



THE NEW GEOPOLITICS OF PEACE OPERATIONS: A DIALOGUE WITH EMERGING POWERS

South East Asia Regional Dialogue

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On 14–16 April 2014 a regional dialogue meeting of the ‘New Geopolitics of Peace Operations: A Dialogue with Emerging Powers’ project took place in Hanoi, Viet Nam. The meeting, which was jointly organized by SIPRI and the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES), brought together a range of leading experts, government officials and representatives of international organizations to discuss the future challenges for peace operations and the roles that states from South East Asia can play.

A CHANGING WORLD ORDER: PERSPECTIVES FROM SOUTH EAST ASIA

During the first session participants discussed perceptions of security threats in the region and beyond, and how such perceptions could affect peace operations in the future. Competition between the United States and China over influence in South East Asia has had an adverse affect on stability in the region. Changing power dynamics have led some countries to redefine their policies and positions, while remaining flexible. A Vietnamese participant noted that, in trying to adapt to shifting global power dynamics, Viet Nam no longer stresses its communist identity and has strengthened diplomatic ties with former enemies such as China and the USA. Viet Nam’s activism within the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) also reflects a shift towards cooperation in the region. At the same, some participants expressed concern about ASEAN unity in the face of Chinese–US tensions.

Several participants noted the importance of better addressing non-traditional security threats, both globally and regionally. Key global threats raised were: the proliferation of piracy, Islamic extremism, sectarian conflict, weak and fragile states, and an escalating refugee crisis. Key regional threats raised were: piracy, terrorism, human trafficking, money laundering and climate change. Climate change was emphasized as a particularly pressing issue for countries like Viet Nam and Cambodia. For example, the effect of climate change on the Mekong River could be devastating for water and

* This report summarizes the contents of each workshop session. The views expressed do not necessarily reflect the views of SIPRI or of the majority of the participants.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

● In the past 20 years there has been a far-reaching shift in the nature of international conflict management. Within this context, the traditional notion of peace operations has been broadened by ever more robust missions, the expansion of mandates towards peacebuilding, and by an unprecedented growth in both the number and the size of operations.

Today, many are questioning the sustainability of the paradigm of peace operations that has emerged since the cold war. It is becoming evident that shifts in international power relations as a result of rapid economic growth in parts of the Global South are calling into question the existing structures of international conflict management, including peace operations.

SIPRI has launched the ‘New Geopolitics of Peace Operations: A Dialogue with Emerging Powers’ initiative with support from the Finnish Ministry for Foreign Affairs and in partnership with the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES). The initiative aims to identify potential future challenges for peace operations and new initiatives that will strengthen the legitimacy of peace operations and create greater capacity, enabling peace operations to meet these future challenges. SIPRI, in cooperation with FES, will be conducting a series of dialogue meetings around the world to support these aims.

**Agenda***Day 1, 15 April 2014*

Opening remarks

Keynote address

A changing world order: what implications for the future of peace operations?

Norms and concepts: a fragile consensus?

Day 2, 16 April 2014

Engagement objectives: high politics and interests of stakeholders

A new peacekeeping landscape: peacekeeping 2.0?

Regional dynamics: ASEAN and peace operations

Final reflections and closing remarks

food security. An Australian participant noted that the Pacific region is seen as the frontline of the effects of climate change and suggested that a peace operation addressing the consequences of climate change could be hosted in the region in the future.

Interstate tensions in South East Asia include a persistent lack of trust between states, rooted in past experiences. The Cambodian–Thai border dispute, for example, could require a peacekeeping operation in the future. The region also faces growing arms proliferation, due to concerns about China’s military power as well as territorial and maritime disputes. A participant from Indonesia suggested that maritime and territorial disputes are driven by resource scarcity and growing nationalist sentiments in China, leading to a reinterpretation of historical borders. Further, several countries in the region are facing internal instability and conflict. In Myanmar, for example, issues of identity and ethnicity are persistent challenges. In the Philippines, the conflict between the government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) ended with a peace agreement that may need to be monitored. Several countries, such as Cambodia, Indonesia and Thailand, are facing election-related conflict. Thailand may consequently suffer from internal fragmentation, which would affect its influence and standing, globally and regionally. However, external involvement in what is considered an internal affair is a sensitive issue.

A security expert on South East Asia suggested that, in order to address some of the pressing regional challenges, ASEAN might have to let go of its traditional non-interference stance. Several other participants, however, claimed that a lack of trust between states in the region prevents ASEAN from playing a bigger role. Another participant stated that ASEAN does, in fact, drive the agenda on non-traditional issues such as climate change. A participant from Singapore suggested that, while deployment to peace operations outside of ASEAN may continue to be difficult for some states with more pressing domestic priorities, the establishment of peacekeeping training centres is a viable first step towards greater contribution from the region. Such training centres could also help to build trust between states in the region, through joint training and cooperation on peace operations.



NORMS AND CONCEPTS

Participants generally agreed that there is an acceptance of basic international norms and concepts applicable to peace operations. However, several participants felt that a lack of clarity persists with regards to some concepts, and that there is often no regional consensus on how certain norms should be implemented. Others suggested that the degree of acceptance varied between countries in the region.

Most participants accepted the protection of civilians (POC) and robust peace operations in general, in missions outside the region. Yet relative newcomers to peace operations, such as Cambodia and Viet Nam, while not necessarily against these concepts for out-of-area missions, stressed that they were not ready to deploy to robust operations. In contrast, seasoned troop-contributing countries (TCCs) like Indonesia and the Philippines were willing—and in some cases even preferred—to deploy to robust out-of-area missions. These countries view robust missions favourably because they are seen as safer for personnel and more conducive to keeping the peace and implementing the mandate. It was noted that Australia is a strong supporter of POC and robust operations. However, for operations within South East Asia, most participants thought that international norms would have to be adapted to the regional context and culture, in which robust peace operations and peacebuilding would not be readily accepted.

With the exception of Thailand, which recently introduced the concept of constructive engagement—essentially meaning selective intervention in limited instances—sovereignty and non-interference are seen as preconditions for any operation in South East Asia. However, there is some indication that the region is evolving when it comes to addressing common and non-traditional threats. For example, non-intervention is increasingly being debated with regards to humanitarian assistance. ASEAN, in some respects, moved away from its strict stance on this norm when it took a leadership role in the humanitarian assistance work in Myanmar following cyclone Nargis.

There is a growing acceptance in the region of the legitimacy of the responsibility to protect (R2P) in out-of-area missions; however, its proper implementation is still debated. R2P's third foundational pillar, which obliges the international community to intervene in cases where the state is unable or unwilling to protect its civilians from mass atrocities, is not accepted by all countries in the region. A participant from Vietnam suggested that R2P can be misused and that what constitutes a legitimate use of R2P remains subjective. Russia, for example, claims that its actions in Ukraine can be justified by R2P as it is protecting ethnic Russians. Others view the use of R2P in Libya as illegitimate. When it comes to the application of R2P within South East Asia, the concept is controversial to some for several reasons. First, there is a strong preference for informal consultation over the use of force in the region. Second, as a Vietnamese participant noted, R2P is not in congruence with ASEAN's 'Bandung principles' of non-interference in internal affairs and respect for sovereignty. Third, militaries within the region view the concept as too ambiguous and governments view it as too controversial.

In conclusion, participants discussed the idea of adapting international norms to the ASEAN region. It was agreed that ASEAN prefers a focus on conflict and crisis management rather than traditional peacebuilding



approaches (e.g. democratization, rule of law and state-building). Participants also noted a regional preference for conflict prevention, informal consultation, consensus building that allows parties to save face, and mediation.

ENGAGEMENT OBJECTIVES

Countries in South East Asia generally have similar motivations for participation. There is a mix of military incentives, such as training, exposure and modernization, and political incentives, such as influence over the United Nations and international standing and image. Economic and normative motivations are secondary, but also important. Australia stands out from other countries in the region, as its motivation for participation is more similar to Western European TCCs. Furthermore, while South East Asian TCCs generally prefer to deploy to operations outside the ASEAN region, Australia prioritizes deployment within the Pacific region.

Viet Nam

Viet Nam has recently announced its intention to contribute troops to UN peace operations and will probably begin by providing medical, engineering or mine-disposal assistance. Participation in any given mission would have to align with Viet Nam's foreign policy and the UN Charter, and must be supported by Viet Nam's National Assembly and its general public.

Viet Nam's engagement objectives are varied. The country's experience of war has created a deeper understanding about the importance of peace and the interconnectivity between regional and national security. At the same time, however, Viet Nam's experience of international isolation until 1993, due to its role in the conflict in Cambodia, will probably cause the country to proceed with caution. As a TCC, Viet Nam hopes to promote the values of the non-aligned movement, such as the primacy of sovereignty, non-intervention and territorial integrity. Advancing its standing and image internationally, providing modern training for its military, and benefiting from remittances, are also important objectives.

It was noted, however, that extensive training and capacity building will be required. Viet Nam lacks interoperability, previous experience of peace operations and crucial language skills. There is also a significant concern among the general public about the safety of personnel. Finally, it was argued that Viet Nam should not merely focus on the operational aspects of deployment but also practise 'upstream engagement' and remain aware of the linkages between domestic and international conflict.

Indonesia

Indonesia has participated in UN peace operations since 1956 and, as of April 2014, contributes 1797 military and police personnel. Over the next few years it aims to increase this contribution to 4000 personnel. Indonesia's motivations are varied but its participation is primarily driven by political and military incentives. On a political level, Indonesia views its contribution as a way to advance its international standing, shape its post-independence image and gain influence over the UN (as it hopes to become a permanent



member in a reformed Security Council). In terms of the military, peace operations have given it a new role to play in a post-authoritarian regime. Operationally, this means an increase in the quality of troops as they receive pre-deployment training and get operational experience, and learn from other militaries deployed alongside them.

There is strong public support domestically for participation in peace operations, in contrast to the general public's usual critical stance towards military activity. For individuals, military participation provides career advancement opportunities and higher salaries, particularly for military observers. As well as extra funding for the military as a whole, participation has given Indonesia the legitimacy to modernize its army and gain arms procurement. On a normative level, the country views participation as a way to maintain world order, which corresponds with its foreign policy and is mandated in its constitution.

Cambodia

Cambodia has participated in UN peace operations since 2005 and, as of April 2014, contributes 649 military and police personnel. In 2006 Cambodia's defence white paper included contributions to peace operations as a part of the country's defence diplomacy. Political and institutional motivations are the primary drivers of participation. Cambodia hopes to advance its standing, image and legitimacy on the international stage—particularly because its human rights record is often questioned. Cambodia is a proud member of ASEAN, and there is a degree of peer pressure within the regional organization to participate in UN peace operations—which is why it is likely that Laos will start contributing too.

Institutionally, Cambodia hopes to professionalize and reform its security sector, improve the civilian capabilities of its military, and share its existing capacities in the area of demining within ASEAN and globally. Economic considerations are primarily relevant for individual troops, who receive a higher salary during deployment due to UN remittances. As far as potential challenges are concerned, Cambodia's military needs additional training and language skills. The country supports better coordination and cooperation on training and operations within ASEAN, and between ASEAN and the UN and the European Union.

The Philippines

The Philippines contributes 676 troops and police personnel to UN operations, as of April 2014. It views contributing as a way to fulfil its international obligations, and to advance its standing and image within the UN. Participation also raises the self-esteem of the military, provides training opportunities and exposure, and is seen as financially lucrative for individuals. A share of UN reimbursements is used to cover the military's training costs and therefore benefits the defence budget as well.

Although there is no shortage of volunteers for participation, the Philippines only contributes to missions that are in congruence with its existing military capacity.



Australia

Australia is the odd one out in the region, contributing 49 personnel to UN peace operations as of April 2014. Australia determines contribution on a case-by-case basis, often responding to specific crisis situations that fall within its national and foreign policy interests. Australia prioritizes conflict areas within its direct neighbourhood, with the exception of participation driven by security alliances with the USA and other Western countries. Like many other Western countries, it prefers not to deploy under UN command but rather alongside a UN mission, as shown by the Australian-led early-entry mission in advance of the UN Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET). When intervening in its direct neighbourhood, where there is no strong regional organization, Australia favours deploying within often symbolic, ad hoc coalitions, as a way of sharing responsibility. In the near future it will probably also contribute specific niche capacities (e.g. counterterrorism) to UN missions (or alongside them); to ad hoc missions in its region; and to US-led missions.

PEACEKEEPING 2.0

During this session participants discussed current challenges in peace operations, potential solutions and their countries' needs and preconditions for participation. Key perceived challenges included the changing nature of UN missions, which now operate in more complex and dangerous environments. One participant from the Philippines noted that, in order to address complex and dynamic situations on the ground, TCCs need additional flexibility to make decisions in real time. They should not have to rely on slow coordination with the increasingly internally fragmented Secretariat and UN Security Council. Establishing clearer rules of engagement is essential in facilitating such flexibility. The same participant stressed that efficiency and cooperation in the field are complicated by very different national caveats for the individual contingents of missions.

In addition to a complex environment, the scope of mandates has expanded over the past two decades to include state- and peacebuilding, humanitarian assistance, and POC—without a perceived meaningful adaption of the UN doctrine to address the grey areas that emerge from such activities. There are also new developments, such as the challenge of tackling terrorism in Mali, the need to examine the future repercussions of a combat mandate for the Force Intervention Brigade (FIB) in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and the need to further clarify the use of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs).

Negative perceptions about peace operations have also soared among some local populations, with some missions viewed as ineffective and biased, which has in turn increased the number of attacks on personnel. In order to address these negative perceptions, more attention should be paid to local ownership and 'winning' the hearts and minds of the local population, and more cultural awareness training is needed for personnel. The transnational nature of some conflicts also provides a substantial challenge for peace operations, requiring increased ownership by and involvement of regional organizations, host countries and civil societies to be increased. Under the



current arrangement, rich countries provide financial contributions to UN peace operations, and emerging and developing countries provide personnel. This arrangement needs to be reformed, given the fact that TCCs are not sufficiently reimbursed for deploying in such difficult and dangerous operational environments.

Responding to some of these concerns, a participant from the UN agreed that peace operations face new challenges and threats. At the same time, there have been no corresponding doctrinal changes to the basic principles of UN peace operations, because the cases of the Central African Republic (CAR), the DRC, Mali and South Sudan are seen as exceptions to the rule. Complex security environments also require operations to use new technology such as UAVs. However, these are unarmed and only used for situational awareness and for the safety and security of deployed personnel.

Despite these growing demands on peace operations, there are no indications of a change in the budget. In reality that means the UN will have to do more with less, as there are more peace operations. Consequently, the UN is now focusing on efficiency, realistic goals and mandates, concrete exit strategies for new operations and transition strategies for longer-term operations. In order to facilitate the sustainability of operations, the Secretariat wants to strengthen its network with regional organizations and training centres, and encourages countries in the region to develop a niche capacity and to coordinate such capacity with the Secretariat and with other TCCs in the region.

ASEAN AND PEACE OPERATIONS

During this final session participants discussed the role that ASEAN currently plays with regards to peace operations within the region and beyond. One participant from Viet Nam noted that while ASEAN is a diplomatic rather than a security organization, designed to build trust between member states through conflict prevention, the organization has also begun to play a diplomatic role in regional interstate conflict. Most recently ASEAN mediated between Cambodia and Thailand, and it remains active in its efforts to prevent an escalation in the South China Sea. Yet ASEAN seeks to maintain its neutrality and remain non-threatening both to its member states and its neighbours.

ASEAN faces some key challenges that prevent it from playing a bigger role in regional security. The organization lacks infrastructure, operational standards and training beyond the national level. It has limited resources to invest in operations, and its members lack interoperability and face language barriers. Moreover, the basic principles of non-intervention and the primacy of sovereignty seemingly contradict a more proactive role for ASEAN in the region. In order to overcome these challenges, member states need to reach a common understanding regarding peace operations and identify specific parameters for missions within the region. Once common modalities are established, the organization could look into specific terms of reference.

ASEAN is already working on establishing a political and security community, which should be launched in 2015, but the interaction remains between militaries. Another ASEAN initiative that may facilitate greater engagement on peace operations in the future is the recent establishment of an ASEAN

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Institute for Peace and Reconciliation. Although this institution is still in its infancy, it is meant to assist in managing and resolving interstate conflicts in the region.

According to a security expert on South East Asia, in order to have a functional defence component, ASEAN needs to facilitate cooperation between military, police and civilian capacities in the region. Over time such cooperation would lead to more cohesive institutional reform that would help to sustain ASEAN's primacy with regards to security matters in the region. A Philippine participant noted that, while ASEAN would ideally be the central organization in regional matters, including security, ASEAN's ability to maintain its own security affairs moves to the background in an increasingly tense multipolar environment. In the current situation, ASEAN depends on the USA to balance China's influence in the region. If the organization consequently loses its role in security, it may still continue to be important in other fields.

With regards to ASEAN's participation in UN peace operations outside the region, participants generally agreed that the role of the organization itself and the individual activism of member states should be viewed separately. According to a participant from the Philippines, ASEAN does not currently seek to play a role in peace operations in terms of deploying to out-of-area missions. Indonesia's repeated proposal to establish a regional standby peacekeeping force has so far not been embraced by member states. ASEAN has, however, tried to improve coordination between national peacekeeping centres in the region by establishing a formal network that serves as a hub for common knowledge and preparation. The main goals of such a network are to (a) increase cooperation by using national peacekeeping centres for common planning and experience exchange, (b) facilitate regional peace arrangements, and (c) assist member states in establishing their own national peacekeeping centres.

Given the fact that a joint ASEAN peacekeeping force is unlikely in the near future, participants put forward the idea of advancing a stronger regional voice in peace operations by participating in the shaping of mandates and by formulating a common ASEAN approach to UN peace operations. In response, a participant from the UN welcomed such increased engagement from ASEAN and suggested that the organization creates a network of police and military advisers, able to integrate into the community of advisers at UN headquarters in New York. Finally, it was suggested that different ASEAN member states deploying national contingents to the same UN mission could coordinate and label their contribution as an ASEAN contribution.

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