ASEAN Political Security Community:
Development of Multilateral Cooperative Frameworks and Further Challenges*

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Abstract

This paper examines the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Political Security Community (APSC), with a particular focus on its multilateral security cooperation frameworks. ASEAN was driven to establish the APSC by regional and global changes in the strategic environment, including ASEAN's expansion, the Asian financial crisis, and the emergence of non-traditional security issues. In the early 2000s, Indonesia took the initiative in forming the APSC. However, Indonesia's numerous ambitious proposals were met with reluctance by other member countries, and the APSC's vision, as outlined in the 2003 Bali Concord II and the 2004 Vientiane Action Programme, only confirmed existing ASEAN security cooperation mechanisms. On the other hand, the formation of the APSC facilitated the institutionalization of political-security cooperation, both within and beyond the ASEAN region. In addition to the East Asia Summit (EAS), the ASEAN Defense Ministers' Meeting (ADMM) and the ASEAN Defense Ministers' Meeting-Plus (ADMM-Plus) were established under the APSC concept. These two closely related frameworks followed divergent paths of development, with the ADMM promoting intraregional confidence-building and the ADMM-Plus strengthening capacity-building support by countries outside the region.

Introduction

This paper examines the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Political Security Community (APSC). The APSC is one of three pillars that make up the ASEAN Community and a cornerstone of ASEAN's political and security cooperation. One of the main focuses of the APSC is its multilateral cooperation frameworks that involve key countries outside of the region. This paper explores ASEAN's security posture through an analysis of these multilateral cooperation frameworks, with a particular focus on the ASEAN Defense Ministers' Meeting (ADMM) and ASEAN Defense Ministers' Meeting-Plus (ADMM-Plus).

The APSC has already been studied from several angles. The most comprehensive of these is Amitav Acharya's study of the formation of a security community in Southeast Asia, but others have also added critical perspectives on the effectiveness of the APSC itself and of

multilateral cooperation frameworks such as the ADMM.[1] Based on the insights revealed by these previous studies, this paper follows up on the recent state of the APSC, particularly regarding the development of multilateral cooperation frameworks and the implications of such developments.

The first multilateral security cooperation framework centered on ASEAN was the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), launched in 1994. ASEAN created the ARF through cooperation with external dialogue partners as a coping mechanism for adapting to the fluid strategic environment of the post-Cold War era. Subsequently, ASEAN created the APSC with the objective of further promoting intra- and interregional security cooperation. In the process of forming the APSC, new cooperative frameworks such as the East Asia Summit (EAS), the ADMM, and ADMM-Plus were created. This paper explores the nature of ASEAN security cooperation by examining the inception, development, and current state of these frameworks in the APSC formation process.

This paper is structured as follows. Section 1 examines the process by which the APSC was formed. This section covers the context in which ASEAN decided to establish the APSC, the negotiations among ASEAN member countries on the nature of the APSC, and their vision for the APSC. Section 2 analyzes the developments that supported the institutionalization of the APSC, focusing on its new multilateral security cooperation frameworks. Section 3 then explores the current state of the APSC by examining the development of the ADMM and ADMM-Plus in terms of how these two frameworks functionally differ from each other.

1. The APSC Formation Process—Responding to Changes in the Strategic Environment

(1) Motive for Establishing the APSC: Changes in the Regional and Global Strategic Environment

ASEAN's idea to establish a community with the APSC as one of its pillars was driven by changes in the strategic environment surrounding ASEAN from the late 1990s to the early 2000s. Three main factors caused these changes: ASEAN's expansion, the Asian financial crisis, and the emergence of terrorism and other non-traditional security threats.

The first factor, ASEAN's expansion, was directly triggered by the end of the Cold War. The end of the Cold War eliminated the ideological confrontation between East and West, dissolving the antagonism between the socialist countries in Southeast Asia and the anticommunist countries of ASEAN. In addition, Cambodia's civil war, which had involved countries both within and outside the region, was finally resolved with the signing of the Paris Peace Agreements in 1991. Against this backdrop of regional stability, non-member countries that sought to develop their own economies by benefiting from ASEAN economic cooperation came to an agreement with the existing member countries, which aimed to stabilize the Southeast Asian region as a whole by bringing such countries into the ASEAN fold. Thus, the dissolution of ideological confrontation and the convergence of interests led to ASEAN's rapid expansion in the late 1990s. First, Vietnam joined ASEAN in 1995, then Laos and Myanmar simultaneously in 1997, and finally Cambodia in 1999, making ASEAN an organization with all ten Southeast Asian countries as members.

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[1]   For example, Amitav Acharya, *Constructing a Security Community in Southeast Asia: ASEAN and the Problem of Regional Order*, third edition (London: Routledge, 2014); Rizal Sukma, "The ASEAN Political and Security Community (APSC): Opportunities and Constraints for the R2P in Southeast Asia," *The Pacific Review*, vol. 25, no. 1 (2012), pp. 135–152; Tan See Seng, "ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting-Plus: Multilateralism Mimicking Minilateralism?" Bhubhindar Singh and Sarah Teo eds., *Minilateralism in the Indo-Pacific: The Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, Lancang-Mekong Cooperation Mechanism, and ASEAN* (London: Routledge), 2020, pp. 120–134.

The resulting ASEAN-10 came to encompass not only the economic disparities between the original and new member countries, but also the political diversity of the member countries. The five original member countries (Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand), while politically diverse if strictly classified, had at least all adopted pluralistic democratic systems. In contrast, new member countries Vietnam and Laos had socialist systems, Myanmar had a military regime, and Cambodia's political system was unstable.[2] The diversity of these political systems and political values, combined with some instability, stood as obstacles to ASEAN's unity. In addition, the new member countries did not necessarily share a common identity as ASEAN members, an identity which had been gradually shaped by the original member countries over the 30 years since ASEAN's establishment in 1967. In other words, ASEAN's expansion presented member countries with the new challenge of building an "ASEAN Community," that is, a "Southeast Asian community" based on common values and a shared identity.[3]

Meanwhile, member countries' diversity of political systems presented ASEAN with the challenge of democratization. Since its establishment, ASEAN had emphasized principles of conduct called the "ASEAN Way," which included non-interference in internal affairs. The principle of non-interference in internal affairs remained in force even in the post-Cold War period, meaning that ASEAN for the most part did not intervene in the internal affairs of member countries to promote change. However, this post-Cold War period gave rise to a challenge: How could ASEAN regard political values such as human rights and democracy as universal, and how could it emphasize and realize those values? Indonesia, which had established a democratic system following Suharto's decades-long authoritarian regime, became particularly concerned about democratization. As a regional power in Southeast Asia and the leader of ASEAN, Indonesia has taken the initiative in making democratization a key issue for political cooperation in the ASPC, at least from the standpoint of maintaining ASEAN's legitimacy in the eyes of the international community. In particular, the suppression of the democracy movement by the military junta in Myanmar posed a challenge for ASEAN as a whole in terms of how to reconcile the long-standing ASEAN principle of non-interference in internal affairs with the new issue of democratization.[4]

The second factor was the Asian financial crisis. The crisis started in July 1997 with the collapse of the Thai baht and quickly cascaded to the other ASEAN countries, causing the currencies of Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines to depreciate sharply. The sudden, sharp depreciation of these currencies threw their respective economies into turmoil, and the countries' economic growth rates plunged from positive to negative. Economic turmoil had a negative impact on national defense as well, as the economic downturn reduced each country's national revenue, resulting in drastic defense budget cuts. Furthermore, the economic downturn triggered by the currency crisis led to social turmoil in Indonesia and the collapse of Suharto's 30-year dictatorship.[5]

During the Asian financial crisis, ASEAN failed to take effective countermeasures as an

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2   Yamakage Susumu, "Tenkanki no ASEAN: Kakudai, Shinka, Aratana Kadai [ASEAN in Transition: Enlargement, Deepening, and New Challenges]," Yamakage Susumu ed., *Tenkanki no ASEAN: Aratana Kadai he no Chōsen* [ASEAN in Transition: New Challenges], (Tokyo: Japan Institute of International Affairs), 2001, pp. 10–11.

3   Ibid., pp. 5–6.

4   Acharya, *Constructing a Security Community in Southeast Asia*, pp. 221–226.

5   National Institute for Defense Studies, *East Asian Strategic Review 1998-1999*, pp. 14–26.

organization for regional cooperation. Suharto's Indonesia, the long-reigning leader of ASEAN, lost its ability to lead due to domestic political turmoil. Having lost a sense of unity, ASEAN member countries were left to deal with their crises on their own. ASEAN's inability to take cohesive measures resulted in increased dissonance among the member countries.[6] Recognizing ASEAN's dysfunction during the financial crisis, and in response to criticism from outside the region, ASEAN began to consider organizational reforms that would enable more effective cooperation.

The third factor was the various non-traditional security issues that emerged simultaneously in Southeast Asia during this period. First was the threat of terrorism, mainly by Islamic extremists. The September 2001 terrorist attacks in the United States drew attention to the existence of an international terrorist network led by al-Qaeda. In Southeast Asia, attention turned to the activities of Islamic extremist organizations suspected of having ties to al-Qaeda, such as Indonesia-based Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) and the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG), which operates in Mindanao, Philippines. In fact, beginning with the Bali bombings in October 2002, Indonesia experienced four consecutive years of major terrorist bombings until 2005, and in each case JI was suspected of being involved.[7] Piracy in the Strait of Malacca also became a terrorism-related issue. Although no actual incidents occurred, there was concern that, for example, extremist members would slip in among the pirates to carry out suicide attacks by crashing boats loaded with biological and chemical weapons into the ports in Malacca.

Some non-traditional security issues are not even attributable to non-state actors, but rather to nature. One typical example is natural disasters. In the early 2000s, ASEAN experienced a variety of threats from nature. The December 2004 Sumatra-Andaman earthquake and Indian Ocean tsunami caused extensive damage to countries with coastlines on the Indian Ocean, including Thailand and Indonesia. From 2002 to 2003, severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) spread throughout East Asia, including Southeast Asia, with a particularly large number of cases occurring in Vietnam and Singapore. This massive infectious disease outbreak not only affected people's health, but also severely restricted social activities in each country, causing damage that affected their economies. Furthermore, since the late 1990s, haze that frequently occurs in Indonesia had spread to neighboring Malaysia and Singapore, disrupting the socioeconomic activities of the people in those countries.

While there are differences between natural disasters, infectious diseases, and wide-area disasters caused by human activities, all of these issues threatened the security of nations and their peoples and were recognized by ASEAN as serious non-traditional security issues. In order to effectively address these threats, it was not enough for each country to respond individually. Cooperation was essential at the regional level through ASEAN, as was support from countries outside the region.

(2) ASEAN Security Community (ASC) Concept: The Bali Concord II
The abovementioned changes in the regional and global strategic environment provided the impetus for creating the APSC. The APSC began with discussions on the ASEAN Security Community

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6   Kuroyanagi Yoneji, *ASEAN 35-nen no Kiseki: "ASEAN Way" no Kōyō to Genkai* [ASEAN's 35-year Path: Effectiveness and Limitations of the "ASEAN Way"], (Tokyo: Yushindo), 2003, pp. 33–139.

7   Acharya, *Constructing a Security Community in Southeast Asia*, pp. 212–213.

(ASC) concept, which called for the creation of a security community in ASEAN. Discussions on the ASC were initiated by Indonesia. One of Indonesia's objectives in spearheading the establishment of the ASC was to restore its leadership in ASEAN, which had been in doubt since the fall of the Suharto regime. Indonesia wanted to restore its authority and prestige as ASEAN's leader when it assumed the role of Chair of ASEAN for a year beginning in July 2003.[8]

Based on the ASC concept paper drafted by Indonesia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Indonesia's proposal for the ASC had the following three characteristics. First, the proposal was extremely conceptual. For example, the term "security community" was strictly and academically defined based on the theories of Karl Deutsch as "a group whose member countries have achieved a condition, as a result of flows of communication and the habit of cooperation, in which members share expectations of peaceful change and rule out the use of force as means of problem-solving."[9]

Second, it explicitly rejected the notion of the ASC being a military alliance. The ASC was a cooperative framework based on the idea of "comprehensive security" rather than collective security. Comprehensive security is a mechanism for preventing conflicts in the region by fostering confidence among member countries through economic and other forms of cooperation, and for resolving conflicts, if they arise, through peaceful means without the use of military force. Specific forms of cooperation that promoted confidence-building among member countries were cooperation in non-traditional areas such as terrorism and transnational crimes, as well as cooperative frameworks among military authorities such as the ADMM, which encouraged cooperation in non-traditional areas.[10]

Third, the ASC relied on ASEAN's security principles. Those principles were non-interference in internal affairs, respect for national sovereignty, consensus-based decision-making, and renunciation of the threat or use of force. Of these principles, however, the adoption of a more flexible method was envisioned for decision-making, such as "ASEAN minus X" (a method which allows those member countries that are ready to commit to enter into an agreement and implement it ahead of others).[11] In order to ensure effective political cooperation, it was also necessary to be flexible on the principle of non-interference in internal affairs.[12]

Discussions about the ASC began not long before Indonesia became Chair of ASEAN. In June 2003, at the ASEAN Senior Officials' Meeting (SOM) and 36th ASEAN Ministerial Meeting (AMM) held in Phnom Penh, Indonesia presented a concept paper to the member countries and informally proposed the ASC concept. The paper contained highly ambitious proposals for security cooperation centered on non-traditional threats, including the establishment of a counter-terrorism center, peacekeeping training center, maritime security center, and other cooperative frameworks, as well as the regular convening of an ASEAN Police and Defense Ministers' Meeting (APDMM).[13]

Member countries initially expressed caution and concern in response to Indonesia's proposal. Particularly problematic was the fundamental character of the ASC. Malaysian Prime

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[8] Ibid., p. 226.

[9] Ibid.

[10] Rizal Sukma, "The Future of ASEAN: Towards a Security Community," paper presented at a seminar on "ASEAN Cooperation: Challenges and Prospects in the Current International Situation," New York, June 3, 2003.

[11] Ibid.

[12] Acharya, *Constructing a Security Community in Southeast Asia*, p. 227.

[13] *Jakarta Post*, June 16, 18, 2003.

Minister Mahathir Mohamad acknowledged the need for ASEAN security cooperation, but warned against the ASC becoming a military pact or a binding security arrangement. In response, Indonesia asserted that the ASC would adhere to ASEAN's fundamental principles, including non-interference in internal affairs, and reiterated that the ASC was not a military alliance.[14]

At the 9th ASEAN Summit held in Bali in October 2003, Indonesia, the Chair of ASEAN, formally proposed the ASC concept. Through discussion, the participating countries came to an agreement on 12 items concerning the basic framework of the concept.[15] Based on this agreement, the Summit adopted the Declaration of ASEAN Concord II (Bali Concord II). This became a basic document for ASEAN, replacing the Declaration of ASEAN Concord (Bali Concord) adopted by the first ASEAN Summit in 1976, and held monumental significance in the history of ASEAN in that it declared that an ASEAN Community would be established by 2020.[16]

The Bali Concord II stipulated the following regarding the ASEAN Community. First, as a reason for ASEAN to establish the community, it stated the need to further consolidate and enhance the achievements of ASEAN as a dynamic, resilient, and cohesive regional association for the well being of its member states and people. The community would comprise three pillars: political and security cooperation, economic cooperation, and socio-cultural cooperation, under the frameworks of the ASC, the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC), and the ASEAN Socio-cultural Community (ASCC), respectively. These three pillars would be intertwined and mutually reinforcing for the purpose of ensuring regional peace, stability, and prosperity.[17]

The Bali Concord II then laid out the basic design of the ASC. It stipulated that the objectives of the ASC would be to enable countries in the region to live at peace and to provide a just, democratic, and harmonious environment. The ASC would have the following three characteristics to enable it to achieve these objectives. First, regarding its fundamental character as a mechanism for cooperation, the ASC would promote political, economic, and social cooperation based on the principle of comprehensive security, rather than pursuing that of a military alliance or joint foreign policy. The activities of the ASC would also uphold ASEAN's principles of non-interference in internal affairs, consensus-based decision-making, respect for national sovereignty, renunciation of the threat or the use of force, and peaceful settlement of disputes.[18]

The second characteristic pertained to the activities of the ASC. The ASC would establish methods for norms-setting, confidence-building, conflict prevention, conflict resolution, and post-conflict peace building based on the principles laid out in initiatives and treaties such as the Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality (ZOPFAN), the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia (TAC), and the Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone (SEANWFZ). The specific areas in which the ASC envisioned cooperation taking place were non-traditional threats such as maritime security, counterterrorism, and transnational crimes including trafficking. Finally, the third characteristic was that the ASC would not be a framework limited to ASEAN member countries, but rather an open mechanism capable of engaging ASEAN's Dialogue Partners and other countries outside of the region. In this regard, the ASC would emphasize security cooperation

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[14]   *Straits Times*, July 21, 2003.

[15]   *Jakarta Post*, October 8, 2003.

[16]   ASEAN, "Declaration of ASEAN Concord II (Bali Concord II)," Bali, October 7, 2003.

[17]   Ibid.

[18]   Ibid.

through the ARF, with ASEAN as the primary driving force within the ARF.[19]

The wording of the Bali Concord II makes it clear that ASEAN's agreed-upon vision of the ASC was an ensemble of political and security principles that ASEAN had been developing since its establishment in 1967. The strategic environment surrounding ASEAN both within and outside the region had undergone significant changes during the post-Cold War period, forcing ASEAN itself to change. As a result, ASEAN created a community concept with the ASC as one of its main pillars. However, rather than a new milestone reflecting these changes, the ASC was merely a continuation and revival of previous policies. ASEAN chose "not to change" itself in the face of internal and external changes, and sought to overcome the stormy seas of the international community using the wisdom it had cultivated as a regional cooperation organization that had existed for more than thirty years. In terms of intra-ASEAN dynamics, the dominance of the "old" over the "new" manifested as a struggle between Indonesia, which presented a concept paper loaded with bold proposals, and other member countries, which expressed doubts and caution about the paper.

(3) Vientiane Action Programme: An Abstract Plan for the Realization of Concrete Goals

Following the agreement on the Bali Concord II, Indonesia, the Chair of ASEAN, initiated the development of an ASC action plan. At the February 2004 SOM, Indonesia presented a draft action plan that included more than seventy proposed items, most of which had implementation deadlines. Among the proposals were items that could be considered provocative for non-democratic ASEAN member countries, such as those promoting democracy and human rights, involvement in regular, free elections, the unrestricted circulation of information, and the building of an open, tolerant, and transparent society.[20] Furthermore, concrete proposals for promoting security cooperation and the formation of an anti-war community included the conclusion and establishment of various treaties and institutions, such as a non-aggression pact, an extradition treaty, a counter-terrorism agreement, and an arms registry. These proposals boldly challenged ASEAN's principles of non-interference in internal affairs and respect for national sovereignty.[21]

The most controversial proposal was the establishment of an ASEAN Peacekeeping Force by 2012. As a preliminary step, the draft action plan proposed linking ASEAN member countries' existing and future peacekeeping centers into a network for joint planning and training, with a view to establishing an ASEAN Peacekeeping Center by 2010. It envisioned that the ASEAN Peacekeeping Force would work closely with the United Nations and, with the consent of the host country, respond not only to emergencies in the region but also internationally.[22] Indonesia's proposal for an ASEAN Peacekeeping Force as part of the ASC concept was partly motivated by the East Timor issue. From 1998 to 2002, during East Timor's process of gaining independence, it was Australia and the United Kingdom, not ASEAN, that deployed military forces to take control of and resolve the situation. For Indonesia, this signified an experience in which ASEAN had failed to effectively deal with a regional security issue for which it was the responsible entity,

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[19]   Ibid.
[20]   *Jakarta Post*, February 21, 2004, *Far Eastern Economic Review*, June 10, 2004.
[21]   Acharya, *Constructing a Security Community in Southeast Asia*, p. 229.
[22]   *Far Eastern Economic Review*, May 6, 2004.

leading to "intervention" by countries outside of the region.[23]

When confronted with Indonesia's bold proposals, other ASEAN countries reacted with surprise, bewilderment, and suspicion at the country's intentions. Some countries saw the purpose of the proposals as a manifestation of Indonesia's ambition to once again become ASEAN's leader. At an informal foreign ministers' meeting in Ha Long Bay, Vietnam, in March 2004, ASEAN ministers again discussed the ASC and the ASEAN Peacekeeping Force. Indonesia faced objections from almost all countries. Singapore, for example, took a negative view, saying that ASEAN was not a security organization and that it was an inappropriate framework for the role of peacekeeping operations. Thailand was also unenthusiastic, saying that the proposal represented one of many security issues.[24] Vietnam argued that the establishment of a peacekeeping force was premature and that each ASEAN country had its own policies regarding politics and the military.[25]

In response to requests from the other member countries, Indonesia rewrote the draft several times while attempting to realize its own vision. ASEAN countries discussed the ASC action plan at the 37th AMM held in June 2004. Indonesia again included in the draft the establishment of human rights commissions in each country and the creation of the ASEAN Peacekeeping Force, but these were strongly opposed by Vietnam and other later-joining member countries. In the end, the draft offered nothing more than principles without a timeframe for implementation, and the peacekeeping force concept was abandoned.[26] The 37th AMM's Joint Communiqué concluded with an abstract statement that the ASC would bring peace to ASEAN and the world at large, strengthen ASEAN's capacity to address traditional and non-traditional security issues, strengthen relations with countries outside the region, and enhance ASEAN's role as the ARF's primary driving force. As for the action plan, it only stated that the member countries appreciated the efforts of Indonesia and the SOM and that a draft would be submitted at the November summit.[27]

Discussions on the ASEAN Community concept, including the ASC, were tentatively settled at the summit held in Vientiane, the capital of Laos, in November 2004. The 10th ASEAN Summit adopted two key documents on the ASC. The first was the Vientiane Action Programme (VAP). The VAP set forth strategic thrusts for each of the three pillars of the ASEAN Community (the ASC, AEC, and ASCC) and an action plan to be implemented for the period 2004–2010.[28]

For the ASC, it defined five strategic thrusts: political development, shaping and sharing of norms, conflict prevention, conflict resolution, and post-conflict peace-building, as well as actions to achieve each of these thrusts. Regarding political development and norms, the VAP included, among other things, the development of mechanisms to facilitate the free flow of information among member countries and cooperation in the development of legal infrastructure. As for conflict prevention and resolution, it listed the development of an early warning system, the establishment of an arms register, and the creation of a network of peacekeeping centers.[29] Overall, although some of the ambitious ideas initially proposed by Indonesia were adopted, discussions concerning

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[23] Ibid.

[24] *Reuters*, March 4, 2004.

[25] *Jakarta Post*, March 9, 2004.

[26] *Far Eastern Economic Review*, July 15, 2004.

[27] ASEAN, "Joint Communiqué of the 37th ASEAN Ministerial Meeting," Jakarta, June 29-30, 2004.

[28] ASEAN, "Vientiane Action Programme," November 29, 2004.

[29] Ibid., pp. 6–8.

their implementation failed to make progress. As a result, the VAP became a list of abstract, non-binding targets.

The second key document was the ASEAN Security Community Plan of Action. This document reiterated the five strategic thrusts defined by the VAP, while setting forth the methods and actions to realize the ASC in slightly greater detail. According to this document, the AMM would oversee the implementation of the Plan of Action and would coordinate among the relevant ASEAN ministerial bodies. The Secretary-General of ASEAN would also assist the ASEAN Chair in monitoring the progress of implementation. In addition, attached to the Plan of Action was an annex that listed activities to achieve the five strategic thrusts. While many of these activities remained abstract, non-binding targets, more concrete actions were included, such as the conclusion of the ASEAN Extradition Treaty and an ASEAN convention on counter-terrorism, the convening of an annual ADMM, and the establishment of an ASEAN Humanitarian Assistance Centre. These two documents adopted at the Summit in Vientiane collectively presented the matters agreed upon as a result of ASEAN's discussions on the ASC concept. The leaders had identified areas of security cooperation that they could agree upon and implement while adhering to ASEAN principles, and had put them into action.

2. From the ASC to the APSC—The Institutionalization of a Security Community

In January 2007, the 12th ASEAN Summit held in Cebu, Philippines, decided to establish the ASEAN Community, including the ASC, by 2015, five years earlier than originally planned.[30] Then, in November 2007, the Singapore Summit changed the ASC to the APSC.[31] This was not a mere change of name, but rather reflected the recognition that ASEAN security cooperation was inseparable from political cooperation. This recognition had deepened through the series of discussions that began with the Indonesian concept paper, continued through the Bali Concord II, the Vientiane Action Programme, and the ASC Plan of Action, and culminated with the adoption of the ASEAN Charter in 2007.

The ASEAN Community, especially the move to form the APSC, facilitated the institutionalization of ASEAN's relations with countries outside of the region in the area of political-security cooperation. During this process, three new frameworks for regional cooperation were established.

The first was the EAS. The EAS was established as a forum for leaders of countries in the Indo-Pacific region to discuss regional issues related to politics, economics, and security. Its first meeting was held in Kuala Lumpur in December 2005.[32] The original 16 members were the 10 ASEAN countries plus Japan, China, Republic of Korea, India, Australia, and New Zealand, but since 2011, the United States and Russia have joined in. In terms of security cooperation, the EAS was an effective framework for regional cooperation on non-traditional issues such as infectious disease control (including SARS, which was a problem at the time) and energy security.[33]

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[30] ASEAN, "Chairperson's Statement of the 12th ASEAN Summit, H. E. the President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, 'One Caring and Sharing Community'," Cebu, Philippines, 13 January 2007."

[31] ASEAN, "Chairman's Statement of the 13th ASEAN Summit, 'One ASEAN at the heart of Dynamic Asia'," Singapore, November 20, 2007.

[32] ASEAN, "Kuala Lumpur Declaration on the East Asia Summit," Kuala Lumpur, December 14, 2005.

[33] Acharya, *Constructing a Security Community in Southeast Asia*, pp. 185–186.

The second regional cooperation framework was the ADMM. The ADMM was an initiative that was more directly related to the formation of the APSC. The 2004 ASC Plan of Action had included the action goal of "working towards convening of an annual ASEAN Defence Ministers Meeting (ADMM)." Previously, ASEAN defense officials had held an annual SOM, established in 1996, as a forum for discussions on security cooperation. In May 2004, the SOM instructed the ASEAN Secretariat to draft a concept paper on establishing the ADMM.

According to the concept paper prepared by the ASEAN Secretariat, the ADMM complemented existing security dialogue and cooperation frameworks such as the ARF and would have four objectives: (1) to promote regional peace and stability through dialogue and cooperation in defense and security; (2) to give guidance to existing senior defense and military officials' dialogue and cooperation in the field of defense and security within ASEAN and between ASEAN and Dialogue Partners; (3) to promote mutual trust and confidence through greater understanding of defense and security challenges as well as enhancement of transparency and openness; and (4) to contribute to the establishment of an ASC as stipulated in the Bali Concord II and to promote the implementation of the VAP on the ASC.[34]

On the ADMM agenda, the concept paper listed: (1) exchange of views on regional and international security and defense issues; (2) voluntary briefings on defense and security policies; (3) discussion on related activities outside the ASEAN process; (4) discussion on interaction with external partners; and (5) review of ASEAN defense cooperation. The ADMM would also be guided by the fundamental principles enshrined in the TAC and would be the highest ministerial defense and security consultative and cooperative mechanism in ASEAN, reporting directly to the ASEAN Heads of Government. In addition, the ADMM would be assisted by an ASEAN Defense Senior Officials' Meeting (ADSOM), which would work closely with the AMM and the SOM.[35]

The inaugural ADMM was held in Kuala Lumpur in May 2006. The meeting was attended by defense ministers from nine countries, excluding Myanmar. The ministers exchanged views on maritime security, terrorism, the situation on the Korean Peninsula, and the ARF. They also considered countermeasures for transnational crimes such as drug and human trafficking, and for natural disasters, including pandemics such as avian influenza.[36]

A joint press release was issued after the inaugural meeting. The press release revealed that the defense ministers of ASEAN member countries had discussed various regional and international security challenges and reaffirmed that they would contribute to the establishment of an ASC. In addition to the objectives of the ADMM that were outlined in the concept paper, the defense ministers also agreed that the ADMM should be an open, flexible, and outward-looking framework that actively engages ASEAN's friends and Dialogue Partners.[37]

The third regional cooperation framework was the ADMM-Plus. As stated in the above joint press release, from its inception, the ADMM planned to involve countries outside of the region. Therefore, the 2nd ADMM held in November 2007 adopted the ADMM-Plus Concept Paper

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[34] ADMM, "Concept Paper for the Establishment of an ASEAN Defense Ministers' Meeting," Kuala Lumpur, May 9, 2006.

[35] Ibid.

[36] *BBC Monitoring Asia Pacific*, 9 May 2006.

[37] ADMM, "Joint Press Release of the Inaugural ASEAN Defense Ministers' Meeting," Kuala Lumpur, 9 May 2006.

and the Protocol to the ADMM-Plus Concept Paper. The ADMM-Plus Concept Paper presented the following five objectives for establishing an ADMM Plus: (1) to benefit ASEAN member countries in building capacity to address shared security challenges; (2) to promote mutual trust and confidence between defense establishments through dialogue and transparency; (3) to enhance regional peace and stability through cooperation in defense and security; (4) to contribute to the realization of an ASC; and (5) to facilitate the implementation of the VAP. The ADMM-Plus was also positioned as an integral part of the ADMM, adding value to and complementing the ADMM.[38]

In February 2009, the 3rd ADMM decided to limit the scope of "Plus countries" in the ADMM-Plus to full-fledged Dialogue Partners of ASEAN.[39] At an informal meeting of the ADMM held in November 2009, the Chair of the ADMM, Vietnam, proposed that the eight "Plus countries" be Australia, China, India, Japan, New Zealand, Russia, Republic of Korea, and the United States, to which the other member countries agreed.[40] At the 4th ADMM held in May 2010, several decisions were made regarding ADMM-Plus procedures: the meeting would be held once in three years; the Chairmanship of the ADMM-Plus would follow the Chairmanship of the ADMM; and Experts' Working Groups (EWGs) would be established to facilitate cooperation among member countries.[41] At this ADMM, it was also officially announced that the above eight countries would be invited to join the ADMM as "Plus countries."[42]

The inaugural ADMM-Plus was held in October 2010. All eight "Plus" countries invited by the ADMM attended. The meeting decided to establish an ASEAN Defense Senior Officials' Meeting-Plus (ADSOM-Plus) as a framework for implementing the decisions of the ADMM-Plus. At the same time, they agreed to establish EWGs to promote practical cooperation in five non-traditional security areas: humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HA/DR), maritime security, peacekeeping operations (PKO), counter-terrorism, and military medicine. In addition, each EWG would be co-chaired by an ASEAN member country and a Dialogue Partner. For the first term, it was decided that Vietnam and China would co-chair the EWG on HA/DR, Malaysia and Australia on maritime security, the Philippines and New Zealand on PKO, Indonesia and the United States on counter-terrorism, and Singapore and Japan on military medicine.[43]

3. Functional Differences between the ADMM and the ADMM-Plus—Where is the APSC Now?

At the ASEAN Summit held in Kuala Lumpur in November 2015, ASEAN declared the formal establishment of the ASEAN Community, which included the APSC. However, establishment itself was not the goal. ASEAN declared that Community building was an ongoing process and that the

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[38] ADMM, "ASEAN Defense Ministers' Meeting-Plus (ADMM-Plus): Concept Paper," Singapore, November 13-15, 2007, pp. 3–4.

[39] ADMM, "ASEAN Defense Ministers' Meeting-Plus (ADMM-Plus): Principles for Membership," Concept Paper, Pattaya, February 25-27, 2009.

[40] *Vietnam News Agency Bulletin*, November 5, 2009.

[41] ADMM, "ASEAN Defense Ministers' Meeting-Plus (ADMM-Plus): Modalities and Procedures," Hanoi, May 11, 2010.

[42] ADMM, "The ASEAN Defense Ministers' Meeting-Plus (ADMM-Plus): Configuration and Composition," Hanoi, May 11, 2010.

[43] ADMM, "Chairman's Statement of the First ADMM Plus: Strategic Cooperation for Peace, Stability, and Development in the Region," Hanoi, October, 12, 2010.

efforts of the APSC would continue.[44] The Summit adopted the ASEAN Community Vision 2025, which laid out the vision for future community building, and presented the APSC Blueprint 2025 for the APSC.[45]

What tangible outcomes were achieved through the efforts of the APSC between the Bali Concord II in 2003 and the establishment of the ASEAN Community in 2015? In January 2007, the ASEAN Convention on Counter Terrorism was signed. While the Convention was premised on respect for national sovereignty, it also prescribed regional cooperation to effectively crack down on terrorist movement, financing, and arms procurement.[46] The signing of the Convention thus provided ASEAN with a legal framework for promoting cooperation against terrorism. As for HA/DR, the ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance (AHA Centre) was established in November 2011 to facilitate regional cooperation on humanitarian assistance. The AHA Centre now plays a central role in ASEAN's HA/DR cooperation, focusing on the collection and provision of disaster information and the institutionalization of disaster relief activities. In 2020, ASEAN added the capacity to stockpile medical supplies at the AHA Centre and distribute them to member countries with shortages as a measure to combat COVID-19.[47] In addition, the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR) was established in 2009, and negotiations for the ASEAN Extradition Treaty are ongoing. Thus, ASEAN security cooperation on non-traditional threats has made some progress in establishing frameworks in each area.

In the process of building up the APSC, the ADMM and ADMM-Plus have developed along divergent paths. The ADMM now customarily meets twice a year, once as a formal meeting and once as an informal meeting (retreat). At each meeting, the ASEAN member countries' defense ministers discussed the security situation in ASEAN and explored possibilities for security cooperation in the region, particularly cooperation among their national militaries. Consequently, the ADMM has developed a triennial work program and has drafted more than a dozen concept papers to explore practical ways of cooperating in a wide variety of areas, including HA/DR, defense industry, PKO, interoperability, military medicine, cyber, maritime security, CBRN, border management, and so on. However, little progress was made on concrete cooperation in each area. This was due to differences in member countries' ideas and interests regarding individual, concrete issues, as well as a critical shortage of funding, assets, and capacity.

The only area in which progress has been made within the ADMM framework is confidence-building. The 7th ADMM in 2013 decided to establish the ASEAN Defense Interaction Program (ADIP). The purpose of the ADIP was to advance security cooperation at the regional level by facilitating exchanges among the defense officials of ASEAN member countries, fostering a sense of ASEAN unity based on the diversity of the countries.[48] Since the ADIP was launched in March 2014, meetings and exchange programs have been conducted for defense officials at

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44 ASEAN, "2015 Kuala Lumpur Declaration on the Establishment of the ASEAN Community," "Kuala Lumpur Declaration on ASEAN 2025: Forging Ahead Together," November 2, 2015.

45 ASEAN, "ASEAN Community Vision 2025," "ASEAN Political-Security Community Blueprint 2025."

46 ASEAN, "ASEAN Convention on Counter Terrorism," Cebu, January 13, 2007.

47 Lina Gong and S. Nanthini, "The COVID-19 Catalyst: Implications for Disaster Governance in ASEAN," *NTS Insight* (S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies), no. IN20-09 (December 2020), p. 6.

48 ADMM, "Establishing ASEAN Defense Interaction Programs: Concept Paper," Bandar Seri Begawan, May 7, 2013.

various levels of seniority, including junior officials.[49] These confidence-building efforts went beyond exchanges among defense officials, contributing to confidence-building in the APSC and the ASEAN Community as a whole.

Another confidence-building initiative by the ADMM was the development of Direct Communications Infrastructure (ADI). This initiative will create a common format by which the military-related agencies of any two ASEAN member countries may communicate with each other. The initial phase (voice and fax communication) has been established, and discussions are now underway for the second phase (video and data communication).[50]

Meanwhile, the ADMM-Plus also developed as a forum for defense exchanges between ASEAN member countries and countries outside the region. Initially held every three years, the ADMM-Plus subsequently became a biennial event and is now held annually. A major difference between the ADMM-Plus and traditional multilateral security dialogue frameworks can be seen in the EWG system. When the ADMM-Plus was first launched, EWGs were established in five non-traditional security areas (HA/DR, military medicine, maritime security, counter-terrorism, and PKO). This was followed by the creation of humanitarian mine action and cyber security EWGs, bringing the total to seven. Each EWG is oriented toward concrete cooperation in its respective area and conducts joint exercises and works to develop a shared standard operating procedure (SOP). The EWG system functions within the ADMM-Plus framework to hold numerous meetings, seminars, and exercises on various non-traditional security areas. This is in large part due to provision of funds and expertise by countries outside of the region. The EWG system has become a venue for the provision of capacity-building assistance to ASEAN countries from countries outside the region. One of the outcomes of the EWGs was the adoption of an ASEAN SOP on HA/DR in December 2020.[51]

Unlike the ADMM, however, the ADMM-Plus did not show much progress in confidence-building. Instead, confrontational situations, especially between countries outside the region, have stood out against the backdrop of the intensifying conflict between the United States and China. For example, at the 3rd ADMM-Plus in 2015, the United States attempted to insert language on the South China Sea issue into the joint declaration, which China strongly opposed. As a result, the discussion unraveled, and the ADMM-Plus was unable to issue a joint declaration.[52] Another example would be the 7th ADMM-Plus in December 2020. Against the backdrop of a standoff with the Chinese People's Liberation Army in the Ladakh region on the Sino-Indian border, Indian Defense Minister Rajnath Singh stressed restraint on the part of India, while implying criticism of China's use of force to change the status quo.[53] On the other hand, competition among major countries outside of the region has, in some respects, facilitated capacity-building assistance

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[49] Sarah Teo and Henrick Z. Tsjeng, "A Diplomatic Decade: The ASEAN Defense Ministers' Meeting," *Global Asia*, vol. 11, no. 1 (March 2016).

[50] ADMM, "Concept Paper on Enhancing the Usage of the ASEAN Direct Communications Infrastructure (ADI) as a Defence Communications Architecture in the ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting Process," June 15, 2021.

[51] ADMM, "Standard Operational Procedure: ASEAN Militaries Ready Group on Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (AMRG on HADR)," December 9, 2020.

[52] Prashanth Parameswaran, "China Blocked ASEAN Defense Meeting Pact Amid South China Sea Fears: US Official," *The Diplomat*, November 4, 2015.

[53] *Hindustan Times*, December 10, 2020.

to ASEAN countries. It can be pointed out that as the United States and China, in particular, emphasize cooperation with ASEAN, ASEAN benefits from this "competition" between the two major powers to obtain support.

As mentioned earlier, the ADMM-Plus was launched as part of the ADMM's activities. In this sense, although the ADMM and the ADMM-Plus are closely related in terms of the background and purpose of their establishment, how they have developed since then can be seen as contrasting with each other. Although the ADMM made progress in confidence-building, it did not make progress in practical cooperation. In contrast, the ADMM-Plus did not make much progress in confidence-building, but it did in practical cooperation.

This is due to differences in ASEAN's internal and external environments. Inside ASEAN, that is, among its member countries, there is a common intent to form a security community. In contrast, there is no such intent outside of ASEAN, that is, among countries external to the region. Rather, differences of opinion and conflicts over regional order and security in the future have become increasingly evident. Despite the fact that the two cooperation frameworks exist as concentric circles with ASEAN at their center, they have developed in very different ways based on whether or not they share a common vision.

The contrasting paths of development taken by the ADMM and the ADMM-Plus indicate where the APSC stands today. First, confidence-building among ASEAN member countries has made progress, and the countries now share a vision of forming a security community. Second, ASEAN member countries alone still lack the capacity to pursue concrete security cooperation, and they need appropriate support from countries outside the region. And third, the strategic environment outside the Southeast Asia region is increasing in complexity, and stabilizing it is a job beyond the capability of ASEAN.

Conclusion

This paper examines ASEAN's efforts to form the APSC. Unlike economic indicators, it is difficult to set quantitative goals in political and security cooperation. Given this, the ADMM and ADMM-Plus were clear achievements for the APSC. However, the two frameworks, which were initially expected to develop in conjunction with each other, have happened to take contrasting paths of development. Despite making progress in confidence-building within ASEAN, practical cooperation still requires resources from outside the region. Thus, ASEAN's influence on the strategic environment outside of the region is limited.

In 2021, new and serious challenges to confidence-building emerged within the ASEAN region. In February 2021, a coup d'état occurred in Myanmar, putting the military back in power and nullifying the legitimately-elected civilian government. ASEAN planned to send a special envoy to serve as a mediator, but has been unable to take effective measures in response to the political upheaval in Myanmar. ASEAN's inability to take any effective actions against Myanmar, one of its member countries, has demonstrated that political cooperation in the APSC is still a long way off and remains at a very early stage. While the Myanmar crisis will likely stall progress in the APSC, this is an issue that ASEAN cannot evade. Here, again, ASEAN's competence is being tested.