

Track II Network of ASEAN Defence and Security Institutions (NADI)
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Session II:
“ASEAN defence security foresighting in the next 2 decades”

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A regional grouping of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) has been a strength for stability and cooperation in Southeast Asia and Asia for the past fifty years. As the former ASEAN’s Secretary-General, Dr. Surin Pitsuwan, has mentioned, “*ASEAN has emerged as the fulcrum of geopolitical stability in Asia.*”¹

Current global situation contains many complex and wide-ranging sets of issues. The world, as well as the Asia Pacific region are experiencing the shift of power and economic influences due to rising of mid and major powers, coupling with the emerging challenge of world’s new order of multi-polarity and new emerging challenging of non-traditional characters.

At the same time, major powers continue to rival in competitions over resources, technological developments continue to advance; and the security challenges have expanded into additional spheres from land into the maritime and cyber spaces.

While the number of challenges maybe vast, the security challenges facing ASEAN today gives clues into what the future of security challenges facing ASEAN defence security environments in the coming two decades. Key current security challenges and issues that will continue to impact into the future of the next 20 years may include:

1. The changing of global order and strategic competitions in the Asia Pacific region
2. Non-Traditional Security Threats
3. Maritime Security

Although the future and exact pace of the global shift in economic power is uncertain, it will require a clear understanding of the current issues and challenges and in-depth study of scenarios analysis to foresight in the next two decades on what the ASEAN security dynamics in the next two decades would be.

1. The shifting of global order and strategic competitions in the Asia Pacific region:

Today’s current issues includes:

1. Trade war between the United States and China

2. The Belt and Road Initiative
3. The Free and Open Indo-Pacific

Recent trend shows that the redistribution of economic and military power continues to decline in the west and move towards Asia. There is also a shift in defence spending within Asia-Pacific as it has shown notable growth within military expenditures in recent years. Some analysts signal that there is a growing arms race in East Asia, including Southeast Asia.

Although economic power alone does not define the global power, economic strength is considered to be the foundation of military power. The Asia-Pacific economies drives 60% of the total global increase in defence acquisition, research and development as well as 30% of the total global defence acquisition budget through 2020.

Implication

ASEAN will continue to play a key role in forging confidence building measures in the region as well as preventive diplomacy. Their significant influences through different ministerial platforms and dialogues to practical expert groups, continues to build constructive dialogues and enhance trust and confidence building mechanisms to continue maintaining and sustaining stabilities and properties in the region.

The world will become more multipolar. Therefore, ASEAN's influence will be pull by various powers and it will be challenging for each ASEAN member States to continue balancing the power of interests.

As young markets with large potentials for trade, economic and resources, it is recommended that ASEAN looks to create a stronger collective value that will strengthen itself as a polarize power in the region on its own. ASEAN, as an organization, needs to strengthen specific aims and motivation, exclusive and unaffected by any country's interests, in order for ASEAN to remain strong and beneficial.

2. The Non-Traditional Security Threats:

Transnational Crime

The promotion of freer movements of people, goods and capital within Southeast Asia has led to an increase in trade and economic growth in recent years. This is reflected in the significant increase in GDP across the region. This, however, also impacts and affects transnational crime groups who are using this freer movement to their advantage. These groups are using this regional integration to further expand operations in efforts for smuggling drugs, weapons, people, wildlife and more.

It is clear that transnational organised crime groups conducts successful trades through exploitation of weaknesses within state regulations as well as gaps within laws and regional corporations. Specific crimes

may also impact issues outside of national security. For example, high illicit exportation of wood-based materials is currently threatening national forests. These illicit activities can lead to deforestation, loss of biodiversity, flooding and soil erosions, resulting in natural disasters.

Regional security leading into the next few decades can not only expect further strengthening of regional policies and law enforcements, but we can also expect more management for climate issues as a result of these illicit activities.

Technology

As technology progresses, it has potentials and will continue to affect social, cultural and economic aspects of the globe at both individuals and state levels. New and developing technologies can potentially impact productivity, living standards, health and resources. Dependent on its use, however, technology can also offer disruptions within our society on a larger scale, impacting stability within the government.

As certain technologies become easier to access, disruptive behaviours can be expected from smaller states and non-state actors as they can acquire and develop more high-tech technologies overtime. The cost of obtaining high-end technologies are becoming less expensive each day. With decrease in cost comes and increase in development of technological advancement, such as drones and robotics, as innovative weapons.

Today's development in wireless communications is stronger than ever before. Militaries are now finding it favourable to push forward with new technology while abandoning older ones due to its high benefits within communication and employment of weapon systems. However, this may also negatively impact states, as the military can becoming overly reliant with their dependencies on technology for operational effectiveness.

We cannot always turn to technology as a solution to all problems. This can lead to neglecting the vulnerabilities of technology itself. Regardless of the availability of technology and its capabilities, we must acknowledge its potential issues and have back up plans for unforeseen failure relevant to these issues.

3. Maritime Security:

Southeast Asian waters has always had strategic importance since ancient times. It is used by both merchants and naval ships as transits in order to access to both the Indian Ocean and the Pacific Ocean.

Cambodia's maritime domain contains high economic potentials including fisheries, mineral resources and more. Our sea is used for trading purposes, communications, as well as tourist destinations. Cambodia's sea is faced with multiple security threats such as maritime disasters, environmental pollution and

transnational crime: illegal fishing, human and drug trafficking, and sea robberies. In order to protect and prevent the harms, maritime security sector has been prioritised.

Conclusion:

ASEAN in the first two decades of its existence focused on a limited range of issues, its mandate has expanded rapidly and may well continue to do so for the next two decades. Its functions now cover a range of new transnational or non-traditional security issues, such as climate change, disaster management, counter-terrorism, pandemics, food security, drug trafficking, people smuggling, and many other issue areas. ASEAN has also extended its institutional model within the wider Asia Pacific and East Asia regions by anchoring new regional institutions like the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), ASEAN Plus Three (APT), and the East Asian Summit (EAS).

Challenges will require the maintenance of the ASEAN unity and cohesion in the face of the rising challenges, the ability to resolve regional disputes, complying with the provisions and instruments of the ASEAN Charter and the Political-Security Community Blueprint, will set prospects of ASEAN defence and security environment for the next decades.

End.

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