepal are the same countries without national guidelines and remain the least prepared for the sudden onset of an extreme weather event. Within the region, the Philippines and Thailand are seen as leaders in developing national guidelines, and developing a coordination plan with civilian actors including an effort to address issues like the need to set up a pre-registration system for humanitarian actors. It is important to build understandings between military and civilian actors on the ground and to maintain these professional relationships. One avenue to bridge the divide is to draw on the latest technology to create the conditions to share information on early warning, as well as coordinate planning and produce effective relief delivery. As such, crowdsourcing technology can help with interoperability to bring humanitarian aid to where it is needed most. Further, the institutionalisation of capacity is central to connecting actors in a formalised and structured way to ensure institutional memory, which is often lost after a disaster with similar recommendations identified after subsequent disasters including the need to understand operational context, the different roles and ways of working for involved actors, promoting better working relationships between actors, the importance of personal relationships, better coordination for operational planning between military and civilian actors, streamlining communications and information sharing. A way forward would be for greater institutionalisation of capacity and include the establishment of policies, strategies, systems and structures, designation of resources, and annual assessment, planning and implementation. Ultimately, clear roles and responsibilities of key actors, clear terms of references for entries and exits, optimisation of surge capacity and disaster management is everybody's business (Martinez 2014). One key example of how to overcome these stakeholder differences was during the Christchurch Earthquake in 2011. The NZDF Liaison Officers built personal relationships between military and civilian agencies, which minimised bureaucracies and misunderstandings. Liaison Officers also advised civilian agencies of the military

capabilities, and tasks not suited to the military were re-directed to more appropriate agencies (Ong 2014). However, at first, a certain level of trust needed to be built between the various information sharing partners. This willingness to share does not come easy, as most continue to operate on a 'need-to-share' basis, and a key recommendation was to develop trust-building exercises to lower these barriers (Ong 2014). A second recommendation was on the 'interoperability between countries which can be impeded due to equipment limitations. In such cases, capacity building is central to enabling all partners to be able to share on an equal footing' (Ong 2014).

Traditionally militaries have been associated with protecting sovereignty and territorial integrity, but now militaries amidst changes in geopolitics are called upon for Peacekeeping Operations and HADR. For militaries, working with United Nations agencies and Non-Government Organisations has become a new norm in Complex Humanitarian Emergencies as was demonstrated in the Pakistan Earthquake where other actors are absent. There is a need to harmonise, manage and coordinate the amount of assistance on the ground to ensure a smooth transition from military to civilian control where militaries are used as a last resort. This new architecture will dominate the global discussions to update global guidelines to reflect the new geo-strategic realities and actors. There is space for cooperation in the Asia-Pacific region for civil-military disaster response but challenges remain. These challenges include the different cultures of decision-making, with a need to see them as positive engagement; the transfer of responsibility from emergency response to longer-term recovery; and the appropriate use of information and communication technology. These challenges will require proactive commitment from both military and civilian actors because the bottom line is that trust-building is about engagement during peacetime and outside of disaster scenarios. Up until today, there remain many lessons observed rather than learnt which identifies two challenges. In the first instance, it means that there are difficulties present with institutional memories within military and civilian institutions, and in the second, the failure to establish durable communication channels between military and civilian organisations. It is therefore a notable development that the RHCC provides a platform for military liaison officers to develop such communication and coordination mechanisms with civilian agencies through the AHA Centre. However, the successful implementation of these new cooperation initiatives remains a work-in-progress.

## A NEW REALITY

This chapter maps out HADR in terms of levels of governance and sites of legitimacy and insecurity. It also provides an introduction to policies that seek to address HADR particularly in Southeast Asia but with implications for the wider Asia-Pacific. Through understanding the polycentric nature of security in this region, this chapter investigated the significant institutional developments and emerging relationships between actors engaged in HADR. As a region, Southeast Asian regional interactions through ASEAN continue to frame the opportunities to cooperate in the Asia-Pacific. However, as noted earlier in the chapter the increased importance and impact of disasters on the region has generated increased political will, but this is leading to an increase in the number of forums through which to cooperate. As a result of the proliferation of initiatives at the national, regional and international levels in HADR, there will likely be increased cooperation and competition. This chapter has also sought to advance the necessity for a holistic approach in an effort to recognise the changing nature of state-society relations as well as the overarching need for more effective governance by bringing the various actors together.

The building of bridges between these different stakeholders is underway albeit at a glacial pace but does offer an avenue for further research and study, and that the structure dominant in ASEAN is being mitigated by the institutionalisation of ‘interstate cooperative patterns’ (Quayle 2012). Through the visioning of the regional level of governance through civilian agencies, militaries and of non-state influencers like track 2 epistemic communities and civil society organisations, the complex web of interactions which determine the level of engagement in HADR and understanding the ways and means of improving responses becomes clearer to see. A holistic approach to HADR attempts to address concerns that states in the Asia-Pacific move beyond rhetorical commitments and competing agendas towards policies that substantively address HADR to ensure a sustainable pathway ahead. With more frequent disasters occurring in the Asia-Pacific and the emergence of new actors in the humanitarian landscape, the system of governance in place for humanitarian assistance is no longer fit for purpose. There is a need to engage actors across and between local, national, regional and global levels of governance to reduce competing mandates and increase accountability. In the absence of an appropriate system of governance, coordination and cooperation will remain a key challenge for the global humanitarian system.

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**Alistair D. B. Cook** is coordinator of the Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief Programme and research fellow at the Centre for Non-Traditional Security Studies (NTS Centre), S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore. His research interests focus geographically on the Asia-Pacific and thematically on humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HADR), foreign policy and regional cooperation.

## Asia's Security Competition by Proxy: Competitive HADR as a Respectable Arena?

*Alan Chong and Il Woo Lee*

When viewed through the lenses of the Asian security landscape, Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) is rapidly emerging as a field of competitive international security. It is no longer the exclusive tool of liberal international relations. On the surface, HADR presents the ideal liberal project: state-organized and funded military and police forces rush into post-disaster hotspots without significant political impediments from national interest considerations and local defensiveness about protecting sovereignty. After all, the very definition of either a natural or man-made disaster implies that local sovereignty is voided by the collapse of the normal operation of law and order amidst the massive loss of human lives, livelihood, food, property and other possessions. External parties intervene to save human lives and restore a semblance of normalcy supposedly on the basis of a cosmopolitan sense of duty. This chapter however argues that this is parochial analysis. Recent multinational rescue efforts pertaining to Cyclone Nargis, Typhoon Haiyan and the MH370 airliner mishap reveal intense international security competition among relief sending states. This is security competition by proxy. The competition of compassion is simultaneously a trial of national hard and soft powers.

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A. Chong (✉) • I.W. Lee  
Centre for Multilateralism Studies, S. Rajaratnam School of International  
Studies, Singapore, Singapore

This chapter will make the case for treating HADR as a field of Asian security competition by proxy by surveying the national security undertones of states' deliberate investment in soft power strategies as a policy that straddles neorealist and neoliberal reasoning. We shall therefore first survey what we call the inklings of HADR as National Security Soft Power. Consequently, by employing the three case studies mentioned earlier, we will argue that national technological superiority, models of good governance and low risk yet high signature contingency deployments of both armed forces and civilian forces comprise the characteristics of this new substitute for strategic competition. The three most recent large-scale humanitarian disasters in Asia have been chosen for the reason that their data are relatively recent and more accessible than the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami. Moreover, the political features of the relief effort have been more sharply evident in the events of 2008, 2013 and 2014 than in 2004. The politics behind the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami have served nonetheless as the proverbial tip of the iceberg for the case this chapter is making.

#### HADR AS NATIONAL SECURITY SOFT POWER: INKLINGS OF A DOCTRINE

The phrase 'preparing for disaster' can convey a wide variety of meanings, some of which can be cynically rhetorical, others taking on a more earnest implication in the wake of increasing recognition that the Indo-Pacific region is probably the most natural disaster-prone region of the world. It is often said that natural disasters recognize neither geographical borders, distinctions of wealth nor political sensitivities of sovereignty. This is only half correct. The 'correct' half can be extrapolated from the Kantian liberal premise of the cosmopolitan right of nations and individuals to be protected from physical harm. By extension, cosmopolitan right also means that they ought to be allowed the maximum space to exercise the other universal and natural human rights to peace, expression and livelihood. This philosophical prescription appears to be largely embedded in the United Nations Charter and its corollary documents. This, in turn, behoves the members of the United Nations, which constitute the majority of the world's 196 independent states, to assist one another on the basis of humane reciprocity in the event of a natural calamity. Moreover, some authors of the soft power theme have stressed that the appeal of soft power—as the ability to get others to want what you want through co-optation—must be grounded in

a showcase of one's good governance at home or drawn from some lofty philosophical principles (Nye Jr. 2004; Chong 2007).

This is all logical on the most basic plane of protecting human rights by delivering aid to disaster stricken territories and their populations, but it also reintroduces the question of the right form of good governance that can anticipate natural disasters and enact pre-disaster measures to cope with possible contingencies. Immanuel Kant's project of 'Perpetual Peace' did not specifically address humanitarian catastrophes but he did inveigh against the evils of authoritarian governments on the basis of their internal lack of accountability and war prone decision making (Kant 1996). It does not take much of an imagination to extrapolate Kant's preference for a democratic and representative government for querying the fitness of domestic governance in relation to disaster management. The three cases to be surveyed below deal with this aspect of the social contract between citizens and their governments, freely elected or otherwise. Some basic questions about the social contract can be teased out of this line of argument. Should expenditure on armaments be seen in a zero sum relationship with investing in large capacity health care facilities? Should civilian infrastructure such as homes, shopping malls, schools and factories be hardened for disaster instead of expending resources on population protection through acquiring high technology military weaponry? Are there any other possibilities of spending public monies on dual use infrastructure? In developing economies characterized by large rural agricultural sectors dependent on the sustainability of local eco-systems, should 'governments not' balance priorities for territorial defence with agricultural security, especially the enhancement of the yield of the soil? It does boil down to a question of budgeting and managerial priorities for a good government in the eyes of the population. David Alexander, a scholar of disaster sociology, provides support for this point of view when he writes that 'the normal characteristics of a society will profoundly affect its reaction to disasters and its ability to cope with their impact.' Moreover, 'generally, the larger the social grouping under consideration, the less close-knit it is, which involves a lowering of the intensity of interaction between social groups. In addition, the degree to which the community has experienced disasters on previous occasions and developed the capability to manage crises will affect its ability to cope with present and future impacts and will govern the level of resources it sets aside for the next extreme event' (Alexander 1993, p. 556). Therefore, when responses to disaster are studied comparatively on a national level, one can compare degrees

of resilience and technical preparedness. Politicians too inevitably assign blame within national boundaries and across them (Bankoff 2003). This is a theme that resonates across the aftermath of Cyclone Nargis, Typhoon Haiyan and MH370.

Increasingly, analysts and participants in HADR have drawn either operational comparisons or benchmarks from military performances in peacetime and wartime. The aftermath of Hurricane Katrina in 2005 was reportedly compared to fighting insurgency in the American military response to the relief effort on home soil: the storm had blown over, the city was now more in danger from its inhabitants. As it was quoted in one academic study, the US army described its mission in New Orleans as follows: ‘combat operations are now underway on the streets. ... This place is going to look like little Somalia. ... We’re going to go out and take the city back.’ New Orleans was framed, post-Katrina, as a zone of lawlessness, with traumatized citizens vying with criminal elements and organized gangs for ascendancy in re-imposing governance (Tierney and Bevc 2007, pp. 40–41). Security was primary, and only then could aid be delivered and consumed. The sceptic might argue that the New Orleans–Somalia analogy was far-fetched and potentially the product of an American society temporarily dominated by the ongoing heavy duty US involvement in Iraq at the time, but reports out of Cyclone Nargis in 2008 suggest otherwise. The Indian navy congratulated itself on being among the earliest responders to the disaster in Myanmar on the basis of being regularly on patrol in the Indian Ocean Region. A United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) representative drew the lesson that ‘half the battle is won when an organization has a preparedness plan and relevant information at their fingertips to deal with the particular details of the country in crisis.’ This same UNFPA representative concluded that ‘but for Burma, there was no plan in place’ (Steele 2013). All these revelations suggest that a powerful driver for state-organized agencies for police and military functions to deploy for HADR effectively is to draw on their security preparedness.

The implication of this is that military capabilities are vital to the actualization and promotion of HADR as a projection of national soft power. In engaging the military and police forces for HADR, hard power finds expression in the soft. Hard power represented by military hardware, especially long distance power projection assets, heavy lift capability, surveillance technologies and loitering capability, can technically constitute a coercive signature. In a soft power mode, these same capabilities are repositioned benignly in a grand narrative of helping and restoring

hope to stricken populations and their governments. In this regard, it is logically possible to both engineer and fear this alloy of hard and soft power. Defence and security establishments can reasonably be said to possess dual capability translated into dual signatures in HADR operations. This simply means that competing national interests can find expression in HADR deployments. There is no need to fight a 'splendid little war' in Asia to prove one's military mettle if the political costs are reckoned to be prohibitive. HADR is competition by proxy.

To recapitulate, this section suggests that HADR treated as a form of competition in national security soft power can be illustrated through three characteristics. Firstly, one can assess a nation-state's superiority, or deficiency, in good governance in the face of humanitarian disasters, which in turn invites either praise, support, intervention or condemnation from both fellow aid givers and aid recipients. Secondly, armed forces' operational readiness in conventional security dimensions lead correspondingly into proficiency in delivering HADR. Thirdly, when militaries are tasked for HADR, they are effectively deploying a policy alloy of hard and soft power, whereby the latter's narrative attempts to neutralize the coercive characteristics of the hard power, at least for the moment. HADR competition is neorealist since it increasingly involves a competitive, albeit non-kinetic and non-combat, demonstration of military projection capabilities. The aim in neorealist HADR is to show up one's immediate and potential opponents. HADR competition is *also* neoliberal in the sense that it requires the entrepreneurial initiative from one or a number of national leaders to organize a collaborative endeavour across rival sovereignties. While international HADR coalitions exhibit liberal features such as the fusion of hard power and social purpose, they are also means for exercising rivalry between differing visions of regional and world orders. Both neorealist and neoliberal trends still fit the paradigm of soft power, since they both anticipate that soft power can mean that one side demonstrates greater communitarian appeal than the other. We can therefore utilize the three characteristics of HADR as national security soft power to organize the three case study illustrations that now follow.

### CYCLONE NARGIS, 2008

After Cyclone Nargis originated in the northern Indian Ocean in late April 2008, it made landfall between 2 and 3 May on a particularly vulnerable part of Myanmar's coast, the Irrawaddy delta. Observers called it a

storm surge since it packed winds of 193 kilometres per hour, and drove a wall of water as high as 3.7 metres nearly 40 kilometres inland. This force of devastation from the sea claimed an estimated 100,000 lives and destroyed 95% of the buildings in seven townships. Most of the dead had been sleeping in flimsy shacks located barely above sea level. Additionally, an estimated 1.5 million people had been displaced and in need of food and shelter at the time. Such was the scale of the disaster that it prompted immediate offers of assistance overnight from foreign governments and aid agencies. We shall now scrutinize the reactions of the Myanmar government, foreign governments and aid agencies to illustrate the competitive exercise of national soft power.

An immediate worldwide media narrative that emerged in the aftermath of Nargis posed the central question framing the poverty-environment nexus in exacerbating the scale of human misery. A UN Environment Programme report put it this way in a post-mortem on the calamity:

While the sources of income for those households with land tenure remain diverse, people's livelihoods rely mainly on the natural environment. Sources of employment include crop farming (mainly paddy rice cultivation), livestock raising, horticulture (mostly fruit trees), paid agricultural labour, fishing (fishponds, shrimp farms, inland and offshore fisheries), small and medium-scale agricultural and fish processing, small-scale forestry activities (firewood, charcoal and timber) and salt production. Some income is derived from commerce and small-scale local trade, but this income is also indirectly reliant on the environment as it relies on servicing those households whose livelihoods are resource-dependent. Landless labourers, on the other hand, derive their income from various sources which are also environment-based, including casual and seasonal labour in agriculture, salt farms, rice mills, fisheries and aquaculture, and fish processing. (UNEP 2009, p. 10)

It was therefore no wonder why the majority of those who perished were poor agricultural workers with scarcely more than a makeshift roof over their heads. This cannot be read any other way except as an indictment of the negligence of Myanmar's central government for neglecting poverty alleviation programmes during the decades of military rule since 1988. The military rulers sustained even more bad press abroad for refusing to take urgent telephone calls from the UN Secretary General and the leaders of neighbouring states concerning offers of help.

A more egregious charge was levelled by Amnesty International in a report detailing large-scale human rights abuses committed by the



government of Myanmar in the wake of Cyclone Nargis. Displaced citizens were being forced out of refugee centres in Yangon and the relatively undamaged parts of the Irrawaddy Delta and made to return to their devastated homes within weeks of being displaced. Amnesty also claimed that it had collected sufficient eyewitness accounts of cyclone victims being forced to build helicopter landing pads, repair roads, clear debris and dismantle relief camps in exchange for material aid (CBC News 2008). The Amnesty report further alleged widespread aid diversion for the purposes of lining the pockets of corrupt local officials. The Myanmar generals lashed out at biased international news reports operating according to a neoimperialist agenda, and even callously suggested on one occasion that it was the lot of the Myanmar people to experience recurring periods of extreme suffering. In one spectacular blast at their foreign detractors, the government-controlled newspaper claimed that survivors of cyclone Nargis 'do not need foreign food aid; they can feed themselves on frogs and fish that abound in the worst hit areas' (Asia News 2008). A low ranking US military officer aboard one of four US naval ships anchored off the devastated Irrawaddy 'delta' openly complained to the international news media that the Myanmar government was denying much needed aid to their people and that since the US flotilla was prevented from landing their stores and personnel to assist with relief, they would sail away to resume normal peacetime operational duties (CBC News 2008).

After slightly more than two weeks of diplomatic aloofness, the military junta agreed to allow an aid survey mission contributed by the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) to enter the country and that each ASEAN state should be dispatching no more than 30 medical personnel for the effort. A CNN reporter also filed a report at the same time alleging that he could verify the neglect of the central government of the Irrawaddy residents only by defying a Myanmar government ban on 'unlicensed' reporting in the area. Moreover, CNN observed that Myanmar's erstwhile 'military' President Than Shwe was finally appearing in public two weeks after the disaster in carefully choreographed television and newspaper shots showing him speaking to survivors looking on as aid workers were opening up food and relief packages! (CNN.com 2008). The competition of attributing good governance in the case of Nargis centred upon the blame game played by the junta and its foreign opponents.

The foreign armed forces' operational readiness vis-à-vis their Myanmar counterparts were also visibly put under the spotlight over the number of

helicopters available for relief flights from the major city of Yangon to the furthest reaches of the Irrawaddy Delta. The negotiations between the UN, ASEAN and the Myanmar junta initially centred upon the number of helicopters available for relief missions. The French Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner, speaking from the perspective of liberal interventionist humanitarian aid, suggested that Myanmar be forced to accept aid distribution by external parties given the scale of the tragedy and the 'generals' continued obstinacy in obstructing the flow of aid (Associated Press (Singapore) 2008). Interestingly, the Myanmar generals accepted US aid only through the 185 C-130 airlift flights from Yokota Air Base in Japan between 12 and 20 May 2008, but only on the condition that the water containers and mosquito netting they delivered to Yangon were to be distributed by the junta's officials. In this regard, the US aid airlift titled 'Joint Task Force Caring Response' was whittled down by Myanmar's political sensitivities. The director of the US Office for Foreign Disaster Assistance, Ky Luu, voiced concern about their inability to track the delivery of aid to the neediest victims in the Irrawaddy region. At the same time President Bush condemned the government of Myanmar in these terms: 'Here they are with a major catastrophe on their hands, and (they) do not allow there to be the full kind of might of a compassionate world to help them' (Associated Press (Washington) 2008). NGO aid agencies had frequently repeated the complaint that Myanmar lacked the logistical support, experienced personnel and basing facilities for efficiently processing the aid packages and delivering them.

The cover lent by ASEAN's diplomatic coordination to Myanmar's dilatory response was also enlightening about the latter's fear of the politically damaging consequences of having western hard power appear on Myanmar's sovereign territory dressed as soft power. Singapore's erstwhile Foreign Minister George Yeo, speaking then as the chair of ASEAN, responded gently but firmly to the demand for forceful military intervention to deliver aid in the following manner: 'That will create unnecessary complication. It will only lead to more suffering for Myanmar people' (Associated Press (Singapore) 2008). In this sense, ASEAN read the strategic fears of the government of Myanmar correctly even as the latter's own propaganda were already loudly voicing the charge that foreign forces were intruding into the country's sovereignty by openly suggesting that they were scheming to land in Myanmar to deliver aid through a satellite system of governance of the relief effort controlled from outside the country.

## TYPHOON HAIYAN, 2013

Typhoon Haiyan, alternately labelled Typhoon Yolanda locally, barrelled into the central Philippine regions of Eastern Samar, Leyte, Cebu, Iloilo and Palawan from the Pacific Ocean on 6 November 2013 and exited into the South China Sea three days later on 9 November. At its zenith, Haiyan packed winds of up to 237 kilometres per hour (147 mph) and propelled waves of up to six metres (20 feet) in height that ravaged inland areas of high population density. Haiyan caused 6300 deaths and displaced 4,095,280 persons. In terms of property destruction, 1,084,762 houses were either partially or totally destroyed. The scale and intensity of destruction thus overtook Nargis by quite a measure leading scientists to conclude that Haiyan was the strongest ever recorded.

In this regard, the governance dimension of the disaster's aftermath immediately merited a military response by the Armed Forces of the Philippines which pre-empted much foreign criticism. A significant degree of anarchy reigned in the worse hit town, Tacloban City, where gunshots, stabbings and ambushes coincided with reports that prisoners had taken advantage of the devastation to break out of their jails and that looters had organized themselves to seize supplies at warehouses and deserted shops. An eyewitness account by a BBC correspondent labelled Tacloban City a virtual 'war zone' with accompanying footage showing tanks rumbling through the centre of the city and 'soldiers crouching behind walls with automatic rifles' (Hodal 2013). Aid workers and disaster victims alike faced threats from lawlessness, prompting the UN agencies and some non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to put their relief programmes on hold until security was restored by the military. Unlike the case of Myanmar in the aftermath of Nargis, the Philippine military was well primed to restore law and order in the urban centres without being unnecessarily encumbered with aid distribution at the same time. Having suffered natural calamities almost annually, the Philippine government readily accepted from the start a foreign role in delivering aid from offshore naval presences. In particular, the US military and the Armed Forces of the Philippines enjoyed an institutionalized partnership that pre-empted the majority of political sensitivities under emergency conditions (CEDMHA 2014, p. 11). The aircraft carrier USS George Washington had arrived in the area within days to conduct relief drops while a hospital ship was scheduled to serve as an offshore healthcare facility on demand (Hodal 2013). In this sense, the US–Philippines special relationship shielded both

governments from any serious competition on the plane of good governance under emergency conditions.

A US government-linked report commissioned in the wake of the Haiyan relief effort described three key reasons why foreign military capabilities were crucial to the task. These were assessments collated through interviews with humanitarian professionals on the ground. Firstly, Typhoon Haiyan destroyed key infrastructure that would be essential for relief and resupply operations. These included airports, sea ports, roads, electronic communications systems and utility distribution networks. Once the Philippine military provided clearance, the USA and other militaries could deploy their heavy lift capabilities to transport construction equipment, temporary substitute systems and relief packages to affected populations. They could ‘restore comms’ in military parlance (CEDMHA 2014, p. 12).

Secondly, given the widespread destruction and scattered locations of the survivors, the logistical capabilities of the most sophisticated militaries—read as mostly, non-Philippine, foreign militaries—would be most needed for successful rescues. And thirdly, because, military logistical capabilities were drilled for speed in deployment and execution of missions, they were critical in saving lives in the initial days following Haiyan’s devastation. This allowed lives in immediate mortal danger to be saved while civilian government and NGO agencies organized themselves for a longer term effort amidst the anarchy on the ground (CEDMHA 2014, p. 12).

These points of post-mortem reiterate that ‘speed and volume’ were crucial to the difference that could be made if foreign militaries intervened in a constructive manner in tandem with a sizable infusion of aid monies. Seen in another way, ‘speed and volume’ in assistance is a credible narrative of one’s great power status. Within the first 11 days following Haiyan’s devastation, the BBC reported a simple ranking of HADR soft power in the following manner:

*Aid at a glance*

**Asian Development Bank:** US\$500 m (£312 m) emergency loans and US\$23 m in grants

**Australia:** A\$30 m (US\$28 m, £17 m)

**China:** 10 m yuan (US\$1.6 m; £1 m) in relief goods plus US\$200,000 from government and Red Cross

**European Commission:** US\$11 m

**Japan:** US\$50 m, 25-person medical team

**South Korea:** US\$5 m, 40-strong medical team

**UAE:** US\$10 m

**UK:** US\$32 m aid package, sending aircraft carrier

**USA:** US\$20 m, 300 military personnel, aircraft carrier (BBC News [2013](#))

Given the widely reported fact that this was a relief effort in the wake of a storm of unprecedented lethality and magnitude, the dominant international media narrative focussed upon the standing of 'responsible great powers and members of the international society of states.' In the list above, the USA, UK, Japan, Australia, the Asian Development Bank and the European Commission appear exceptional in their quantitative generosity. China's US\$1.6 million was contrasted as 'paltry' and criticized as being inconsistent with its great power status. Other less magnanimous editorials and critics explained away China's impecunious response as a direct result of the flare-up in Sino-Philippine tensions over rival ownership claims in the Spratly islands in the South China Sea. China was signalling displeasure (BBC News [2013](#); Einhorn [2013](#)). Another perspective suggested that Chinese civil society and bureaucracy were in fact fragmented in their sentiments towards the Philippines: some Chinese believed the initial pledged amount was cautiously framed to test domestic reactions in China, while some Chinese university students criticized their government's public stinginess, and the majority of Chinese domestic netizens polled on the Phoenix News website felt that China ought never to have donated anything to the Philippines (Perlez [2013](#)). By 20 November, China had apparently taken a leaf out of the US and UK play-book by announcing the despatch of its hospital ship, the Peace Ark, to Samar Province to support medical relief efforts there.

Yet another winner in the soft power contest in HADR worth noting was Japan. Premier Shinzo Abe's newfound enthusiasm for courting Southeast Asian states to outflank Chinese diplomatic inroads had paid off with his country's contribution of 1000 troops aboard three naval vessels to the relief effort. Observers touted it as Japan's biggest military deployment since World War Two, and ironically to those areas of the Philippines where Japan suffered one of its worst naval defeats at the hands of the USA and allied forces. As quoted by the *Agence France Presse* and the *Bangkok Post*, the Philippine reaction on the ground spoke volumes of the psychological payoffs from Japan's embrace of HADR:

Eulalia Macaya, World War Two survivor and typhoon survivor: ‘I don’t hold grudges anymore. There’s no more bad blood between us.’

General Roy Deveraturda, Commanding General of the Philippine Armed Forces’ Central Command: ‘This is a different world. We have seen the generosity of their donation. ... They have already showed remorse. Their help is most welcome.’ (Agence France Presse 2013)

If this were a subsidiary round in the ongoing Sino-Japanese geopolitical rivalry, this set would be won by Japan in a landslide using the alloy of hard and soft power.

Correspondingly, South Korea’s initial pledge to commit a rather small contingent of its own personnel, especially when compared to its Japanese counterpart, would significantly increase soon afterward. Though initially pledging a modest amount of only 40 medical staff, the South Korean Ministry of Defence would soon commit a relief delegation comprising 500 military engineers and medical professionals in total (Jeon and Lee, Korean troops provide aid to Haiyan victims, 2013). Whether the change of heart was due to the Korean government’s need to not be perceived as being overshadowed by its traditional rival is not fully known. What is known however is South Korea’s enlargement of its dedication to assisting the Philippines soon after Japan’s public relations success. Looking at it from this chapter’s point of view then, it can at least be conceived that in the gamesmanship of humanitarian power projection, the need to showcase one’s national capacity to competitors, all under the auspices of a philanthropic mission, not to mention at little to no political cost to oneself, might have provided an opportunity too tempting to pass up for the South Korean government.

### THE MH370 AIRLINER MISHAP, 2014

Malaysia Airlines MH370 was supposed to have been a routine non-stop flight from Kuala Lumpur to Beijing operated by a Boeing 777-200 model airplane equipped with two Rolls Royce RB211 Trent engines with 12 crew members onboard, carrying 227 passengers, when it disappeared (Chief Inspector of Air Accidents Malaysia 2014). At 1241H Malaysia time, on 8 March 2014, MH370 took off from Kuala Lumpur International Airport (KLIA) following the usual communications clearance procedures from the control tower. Within a minute, ground communications were transferred from KLIA tower to Kuala Lumpur Air Traffic Control Centre

(KLATCC). Hence from 1242H, KLATCC directed MH370 to follow a course towards 'waypoint IGARI.' KLATCC also advised MH370 to climb to flight level 250 at 1246H, and subsequently to flight level 350 at 1250H. The MH370 cockpit was recorded as having confirmed twice at 0101H and 0107H that it had attained flying altitude at flight level 350. At 0119H, MH370 was directed by KLATCC to contact Ho Chi Minh Air Traffic Control Centre (HCMATCC) on radio frequency 120.9 MHz, to which MH370 acknowledged with the nondescript phrase 'Goodnight Malaysian Three Seven Zero' (Chief Inspector of Air Accidents Malaysia 2014, p. 3). Approximately two minutes later, at 0121H, MH370 was observed on the radar screen at KLATCC as having complied with its direction to fly through 'waypoint IGARI.' The Malaysian official account noted that 'the radar label for MH370 disappeared from the radar screen at LUMPUR RADAR KLATCC' (Chief Inspector of Air Accidents Malaysia 2014, p. 3). Since the official preliminary report was silent on whether this disappearance from KLATCC screens was due to structural convention in the handover of navigational jurisdictions, or a reflection of the limited coverage of KLATCC radars, this is liable to be a subject of reasonable speculation and attribution of blame in the months after the airliner's disappearance. The attribution of faults technically covered the gamut from governance of technological competence and bureaucratic probity to competence in operating military radar and in search and rescue (SAR) efforts.

It is therefore fair to state that debates about good governance have been heavily securitized by all parties involved when discussing aviation safety and accountability in the aftermath of MH370 and trading blame in the process (Buzan et al. 1998). For instance, eight days after MH370 was reported as missing, it appeared that Beijing was deliberately securitizing the fact that 153 of the 227 passengers aboard the plane were Chinese nationals who deserved the logical and nationalistic support of their government. It was also an opportune moment given that Malaysian Premier Najib Tun Razak had declared 24 hours earlier that the plane was most likely directed off course by human intervention and that the South China Sea had probably been the wrong search area for the past eight days. Beijing's Foreign Ministry spokesperson Qin Gang demanded: 'we urge Malaysia to expand and define the search area for the missing plane and increase the intensity of the search. ... Chinese technical specialists are on the way to Malaysia to help in the investigation' (Kor, 3 Countries end South China Sea Search, 2014a). Malaysia Airlines' public communication

postures had by then also been substituted by official announcements by Premier Najib and his Acting Minister for Transport Datuk Seri Hishammuddin Hussein, thereby heightening the interstate rivalry of narratives (Kor, In Beijing; Relatives torn by latest revelations, 2014b). Chinese state-run media and state-associated intellectuals continued to pummel the Malaysian handling of MH370 over the next few days using the theme of good governance and competence. *The China Daily* commented ruefully: ‘the contradictory and piecemeal information Malaysia Airlines and its government have provided has made search efforts difficult and the entire incident even more mysterious. ... It is of the utmost importance that any loopholes that might have been exploited by hijackers or terrorists be identified as soon as possible because we need countermeasures to plug them’ (Channel News Asia 2014b). Apparently, Beijing’s efficient online censors deliberately allowed indictments on Malaysia’s quality of governance to circulate on China’s equivalent of Twitter, Sina Weibo, of which these were the sharpest:

1. I’m really getting more and more disappointed in Malaysia and their unreliable government. I’m not planning on travelling there any time in the future.
2. Vietnam keeps discovering. Malaysia keeps denying. China keeps sending rescue teams.
3. Malaysia has been telling a week’s worth of lies. Vietnam has fished out a week’s worth of trash. China has forwarded a week’s worth of news (Channel News Asia 2014c).

Chinese Premier Li Keqiang capped a week’s worth of Chinese editorials calling for Malaysia to practice transparency and personal honesty by urging Premier Najib to report the progress of the search ‘in a timely, accurate and comprehensive manner’ notwithstanding Beijing’s own missteps in handling public opinion over the severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) and Bird Flu pandemics between 2003 and 2008 as well as the 2011 high speed rail crash near Wenzhou where 39 people died and nearly 200 were injured. Chinese state media had the audacity to contrast Malaysia’s ineptitude with Beijing’s handling of the 2008 Sichuan earthquake! (Channel News Asia 2014c) Around this time, Day Ten of the search, even the French aviation authorities issued veiled criticism of Malaysian governance, even as they volunteered to assist with MH370. Jean-Paul Troadec, a special adviser to France’s aviation accident



investigation bureau, drew on his organization's experience in recovering Air France Flight 447 which went down in the South Atlantic in 2009, but noted that 'the difference is that very soon after the accident of Air France Flight 447, we knew the limited area where the airplane was' (Channel News Asia 2014d).

Once military assets were involved in the search for the missing airliner, the military technical aspects of each nation's detection capabilities entered into the rivalry: areas of radar coverage, helicopter capabilities and the issuance of official reports on the events and search operations concerned with MH370. The simultaneously defensive and self-aggrandizing tone of this Malaysian government-linked *New Straits Times* editorial hints at this dimension of non-kinetic military rivalry below the surface:

The plethora of questions and issues from this episode are many and understandable.

Among them is the supposed inaction of our air defence organization after its primary radar had tracked the aircraft, or more precisely, tracked an unidentifiable flight that had turned around, maintained a westerly course on a regular flight corridor and route, and flew away from our airspace.

During that time, there had not been any indication that a flight in the region was in distress or had declared emergency. Additionally, our intelligence services had not heard anything about an external air threat, air terrorism or hijacking situation likely to occur during that period of time.

There is nothing wrong to query what the military knew, especially after MH370 had disappeared in the manner it did.

*Nothing else that is unrelated or irrelevant to the search must, however, be elicited from the military. The government has decided that we are giving the search-and-recovery (SAR) effort a higher priority and even placing it above that of national security. That, despite the revelations on the incident, must not come to a stage of baring all of our military capabilities and defensive schemas.*

It is also not right to denigrate our military professionals or the assets they have just because there is a lacking of capabilities required for the SAR of this incident, which is in many ways unprecedented. (NST 2014)

In other words, the MH370 incident contained a military dimension by virtue of the deliberate reliance on military detection capabilities. For most military analysts, the revealing of military radar data for SAR raises anew the debate over whether indirect revelations of detection ranges and the degree of sophistication of their radar readings undercuts one's national reputation and military readiness for the sake of humanitarian concerns.

This latent competition of radar capabilities in both civilian and military spheres was evident from the first 24 hours when Vietnam accused Malaysia of losing track of MH370 before it ever crossed into the zone managed by the Ho Chi Minh Air Traffic Control Centre (HCMATCC). Subsequently, on 13 March 2014, Malaysian official revelations that their military radar tracked MH370 inadvertently and without deeming it sufficiently hostile to warrant an aerial intercept by a fighter jet stoked the issue further. An unnamed Malaysian official added that MH370 was tracked to the earlier mentioned ‘waypoint IGREX’ northwest of the Malaysian island of Penang, en route towards the Indian-controlled Andaman islands, and that this was ‘the limit of Malaysia’s military radar in that part of the country [i.e. Penang]’ (The Star 2014). Malaysian Transport Minister Hishammuddin Hussein refused to declare the actual range of his country’s military radar and instead suggested to the media that he would ask if neighbouring states could share their radar information.

One day later India was queried by the media over their military radar readings at the time of MH370’s purported disappearance. Rear Admiral Sudhir Pillai, chief of staff of India’s Andamans and Nicobar Command, told Reuters that ‘we have many radar systems operating in this area, but nothing was picked up. ... It’s possible that the military radars were switched off as we operate on an “as required” basis.’ When Reuters journalists asked other Indian military officials why radars were never permanently turned on, one replied that it was simply ‘too expensive’ to do so (Apps and Daniel 2014). Even ever vigilant Singapore, boasting a significant long distance maritime patrol aircraft fleet and an ‘Information Fusion Centre’ hosting international liaison officers from 13 navies including Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Thailand, Vietnam, plus Australia, India, France, New Zealand, Peru and the USA failed to supply new radar data. Instead, the Chairman of Singapore’s Government Parliamentary Committee for Defence and Foreign Affairs blamed Malaysia for firstly, reluctance, and secondly, lateness in sharing military data with its SAR partners at the Information Fusion Centre concerning MH370’s turn around towards the Andamans (Lim 2014). Although this Singaporean politician was chastised by his prime minister for disparaging Malaysian SAR efforts, the image of Malaysian operational tardiness had stuck in the global media. Following Malaysian Premier Najib’s press conference on 15 March 2014 announcing the possibility that MH370 could have flown for several hours past the Andamans in a northerly arc towards Central Asia, the governments of Kyrgyzstan and

Kazakhstan were quick to emphasize that their radar picked up nothing from MH370. The Head of Kazakhstan's Civil Aviation Authority even suggested that 'before reaching Kazakhstan, the plane would have to cross the territory of other countries en route, where the air zone is also carefully monitored' (Channel News Asia 2014a).

The sense of military vulnerability was reiterated by multiple quotes from retired air vice-marshals, defence analysts and academics, thereby effectively securitizing 'military radar,' 'gaps in Southeast Asian air defences,' 'gaps in over ocean air surveillance' and 'gaps in global air surveillance.' China jumped on the bandwagon of electronic surveillance competition by openly berating the dilatory Malaysian responses to SAR and trumpeting its deployment of a fleet of warships, 10 surveillance satellites, ice-breaker ships and the Haixun 01 oceanographic vessel into the search. On 20 March 2014, China officially sought Indian permission to join the search off India's Andaman and Nicobar islands, which India rebuffed unequivocally. Indian officials declared to the media that the Andaman and Nicobar islands were a major military outpost, hence 'we don't want Chinese warships sniffing around in the area on the pretext of hunting for the missing jetliner or anti-piracy patrols' (Pandit 2014). Australia, being located closest to the projected southern arc of MH370's flight trajectory after 'Waypoint IGREX,' likewise began publicizing its radar capabilities, along with its American ally's vastly greater satellite capabilities. This military technological ante was captured approvingly by a Reuters report on 20 March 2014:

Australian civilian radar extends only some 200 km (125 miles) from its coast, an Australian official said on condition of anonymity, although its air defense radar extends much further. Australia's military could not be reached for comment on Saturday and if it did detect a transponder-less aircraft heading south, there is no suggestion any alarm was raised.

U.S. military satellites monitor much of the globe, including some of the remotest oceans, looking primarily for early warning of any ballistic missile launch from a submarine or other vessel.

After the aircraft's initial disappearance a week ago, U.S. officials said their satellites had detected no signs of a mid-air explosion. It is unclear if such systems would have detected a crash landing in the southern Indian Ocean. (Apps and Daniel 2014)

Although at the time of writing it is still unclear if the bulk of the wreckage of MH370 will ever be recovered by SAR operations mounted

either unilaterally or multilaterally, it is quite evident that the preliminary and ongoing SAR operations mounted by the various national militaries and paramilitary agencies have reproduced a form of strategic competition by comparing radar capabilities, as well as pointing out and deflecting shortcomings in detection systems. This game of one-upmanship ought to be treated seriously as a proxy form of security rivalry that can be productively employed to displace a possible opponent's confidence in his own capabilities. This is potentially soft power of technological capability employed with a tinge of menace. Firstly, radar and its associated subsidiary detection devices, such as the Aircraft Communications Addressing and Reporting System (ACARS), air traffic control and satellites in space, are collectively the only technology capable of detecting aircraft traveling at high speeds. Secondly, depending on the sophistication of radar detection technology operated within national 'flight information regions' and air defence zones, flying heights and speeds can be computed almost instantaneously, and irregularities automatically flagged up on radar plots and computer monitors. Civilian and military air traffic managers can then follow procedures and initiate emergency operations, or direct military aircraft towards airborne intercepts of suspicious targets.

For governments such as China, India, Vietnam and Malaysia, casting doubt on their rivals' radar capabilities, or being at the receiving end of them, signifies the upping of stakes in their ongoing geopolitical rivalries, whether over landed borders or maritime claims on islets in the South China Sea. Between middle and great powers such as Australia, India and the USA vis-à-vis China, the mere demonstration of sophistication and quantity of 'electronic eyes' over the seas, under the seas, over land and in the air conveys subtle deterrent messages about one's capabilities in any future 'theatre information battlespace' since all military operations now require militaries to look deep into their opponents' mobilization signatures and testing of mobile offensive assets (Arquilla and Ronfeldt 1997).

Our treatment of competition among radar capabilities is perhaps only the most visible form of military technological competition. Further research on MH370 may unveil other forms of technological competition between the Asia-Pacific militaries in the arena of HADR. Before we conclude this section, we highlight two others as brief illustrations of alternative proxies for security competition. Firstly, naval, ship-borne helicopters have been flagged out by Chinese editorials as something the Chinese destroyers, amphibious landing ships and replenishment vessels found themselves short of, in contrast to their US naval rivals, the USS Pinckney

and USS Kidd, which each had two MH-30R Seahawk helicopters, capable of nearly round the clock sorties (Zhao Lei 2014). Interestingly, the Republic of Singapore Navy, which hardly played a major role in the more expansive Indian Ocean phase of the search, justified in July 2014 its decision to acquire 'Joint Maritime Mission Ships' featuring dedicated naval helicopter capacity in terms of the need to respond to regional HADR situations by providing in situ aerial command and control assets.

Secondly, the publication of nationally sanctioned reports on the progress of SAR operations constitutes a form of security competition by proxy. Not unlike the status of Defence White Papers and UN-generated inspection dossiers diagnosing a violation of norms, reports by Malaysia and Australia respectively on the train of events on 8 March 2014, and on the state of the Indian Ocean phase of the search, allow the national authorities producing them to confer a large degree of legitimacy on their actions in a *post facto* manner. It is of course open to interpretation as to whether these forms of self-conferment of technical authority and image burnishing prove credible in the perception of Asia-Pacific-wide national public opinion. But in the absence of credible scientifically verifiable hard data, these reports may substitute approximations and limited facts for the ultimate truths. Therein lies the political value in producing a 'preliminary official report' in compliance with Malaysian obligations to international regimes such as the ICAO, or in Australia's case, the report titled *MH370—Definition of Underwater Search Areas* published on 26 June 2014 which explains the status of the search through scientific modelling in order to legitimize the next steps in the SAR effort pursued by Australia, Malaysia and China under Australian leadership. If in the eventuality that MH370's debris is never found, these official documents would serve *post facto* to exonerate the respective governments overseeing the critical parts of the SAR operation (Chief Inspector of Air Accidents Malaysia 2014; ATSB 2014).

#### TOWARDS THE CAPABILITY OF INTERCHANGEABILITY: HARD AND SOFT POWER CONJOINED

If one might ever be tempted to ponder a potential competitive analysis to the thesis of soft power, HADR operations in Asia would serve as a fine exploratory vehicle. HADR falls under the broad category of national technical competence, and by extension, it is a reflection of both the recipient and sending states' domestic governance and political culture.

Military forces, once authorized to participate in HADR, extend their sender's interests and strategic ostentation. Likewise, the military forces of the host states are under psychological pressure either to measure up against the interveners or to prove their equal in partnering arrangements. This form of non-combat competition is a trial of soft power using hard power means. In an ironic way, despite recent scholarship to the contrary (Collins 2013), Asia's human security dimensions may be militarized via a misleadingly titled 'competition of compassion.' It is harmless, and quite respectable, if the major states of the Asian region treat this as a strategically valuable form of competition short of outright kinetic war. Moreover, if one takes seriously the prognosis that the Asia-Pacific is likely to remain one of the most natural disaster-prone regions of the world, then security competition by proxy is here to stay.

Still, if unspoken proxies are indeed taking place via competitive HADR, the looming question of what this could mean for actual armed conflict within Asia, now that tensions in the South China Sea have caused speculation for an up and coming clash, certainly cannot be ignored. Our thesis is in fact related to the scholarship of Ian Storey and Jeffrey Engstrom (Storey 2012; Engstrom 2013). But instead of judging HADR and military upgrades as something binary, which is to view such upgrades as either inclining towards conflict or an implicit balance of power (a.k.a. peace), we are positing that operations for disaster relief may have created a third dimension in which military contests regularly do occur in benign forms. Considering that tensions persist among the two biggest players in the region, the USA and China, HADR affiliation between the two has continued to mature notwithstanding ongoing tensions (Johnson 2015). It would appear that both powers have utilized disaster management as a proto-confidence building measure in which the conflicting forces for diplomacy and those of China's strict interpretation of its territorial sovereignty can still coexist, with HADR greasing the foundations for future progress.

All the same, it is important to keep in mind that what appears to be benign action can easily be modified for combative purposes in this grey world of humanitarian assistance. Occupying that bizarre space where charity and military interests coincide, recent stockpiles for future HADR operations by the USA have already begun in places like Vietnam, Cambodia and others that have yet to be announced (Freedberg 2016). Even as the types of hardware stored have been publicized for strictly relief purposes, the fact that such logistical hubs are coming into play is enough

to imagine a prospect for gathering lethal ordnance should the USA and the host nation deem it necessary. This form of projection, capable of *both* lifesaving and life taking, would certainly allow for that interchangeable option whereby the soft power delivered through hard power means can switch gears should authorities consider it proper to keep certain players, such as China, in check.

From this vantage point, it may not be sacrilegious to consider that the Kantian principles, for which the entire spirit of HADR is ideologically derived from, have been turned upside down in relation to this particular development in international security (Kant 1996). While on the surface the assisting of peoples in need may appear to subscribe to the philosopher's recipe for establishing a self-reinforcing peace between giver and recipient, this reciprocity of trust and rationale of not fighting but earning goodwill carries an implicit paradox. In place of exchanging good faith and avoiding conflict, HADR campaigns now offer a testing ground to judiciously size up and even outdo competitors in ways other than kinetic combat, while retaining the assurance of maintaining an existential strategic rivalry with a cleaner political conscience.

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**Alan Chong** is an associate professor at the Centre for Multilateralism Studies, S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore. He has written widely on the notion of soft power and the role of ideas in constructing the international relations of Singapore and Asia. His publications have appeared in *The Pacific Review*, *Review of International Studies* and *Armed Forces & Society*.

**Il Woo Lee** is a former associate research fellow (2013–2016) with the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore. Lee was an instructor with the Military Studies Programme during his stint at the S. Rajaratnam School, and as such his research interests include military history and foreign policy, with a special emphasis on East-Asian affairs. He is planning for doctoral studies.

## Re-conceptualizing the Role of the Military for International Disaster Relief in East Asia

*Jeffrey Engstrom*

On November 13, 1998, Japanese Self-Defense Forces sent six C-130 transports to hurricane Honduras on its first ever operation to provide disaster relief. This event marked also the first time that an East Asian military was dispatched to provide disaster assistance outside of its own territory.<sup>1</sup> Over the next half-decade, with one obvious exception, the other militaries in East Asia were similarly dispatched.<sup>2</sup> Far from being a one-time or rare occurrence, instances of such operations continue to this day. Indeed, disaster relief participation by these same militaries is now a regular aspect of international relations.

What motivates Asia-Pacific states to re-conceptualize the role of their militaries to include non-traditional missions, specifically international disaster relief operations? Secondly, are Asian-Pacific countries prepared to tackle non-traditional security threats? By looking at four East Asian countries—Japan, Taiwan, China, and South Korea and how they were ultimately dispatched for international disaster relief—this chapter seeks to shed some light on these questions. However, finding answers to the first question is a formidable task as official statements do not provide convincing reasons. As a result this chapter examines the role of various potential drivers using the lens of theory to try to make sense of the available empirical evidence. At the system level, this includes the drivers of

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J. Engstrom (✉)  
RAND Corporation, Santa Monica, CA, USA

norms, international institutions, polarity, and anarchy. At the national domestic level, it includes agenda setting, policy initiation, and policy evolution. Though no one driver or level of analysis provides overwhelming evidence for this phenomenon, they each shed valuable light on why international disaster relief dispatches initially occurred in East Asia and why they continue to occur. Furthermore, we can examine exactly how these operations are evolving. In thinking about state preparedness for military-based disaster relief, we see that the examined East Asian countries are acquiring significant dual-use military capabilities. These capabilities will enable their respective militaries to significantly expand their contributions to such missions in future disaster operations.

Answers to these questions about the why and how of East Asian military participation in international disaster relief are important for several reasons. First, military participation in international disaster relief is yet another permutation in the ever evolving history of military intervention.<sup>3</sup> Of course this type of intervention is possibly the most benign form of intervention currently conceivable as the intervener is both invited by the host state *and* the intervention itself is not directed toward a third party (whether internal or external). Second, East Asian military participation in disaster relief, not to mention the increasingly common norm of military participation in disaster relief in general, is a relatively new and understudied phenomenon.<sup>4</sup> Third, understanding these states' motivations provides insights into the scope and scale of future military participation in such operations in the region and globally. This is important for potential recipient states that rely on prompt relief aid in the aftermath of a disaster. Fourth, military provision of international disaster relief is a new but increasingly important domain in which security cooperation and security competition occur (see Engstrom 2013). Having a stronger understanding of the dynamics at work in this new phenomenon is important to more clearly understand regional dynamics in the Asia-Pacific.

The rest of this chapter is structured as follows. First, it briefly reviews official statements of the East Asian nations examined that justify military participation in international disaster relief. Second, systemic level factors from various international relations theories are examined (norms, institutions, polarity, and anarchy) to see what insights each provide about potential motivations of East Asian military participation in disaster relief. Third, domestic level factors are briefly considered to explore how military-based international disaster relief became a tool of policy by each

of the countries examined. Fourth, the chapter briefly assesses, based on the evidence from past international disaster relief operations, whether or not East Asian militaries are prepared for tackling non-traditional security operations in general. Finally, the chapter ends with a short conclusion summarizing the findings.

### OFFICIAL STATEMENTS ON INTERNATIONAL DISASTER RELIEF

What do official documents say about why East Asian countries are now inclined to dispatch their militaries for international disaster relief? Interestingly the stated motivations regarding participation in humanitarian efforts in general and international disaster relief in particular among these states' official documents are highly uniform in their responses. These are: "to be a proactive contribution to world peace" (Japan Ministry of Defense 2014, p. 301); "to fulfill our responsibility as a global citizen" (Taiwan Ministry of Defense 2013, p. 37); "to uphold world peace and regional stability" (Information Office of the State Council 2013); and "to contribute to world peace and joint development" (Ministry of National Defense 2012, p. 40 fn2), as stated by the defense ministries of Japan, Taiwan, China, and South Korea, respectively. While these statements are not empty rhetoric, they also do not provide satisfactory answers as to what is motivating this relatively new behavior. Even if taken at face value, they fail to specify why military force is being used to accomplish these ends, when this is a departure from earlier behavior. In other words, there appears to be more at stake than a newfound commitment to international goodwill.

### SYSTEMIC FACTORS PROMPTING MILITARY INVOLVEMENT IN INTERNATIONAL DISASTER RELIEF

What motivates Asia-Pacific states to re-conceptualize the role of their militaries to include non-traditional missions, specifically international disaster relief operations? In order to seek answers to these questions this section looks at various international systemic drivers, that is "third image" (Waltz 1954) explanations, that are potential motivators of state behavior in East Asia regarding the dispatch of military forces international disaster relief military forces. These are: evolving roles of norms, international institutions, system polarity, and systemic anarchy.

Although these factors are often thought of as competing explanations—representing constructivist, neo-liberal, and neo-realist schools of thought—this chapter views them largely as complementary explanations as they provide explanations to different facets of this phenomenon. Of course some of these factors have more explanatory power regarding the observed behavior of different states examined than others but each contributes to a more fulsome understanding nonetheless.

### *Changing International Norms*

Norms about military intervention, of which international disaster relief is a subset, have changed dramatically over the past few centuries. As infringements of state sovereignty under a Westphalian construct are frowned upon by default, these norms have distinguished when the international community considers instances of intervention legitimate or illegitimate. To the extent they allow or accept intervention, norms provide a quasi-legal justification for an action that undermines the already well-established norm of state sovereignty. For example, in the nineteenth century debt collection was viewed as legitimate reason for military intervention (Finnemore 2003, pp. 142–144). During the Cold War, shoring up internally threatened governments to prevent the spread of competing political ideologies was a commonly used justification. In the post-Cold War era, humanitarian intervention is now a recognized norm, appearing in numerous guises, including United Nations (UN) peace enforcement operations, genocide prevention, and, most benignly to Westphalian norms, international disaster relief (see Prantle and Nakano 2011). Simultaneously, these norms are further shaping the perception of threats in the security environment.

What is driving this relatively recent shift in norms? In the current era, non-traditional threats to security are viewed by all of the militaries examined as of heightened importance. Trans-border terrorism, large-scale disasters, internal instability, maritime piracy, health epidemics, and even cyberattacks have come to be viewed as increasingly challenging threats to national security. In some cases, these non-traditional threats are even viewed as comparable to traditional state-based threats. Indeed, Japan's Ministry of Defense recently stated that it now views "international peace cooperation" operations, of which peacekeeping and disaster relief are the core activities, as "one of the primary missions of the SDF [Japan's Self Defense Forces], alongside the defense of Japan and the maintenance of

public order” (Japan Ministry of Defense 2014, p. 301). Though this is the boldest statement expressed in this regard by one of the militaries examined, the general sentiment is widely shared. A recent white paper from China generally recognizes as much when it states “China’s security and development are closely connected with the peace and prosperity of the world” (Information Office of the State Council 2013). Based on these changed normative views, it is unsurprising that international disaster relief is specifically listed as a policy means for China to seek such ends.

### *International Institutions*

In tandem with this evolution in norms regarding humanitarian intervention, existing international institutions have begun to increasingly focus on these issues and in some cases, are being created to deal with them. By their very nature non-traditional security threats often demand a coordinated multilateral response. Epidemics, disasters, terrorism, instability are issues that ignore borders and often overwhelm the resources available to an individual state to effectively combat them. Therefore institutions have a clear role to play in coordinating a multilateral response.

For example, the ASEAN regional forum (ARF), the ASEAN Defense Ministers’ Meeting Plus (ADMM-Plus) as well as numerous multilateral and bilateral military exercises involving one or more of these countries provide venues to not only coordinate future cooperative disaster relief actions but also to train jointly for them. The “HADR/Military Medicine Exercise” hosted by Brunei in mid-2013 under the ADMM-Plus mechanism typifies the level of cooperation achieved to date in this region. Japan, China, and South Korea participated along with the ten ASEAN countries, the USA, Russia, India, Australia, and New Zealand. Involving over 3200 individual participants this exercise focused on aid delivery and displaced person evacuation (Singapore Ministry of Defense 2013).

From a neo-liberal standpoint, further international interaction in forums such as these serve to increase the scope and intensity of multilateral cooperation. Circumstantial evidence would seem to support this notion, especially as witnessed in the late-2013 response to Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines. This disaster is notable for two reasons. It was the first instance of all militaries examined in this chapter actively participating together in a disaster zone. This is significant because each military had to be individually postured so as to be available to undertake such an operation on short notice.<sup>5</sup> Also, based on various metrics, many of these

militaries surpassed the level of efforts seen to date in providing disaster relief or achieved various “firsts” in demonstrating new capabilities.<sup>6</sup>

International institutions do not provide an explanation for Taiwan’s participation in military disaster relief, though diplomatic isolation and exclusion from most international institutions do not prevent it either. Though often excluded, Taiwan seeks to use disaster relief operations, as it did in the aftermath of the 2010 Haiti earthquake, as a venue for increased interaction with the international community.

### *System Polarity*

How power is distributed within the international system, or polarity, provides further glimpses into the motivations of the states examined and their willingness to dispatch military forces for international disaster relief. Polarity partly predicts why military participation in disaster relief occurs among regional powers such as Japan and China. It also offers explanations as to what prevented the phenomena from occurring in the past and also provides some suggestions about such operations in the future for South Korea and Taiwan.

In spite of a constitution that formally renounces war, Japan is an undisputed regional military power. That aspect and its status as a major economy have required it to in the words of one scholar “to undertake system wide tasks” such as “contributing to security in nontraditional domains” (Soeya 1998, p. 209). This has included a variety of supporting missions to contribute to US-coalition led efforts, United Nations peacekeeping operations (UNPKO), and more recently disaster relief. Efforts in recent years to further normalize Japan’s military power are occurring in front of the backdrop of rising Chinese military power and its increasing assertiveness over territorial claims. This is prompting Japan to begin to internally balance China, leading to organizational changes such as the newly established Ministry of Defense and to a substantial growth in material capacities. Witnessed within this material growth is an entirely new set (at least for Japan) of military capabilities such as aerial refueling, heavy airlift, amphibious surface ships, and helicopter carriers. Not only do such assets provide significant crisis and wartime capabilities, they are enormously beneficial to non-traditional security operations as well.

For Taiwan, support by one great power (the USA) initially underwrote and continues today to maintain its independence in the face of



another great power's core interests (Mainland China). Contrary to realist theory, normalized relations with the Mainland have not led to the USA abandoning the island nation (Cliff 1998, p. 312). As a result, Taiwan continues to exist largely in international isolation with nominal US patronage. This isolation, due in part to structural factors, affects the island nation in a variety of ways regarding disaster relief. As mentioned earlier, this isolation often prevents it from directly cooperating within international institutions dealing with international disaster relief. Isolation also alters how it acts in providing disaster relief aid. At least on one occasion, Taiwan's military has acted in secrecy to deliver aid (BBC 2005). It also has limited means to send aid far afield, when distance often necessitates the use of third-party ports and airfields as intermediate refueling or staging points. As a result, systemic factors will continue to hamper, though not entirely prevent, Taiwan's military's ability to participate in international disaster relief.

Though unsatisfying as a significant explanation for China's behavior, systematic factors provide at least a small measure of insight into China's dispatch of its military forces to conduct international disaster relief. As a rising great power, China must necessarily be concerned with the emergence of balancing coalitions. This motivates provision of international public goods as they provide a way to demonstrate benign intent to potentially wary neighbors and prevent such coalitions from forming. Furthermore, as China seeks to be perceived as great power, it increasingly recognizes that great powers have different responsibilities and motivations than other states. As Kenneth Waltz noted, great powers status "gives its possessors a big stake in their system and the ability to act for its sake" (1979, p. 195).

Systemic factors help explain why for much of its history South Korea was internally focused rather than externally focused, thereby damping the likelihood of participation in operations such as international disaster relief. The bipolar structure of the Cold War era and the end result of the Korean War meant both Koreas were client states, heavily reliant on two external powers for basic security. Devastated by war and facing an existential threat from an immediate neighbor, South Korea understandably became an internally focused "garrison state."<sup>7</sup> Though the end of the Cold War did not vanquish the North Korean threat, Pyongyang's failing economy and lack of substantial international backing meant it could not continue to pose the same fundamental challenge to South Korean security. In this way, international structure provided a necessary

condition allowing for South Korea's to undertake various internationally focused policies including international disaster relief though structure alone cannot account for why these policies were enacted (see Shim and Flamm 2013).

### *Anarchy*

Anarchy is the second of the two structural factors emphasized by realism, and the last systemic factor examined in this chapter. The prevailing condition of anarchy in the international system dictates that a state itself is ultimately its own guarantor of security and survival. Though military participation in international disaster relief is itself an exceptionally benign activity, it provides states an important venue with which to signal military strength, enhancing security and prospects for survival. Yet state versus state conflict is a relatively rare event and peacetime military exercises that occur frequently are often scripted to some degree and therefore a relatively weak avenue for signaling. Occurring without forewarning, international disaster relief operations provide, in some respects, a signaling opportunity superior to military exercises but still short of the ultimate signaling opportunity that actual combat provides (Engstrom 2013, p. 53).

Demonstration of capability is an important qualitative ingredient of overall military strength, and is an important ingredient when making credible coercive threats. Indeed, the signaling that can occur from successful international disaster relief operations may improve a military's ability to deter potential adversaries down the road. Similarly, it may also even help compel potential adversaries as well.

As a result, benign international disaster relief operations are a means for a state to credibly signal its ability to use military force. For a rising power such as China, this also signals an increasing ability to compel its regional neighbors. As a country with numerous irredentist territorial and maritime claims, the ability to credibly project forces is an important instrument to seek changes to the current status quo. For regional powers such as Japan and South Korea, the ability to project a combined arms force to carry out international disaster relief operations credibly signals a deterrent capability.

To summarize, the various systemic level reasons shed complimentary light on a much more dynamic and compelling list of state motivations for the phenomenon of military participation in international disaster

relief than official documents of the examined militaries would suggest. International norms have evolved to legitimize such behavior and even promote it as an acceptable form of military intervention. International institutions, of which three of the four states regularly participate, work to further deepen the level of cooperation and thus promote the increased burden sharing that appears to be occurring in the region during international disaster contingencies. Institutions may help to further regularize participation by the three of the four militaries examined and have possibly supported the simultaneous responses to a recent disaster in the Philippines.

Though it does not predict specific behavior, system structure provides insights as to why Japan, as a regional power, and China as a rising power have been motivated to dispatch their militaries to conduct international disaster relief. It also provides reasons why South Korea has faced in the past and Taiwan continues to face in the present various constraints. Finally, systemic anarchy provides a persuasive argument that states are motivated by more than merely altruistic behavior and that international disaster relief provides an important venue for militaries to signal military effectiveness and further underwrite a state's own security.

### DOMESTIC FACTORS PROMPTING MILITARY INVOLVEMENT IN INTERNATIONAL DISASTER RELIEF

Whereas the previous section looked at various systemic factors, this section considers internal domestic factors that prompted why and how military dispatch in international disaster relief came about. This section is focused on how each of these countries ultimately decided embark on a policy of using the military instrument to carry out international disaster relief operations. Though specific domestic factors in Japan, Taiwan, China, and South Korea are unique, Kingdon's framework provides a general rationale for how policies come to be enacted (2003). According to Kingdon, agenda setting that occurs prompting the creation of a policy is initiated in one of three ways, either: (1) through the recognition of a problem needing to be addressed, such as a crisis, (2) through the generation of policy proposals, or (3) as a result of internal political events (2003, pp. 16–18). Available evidence for each case is further examined.

Japan's road to using its military in international disaster relief has faced unique challenges, as its own conceptions of using military force abroad have been heavily shaped by a pacifist constitution and public opinion. It would appear that a particular crisis event (i.e. problem recognition) buttressed by evolving public opinion (i.e. political events) increasingly amenable to such policy changes drove international disaster relief into the political landscape (see Inoguchi 2014). Specifically, the 1991 Bangladesh cyclone put the use of the Japanese Self Defense Forces (JSDF) on the political agenda. Polling data from two years previous to this disaster suggested that an overwhelming majority of Japanese citizens (72%) already favored the SDF's participation in possible international disaster relief operations (Midford 2006, p. 14). As a result initial policy enactment came about in 1992 when the earlier 1987 Japan Disaster Relief Team Dispatch Act was amended to also include JSDF participation (Japan Ministry of Defense 2014, p. 308). The most recently issued National Defense Program Guidelines reiterates the JSDF's role in international disaster relief and promises to continue to further enhance its cooperation with international organizations such as the ARF and ADMM-Plus as well as bilaterally with the USA (Japan Ministry of Defense 2013).

Official documents suggest South Korean military participation in international disaster relief was placed on the policy agenda as a result of an international crisis, specifically the 2004 South Asian Tsunami (South Korea Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade 2007, p. 172). South Korea's military promptly reacted to this disaster with aid delivery suggesting that few internal legal hurdles existed that might impede such an operation. Indeed, South Korean military dispatch for traditional security operations has a long though sporadic history and includes support for American military operations in Vietnam in starting 1964. Though the legal hurdles within the South Korean government were likely minimal policy documents suggest that South Korea recognized more effective processes could be enhanced (see Oh 2014). These included a "framework ... to provide an effective mechanism for overseas relief activities, including sending assistance ... [and] deploying rescue teams" (South Korea Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade 2007, p. 172). As a result, a 2010 law on foreign aid was enacted with the intent of allowing South Korea to "provide aid in a more consistent and effective manner" (South Korea Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade 2007, p. 170.)

Though it is unknown what exactly put international disaster relief by the People's Liberation Army (PLA) on the policy agenda in China it would appear to be the result of the generation of policy of proposals by members within the Politburo or the Politburo Standing Committee (PBSC) rather than a crisis or an internal political event.<sup>8</sup>

It has been argued by at least one scholar that the growing "emphasis on the global dimension of China's external security environment reflects the vulnerability of China's economy to threats beyond its borders" (Fravel 2011, p. 188). International disaster relief had been a topic of policy discussion within China for some time as evidenced by two Defense White Papers that predate the first dispatch of military forces in 2003.<sup>9</sup> Both documents mention international disaster relief as topics of multilateral discussion in various international organizations China participates. Specifically, the 1998 and 2000 defense white papers point to the ASEAN Regional Forum as advancing international dialog on this topic (Information Office of the State Council 1998, 2000). Even the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, of which China is the founding member, made disaster relief an agenda item of discussion in 2000 (Information Office of the State Council 2000). Further codification of the PLA's role in international disaster relief likely occurred under the "New Historic Missions" concept, a concept promulgated by President Hu Jintao in late 2004. It acknowledges the PLA role in supporting strategic goals in the face a variety of non-traditional challenges.

Though the extent of further policy refinement regarding international disaster relief activities is also unknown, the PLA continues to play an increasing role in international disaster relief as witnessed by recent operations. According to a recent policy white paper China appears to place continuing emphasis on its international foreign aid activities (Information Office of the State Council 2014).

It is unclear from the literature exactly how military-based international disaster relief came to be on Taiwan's policy agenda. If it were driven by events, the 1999 a complex emergency occurred refugees occurred in Macedonia, a country that had officially recognized Taipei only months before is the obvious candidate. However, as international disaster relief by Taiwan's military is an important aspect of the country's overall foreign policy, it is possible that Taiwan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) had already foreseen the possibility of such a contingency occurring (see Atkinson 2014). As a result, existing laws allowing for the dispatch of civilian personnel appear to have similarly applied to

the military as well. As of 2010, dispatch of all personnel, including the military currently fall under the auspices of MOFA and is codified into Taiwanese law by the International Cooperation and Development Act (Taiwan Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2010). This act is presumably an example of continued policy refinement as Taiwan's military had already participated in five international disaster relief operations at the time of its promulgation.

To briefly summarize, for Japan and South Korea it was through the recognition of a problem, in this case a severe international disaster, and through political events that witnessed public opinion shifting favorably toward this policy. For China it appears likely that it was through the generation of policy proposals by experts within the Politburo rather than problem recognition or political events. Taiwan's first foray into military-based international disaster relief appears to have occurred in response to a problem as the result of a foreign policy crisis. Once sufficient internal political consensus was achieved, China and Taiwan were ready for such participation. Furthermore, we know that laws for Japan, Taiwan, and South Korea have been updated to both codify roles of their respective militaries and improve the efficiency of response. For this later aspect, in two cases military participation in international disaster relief falls directly under the Foreign Affairs Ministry (South Korea and Taiwan).

#### PREPAREDNESS FOR ENGAGING IN NON-TRADITIONAL SECURITY MISSIONS

Are the four East Asian countries surveyed in this section prepared to deal with non-traditional security threats based on their respective conventional military capabilities? Because advance warning of disasters is either limited or non-existent, international disaster relief presents a difficult test for military capability and therefore provides an excellent proxy of military preparedness, capability, and capacity for both non-traditional *and* traditional security operations. The reality that Japan, South Korea, China, and Taiwan have each engaged in numerous disaster relief operations, in itself, signals a substantial level preparedness for a variety of other non-traditional security operations. Of these four militaries, Japan and China have demonstrated the greatest capability and capacity for international disaster relief to date (see Engstrom 2013).

The question therefore becomes whether this activity to date reveals a substantial level of capability, or not. Based on its lack of international recognition and its need to focus its military capabilities on immediate periphery defense, Taiwan is unlikely to be in a position to either contribute significant military forces or further develop/acquire the long range sea and air platforms essential for substantial international disaster relief. However as South Korea, Japan, and China continue to redefine their militaries' postures to include expanded global roles, they have developed and acquired military hardware that is enabling regional and even modest global power projection capabilities. Such platforms that enable participation in international disaster relief and other non-traditional security missions are technologies that by their very nature are flexible for a number of missions. Specifically they involve lift capabilities that have both range and carrying capacity. Though traditional security roles are the main driver for these acquisitions, these platforms are highly adaptable to a wide variety of missions. In this way, not only do these countries now possess the willingness to involve their militaries in international non-traditional security roles, but they are also acquiring significant dual-use conventional military capabilities such as heavy airlift and large amphibious vessels to make a substantial contribution (see Moroney et al. 2013, pp. 123–130).

### CLOSING THOUGHTS

What motivates East Asian states to dispatch their militaries for international disaster relief? Substantial changes in defense diplomacy (an aspect of a state's overall foreign policy) such as a newfound willingness to engage in external operations, as witnessed recently in East Asia, suggest that significant changes have occurred in the motivations of the four states examined. This chapter has examined various systemic level factors and domestic level factors to seek further insights. Substantial changes in international norms regarding the legitimacy of certain military interventions have paved the way for this behavior at the systematic level. Furthermore, international institutions (e.g. ARF and ADMM-Plus) of which three of the four states examined are a part of have broadened both the acceptance of these new norms and have contributed to the enhancement of multilateral cooperation in international disaster relief as witnessed by various humanitarian assistance and disaster relief exer-

cises. System structure provides some explanation for why the states examined are either motivated to dispatch their respective militaries or curtailed in doing so (Taiwan and South Korea, respectively). Lastly, system anarchy suggests that international disaster relief, like many other activities that fall under the broad rubric of defense diplomacy (e.g. multilateral exercises, port visits), is yet another venue for states to signal military capability and engage in security competition. From the perspective of domestic level factors, changing global norms about military intervention broadly and international disaster relief, in particular, had to be recognized and accepted by each of the states examined. From the standpoint of the policy process, it appears that for Japan and South Korea, recent crises helped place this issue on the respective national political agendas though political events within each country provided popular support and acceptance. For China, it appears that the policy generation process is what started the PLA down the path of participation in international disaster relief. For Taiwan, it appears to have been the need to respond to a foreign policy crisis.

China, Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan have further refined their respective laws and policies to enhance future international disaster relief operations suggesting these activities will continue be regular aspect of the geopolitical and defense diplomacy landscape in East Asia for the foreseeable future. At least three of the states examined have also sought to acquire substantial dual-use conventional military capabilities that could significantly expand the size and scope of their contribution to future non-traditional security missions such as international disaster relief. As a result, we can expect this phenomenon to not only continue but also intensify into the foreseeable future.

## NOTES

1. Taiwan's military sent forces to assist in a complex emergency Macedonia a year later in 1999. Chinese military personnel were sent to Algeria in 2003 to aid in earthquake rescue activities. One year later in 2004 South Korea airlifted military aid to Sri Lanka in the aftermath of the Indian Ocean tsunami. I define East Asia as consisting of China, Japan, South Korea, North Korea, and Taiwan.
2. North Korea is the notable exception.
3. Though the term "military intervention" can have a pejorative connotation, I use Pearson and Baumann's (1974, p. 273) descriptive definition, which is any instance when the troops of one country cross the border of another.



4. Instances of known military participation in disaster relief span at least back to the early twentieth century, and include the US Navy's Great White Fleet provision of assistance to earthquake ravaged Sicily in 1908. However these are often instances of serendipitous proximity rather than examples of intentional non-traditional security missions.
5. Notably, Japan's Self Defense Forces coordinated and carried out its disaster response in the Philippines in close coordination with US and Australian forces (see Japan Ministry of Defense 2014, pp. 308–312).
6. For example, this was the first dispatch of the China's PLA Navy and it was the first dispatch of South Korea's ground forces.
7. For an alternative view that South Korea's foreign policy is currently not guided by realpolitik but rather "constitutive norms" see Son (2011).
8. For analysis of domestic level factors in China's foreign policy see Lai and Kang (2014).
9. China dispatched a rescue team to Algeria in the aftermath of an earthquake.

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**Jeffrey Engstrom** specializes in Asia-Pacific security issues and foreign policy at the RAND Corporation. His recent work has focused on Chinese conventional and nuclear capabilities, East Asian force projection, and partnership capacity building. He received his B.A. in political science and international studies from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and an M.P.P. from the University of Chicago.

## Conclusion: Asian International Security in the Mode of Indefinite Polycentrism

*Alan Chong*

The state of international relations and international security in the Asia-Pacific continues to represent a laboratory environment for trialling the standard textbook frames of analysis: Realism, Liberalism and along with their neo-realist and neo-liberal variants. And then there is Constructivism, which emphasizes the co-constitution of agency and structure. In Asia-Pacific international relations, agency tends to belong to sovereign nation-states, given the weakness of international organizations in the region. Structure would likewise be attributed to what neo-realists would describe as the existing distribution of military and economic power. This distribution of power would consequently contribute to a widespread perception that a hierarchy of states exists, whereby the majority of its ranks attempt to maintain their respective positions on the totem pole of power, while a few ambitious ones try to scale themselves upwards. Alternatively, there will be others who argue that the experimental nature of the institutionalization of security—read Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and its associated ‘progeny’ such as the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), the ADMM Plus and East Asia Summit—is derived out of a totally sociological

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A. Chong (✉)

Centre for Multilateralism Studies, S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Singapore, Singapore

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appreciation of the developmental circumstances of international society (Katsumata 2006). Leaving aside China, India, Japan, Russia and the USA, the rest of the Asia-Pacific states appear to have come around to the interpretation of their collective need for preserving the currently imperfect peace in order that their populations can be lifted out of abject poverty, their collective dignity affirmed through defending sovereignty and their governments legitimized by the necessary economic growth. In this constructivist reading, the structure is mapped out through the diplomatic and public communication of the logics of national self-determination, nation-building, state-building and the aspiration towards middle-class-consumer societies. Development thus understood is concerned with making populations richer, materially sustainable and comfortable in the knowledge that they have arrived—or will eventually arrive—at the end point of a fulfilled community under their respective national labels. The frequently quoted texts of ASEAN's Treaty of Amity and Cooperation, the two Bali Concordats of 1976 and 2003, plus innumerable references to development in the communiqués at the ARF and East Asia Summits are testament that there exists some degree of regional international society focused along developmental lines (Buzan and Zhang 2014; Ba 2014).

This edited volume has not deliberately set out to directly address the world of International Relations Theory. It has only tried to plumb the current nature of the international security of the Asia-Pacific from approximately the end of the first decade following the end of the global Cold War to the current point of the twenty-first century. This project was steered towards the 'academic-cum-practitioners' perspective since it gestated from a two-day seminar co-organized by the Goh Keng Swee Command and Staff College in Singapore, in tandem with the SAF-NTU Academy (Singapore's equivalent of an agency for military education) and the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies based at the Nanyang Technological University in Singapore. The horizons of the project had to be trimmed accordingly to focus upon how government officials and think tank professionals are seeing the state of international power play across the region. Concomitantly, they were also interested in gauging how far pragmatic restraints governments would be willing to exercise upon themselves in pursuit of development as a national goal. Development was almost universally understood to refer to economic interaction with a global economy that made all states, regardless of territorial size and power, interdependent. Evidently these policy-relevant concerns are exactly mirrored by the myriad of theoretical considerations I have

sketched in the preceding paragraph. Realism and its privileging of international power rivalries, the cautious embrace of Liberalism via limited neo-liberal organizations such as ASEAN and the East Asia Summit, coexist with an impromptu quality of making up international cooperation in an open-ended, *ad hoc* fashion. Understandably, non-traditional security issues that deal with the well-being of the human person, often re-phrased as the physiological and biological needs of whole populations, will be dealt with first using the existing realist and neo-realist instruments, invoking some liberal principles, and appealing for action through highly limited neo-liberal institutions. This is the condition of international security in the Asia-Pacific heading into the second decade of the twenty-first century. All frameworks are in play and nothing from the violent past, including military solutions, gunboat diplomacy and military soft power, can be ruled out. In this sense, this book offers a theoretically eclectic reading of Asian international security instead of artificially pitting Realism against Liberalism and Constructivism. This book therefore trenchantly disagrees with Henry Kissinger's reading that 'under contemporary [Asia-Pacific] conditions, essentially two balances of power are emerging: one in South Asia, the other in East Asia. Neither possesses the characteristic integral to the European balance of power: a balancer, a country capable of establishing an equilibrium by shifting its weight to the weaker side. The United States ... will have to be active in the diplomacy over re-establishing a regional order lest a vacuum is created, which would inevitably draw all surrounding countries into a regional conflagration' (Kissinger 2014, p. 211). As the various contributors have argued, the USA may be *primus inter pares* among the great powers in the Asia-Pacific, but it is not *the* hegemon supplying the public good of stable security.

Transitional polycentrism *is* the security order for now. Given the polarizing views expounded in the various chapters about ASEAN centrality and the bold gambits of the great powers to wrest the direction of security definition, one can only conclude that no single hegemonic power appears ready to impose the ultimate order. Even the USA appears to act the part of being one of the many balancers, instead of a complete manager of security. ASEAN, by default, appears to be the next closest contender for the role of regional security manager. In diplomatic terms, ASEAN is a diplomatic caucus that is attempting to be a coherent manager. In this role, the collective parlays its weaknesses in cohesion as a strength, as so many chapters hint at. The 'lowest common denominator' approach keeps the imperfect peace at the very least. Interestingly,

this aspect of polycentrism ensures that diplomatic and military balancing remains subtle and positive in ensuring access to developmental goals. When it comes to non-traditional security, polycentrism allows all solutions including national and international ones experimental room. As the authors in Part 3 suggest, there is no clear consensus for a singular and holistically correct political action, even if liberal logics for cooperating on food crises, climate change, civil insecurities and natural disasters are compelling. National solutions therefore coexist with international governance in the Asia-Pacific's indefinite transition to something better. Yet, some will argue that transitional polycentrism is *security in itself*: if there is a plurality of avenues for pursuing national interests, as well as transnational ones, there is freedom for all Asia-Pacific states to avoid a resort to zero sum security logics.

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**Alan Chong** is an associate professor at the Centre for Multilateralism Studies, S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore. He has written widely on the notion of soft power and the role of ideas in constructing the international relations of Singapore and Asia. His publications have appeared in *The Pacific Review*, *Review of International Studies* and *Armed Forces & Society*.

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