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COOPERATIVE SECURITY IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

A Case Study of Natural Disaster Management

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ABSTRACT

Cooperative Security in Southeast Asia: A Case Study of Natural Disaster Management

Supreecha Hiranburana

Cooperative security is a strategic principle oriented toward achieving shared objectives through the consent of all parties, rather than through coercion or the threat of force. In the case of natural disaster, the crisis at hand is not a conflict to be resolved by arms or compulsion, but a shared emergency calling for cooperation — cooperation aimed at restoring stability and security to the affected state and, more broadly, to the Southeast Asian region as a whole. Because this strategy rests on consent rather than coercion, it has proven comparatively easy to mobilise, generating not only agreement among members but sustained humanitarian assistance among neighbouring states across Southeast Asia.

Drawing on constructivist international relations theory, this study examines how shared norms, identity, and culture among ASEAN member states have enabled cooperative security to take root in the specific domain of disaster response, using the cases of Indonesia, Thailand, and Myanmar.

KEYWORDS — Cooperative Security · Southeast Asia · ASEAN · Disaster Management · Constructivism

CONTENTS

01	Introduction	8
02	Objectives of the Study	11
03	Disaster Cooperation in Southeast Asia	12
04	The Concept of Cooperative Security	15
05	Constructivism: Norms, Identity, and Culture	17
	<i>Norms</i>	18
	<i>Identity</i>	18
	<i>Culture</i>	18
06	Case Analysis: Indonesia, Thailand, Myanmar	19
07	Conclusion	21
08	Recommendations	26
	Notes	27
	References	29
	About the Author	31

01 CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

When the Cold War came to a close in 1991, regional security cooperation began to depart from earlier, more traditional models of security. The security-cooperation circumstances of individual states had themselves changed, and in order to keep pace with a new global era, thinkers increasingly sought to bring into the security conversation issues beyond the traditional foundations of military threat and foreign aggression — among them, the concept of *human security*.

Thailand's Fourth National Plan for Social Welfare and Social Development (B.E. 2545–2549 / 2002–2006) defines human security as a condition in which people are guaranteed their rights to safety, have their basic needs met, can live in society with dignity, are free from poverty and despair, live with a measure of happiness, and enjoy equal opportunity to develop their own potential.¹ This principle of equal opportunity for self-development also underlies the United Nations Development Programme's 1994 *Human Development Report*, which placed human security on the global agenda as a new conceptual frontier — one emphasising a life free from fear, marked by confidence, resilience, and stability against threats to security in every dimension, not military threats alone. At the same time, the report recognised the value of regional groupings that draw on the particular strengths of each member state to reinforce

one another in addressing shared security problems, giving rise to what is now understood as *regional security*.

ASEAN — the Association of Southeast Asian Nations — was founded on 8 August 1967, prompted by instability across the region: interstate conflict and the spread of communist influence. The Association's founding purpose was to build peace and security in Southeast Asia, and, through that stability, political stability and economic, social, and cultural progress. On 1 March 2009, ASEAN's leaders signed the Cha-am Hua Hin Declaration on the Roadmap for the ASEAN Community, committing to complete the ASEAN Community by 2015. That Community comprises three pillars: the ASEAN Political-Security Community (APSC), the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC), and the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC). Alongside it, member states concluded the ASEAN Charter, a treaty among member states establishing the legal framework and institutional structure of the Association, intended to strengthen ASEAN's capacity to pursue its objectives — above all, the drive toward Community-building by 2015 that ASEAN's leaders had agreed upon.

To give effect to the Political-Security Community, member states jointly drafted the ASEAN Political-Security Community Blueprint, built around three emphases: first, a body of shared rules and values covering the activities through which members build mutual understanding of one another's differing social systems, cultures, and histories, and promote political development along common lines — democratic principles, the promotion and protection of human rights, support for civil-society participation, opposition to corruption, and the promotion of the rule of law and good governance; second, the promotion of peace and shared responsibility for maintaining comprehensive security for the peoples of

the region; and third, cooperation to reinforce traditional security through confidence-building measures and the peaceful settlement of disputes, so as to prevent war and allow ASEAN member states to coexist in peace.²

The substantive content of the ASEAN Charter speaks directly to political-security cooperation, emphasising the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms, the strengthening of democracy, and the enhancement of good governance and the rule of law in response to emerging security challenges. On the non-traditional security dimension of the ASEAN Community, as set out in the Security Community Blueprint, six categories of transnational crime are identified as of particular concern: terrorism; kidnapping and human trafficking; drug trafficking; illegal fishing; the trafficking of small arms; cybercrime; and piracy. To this list must be added the severe natural disasters that have struck the ASEAN region — disasters that have required the mobilisation of member states' resources and even military capacity for humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, and that have, in turn, been linked to efforts to reduce arms build-ups in the pursuit of peace within ASEAN.³

02 CHAPTER TWO

Objectives of the Study

This study pursues three objectives:

1. To examine the development of cooperative security in the Southeast Asian region.
2. To examine disaster-management planning as it relates to security within Southeast Asia.
3. To analyse cooperative security and the factors that give rise to it.

03 CHAPTER THREE

Disaster Cooperation in Southeast Asia

Southeast Asia is a region increasingly exposed to natural disaster, owing to its geography and to the mounting pressures of environmental change on human life across the region. Disasters take many forms — and each occurrence is classed among the region's most serious threats, inflicting substantial damage wherever it strikes. Floods, windstorms, fires, droughts, extreme heat, extreme cold, volcanic eruption, earthquake, and tsunami have all, at various times, struck at the security of individual nations and of the region as a whole: the 2004 earthquake and tsunami that struck Aceh, Indonesia; Cyclone Nargis, which struck Myanmar in 2008; and the great ASEAN floods of 2011 — each episode brought heavy economic loss and considerable loss of life.

The system, processes, and institutions through which the region cooperates on disaster response have a long history. The ASEAN Council first initiated cooperation on disaster management under the framework of the 1967 Bangkok Declaration, establishing the ASEAN Permanent Committee on Socio-Cultural Activities, whose remit included disaster management. In February 1976, in Bali, Indonesia, ASEAN's leaders signed the Declaration of ASEAN Concord (Bali Concord I), which enshrined disaster management as a matter of principle: natural disasters

and other calamities, the Declaration held, could hold back the development of member states, and member states would accordingly extend relief assistance to afflicted states, to the extent of their capacity, from that point onward.

Later efforts focused on building capacity in urgent-need areas, establishing an ASEAN information-sharing network, promoting public awareness of and participation in disaster-risk reduction, and strengthening community participation and preparedness for disaster.⁴ Flooding, monsoon storms, typhoons, earthquakes, and volcanic eruptions recur regularly across Southeast Asia and have, time and again, caused severe damage to the states they strike. It was this recurring exposure that led to the signing of an ASEAN declaration establishing the ASEAN Committee on Disaster Management (ACDM) in early 2003. The Committee draws together representatives at the head-of-agency level from each ASEAN member state's relevant government bodies, and is responsible for coordinating the region's work on assistance and recovery following disaster — whether natural or man-made — including early warning and assistance to victims, so as to reduce loss of life and property. This shared recognition of the problem led all ten ASEAN member states — Thailand, Malaysia, Vietnam, Myanmar, Cambodia, the Philippines, Indonesia, Laos, Singapore, and Brunei — to build a joint framework for disaster management across the ASEAN region. Under that framework, member states have developed a regional agreement on disaster management and emergency response, standards of practice for disaster relief consistent with that agreement, strengthened the capacity of each member state's working groups to mount rapid emergency response, and instituted regular disaster-response exercises across ASEAN.

Examining cooperative security in Southeast Asia in this way brings into view the underlying conditions that give rise to different forms of security cooperation, and calls for analysis at the level of both individual security and collective security — an analysis to which the following chapters now turn.

04 CHAPTER FOUR

The Concept of Cooperative Security

Cooperative security has enjoyed growing currency since the end of the Cold War. Although the term has never settled into a single, universally accepted definition, it has been used with increasing frequency to signal new approaches to relations among states — a strategy for building peace and harmony between nations by proposing a form of security cooperation that covers both the traditional core of international security (the preparation of collective defence and protection within a group of states) and a newer element: the security of the individual, or domestic security, together with the promotion of stability more broadly. On this newer conception, security cooperation is no longer a matter of war alone, but is shot through with the language and aims of peace.

In the 1990s, many strategic thinkers were swept up in a general optimism, hailing what many called a new world order. Security cooperation became a phrase that rapidly reshaped ideals of international security. In 1990, Joe Clark, then Canada's Secretary of State for External Affairs, spoke of security in cooperative terms, with particular emphasis on security in the North Pacific. Later that same year, the concept gained wider credibility, was extended, and was formally articulated —

establishing an approach to maintaining security cooperation that offered a genuinely new avenue for international security cooperation.⁵

05 CHAPTER FIVE

Constructivism: The Sources of Cooperative Security

The central move of constructivist theory is a shift away from an exclusive focus on external, material factors and toward internal stimuli — knowledge, understanding, and processes of cognition and thought.

Alexander Wendt illustrates the point with the relationship between Germany and Denmark between 1940 and 2000. Across those decades the two states' national interests diverged sharply enough that each came to regard the other as rival and adversary; yet by 2000 the two countries had become friends, extending assistance to one another. Interest or power alone, Wendt argues, cannot explain the relationship between these two states — one must also account for the attitudes each nation holds toward the other.⁶

Constructivist scholars hold that cooperation in international relations does not arise from power and interest alone, but is shaped as well by social factors, chief among them three: norms, identity, and culture. A state's domestic social structure can shape the structure of international society, and, in turn, the relations of international society can shape a state's domestic social structure.⁷

Norms

Social norms are the patterns, rules, regulations, and standards — together with the habits and customs of practice — that human beings create in order to define behaviour and govern the interests of a society. Social norms frame, and provide the guiding orientation for, the foreign conduct of actors within international society.⁸

Identity

Social identity consists in holding beliefs or concepts in common. Constructivism treats the state as an actor possessed of multiple identities, whose structure arises from both domestic and external factors acting upon one another. What shapes the structure of human society, on this view, is not material power but shared belief — belief that determines the identity and interests of the various actors within a society.⁹

Culture

Culture, in constructivist terms, denotes a pattern of shared culture or shared identity, sustained by adherence to specific, agreed standards — norms and values — and by the shared learning of rules and standard models of conduct.¹⁰

A state's domestic social structure shapes international society; international society, in turn, reshapes the state.

06 CHAPTER SIX

Case Analysis: Indonesia, Thailand, and Myanmar

Approving the concept of cooperative security as a strategy for responding to disaster, and for building security across the ASEAN region, is, on the evidence of this study, highly appropriate. Cooperative security rests on two components: a broad network of relational partners, and the coalition-building that brings together multiple actors from within a shared power bloc in the international system.¹¹

Considered against these two components, the three case-study countries show markedly different profiles. Indonesia and Thailand possess broader networks of relational partners and a greater capacity for coalition-building among the many actors within ASEAN's own sphere, and were accordingly able to establish cooperative security effectively. Myanmar, by contrast, joined ASEAN more recently and possessed a narrower network of relational partners within the Association; in the early stages of Cyclone Nargis it did not prioritise coalition-building with a range of actors, and initially declined foreign assistance, which slowed its disaster response considerably. In time, however, by drawing on a cooperative-security strategy with ASEAN — brokered through the negotiation of ASEAN's Secretary-General at the time — Myanmar was ultimately able to build the cooperative security it needed to respond to Nargis.

Reading the three countries' disaster experiences through the constructivist factors set out in the previous chapter yields a consistent picture. On norms: ASEAN has built a body of shared norms through its various rules and regulations, enabling member states to work together and understand one another well, and producing behaviour and practice consistent with the norms the Association has established — behaviour that in turn generates cooperative security. On identity: although the three case-study countries differ considerably in language and religion, they share a common aspiration toward stability, both domestically and across the region, giving rise to a shared belief and, to a meaningful degree, a shared identity — an interest that the various actors within the society hold in common. On culture: from that shared identity and shared culture, sustained by adherence to common standards and the same ASEAN norms, member states have built a shared understanding of the rules and agreed to operate within a jointly established framework — giving Indonesia, Thailand, and Myanmar a common cultural ground in disaster management that leads, in turn, to cooperative security at both the national and the regional level.

07

CHAPTER SEVEN

Conclusion

Cooperation among Southeast Asian states in disaster management — a comparatively new category of threat for ASEAN — constitutes a new field of study, one that requires the continued development of both knowledge and practical experience. The concept of cooperative security, with its emphasis on cooperation by consent, calls for a broad and comprehensive relational network and for the participation of multiple actors, formal and informal alike, in the building of security. On the constructivist account, the factors that generate this security are, again, three: norms — rules jointly established and accepted within ASEAN; identity — the shared recognition of belonging to a single region, notwithstanding real diversity of language and religion; and culture — the shared recognition of common norms and identity.

Cooperative security nevertheless continues to face real obstacles and challenges: cooperation at the level of policy still differs from one member state to the next, and cooperation at the level of operations still requires time in which to build knowledge and experience. Even so, ASEAN's member states have consistently found a path to cooperation amid diversity, and have been able to apply that cooperation in ways suited to what is often called the "ASEAN Way." Since the end of the Cold War, ASEAN has continued to prioritise and promote human rights, holding regular workshops on regional human-rights mechanisms; the

ASEAN Charter itself contains provisions on the goals and principles of mutual cooperation that speak directly to the promotion and protection of human rights, and mandates the establishment of an ASEAN human-rights mechanism to protect the fundamental rights and freedoms of ASEAN's peoples. This has, in turn, encouraged member states to build cooperation between their public and private sectors in matters of internal security, supported by regulations and policies that ASEAN's Foreign Ministers and Defence Ministers have adopted and refined to suit each country's particular political, economic, and social circumstances.

Foreign policy, the maintenance of security, and joint military integration together sustain the wider system of security cooperation the region has built — a system that is likely to become an increasingly important foundation for a peaceful, unified region in the years ahead. As Alexander Wendt has shown, interest or power alone cannot explain the relationship between states; one must also account for each nation's attitude toward the other. Constructivist thinkers hold that international cooperation is shaped not by power and interest alone, but by social factors as well — above all, norms, identity, and culture — because a state's internal social structure can shape international social structure, just as international social relations can, in turn, shape a state's internal structure.

Adapting these ideas appropriately to each country's own internal-security context matters a great deal. Where Western conceptions of security cooperation are adopted, each state must still adapt and build its own cooperative-security system with an eye to long-term, shared national interest — and states do so because they judge the shared benefit to outweigh anything they might secure alone. This is the foundation on which the success of any cooperative-security system ultimately rests:

damage to any one state's internal security can diminish the security of the group as a whole (Richard Cohen, *Cooperative Security: From Individual Security to International Stability*).

Building internal security is thus a factor that bears directly on shared regional security. The real question is how to build internal security in ways that contribute effectively, and appropriately, to shared security across Southeast Asia. King Bhumibol Adulyadej (Rama IX) offered one answer in his concept of "implosion" — development proceeding from the inside outward. Development, he held, must proceed step by step, in order of necessity and with economy, so that a firm foundation is laid before further progress is attempted. He placed particular emphasis on strengthening the self-reliance of communities:

"Self-reliance means that everything that happens must originate from one's own thinking, knowledge, and inner need as the driving force — not something stirred up or urged on by others." A village or community made strong from within is then ready to engage the wider society; a prepared people can solve the problems that arise, adapt to changing circumstances, and sustain continuous development in support of whatever development policy may follow.¹²

From this idea flows a broader model of integrated security cooperation: government sets policy and builds the institutional structures needed to carry it out, coordinating with local administrative bodies from the village level up to the provincial level, and with other actors — the defence establishment and the private sector alike — to build real strength in implementing the state's security policy. Once a state's

internal security is sufficiently robust, it becomes able to extend knowledge and technological support to other states in the region that need it, generating shared security in turn — for national-level security cooperation shapes the factors that build cooperative security more broadly, just as cooperative security, at the same time, shapes cooperation at the national level. The findings of this study of security cooperation, grounded in the disaster experience of Southeast Asian member states, offer one way of seeing both the problems that remain and the direction in which cooperative security in the region might continue to develop.

Preserving peace and internal stability together allows member states to maintain peace and internal security across the region efficiently — safeguarding security and advancing the wider idea of group security: protection against threats and against aggression among the group's own members. The broader system of security cooperation also extends to close cooperation among members in responding to common threats such as terrorism, transnational crime, migration control, human trafficking, drug-related threats, and pollution, and to joint planning for natural disaster and other, human-made hazards.

Amid the diversity of ethnicity, religion, and language across Southeast Asia — amid a history of conflict over territory and power, of division into states shaped by colonial rule, of historical narratives bent to serve rulers and great powers, and even amid the expansion of capitalist and communist systems during the Cold War (1960–1991) — cooperation among ASEAN's members might well have been expected to founder on many obstacles. And yet, today, every state in Southeast Asia is able to come together and cooperate across security, economic, and social affairs; nowhere is this clearer than in the fact that when disaster strikes a member state, every other member state cooperates to help, according to

CONCLUSION

its own capacity. Read through a constructivist lens, this pattern confirms that interest or power alone cannot explain the relationships among ASEAN's member states — however much conflict may exist, each nation's attitude toward the others must also be taken into account. What every nation of Southeast Asia has come to accept is something closer to kinship: a relationship built on a shared, blended culture and on a long and intertwined history. Security cooperation has, accordingly, developed further in the direction of mutual assistance than in the direction of war — though cooperation in one domain continues to spill over into cooperation in another. When regional trade cooperation succeeds, it strengthens shared cooperative security in turn; but building the norms, identity, and culture of a cooperative security that can develop sustainably still takes time.

08

CHAPTER EIGHT

Recommendations

1. **Broaden the network of relational partners, within and among states.** Both bilateral and multilateral cooperation — formal and informal alike — should be pursued, bringing together actors from multiple sides. During Cyclone Nargis in Myanmar (2008), for instance, the Thai Red Cross and chambers of commerce in Thailand's border provinces were able to extend cooperation and assistance entirely outside the ASEAN framework, demonstrating the value of relational networks that reach beyond formal regional institutions.
2. **Deepen shared patterns, shared identity, and a culture of participation across the ASEAN region.** Doing so will strengthen cooperative security both within the disaster-management framework and across other frameworks of regional cooperation going forward.

NOTES

Notes

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ABOUT

About the Author

Supreecha Hiranburana prepared this study as a doctoral dissertation in Political Science (Politics), submitted in the 2017 academic year, under the guidance of an advisory committee chaired by Assoc. Prof. Dr. Thanasarit Satawethin, with Prof. Dr. Supang Chantavanich and Assoc. Prof. Dr. Vitthaya Sujaritthanarak.

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