

### ASEAN's environmental challenges and non-traditional security cooperation: towards a regional peacekeeping force?

Borchers, Henning

Veröffentlichungsversion / Published Version

Zeitschriftenartikel / journal article

#### Empfohlene Zitierung / Suggested Citation:

Borchers, H. (2014). ASEAN's environmental challenges and non-traditional security cooperation: towards a regional peacekeeping force? *ASEAS - Austrian Journal of South-East Asian Studies*, 7(1), 5-20. <https://doi.org/10.14764/10.ASEAS-2014.1-2>

#### Nutzungsbedingungen:

Dieser Text wird unter einer CC BY-NC-ND Lizenz (Namensnennung-Nicht-kommerziell-Keine Bearbeitung) zur Verfügung gestellt. Nähere Auskünfte zu den CC-Lizenzen finden Sie hier:

<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/deed.de>

#### Terms of use:

This document is made available under a CC BY-NC-ND Licence (Attribution-Non Commercial-NoDerivatives). For more information see:

<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0>

# ASEAN's Environmental Challenges and Non-Traditional Security Cooperation: Towards a Regional Peacekeeping Force?

Henning Borchers<sup>1</sup>

► Borchers, H. (2014). ASEAN's environmental challenges and non-traditional security cooperation: Towards a regional peacekeeping force? *ASEAS – Austrian Journal of South-East Asian Studies*, 7(1), 5-20.

This article reflects on the prospect for an ASEAN peacekeeping force and regional security cooperation. I argue that progress on 'soft' security issues stands to facilitate a slow deepening of 'hard' security cooperation at the ASEAN level. Governments of ASEAN member states are still reluctant to develop a regional mechanism for conflict resolution, which they perceive to be a challenge to the norms of non-interference and state sovereignty. Yet, these norms are subject to dynamic shifts in the security environment that regional governments now have to manage. The establishment of mechanisms to address politically less controversial non-traditional security issues such as environmental challenges stands to further develop and consolidate military-to-military ties and deepen political trust among member states. An ASEAN standby force for emergency response and disaster relief has become a politically acceptable initiative and could set the stage for the development of an ASEAN peacekeeping force.

**Keywords:** ASEAN; HADR; Peacekeeping; Security Community; Security Cooperation

~

In diesem Beitrag wird die Möglichkeit einer ASEAN-Friedenstruppe und einer regionalen Sicherheitskooperation betrachtet. Ich argumentiere, dass Fortschritte bei „weichen“ Sicherheitsfragen eine stetige Vertiefung der „harten“ Sicherheitszusammenarbeit auf ASEAN-Ebene ermöglichen. Noch zögern die Regierungen der ASEAN-Staaten, einen regionalen Konfliktlösungsmechanismus zu entwickeln, da sie diesen als Infragestellung der Normen der Nichteinmischung und der staatlichen Souveränität sehen. Diese Normen hängen jedoch von dynamischen Veränderungen in der Sicherheitsumgebung ab, mit welchen die Regierungen konfrontiert sind. Die Einrichtung von Mechanismen um politisch weniger umstrittene, nicht-traditionelle Sicherheitsthemen anzugehen, wie z.B. Umweltherausforderungen, ist ein erster Schritt dahin, militärische Kooperationen weiter zu entwickeln, zu festigen sowie das politische Vertrauen zwischen den Mitgliedstaaten zu vertiefen. Eine ASEAN-Abufruppe für Notfall- und Katastrophenhilfe ist bereits eine politisch akzeptable Initiative geworden. Dies könnte den Weg für die Entwicklung einer ASEAN-Friedenstruppe festlegen.

**Schlagworte:** ASEAN; HADR; Friedenssicherung; Sicherheitsgemeinschaft; Sicherheitskooperation

<sup>1</sup> Disclaimer: The views and opinions expressed in this article do not necessarily represent the views of the New Zealand Human Rights Commission.

## INTRODUCTION

In 2003, Indonesia proposed an Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)<sup>2</sup> peacekeeping force towards the development of a regional mechanism for conflict resolution. The proposition was part of a comprehensive proposal for the ASEAN Political-Security Community (APSC), one of the three pillars<sup>3</sup> of the ASEAN Community. At the time, several other ASEAN members rejected the idea of a regional force as ‘unnecessary’ or ‘too early’, with resistance largely credited to concerns over the norm of non-interference in member countries’ internal affairs (Bandoro, 2004; Chongkittavorn, 2004; Kuah, 2004). Over the past decade, ASEAN advanced the APSC and military-to-military ties through preventive diplomacy and confidence building measures. Several member countries also developed their peacekeeping capabilities for United Nations Peacekeeping Operations (UNPKO) and Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR). The Association further adopted plans to establish a regional mechanism to address non-traditional security (NTS) challenges, including the development of a regional standby force that could be deployed in response to environmental disasters. Plans to establish a regional mechanism for conflict resolution remain vague.

Focusing on the prospect of an ASEAN peacekeeping force, this article reflects on ASEAN’s approach to regional defense and security cooperation. I argue that progress on ‘soft’ security issues stands to facilitate a slow deepening of ‘hard’ security cooperation at the ASEAN level. ASEAN governments are still reluctant to develop a regional mechanism for conflict resolution, which they perceive to be a challenge to the norms of non-interference and state sovereignty. Yet, these norms are subject to dynamic shifts in the security environment that regional governments now have to manage. The establishment of mechanisms to address politically less sensitive NTS challenges such as environmental disasters stands to further consolidate military-to-military ties among ASEAN member states through joint military exercises and thus deepen political trust. An ASEAN standby force for disaster preparedness and emergency response in the region has become a politically acceptable initiative. This could set the stage for the development of an ASEAN peacekeeping force that could address more intricate political challenges such as domestic or regional conflicts.

Firstly, I will provide a historical outline of ASEAN’s approach to regional security, followed by a brief review of ASEAN security community building by means of an analysis of relevant literature and ASEAN policy papers. I will then analyze selected examples of regional peacekeeping initiatives and security cooperation. Lastly, I will discuss ASEAN’s approach to disaster preparedness and emergency response, and the implications related mechanisms could have for the development of an ASEAN peacekeeping force.

---

2 The ASEAN includes Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam.

3 The other two pillars of the ASEAN Community are the ASEAN Economic Community and the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASEAN Secretariat, 2009a).

## ASEAN'S APPROACH TO REGIONAL SECURITY

Security has always been a core concern of ASEAN. Following Indonesia's armed opposition to the creation of Malaysia (*konfrontasi*) between 1963 and 1966, interstate war has been notably absent in Southeast Asia since ASEAN was established in 1967. The promotion of regional peace and stability is among the main objectives outlined in the Bangkok Declaration, the Association's founding document. The declaration refers to security only in the context of external interference (ASEAN Declaration, 1967). Yet, alongside interstate tensions, most of ASEAN's founding members were also facing internal threats with potentially regional implications from the turbulent processes of nation building and Cold War dynamics. Strengthening the state was ASEAN's principal approach to manage internal security challenges, advance economic development, and maintain regional stability (Bellamy, 2004, p. 93; Rolls, 2012, p. 128).

The Association has successfully maintained a stable interstate peace among its members based on the norms of respect for national sovereignty, non-interference in internal affairs, the non-use of force, and a consensus-based approach to decision-making, collectively referred to as the 'ASEAN Way'. The expansion of multilateral security and defense cooperation to a level "short of a formal military alliance" was also one of the options considered early on (Rolls, 2012, p. 129), but concerns over Cold War power rivalries prevented the formation of a military pact, which could have been perceived as a threat by communist regimes in the region (Acharya, 2000, p. 26). Moreover, most of the founding members already had *de facto* or formal alliances with Western powers that helped maintain regional stability. Security and defense cooperation at the ASEAN level was confined to bilateral relationships (Acharya, 1991; Tomotaka, 2008, p. 19).

The norms entailed in the 'ASEAN Way' account for ASEAN's strengths and weaknesses. Norms have a transformative impact as a determining factor in interstate interactions and facilitate security community development (Adler & Barnett, 1998). ASEAN has been comprehensively and critically studied within the framework of security communities (Acharya, 1991, 2000; Bellamy, 2004; Caballero-Anthony, 2005; Haacke, 2005; Kuah, 2004; Tomotaka, 2008). The rules laid out in the 'ASEAN Way' have without doubt promoted shared values and a collective ASEAN identity among the region's state-makers and bureaucratic elite, consolidating a level of mutual trust as well as deepening interstate practices through regular interaction. These processes have created "a transnational region comprised of sovereign states whose people maintain dependable expectations of peaceful change" (Adler & Barnett, 1998, p. 30). Yet, internal conflicts with at times regional implications are prevalent in the region and have regularly raised questions as to the Association's legitimacy, as it refrains from addressing regional conflicts and the poor human rights records of some regional governments. The "cliché problem" (Sukma, 2010, p. 3) of non-interference is at the core of ASEAN's ongoing struggle to effectively address regional security concerns as it obstructs collective efforts at conflict resolution in order to avoid confrontation.

ASEAN's perspective on regional conflict resolution changed with the Association's engagement in the Cambodian conflict. The 1978 Vietnamese invasion of Cam-

bodia provided ASEAN, at the time including Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand, the grounds for acting collectively towards the peaceful settlement of a regional dispute. To avert the perceived Vietnamese threat to Thailand's sovereignty and regional stability, ASEAN advanced political, economic, and diplomatic initiatives, and urged and supported UN measures in order to effect Vietnam's withdrawal from Cambodia, specifically through the Jakarta Informal Meetings in 1988 and 1989 that helped facilitate the establishment of the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) and the deployment of UNTAC peacekeeping forces from 1992 to 1993 (Sundararaman, 1997). This shared expression of the 'ASEAN Way', based on the commitment to diplomacy and consultation, was a formative experience for ASEAN that shaped the Association's future approach to community building and regional peace and security (Bellamy, 2004, pp. 99-100; Caballero-Anthony, 2005, p. 259). Furthermore, Brunei, Indonesia, the Philippines, and Thailand contributed military and civilian police personnel, marking UNTAC as ASEAN member states' first contribution to a multilateral peacekeeping operation in the region.

In subsequent years, ASEAN had to redefine its role in managing regional security in a changing post-Cold War strategic and security environment. Security issues were increasingly raised in a range of extra-regional dialogues, highlighting the need for a multilateral approach. This led to the establishment of the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) in 1994, a platform that expanded ASEAN's style of confidence building and preventive diplomacy to the wider Asia-Pacific region (Rolls, 2012, p. 131; Tomotaka, 2008, p. 22). Yet, the Forum's predominantly foreign ministry-affiliated participants, its emphasis of process over action, and slow pace towards developing a platform for preventive diplomacy were criticized by non-ASEAN members (Brandon, 2002; Tomotaka, 2008, p. 23). This gap was addressed through the establishment of the Shangri-La Dialogue (SLD) in 2002, "Asia's most prominent exercise in defence diplomacy" (Capie & Taylor, 2010, p. 359), which provides a forum for defense, security, and intelligence officials from the ARF countries to meet and discuss security issues pertaining to the Asia-Pacific. A similar platform exclusive to ASEAN was yet to emerge. Regional repercussions of 9/11 and maritime security as well as pandemics and environmental disasters further highlighted the need for a multilateral approach towards defense diplomacy and security cooperation at the ASEAN level.

### THE ASEAN POLITICAL-SECURITY COMMUNITY

The notion of establishing a Southeast Asian security community to facilitate political and security cooperation has been at the heart of ASEAN's concept of regional order since its early years (Acharya, 1991, p. 161). In 2003, Indonesia advanced a set of propositions suggesting a range of measures towards the establishment of an ASEAN Security Community as one of the three pillars of the ASEAN Community. Indonesia, having emerged from the crippling impacts of the Asian financial crisis and the socio-political tensions this had created domestically, was eager to again project its claim for regional leadership both to the Association's other members and to an international community that welcomed the norms and values Jakarta espoused with its proposal ("Indonesia Proposes", 2004; Kuah, 2004). Following East Timor's referendum and

independence, which had been facilitated by an Australian-led international force, it likely was also in Jakarta's interest to develop a regional mechanism to avert further international interference in domestic and regional affairs. Australia's leadership in East Timor had soured the relationship between Jakarta and Canberra for several years following the intervention. Ongoing conflicts in Aceh, where the Megawati administration had declared martial law in 2003, and Papua also highlighted the need to establish a mechanism to manage domestic problems regionally. The tenets of the 'ASEAN Way', which continue to determine relations among member states and that prioritize dialogue over confrontation, would be preferable to the embarrassment caused by the intervention of extra-regional forces.

Other ASEAN governments were, however, apprehensive of Indonesia's projection of what was perceived as a "democracy agenda" that challenged the principles enshrined in the 'ASEAN Way' (Sukma, 2008, p. 138). In order to address these concerns while maintaining core elements of the original proposal, Indonesia proposed the establishment of peacekeeping centers in the region to build regional capabilities for UN-led peacekeeping missions and disaster relief. These objectives were better aligned with the less contentious dimension of regional non-traditional security cooperation, acknowledging that peacekeeping missions increasingly have to meet a wider range of objectives, including HADR (Uesugi, 2004). While noting the region's need to develop its capacity for conflict prevention and resolution, the revised proposal refrained from highlighting the potential of regional peacekeepers for the purposes of 'hard' security cooperation within ASEAN. Sugeng Raharjo, a former Indonesian foreign ministry official, suggested that "the wording was changed but the spirit is the same" ("Indonesia Modifies", 2004). The revised proposal was approved in the same year at the ninth ASEAN Summit. By signing the Bali Concord II, member states committed to its principal components of norm setting, conflict prevention, conflict resolution, post-conflict peace building, and the establishment of an ASEAN Political-Security Community (APSC) by 2020 (ASEAN Concord II, 2003).<sup>4</sup>

Through the Bali Concord II, ASEAN outlined its commitment to 'comprehensive security' and enhanced defense cooperation, though within the framework of the 'ASEAN Way' to inform interstate relations. The norm of non-interference substantially shaped member states' initial resistance to the original proposal and Jakarta's response as the Bali Concord II reaffirmed ASEAN member countries' "rights to lead their national existence free from outside interference in their internal affairs" (ASEAN Concord II, 2003, p. 3). This perpetuation of ASEAN's core norms raised the question of whether the initiative really was "more of the same" (Rolls, 2012, p. 132). Any development and implementation of new mechanisms was further set to move "at a pace comfortable to all", which confirmed the tradition of the lowest common denominator in ASEAN's consensus-based decision-making culture (ASEAN Concord II, 2003, p. 3).

The Vientiane Action Programme, which was adopted the following year (2004), aimed to address a wide range of security issues by initiating the gradual institutionalization of confidence building measures, multilateral security dialogues, and mechanisms (ASEAN Secretariat, 2004b). Multilateral dialogues such as the ASEAN

---

4 The timeline for establishing the APSC was later changed to 2015 (ASEAN Secretariat, 2009b, p. 1).

Defence Minister's Meeting (ADMM, since 2006) and the ADMM-Plus (since 2010) have since become important regional platforms for ASEAN member states and dialogue partners to advance security cooperation and defense diplomacy.<sup>5</sup> As the highest defense mechanism within ASEAN, the ADMM is a significant step in ASEAN security regionalism towards the APSC as it promotes "regional peace and stability through dialogue and cooperation in defence and security" by means of military-to-military interaction (ASEAN Secretariat, 2006).

Despite restated commitments to establishing an ASEAN mechanism for regional conflict resolution, progress towards this goal remains slow. The objective of establishing "regional arrangements for the maintenance of peace and stability" was first expressed in the 2004 Vientiane Action Programme (p. 8). It was reiterated in the 2009 APSC Roadmap (p. 14). In 2011, defense ministers agreed to establish an ASEAN Peacekeeping Training Centre Network to facilitate planning, training, and exchange of experience in order "to contribute to peacekeeping efforts in the world" (Indonesian Defense Minister Purnomo Yusgiantoro, cited in "Defense Ministers Discuss", 2011; ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting [ADMM], 2011b). Concrete steps to establish a mechanism for the management of regional security are yet to materialize. Recent territorial spats between Thailand and Cambodia as well as the conflict between Rohingya Muslims and Rakhine Buddhists in Myanmar highlight the need for such a mechanism and have raised renewed calls for an ASEAN peacekeeping force ("Asean Peacekeepers", 2012; Pitsuwan, 2011).

### TOWARDS AN ASEAN PEACEKEEPING FORCE?

ASEAN member states are yet to agree on a uniform view of defense cooperation that could make a regional force possible. The idea of some form of military arrangement, even a "joint command", had been raised several times throughout the 1970s and 1980s, yet it failed to receive the support of ASEAN leaders (Acharya, 1991, p. 161). Indonesia's proposal for an ASEAN peacekeeping force that could be deployed to help resolve regional and internal conflicts met with resistance from the representatives of several regional governments, who at the time considered Jakarta's proposal for an ASEAN Security Community a "blatant and unacceptable bid to reassert itself over the rest of the region" (Wain, 2004). Vietnam's foreign minister considered the idea of a regional force "too early" and argued that the region's political and military policies were not sufficiently compatible for the level of cooperation required for such an initiative (Acharya, 2005, p. 149). Possibly in view of the Association's economic prerogatives, Singapore's foreign minister argued that ASEAN was neither a security nor a defense organization and that the grouping was the "wrong entity to play a peacekeeping role" (Acharya, 2005, p. 149; Kuah, 2004, p. 4). Thailand's foreign affairs minister rejected the idea as unnecessary and argued that there were no conflicts in the region that would justify the mobilization of an ASEAN force (Kuah, 2004, p. 2). The resistance of regional governments to this level of 'hard' security cooperation was indicative of the latent antagonism that exists among members of the Association.

---

<sup>5</sup> The ADMM-Plus includes ASEAN dialogue partners Australia, China, India, Japan, the Republic of Korea, New Zealand, Russia, and the United States.

Notwithstanding efforts towards community building, mutual distrust and competition within ASEAN endure. The several territorial disputes in the South China Sea involving Malaysia, Vietnam, and the Philippines as well as border disputes between Thailand and Cambodia, among others, underline this complexity (Acharya, 1991, pp. 173–174, 2000, p. 128; “ASEAN, Preventive Diplomacy”, 2011; Bandoro, 2004; Sukma, 2011). Faith in the Association's conflict resolution procedures has been modest at best, evident in the yet to be utilized High Council mandated in the 1976 Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (TAC) that was again put forward in the APSC (Tomotaka, 2008, p. 21). The absence of a regional mechanism for conflict resolution is particularly noteworthy in view of the disproportional ratio of armed conflict in Southeast Asia to the number of peacekeeping operations in the region (Helmke, 2009, p. 4).

The response to Indonesia's propositions also indicated regional governments' ongoing commitment to the norm of non-interference (Bandoro, 2004; Chongkitavorn, 2004; Kuah, 2004). ASEAN member states' initial lack of response to the post-referendum violence in East Timor highlighted the significance of this norm in interstate relations in the region, though once Indonesia conceded to UN intervention, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand did eventually deploy personnel to the Australian-led International Force for East Timor (INTERFET) and to the United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET).

The norm of non-interference continues to impact on regional affairs, but some change is underway. Rizal Sukma from the Centre for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) in Jakarta, who was involved in drafting the 2003 proposal, noted that Indonesia had failed to address the question of non-interference in view of its proposed mechanisms for conflict resolution and peace building (Khalik, 2003). Sukma asserted that Indonesia did not want to question the principle, though he claimed a more flexible interpretation was necessary in order to address internal security problems within the region. This episode once again demonstrated the intricate balance norm entrepreneurs in ASEAN have to maintain between the ‘ASEAN Way’ and efforts to realign these norms to address emerging issues in a changing security environment. Prior to Indonesia's proposal, Malaysia's Anwar Ibrahim and Thailand's Surin Pitsuwan endeavored to adjust ASEAN's founding principles. Their concepts of ‘constructive intervention’ and ‘flexible engagement’, respectively, met with considerable resistance at the time (Acharya, 2005, p. 150; Bellamy, 2004, p. 97; Bellamy & Drummond, 2011, p. 187; Haacke, 2005). Acharya thus asserts, “the most significant barrier to peace operations in Asia ... is normative” (Acharya, 2005, p. 149). These reactions also explain the lingering skepticism towards the global ‘Responsibility to Protect’ (R2P) debate. Alongside its premise to address human security in the context of government atrocities, R2P has also been invoked to legitimize the forcible delivery of humanitarian assistance without a government's consent in response to the initial resistance of Myanmar's government to accept foreign assistance following cyclone Nargis, and it has been argued that the principle is making some normative headway in the region (Bellamy & Drummond, 2011, p. 263).

Following Indonesia's proposal, one can discern growing support for the notion of a regional peacekeeping capability as several ASEAN members developed their peacekeeping capacities. Primarily, regional governments value the participation in multilateral peace operations under UN auspices, as this helps advance their interna-

tional standing, multilateral diplomacy, and defense capabilities. Since 2003, Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines have substantially increased their contributions of police, military experts, and troops to UNPKO. Jakarta has invested considerably in the country's peacekeeping capacities as Indonesia intends to be among the top ten contributing countries to UNPKO by 2020 (Luftia, 2012). Also the Philippines have more than tripled contributions to UNPKO since 2003 and numbers of troop deployment, in particular, have sharply increased (UN Peacekeeping Statistics, 2013).

While these developments are less pronounced in other ASEAN countries, there is a discernable regional trend to advance peacekeeping capacities. Singapore's contribution has been modest since the country deployed several hundred peacekeepers to UNPKO in East Timor. Brunei started deploying modest numbers of peacekeepers in 2006 (UN Peacekeeping Statistics, 2013). Cambodia has been a steady contributor to UNPKO since 2004. Thailand's contributions dropped following the 2006 military coup, increased again from 2010, but dropped again sharply in mid-2012. In 2010, Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Thailand also established the ASEAN Peacekeeping Centre Association, a first step towards the establishment of the ASEAN Peacekeeping Centres Network that was endorsed by the ADMM in its 2011 Joint Declaration. The network's purpose is "aimed to promote and enhance cooperation among defence and armed forces within ASEAN" to leverage member states' peacekeeping competencies and capabilities, which would benefit both UN-led operations and regional initiatives (ADMM, 2011a).

Signaling a significant shift in attitude towards the UN, Vietnam first expressed support for UNPKO in 2006. Hanoi has yet to contribute peacekeepers to UNPKO, which might be due to political opposition as much as capacity ("Vietnam Mulls Participation", 2006). In developing its peacekeeping capacity, Vietnam is also deepening bilateral relationships with extra-regional partners ("Australia Expands", 2012; "Vietnam, Bangladesh", 2012). Myanmar and Laos are yet to participate in this development. But the shift is obvious. Carlyle Thayer of the Australian Defence Force Academy thus proposed that "there is normative pressure building up regionally in support of peacekeeping under U.N. auspices" ("Vietnam Mulls Participation", 2006).

Furthermore, these developments are paralleled by a gradual reinterpretation of the norm of non-interference. The language of the 2009 APSC Roadmap entails a subtle shift from the 2007 ASEAN Charter, which had already indicated a more flexible interpretation of non-interference vis-à-vis the achievement of collective goals in economic affairs, but also increasingly in view of regional security (Bellamy & Drummond, 2011, p. 189). The Roadmap makes no mention of the norm of non-interference, a notable omission in view of its security context. Instead, it emphasizes the objective to "strengthen efforts in maintaining respect for territorial integrity, sovereignty and unity of ASEAN Member States [by] addressing threats and challenges that may affect the territorial integrity of ASEAN Member States including those posed by separatism" (ASEAN Secretariat, 2009a, p. 13). This objective reflects Indonesia's original proposal to develop 'standby arrangements' for a peacekeeping force as a "maximum security response ... that could one day help settle disputes such as those in Aceh and the southern Philippines" (ASEAN Secretariat, 2004a). Two regional missions highlight the potential of this arrangement. In Aceh, Brunei, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand supplied approximately 40 percent of the military observers

and civilian monitors to the 2005–2006 Aceh Monitoring Mission (AMM) that was established by the European Union, and which facilitated the implementation of the 2005 Helsinki Memorandum of Understanding.<sup>6</sup> Yet, the security component of the International Monitoring Team (IMT) in Central Mindanao comes closest to the idea of a regional force.<sup>7</sup> The IMT was established in 2004 under the Government of the Philippines-Moro Islamic Liberation Front Coordinating Committee on the Cessation of Hostilities (CCCH) and has since been credited with successfully reducing the number of ceasefire violations (Bendahara & Au, 2012). In October 2012, in view of a peace agreement that was signed in early 2014, a Philippine government representative raised the idea of an international peacekeeping force through the existing IMT structure to facilitate demobilization, disarmament, and reintegration (DDR) of the armed forces of the MILF (Arguillas, 2012). The mission's success is also due to the favorable conditions of the constellation. Both Malaysia and Indonesia, who contribute a substantial share of the peacekeepers, have played significant roles in mediating the conflicts in Central Mindanao since the 1990s.

The development of regional peacekeeping capacities will further benefit from initiatives at the level of ASEAN-centered multilateral mechanisms such as the ARF and the ADMM-Plus. At the 2010 ADMM-Plus meeting in Hanoi, defense ministers agreed to establish a Peacekeeping Working Group to identify capability gaps as well as opportunities for collaboration to enhance member states' contributions to peacekeeping operations (Department of National Defense, Republic of the Philippines, 2012). Member countries of the ARF have conducted annual Peacekeeping Expert Meetings since 2007, focusing on capacity building, civil-military cooperation, and regional cooperation in peacekeeping, post-conflict peace building, and HADR (ASEAN Regional Forum [ARF], 2010).

The convergence of peacekeeping and aspects of NTS and HADR creates opportunities to expand military cooperation. The APSC Roadmap instructs member states to create a “cohesive, peaceful, stable and resilient region with shared responsibility for comprehensive security ... which goes beyond the requirements of traditional security but also takes into account non-traditional aspects vital to regional and national resilience” (p. 11). Regional cooperation on some of the less contentious issues of NTS such as environmental disasters can thus facilitate military-to-military ties through joint training, operations, and exercises as well as the development of a regional standby arrangement for disaster relief. As such, the non-traditional security agenda could become the platform on which to advance traditional security cooperation.

## NON-TRADITIONAL SECURITY: ENVIRONMENTAL CHALLENGES

The NTS agenda advances the intractable debate on normative realignments as it questions the *modus operandi* of the ‘ASEAN Way’, which hitherto had been framed within traditional security concerns. Since the late 1990s, ASEAN had to manage a

6 Thailand, Malaysia, Brunei, the Philippines, and Singapore provided monitors to the mission alongside the European Union, Norway, and Switzerland.

7 At the time of writing, the IMT's Security Component included 11 peacekeepers from Malaysia, 15 peacekeepers from Brunei, 15 peacekeepers from Indonesia, and two peacekeepers from Norway.

range of security issues, such as transnational crime and terrorism as well as natural and man-made environmental disasters, which initiated a gradual shift towards a more qualified form of sovereignty that allowed some degree of interference at the regional level. Sukma (2008, p. 147) argues that while the doctrine of non-interference continues to remain relevant, it needs to be interpreted in the context of member states' interdependence and their vulnerability to transboundary issues and spillover effects of domestic events in member countries. Bellamy and Drummond (2011, p. 196) assert that "many Southeast Asian states are moving away from the traditional notion of sovereignty ... towards accepting a localised variant of sovereignty as responsibility" that allows for criticism of domestic policies and limited diplomatic pressure in the event of humanitarian crises. Also Caballero-Anthony and Haywood (2010, p. 7) note a gradual shift in attitudes towards the principles of state sovereignty and non-interference, with 'regional' security concerns at times outweighing concerns over 'interference'. They conclude that "the 'ASEAN way' itself is not an entirely static concept and what is considered interference in the domestic affairs of a country is an ever-widening notion" (Caballero-Anthony & Haywood, 2010, p. 5).

These dynamics became evident in ASEAN's – albeit belated – response to cyclone Nargis that devastated parts of Myanmar in 2008. ASEAN, long criticized for its hands-off approach to the Burmese regime, raised concerns over human security and eventually responded despite initial concerns over the prerogative of non-interference. Nargis triggered the largest humanitarian operation ever coordinated by ASEAN, who successfully mediated between the Burmese regime and international aid donors, diminishing fears of political intervention in order to manage the humanitarian crisis (Emmerson, 2008a, p. 45). Although critics pointed out the non-political nature of ASEAN's involvement, some observers argued that the cyclone "transformed Myanmar from ASEAN's embarrassment into its opportunity" (Emmerson, 2008a, p. 45) as the Association's relationship with the regime became an asset in the aftermath of the disaster (see also Bellamy & Drummond, 2011, p. 191).

The experience highlighted the need for more formal mechanisms to facilitate a coordinated regional response to such disasters. It further demonstrated the role ASEAN militaries could play in assisting relief efforts (Gunawan, 2008) and illustrated the significance of cooperation with non-state actors as well as civil-military coordination. This multi-faceted approach widens the security discourse in the region towards a pluralistic response to security challenges, further eroding the Westphalian logic of state-centered security (Emmerson, 2008b, p. 147; Sukma, 2008). Then-ASEAN Secretary-General Surin Pitsuwan, who was credited with putting pressure on Myanmar to cooperate, later proclaimed, "this is the New ASEAN – a community that puts people at the centre of concern" (Pitsuwan, 2008, p. xx). The response to Nargis highlighted ASEAN's efforts at "working around the sensitivities to external interference and avoiding charges of intrusion by emphasising the cooperative character of the NTS agenda in which sovereignty is not trumped or superseded, but rather, pooled" (Caballero-Anthony, 2008, p. 207). Since Nargis, this approach has been further institutionalized.

The establishment of a legally binding ASEAN disaster mitigation mechanism draws from the lessons learned, but progress remains slow. The ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response (AADMER) was designed as a

“proactive regional framework for cooperation, coordination, technical assistance, and resource mobilisation in all aspects of disaster management” (ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response [AADMER], 2005). The process was initiated several weeks before the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami and ASEAN Foreign Ministers ratified AADMER in July 2005. It took more than four years for the agreement to come into effect, however, and overall progress has been criticized as too slow in view of the frequent disasters in the region (Amul, 2012).

The ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on Disaster Management (AHA Centre), established in November 2011 and based in Jakarta, serves as the hub for coordinated disaster response under the mandate of the AADMER. The Centre faced its first major challenge with typhoon Haiyan, which devastated parts of the central Philippines in November 2013. While the Centre had been monitoring the movement of the typhoon and deployed a field team to the region prior to the typhoon's landfall to coordinate relief efforts, some observers were critical of ASEAN's response, noting that regional relief efforts were coordinated bilaterally, rather than through ASEAN (Graham, 2013). A week after landfall, there was still no clear chain of command to coordinate relief efforts, a gap that the Centre would have been mandated to fill. Further, the naval relief effort, a significant dimension of HADR in a predominantly maritime region, was being led by extra-regional states, with ASEAN navies mostly absent (Graham, 2013). Thailand's foreign minister Surapong commented that “a quick response team is needed for ASEAN, the 10 countries have human resources and enough equipment, so it is time to share and cooperate” (Graham, 2013).

The AADMER is also the most significant step yet towards a more functional level of security cooperation. Article 9 of the AADMER mandates the establishment of an ASEAN Standby Arrangement for HADR deployed on a voluntary basis and based on the state's capabilities. Under the ASEAN Standby Arrangements and Standard Operating Procedures (SASOP), the AHA Centre now co-organizes the multi-level ASEAN Regional Disaster Emergency Response Simulation Exercise (ARDEX) that began in 2005, where ASEAN member states practice, assess, and review the readiness of disaster emergency response mechanisms (Pacific Disaster Center, 2013). ARDEX-13, which was hosted by Vietnam shortly before typhoon Haiyan, was the first opportunity to test the operational capability of the AHA Centre.

In the 2011 ADMM declaration, defense ministers adopted plans to use military assets and capacities for HADR operations (ADMM, 2011b, p. 4). The establishment of the standby arrangement is perceived as a matter of urgency that requires the acceleration of “the effective operations of the ASEAN military in HADR operations regionally and internationally ... to minimise loss to life and property due to natural and man-made disasters, while respecting the sovereignty of the affected State” (ADMM, 2011b, p. 4 and Annex D, p. 2). Indonesia and Singapore co-hosted the first ASEAN HADR Table-Top Exercise (ASEAN HADR TTX) in July 2011 as a step towards practical cooperation of ASEAN militaries. The second HADR TTX was co-hosted by Brunei and Singapore in 2013 in an effort to strengthen ASEAN centrality especially in the context of military-to-military cooperation as well as the coordination with civil HADR mechanisms such as the AHA Centre (Wood, 2013).

Progress towards the standby arrangement has been limited to the ongoing identification of member states' assets and capacities. The implementation of the

AADMER work programme is the primary responsibility of the member states, which have to develop the policy and legal framework at the national level to facilitate the establishment of necessary structures and mechanisms for implementation, coordination, and enforcement (ASEAN Committee on Disaster Management, 2010, p. 74). Without a definite timeframe, these processes will take time. Voluntary contributions by ASEAN member states, “preferably on a regular basis”, along with contributions from dialogue partners are meant to finance the implementation of the AADMER work programme (AADMER, 2012). Without secure funding, the viability of the mechanism cannot be ascertained. Also the voluntary nature of the standby arrangement should not surprise critics of ASEAN’s *modus operandi*. The ‘ASEAN Way’ still sets the pace for the development of a regional mechanism that provides the clearest outline yet for a regional force.

Notwithstanding the shortcomings of this mechanism, progress made towards regional responses to environmental, or ‘soft’, security challenges may stand to facilitate the emergence of a collective response to ‘hard’ security challenges, though a regional mechanism for conflict resolution is unlikely to be realized in the near future. ASEAN’s preference for a ‘soft’, or lower, degree of institutionalization means that the normative realignment currently underway will take time to manifest itself in institutions and practices. The prevalence of NTS threats to national and regional security will continue to highlight the need to accelerate this development.

To adequately address current security challenges will require regional governments to sacrifice a degree of their sovereignty. As the norm of sovereignty as responsibility as a concession to the primacy of individual human rights and security gains traction (Bellamy & Drummond, 2011, p. 186), one can be hopeful that the conflicts that have festered under the protective fold of the ‘ASEAN Way’ for decades and that have led to many ‘man-made disasters’ across the region will be subject to closer regional scrutiny in the near future. The establishment of a regional force as a conflict resolution mechanism is still eyed with caution, as it is perceived to be a challenge to the norms that help uphold regional peace and stability. Yet, a regional force could also be a powerful statement consolidating the level of trust and the sense of community within ASEAN. This may allow for an open dialogue also on those conflicts that could, if further ignored by regional governments, adversely affect community building towards a “peaceful and stable Southeast Asia where each nation is at peace with itself”, the very purpose that is at the core of ASEAN’s existence (ASEAN Secretariat, 1997).

## CONCLUSION

I have argued that ASEAN’s cooperation on some non-traditional security challenges stands to facilitate the deepening of traditional security cooperation. The Association has made considerable progress towards adapting to the changing security environment, most notably in the area of defense diplomacy and the management of non-traditional, specifically environmental, security challenges. Military cooperation within ASEAN remains limited, as indicated by the lack of progress towards a regional mechanism for conflict resolution, but plays an increasing role in HADR. Thus far, commitments to a regional mechanism for conflict resolution are not designed to

move beyond the level of political rhetoric. The main obstacle has been the question of whether and under what conditions ASEAN's approach to security should include a right to intervene in a member country's internal affairs. The norms framing South-east Asian security cooperation are only slowly succumbing to the changing security environment regional governments have to face as they have to consider whether and when to prioritize human security over state security and external versus internal security threats (Emmerson, 2008a, p. 6). ASEAN's response to a range of NTS issues in recent years, such as the cyclone Nargis, suggests that these new challenges have contributed to a realignment of the 'ASEAN Way'.

ASEAN governments have come to realize that multilateral defense cooperation is necessary in order to effectively address NTS challenges. ASEAN could benefit from a deepening of regional defense cooperation, as it consolidates confidence among its members. The objective of establishing an HADR standby force is encouraging. The nascent initiative seen in the network of national peacekeeping training centers provides a framework for advancing joint initiatives that could well include all ASEAN members in the future. The security component of the peacekeeping operation in Central Mindanao is a positive example of an initiative that is already predominantly regional. These initiatives indicate that the notion of a regional force, which was outright rejected ten years ago, is slowly gaining traction in the regional normative framework. The 'soft' institutionalization of security and defense cooperation is at a pace observers might criticize as too slow in view of the urgent needs faced by many disaster- and crisis-struck communities in the region. However, acknowledging the achievements of ASEAN to date, an ASEAN peacekeeping force might yet be a not-too-distant possibility. Whether it would work towards resolving some of ASEAN's long-standing internal conflicts or whether it would serve to ward off international scrutiny of ASEAN's at times questionable approach to protecting its citizens' human rights remains to be seen.



## REFERENCES

- Acharya, A. (1991). The Association of Southeast Asian Nations: "Security community" or "defence community"? *Pacific Affairs*, 64(2), 159.
- Acharya, A. (2000). *Constructing a security community in Southeast Asia: ASEAN and the problem of regional order*. London, UK: Routledge.
- Acharya, A. (2005). Conclusion: Asian norms and practices in UN peace operations. *International Peacekeeping*, 12(1), 146–151.
- Adler, E., & Barnett, M. (1998). *Security communities*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Amul, G. G. (2012, 21 September). Still falling short, in preparing for disaster. *Today Online*.
- Arguillas, C. (2012, 12 October). Demilitarizing Bangsamoro: Proposals include transitional int'l peace-keeping force. *Minda News*.
- ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response. (2005, 26 July). Retrieved from [http://www.jus.uio.no/english/services/library/treaties/13/13-02/asean\\_disaster\\_management.xml](http://www.jus.uio.no/english/services/library/treaties/13/13-02/asean_disaster_management.xml)
- ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response. (2012, 16 March). *Chairman's statement of the first meeting of the conference of the parties to the AADMER*. Jakarta, Indonesia. Retrieved from [www.aseansec.org/26822.htm](http://www.aseansec.org/26822.htm)

- ASEAN Committee on Disaster Management. (2010, 12 March). *AADMER work programme 2010–2015*. Retrieved from [www.aseansec.org/publications/AADMER%20WP%202011.pdf](http://www.aseansec.org/publications/AADMER%20WP%202011.pdf)
- ASEAN Concord II (Bali Concord II). (2003, 7 October). Retrieved from <https://www.aseansec.org/15159.htm>
- ASEAN Declaration (Bangkok Declaration). (1967, 8 August). Retrieved from <http://www.asean.org/news/item/the-asean-declaration-bangkok-declaration>
- ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting. (2011a, 19 May). *Concept paper on the establishment of ASEAN Peacekeeping Centres Network*. Jakarta, Indonesia. Retrieved from <https://admm.asean.org/dmdocuments/10.%20ANNEX%209-%20Concept%20Paper%20on%20The%20Establishment%20of%20ASEAN%20PKC%20Network%20-.pdf>
- ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting. (2011b, 19 May). *Joint declaration of the ASEAN Defence Ministers on strengthening defence cooperation of ASEAN in the global community to face new challenges*. Jakarta, Indonesia. Retrieved from <http://www.aseansec.org/26304.htm>
- Asean peacekeepers for Myanmar? (2012, 17 April). *Bangkok Post*.
- ASEAN Regional Forum. (2010, 12 March). *Co-Chairs' Summary Report of the Fourth ARF Peacekeeping Experts' Meeting*. Bangkok, Thailand. Retrieved from <http://www.aseanregionalforum.asean.org>
- ASEAN Secretariat. (1997, 15 December). *ASEAN Vision 2020*. Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Retrieved from <http://www.aseansec.org/1814.htm>
- ASEAN Secretariat. (2004a). *Indonesia proposes Southeast Asian peacekeeping force*. Retrieved from <http://www.aseansec.org/afp/20.htm>
- ASEAN Secretariat. (2004b, 29 November). *Vientiane Action Programme*. Retrieved from <http://www.aseansec.org/VAP-10th%20ASEAN%20Summit.pdf>
- ASEAN Secretariat. (2006, 9 May). *Concept paper for the establishment of an ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting*. Retrieved from <http://www.asean.org/news/item/concept-paper-for-the-establishment-of-an-asean-defence-ministers-meeting-2>
- ASEAN Secretariat. (2009a). *Roadmap for an ASEAN Community 2009–2015*. Jakarta, Indonesia. Retrieved from <http://www.aseansec.org/publications/RoadmapASEANCommunity.pdf>
- ASEAN Secretariat. (2009b, 1 March). *ASEAN Political-Security Community blueprint*. Retrieved from <https://www.asean.org/archive/5187-18.pdf>
- ASEAN, preventive diplomacy and bilateral conflict. (2011, 29 October). *Jakarta Post*.
- Australia expands military influence in Vietnam. (2012, 28 August). *Thanh Nien News*.
- Bandoro, B. (2004, 2 March). Undesirable consequences of an ASEAN peacekeeping force. *Jakarta Post*.
- Bellamy, A. J. (2004). *Security communities and their neighbours: Regional fortresses or global integrators?* New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Bellamy, A. J., & Drummond, C. (2011). The responsibility to protect in Southeast Asia: Between non-interference and sovereignty as responsibility. *The Pacific Review*, 24(2), 179–200.
- Bendahara, A., & Au, E. (2012, 12 October). Contributing to peace building. *New Straits Times*.
- Brandon, J. (2002, 31 July). ASEAN needs to firm up: A regional forum that could do better. *New York Times*.
- Caballero-Anthony, M. (2005). *Regional security in Southeast Asia: Beyond the ASEAN Way*. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.
- Caballero-Anthony, M. (2008). Challenging change: Nontraditional security, democracy, and regionalism. In D. Emmerson (Ed.), *Hard choices: Security, democracy, and regionalism in Southeast Asia* (pp. 191–217). Stanford, CA: Walter H. Shorenstein Asia-Pacific Research Center.
- Caballero-Anthony, M., & Haywood, H. (2010). *Defining ASEAN's role in peace operations: Helping to bring peacebuilding "upstream"?* Civil Military Working Papers 3/2010. Asia Pacific Civil-Military Centre of Excellence.
- Capie, D., & Taylor, B. (2010). The Shangri-La Dialogue and the institutionalization of defence diplomacy in Asia. *The Pacific Review*, 23(3), 359–376.

- Chongkittavorn, K. (2004, 8 March). How serious is Asean about security? *The Nation*.
- Defense ministers discuss plan to establish joint peacekeeping network. (2011, 16 November). *Antara News*.
- Department of National Defense, Republic of the Philippines. (2012, 28 June). *DND conducts peacekeeping workshop*. Retrieved from <http://www.dndph.org/2012press-releases/dnd-conducts-peacekeeping-workshop>
- Emmerson, D. (2008a). Critical terms: Security, democracy, and regionalism in Southeast Asia. In D. Emmerson (Ed.), *Hard choices: Security, democracy, and regionalism in Southeast Asia* (pp. 3–56). Stanford, CA: Walter H. Shorenstein Asia-Pacific Research Center.
- Emmerson, D. (2008b). *Hard choices: Security, democracy, and regionalism in Southeast Asia*. Stanford, CA: Walter H. Shorenstein Asia-Pacific Research Center.
- Graham, E. (2013). Super Typhoon Haiyan: ASEAN's Katrina moment? *RSIS Commentary*, 213/2013, 3. Retrieved from <https://csis.org/files/publication/Pac1382.pdf>
- Gunawan, A. (2008, 7 June). U.S., RI military send aid to Nargis cyclone survivors. *Jakarta Post*.
- Haacke, J. (2005). "Enhanced interaction" with Myanmar and the project of a security community: Is ASEAN refining or breaking with its diplomatic and security culture? *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, 27(2), 188–216.
- Helmke, B. (2009). The absence of ASEAN: Peacekeeping in Southeast Asia. *Pacific News*, 31, 4–7.
- Indonesia modifies peacekeeping proposal after ASEAN reservations. (2004, 15 June). *Agence France-Press*.
- Indonesia proposes ASEAN peacekeeping force. (2004, 21 February). *Xinhua News Agency*.
- Khalik, A. (2003, 11 December). RI must explain ASC to ASEAN members. *Jakarta Post*.
- Kuah, A. (2004). The ASEAN Security Community: Struggling with the details. *IDSS Commentaries*. Singapore: IDSS.
- Luftia, I. (2012, 23 March). Indonesia wants more female UN peacekeepers. *Jakarta Globe*.
- Pacific Disaster Center. (2013). *ASEAN tests regional disaster response readiness prior to Typhoon Haiyan*. Retrieved from <http://www.pdc.org/news-n-media/pdc-updates/ASEAN-Tests-Regional-Disaster-Response-Readiness-Prior-to-Typhoon-Haiyan/>
- Pitsuwan, F. (2011, 2 May). Time for ASEAN peacekeeping force. *The Diplomat*.
- Pitsuwan, S. (2008). Foreword. In D. Emmerson (Ed.), *Hard choices: Security, democracy, and regionalism in Southeast Asia* (pp. xix–xxi). Stanford, CA: Walter H. Shorenstein Asia-Pacific Research Center.
- Rolls, M. (2012). Centrality and continuity: ASEAN and regional security since 1967. *East Asia*, 29(2), 127–139.
- Sukma, R. (2008). Political development: A democracy agenda for ASEAN? In D. Emmerson (Ed.), *Hard choices: Security, democracy, and regionalism in Southeast Asia* (pp. 135–149). Stanford, CA: Walter H. Shorenstein Asia-Pacific Research Center.
- Sukma, R. (2010). *ASEAN and non-traditional security*. Paper presented at the Fourth International Symposium "Security Cooperation and Regional Integration in Asia", Waseda University, Japan.
- Sukma, R. (2011, 10 February). Indonesia should address territorial disputes in ASEAN. *Jakarta Post*.
- Sundararaman, S. (1997). ASEAN diplomacy in conflict resolution: The Cambodian case. *Strategic Analysis*, XXI(7), 1047–1058.
- Tomotaka, S. (2008). ASEAN Security Community: An initiative for peace and stability. *NIDS Security Reports*, 3(4), 17–34. Tokyo, Japan: The National Institute for Defense Studies.
- Uesugi, Y. (2004). The nexus between UN peacekeeping and human security: Reviewing the functions of UN peacekeeping from a perspective of human security. In Institute for Peace Science Hiroshima University (Ed.), *Conflict and human security: A search for new approaches of peace-building* (19th ed., Vol. 19, pp. 96–123). Hiroshima, Japan: Institute for Peace Science Hiroshima University.
- UN Peacekeeping Statistics. (2013). *Troop and police contributors archive (1990–2013)*. Retrieved from [http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/resources/statistics/contributors\\_archive.shtml](http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/resources/statistics/contributors_archive.shtml)
- Vietnam mulls participation in U.N. peacekeeping force. (2006, 7 January). *The China Post*.
- Vietnam, Bangladesh strengthen defence cooperation. (2012, 22 September). *The Voice of Vietnam*.

Wain, B. (2004, 10 June). Jakarta jilted. *Far Eastern Economic Review*.

Wood, D. (2013, 17 June). Forces improve mutual understanding. *Brunei Times*.

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Henning Borchers is a research, monitoring, and evaluation officer with the New Zealand Human Rights Commission. He has worked on social, political, and environmental issues in the Asia Pacific with local and international non-government organizations, focusing on human rights, peace, conflict, and human security in Southeast Asia.

► Contact: [h.borchers@gmx.net](mailto:h.borchers@gmx.net)