

The Emergence of an Asia-Pacific Diplomacy of Counter-Terrorism in Tackling the Islamic State Threat

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INTRODUCTION

The militaries in the Asia-Pacific region have been largely established to respond to specific threats to national security. As it was the global norm, largely due to the experience of the First and Second World Wars, the build-up of balanced conventional capabilities consisting of the army, navy and air force was something common to most militaries in the region, particularly in China, Japan, USA and most of the ASEAN countries. Yet, due to the specific nature and peculiarities of threats in some countries, the conventional capabilities of some militaries were lopsided and structurally unbalanced. While the USA and Japan developed a balanced force structure, this was not true of China and most of the ASEAN member-states. While Japan's Self-Defence Force largely cloned its structure from that of the USA, the occupying power after Japan's defeat in the Second World

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War, China's military capability was mostly army-based with a weak air force and navy. This was mainly due to the concept of 'people's war' developed in response to the Chinese Communist Party's struggle for power in China against the nationalist forces led by Chiang Kai-shek who was eventually defeated and driven to the off-shore island of Taiwan.

In the same vein, the experience of ASEAN member-states was different from that of the USA and Japan. Somewhat more akin to China, most of the ASEAN member-states were afflicted with internal security challenges of one kind or another. The Philippines, Malaya (later Malaysia) and Thailand were threatened by Soviet and Chinese-backed communist insurgencies. To overcome these threats, a largely army-based counter-insurgency mode of military structure was created, with a relatively weak air force and navy. Similarly, due to various separatist threats from within, Indonesia's military structure was largely army-based with a weak navy and air force. It was also a legacy of Indonesia's war of nationalism based on guerrilla warfare against the Dutch from 1945 to 1949. In contrast, following its separation from Malaysia in 1965, Singapore developed national conscription as the basis of its national defence and endeavoured to create a balanced force structure. This was mainly because of the urban character of Singapore and where there was no jungle-based insurgency threat.

The Indochinese states, due to the continuous warfare since the end of the Second World War developed a force structure that was largely army-based with a weak air force and navy. The most powerful military capability was that of Vietnam with a relatively weaker force structure in Cambodia and Laos. Vietnam's forte was guerrilla warfare, mainly army-based to win the war of attrition against the USA and its Cold War allies. Brunei developed a weak military capacity with the force structure dominated by the army. It is also assisted by a strong army-based Gurkha force. Like most of Southeast Asia, Myanmar (formerly Burma) developed a force structure that was loaded in favour of the army. This was mainly to deal with the armed struggle launched by the regional ethnic separatist forces since 1947, something that still characterises Myanmar today. Its air force and navy are relatively weak. All in all, serious budget constraints also led to lesser investments being made for the air force and navy.

Against this backdrop, how can one analyse and conceptualise the Asia-Pacific's diplomacy of counter-terrorism in tackling the threat posed by the Islamic State? This chapter will examine the counter-terrorism policies of Asia-Pacific states and analyse how non-traditional threats such

as that posed by terrorism have been managed by the armed forces of the region.

THE RISE OF NON-TRADITIONAL SECURITY THREATS IN THE ASIA-PACIFIC REGION

While non-traditional security threats are not new, they came increasingly into focus in the post-Cold War era. While the specific definition of what constitutes non-traditional security threats remain contested, generally it refers to challenges to a state's well-being and survival from non-military sources (Caballero-Anthony 2007). According to one definition, this includes challenges stemming from 'climate change, resource scarcity, infectious diseases, natural disasters, irregular migration, food shortages, people smuggling, drug trafficking and transnational crime' (What are NTS Issues? 2016). These threats have become increasingly important in the post-Cold War era in the context of rising globalisation, environmental degradation and international terrorism. Advances in technology and communications have also facilitated this process. In turn, this has opened up new vistas and facets of security, and its conceptualisation. Equally important, not only are these threats transnational in character but they also require comprehensive solutions involving political, economic, socio-cultural and even psychological dimensions (Caballero-Anthony 2010). Military force alone cannot resolve these threats, in turn, leading to the role expansion of the military with the rise of what has been referred to as the 'humanitarian' use of military power, be it in peacekeeping operations, and humanitarian and disaster relief. The rise in importance of military operations other than war (MOOTW), which aims to deter war, resolve conflict, promote peace and support civilian authorities in response to domestic or post-crisis era, is part and parcel, of the changing role of the military and its deployment, both domestically and internationally (Bonn and Baker 2000).

What has led to the rise of non-traditional security threats is that military power alone might no longer guarantee a state of its existential security. Many new threats are largely non-military in nature and where the use of military power can be counterproductive. These threats are also transnational in character. As was argued by V. R. Raghavan, 'the existing state-centred approach to national security, confined to the defence of a country against territorial aggression, has been widened to the idea of security inclusive of a larger set of threats to the people of the state' (Iqbal 2016). Hence, the widening of the concept of security and the broadening of

what should constitute security studies. Many elements characterise non-traditional security threats. These can arise suddenly from the government or non-government sectors. This makes the threats unpredictable and hence, difficult to address quickly. The transnational character of these threats also make it difficult to neutralise them quickly as was evident from the Asian Financial Crisis of 1997–98, the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) outbreak (2003–04), the H5NI ‘bird flu’ virus outbreak in 2007, the Global Financial Crisis in 2008, the outbreak of Ebola in West Africa (2014), the threat by the Islamic State and its global affiliates since 2014, the Zika virus outbreak (2016), and the recent refugee issue confronting Western Europe (2016).

However, if there is one non-traditional security threat that has engulfed and preoccupied most states in Asia, Africa and Europe today, it is the threat posed by Islamist extremism and terrorism. There are many reasons for the rise of this non-traditional security threat, with many issues of the post-colonial order continuing to bedevil many communities in Asia and Africa as well as serious issues of governance at home and internationally. The lure of Islamist extremism has been further strengthened by the ideological and doctrinal appeal of a supranational radical narrative that is able to link local grievances with global movements, and state and non-state actors that are blamed for the state of affairs in the Muslim majority and minority states. As radical elements coalesce around radical supranational movements and actors such as Al Qaeda and the self-proclaimed Islamic State to target states through wanton acts of violence, law and order forces, especially the police, military and even intelligence agencies are being reinvigorated to respond both within and without the state borders through various cooperative schemes.

ASIA-PACIFIC AND THE RISE OF THE ISLAMIC STATE THREAT

The rise and expansion of the Islamic State or its Arabic acronym *Da'esh* was a function of struggles within various extremist groups and their affiliates, particularly, Al Qaeda as well as the role of regional states in the Middle East and the external powers, mainly in the West led by the USA (Cockburn 2015; Weiss and Hassan 2015; Stern and Berger 2015). What is termed the Islamic State today would probably not be in existence had the USA not invaded Iraq in 2003. The West and in particular the USA was complicit in the creation and rise of the Islamic State on two grounds. First, by invading Iraq to oust Saddam Hussein and his regime, it created

the conditions for the rise of a Sunni-based terrorist group that was both anti-West, especially American and anti-Shia. Second, later, as part of a strategy to undermine and oust Bashir Assad of Syria, the USA, together with its close allies, both Arabs and in the West, funded a then largely weak ISIS, boomeranging into what ISIS has become today, a Frankenstein Monster, in turn, leading to the flow of more than 35,000 foreign fighters from nearly 100 countries, including from Southeast Asia, to join ISIS in Iraq and Syria. The brutalities and atrocities that the Islamic States have perpetrated are unparalleled in recent history, aimed at provoking counteractions that will only benefit the ISIS to the detriment of the USA, the West and conservative-feudal Arab states.

ISIS began as an Al Qaeda outfit. What is the Islamic State today went through a series of evolution before it metamorphosed into the mega-terrorist outfit it is today in control of swathes of land and population. In response to the US-led invasion and occupation of Iraq that toppled the Saddam Hussein's regime in March 2003 and where a Shia-dominated regime was emplaced, a Sunni-based jihadi-oriented insurgency surfaced. This provided the Al Qaeda with an opportunity to intervene in Iraq. In early 2004, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, a Jordanian, established the Organisation of Monotheism and Jihad (OMJ) that was affiliated with Al Qaeda. Later, the OMJ morphed into the Organization of Jihad's Base in the Country of Two Rivers, commonly referred to as the Al Qaeda Iraq (AQI). In January 2006, the AQI 'iraqized' itself by renaming itself as Mujahidin Shura Council (MSC), also partly to distant itself from Al Qaeda. Abu Musab was killed by the Americans on 7 June 2006 (Cockburn 2015; Weiss and Hassan 2015; Stern and Berger 2015).

In October 2006, the MSC joined forces with four insurgent groups to establish the Islamic State of Iraq (ISI), led by Abdullah al-Rashid al-Baghdadi and Abu Ayyub al-Masri, both of whom were killed in April 2010. The ISI's leadership was taken over by Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi aka Abu Duwa. With the outbreak of a civil war in Syria, ISI took advantage of the Sunni-Shia civil war by fighting against Shia and Assad forces in Syria. On 9 April 2013, Abu Bakr declared the establishment of the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Shaam. On 29 June 2014, the establishment of a new Caliphate with Abu Bakr as the Caliph was announced. ISIS also renamed itself as the Islamic State or *Daulah Islamiyyah*. Thus, even though ISIS originated from Al Qaeda, over time, it distanced itself from the premier terrorist organisation, especially its leader, Ayman al-Zawahiri, viewing Al Qaeda and its leadership as being irrelevant, ineffective and inferior in the

context of the ongoing jihadi struggle in the Islamic World, especially in the Middle East.

What helped the Islamic State to emergence in such a speed was due to a number of factors. It was due to the pro-Jewish, neo-conservative, Bush-initiated invasion, of Iraq that created the necessary and sufficient pre-conditions for radical groups such as ISIS to take root. The regime change imposed on Iraq by the short-sighted invasion, which was more concerned with assisting Israel's security concerns and grabbing the abundant Iraqi oil, destroyed the Baathist secular state and replaced it with a Shia-dominated political-religious-social order that discriminated and marginalised the Sunnis. ISIS was the blowback and backlash to this new political-security order created by the Americans and their clients in Iraq. This led to the exponential growth of a Sunni-driven insurgency that eventually evolved into ISIS. In this context, one can easily concur with Garikai Chengu (2014), a research scholar at Harvard University that:

There are essentially three wars being waged in Syria: one between the government and the rebels, another between Iran and Saudi Arabia, and yet another between America and Russia. It is this third, neo-Cold War battle that made U.S. foreign policy makers decide to take the risk of arming Islamist rebels in Syria, because Syrian President, Bashar al-Assad, is a key Russian ally. Rather embarrassingly, many of these Syrian rebels have now turned out to be ISIS thugs, who are openly brandishing American-made M16 Assault rifles.

One can venture to argue that even the second war, between Iran and Saudi Arabia, if it is a war at all, is in part responsible for the rise of ISIS. This is because the backward-looking and archaic-oriented Salafiyyah and Wahhabiyyah orthodoxy of Saudi Arabia, which colours the conservative Saudi regime, was highly responsible in supporting Sunni groups that were anti-Shia, anti-Iran and anti-Assad. This led to Saudi Arabia and a number of conservative pro-American regimes in the Gulf States such as Qatar, Bahrain and Kuwait to bankroll extremist and radical groups that eventually coalesced to form the Islamic States. According to *The Washington Post*, Kuwait, a designated Non-NATO Ally of the USA, 'is the leading source of funding for al-Qaeda linked terrorists [Jabhat al-Nusra] fighting in Syria's civil war' (Glaser 2014). In fact, the US Treasury Undersecretary, David Cohen, referred to Kuwait as the 'epicentre of fundraising for terrorist groups in Syria' (Glaser 2014). Similarly Qatar is believed to be funding extremist group such as Al Qaeda and its affiliate,

Jabhat al-Nusra, and the Islamic State. Interestingly, Jabhat al-Nusra is on the US blacklist of terrorist organisations and yet, the US Government is channelling weapons and money to it to hurt both Assad and the Islamic State. It was in this context that the Syrian Foreign Minister, Walid al-Moallem called on the West, not just to undertake military strikes against the Islamic State but also to cut off its sources of funding for these groups. Otherwise, ‘it will create a whirlpool of which the international community will not exit in decades’ (Alakbar English 2014).

COUNTERING THE ISLAMIC STATE’S THREAT IN THE ASIA-PACIFIC

There are a number of ways in which the Islamic State is threatening the Asia-Pacific region. The first threat is the ISIS fighters who are fighting as the core or main soldiers of the self-proclaimed Islamic State. These soldiers, numbering more than 30,000 are from Iraq and Syria, the different parts of the Middle East, North Africa as well as from other continents, mainly from Western and Central Europe (mainly Russia), North America, Africa, Australia and Asia. The ISIS core fighters have gain experience in fighting as organised combat units as well as become experts in the handling and deployment of modern weapon systems. The Islamic State has already shown its propensity to launch attacks in Iraq and Syria, and it has the capacity to attack targets of Asia-Pacific region in the Middle East, such as the beheadings of captured Japanese and American civilians. These soldiers are also experts in terrorist attacks, making them doubly dangerous in terms of skills, experience and ideological motivations.

Asia-Pacific’s second security concern stems from the ‘returnees’. While there are many fighters from the Asia-Pacific fighting for the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria, little is known of exactly who these fighters are and the probability of their return is even less known. Many may have returned due to disenchantment with the Islamic State, or due to injuries or even being sent back as sleepers to be activated for attacks when ordered. The ‘returnees’ who are well trained in combat operations, including bomb making as well as fortified with extremist ideology, pose a serious threat to the region.

The third category of threats to the region stems from those who are inspired by ISIS even though they may not have travelled to the Middle East. Unlike the Al Qaeda, ISIS’ social media is very effective in radicalising individuals for recruitment, fund raising, gathering intelligence and

even organising attacks. ISIS is also very adept in uploading manuals for bomb making, making of suicide vests and even on how to kill individuals ‘silently’ which can influence vulnerable youths in the region, including those seeking adventure in the war zone.

Against this backdrop, even though not all states in the Asia-Pacific are directly affected by the threat of the Islamic State, most are. The main states that face what can be described as a serious threat from ISIS are China, Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Thailand, Myanmar and Singapore. Citizens from these countries can be found as foreign fighters in Iraq and Syria, where all of them have sworn allegiance to the Islamic State and its leader, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi.

All of these states have also invoked various hard and soft measures, kinetic and non-kinetic to deal with the threat from the Islamic State. The first major issue is to admit that the Islamic State’s threat exists and only then can appropriate measures be adopted to counter it. Here, the national and international enabling factors must be addressed. According to a Congressional Report (Blanchard and Humud 2016, pp. 4–5), the Islamic State’s expansion has been facilitated by a number of factors. These include:

1. conflicts based on ethnic, sectarian and/or political disputes;
2. foreign fighter recruitment and travel networks related to such conflicts;
3. the weakness of state security forces and the availability of arms;
4. limited international counterterrorism and intelligence cooperation and
5. armed groups and individuals to whom the Islamic State’s specific ideology appeals or for whom affiliation with the Islamic State offers potential material advantages.

Yet, despite the Islamic State’s determination to ‘remain and expand’, there are many factors that have constrained its growth. According to the Congressional Research Service Report (Blanchard and Humud 2016, p. 5), these factors can be enumerated as follows:

1. targeting of civilians, including the use of violence against Muslims and religious minorities;
2. its broad and uncompromising claims of religious/political authority;

3. opposition from local or foreign security forces, other non- state actors, and/or rival salafi jihadist groups;
4. improvements in international counterterrorism and intelligence cooperation and
5. the existence of competing identities, loyalties and agendas among potential recruits.

While the Islamic State's expansion beyond Syria and Iraq has been stalled, except for its ability to take advantage of the ongoing conflict in Yemen and Libya, territorially, it has also shrunk, losing many cities in Iraq and Syria to government forces. Yet, due to its transnational character, its appeal to radical elements worldwide, and the role of 'returnees' and those being inspired by the Islamic State's ideology, the threat from the Islamic State has not diminished but may even become more serious in the near future. According to John Brennan, the CIA Director (cited in Blanchard and Humud 2016, p. 7):

To compensate for territorial losses, ISIL will probably rely more on guerilla tactics, including high profile attacks outside the territory in Syria and Iraq that it currently holds.... Unfortunately, despite all of our progress against ISIL on the battlefield and in the financial realm, our efforts have not reduced the group's terrorism capability and global reach. The resources needed for terrorism are very modest, and the group would have to suffer even heavier losses on territory, manpower and money for its terrorist capacity to decline significantly. Moreover, the group's foreign branches and global networks can help preserve its capacity for terrorism, regardless of events in Iraq and Syria. In fact, as the pressure mounts on ISIL, we judge that it will intensify its global terror campaign to maintain its dominance of the global terrorism agenda.... We judge that ISIL is training and attempting to deploy operatives for further attacks. ISIL has large cadre of Western fighters who could potentially serve as operatives for attacks in the West. And the group is probably exploring a variety of means for infiltrating operatives into the West, including in refugee flows, smuggling routes and legitimate methods of travel. Furthermore, as we have seen in Orlando, San Bernardino and elsewhere, ISIL is attempting to inspire attacks by sympathisers who have no direct links to the group.

The Islamic State is also very adept in compelling governments, in the name of counter-terrorism, to take measures that may eventually backfire and benefit the Islamic State in terms of support, recruitment, funding

and further strengthen its propaganda claims. For instance, its ability to use the social media and various Internet-enabled communications platform has led many governments to react in what can be seen as being undemocratic, abusing various freedoms, thereby weakening the legitimacy of these state. The same can be said of the various attempts to curb the spread of religious sermons in Muslim and non-Muslim countries. While this may be easily undertaken where the Muslims are a minority, say in Singapore, but in Muslim majority states such as Indonesia and Malaysia, this can worsen the relations between the government and its populace who also forms the majority of its electorate. This may confirm the Islamic State's claim that such governments are indeed 'anti-Islam' and should be overthrown, thereby leading to a backlash even though the Islamic State's vitriolic ideology needs to be curbed.

THE ROLE OF THE MILITARY IN COUNTERING THE ISLAMIC STATE IN THE ASIA-PACIFIC

Counter-terrorism is mainly a law and order issue, giving the police powers to deal with the threat, which is often presupposed to be internally driven. This is practised in most states including in the Asia-Pacific. Yet, due either to the increasing military power of terrorist groups and the danger they pose, the weakness of the police to deal with the terrorist threat or the fact that the military has always, or on an ad hoc basis, been given a counter-terrorism role, there has been a concomitant increase in the military's role in counter-terrorism, including in the Asia-Pacific region. This is also due to the transnational character of terrorism, driven mainly from outside the territory of the targeted state, such as the Mumbai (India) attacks in November 2008, with the perpetrators coming from Pakistan. Hence, there are many cases where the militaries in the Asia-Pacific are prepared to tackle non-traditional security threats because their conventional military capabilities have already been technologically engineered for dual use or even more important, there has been a historical legacy where the military, rather than simply focusing on external threats, has also been involved in counter-terrorism operations. In Southeast Asia, for instance, there is a long history of the militaries in Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines and Thailand being involved in counter-terrorism operations, be it against groups driven by secular ideologies such as the various communist movements or religiously oriented groups such as the Al Qaeda and the Islamic State. Whether the military's involvement in non-traditional security oper-

ations has bolstered or undermined ASEAN centrality within the regional security architecture is something worth exploring.

How intensely a country's military is allowed to participate in counter-terrorism operations depends on the approach a state adopts towards the threat of terrorism. The Criminal Justice and Enhanced Criminal Justice Models emphasises on law enforcement with the military playing a supporting role to the police. The War and Counter-Terror Models views terrorism as an existential threat to the state, sanctioning the use of military force to terminate the threat. In the literature on the military's role in counter-terrorism, it can be seen as a force with both positive and negative attributes. On the positive side, it can be instrumental in combating terrorism. Successful military strikes can neutralise key leaders of terrorist groups such as 'Operation Neptune Spear' that killed Osama bin Laden in May 2011. Military operations can also disrupt terrorist operations. On the flip side, military operations can prove counterproductive. The death and injury caused by military strikes on innocent bystanders, mostly civilians and to infrastructure, can lead to anger being directed at the attackers. In turn, this can generate support and sympathy for the terrorists, as has happened with the frequent American drone attacks in Pakistan and Afghanistan.

Militaries are established by the state to fight a state adversary even though many militaries are now involved in peacekeeping operations and peace support missions. In the end, whether the military is permitted to participate in counter-terrorist operations also depend on how the threat is perceived. If it is viewed strictly from the law and order perspective, then the police are given the prerogative and priority to neutralise the threat based on laws of the state. However, if terrorism is viewed and based on a war model that views terrorism as something that threatens existential security of the state, then military intervention in counter-terrorism is seen as necessary and legitimate.

According to Geraint Hughes, the military's role in counter-terrorism can be seen from different perspectives. The military can be called into action on grounds of aiding a civilian authority to restore law and order, or to provide disaster relief, including following a mass casualty attack. The military has also been used to deter terrorist attacks through its deployment in public places or to guard critical infrastructure. The military has also been used to interdict, both on air and the high seas, of terrorists or arms shipment. Many militaries are also involved in training friendly foreign forces in counter-terrorism operations. The military,

especially its specialised units, has undertaken hostage rescue. Militaries are also involved in clandestine operation and intelligence gathering. More poignantly, militaries have been involved with various degrees of operations in pre-emptive intervention, targeted killing, retaliation and, in the final analysis, in undertaking regime change (Hughes 2011, pp. 40–59).

CASE STUDY: THE INDONESIAN MILITARY AND COUNTER-TERRORISM

To what extent militaries in the Asia-Pacific are prepared to tackle non-traditional security threats, and whether the armed forces' involvement in non-traditional security, will or not undermine ASEAN's centrality within the regional security architecture is best analysed by looking at Indonesia's military response to the threat of terrorism. There are many sound reasons for choosing the Indonesian case study to illuminate the nexus between the military and counter-terrorism. Unlike many armed forces, the Indonesian military has been involved in counter-terrorism operations from its very onset in the 1940s, focusing more on internal rather than external threats. It is also adept in dealing with threats emanating from conflicts that are based on race and religion. Unlike other security agencies such as the Police, the Indonesian military was always viewed as the 'senior partner' due to its historical role in helping to win national independence from the Dutch in 1949 through an armed struggle that was led by the Army. Historically, this also meant that the other security agencies were disadvantaged from the perspective of experience in counter-terrorism, intelligence assets as well as a military structure that extended to the entire length and breadth of the Indonesian archipelago. From this perspective, not only is the Indonesian military the most experienced counter-terrorism specialist in the country, it is also the most experienced and with the longest history of involvement in dealing with this particular non-traditional security threat compared to other armies in the Asia-Pacific, especially China, India and Vietnam which were more preoccupied with external threats.

Modern Indonesia's nationhood coincided with the threat of terrorism posed by the Darul Islam, a radical Islamist group bent of establishing an Islamic state in Indonesia (1948–62). In order to combat Darul Islam's low level insurgency and terrorism, the Indonesian Army established the KOPASSUS or Special Forces Command. The Command was critical in putting down various rebellions, including acts of terrorism such as the hijacking of a Garuda plane in March 1981 (Singh 2015).

A people's power revolution brought down the 32-year regime of Suharto in May 1998. A major consequence of this power shift was the 'back to barracks' policy of a democratising Indonesia. Mainly for political rather than operational considerations, the Indonesian military's counter-terrorism role was terminated. The military was also accused of various human rights violations during the Suharto era. The liberal narrative, that a country in transition to democracy should allow civilians to undertake tasks of maintaining law and order with the military concentrating on protecting the state from external threats, also took dominance. This gave the police the sole responsibility for counter-terrorism operations.

This praxis became a reality when Indonesia was threatened by the Al Qaeda-linked Jemaah Islamiyah terrorist group which claimed responsibility for five major bombings. This included the first Bali bombings in October 2002, the August 2003 suicide bombing of the J.W. Marriott Hotel in Jakarta, the September 2004 bombing outside the Australian Embassy in Jakarta, the second Bali bombings in October 2005 and the July 2009 twin bombings of J.W. Marriott Hotel and Ritz Carlton Hotel in Jakarta. Additionally, there have been more than 30 minor bombings in Indonesia since 2000 (Ramakrishna 2009, 2014). As the police gained prominence in counter-terrorism, the Indonesian military, despite much expertise and experience, watched from the side lines.

Following the first Bali bombings, the Indonesian government established various institutions and passed laws to deal with the threat. What developed was a police-led counter-terrorism regime that has remained in place. In 2002, a Coordinating Desk of Counter-Terrorism in the Coordinating Ministry of Politics and Security was established. In June 2003, Special Detachment 88, a specialised counter-terrorism unit from the Indonesian National Police, was tasked to neutralise the rising danger posed by Islamist terrorism. In September 2010, BNPT or the National Counter-Terrorism Agency was established. Generally, the police-dominated counter-terrorism regime did good work in countering the threat of terrorism and, by 2016, it had succeeded in killing and detaining more than 100 and 1000 terrorists, respectively.

Despite this, mainly due to various shortcomings of the police and the rising legitimacy of the military, the latter has successfully reclaimed part of its counter-terrorism role. While the military argued that it was well-endowed to play a counter-terrorism role, political sentiment militated against such a role expansion. Still, the military succeeded in justifying its role expansion on grounds of the need to assist the police in enhancing

national security from the rising threat of terrorism. The first major breakthrough in this regard was the placement of a senior military officer in the BNPT in September 2010.

Since then, there has been a steady induction of the military into the national counter-terrorism regime. In September 2013, the Army was allowed to assist in counter-terrorism by collecting information on terrorist activities domestically (Yang Hui 2013). In March 2015, military personnel began undertaking counter-terrorism training with the police. On 9 June 2015, the military's Joint Special Operations Command was launched, breaking through what had hitherto been a police monopoly in counter-terrorism since 2002. Comprising initially of 90 personnel, the military-led Command brought together elite Special Forces of the army, navy and air force to undertake counter-terrorist operations nationwide. This represented a game changer in Indonesia's counter-terrorism policy, brought about primarily by the rising threat posed by the Islamic State.

While the police-led counter-terrorism policies were effective in countering the Jemaah Islamiyah, new threats called into question past policies, especially one predicated on a police-driven counter-terrorism approach. The approach failed to detect and anticipate the emergence of the Islamic State's threat in Indonesia. This failure played a key role in the re-emergence of the military's role in counter-terrorism. The police have also been criticised for many failures, including the ability of leading terrorists such as Abu Dujana to return undetected from the Philippines, the negative image that Detachment 88 acquired as a killing machine and the inability of the police to protect its own officers, where nearly 40 of them have been gunned down by terrorists.

The improving image of the military, in contrast to the police, which has been tainted with massive corruption scandals, also hurt the police-led counter-terrorism policy. The growth of home-grown terrorists and where the targets are Indonesians rather than foreigners also propelled the military to the forefront of counter-terrorism in view of its strengths on the intelligence front. The military's territorial structure, right down to the remotest village, provides it with a resource, especially intelligence that no other agency has.

The military's all-round strength in counter-terrorism in the past and its possession of well-trained combat units, supported by good intelligence, are strong factors that make it natural for it to be deployed for counter-terrorism duties. Also, the next phase of counter-terrorism in

Indonesia is expected to be more demanding and dangerous with the Islamic State and its supporters possessing well-trained combat units. This is evident from the establishment of the *Katibah Nusantara* in Syria, a Malay-based combat unit made up mainly of Malaysians and Indonesians. Partly in anticipation of a more robust military attack from the terrorists, both home-grown self-radicalised and *Katibah* units, the military's involvement in counter-terrorism is something to be welcomed. Already, beginning in 2015, under the leadership of a charismatic defence minister, Ryamizard, the military launched a six-month military operation in Sulawesi province in eastern Indonesia. This was to terminate the threat posed by the Eastern Indonesian Mujahidin led by Santoso that is affiliated with the Islamic State, and where the police had failed to dislodge the group since 2012. Once the Indonesian military was involved, Santoso's deputy, Daeng Koro, was killed in April 2015 and in July 2016, Santoso himself was gunned down by a joint military task force in the jungles of Central Sulawesi, bringing an end to the saga of a man described as the most dangerous terrorist in Indonesia, with the Indonesian military scoring a major operational success in counter-terrorism.

Despite various reservations, the military's increasing role in counter-terrorism will enhance Indonesia's counter-terrorism capacity. What is being undertaken is not the displacement of the police counter-terrorism tasks but supplementing it. This is all the more necessary as counter-terrorism also involves many non-military tasks such as de-radicalisation and counter-radicalism in various segments of society and where the military does not have access, such as in mosques, schools, prisons and mass media. In view of this, a joint police-military approach to counter-terrorism will go a long way in ensuring that the threat posed by the Islamic State would remain manageable.

CONCLUSION

It is clearly evident that militaries in the Asia-Pacific region are increasingly prepared to tackle non-traditional security threats. This is necessitated by the increasing dangers countries in the region are facing from non-conventional threats and where the resources, including training of the military personnel, are extremely useful in mitigating such threats to the nation. While the military can play a critical role in alleviating a crisis from natural disasters such as the 2004 tsunami that affected Indonesia or floods in China, militaries are also extremely helpful in assisting the civilian

authorities in confronting threats short of war, such as diseases, piracy and even terrorism.

In the case of Southeast Asia, there has never really been a historical dichotomy of the military being confined to the barracks and tasked only to undertake duties to defend a country from external threats. In fact, the militaries in Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, Philippines and Burma/Myanmar have spent the bulk of their history in overcoming domestic threats, be it from insurgencies led by communists, regional separatists or Islamists as in Indonesia, Thailand and the Philippines even though it is only the Indonesian military that was almost totally preoccupied with internal rather than external threats.

The more effectively militaries are involved in successfully tackling non-traditional security threats in Southeast Asia, the more likely they will be able to enhance ASEAN's centrality within the regional security architecture in the Asia-Pacific. A threat-free ASEAN achieved from within will be able to serve as a more effective security organisation in performing tasks to enhance regional security at the Asia-Pacific level, especially in managing or mitigating rivalries and even conflicts among the great powers, for instance, the USA and China over the South China Sea region. Furthermore, this is not a novel idea or practice as almost every military in the Asia-Pacific is undertaking operations of one kind or another to tackle non-traditional security threats. To that extent, the more effectively Asia-Pacific militaries perform their tasks of tackling non-traditional security threats, at least as far as ASEAN is concerned, the more its centrality within the regional security architecture in the Asia-Pacific will be enhanced and guaranteed.

However, as far as the key issue of counter-terrorism is concerned, the one area of intra-regional Asian diplomacy that can be enhanced and strengthened is in the area of counter-terrorism. Generally, while military cooperation has been growing among Asian states, there are still many areas that can be enhanced and improved. While there are many sensitivities involved in military-to-military cooperation, mainly due to past conflicts and unresolved territorial disputes, defence diplomacy in general and military cooperation in particular, especially in counter-terrorism, is a potential growth area. This is all the more urgent as there is a growing perception of the Islamic State and its terrorism as the common threat to all Asian states. Some of the possible areas of cooperation would involve the Special Forces and Counter-Terrorism Units of various militaries in the Asia-Pacific conducting bilateral and multilateral exercises. This can

later expand to sharing of best practices, intelligence and if need be, when the opportunities avail themselves, for joint operations, especially in the common border regions. Through these endeavours, the importance and centrality of the Asia-Pacific militaries in tackling non-traditional security threats, especially terrorism, can be enhanced.

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