

Explaining the Impact of the Global War on Terrorism on ASEAN: the New Regionalism Revisited?

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines how the global war on terrorism has affected regionalism within the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). According to its basic assumption, the new regionalism has been determined by a set of structural changes in the international system, which includes the relative decline of the US hegemony in the region. In other words, the new regionalism is rather a spontaneous process as the initiative of countries within a region rather than deriving from the external actor. After Southeast Asia was labeled as the second front of the global war on terrorism by the US, the agenda of combating terrorism in the region has been largely shaped by the superpower. Even though the role of Washington has been significant in assisting countries in Southeast Asia in combating terrorism, it does not significantly contribute to the change of security regionalism under the framework of ASEAN.

Keywords: ASEAN, the US, new regionalism, second front, war on terrorism.

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1. Introduction

The state of the art of regionalism in the post-Cold War era has demonstrated that regionalism as a long standing feature in international relations since post-WW II has been changing over time. In the aftermath of the end of the global bipolarity, regionalism has been attached with the issue of globalization. Parallel with the discussion of the development of regionalism, the conception of security had undergone a massive transformation after the end of the Cold War when realist tradition has been challenged by post-modernist approaches.

This paper, however, does not with the idea of regionalism and globalization under the framework of economic integration. It is rather focused on the correlation between regionalism and security in seeking explanation on how the change in the conception of security also leads to the change in the conception of regionalism. It is particularly focused on the impact of the global war on terrorism to ASEAN security regionalism.

Indeed, regionalism in Southeast Asia -- like any other regions across the world -- indeed has been transformed from the so-called old regionalism into the new regionalism. Many argue that the framework of the new regionalism in Southeast Asia has been revisited after the region becomes the second front of the global war on terrorism. This assumption has been associated with the claim that in the post 9/11, the US has “re-engaged” with Southeast Asia as the region has been defined as the second front of the global war on terrorism. This fact was built based on the assumptions brought up by the new regionalism approach. The new regionalism has been determined by a set of structural changes in the international system, which includes the relative decline of the US hegemony in the region. Therefore, regionalism within ASEAN has moved beyond the new regionalism with regard to the re-involvement of external power within the region. In other words, the new regionalism is rather a spontaneous process as the initiative of countries within a region rather than deriving from the external actor. Indeed, after a decade of being a low priority in American foreign policy, Southeast Asia is back on the radar in Washington. While it is not yet a region of prime strategic importance to the United States (Desker and Ramakrishna 2002), ASEAN certainly now has a more prominent place in US foreign policy than at any time since the end of the Cold War (Gershman 2002). This renewed

attention, however, presents some risks for ASEAN's members, given the importance they attach to maintaining regional autonomy free from the interference of major powers.

Based on this argument, this paper attempts to explain into what extent the US re-engagement in Southeast Asia has affected ASEAN security regionalism. Even though this paper rather argues that this engagement has a limited influence in changing the pattern of security regionalism in the region, however the US role in the war on terrorism has become an intervening variable in the region's stance toward the global war on terrorism. It can be argued also that analyzing the pattern of the new regionalism within ASEAN cannot be completely detached from the factor of external powers. The agenda of a regional organization sometimes is not only initiated by its member countries, but can also be imposed by external actors. As a matter of fact, limited interference from external actor can help those countries out from a long conflict between regional interest and domestic pressure.

2. Bridging Regionalism and Security: Explaining Security Regionalism

The state of art of regionalism in the post-Cold War era has demonstrated that regionalism as a long standing feature in international relations since the post Second World War has been changing over time. The idea of regionalism as a political solution for regional problems has been a prominent feature during the 20th century. The idea of regionalism itself was initiated in the 1930s; however, it is generally argued that regionalism was predominantly a post-Second World War phenomenon. Research on this topic peaked with the evolution of regionalism in the 1960s. However, scholarly preoccupation with regional cooperation has been less consistent. A great deal of interest was apparent in the 1950s and 1960. This enthusiasm was not very long lasting as disillusionment set in by the early 1970s. The halting manner in which regionalism was progressing in Europe and elsewhere began exposing the weakness of regional integration theories. A number of functional arrangements outside Europe, like the Latin American Free Trade Area and East African Community had clearly failed. In spite of this dwindling phenomenon, empirical evidence suggested that regional inter-governmental organizations were merrily proliferating on the ground, especially in the Third World, no matter how ineffective their performance was. Subsequently, the early 1990s witnessed a pronounced increase in

regional trading arrangements which coincided with the deepening of the European integration project.

Regionalism is broadly defined as a policy whereby state and non-state actors cooperate and coordinate strategy within a given region (Fawcett 2004). The aim of regionalism is to pursue and promote common goals in one or more issue areas. Based on this goal, regionalism is divided into two main categories: soft regionalism where regionalism is aimed at promoting a sense of regional awareness through consolidating regional networks; and hard regionalism, by means of formalizing interstate arrangements and organizations (Fawcett 2004: 433).

According to Tavares (2004), there are some ontological elements that can differentiate the “old” and “new” regionalism in terms of actor (regional projects are driven by a wide variety of actors, both states and non states); driving force (multidimensional forms of integration covering political, economic, and social); direction (no longer structural-imposed projects, constructed by human actions and social practices); and coverage (regionalism is not only a European phenomenon, but it is already going global). Regionalism can also be identified in terms of both socio-cultural factors internal and political factors external to the region. The inclusive definition of regionalism by Cantori and Spiegel (1970: 6-7) emphasizes on geographic proximity, international interactions, common bond, and a sense of identity that is sometimes accentuated by the actions of countries outside of the region. Referring to this variety in defining regionalism, this concept is theoretically contested for two reasons: unavoidable empirical ambiguities and differences in analytical perspectives (Katzenstein 1996).

Hence, to better understand the complexity of regionalism, one can speak about the generations of regionalism. The central point in analyzing regionalism in this study is by focusing on the first generation of regionalism (mainly labeled as the old regionalism) and especially its recent variant, known as the new regionalism.¹ The new regionalism has been defined differently by scholars, but the concept generally refers to the “second wave” or the “second generation” of

¹ The term “new regionalism” was coined by Norman Palmer (1991). Mario Telo (2001), for instance, labels it as “post-hegemonic regionalism”.

regional cooperation that has initiated by the mid of 1980s, but took off only after 1990 when the Cold War came to the end.²

The old regionalism as a predominantly a post-Second World War phenomenon was seen as an important strategy for achieving peace, security, development, and welfare. As the old regionalism was attached to the context of the Cold War, scholars were more concerned on the global dynamics than the regional ones. Indeed, the international context has played a significant role in determining the up-and-down of the study of regionalism. Indeed, studying regionalism means studying the change of the world order. In the 1950s and 1960s, the old regionalism focused mainly on technical and economic factors, with a view that economic growth would ensure peace and welfare societies. However, from 1970s, empirical evidence increasingly pointed out that economic factors alone were not sufficient to ensure growth.

Meanwhile, the main literatures of the new regionalism are mostly associated with the post Cold War's transformation with the following main elements: the shift from bipolarity to multipolarity with different kind of division of power and division of labor; the decline of American hegemony; the restructuring of the nation state and the growth of interdependence in a more globalized world; recurrent fear over the stability of the multilateral trading order; and the changed attitude towards (neo-liberal) economic development and political systems in the developing countries and the post-communist countries (Schulz, Soderbaum, and Ojendal 2001).

Parallel with the discussion on regionalism, the conception of security had undergone a massive transformation when realist tradition has been challenged by post-modernist approaches such as critical theory and constructivist after the end of the Cold War. Despite the fact that security is an essential concept in international relations, it is a “contested concept”³ with changes in its meaning during different historical periods. The end of the Cold War has prompted a dynamic debate of the concept of security as the question of “what made people secure” must be

² Although not yet widely developed, the recent work of Luk Van Langenhove and Ana-Cristina Costea (2005) reveals that there is the third generation of regionalism emerging which emphasizes the role of regions as global actors.

³ W.B.Gallie introduced a phrase namely ‘contested concept’, which does not simply mean that it is difficult to agree on a definition of a concept, but there are some concepts whose meaning are inherently a matter of dispute, for there is no such a neutral definition, see for instance, Barry Buzan (1991).

broadened to provide more space to analyze new security challenges. The traditional view of security, with its strong emphasis on state security and the use of military power, has shifted to a broader perspective which also incorporates economic, societal, and environmental dimensions under the framework of non-traditional security issues.

This study applies the term security regionalism for several reasons. First, security regionalism has a more comprehensive meaning than security cooperation since it comprises the general idea of security relations, whether it is an amity or enmity between countries in the region. In other words, security regionalism can encompass a broader context of security relations, in terms of conflict or cooperation. Second, related to the case of ASEAN, the Association cannot be regarded as a security organization as it was not found upon a formal security/military agreement. Therefore, analyzing the security aspect of this kind of institution requires a closer reading to all related aspects, security and non-security. Third, related to the second argument, although ASEAN is not a security organization, we can analyze how ASEAN countries develop its security relations under the framework of ASEAN as the Association has developed some norms to manage its intra-mural relations.

The term “security regionalism” itself first coined by Muthiah Alagappa (1994). Although he did not specify its definition, but it mostly referred as regionalization of international security brought about by the termination of the Soviet-American conflict and the ongoing changes (economics-driven but accelerated by the collapse of the former Soviet Union) in the distribution of power (Alagappa 1994: 152-3). However, this study does not delimit security regionalism as merely a post-Cold War phenomenon. It rather adopts a broader conception of Björn Hettne (2005) where security regionalism refers to attempts by states and other actors in a particular geographical area – a region in the making – to transform a security complex with conflict-generating inter-state and intra-state relations in the direction of a security community with cooperative external (inter-regional) relations and domestic (intra-regional) peace. The main goal of security regionalism is a transformation from war-prone region to more secure and peaceful regional system.

Borrowing the assumption of the old regionalism and its new variant, analyzing ASEAN security regionalism also can be divided into two generations: old and new. During the Cold War period, regional security was closely linked to, or subsumed by, the bipolar rivalries. Security regionalism was more external-oriented in the sense that a regional security block was as an instrument to compete with another block. Therefore, a regional security block could play a decisive role in the security configuration of another security block, as what happened between NATO and the Warsaw Pact. In other words, ASEAN's old security regionalism focuses on the idea correlation between state security and regional stability. The context of decolonization led newly independent countries sought to search for internal stability and regime security. The nature of state or national security to some extent can be understood as the protection of the core values of the state, especially its political sovereignty and territorial integrity as the main attributes of the state. This strong preservation to sovereignty appears as the main character of regional organization such as ASEAN, as a group of newly independent states which tend to depend on external or judicial sovereignty by committing themselves to principles of the modern Westphalian system, including respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all states and non-interference in the affairs of states.

Against this backdrop, during the Cold War, ASEAN countries attempted to limit external intervention, especially from the major powers. The 1971 ASEAN Declaration on the Zone of Peace, Freedom, and Neutrality (henceforth, ZOPFAN) is specifically referring to ASEAN's effort in securing its member states from external intervention and achieving an eternal stability in the entire region. This idea is the continuity of the 1967 Bangkok Declaration, which is being re-stated in this Declaration as follows: "Recognizing the right of every state, large or small to lead its national existence free from outside interference in its internal affairs as this interference will adversely affect its freedom, interdependence, and integrity..." (*The ASEAN Declaration on the Zone of Peace, Freedom, Neutrality 1971*, para 6). The ZOPFAN Declaration is indeed the expression of ASEAN's unwillingness to allow major countries in the region – China, Japan, Soviet Union, and the US – to have unlimited involvement in the region. This principle was rather controversial since some ASEAN countries such as Singapore and the Philippines maintained strong bilateral relations with the US. The idea of neutrality that ASEAN proposed in this Declaration was the result of a collective bargaining in accommodating Malaysian proposal

on “neutralization” of the region (Haacke 2005; David Irvine 1982; Roger Irvine 1982; Narine 1998)

In the post-Cold War period, security regionalism has different orientations as follows: first, it is built from inside rather than from outside influence; second, it does not conceive its intra-regional strategy as a negative sum-game with neighboring security blocks; and third, it is more interested in materializing its intra-regional security through civilian and cooperative means than an arms race in preventing extra-regional threats (Tavares 2005). However, most of current security regionalism projects are not new in term of organization. Those which exist now are mostly just old organizations that have re-born in function and approach. Furthermore, there is no such clear difference between security and non-security regional organization as security regionalism nowadays adopts a comprehensive approach, both security and non-security approaches to maintain regional peace.

The termination of the Cold War has contributed to a rethinking of security and security regionalism. Regional security has to deal with new referent, dimension and threats in the new era. Neorealists explain security problems and the approach to security in terms of the logic of anarchy. Thus, the mechanisms to manage this situation are through the instruments of power and diplomacy as neo-realists believe in the importance of the material element in international politics. For them it is power and power relations which matter in determining state’s behavior. The most important realists’ argument that needed to be highlighted here is that states operating in an anarchical system and interested in ensuring their survival will engage in balancing behavior because their first aim is to maintain their position and not to maximize their power. However, the arguments of realists were mostly concerning major powers in the Cold War time.

3. ASEAN New Security Regionalism and the Role of Extra-Regional Power

The new regionalism has been determined by a set of structural changes in the international system, namely: the shift from a bipolar world into a multi-polar one; the relative decline of the US hegemony; the erosion of the Westphalian state system; and the transition process into a neo-liberal economic development in ex-communist and Third World countries. The discussion about

the new regionalism is closely attached to the global structural transformation process. This transformation then has brought regional institutions to their process of revival. As far as the existence of regional cooperation is concerned, it is aimed to overcome the problem of international order at the regional level. However, the nature of international order has never been stagnant, it has always been shaped and reshaped constantly. The end of the Cold War is an important benchmark of the re-shaping of international order. The post-Cold War era has been dominated by new security challenges which makes the structure becomes more complex and unpredictable.

The end of the Cold War itself brought a relatively peaceful picture to Southeast Asia due to the fact that the region was no longer an area of high priority of the world's major power in terms of security for several reasons. First, it was not an area of nuclear weapon proliferation and it was not a heavily armed part of the world. Southeast Asia is an anomaly comparing to East Asia with respect to weapons of mass destruction (WMD). For instance, China possesses a significant nuclear weapons capability and also probably a chemical warfare capacity. North Korea's nuclear weapons ambitions are being contained for the time being through the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization (KEDO). Furthermore, one of the main purposes of the Japan-U.S. and South Korea-U.S. security treaties is to extend American nuclear deterrence to these two allies. Southeast Asia, by contrast, has none of these concerns. In the contrary, Southeast Asia remains unruffled and essentially uninterested in acquiring WMD. While prior to the Asian financial crisis, ASEAN countries had been engaged in modernizing their conventional forces for the past 15 years, these military advances have not included WMD. Second, after the closing of American military bases in the Philippines in 1992, there are no more American military bases in the region. Third, in terms of regional security dynamics, a large-scale armed conflict between countries in the region, with an exception of small-scale border tensions, was rather remote. All of these evidences provide a façade of Southeast Asia as a peaceful region. The decade of 1990s with an emphasis on development, has been the most autonomous and peaceful the region has experienced in the modern time (Bert 2003). It contrasts with, for instance, the turbulence period of 1940s-1950s when the region had to struggle for independence and followed by the domestic insurgencies or the height of the Cold War and the Vietnam War in the 1960s-1970s, and the Cambodian conflict in the 1980s.

However, the years 1989-1992 were important because the uncertainty and unpredictability about the future of peace and stability in the region became palpable and pragmatic. Thus, ideas and proposals on security cooperation were discussed enthusiastically inside the region. Particularly in the case of Third World countries, there has been a growing tendency that these countries start to pursue regional solutions for regional problems to oppose a more intervention of external powers as the influence of the two major powers has faded away. Indeed, with regard to the end of the Cold War, comparing to the old regionalism that was shaped by the superpowers (shaped from above), the new regionalism is rather a spontaneous process as the initiative of countries within a region (shaped from below).

At the same time, the growing prosperity in the region has resulted a shift in regional strategic thinking. During its early period, ASEAN's concern on security covered the issues of poverty and underdevelopment. In the post Cold War period, the concern is rather on how to maintain the continuity of economic development. The economics of ASEAN countries has become dependent upon their external economic relations with developed countries like Japan, the US, and the European Community (now the EU). This development has opened up a space of creating a broader security arrangement in the region that also includes extra-regional major powers. The collapse of the bipolar system has brought into an end an obstacle of bringing together all major powers into the same table to discuss security problems. Indeed, during the 1990s, ASEAN replaced its official notion of insulating Southeast Asia from the great powers to one of actively engaging them. This idea led to the creation of the ARF. The ASEAN members believe that the best strategy to adopt in the aftermath of the Cold War is to build an equilibrium between great powers and themselves (Alagappa 1991; Collins 2003; Narine 1998).

The end of the Cold War in Southeast Asia has opened a new era of a new pattern of security relations among actors in the region and beyond. Moreover, regionalism in Southeast Asia now also covers a broad spectrum of arrangements among track one (government-to-government), track two (semi-governmental think tanks), and track three (private institutions). These arguments are rooted from two arguments. First, the ASEAN Senior Officials Meeting (SOM) in May 1993 was a historical benchmark for security cooperation in Southeast Asia since this meeting is the embryo of the ARF. The ARF is a weak institution as it lacks a secretariat and its

members are labeled as “participants” that has a series of intercessional working groups focusing on confidence building measures and preventive diplomacy. Second, the Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia Pacific (CSCAP) was launched by the members of the ASEAN Institute of Strategic and International Studies (ASEAN-ISIS) and their dialogue partners. Both CSCAP and ASEAN-ISIS are the representation of the expanding role of the track two. Their activities offer governments an informal venue to exchange information to assess regional security concerns as well as help to shape “the climate of opinion in national settings in which security affairs are conducted” (Katzenstein 2005: 143) . The emergence of non-state actors in the regional security cooperation has enriched ASEAN’s political and security lexicon with a new term namely “second track diplomacy.” The role of second track diplomacy in enhancing ASEAN’s regional cooperation in security matters will be further developed in the following chapters.

Against this backdrop, suffice to say that ASEAN security regionalism has shifted from the old to new regionalism. ASEAN’s security regionalism is mainly shaped by the interests of its members. The idea of creating the ARF as a multilateral regional security arrangement with ASEAN as the main driving element shows that the main idea has been developed by countries in the region. It explains the argument that the new regionalism is rather a spontaneous process as the initiative of countries within a region and involves both state and non-state actors.

4. The Anatomy of Southeast Asia as the “Second Front”

As this paper mainly argues, the war on terrorism has been the main rationale of why the ASEAN regionalism has gone beyond the framework of the new regionalism. As Central Asia constitutes American first front on the war against terrorism, the second front has been projected to Southeast Asia. Together with Malaysia and the Philippines, Indonesia was reported as potential Al Qaeda hubs by the US State Department. The notion of “the second front” has pushed ASEAN countries to stand together in combating terrorism. At the very beginning, it was not the threat of terrorism *per se* that becoming the main triggering mechanism for ASEAN to launch some important initiatives at the regional level in combating terrorism. However, it is the idea of Southeast Asia as the second front which has mainly shaped the regional cohesion.

The term “second front” itself emerged from five main factors. First, according to American scholars, policy makers, and media, the notion of Southeast Asia as a second front emerged from the fact that the region is home to about 20% of the world’s Muslim population as Indonesia, the world’s largest Muslim country in the world and Malaysia are located there. With an addition, the Philippines and Thailand also constitute significant Muslim majorities. Nevertheless, the argument that the religion factor significantly contributes to the growing number of terrorist movements in the region is indeed rather erroneous because Indonesia and Malaysia, two largest Muslim population countries in the region, develop a moderate and tolerant practice of Islam. This “regional background” is important for two reasons: first, because many of terrorists and militant groups are highly associated with radical Islamic ideologies; and second, its is widely believed that the deterioration of economic and social conditions after the Asian financial crisis in Southeast Asia and the associated political upheaval in Indonesia have produced an environmental favorable to the activities of terrorists, radical groups, and separatists (Rabasa 2001).

Second, concerns around the issue of terrorism in the region have been anchored in the possible presence of active separatist movements such as the Free Aceh Movement (Gerakan Aceh Merdeka, GAM) in Indonesia which was aimed to establish an independent Islamic country separated from Jakarta; Abu Sayyaf and Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) in the Philippines; and Patani Movement in the south of Thailand. Some may argue that separatist movement cannot be classified as terrorism. However, although it seems unfair to link Islam with terrorism in this context, it is not difficult to see that the notion of Southeast Asia a second front is more linked to the Islamic factor rather than the issue of separatism. Indeed, there has been a concern on the growing role and influence of militant Islamic groups in the region, particularly in Indonesia (mostly referring to Laskar Jihad and Islamic Defender Front/FPI, and Indonesia’s Mujahidin Council/MMI), Malaysia (Al Maunah and Kumpulan Mujahidin and Militan Malaysia/KKM), and Singapore (centered on the activities of a militant group called the Jemaah Islamiah/JI).

The third factor strengthens the two previous factors due to the fact that there have been arrests made in Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, and the Philippines for alleged involvement of their

citizens in terrorist activities. Singapore authorities, for instance, since January 2002 have arrested 31 members of the extremist group Jemaah Islamiah (JI) which operates a clandestine network of cells in Indonesia and Malaysia (Tan 2002; Thayer 2005). Some of these JI members had attended training camps run by Al Qaeda in Afghanistan. It was also revealed that this group planned to attack American military personnel at a local subway station, US naval vessels at Singapore's Changi Naval Base, US commercial interest, some Western (especially the US, British, and Australian) embassies, and Singaporean military facilities (Straits Times, 12 January 2002). It was also later discovered that the JI also planned attacks on US embassies in Singapore, Kuala Lumpur, and Jakarta to take place on 4 December 2001. (Straits Times, 11 February 2002). In Malaysia, about 40 militants who were arrested in December 2001, 22 of them belonged to the Malaysian wing of JI, with a link to the one in Singapore. One of JI members who was arrested, Yazid Sufaat, is believed by the US to be the paymaster of Zacarias Moussaoui, the Frenchman charged with involvement in the 9/11 attacks (Sunday Times Singapore, 3 February 2002; Straits Times, 29 January 2002). Yazid was also said to have hosted two of the 9/11 hijackers when they visited Malaysia in 2000. Nevertheless, Malaysian authorities strenuously denied that Malaysia had been a platform for the 9/11 attacks and doubted Yazid's involvement. However, this claim did not stop Malaysia to cooperate with the US in combating terrorism. Fourth, concerns over terrorist threats in the region have been perpetuated by the surge of anti-American sentiments among sections of the Muslim community in the aftermath of 9/11, especially after the US' military action in Afghanistan.

The global war on terrorism has imposed new challenges for Southeast Asian governments in their dealings with the United States. Regimes in Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines have found themselves caught between a need to work with the most powerful state in the international system and a variety of domestic pressures. Even after the US declared the region as the second front, countries in Southeast Asia were still in the denial about the existence of terrorist network in their countries. Indonesia is a good example of this phenomenon. Even after the 2002 Bali bombings, key government officials, including the then Vice President Hamzah Haz, continued to deny the importance of this issue to the country's national stability as most of them believed that foreign agents had perpetrated Indonesia to discredit Islam. The government then faced a difficult task of balancing the need to fight against terrorist network and take into

account Muslim sensitivities on this issue. Therefore, Indonesia's president during that period, Megawati Soekarnoputri, faced a big dilemma with regard to the issue of terrorism. On the one hand, the credibility of her government in the eye of the international community was seriously undermined; while on the other, there was a strong fiction at the domestic level with regard to this issue.

Restraints from the internal public did not really take place in Muslim majority countries like Indonesia and Malaysia. Domestic politics have also been critical in the Philippines. American military aid, arms and equipment provided the Arroyo regime with the opportunity to improve its relations with the military, and it has also been anxious to publicize the economic and trade benefits it has received through its improved relationship with the US. At the same time, the regime also realized it could not risk being perceived to be an American client. It must be careful to ensure the nature of its bilateral military ties are not perceived as undermining Filipino sovereignty, hence its reservations about the deployment of US combat troops, the status of the MILF and access to bases (Capie 2004).

The cases suggest that domestic politics are a vital intervening variable in shaping the nature of alignment between Washington and its Southeast Asian partners (Capie 2004). However, while internal factors provide a range of incentives and disincentives for bilateral cooperation, they cannot explain why Kuala Lumpur and Jakarta provided Washington with intelligence, defense and law enforcement cooperation, even while strongly vigorously disagreeing with US actions and policies. The answer here lies partly at the systemic level. Regional elites continue to value the US presence and still feel cooperation with the US is essential for a range of economic and geopolitical reasons, including the preservation of the regional balance of power. Washington may have undermined its 'soft power' and international legitimacy through its action in Iraq (Goh 2003), but it continues to be seen as the region's best insurance policy against future instability.

5. The Paradox of the US Re-engagement in Southeast Asia

The US hegemony in the region during 1980s-1990s was on the decline. In contrast, the picture now is different. The war on terrorism has increased US military presence and diplomatic influence in Asia. The US approach to the post-9/11 world order as stated in the Bush's administration revised National Security Strategy has showed that the US has defined terrorism as a global threat which has a moral implication to the US to take a leadership in any actions under the framework of global war on terror. Thus, any countries which found themselves on the opposite side of this action will be considered as the US' ideological opponent like the Eastern pole during the Cold War. Subsequently, this new approach has put many countries into a difficult position, especially countries with Muslim majority population. In the case of Southeast Asia, radical Islamic group in big Muslim countries such as Indonesia and Malaysia have posed a serious challenge on the US approach. The condition is getting more difficult after the US declared Southeast Asia as the second front of the global war on terrorism.

However, the global war on terrorism has brought a paradoxical implication towards US role in Southeast Asia. It is paradox because on the one hand this cataclysmic event has increased the US' strategic importance in the region; on the other hand, this growing strategic engagement has been followed by a widening legitimacy deficit of US hegemony in the region as this involvement has triggered anti-Americanism movement across the region. In some countries, there is a significant gap between government response and popular support. At the certain levels, governments in countries like Indonesia and Malaysia are also showing their opposition against some US military actions like those in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Moreover, the war on terrorism which is followed by the US' decision to declare that Southeast Asia is its second front of its global war on terrorism has complicated this paradox as some governments in Southeast Asia have to face pressure from their own population to take a firm position against any US intervention worldwide, particularly those which are perceived as American war against the Muslim world. Many analysts argue that this opposition at the popular level takes place because people perceive that the US applies double standard foreign policy. In the issue of terrorism, the US is condemned to be focusing too much on military aid rather than

on the root cause of terrorism itself. However, some governments in the region inevitably need the US support on their policies in combating terrorism. Resistance from their population has placed governments in Southeast Asia into a difficult situation, being trapped between external and internal pressures. Moreover, in the case of a new democracy like Indonesia, eliminating internal pressure will undermine the democratization process in the country. Mirroring democratization process in Indonesia and its relation with regional security, there is a tendency that democratic transition, at a certain level, is a catalyst for regional security disorder. In the case of Indonesia, as the process of transition was triggered by economic, social, and political crises in this archipelagic country, thus the transition itself overshadowed by national instability which led to regional instability. Moreover, as Indonesia is practically ASEAN's biggest country, its internal stability is the key to the regional order.

6. ASEAN and the Global War on Terrorism: between Convergence and Divergence

Prior to 9/11, terrorism probably has not posed such a big problem in ASEAN countries as it did in other parts of the world⁴. Terrorism was subsumed under the rubric of transnational crime, along with maritime piracy, illicit drugs trafficking, or arms smuggling. The Declaration of ASEAN Vision 2020 does not explicitly mention terrorism as a threat. ASEAN's major priorities in that time were regional economic integration, peaceful interaction and dispute resolution among members, and enhanced cooperation to confront transnational problems, including trafficking in drugs and humans (*ASEAN Vision 2020, 1997*). ASEAN members initiated a regional cooperation against transnational crime since 1976 when the Declaration of ASEAN Concord I postulates the Association's willingness to promote regional cooperation in preventing illicit drugs trafficking. Since then, a number of non-traditional security issues have been raised in ASEAN forums, albeit under the broader heading of social issues. However, until 1990s, ASEAN's domain of attention for transnational crimes remained in the issue of illegal drug trafficking.

⁴ In the 1970s, ASEAN countries had their fair share of terrorism. These also included, for instance, the attack on fuel tanks in Singapore in Jan 1974 by PFLP and Japanese Red Army (JRA), five Japanese terrorists' takeover of the American embassy in Malaysia in 1975, the takeover of Israeli embassy in Bangkok in 1972.

After 9/11, the ASEAN governments also showed its commitment to fight terrorism. At the Seventh ASEAN Summit in Brunei on 5th November 2001 the Heads of State/ Government of ASEAN issued a *Declaration on Joint Action to Counter Terrorism*. The Declaration says that the ASEAN leaders “unequivocally condemn in the strongest terms the horrifying terrorist attacks in New York City, Washington DC and Pennsylvania on 11 September 2001 and consider such acts as an attack against humanity and an assault on all of us”. The leaders also commit themselves “to counter, prevent and suppress all forms of terrorist acts in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and other international law, especially taking into account the importance of all UN resolutions”. It is important to note here that from the very beginning ASEAN countries have emphasized the centrality of the United Nations and international law. The Declaration also stated that “all cooperative efforts to combat terrorism at the regional level shall consider joint practical counter-terrorism measures in line with specific circumstance in the region and each member country. In other words, while supporting the international war against terrorism the means used must not only conform to the United Nations Charter, but must also be tailored to suit local circumstances in each member country. The Declaration outlines several measures to fight terrorism, as follows:

1. “review and strengthen national mechanisms to combat terrorism;
2. deepen cooperation among front-line law enforcement agencies in combating terrorism;
3. enhance information/intelligence exchange to facilitate the flow of information, in particular, on terrorists and terrorist organizations, their movement and funding, and any other information needed to protect lives, property, and the security of all modes of travel;
4. strengthening existing co-operation and co-ordination between AMMTC and other relevant ASEAN bodies in countering, preventing, and suppressing all forms of terrorists’ acts. Particular attention would be paid to finding ways to combat terrorist activities, support infrastructure and funding and bringing the perpetrators to justice;
5. strengthen cooperation at bilateral, regional, and international levels in combating terrorism in a comprehensive manner and affirm that at the international level the UN should play a major role in this regard” (*ASEAN Declaration on Joint Action to Counter Terrorism 2001*).

This Declaration has opened a new way of developing a further regional cooperation in combating transnational crimes. For example, in May 2002, Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines approved a trilateral agreement which was officially billed as an anti terrorism pact. This agreement obliges its members to exchange information on a wide variety of illicit activities, ranging from money laundering and piracy to the theft of marine resources and marine pollution. At the institutional level, ASEAN organized the Special ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Terrorism in Malaysia on 17 May 2002. In this meeting, the above Declaration was incorporated into the 2002 ASEAN Plan of Action to Combat Transnational which in general covers the issues of drug trafficking, trafficking of persons, sea piracy, arms smuggling, money laundering, international economic crimes, cyber-crime, as well as terrorism. The cooperation established in this Plan of Action includes specific actions addressing information exchange, legal matters, law enforcement, institutional capacity building, and extra-regional cooperation

Despite the fact that the issuance of the Declaration was significant to acknowledge that terrorism was a serious issue that ASEAN had to face, there emerged significant disagreement within the Association over how to combat terrorism. For some ASEAN countries, the lack of intra-state coordination and the issue of sovereignty altered the implementation of common regional actions in combating terrorism (Rose and Nestorovska 2005).⁵ At the practical level, legal measures against terrorism widely varied and continue to vary within ASEAN. On the one side, Malaysia and Singapore possess internal security laws that provide for indefinite detention without trial of any suspected terrorists. While on the other, Indonesia has a police force beset by corruption and an antiquated legal framework that until March 2003 did not even formally list terrorism as a crime or provide harsh punishment for it.

Moreover, although ASEAN is known for presenting a common diplomatic vision on any major international issue, the post 9/11 international developments have made it considerably difficult to maintain this gesture. At the declaratory level, impressive steps have been taken by ASEAN to combat terrorism in the region. The designation of Southeast Asia as a second of front of the global war on terrorism was initially very disturbing to the countries in the region but it was

⁵ For instance, there was a sharp difference between Indonesia and Singapore in their policies of combating terrorism. This difference triggered a bilateral tension between the two countries.

something which cannot be ignored. However, it proved very tricky to go beyond the declaratory level. This was, once again, not surprising because the non-interference principle allows only a narrow room for maneuver when it comes to the actual cooperation, especially on sensitive issues like terrorism and regional security. Countries with large Moslem population have been wary of undertaking any radical measures for tackling terrorism because of the fear that these may prove counter-productive, especially at their domestic stakeholders. This was also partly the reason why Indonesia seemed reluctant in the beginning and only after the Bali bombings the country came to grips with the problem facing the region.

There emerged significant public disagreement within ASEAN over how to combat regional terrorism. The main cause of this disagreement, according to Bantarto Bandoro of CSIS Jakarta, is due to the fact that three ASEAN countries – Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines – have been suspected as a place for Muslim extremist activities (Bandoro 2002). Therefore, the issue of terrorism is seen as a litmus test for ASEAN solidarity. For example, in February 2002, Singapore Senior Minister Lee Kuan Yew charged that Indonesia was unwilling to hunt down a nest of terrorists within its own borders, pointing out that alleged Jemaah Islamiyah leaders Abu Bakar Ba'asyir and Riduan Isamuddin were still living freely in the country. Responding to this statement, Indonesia's Foreign Minister Hassan Wirajuda suggested that the divergent approaches to combating terrorism derived from the two countries' political systems, one based on democratic pluralism and the other on authoritarianism. Following this polemic, hundreds of demonstrators surrounded the Singaporean Embassy in Jakarta to protest Lee's statement. President Megawati's calm reaction on this issue upset conservative Muslim groups, which demanded an apology from Lee and a reevaluation of diplomatic relations with Singapore. Although the row eventually faded away, it illustrated the tensions within ASEAN and the challenges that counterterrorism cooperation posed to non-intervention norms.

The role of the US in the global war on terrorism has proved to be another divisive issue among ASEAN members. For some states, the prospect of linking regional and domestic counterterrorism efforts with direct American involvement posed a dilemma. While aid was welcome, collaboration in a war popularly perceived to be anti-Islamic was not. Malaysia was particularly sensitive to such cooperation and criticized the Philippines for allowing the United

States to conduct joint military exercises aimed at eradicating the Abu Sayyaf Group. Additionally, the core members of ASEAN which have traditionally spoken with the same voice on major international events were acutely divided in their attitude towards the Iraq crisis. The deep split among the members was apparent during the annual retreat of the ASEAN foreign ministers who met in Sabah on the eve of the war with the aim to find a common ground on the issue. As it turned out, however, the ministers only could compare notes on Iraq and found it was impossible to reach any agreement on the issue. Malaysia and Indonesia were openly critical on the US decision to act outside the UN framework. Indonesia condemned this action as illegal since there was no second UN resolution adopted against Iraq.

A number of countries in the region also do not look at the terrorist attacks on the US as isolated incidents or as random acts of violence. Instead, many people in Asia see these terrorist attacks as reactions to American foreign policy, particularly in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in which Washington always supported Israel against the Palestinians who have been deprived of their homeland. Doubts also began to emerge quickly that the American war against terrorism would quickly lead to a global anti-Islam movement. Therefore, the ASEAN leaders in their Declaration on Joint Action to Counter Terrorism explicitly stated they reject any attempt to link terrorism with any religion or race. There is a doubt that the perception that the war against terror targets Islam has complicated and made more difficult the efforts to deal with terrorist threats. This is particularly true in Indonesia where in the past the authoritarian regime had followed repressive policies towards Islamic political activism, but is now embarking on democratization. US statements concerning the presence of terrorist networks in Indonesia and its calls to the Indonesian government to act effectively against people suspected of terrorism were met with widespread suspicions by various Indonesian Muslim groups. These suspicions were not only directed at the US but also against the Indonesian government, in particular the security and intelligence apparatus, that the hunt against terrorists was used as a pretext to weaken the Islamic insurgency in Indonesia. Consequently, before the Bali bombing on 12th October 2002 Indonesia was criticized by many Western and a number of neighboring countries for being too soft on terrorism. Besides having to pay attention to Muslim sensitivities, the new democratic government did not possess an effective legal instrument to deal with terrorist threats after the repeal of the earlier draconian anti-subversion law.

Furthermore, ASEAN members have been critical on certain aspects of western policy on this issue. For instance, some countries in Southeast Asia have condemned the policy of some western countries that have issued indiscriminate travel warnings to their citizens and an increasing difficulty for Muslims to enter the United States and some western countries. As a respond to this phenomena, ASEAN leaders issued another Declaration on Terrorism at the 8th ASEAN Summit in Phnom Penh 3rd November 2002 which mentions a “call on the international community to avoid indiscriminately advising their citizens to refrain from visiting or otherwise dealing with our countries, in the absence of established evidence to substantiate rumors of possible terrorist attacks, as such measure could help the objectives of the terrorists”. As those travel warnings have somewhat influenced regional economy, the Declaration also “urge the international community to support ASEAN's efforts to combat terrorism and restore business confidence in the region”.

However, the US high involvement in combating terrorism in Southeast Asia in general has induced a better regional cooperation in this matter. For instance, the sharing of meaningful information through ASEAN is improving, though there are short-term stumbling blocks. The expansion of Cobra Gold, an annual U.S.-led multilateral exercise, may facilitate cooperation and interoperability as well as to demonstrate American commitment to the region. Though there are problems with Cobra Gold (e.g., its anti-terrorism exercise is jungle-based instead of urban), the U.S. Pacific command would like to see up to five countries participating. Although only Singapore and Thailand have taken part so far, at least 18 governments sent observers in 2003.

Moreover, Washington has pressed ASEAN to develop collective counter-terrorist responses. Indeed, the war on terrorism has served as a modest spur for closer multilateral cooperation in the region, although skepticism remains about the extent to which words have translated into deeds (Breckon 2001). Within ASEAN there has been a modest increase in multilateral defense cooperation. For instance, in November 2001, ASEAN army chiefs met and pledged to increase military-to-military cooperation and intelligence sharing. Counterterrorism also led to the first ever meeting of regional defense intelligence chiefs (Acharya 2002: 197) and subsequently led to the first meeting of ASEAN ministers of defense in April 2006. In May 2002 ASEAN foreign ministers proposed a counter-terrorism Action Plan, including specific measures aimed at tackling money-laundering, identity-fraud, illegal migration and the trafficking of small arms (Capie 2002). Three months later a United States–ASEAN Joint Declaration for Cooperation to

Combat International Terrorism was signed, providing the mechanism of intelligence sharing, capacity building and improved border controls.

Washington is also interested in strengthening ASEAN as an institution. In August 2002 the State Department announced the ASEAN Cooperation Plan, designed to assist with the integration of the new ASEAN members, combat transnational challenges like terrorism piracy and the spread of HIV/AIDS and strengthen the organization's Secretariat. However, few details have yet to emerge. In a wider framework, the US also demanded a strong response from the ARF at the 2002 Ministerial Meeting in Brunei and ministers responded with an "ARF Statement on Measures against Terrorist Financing". Unlike previous ARF agreements, these counter-terrorist actions were not simply voluntary or 'encouraged', but were actually required of members. The Statement declared that ARF members "will implement quickly and decisively measures that the United Nations has identified as mandatory to combating terrorist financing. We will block terrorists' access to our financial system . . . [and] will work with other relevant international bodies . . ." (Glosserman 2002).

Another argument to be highlighted here is that the US role in combating terrorism in Southeast Asia has widened differences among ASEAN members in how to deal with the issue. During the negotiation of the US-ASEAN Joint Declaration on terrorism, several countries had difficulty to agree upon the wording of the text. For instance, Vietnam and Indonesia sought reassurances that the ASEAN principle of non-interference would be respected (The Straits Times, 3 August 2002). ASEAN countries are also different in developing strategies in combating terrorism with the assistance of the US. For example, Singapore is cooperating with the US more closely on key anti-terrorism and anti-proliferation issues, including the city state's participation in the Container Security Initiative (CSI) and the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI) aimed at intercepting illegal weapons cargoes transported over sea, air, and land. However, countries like Indonesia and Malaysia refused to participate in these two programs as well rejected the idea of the US and other major powers like Japan in joining the regional countries to patrol their waters in the Malacca Straits. Having said that, American strategic attention to Southeast Asia in the wake of 9/11 also constitutes a perceptual challenge to the credibility of regional institutions whose professed objective is to offer regional solutions to regional problems.

In spite many evidences show that contemporary US-ASEAN relations have influenced ASEAN pattern of regionalism, especially in the field of security, one should not over-state the extent to which the US has re-engaged in the region through its second front doctrine. Indeed, there is no doubt that Washington's intervention in Southeast Asia has risen in the wake of the terrorist attacks, but the country's strategic priorities remain firmly focused in the Middle East, South, East, and Central Asia. This argument can be strengthened by looking at the fact that there have been no proposals for new US bases in the region. Moreover, despite the flurry joint declarations and statements made by ASEAN and the US, there is still a gap between those statements and the actual implementation at the practical level. This condition seems unlikely to change in the foreseeable future. It makes the US still prefers to deal with countries in the region on a bilateral basis rather than via regional organizations. ASEAN's strong adherence to the principle of non-interference and the Association's preservation of regional autonomy also limit the US deeper role in the global war on terrorism in Southeast Asia.

8. Closing Remarks

The US is in the unique position of being the sole remaining superpower in the world. Yet the safety of its citizens, the security of its homeland as well as the security of its allies and regional partners is threatened by terrorist organizations bent on the destruction of the American way of life. Therefore, the preservation of peace, economic growth, and stability in Southeast Asia are vital interests for the US. The war on terrorism refocused American strategic interest on the region and strengthened existing relationships. Even though the US has re-asserted its role in Southeast Asia through the doctrine of the second front on the war on terrorism, it does not however significantly change the pattern of ASEAN security regionalism. As argued in this paper, the US itself prefers to build relations with ASEAN countries on a bilateral basis since ASEAN still needs to reverse a common argument that the Association is still facing a gap between verbal statement and actual implementation. Indeed, the US role in the global war on terrorism in Southeast Asia has diversified perspectives in how to fight against terrorism among ASEAN members, but this condition does not lead to the breakdown of regional commitment in combating terrorism.

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