Peace and Security Studies in Southeast Asia in a Changing Global Environment

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Peace and security studies in Southeast Asia show a rich array of theoretical and policy-oriented research that highlights key themes in the prevention and management of conflicts. These themes also highlight salient concepts that define approaches to peace and security. Two themes are noteworthy. First, while peace and security are not mutually exclusive, security cannot be assured by focusing on negative peace alone but also by a purposeful pursuit of positive peace, hence comprehensive security is critical. The second theme is the importance of regional institutions like ASEAN in managing intra-state relations. Given the fluid state of the global security environment, there is now greater scope for new thinking on how approaches to peace and security can be made more responsive to achieve shared goals.

Keywords ASEAN, conflict prevention, positive-negative peace, comprehensive security, climate crisis

Introduction

Southeast Asia has enjoyed a period of relative peace in the last sixty-seventy years. In fact, if one were to go with the definition of peace as the absence of violent conflicts or war, understood as "negative peace" (Galtung 1969), then this claim can extend beyond Southeast Asia to the wider East Asian region, which includes the three Northeast Asia states—China, Japan, and South Korea. This claim of peace, however, is contentious and would depend largely how on how scholars and analysts study peace and security in Southeast Asia and beyond.

One notable observation on the contemporary research on peace and security in Southeast Asia is how many studies treat "peace and security" as one compound term even though the definitions of peace and security have been contested. With regard to security studies, for instance, since the mid-80s and early 1990s, there has been significant contestation around what and how security should be defined against the dramatic changes in the global security

environment (Ullman 1983; Buzan, Waever, and de Wilde 1998; Baldwin 1997; Alagappa 1998).

Another observation is the preference of many researchers to use "security" rather than "peace." As Kevin Clements (2020) notes, among the reasons for peace researchers to use security are both the normative and the transformative nature of the discipline that often desires to change the world in a positive direction and the steady shrinking of the field. Others also find the notion of "positive peace" problematic and therefore focus instead on security. Muthiah Alagappa (2020) also observes that within the context of Asia, particularly Southeast Asia, many scholars find the concept of security more useful. Moreover, as concepts like "cooperative security," "common security," "human security," and "non-traditional security" were added to the security lexicon of the region (in the early 1980s it was limited to the broad concept of "comprehensive security"), it became evident that research on security dominated peace studies.

Whether the two streams of studies have taken different pathways in Southeast Asia is indeterminate. To be sure, peace and security studies share common research questions, which include: How can conflicts be prevented and peace be built in Southeast Asia? What are the drivers of conflicts and/or causes of insecurity? How does one build peaceful societies or security communities? Thus, one could submit that the divide between the two is artificial when one examines the shared objectives of studies, which are on how conflicts are prevented in order to maintain regional peace and security. In other words, it is not so much the difference in the two concepts that matters but rather how these objectives of peace and security are achieved.

Against this background, the objectives of this article are twofold. First, it examines how peace and security studies have evolved in Southeast Asia by looking at the kinds of themes and concepts that featured in the evolving literature. In doing so, the article does not attempt to provide a state-of-the-art review of the two different schools but rather examine the kinds of issue areas that the studies focus on, particularly the interest in the role of regional institutions like the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). There is a vast literature on ASEAN in the peace and security studies in Asia, hence its inclusion here. Of particular interest is how concepts like peace, comprehensive security, and security community are articulated in the discourses on ASEAN's practices of conflict prevention and intraregional relations.

Second, this article analyzes the challenges to the twin goals of peace and security, given the rapid and significant changes in the global and regional security environment. It discusses how peace and security studies are now at a crossroad given the new types of transborder security challenges, like climate change, that have emerged. These challenges do not fit neatly within the traditional state-centric approaches to peace and security, such as peacekeeping, peacebuilding, and alliance-building.

The article then sets forth the following arguments: (1) although peace and security are not mutually exclusive, security cannot be assured by focusing on negative peace alone but must involve a purposeful pursuit of positive peace; and (2) given the fluid state of the global security environment, there is now greater scope for new thinking on how approaches to peace and security can fit together to achieve their shared goals.

Overview of Peace and Security Studies in Southeast Asia

A dominant theme in peace and security studies is how violent conflict can be reduced and avoided. Peace research can be said to stem from the pacifist tradition of nonviolence. Thus, the search for peace through nonviolent solutions has tended to examine issues like arms control, disarmament, international peacekeeping, and peacebuilding. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, disarmament featured as a major issue in peace studies, as policymakers and analysts examined how wars could be prevented and how conflicts could be de-escalated to achieve peace. Similarly, topics like peacekeeping, peace-making, and peacebuilding, including preventive diplomacy, which were reflected in the 1992 *United Nations (UN) Agenda of Peace*, became areas of research subsumed under peace studies (Peou 2010).

There were also the broader, more philosophical perspectives on peace and security studies that problematized and critiqued the notion of liberal peace in peacebuilding missions, particularly as it applied to the Global South (Richmond 2005, Mac Ginty and Richmond 2013). While these studies are not focused on Southeast Asia, scholars who take a critical approach to peace studies challenge the ideological supremacy of political liberalism as an approach to peacebuilding and state-building. They advocate instead for the opening of spaces for deeper understandings of politics, paying attention to local context, actors, and agency. As argued by Michael Pugh (in Mac Ginty and Richmond 2013, 13), within this "local turn" in peacebuilding, efforts should support their local subjects rather than define them and avoid the tendency to fit peacebuilding into an overarching neoliberal ideology that equates peace with state-building, which, in turn, creates hollow institutions and an economic development model that reproduces capitalism.

Although these were the prominent themes found in peace and security studies during that period, there were notably fewer studies on issues like disarmament and peace operations in Southeast Asia. To be sure, the regional context was different. It was not until the mid to late-1990s and early 2000s that studies on peace operations in Asia were published (see for example, Amer 1993; Dobson 1999; Caballero-Anthony and Acharya 2005; Peou 2022). Most of these studies examined the contributions of Southeast Asian/ASEAN countries to UN

peacekeeping missions and peacebuilding. The focus was mostly regional (i.e., ASEAN) rather than country-based (see for example, Narine 2004; Prasetyono 2007; Jones 2020). The studies analyzed the response in Southeast Asian and from ASEAN members to the the UN Agenda of Peace that advocated for task-sharing arrangements between the UN and regional organizations. The studies examined the thinking in Southeast Asia and the wider Asian region on the changing nature of peacekeeping and the Brahimi report (UN Security Council 2000) that outlined the need to strengthen the capacity of the UN to respond to new demands in peace operations beyond peacekeeping and toward peace enforcement and state-building. The Brahimi report also reinforced the call of the Agenda of Peace for regional organizations to play a greater role conflict prevention, peacekeeping, and peacemaking.

Nevertheless, since the early 2000s, much of the peace and security literature in Southeast Asia focused more on country-specific conflicts. It is in that scholarship that we find an abundance of case studies on intra-state conflicts in ASEAN countries. These studies examined the nature and drivers of internal conflicts in Indonesia, Myanmar, the Philippines, and Thailand, the kinds of peace processes that were in place, and analyzed their successes and failures (see for example Vatikiotis 2003; Callahan 2003; Kingsbury 2006; Liow 2007; McCargo 2010; Oishi 2016; Hsueh 2016; International Crisis Group 2020). Much of the findings of these studies highlight the different internal challenges faced by states in addressing domestic conflicts. Common themes that emerged from these studies included "weak states," the nature of political regimes, autonomy, and legitimacy (Liow 2007; Alagappa 2011; Miller 2012).

Aside from country-specific studies, there is a large body of peace and security scholarship that looks at the role of regional organizations—that is, the role of ASEAN in maintaining peace in Southeast Asia. In fact, even country-specific studies look at how ASEAN has either helped or failed to resolve conflicts in the region. Vatikiotis (2009, 31-32), for instance, noted ASEAN's lack of conflict management capacity, particularly in the realm of mediation. He argued that ASEAN needs more resources to perform a mediation role and explore partnerships with other international organizations.

The considerable attention paid to ASEAN in studies on peace and security in Southeast Asia is largely due to the view that the regional organization has significantly contributed to building a peaceful regional environment despite the presence of internal conflicts. In both academic and policy writing, it has been argued that ASEAN has substantially contributed to the peace dividend enjoyed by states in Southeast Asia and in managing regional security challenges (see for example Acharya 2001a; Severino 2006; Glas 2017; Natalegawa 2018). However, given scholars' different theoretical leanings, ASEAN's contribution to regional peace and security has been an ongoing subject of contention.[1]

For realists, the peaceful and secure Southeast Asian environment has

benefitted from the strategic involvement of the United States, which is regarded as a benign hegemon and an external balancer that is able to preserve the stable distribution of power in Southeast Asia and the wider Asian region (see for example, Leifer 1999; Emmers 2003). Realist scholars view the role of regional institutions like ASEAN as limited and consider multilateral cooperative frameworks like the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) and the East Asian Summit useful only for as long as great powers consider them to be in their interests. Realists who study Southeast Asian security also see the role played by ASEAN as a reflection of its members' calculations for their own national interests and are, therefore, skeptical about its role in maintaining peace in the region (Beeson 2009; Leifer 1999; Khong 1997). To many realist scholars, major power cooperation and rivalry are key facets for understanding peace and security in Southeast Asia and the wider East Asian region.

Unlike realists, those from the liberal school offer a more positive view of institutions and regimes in managing interstate relations and mitigating conflicts. Following the Kantian theory of peace, liberalism is founded on three pillars: international trade, which generates economic interdependence among states and makes conflicts or wars costly; the presence of liberal democratic political systems, which minimizes the incidence of conflicts given that democracies are much less likely to go to war against each other; and the development of international institutions and rules that constitute regulatory regimes that manage interstate disputes and allow for the peaceful settlement of conflicts (Rosecrance 1986; Keohane and Martin 1995; Russett and Oneal 2001). Liberal-institutionalist scholars who take this perspective highlight the importance of regional institutions like ASEAN for managing regional peace and security (Ba 2005; Severino 2006; Clements 1992, 2021). They underscore the salience of the politics of cooperation in maintaining regional peace and security and emphasize the benefits of increased economic cooperation through the development of regional trading arrangements like the ASEAN Free Trade Arrangement and the push toward the creation of an ASEAN Economic Community (Nesadurai 2003; Chia and Plummer 2015; Basu Das et al. 2013).

Constructivists, on the other hand, provide insights into understanding how peaceful change has evolved in Southeast Asia, particularly since the end of the Cold War period, by focusing on how states have developed norms and practices to avoid regional conflicts. Constructivists pay close attention to the role of norms such as non-interference, sovereignty, and collective identity in shaping the normative structure and institutions that define intraregional relations (Acharya 2001a; Kivimaki 2001; Caballero-Anthony 2005; Tan 2011; Glas 2017). Constructivist studies on peace and security in Southeast Asia show that despite the disparity in geographical size, economic power, and influence, security in Southeast Asia is to a large part due to the ASEAN model of cooperation in economic, political, and security areas.

Regional cooperation in these areas is undergird by a normative framework characterized by the so-called ASEAN way. The ASEAN way is founded on sociocultural norms that emphasize consultation, consensus-building, and non-confrontation among member states, a preference for informality with organizational minimalism, and an emphasis on cultivating habits of dialogue and cooperation. As argued by Kivimaki (2001, 8), "[T]he subjective sentiments of common interests, together with subjective trust on the common culture and identity is the foundation of the long peace in ASEAN."

Revisiting Concepts in Defining Pathways to Peace and Security Studies in Southeast Asia

Among the many themes found in peace and security studies in Southeast Asia—peacekeeping and peacebuilding, democratization, major power competition, regional security cooperation, and transnational security challenges like terrorism or extremism—it is useful to revisit some of the key concepts that have featured over time. Not only have these concepts endured, but similar ones have also emerged reflecting new ideas that aim to influence pathways to achieve the shared objectives of achieving peace and security. Some of these concepts are discussed briefly below.

Negative Peace, Positive Peace, and Human Security
The notions of negative peace (the absence of wars or violent conflicts) and positive peace (the absence of structural or indirect violence) are intrinsic to peace studies literature. According to Galtung (1969, 183), positive peace is the achievement of social justice, through the equitable distribution of power and resources. Lack or absence of social justices leads to exclusion and marginalization and, if not addressed, can be a driver of conflicts. To Galtung, negative and positive peace are not mutually inclusive; and the two are equally significant and neither is less important than the other. Negative peace and positive peace are to be viewed as "values" and "goals" (ibid., 185).

In more contemporary times, this "Janus" notion of peace has found similar expression in the ideational concept of human security in the early 1990s (see UN Development Programme [UNDP] Human Development Report 1994). Human security is defined by the UNDP (1994) as the "freedom from fear" and "freedom from want"—a policy framework to respond to the growing insecurities faced by individuals, groups, and states. As such, negative peace is akin to the idea of freedom from fear (which is associated with freedom from physical violence during armed conflicts or as a consequence of gross violations of human rights as well as from atrocities like genocide, ethnic cleansing, war crimes, and crimes against humanity). Thus, in the pursuit of human security, states should work

toward preventing conflicts from escalating into wars that cause violence and lead to acts of atrocity. These kinds of arguments are found in several studies on human security in Southeast Asia and the wider Asian region (Thakur 1997; Acharya 2001b; Caballero-Anthony 2004; Morada 2006; Nishikawa 2010).

Similarly, the concept of positive peace is closely linked to human security's goal, freedom from want. As emphasized in the UNDP (1994) report, freedom from want is being free of the shackles of poverty and economic underdevelopment, having access to basic needs (such as food, shelter, health care, and education, among others), as well as having the freedom to live a life of dignity. This also means that without significant economic development to lift people from economic oppression and deprivation, peace will not be sustainable (Japan Centre for International Exchange 1999; Terada 2011; Pitsuwan and Caballero-Anthony 2014; Hernandez 2016).

Comprehensive Security

Comprehensive security is another very important concept in ASEAN and is integral to discussions on peace and security in Southeast Asia. In fact, it has been ASEAN's organizing concept of security, particularly during the organization's formative years from the late 1970s to early 1990s (Alagappa 1998). Unlike the conventional notion of security, which focuses mainly on defending state borders from military attack, comprehensive security has been defined as a much broader conceptualization of security that goes "beyond (but does not exclude) the military threats to embrace the political, economic, and sociocultural dimensions" (ibid., 624). The thinking then was that security is multi-dimensional and states cannot be secure until its economic, political, and sociocultural challenges are addressed. This means that economic security is fundamental to state security, as are political stability and social cohesion. Achieving these leads to peace.

Despite the lack of articulation, the notion of comprehensive security, which is found in many studies of security and international relations in Southeast Asia, also presents elements of positive peace (a concept intrinsic in the peace studies literature).

Regionalism

Several Southeast Asian studies on peace and security have also used the lens of regionalism to examine how these two goals, or values, are achieved. In fact, it is here where one can further see the intersections of peace studies' concepts of negative and positive peace with security studies' idea of comprehensive security, human security, and security community. These concepts have, in a way, shaped the approaches and trajectory of regionalism in Southeast Asia.

A vast literature on Southeast Asian regionalism examines the extent to which ASEAN has been critical in maintaining peace and security in the region. ASEAN, as many other scholars noted, has been Southeast Asia's mechanism to

prevent and manage intra-mural conflicts (see for example, Leifer 1999; Alagappa 1998; Acharya 2001a; Ba 2005; Severino 2006; Natalegawa 2018). The most recent work by Emmers and Caballero-Anthony (2022) argues that ASEAN has been instrumental in creating Southeast Asia's long period of sustained peace, in spite of the region's great diversity and history of internal and interstate conflicts.

As reflected in the studies on regionalism in Southeast Asia, the history of peaceful change in a region once regarded as the "Balkans of the East" can be explained as a product of thoughtful development and nurturing of norms over six decades since the establishment of ASEAN in 1967. This practice continues today and has helped shape the region's security environment. To promote regional peace, manage regional security, and maintain stability, ASEAN pursued the negative peace approach, which is avoiding conflicts between and among member states. In fact, conflict prevention defined what ASEAN was and stood for for several decades and this was pursued through the generation of a set of regional norms and practices that guided the conduct of interstate relations in Southeast Asia. The ASEAN's 1976 Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (TAC) reflects this set of regional norms, which include: sovereignty, non-interference in internal affairs, non-use of force, peaceful settlement of disputes, and regional economic cooperation. For all intents and purposes, ASEAN's approaches to peace and security can be summed up as conflict prevention, confidence-building measures, and trust-building. To enable ASEAN to also cope with the ideological divide of the Cold War period, ASEAN states adopted the Zone of Peace, Freedom, and Neutrality (ZOPFAN) declaration in 1971. A key objective of the TAC and ZOPFAN was to make the Southeast Asia region one of the many "zones of peace" around the globe, free from the interference of external powers (ASEAN Secretariat 1971).

Increasingly, scholars in peace studies also examine the role that regional organizations play in promoting peace. Although much of the earlier focus of peace studies addressed internal conflicts, peace scholars like Clements (2021) have recently argued that ASEAN and the ARF[2] have been instrumental in managing peace and security in Asia. These institutions have promoted cooperative security in the wider Asia-Pacific region, despite moving at glacial pace and getting stuck at the promotion of confidence-building measures while falling short in preventive diplomacy. Vatikiotis (2009), on the other hand, suggests that more political support must be built within ASEAN to be more proactive in conflict management to achieve peace and security in Southeast Asia.

Security Community
Another significant concept is the idea of peaceful societies which is very similar to the idea of a security community. As a concept, a security community is achieved when the prospect of violent conflicts, such as wars, is deemed highly unlikely among a group of states that share values of peace and a common

identity (Deutsch et al. 1957). This concept, which was first introduced by Karl Deutsch, became a major thesis in the work of Amitav Acharya (2001a) who argued that through ASEAN's assiduous socialization of norms through the ASEAN way, ASEAN has been able to develop a collective identity—the "we feeling" that has underpinned intra-regional relations. To Acharya, while the "we feeling" would be a work in progress needing to be continually strengthened, since its establishment in 1967, ASEAN is already a nascent security community.

Since its founding, ASEAN has indeed come a long way as an interstate organization toward realizing its vision of an ASEAN Community, whose preferred approach to preventing conflict and building peace is through deepening regional economic cooperation and promoting closer political and security cooperation. This approach underscored—and, in fact, further reinforced—the thinking in ASEAN that security can only be achieved comprehensively, with economic development and political cooperation being the core pillars of regional peace and security. This approach remained consistent over the years but was recalibrated with the adoption in 2003 of the three-pillared ASEAN Community. These are: the ASEAN Political-Security Community, the ASEAN Economic Community, and the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASEAN Secretariat 2003).

Re-calibrating the Agenda of Peace and Security Studies in a Changing Regional Environment

The rapidly changing global and regional environment marked by disruptions and uncertainties have brought many challenges, risks, and threats to state and human security today that were not anticipated when peace and security studies were founded. The goal of achieving peaceful change is no longer just about preventing the outbreak of war and peacebuilding. Similarly, the threats to states, individuals, and communities are no longer confined to risks and vulnerabilities within borders. And, while major power rivalry and hegemonic ambitions continue to destabilize states in the region, so too are the emerging/growing threats from a wide range of nontraditional security challenges that are transborder in nature.

Transnational security threats like climate change and global pandemics are challenging the capacities of states and societies to deal with their multifaceted impacts and are more than compelling reasons for the policy and academic communities to re-examine concepts, definitions, and approaches to peace and security that suit the conditions of the 21st Century. Equally important is the urgency to make global and regional institutions fit for handling new and emerging challenges. Some of these threats are discussed below.

Climate Crisis

Climate crisis is now regarded as one of the most serious risks/threats to global peace and security. Evidence-based research has shown how the impacts of climate change (such as sea-level rise, long draughts, and extreme weather events) have led to loss of livelihoods, economic downturns, forced migration, and health threats. The effects of climate change have, in turn, led to societal consequences like conflict (Smith and Vivekananda 2007; Gleditsch, Nordås, and Salehyan 2007; Theisen, Gleditch, and Buhaug 2013). The arguments have been that the economic, cultural, and other effects of climate change bring and/or aggravate conditions for conflicts.

However, much of the research on the climate change and conflict nexus and the climate change and security nexus focus their attention on developments in Sub-Saharan Africa, the Sahel region, and the Middle East but with far less attention to the Indo-Pacific region (Scheffran, Marmer, and Sow 2012; Vivekananda, Wall, and Wolfmaier 2018). This is a significant gap given that countries in the region make up the highest ten in the list of countries that are most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change—Indonesia, Philippines, Cambodia, Laos Myanmar, Thailand, and Vietnam. These countries are most exposed to natural hazards with climate change causing more frequent and intense occurrences of extreme weather events like typhoons and cyclones, as well as being particularly exposed to sea-level rise in archipelagic countries, small island states, and large coastal population centers and to extreme heat impacting large geographic areas and densely populated urban settlements. Not only are these countries in the region facing huge challenges in dealing with the geophysical effects of climate change, but they are also seriously/severely challenged in terms of fragility risks such as adaptation capacity, lower economic development, governance, and extant domestic conflicts.

To further illustrate the impact, between 2004-2014, more than half of the total global disaster mortality was in Southeast Asia—that is, 354,000 of the 700,000 total deaths in disasters worldwide. It is also estimated that about 191 million people have been displaced and rendered homeless (either temporarily or permanently) as a result of disasters, affecting a total of 193 million people. Currently, regional efforts in humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HADR) have brought together countries within and beyond Southeast Asia to pool resources to manage the devastating impact of disasters. ASEAN has established the ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on Disaster Management (2020), a regional body dedicated to coordinating HADR activities in ASEAN. Regular HADR exercises in the ASEAN (Regional Disaster Emergency Response Simulation Exercise [ARDEX]) and the ARF (Disaster Relief Exercise [DiRex]) are also held to improve inter-operability among militaries in the region in HADR operations.

While HADR exercises are certainly helpful, there remains the task of helping

communities build resilience and cope with the other cross-cutting impacts of climate change, such as food and water security, health security, and forced migration. More significantly, despite these worrying trends, there remains limited coverage of the ways in which climate change and security are understood (conceptualized) and acted upon in the region. And, despite the fragility risks faced by countries in the wider Indo-Pacific region, climate change remains peripheral in the security discourse of the region.

Against these unfolding trends, it is important for scholars of peace and security studies to examine closely how the different impacts of climate change become drivers of internal conflicts. The devastating impact of extreme weather events like drought and cyclones that are increasing in frequency and intensity, as well as increasing sea-level rise, has been a potent driver of forced or involuntary migration and population displacement. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change Working Group II Sixth Assessment Report in 2022 notes that climate-induced displacement is found in all regions of the world and is already becoming a tremendous humanitarian challenge today. In part of the Sahel and North Africa, forced migration and displacement are reported to have exacerbated conflicts as population movement inadvertently lead to competition for limited resources. One can therefore imagine that in resource-scarce parts of Southeast Asia, the potential for more displacement brought on by extreme weather events may also trigger conflict and instability, particularly in conflict areas.

Thus, the multifaced impacts of climate change should now be part of the analysis on drivers of insecurity, conflicts, and instability in Southeast Asia. The same can be argued for security studies where forced displacement caused by disasters is estimated to reach 216 million by 2050 (Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre 2021). As the capacity of states are put to the test dealing with forced migration and other climate-related security issues, the push for greater international cooperation and the need to advance multilateral approaches become even more critical.

Pandemics and Emerging Infectious Diseases

The goal of achieving sustainable peaceful change in Southeast Asia and beyond has become more challenging in the face of extraordinary crises like the global COVID-19 pandemic and severe economic downturn. The catastrophic impact of the pandemic on the regional and global economies has threatened to reverse economic growth and development gains achieved over the past few decades, which have been the bedrock of peace and prosperity in Southeast Asia. The period since the COVID-19 virus was declared a pandemic, however, has been very different from the pre-COVID-19 era, to say the least. The changes have practically upended lifestyles, work, and consumption patterns among individuals since quarantine measures prevented economic activity over a relatively protracted period. From the way international travel has been affected, the changes have also

transformed mobility. In fact, some have posited that the changes may lead to a reversal in globalization, undoing the progress in international trade and labor integration since the start of the 21st Century (Bloom 2020).

The pandemic has also further deepened rifts in societies—worsened poverty (economic access), further disruption to production and reduction in agricultural productivity (food availability), and greater instability in markets because of panic-buying and supply chain disruptions (physical access). The severe disruptions caused by pandemics leading to other crises like economic crisis and food insecurity have lingering effects that can further lead to more insecurities. For example, the unexpected war in Ukraine aggravated food security as more supply chains are blocked as a result of the conflict. As a major exporter of grains globally, the blockage of Ukrainian grain exports has sparked fears of heightened food prices. The ongoing war in Ukraine, which happened on the heels of a global pandemic, illustrates the kinds of interlocking crises that can emerge if countries are not prepared to deal with these cascading crises. The war also highlights how fragile the global and regional security environment has become. Thus, in analyzing approaches to prevent another global health crisis, the salience of multilateral cooperation cannot be overstated.

Triple Planetary Crisis

Emerging pandemics like COVID-19 are not the only crisis that has impacted society. The UN Environment Programme (UNEP) highlighted three concurrent pressing environmental challenges that, in and of themselves, presented crises. These were climate change, biodiversity and ecosystem integrity loss, and pollution. In combination these three challenges pose an interconnected "triple planetary crisis" today (UNEP 2020). In the age of the Anthropocene, we see the continued worsening degradation of the environment and its knock-on effects. There is growing urgency for those who deal with peace and security studies to understand that one of the biggest sources of insecurity is environmental change, thus environmentalists and peace and security researchers need to understand each other's language.

Environmental degradation and its effects on human health can be examined through a range of issues, including food systems, growing urban spaces, unabated energy uses, climate change, human displacement, and conflicts, among others. In conflict settings, for instance, the ongoing war in Ukraine, which has seen the barrage of exploded weapons and cluster munition, is already causing long-term disastrous consequences on the environment. Preliminary report from the UNEP indicates that the war in Ukraine has already seen environmental damage across many regions of the country threatening the livelihoods, public health, clean air and water supply, and basic food systems (UNEP 2022). Environment and conflict are so closely interlinked, that if one damages the environment, one threatens human health. These can, in turn, endanger peace and security, and

vice versa.

If peace is enhanced, there is a chance to protect and enhance the natural environment, and potentially foster peaceful relations, which are fundamental to tackling the twin or triple crisis. The triple planetary crisis calls for more dialogue between and among different academic and policy communities to offer, and even chart, more holistic perspectives on these issues, and to formulate timely solutions to the world's increasingly alarming issues related to the new "normal" of the triple planetary crisis (De Paula 2021).

Toward Sustainable Peace and Security: Building More Capacity for Conflict Resolution

For developing states in Southeast Asia, peaceful change is also very much about sustainable peace. In this regard, the critical role of global and regional institutions needs to be better examined to assess if they are still fit for the purpose. In Southeast Asia, ASEAN's ongoing goal of realizing a three-pillared ASEAN community is a step in the right direction. It reflects the importance placed on drawing close linkages between peace, security, and development, which are, ideally, to be achieved in tandem and not sequentially. Arguably, such an approach presents a theory of peaceful change, reflecting a transformative framework that recognizes the foundations of sustainable peace—positive peace: inclusive communities, economic progress, people-centered security, and social justice.[3] This regional approach also dovetails with the current thinking at the international level on how to achieve sustainable peace. The UN's notion of sustaining peace is described as a "goal and a process…which encompasses activities aimed at preventing the outbreak, escalation and recurrence of conflicts, addressing root causes…ensuring national reconciliation" (UN Security Council 2016).

While such an approach may indeed be more comprehensive and more responsive to contemporary security threats facing the region, the goal of achieving sustainable peaceful change in ASEAN has also become more daunting and fraught with challenges. Already ASEAN's record thus far in dealing with the Rohingya crises has been regarded as disappointing, particularly in its inability to persuade Myanmar to respond to protection issues and to craft a comprehensive political settlement to the problem. The lack of decisive regional action to help address and resolve a complex and long-drawn-out internal conflict will be a major hindrance to sustainable peace.

A critical area that ASEAN needs its strategies for sustainable peace to focus more on is dealing with internal conflicts and helping member states find peaceful solutions to problems of separatism and religious/ethnic conflicts. Despite the peaceful environment in Southeast Asia, countries like Thailand, the Philippines, Indonesia, and Myanmar have been plagued with decades-long internal conflicts. For example, the Rohingya refugee crisis that unfolded in 2015 and 2017 after

the military operations in Myanmar's Rakhine state had shown how a festering conflict could rapidly escalate into a bigger issue that causes interstate tensions and threatens regional security. More significantly, Myanmar's military coup on February 1, 2021, has further destabilized the region. The consequences of these internal conflicts in Southeast Asia are constant reminders that building capacity in conflict resolution is something that ASEAN needs to address sooner rather than later, knowing that peaceful societies are integral to maintaining peace and security in Southeast Asia.

Conclusion

Recent studies on peace and security in Southeast Asia reiterates the need for enhancing regional capacity in conflict prevention and conflict management (Natalegawa 2018; Emmers and Caballero-Anthony 2022). Moving forward, it can be argued that in crafting an ASEAN agenda for conflict prevention in the 21st Century, one need not reinvent the wheel. Instead, more efforts must be done to build on what ASEAN has achieved and strengthen the institutions it has built. As noted in the report of the High-Level Advisory Panel on the Responsibility to Protect in Southeast Asia (2014), ASEAN is already endowed with norms, institutions, capacities, and mechanisms that can be utilized to support and advance the agenda of conflict prevention. These include: the ASEAN Charter, ASEAN Inter-governmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR), the ASEAN Commission on Women and Children (ACWC), and the ASEAN Institute for Peace and Reconciliation.

Against these developments, a renewed ASEAN agenda for conflict prevention should include steps toward strengthening the institutional development of ASEAN institutions for peace and security such as the ASEAN Charter. With the rapid changes in today's security environment, which are increasingly fraught with uncertainties, it may do well for ASEAN to seriously consider how its Charter—particularly Chapter VIII on Settlement of Dispute, Articles 22 and 23—can be implemented. This is particularly urgent given the severity of the Myanmar crisis, the kinds of suffering faced by its people, and the profound impact this crisis has on regional peace and security.

More attention must also be given to advance modest goals achieved by ASEAN institutions in preventing conflict. For example, in the case of AICHR, more can be done beyond the promotion of human rights through education and training to boost efforts in generating reports on the state of human rights in Southeast Asia. AICHR can engage with ASEAN Parliamentarians on Human Rights in developing "scorecards" on human rights in ASEAN, using the ASEAN Declaration of Human Rights as the basis of its assessments. Similarly, AICHR can work with ACWC in conducting assessments of the state of protection of

the rights of women and children in ASEAN countries in contexts of conflicts, human trafficking, and internal displacements due to natural or human induced disasters.

As conflict prevention and peacebuilding require multilevel approaches, more regional efforts must be focused on supporting national efforts to prevent conflicts. These efforts include providing more assistance to build states' capacity to address issues that can cause societal fractures and exacerbate/aggravate risks and vulnerabilities brought on by climate change, pandemics, forced migration, and displacement.

Multilevel approaches to peace can be strengthened by expanding the stakeholders of peace beyond states and governments to include civil society, academia, and other actors that can contribute to the range of functions geared toward advancing sustainable peace. By increasing the constituency of peacemakers, ASEAN also increases opportunities for meaningful work in promoting peace and security in Southeast Asia and beyond.

The list above is not exhaustive, but the areas outlined certainly provide a rich ground for more research and studies on issues of peace and security within and outside Southeast Asia and for meeting the growing demand for innovative approaches to the enduring quest for global peace and security.

Notes

1.   The discussion on theoretical perspectives draws on an earlier work by Mely Caballero-Anthony and Ralf Emmers (2022).
2.   The ASEAN Regional Forum is a much larger institution established in 1994, comprising of the twenty-seven states in the wider Asia-Pacific region. It brings together the ten ASEAN states (Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam), the ten ASEAN Dialogue Partners (Australia, Canada, China, the European Union, India, Japan, New Zealand, the Republic of Korea, Russia and the United States), Bangladesh, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Mongolia, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Papua New Guinea, and Timor-Leste.
3.   The United States Institute of Peace (2020) presents a theory of peaceful change that assumes that the absence of violent conflict alone is not sufficient to ensure peace. It highlights the need to work within a transformative framework that recognises conditions necessary for sustainable peace: inclusive societies and political processes, economic opportunity, citizen security, and access to justice.

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