

# ASEAN MECHANISMS ON MARITIME SECURITY COOPERATION

Event Report  
26 September 2017



**Event Report**

**ASEAN MECHANISMS ON MARITIME  
SECURITY COOPERATION**

**26 September 2017  
Campus Clubhouse  
Nanyang Technological University, Singapore**

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### **Organised by:**

Maritime Security Programme,  
Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies,  
S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies,  
Nanyang Technological University,  
Singapore

### **Rapporteur:**

Rajni Gamage

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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This workshop was part of a study that looked at the existing mechanisms within the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and ASEAN-Plus that have maritime security on the agenda. Participants from the 10 ASEAN member countries provided insights on how their respective countries view these different forums. The general attitude of the participants was that existing duplication of maritime-related discussions across these platforms, while likely to pose a coordination challenge, was an integral part of the “ASEAN Way” and was vital for confidence-building in the region.

The workshop also assessed the impact of these mechanisms on the notion of ASEAN centrality. The ASEAN states had divided perspectives on this: on one hand, these forums provided smaller states with greater strategic leverage vis-à-vis external states, allowed some progress when there was deadlock due to the ASEAN Way, and external powers generally held the needed resources. At the same time, there was concern that maritime issues dominated by external powers generated a lesser sense of ownership amongst ASEAN states, precluded ASEAN from forming a unified stance on certain issues, and subjected these platforms to the balance-of-power politics. Of these expanded formats, the ASEAN Defence Ministers Meeting-Plus appears to have made the most progress in terms of practical maritime security cooperation.

Participants discussed key topical issues including Indonesia’s push for the criminalisation of illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing; the lack of leadership within ASEAN; ASEAN’s norm-making functions; the bilateral and minilateral models of cooperation among ASEAN states; China’s Belt and Road Initiative; and whether a dedicated ASEAN sectoral body on maritime security was necessary.

Progress in the South China Sea disputes is expected to be foremost on the agenda of Singapore’s chairmanship in 2018, especially in terms of determining what practical cooperation activities can be pursued as per Article 6 of the China-ASEAN Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea.

## **Session 1: The ASEAN Mechanisms – AMM, ADMM, AMMTC, AND ATM (including their corresponding SOM) and AMF**

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The first session of the workshop explored the different perspectives countries have on ASEAN mechanisms with maritime security on the agenda. As the scope of discussions and activities expand across different platforms, there is likely to be an overlap of efforts, thereby risking the effectiveness of these frameworks and creating a drain on resources. Key questions for the sessions were: Which mechanism (from a country's perspective) is considered the most useful and which redundant? Should maritime security be enfolded into one dedicated sectoral body, or is there merit in multiple platforms?

All ASEAN countries view maritime security as important; however, countries differ in terms of prioritisation and capability. For the Philippines, institutionalised maritime security cooperation is critical as it has no credible national defence posture. The Department of Foreign Affairs has traditionally been central in the Philippines' involvement in ASEAN; nonetheless, in recent years their Department of National Defense has gradually been involved deeper in ASEAN activities, including on issues of maritime security. However, there is no long-term strategy. Previous Philippine administrations viewed ASEAN mechanisms as means to promote international law and norms of maritime cooperation, especially in relation to the arbitration case against China. However, under President Duterte, the national policy with regard to these mechanisms has shifted from territorial defence in the South China Sea to practical maritime security cooperation, such as humanitarian and disaster relief and countering piracy, maritime terrorism, and drug trafficking. For instance, the Philippine Coast Guard is severely under-resourced, and stands to gain substantially from the recently-convened ASEAN Coast Guards Forum. However, there may be the danger of strategy and operational policy disjunction. That is, even if there is top-level interest in increased maritime security cooperation, this may not be executed rigorously by bureaucracy with their own interests.

Malaysia acknowledges that in ASEAN there are diverging regional preferences on issues like illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing, joint patrols among coast guards, and military-to-military engagement. At the same time, there are also converging regional interests like marine environmental protection and maritime connectivity. There was recently a national meeting in Malaysia to discuss what their priorities in the ASEAN Defence Ministers Meeting-Plus (ADMM+) are.

Cambodia's maritime-related priorities are non-traditional security issues like human trafficking, IUU fishing, maritime terrorism, and sea piracy. Their interest in maritime-related affairs heightened after 2009, when the U.S. and Australia helped found the National Maritime Commission in the Cambodian Ministry of Defence. However, no action plan has followed since.

On the issue of the high number of ASEAN meetings and possible overlaps on issues related to maritime security discussed in various forums, most participants generally recognise that there may be such a situation. Furthermore, some countries like Malaysia have experienced a lack of capacity (i.e., officials) to attend all these meetings. For the Philippines, engagement in other multilateral and bilateral initiatives may result in meeting fatigue. Brunei also remarked in the following session about fatigue and limited resources due to the proliferation of meetings and exercises, and it being difficult for officials to balance domestic obligations and regional necessities

Participants from Cambodia and Vietnam, on the other hand, were keen to emphasise that the multiple maritime-related ASEAN mechanisms are complementary and not duplicative. Cambodia is almost always a follower and not an initiator of these forums, and sees participation as a diplomatic avenue and a means for learning best practices. The annual bilateral military exercise conducted between the U.S. and ASEAN states – Exercise CARAT (Cooperation Afloat Readiness and Training) – is one of Cambodia's maritime security pillars, although its continuity has been questioned due to increasing regional tensions.

The significance of ASEAN, and the way it functions, was a major topic of discussion. The general sentiment from all speakers was that while ASEAN is important, it needed to readjust priorities and strengthen cooperation in response to major global trends; ASEAN states also need to balance national interests with regional and global interests. A participant from Malaysia held the view that ASEAN and ASEAN-Plus (ASEAN+) forums should discuss major geostrategic issues like the evolving U.S.-China dynamics. Most of these ASEAN-related mechanisms involve senior officials, and this is useful for Malaysia as it can ensure greater coordination between national and regional initiatives. In this regard, the ASEAN Defence Ministers Meeting (ADMM) and ADMM+ are considered the most appropriate platforms as they involve senior defence ministers. Nonetheless, the ASEAN Maritime Forum (AMF) is still important because it discusses issues not in the domain of security and defence. An interesting suggestion from a Malaysian participant was that some existing sectoral bodies like the Expanded ASEAN Maritime

Forum (EAMF) and the ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Transnational Crime (AMMTC) can be merged into the main corresponding mechanisms.

Within Indonesia, opinion is divided on whether and how ASEAN matters for the country, particularly in light of President Joko Widodo's Global Maritime Fulcrum vision. The loyalist camp feels that ASEAN provides diplomatic modalities that suits Indonesia's inclination to project power. The increasingly popular sceptic camp views ASEAN's non-binding mechanisms as ineffective, and is calling for the ASEAN Charter to be revised. However, both camps shared the common consensus that a single body dealing with maritime issues is futile – the loyalists feel maritime issues are too complicated for such an outfit; while the sceptics feel it is unnecessary as it will not be legally binding. These divisions in national opinion reflect the domestic situation, with multiple bodies working on maritime-related affairs such as the new Coordinating Ministry for Maritime Affairs and the Coordinating Ministry for Political, Legal, and Security Affairs. There is also the challenge of domestic coordination for regional initiatives. For instance, the focal point of the AMMTC is the Indonesian police, but the issue of IUU fishing comes under the domain of the Coordinating Ministry for Maritime Affairs.

For Indonesia, leadership in ASEAN is important, but at the same time, it is not clear at present whether Indonesia wants to or is ready to take up such a role. Indonesia also sees the instrumentality of ASEAN in fostering traditional diplomatic positions on issues like the South China Sea. At the same time, Indonesia looks forward to testing the waters in ASEAN on other issues of high national priority such as IUU fishing. A big agenda for Indonesia currently, ASEAN has thus far failed to support their efforts to recognise IUU fishing as a transnational crime. There seems to be a loss of confidence in ASEAN, and Indonesia may bring the matter to other forums or by convening a regional conference with the aim of creating a legally-binding regional agreement against crimes on fisheries.

With regard to the AMF, some Indonesian officials perceive it as a useful mechanism to promote dialogue, consultation, information sharing, and to decrease the dominance of Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships in Asia (ReCAAP) in the region. However, there remain sceptics on whether the AMF has the mandate over other ASEAN sectoral bodies. Some Indonesian officials feel that the AMF weakened when it expanded to the EAMF. According to them, the original AMF is now a victim to balance-of-power politics, and prevents ASEAN from consolidating its position vis-à-vis external powers.



On the domestic front, continuity and coordination are problems for most countries. One characteristic of the Philippines' foreign policy is that personalities tend to matter more than institutions. Thus, the level of importance given to ASEAN mechanisms depends on the level of familiarity – in terms of individual and institutional memory. In championing certain issues, including maritime issues, individuals play a crucial role. There is a preference to place individuals with sustained involvement and memory in these ASEAN mechanisms. However this raises the question of how to gauge the efficacy of some of these institutions when the actual problem may be the absence of suitable skills? At the same time, do institutional memories and a preconceived idea of what ASEAN is supposed to do stifle change?

For both Vietnam and Indonesia, the coordination between ministries that attend different ASEAN meetings is an issue. For example, Indonesia initially approved of capacity-building initiatives made in ADMM and ADMM+ (attended by Ministry of Defence), but implementation on these fronts has been met with domestic coordination challenges. Thailand also suffers from lack of coordination, and limited resources and human capital, which limit effective regional maritime security cooperation. There is no continuity in maritime policies, as policy shifts follow the country's regime changes.

For Cambodia, there is no strong national position with regard to ASEAN and ASEAN-led mechanisms. All multilateral forums, including their expanded formats, are seen to serve its national interests in terms of engaging with external powers, capacity-building, information sharing, and learning best practices. It is more about how Cambodia can learn from others than what Cambodia seeks to do, partly because Cambodia hardly has any experts on maritime issues, particularly on maritime law. As for extra-regional partners of ASEAN, Cambodia views them as extremely important because ASEAN would become irrelevant in regional affairs if they only talked among themselves. Engaging with external powers also increases the strategic leverage of ASEAN's smaller powers. Under its new foreign minister, Cambodia has exhibited a clear commitment to the process to create a Code of Conduct for the South China Sea, and other preventive and conflict management mechanisms in the South China Sea.

On the issue of a single ASEAN sectoral body dedicated to maritime issues, most participants question the practical arrangement. For example, the schedules of Cambodia's relevant persons are already packed, and they fight off additional initiatives in order to get actual work done. For Brunei, having a single sectoral body devoted to maritime security would be workable

at the operational level, but may face challenges at the strategic level, as all maritime security issues, even the environmental-related ones, have sovereignty implications.

One interesting point that came from the discussion was how well bilateral or minilateral settings outside of the ASEAN mechanisms have worked. In most cases, cooperation occurs when policy windows of opportunity are created; one example being the recent establishment of Trilateral Maritime Patrol between Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines in the Sulu and Celebes Sea. Indonesia is also a strong believer of sub-regional mechanisms of cooperation involving directly-concerned states, and actively participates in minilateral cooperation practices. There have also been discussions to go beyond ASEAN. Although it is unlikely that Indonesia would adopt a novel approach towards ASEAN, it may increasingly look to work with regional bodies besides ASEAN (new or existing) and to engage with other players, like Europe. Almost in the same manner, Thailand, while supportive of multilateral and regional agreements with regard to maritime security, in practice, is more likely to sign bilateral agreements.

## **Session 2: The ASEAN+ Mechanisms – ARF ISM-MS, ARF ISM-CTTC, ADMM+, EAMF**

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The second session of the workshop explored the role of extra-regional powers in driving the agenda of maritime security in ASEAN+ forums. ASEAN engages its dialogue partners and other regional countries in ASEAN-led mechanisms. However, as ASEAN does not have a dedicated sectoral body on maritime issues, it has very limited drive on the expanded forum. The consequent implication is that agenda-setting in expanded platforms would be driven by the non-ASEAN countries with greater resources. There were many questions to consider: Which of these ASEAN+ mechanisms are considered more useful? What agenda would each country like to pursue with their non-ASEAN participants?

One of the key issues deliberated during this session was that of ASEAN centrality amidst external powers. How could ASEAN states harness the potential of external powers, while keeping at bay less constructive interests? Would differences in perspective within ASEAN lead to weakening of a united position? The tendency for ASEAN states to push for certain ideas at ASEAN+ forums when they have not met with success at the ASEAN level was also identified. This raises questions of to what extent these states prioritise ASEAN and how willing they are to make use of ASEAN+ mechanisms. Another speaker stated that maritime initiatives predominated by external powers tend to receive lukewarm response by most ASEAN states. The China-ASEAN Maritime Fund, for example, has ample resources but some ASEAN members do not have sufficient strategic trust in China to exploit this fully. Arguably, the same can be said for the Belt and Road Initiative; it is well-funded but several ASEAN states are approaching it with caution.

The Philippines is concerned that external players are using forums like ADMM+ to satisfy their respective national interests. One of the solutions suggested in response was for ASEAN to engage individually with major external powers, as this would allow ASEAN to speak with more coherence on interests. One of the Indonesian speakers stated that for Indonesia, external powers were more likely to be engaged for non-traditional security issues such as cooperation on cleaning marine plastic debris, and incidents at sea like oil spills. However, on territorial issues, the engagement of external powers is to be fully rejected.

Meanwhile, Singapore's ASEAN chairmanship in 2018 will overlap with its role

as country coordinator for the ASEAN-China dialogue. Singapore realises the importance of improving its relations with China, as the latter's cooperation is vital in making headway in regional obligations and its own objectives as ASEAN chair. As much as Singapore is committed to all ASEAN mechanisms, on the matter of maritime security, Singapore is more likely to focus its resources on ADMM+ as it is seen to hold the best chances of success at present. There has not been much movement in maritime security cooperation within the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) and EAMF. Under ADMM+, the scope and depth of multilateral security cooperation is unprecedented, and the scale of its maritime exercises (e.g., the Maritime Security and Counter Terrorism Exercise in 2016) signal that maritime security is an agenda priority. However, are engagements of such tempo and frequency sustainable? Also, will ADMM+ leverage on this success in maritime cooperation to reduce tensions in the South China Sea?

One of Singapore's top and sustained priorities has been for all ADMM+ states to join the Code for Unplanned Encounter at Sea (CUES), an agreement that was reached at the 2014 Western Pacific Naval Symposium. In November 2015, Singapore's defence minister urged all ADMM+ states to expand CUES to include white hulls (this proposal was later extended to include the underwater realm). Should Singapore as ASEAN chair be able to get all ADMM+ states to endorse CUES, there is potential for ADMM+ to put in place a framework for multilateral maritime exercises (applying CUES) in appropriate areas in the South China Sea. Such progress may question ADMM+'s mandate as its role evolves from tackling non-traditional security issues to traditional ones. This is not, however, to delegate ADMM+ the tall order of being a peace process for the South China Sea disputes. ARF seems to be stuck with the more traditional regional issues such as those involving Taiwan and North Korea, and it is important that ADMM+ does not face the same fate. For Singapore, it is important to ensure that ADMM+ pursues more practical goals. Moreover, it is worrying to notice an uptick in the "ASEAN minus X" types of cooperation, a trend which might in time undermine ADMM+.

Vietnam views the ASEAN and ASEAN+ mechanisms as platforms for exchange of views and confidence-building, rather than practical cooperation. Practical cooperation in the region is in reality done outside the ASEAN framework, like ReCAAP Information Sharing Centre and Partnerships in Environmental Management for the Seas of East Asia. In other words, while ASEAN talks, the action is taking place elsewhere. For Vietnam, regional maritime priorities include the prevention and management of maritime incidents at sea, application of CUES, development of an agenda for respect

for freedom of navigation (FON) and overflight, and protection of the marine environment. It also wants ADMM+ to increase its visibility in order to intensify practical cooperation, since it has the capacity and can respond very quickly to incidents at sea. Special attention should also be given to institutionalising the EAMF, as it is the only ASEAN-led mechanism with such wide-ranging participation and agenda.

From Thailand's perspective, its national maritime plan has five levels: global, regional, ASEAN, neighbours, and domestic. Nonetheless, Thailand tends to adapt to new issues arising within ASEAN, and has lately not pursued any national agenda in maritime security. Although Thailand is a non-claimant in the South China Sea disputes, it has shown strong support for the ASEAN-China code of conduct (COC). Thailand has also settled its maritime territory dispute with Malaysia by creating a joint development zone. With Cambodia, however, the likelihood of future conflict over overlapping maritime areas with rich energy deposits remains. Meanwhile, though a preliminary agreement has been reached with Vietnam allowing fishing boats to operate in a designated maritime space, the problem of illegal fishing persists.

Indonesia, interestingly, seems to favour the ARF. Indonesia views ARF as a platform for ASEAN to engage external powers like the U.S., China, and Japan. However, at present with its IUU fishing agenda, Indonesia is disappointed that it has not succeeded in gaining support through the ARF platform. There is an idea within Indonesia, although it is unclear to what extent this is serious, to move some maritime issues from the ARF to the AMF. Indonesia is likely to look beyond ASEAN and its related mechanisms to address its concerns on IUU fishing and climate change.

From Brunei's perspective, its defence sector has progressed in terms of contribution to maritime security cooperation. ADMM+ in particular has brought value to capacity-building and confidence-building. The ADMM+ Experts' Working Group (EWG) on Maritime Security has provided the Brunei Navy the opportunity to share information and conduct joint exercises, and is seen as complementary to activities under the ASEAN Naval Chiefs Meeting. The other ASEAN+ mechanisms are seen as providing a supporting role for maritime security cooperation. One of the challenges within ASEAN-led mechanisms is the lack of continuity, as there is a new ASEAN chair with a new set of priorities each year, and Brunei believes this problem also applies for the EWGs and ADMM.

Specifically for the ADMM, the speaker from Brunei suggested that it was time to review the ADMM mechanisms. An issue was raised was that if the defence

sector (i.e., the ADMM) was perceived as the most successful institution on maritime security, it may risk the ADMM processes being laden with more than it can and should. On politically-sensitive maritime incidents, this may even lead to militarisation of such issues. The importance of a whole-of-government approach to maritime security was therefore noted. Having a variety of government agencies involved would help limit excessive militarisation, and balance the hard and soft capabilities they bring to the table. It was also suggested that there be overlapping or back-to-back naval and coast guard exercises. Since ASEAN members have uneven capacities, regional cooperation becomes a challenge. Suggestions were also made towards putting in place an ASEAN Naval Chiefs+ forum and an ASEAN Coast Guard+ forum for capacity-building assistance and for discussing issues relating to the high seas.

### **Session 3: Recent Initiatives and Proposals in Maritime Security**

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The third session of the workshop discussed some of the initiatives that had been proposed in the different ASEAN mechanisms. These include CUES, and its extension to civilian law enforcement agencies and the underwater realm; diplomatic hotlines for maritime emergencies; adoption of a regional statement on IUU fishing; and dispute resolution mechanisms. Country perspectives towards such initiatives were presented. A series of questions were addressed: Which initiatives do their countries support? Which proposals are they opposed to or have no interest in?

On the topic of CUES, a participant from Vietnam suggested that if CUES was expanded to the coast guard, this would be challenging at an operational level as there are fundamental differences between the coast guard and the navy. That is, the basis of CUES is to prevent the use of force, but the function of the coast guard is to use force to combat crimes. It was also stated that even supposed low-hanging fruits of cooperation, such as search and rescue and marine scientific research, were challenging as deciding a location meant the issue of territorial integrity would emerge. It was also stated that maritime cooperation among ASEAN states should be simpler since they share the same “language” and therefore, should harmonise interests among themselves first before approaching non-ASEAN states. For instance, Vietnam and Indonesia have overlapping exclusive economic zones (EEZs) and can work out some form of joint development. It was also said that the proliferation of exercises helped demonstrate willingness for cooperation. In fact, they should expand further to the high seas or hold exercises in different states’ EEZs on a rotating basis.

The viewpoints of both Laos and Cambodia signalled their commitment to CUES in the South China Sea. Cambodia is a strong supporter of existing initiatives pursued. A participant from the Philippines suggested that it was essential and urgent to adopt a mechanism similar to CUES for coast guard forces in the region. In fact, this proposal was put forward by the Philippines at the 2016 ADMM.

Malaysia, on the other hand, felt that CUES only applies to the Navy. Thus, it is irrelevant to be expanded to the coast guard. Within Indonesia, it was noted that there is considerable pessimism on initiatives like CUES, as some officials pointed to the fact that it took more than a decade for the ASEAN-China DOC to progress into a COC in the South China Sea. The primary reason for such

slow progress is uneven interests and capabilities of ASEAN states. Indonesia is still a relative novice at maritime institutions, as it only recently released its national ocean policy, and subsequently recalibrated its foreign policy to it. On expanding CUES to the coast guard, it was remarked that Indonesia does not even have one, given the absence of a brown-water space.

IUU fishing was brought up next. Indonesia, as has been conveyed in previous sessions, is a promoter of a regional statement, if not a legally-binding one. Other countries in general are supportive of commitments related to sustainable development, but IUU fishing might be a different issue. The Philippines immediately took action after the EU gave it a yellow card for IUU fishing, and was subsequently praised by the latter for its quick response. This bureaucratic culture has remained even after Duterte came into power, which explains some of the Philippines' operational ambivalence on certain maritime issues. However, while the state is ever-ready to pass cutting-edge laws, including ones on IUU fishing and maritime confidence-building measures, there is often a lack of state capacity to implement them.

Vietnam agreed that IUU fishing requires imperative responses and cooperation between states concerned. However, criminalisation of IUU fishing activities or imposing brutal punishment cannot address the root causes of the issue.

For Malaysia, the overall trend of fishermen being detained for IUU fishing in Malaysian waters by the coast guard is on the rise. Significantly, 93 per cent of reported IUU fishing came from Vietnam due to overfishing in northern South China Sea. Negligible numbers of Chinese fishing boats were reported in these statistics as these are usually accompanied by the Chinese coast guard and maritime militia. Malaysia wishes to treat IUU fishing as a resource management issue and not an issue of transnational organised crime. This is because not all elements of IUU fishing are illegal and to criminalise it would violate United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea Article 73. ASEAN states' coast guards also do not have uniform force thresholds. Moreover, Malaysia lacks the confidence that other countries will not abuse the situation if IUU fishing is criminalised. This lack of strategic trust is seen to preclude cooperation even on search and rescue operations. There are alternative ways to tackle this issue; for instance, Vietnam and Malaysia have an agreed-upon form of cooperation where arrested fishermen are handed over to the respective country and tried under national law.

On dispute resolution mechanisms, Malaysia is comfortable with existing mechanisms. It was suggested that member states should not be too



ambitious about ASEAN, and that several, overlapping maritime-related mechanisms was simply part of ASEAN's modus operandi. However, it was recommended that hotlines and similar initiatives should progress beyond the foreign ministry level, as in the event of a maritime incident, the foreign ministers are not the first responders due to bureaucratic procedures and them not being on the ground.

Specifically on the South China Sea disputes, certain ASEAN states have been observed to adopt an approach of being agreeable towards China bilaterally. There is no such distinction for the Philippines, however, to assume a tougher stance multilaterally. The Duterte administration has been working double time to repair its bilateral ties with China, including setting up a bilateral foreign ministry dialogue and establishing military-to-military contacts. Laos, on the other hand, gave an example of the sub-regional cooperation mechanisms ASEAN has created within the Mekong.

Another issue that was discussed was joint cooperation, particularly in the disputed areas of the South China Sea. It was mentioned that while there have been proposals for joint development in the disputed waters off Scarborough Shoal, this area is considered to be the territory of Philippines as per its national law. If Duterte were to push for joint development in this location, he would likely be impeached, unless he manages to synchronise the Constitution with international law. Meanwhile, Vietnam views areas of marine scientific research, environment, and humanitarian protection as low-hanging fruits, that may yet be sensitive. For example, because marine scientific research and environment protection fall within the jurisdiction of coastal states, cooperation takes place in near-shore areas.

## Session 4: Open Discussion

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Due to its complexity, the South China Sea dispute is almost always the elephant in the room. This means that most maritime-related issues, like maritime environment security, have been sidelined in these mechanisms by discussions on the South China Sea. In ASEAN, many concepts are kept intentionally ambiguous to encompass the interests of all states. Added to this, the absence of regional strategic trust means that maritime security cooperation cannot move as fast as expected. While duplication may pose coordination challenges, some ASEAN states actually prefer the ambiguity and lack of coordination, and appreciate its merits in facilitating confidence-building. It was also stated that duplication is acceptable for those mechanisms with a strong sectoral focus, since they are competent in their areas of expertise and have the domestic competence to carry through.

While the ADMM and ADMM+ have delivered through practical cooperation, the AMF is gradually losing its momentum and is currently groping its way forward. It was suggested that it is best for each mechanism to focus on its own niche and mandate. It was also acknowledged that ASEAN states should have the ability to live with a certain degree of messiness, where more is better than less, and duplication is better than nothing. It should not be seen as discouraging that ASEAN states are pursuing several initiatives at the bilateral level before these issues are eventually introduced at the regional ASEAN level, as this is the regional *modus operandi*. Bilateral and minilateral cooperation among ASEAN member states is common and effective (e.g., the Malacca Straits Patrols initiative among Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, and Thailand). It was suggested that these cooperative initiatives should be highlighted as ASEAN success stories as well.

It was highlighted that Singapore has tabled a CUES for underwater vessels. The Republic of Singapore Navy recently launched a Submarine Safety Informational Portal which provides information on movement of white shipping that may be hazardous to underwater vessels and on submarine rescue mechanisms (state and commercial). Although users are not required to share confidential information, the regional response has so far been lukewarm and Singapore wondered how such initiatives can be pushed further without seeming suspicious to its neighbours. In response, some of the speakers stated that this was a result of political inattention whereby ASEAN states are occupied with other more immediate necessities, like capacity-building and traditional maritime disputes. The issue of submarine information

sharing and safety is not high (and often absent) on their maritime security agenda.

Finally, there was a suggestion that the next chair of ASEAN should explore various cooperative efforts. Maritime security is too broad and cross-cutting to be designated to any single body or mechanism. The best way forward is for each mechanism to focus on their own niche areas where they have the mandate and wherewithal to make policy decisions.

## Way Ahead

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There is a clear lack of leadership regarding maritime security initiatives within ASEAN. On occasions when certain ASEAN states attempt to assume leadership on a specific maritime-related issue, there is minimal support from other member states due to a lack of strategic trust and confidence in the region. It is not, however, clear that this is the case only with regard to maritime issues. It was proposed that a follow-up workshop be held next year to touch on new developments and issues.

## Seminar Programme

Tuesday, 18 July 2017

0800 - 0830 hrs

**Registration**

0830 - 0915 hrs

**Welcome Address**

Professor Joseph Liow

*Professor of Comparative and International Politics; and Dean, RSIS*

**Scoping Address**

Dr Shafiah Muhibat

*Senior Fellow, Maritime Security Programme, IDSS, RSIS*

0915 - 1100 hrs

**Session 1: The ASEAN Mechanisms: AMM, ADMM, AMMTC, and ATM (including their corresponding SOM) and AMF**

Moderator

Ms Jane Chan

*Research Fellow and Coordinator of Maritime Security Programme, IDSS, RSIS*

Speakers

Dr Aries Arugay

*Associate Professor of Political Science, University of the Philippines*

Ms Sumathy Permal

*Senior Researcher, Centre for Straits of Malacca, Maritime Institute of Malaysia*

Mr Andrew Mantong

*Researcher, Centre for Strategic and International Studies, Indonesia*

Dr Vannarith Chheang

*Visiting Fellow, ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute; and Senior Fellow, Cambodia Institute for Cooperation and Peace*

1100 - 1115 hrs

**Tea Break**

1115 - 1300 hrs

**Session 2: The ASEAN+ Mechanisms: ARF ISM-MS, ARF ISM-CTTC, ADMM+, EAMF**

Moderator

Dr Shafiah Muhibat

*Senior Fellow, Maritime Security Programme, IDSS, RSIS*

## Speakers

Professor Tan See Seng

*Professor of International Relations; and Deputy Director and Head of Research, IDSS, RSIS*

Dr Tran Truong Thuy

*Director, Foundation for East Seas Studies; and Deputy Director General, Bien Dong Institute for Maritime Studies, Diplomatic Academy of Vietnam*

Dr Harit Intakanok

*Assistant Dean for International Relations, Khon Kaen University International College, Thailand*

Ms Yura Suma Adnan

*Head of Research Division, Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies, Ministry of Defence, Brunei Darussalam*

**1300 - 1400 hrs**

**Lunch**

**1400 - 1545 hrs**

**Session 3: Recent Initiatives/Proposals in Maritime Security**

## Moderator

Ms Jane Chan

*Research Fellow and Coordinator of Maritime Security Programme, IDSS, RSIS*

## Speakers

Dr Nguyen Thi Lan Anh

*Deputy Director General, Bien Dong Institute for Maritime Studies; and Vice Dean, International Law Faculty, Diplomatic Academy of Vietnam*

Mr Richard Heydarian

*Political Analyst, GMA Network; and Columnist, Manila Bulletin*

Dr Bouadam Sengkhamkhoutlavong

*Director, Asia Research Center, National University of Laos*

Mr Shahrizan Lockman

*Senior Analyst, Institute of Strategic & International Studies, Malaysia*

**1545 - 1600 hrs**

**Tea Break**

**1600 - 1700 hrs**

**Session 4: Open Discussion**

Moderator

Dr Shafiah Muhibat

*Senior Fellow, Maritime Security Programme, IDSS, RSIS*

Kick-off comments

Ms Hoang Thi Ha

*Lead Researcher II (Political-Security Affairs), ASEAN Studies Centre,  
ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute*

**1700 - 1715 hrs**

**Closing Remarks**

**1830 hrs**

**Workshop Dinner**

## About the Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies

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The **Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies (IDSS)** is a key research component of the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS). It focuses on defence and security research to serve national needs. IDSS faculty and research staff conducts both academic and policy-oriented research on security-related issues and developments affecting Southeast Asia and the Asia Pacific. IDSS is divided into three research clusters: (i) The Asia Pacific cluster – comprising the China, South Asia, U.S., and Regional Security Architecture programmes; (ii) The Malay Archipelago cluster – comprising the Indonesia and Malaysia programmes; and (iii) The Military and Security cluster – comprising the Military Transformations, Maritime Security, and Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) programmes. Finally, the Military Studies Programme, the wing that provides military education, is also a part of IDSS.

For more information about IDSS, please visit [www.rsis.edu.sg/research/idss](http://www.rsis.edu.sg/research/idss).

## About the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies

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The **S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS)** is a professional graduate school of international affairs at the Nanyang Technological University, Singapore. RSIS' mission is to develop a community of scholars and policy analysts at the forefront of security studies and international affairs. Its core functions are research, graduate education and networking. It produces cutting-edge research on Asia Pacific Security, Multilateralism and Regionalism, Conflict Studies, Non-Traditional Security, International Political Economy, and Country and Region Studies. RSIS' activities are aimed at assisting policymakers to develop comprehensive approaches to strategic thinking on issues related to security and stability in the Asia Pacific.

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