Insurgencies, Border Clashes, and Security Dilemma— Unresolved Problems for ASEAN

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The decision to deepen ASEAN cooperation has inspired a lively debate among scholars. Since, no large-scale war has occurred between ASEAN member states since its 1967 founding, it is reasonable to ask whether the institutionalisation of a Security Community was not long overdue. Furthermore, the official proclamation of ASEAN as a Security Community should lead to the expectation that ASEAN is a zone of peace and stability. This article questions the stability of ASEAN security arrangements, and subsequently queries whether ASEAN can be considered a security community in the fullest sense of the term. The main goal of a Security Community is to provide transnational peace and political stability. However, armed border conflicts between neighbouring countries emerge occasionally due to unsettled territorial claims, as the recent border conflict between Thailand and Cambodia about the Preah Vihear temple compound with several casualties. Furthermore, in nearly half of the ASEAN member states there are ongoing armed insurgencies against the governments. Yet, concerted actions of the affected ASEAN members against transnationally operating insurgents have failed to materialise. Until the respective governments can ensure that civilians are not affected by border clashes, skirmishes between insurgents and armed forces, and other threats, as well as effectively tackling these issues, the existence of ASEAN as an effective security community should be doubted.

Keywords: *ASEAN, Security Community, Zone of Peace, Insurgencies, Security Dilemmas*

Introduction

The decision to deepening ASEAN cooperation and to enhance ASEAN's ability to 'catch-up' with other regional organisations was taken by ASEAN officials in 2003. The project of an ASEAN Community (comprising the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC), the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC), and the ASEAN Security Community (ASC)) was planned to be fully developed by 2020.[1] However, it was not until 2008 that all ASEAN members ratified the new ASEAN Charter. Nevertheless, the community-building process has been brought forward to the year 2015. Even before ASEAN promoted its security community, Amitav Acharya voiced the claim in several publications that ASEAN is a 'nascent security community.'[2] This claim has been heavily debated among regional scholars from different fields and perspectives.[3] Supposing that Acharya's claim is correct and ASEAN is indeed a nascent security community, a reasonable question would be whether ASEAN is actually ready to become a security community in the full theoretical sense.

Deniz Kocak

The main goal of a security community is to provide transnational peace and political stability within a region. However, armed border conflicts between neighbouring countries emerge periodically and then due to unsettled territorial claims, as the recent border conflict between Thailand and Cambodia over the Preah Vihear temple compound showed. Furthermore, in nearly half of the ASEAN member states there are ongoing armed insurgencies against the respective central governments. Yet, due to a lack of coordination and cooperation ASEAN members failed to take concerted actions against transnational insurgents.

Establishing a security community should provide the opportunity to anticipate security dilemmas and arms races between states. Nonetheless, the historic mistrust between most of the ASEAN members is hardly fading away and antagonisms and stereotypes are still used in political propaganda and feature in daily life. Furthermore, distrust between government officials is aroused by the increasing arms purchases of several ASEAN members. Instead of mutual collaboration and integration dealing with security issues, there are only bilateral agreements between some member states and external partners. Barely any multilateral agreements exist, especially dealing with security. The aforementioned security issues suggest that there is a lack of cooperation, efficiency and willingness at the decision-making level of the respective member countries to fully implement security cooperation

within ASEAN. Furthermore, sensitive civil-military relations as well as a lack of political accountability in Southeast Asian countries are further obstacles to deepened transnational cooperation.

In light of these inherent, and generic, problems among ASEAN members, this article questions the stability of ASEAN security arrangements, and subsequently queries whether ASEAN can be considered a security community in the fullest sense. The article is structured in the following way: first, the basic concept of the security community will be introduced. This will be followed by case studies describing ongoing insurgencies in Burma and Southern Thailand. Afterwards, border clashes and national antagonisms between Burma and Thailand as well as Cambodia and Thailand will be discussed. Finally, the last two sections deal with the security dilemma in Southeast Asia and how to mitigate it.

Theorising On The 'Security Community' Concept

According to Deutsch, a security community is a community of states that aim to establish and maintain peaceful interstate relations among themselves. Increased cooperation and communication as well as the will to settle interstate conflicts through mediation and communication rather than through military threats and engagement is the basis of such a community. The term "security" however, should not be misleading since the establishment of a security community does not refer to a military organisation directed towards an external enemy. "Security" rather means all encompassing security in a defined spatial area for all its inhabitants and the guarantee of peaceful relations between member states.[4] As Deutsch's security community aims, in the ideal case, at providing a peaceful environment for every citizen within the security community, "security" therefore should be related not only to the traditional security context but to the non-traditional security concept as well. While the traditional security concept deals with classical external threats which should be met first and foremost by the national military and other relevant security agencies, the non-traditional security approach encompasses environmental threats to the population, water- and food supplies, health- and sanitation standards as well as societal peace.[5]

We can identify two models of security communities in Deutsch's concept: amalgamated and pluralistic communities. While the amalgamated community-model is a fusion of two or more former sover-

eign states into a new state with a distinctive centre, the pluralistic model encompasses two or more independent states with tight grids of cooperation and consultation in various political fields.[6] Political research however has focused, in the last ten years, on the pluralistic model because of the exceptional status of the amalgamation model.[7] Essential conditions for establishing a (pluralistic) security community are the compatibility of norms and values as well as mutual political accountability. The existence of shared values increases the necessary coordination and improves communication between member states as well as accelerating the integration process. The key variables in the construction of a security community however is trust and assurance of the peaceful cooperation with "the others."[8]

Regional Insurgencies

The nation state and its related concepts is a relatively new phenomenon in Southeast Asia due to the fact that most of the Southeast Asian countries experienced colonial rule since at least the end of the 19th century. After the transition to national independence in the 1950s, the emerging states faced the challenges of nation-building, establishing fixed borders with their neighbours, and imposing the state monopoly on the use of force. In short, the emerging states tried to emulate the concept of the Westphalian state-system in Southeast Asia. Yet, traditional border concepts, remote and undeveloped areas as well as the multiethnic composition of the new states made it difficult to establish the authority of the central state successfully. Moreover, apart from armed conflicts with neighbouring states, each country in Southeast Asia experienced rebellious movements, mostly driven by ethnic and religious minorities and their respective demands.

The main feature of the nation state is, according to Weber, that the state defends the rule of law and holds the monopoly of force undisputedly within a defined territory with fixed borders.[9] Insecurity within states however, poses a serious threat not only to the stability of the political regime but also the daily lives of the inhabitants. Furthermore, the inability of the central government to protect its citizens from regular violence gives rise to questions about the sovereignty of the government.

The following two cases studies of ongoing insurgencies in Burma and Thailand illustrate the above mentioned incapacity of the respective central states to end insurgencies. At the same time civilians suffer

from internal insecurity caused by ongoing clashes between the armed forces and insurgents.

The Case of Burma

The history of Burma has been shaped by insurgencies against colonial occupiers and central governments. Even now, there are a large number of armed and rebellious groups in Burma who are fighting against the central government (SPDC[10]) and partly against each other since independence from the UK in 1948. One crucial factor for the ongoing insurgencies in Burma is the colonial legacy of the British Empire. Since the incremental occupation of the territory between British India and Siam, which was finally called "Burma," the British faced massive resistance and rebellions against their rule. To control the country, the British supported particular ethnic groups, collaborated with them and granted several ethnic groups semi-autonomy. This not only led to asymmetries of political power and mistrust between indigenous ethnic groups in Burma, but also to attempts to achieve self-determination by some ethnic groups. Furthermore, these rather neglected and suppressed ethnic groups established militias to defend themselves from the incursions of adversary ethnic groups. This means, that the use of private security actors and the private use of weapons is a feature of the security context in Burma, which was strengthened during the colonial period. Even now several ethnic groups maintain their own security forces and administrative apparatus in their respective territories.[11]

According to Smith, there are four reasons why there are so many insurgencies that have lasted so long. The landscape of Burma with its mountainous ridges, dense jungles and porous borders, is well suited to guerilla activities. Undeveloped infrastructure in many Burmese regions as well as the mountainous landscape prevents the central government from controlling the territory effectively. In addition, the porous borders between Thailand, China, and Bangladesh allow insurgent ethnic groups to make use of external support, such as weapons and technical utilities, as well as enable them to retreat into safe-zones and establish bases, where the central government forces are not allowed to operate.

Secondly, external political influences, like diaspora organisations of the respective ethnic groups, generate moral and political support as well as external funding. This external support may encourage the

64

political and armed struggle of the respective ethnic groups.

Thirdly, by far most important source of income for some armed groups in Burma is the trade in narcotics. Particularly the Shan State Army-South (SURA) and the United Wa State Army (UWSA) are infamous for producing and trading narcotics to finance their armed struggle against the SPDC. Here again, the porous borders to neighbor countries like Thailand serve as smuggling- and drug trafficking conduits. In general, the profits from drug smuggling are used to purchase weapons. Apart from that some armed groups strive for profit maximisation and personal enrichment by trading drugs to Thailand.[12]

Deniz Kocak

Fourthly, despite some attempts by the central government to negotiate with the insurgent groups on equal terms, there were no conflict-resolution initiatives. Rather, uncompromising military campaigns under Ne Win aimed at eradicating any ethnic opposition to his regime. Instead of using a "hearts and minds" counterinsurgency tactic to win the support of the rural population, the Tatmadaw tried to isolate the insurgents from the villages and cut off support by destroying villages.[13] These tactics however, led to growing support for the respective insurgents on the part of affected villagers and created deep mistrust and resentment toward the central government.[14]

The Christian Karens, formerly supported by the British colonial administration, organised the Karen National Union (KNU), maintained an armed organisation called the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA), and fought against the central government since the 1940s. The KNU experienced a heavy setback when the Tatmadaw seized the Karen capital Mannerplaw and forced the weakened Karens to retreat into the mountainous border region in 1995. But the great factor weakening the Karen insurgency was a result of internal splits between Buddhist and Christian factions within the KNU, and the following move by the Buddhist faction to support the SPDC. The KNU however, recovered from the 1995 clashes and reestablished operational bases along the Burma/Thailand frontier. Furthermore, the Karens formed a political party, the Karen National League (KNL), to advocate the Karens' interests peacefully. Nevertheless they also continued the armed struggle against the SPDC as well.[15]

The Case of Thailand

In addition to the Case of Burma highlighted above, Thailand acts as a solid indication of the main theoretical basis of this work and

acts in support of the work's main hypothesis. The Malay-sultanate of Pattani, which comprised the three provinces of Pattani, Yala, and Narathiwat, was a tributary state of the Siamese kingdom since the 18th century. However, the treaty of 1909 settled the borders between British Malaya and Siam, and granted Siam the sovereign rule over the three Malay provinces. Since then, the centrally administered kingdom aimed at tightening its rule and political legitimacy in the new southernmost provinces. During the following decades a sustained attempt at state-building and assimilation was made through which Thailand established administration structures, schools and garrisons in Pattani, Yala, and Narathiwat. The proto-nationalist Phibun Songkhram-regime in the 1940s promoted a particularly aggressive assimilation strategy for the southern provinces. Furthermore, most of the administration staff came directly from Bangkok and were mainly Buddhist while Muslims were not assigned to administration posts until the 1960s. Ethnic as well as religious dominance by the central Thai governments in the three Muslim provinces was used as an instrument of political power.[16] Several Malay insurgency groups emerged during the 1960s and 1970s. The two most influential groups were Barisan Revolusi Nasional (BRN), founded in 1960, and Pattani United Liberation Organisation (PULO), founded in 1968. Both groups were supported politically and financially by international Muslim organizations. Currently, the Barisan Revolusi Nasional-Coordinate (BRN-C) is the leading insurgency group with more than 1800 active fighters. Their organisational structures and hierarchy are still unclear. Yet, it is known that they maintain extensive paramilitary training for new recruits, and that the respective organisations maintain several paramilitary tactical combat units.[17]

Despite the fact that the Prem Tinsulanond-government funded programs for villages, amnesty programs for rebels, and established the Southern Border Provinces Administration Center (SBPAC) to ease the economic and social pressures in the three provinces as well as to undermine the insurgents' legitimacy, the insurgents continued to operate. Although insurgents had always engaged regularly in violent attacks, a new generation of insurgents intensified its activities during the 1990s. Their attacks aimed particularly at representative and hard targets such as police stations and garrisons. After 2001 however, the attacks intensified and even included soft targets, mainly civilians, both Buddhist and Muslim. Some observers assumed operational links between PULO and international terrorist networks.[18]

The Thai governments reacted to the new level of insurgency without mercy. Often security forces violated human rights while engaging suspected rebels, such as the so called "Tak Bai"-massacre in 2004, where more than 100 people died. The brutal behaviour of the security forces and the uncompromising stance of the Thaksin Shinawatra-administration provoked further distrust and hatred towards the Thai central state among the Muslim community in Thailand. Thaksin's unbending will to quell the southern unrest by force caused him to shut down the SBPAC and proclaim martial law in the three provinces. The violent conflict however was restricted to the three provinces only. There were never any attacks by the insurgent groups in Bangkok or in the densely populated tourist areas of Southern Thailand.[19] The conflict in Southern Thailand is political in motivation rather than religious. On the one hand, the ethno-nationalist Malay movement instrumentalized the religious-component to get stronger support from the international Muslim community. On the other hand, the Thaksin-administration used the "us-against-the-others" distinction between the Thai Buddhist majority and the Malay Muslim minority as a tool for political propaganda. In particular the Thai government stressed the religious components and causes of the conflict in order to distract from the actual cause of the Malay insurgency, which is a purely political one—the demand for self-determination and secession from Thailand.[20]

In sum, the state's monopoly on the use of force, the classical indicator of a sovereign state, challenged by armed insurgent groups in both the cases of Burma and Thailand. Furthermore, the regular clashes between government security forces and rebel groups pose a serious threat towards innocent civilians since the civilians' daily life is tremendously affected by martial law, curfews, campaigns of vengeance by both sides as well as the pure brutality of being victimized. The inability or unwillingness of the respective governments to protect their citizens from violence testifies to a lack of internal security, at least in certain regions, within the respective countries. Most often, as in the cases of Burma and Thailand, ethnic- and religious minorities are seriously affected by this internal insecurity.[21]

Regional Border Clashes

Collins stresses the historical rivalry of Southeast Asian states. Especially the case of Thailand with its borders to Myanmar, Malaysia,

Cambodia and Laos serves as the basis for the continuous distrust between the peninsular countries.[22] Political tensions emerge between the countries due to the fact that insurgents receive assistance from beyond the states' borders. The infamously porous borders of Southeast Asian countries do not prevent militias and smugglers from dealing in weapons, drugs, and commodities across borders.[23] Idean Salehyan confirms 'that transnational rebels in neighboring states raise the probability of international conflict.'[24] In fact, there is a long history of border violations by the Burmese Tatmadaw and the Royal Thai armed forces. While the Burmese forces regularly entered Thai territory to hound rebel groups, the Thai armed forces combated illicit drug trade and drug production on Burmese territory.[25] Moreover, according to Phongpaichit, successive Thai governments supported rebels with weapons, provided border zones in which insurgent groups could maintain operational bases to weaken the central government of Myanmar—the so called "buffer-zone-policy"—and trained several insurgent groups in paramilitary tactics.[26] While this is a typical strategy to covertly weaken an adversarial neighbour, it bears some political risks as well, such as antagonising the neighbour and provoking an interstate conflict or retaliatory strikes by conventional armed forces.[27] As a reaction to the Thai border-policy, the SPDC regularly closed border check points and allowed its troops to violate the Burma-Thai frontier while chasing Karen rebels on Thai territory which culminated in clashes between units of the armed forces of Myanmar with the Thai border police on a frequent basis. These incidents not only alarmed military officials in both countries but also provoked government officials to threaten each other.[28]

Serious clashes between Burma and Thailand took place in 2001 when Burmese troops crossed the Thai border during a skirmish with the Shan State Army-South. The skirmish then evolved into a clash with Thai military forces, the deployment of heavy artillery and the capture of a Thai border police post by the Tatmadaw. The use of heavy artillery by the Burmese- and Thai military, as well as the bombardment of civilian settlements and military positions led to a large number of casualties on both sides. As a result of the political rise of Thaksin Shinawatra and his economic interests in Burma, there was a gradual improvement in diplomatic relations between Thailand and Burma. As a sign of courtesy towards Burma, Thaksin partly renounced the buffer-zone-policy. Yet, several insurgency groups maintain operational bases along the Thai-Burmese border. Furthermore,

there are still border violations and sporadic clashes, including mortar bombardment and heavy casualties, between Burmese and Thai armed forces.[29]

The diplomatic history between Thailand and Cambodia is marked by Thai hegemony over Khmer tributary kingdoms. Furthermore, Cambodia was the bone of contention between Siam and Vietnam, the two dominant powers in the Southeast Asian peninsular and later Siam and Imperial France. Due to several French military campaigns during the 1880s and 1890s, Siam lost control over large parts of Cambodia.[30] The already sensitive relations between Thailand and Cambodia experienced a serious backlash in January 2003 when the Khmer media reported that a Thai celebrity made a provocative claim about the illegitimate occupation of Angkor Wat by the Cambodian state and that the temple compound should be handed back to Thailand. As a consequence, an enraged mob, mostly students and youth gangs, besieged the Thai embassy in Phnom Penh. As the anti-Thai riots started, Cambodian police forces stood by and watched the scene. Even as the mob started storming the embassy compound the police did not intervene. It was not until the Thai ambassador and the administrative staff fled before the mob set the embassy ablaze that the riot police dispersed the mob. After that, street mobs chased Thai citizens and set fire to Thai-owned hotels, shops, and private houses. The subsequent evacuation of Thai officials and civilians from Cambodia by the Thai military and the closing of border checkpoints between Thailand and Cambodia weighed on diplomatic relations between the two countries for several months. Furthermore, Thaksin ordered the Royal Thai Air force to be combat-ready for eventual retaliation strikes. Afterwards, the Cambodian government agreed to pay compensation to the Thai government and the affected civilians as well as offering its apologies.[31]

The conflict over the temple compound of Preah Vihear between Thailand and Cambodia is another politically sensitive issue. Actually, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) decided in 1962 that the temple compound of Preah Vihear belongs to Cambodia. Here, the ICJ referred to a border treaty between Siam and France, the former colonial occupier of Cambodia, in 1904.[32] However, Thailand still asserts its historical claim on the temple compound. Since 2001, these territorial claims on the Preah Vihear temple compound on the Thai-Cambodian border regularly surfaced among nationalist propaganda in times of domestic political tension and especially in the power struggle in Thailand in 2008 between the anti-government organisation—PAD—and

Deniz Kocak

69

the then ruling PPP, linked to Thaksin Shinawatra. While the PPP tried to strengthen bilateral relations with Cambodia by supporting Cambodia's plea to classify Preah Vihear as a UNESCO-World Heritage Site, although without admitting that the surrounding compound belongs to Cambodia, the PAD and the Democrat Party (DP) blamed the PPP for treason and "selling the nation."[33] Simultaneously Hun Sen and his Cambodian's People Party (CPP) government in Cambodia tried to fan nationalist sentiments against Thailand in anticipation of a coming election in 2008.[34] Verbal attacks were soon followed by an increased gathering of troops along the border on both sides and several smaller clashes with minor casualties occurred. Additionally, the PAD stormed and occupied the temple compound to manifest the territorial claims of Thailand.[35] Furthermore, bordering villages were evacuated in case of serious clashes between military forces and militias were prepared for contingent operations. Finally, in October 2008 several clashes occurred between Khmer and Thai armed forces and caused several casualties on both sides followed by mutual accusations of aggressive and provocative actions. Although diplomats prevented a further escalation and a large-scale war, relations between the two countries seem likely to remain tense as long as the Preah Vihear issue has not been resolved.[36] Hun Sen's move to appoint the ousted Thai-prime minister Thaksin Shinawatra as an economic advisor exacerbated already tense diplomatic relations between Phnom Penh and Bangkok. Furthermore, Hun Sen resisted extradition demands of Thaksin by the Abhisit Vejjajiva-administration. Several clashes and border violations occurred between Thai- and Cambodian military forces in 2009 and 2010. A striking but typical example for this kind of border incident is a clash at the Chong Chom border crossing which occurred in April 2010. According to a commander of the involved tahan prahn (rangers) in the Thai province Surin, a tahan prahn patrol witnessed Khmer soldiers trespassing at the border. Subsequently, the Khmer soldiers opened fire on the Thai border patrol. Although the exchange of fire lasted about fifteen minutes and the Khmer soldiers pulled back, there were no casualties on either side. The commander in question furthermore admitted that such incidents occur on a frequent basis, although the causes of such incidents are unclear since both sides accuse each other.[37] This permanent state of mutual mistrust and threat between Thailand and Cambodia is a fragile one that can erupt at any time.[38]

The common point among the border clashes between Thailand and Myanmar in 2001 as well as Thailand and Cambodia in 2008 is

the lack of clarity about who was in military command or rather who ordered the intensification of the skirmishes on the respective warring factions.[39] A possible interpretation of these events however suggests that the respective commanders in charge acted of their own accord. This fact would subsequently raise questions about the integrity of the military command structures, military professionalism, and finally about the effectiveness of civilian government control of the military. While misperceptions of the respective border guards can occur, border clashes of this frequency suggest a lack of professionalism among the respective units involved. Furthermore, the instrumentalisation, or rather misuse of transnational conflicts and nationalist sentiments to influence political interests in domestic politics suggests that the respective government actors acted irresponsibly since the border clashes caused several casualties and brought grievance and agony to the affected civilians along the borders.

The Security Dilemma

The results of the above case studies suggest that there is a variety of threats towards internal security as well as external security. While the insurgency movements pose serious threats to the stability of the respective states and the daily life of its citizens, the government security forces often do not provide security but insecurity. As described above, there are furthermore, interstate disputes that lead occasionally to fatal clashes between neighboring states.

Within these patterns of action we can identify the concept of the security dilemma. The security dilemma works on two levels: the dilemma of interpretation and the dilemma of response. While the dilemma of interpretation describes the difficulties and insecurities of interpreting the actions of "the other," the dilemma of response deals with the crucial question of how to react and re-react towards the actions of "the other." Furthermore, it should be kept in mind that one's reactions influence the mindset and actions of the other actors as well. Mistakes in the timing of certain actions towards "the other" could inflict serious consequences and unintended chain reactions.[40] Applying this concept to our cases enables us to define a domestic security dilemma and an interstate security dilemma.

Violence begets violence. The internal security dilemma of many Southeast Asian states derives out of conflicts between the central state, which is still in a process of state-building, and opposition groups

which are pursuing political independence, ethnic self-determination, religious freedom or social inclusion. In many cases, these factors and motives intertwine. Since these kinds of conflicts are seldom resolved by political means, the actors involved resort to violence to add emphasis to their respective claims. As a result, a spiral of violence occurs. While non-state groups organize themselves in paramilitary organisations to counter and fight the central state authorities, government security forces in turn are often involved in human rights abuses while fighting or containing anti-government uprisings. As we have seen in the case studies, this spillover of politicised violence and internal security problems can severely affect interstate relations. Porous borders enable transnational insurgency groups to operate on foreign soil, and therefore export an internal conflict to contiguous countries. At the same time, border violations and territorial disputes are often used by governments to distract from domestic political problems and fan nationalist and populist sentiments. As a consequence, the buildup of troops along the border by state-A causes state-B to react in the same way. Mutual threats by combat ready troops deployed along the borders only bolsters mutual (mis)perceptions and can lead to serious conflict.

Another dimension of mutual threat perception, besides the actual deployment of troops, is weapons procurement among states. Booth and Wheeler argue that, 'given the stakes involved, the existence of weapons in the hands of one state can provoke at least uncertainty and possibly fear in others even when those weapons are not intended to be used except for self protection.'[41] The defence expenditures of Southeast Asian states rose steadily from the end of the Cold War until the Asian Economic Crisis in 1997. Although the economic crisis dampened the amount of the weapons purchases, some countries invested in prestigious items, for example the aircraft carrier purchased by Thailand and the modern airplanes, by Singapore, Thailand, Malaysia, and the Philippines in 1997.[42] By now, ASEAN member states have mostly recovered from the economic downturn and increased their military budgets by 50% from 2000 until 2008.[43] Interestingly, all ASEAN members obviously transformed and are still transforming their militaries. There is a much lesser focus on equipment for maintaining internal security and a new focus on conventional warfare equipment such as modern jet fighters, vessels and submarines. Yet, the armament and modernisation of the air force and the navy could be perceived by worried neighbours as offensive weapons, and therefore as

a threat.[44] Furthermore, the recent increase of potential conventional warfare equipment raises the question of whether there is an ongoing intra-ASEAN arms race.[45]

Bitzinger, however, suggests that the recent arms purchases by Southeast Asian states are a regional 'arms dynamic' rather than a regional arms race. The classical arms race aims at outnumbering and threatening the adversary as well as dominating the operational region. Furthermore weapons acquisition must be carried out rapidly. An arms dynamic however, describes an act of weapon acquisition that does not aim at dominating the surrounding neighbor countries but rather aims to maintain a status quo of armament and weaponry, or more accurately, a constant military balance between the neighbouring countries. Bitzinger underpins this interpretation by referring to the fact that except for Singapore, ASEAN member states purchased only small amounts of the latest weapons technology thus aiming to demonstrate that they can keep up with their neighbours.[46] Although this explanation sounds plausible two caveats should be added. Firstly, the partial retreat of US-forces from Southeast Asia after the Cold War left a power vacuum in the region. Therefore, the increased armament of ASEAN could be directed against supra-regional powers such as China. This seems especially likely set against the background of territorial disputes in the South China Sea between China and several ASEAN members. Secondly, despite the possibility that ASEAN members try to equal their respective military capabilities and hence try to maintain a regional status quo of military power, there is a danger that this trend could shift towards a more aggressive contest between ASEAN members. Volatile dynamics such as interstate rivalries could get out of control because of territorial disputes and border violations could occur at any time within this fragile regional environment.[47]

A subsequent question could be: how ASEAN tries to channel the diverging security interests of its members and implement a coherent security policy. Initially, the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), established in 1994, was supposed to function as a policy instrument to foster regional security cooperation. However, Chung assets that the ARF is rather a security dialogue forum than an effective security policy institution.[48] This verdict is based on the fact that the ARF comprises 26 countries and therefore exceeds the Southeast Asian region by including countries such as Russia, China and the US. Although ASEAN members unofficially control key positions within the ARF's, they do not have the necessary bargaining power to prevail against supra-regional

Deniz Kocak

73

heavy-weights like China. The multifaceted composition of the ARF means that the member states 'do not share a common interest, norm or threat to any extent, nor ways of handling security concerns [...].'[49] Bilateral agreements prevail in security cooperation while multilateral agreements are an exception. Even though the ASEAN declaration on Joint Action to Counter Terrorism was supported and signed by all ASEAN members in 2001, the unanimous agreement was rather a symbolic act. According to Acharya, ASEAN members have always rejected the idea of a corporate or multilateral security policy. Rather, individual ASEAN member states conducted bilateral security collaborations with external powers or other ASEAN members. Joint military maneuvers in which all ASEAN members took part have not yet been accomplished. Rather, there were extensive US-led Cobra-Gold-maneuvers with several US-affiliated ASEAN members, and annual bilateral military maneuvers among individual countries.[50]

Mitigating The Security Dilemma?

It should be emphasised that bilateral and exclusive defence programmes, do not enhance regional mutual trust, but instead have the opposite effect. The combination of an increasing conventional warfare arsenal with fractional and exclusive military alliances within ASEAN is further grist to the security dilemmas' mill. Mutual understanding and trustworthiness between nation states however could ease the unpredictability of "the others'" actions and provides ways and means to mitigate the dilemma of interpretation as well as the dilemma of response.[51]

As described above, a working security community needs accountable and trustworthy members to rely on. Therefore, it is mandatory that each member state fulfill certain characteristics of a sovereign and functioning nation state. Holding the undisputed states' monopoly of violence is an absolute prerequisite for implementing and enforcing governance structures within the respective sovereign territory.

Furthermore, crucial elements of good governance, such as accountability, the rule of law and transparency in government and bureaucracy are useful tools for establishing coherent policy structures. While accountability and transparency of the administrative structures strengthen the credibility and trust of the electorate towards its government, fostering the principle of rule of law assures equal judicial treatment of its citizens. According to Zielinski, maintaining fair and

effective rule of law domestically, leads to equal behaviour on the international level. This means, that supranational conflicts are rather resolved by negotiations than by threatening each other and mobilising troops along the borders. In addition, the integration of civil society organisations and associations into the policy making process not only leads to meaningful monitoring of the elected representatives by the electorate, but also provides a critical counterbalance to dubious nationalist and militarist agitation.[52] The idea behind the inclusion of civil society organisations into the policy process can be traced back to Kant who suggested that the people should be the actual decision-maker when it comes to the question of war or peace since the people suffer the most in cases of war because it is they that have 'to fight, having to pay the costs of war from their own resources, having painfully to repair the devastation war leaves behind, and, to fill up the measure of evils, load themselves with a heavy national debt that would embitter peace itself and that can never be liquidated on account of constant wars in the future.'[53]

Granted that the implementation of the proposed measures faces a long and difficult path and cannot be achieved overnight. Yet, the domestic political pluralisation of the ASEAN members could positively affect their foreign policy behavior as well. Moreover, supra-national political cooperation, especially in such hard cases as security policy, between likeminded constitutional countries would be much more likely and likely more binding than it is now.[54] This theoretical approach sounds too easy yet the ASEAN-reality offers a different picture since all ASEAN members ratified the 2007 ASEAN charter with its goals of

> adherence to the rule of law, good governance, the principles of democracy and constitutional government [...] abstention from participation in any policy or activity, including the use of its territory, pursued by any ASEAN Member State or non-ASEAN State or any non-State actor, which threatens the sovereignty, territorial integrity or political and economic stability of ASEAN Member States.[55]

However, the described empirical cases of insurgents operating transnationally, the lack of internal security, and various border clashes tell us a different story about the current state of ASEAN. Not without reason Jones indicates the huge gap between aspiration and reality within the brave-new ASEAN-charter world. Moreover, he traces this discrepancy back to the typical problematic relations of different po-

litical regimes with different constitutions.[56] Furthermore, Jones hints that the simple formula of implementing pluralist political structures in ASEAN could lead to unintended consequences. This is because most of the Southeast Asian states still rely on autocratic political systems. Breaking up these rigid structures would lead first and foremost to political instability and eventually to regional disintegration.[57]

Conclusion

The discussed cases of interstate conflicts and insurgencies are just fragments of several ongoing conflicts within ASEAN. Moreover, the above-mentioned issues prove that the historical rivalries between some Southeast Asian states have not been overcome. Rather, the frequent occurrence of border clashes and unresolved territorial claims hint that the 'peaceful settlement of disputes' has not yet been achieved. However, since the foundation of ASEAN in 1967 no large-scale war has taken place between its member states. Therefore, the goal of stabilising relations between the then major power in Southeast Asia, Indonesia and its neighbour Malaysia as well as adjacent countries after the four year long *konfrontasi* in the 1960s was relatively successful.[58] Despite the absence of large-scale wars between ASEAN members, there are continuous internal and external threats towards the most vulnerable group—civilians. Until the respective governments can ensure that civilians are not affected by border clashes, skirmishes between insurgents and armed forces, and other threats, as well as effectively tackling these issues, the existence of ASEAN as an effective security community should be doubted.

Finally, there are some remaining questions. First, why is ASEAN labeling itself a security community if it does not fulfill the characteristics of a security community? Secondly, is ASEAN able to evolve into an effective security community by agitating for the implementation of political pluralism and effective rule of law within its member states? What is certain is that ASEAN as a regional institution must gain more administrative independence and authority vis-à-vis the ASEAN member states in order to foster political pluralism throughout the region. Yet, a subsequent question would then be whether ASEAN could cope with the implementation of political pluralism. Actually, the adoption of effective and indiscriminate rule of law as well as the initiation of unrestricted party competitions and the inclusion of civil society organisations could erode the authoritarian political bases of some

ASEAN members. Therefore, the liberalisation of ASEAN politics would rather lead to political instability due to shifts in power configurations and violent contests over political power, as Jones has pointed out.[59] Nevertheless the continuation of authoritarian political practices, as we have seen in the cases studies, triggers several internal as well as external security dilemmas in Southeast Asia.

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Notes

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7   Emanuel Adler and Michael Barnett (1998): *Security Communities*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 5.
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12 Jesse Earle Odum (2008), pp. 43-65; Martin Smith (2007), p. 308.

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