



## Security in Times of Uncertainty in Asia: Bringing the State Back in?

by Mely Caballero-Anthony

Across the world today, we see a growing list of security challenges affecting both state and human security. The threats we are seeing span a wide range of security issues from the conventional inter and intra-state conflicts brought on by territorial and maritime disputes, arms race and nuclear proliferation, to a host of non-traditional security challenges. The latter type of security threats is significantly challenging given their scale, complexity and transnational impact that defy state borders and controls. These kinds of threats include cybersecurity, new faces of terrorism and radical extremism, highly pathogenic pandemics, and severe weather events brought on by global warming.

With all these new types of security challenges also remain many intractable intra-state conflicts stemming from ethnic tensions and societal fault lines, exacerbated by severe economic conditions and grave environmental degradation leading to extreme poverty, famine, strife and forced migration. The list of security threats from the local to the international level can be overwhelming, leading to concerns about prospects for global peace and security.

Against this rapidly changing security environment, we observe two opposing trends. On one hand, the ability and capacity of states as security provider(s) have been severely challenged given the new security realities in the twenty first century. This has led to the emergence of other actors that engage in functions that were considered the domain of states, i.e. security provision and the monopoly of the legitimate use of force. Seen from the perspective of security governance, we now see multiple sites of authorities. The consequence of such development is a fragmented, often chaotic security environment where numerous actors engage in the business of providing security and violent activities, which endangers more people than it protects.

On the other hand, in spite of the flaws and limitations of state and its political institutions to provide security, it is still the state that people generally turn to for their security, safety and justice. At the same time at the global level, the norms and rules of international order are based on the sovereignty of nation-states. The state therefore still remains the recognized actor in the conduct of international affairs and in the negotiation of international treaties and agreements.

These two contending trends present new dilemmas and challenges as the international community confront a plethora of issues affecting international peace and security. These trends and other associated issues of state formation and political systems were among the many topics that were analyzed by the Reflection Group and formed the bases for the findings and recommendation contained in the Report of the Reflection Group, entitled 'Providing Security in Times of Uncertainty: Opting for a Mosaic Security System', (FES, 2017). The Report presents the realities of a changed security environment where the state is no longer the uncontested security actor. It also recognizes the proliferation of different actors and the presence of several competing institutions and frameworks that deal with matters of security, at multiple levels—from the local to the regional and international arena. The Report therefore notes that a mosaic of security arrangements now characterizes the global security environment. Against these salient developments in the international system, the Report argues for a two-pronged approach in realizing the shared objective of achieving a more "equitable and inclusive security" for all. This approach begins with upholding the norms of state responsibility to provide security, while recognizing the role and potential of the multiplicity of actors that are also able to provide security and engaging with them in a more coordinated manner to establish a legitimate, effective and sustainable security architecture.

### IMPLICATIONS FOR ASIAN SECURITY

The analyses and the findings of the Report of the Reflection Group resonate well with imperatives of achieving peace and security in Asia. In a highly diverse regional environment with different political systems, the enduring dominance of the state and its role in providing security are distinctive features in most states in the region. But there are also palpable changes in efforts by a range of actors and institutions to help regional states and its people achieve equitable and inclusive security against the many security challenges confronting the region.

Indeed, much has changed in Asia's security environment. Although Asia, particularly East Asia, is now seen as the new economic powerhouse, its security outlook still appears to be laden with uncertainties. From the changing dynamics in the balance of power between the US and China, an emboldened North Korea with nuclear power capabilities and the prospects of nuclear arms race and the threat of the different shades of terrorism and radical extremism, there are serious concerns about the prospects for peace and security in the region. There is also the shared anxiety among many in the regional community about the resurgence of nationalism and the seeming retreat from multilateralism by big powers that cast a long shadow over the sustainability of a rules-based international order.

Most recently, Southeast Asia has had to deal with new faces of terrorism and radical extremism with the presence of extremist groups like Al Qaeda, Jemaah Islamiah and ISIS in the region. In countries like the Philippines and Indonesia, the presence of these terrorist and extremists groups have compounded its long standing problems of ethnic separatism with separatist groups often regarded as working with or transforming themselves to become part of the terrorist groups like ISIS. As example is the recent security crisis in Marawi City, Philippines where a terrorist group called the Mautes comprised of some members of the separatist groups like the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) and the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) attempted to take over the city and establish a caliphate in Asia.

The region had also experienced a string of crises and emergencies that affected several states. These included the Asian Financial Crisis in 1997-98, public health emergencies from the outbreaks of pandemics like SARS, H5-N1, MERS and transboundary environmental haze pollutions that resulted in huge economic losses and loss of lives. Moreover, many states also had to deal with numerous catastrophic disasters both natural and man-made that led to complex humanitarian emergencies and forced migration. Typhoon Haiyan that hit the Philippines in 2014 was one of the most intense tropical cyclones in decades which displaced over 4 million people. The conflict in the Rakhine State of Myanmar in 2015 and which became more intense in 2017 caused the highest number of forced migration in Southeast Asia as hundreds of thousands of Rohingya refugees were forced to leave Myanmar to neighbouring Bangladesh, fleeing from the violence and human right atrocities committed by military forces in Rakhine.

To be sure, the features of these traditional and non-traditional threats have had important implications on the evolving patterns of security provision at the national level and nature of security governance at the regional level. The transborder nature of many security problems has made it difficult for states in the region to contain the impacts of these threats within their borders and effective security governance has been beyond the capacity of any individual government. More significantly, with many developing states disproportionately affected by the impact of large-scale natural disasters, pandemics and terrorist attacks largely also due to their constraints in capacity and resources—questions about the ability of states to provide security have been raised. The transnationality, scale and complexity of many security challenges have therefore given rise to the need to involve more actors in security governance in order to expand the bases of capacity, resource and expertise to deal with these challenges.

Against this imperative, however, is the fact that while there are compelling reasons to expand the space of security governance, a majority of Asian countries still adhere to the traditional understanding of sovereignty and therefore uphold the state's primary role in providing security to its population. As a consequence, tensions between state authorities and non-state actors like NGOs, CSOs, international bodies like the UNHCR, ICRC and the IMO have often emerged. Despite well-meaning intentions to provide assistance in times of crisis, the legitimacy of external actors' assistance and intervention is still dependent on the consent from the national government of the state concerned. For instance, after Cyclone Nargis hit Myanmar in May 2008, the Myanmar government did not allow international humanitarian assistance, even though the humanitarian consequences of the disaster were beyond the government's capacity. While there were even calls for a military operation to open humanitarian access by some NGOs and western diplomats, the mainstream opinion among Asian countries was to persuade the Myanmar government to open up through quiet diplomacy, avoiding publicity and international attention. A similar approach has been adopted in the aftermath of the violent that caused the mass exodus of Rohingya refugees from Myanmar. Some member states of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) had to quietly persuade the authorities in Nay-pitaw to allow humanitarian assistance from ASEAN and other NGOs to reach the affected communities within Myanmar and the refugee camps just outside its border. With these constraints, how might the two-pronged recommended in the Report of the Reflection to advance inclusive security be implemented in Asia?

## PATHWAYS TO A COORDINATED MOSAIC SECURITY ARCHITECTURE FOR ASIA

At the outset, it is important to recognize that ideas and recommendations toward better coordination of security arrangements at the local and regional levels in Asia cannot ignore the reality that sovereignty and non-interference are the governing principles that define the conduct of relations in the region. This does not mean however that efforts have not been done to work around these normative constraints to create spaces to advance the goal of inclusive security. Within the context of East Asia and particularly the sub-region of Southeast Asia, the initiatives by ASEAN to build an ASEAN Political and Security Community (APSC) reflect the work by states and with the support of the epistemic communities, CSOs and NGOs to strengthen the normative foundation of inter- and intra-state conduct. The APSC reflects the aspirations of ASEAN to 'ensure a rules-based and inclusive community in which peoples enjoy human rights, fundamental freedoms and social justice, live in a safe and secure environment with enhanced capacity to respond effectively to emerging challenges...'.<sup>1</sup> The frequent use of the language of community in many official pronouncements is indicative of the shared goals of the states and peoples of the region maintain peace and build a resilient region for the common good of all the peoples in the region.

Thus, as ASEAN and other regional states come to grips with multifaceted security challenges facing the regional and global community today, there are critical elements that need to be acted upon to ensure an inclusive and resilient community. Foremost amongst these is the shared determination to strengthen its fledging institutions that are meant to support the realization of a 'just, peaceful and stable region' and to strengthen the normative foundations of state-society relations. These include, among others, the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR); ASEAN Commission on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children (ACWC), ASEAN Institute for Peace and Reconciliation (AIPR) and legislative body like the ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly. These mechanisms provide significant opportunities for building regional capacities to assist states and societies in the region to resolve disputes, prevent violence, and facilitate the peaceful management of conflicts.

<sup>1</sup> ASEAN Political-Security Blueprint 2025 in the ASEAN Vision 2025 (ASEAN, 2015: 19).

The next most important agenda is to urge regional states to actively engage the participation of non-state actors and other stakeholders in addressing security problems. Non-state actors represent a broad group ranging from private companies, business chambers, to local community, international NGOs, private foundations, as well as think tanks. The variety of the non-state actors (NSAs) indicates a potential pool of different resources and capabilities for security governance. Three particular strengths distinguish NSAs' contributions from state actors – resources, skills, technologies and knowledge that can fill in the gaps left by state actors; enhance the relationship between closeness to the people and communities in need and build public trust.

But in order to take these two broad measures forward, all stakeholders should pay attention to some key elements that could determine the outcomes of regional endeavours.

#### Establish clarity in roles and responsibilities

While cognizant of the need to build state capacity in dealing with security challenges, the proliferation of other actors can lead to confusion and/or conflict in roles and responsibilities in security provision, which in turn, result in governance gaps at the operational level. The roles and responsibilities of the state and other actors may also change depending on the nature or scale of the threat. For crises that have immediate and serious transboundary impacts like emerging infectious disease, the role of international organizations like the WHO becomes critical as they coordinate global efforts with states and regional organisations to deal with public health emergencies of international concern. It is therefore crucial to clearly define the working relationships between and among the actors in different security settings to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of security governance.

#### Encourage ownership and allow national government take the lead

Despite the growing role of other actors in helping build states' capacity to deal with security challenges, it is also important to be mindful and sensitive to the local and regional context. More importantly, states must take ownership of the kinds of policies and assistance provided by different stakeholders.

In this regard, the experience of ASEAN in dealing with transboundary security threats is instructive. States engaged at the regional level in cooperative and collaborate efforts in addressing security problems, while being sensitive to the norms of sovereignty and

non-interference. They are also mindful that while the need to offer assistance is an integral part of its ASEAN Community vision, there is a limit to the extent that other states or ASEAN can be involved even without consent is granted by the affected state. This means that while regional organisations can be effective mobilisers of resources, their main thrust is to lend support and complement the work of the affected country but not replace them.

Sub-regions in Asia differ in the level of regional institution, with Southeast Asia achieving higher level of institutionalisation than Northeast Asia and South Asia. Overall, the experience in East Asia is that providing assistance without threatening sovereignty has gone a long way in allowing affected states to take ownership while opening spaces for assistance to flow to communities of concern.

#### Harness bilateral channels, regional mechanisms and other formal and informal networks

Apart from clarity in roles and responsibilities, cooperative security frameworks, mechanisms and security architectures that facilitate communication and coordination at different levels hold the key to effective security governance. This web of institutions must be harnessed to the fullest.

Bilateral channels and regional mechanisms are intended to facilitate coordination between national governments as well as non-state actors above the national levels. Bilateral cooperation is a major component of governing transboundary security challenges, particularly for regions where the regional institution is weak or absent. For example, the strong relationship between the Japanese Self Defense Force (SDF) and the US military laid the solid foundation for the joint operation in response to the Great East Japan earthquake in 2011, known as Operation Tomodachi. Similar cooperation was seen in the response to Haiyan between the Philippines and the US in 2013.

Regional frameworks facilitate bilateral as well as regional cooperation. In Southeast Asia, the governance of haze problem is being continuously strengthened by regional agreements, initiatives and networks. Some of which include the 2002 ASEAN Agreement on Transboundary Haze Pollution, the 2003 ASEAN Peatland Management Initiative, and the 2005 ASEAN Peatland Management Strategy. During the major outbreaks in Indonesia in the past, neighboring countries responded with assistance in different forms within the ASEAN frameworks.

### Engage Non-State Actors as indispensable partners in inclusive security provision

As seen in times of humanitarian emergencies, outbreaks of pandemics and environmental pollution, philanthropic foundations, multinational corporations and INGOs are often sources of funds and other types of assistance. Similarly, local communities and civil society groups always play a crucial role in providing security as they often have better knowledge about local conditions, people's interests and concerns and cultural sensitivity. Such knowledge enables them to spot the gaps left by formal security arrangements and mechanisms and fill them in according to their own strengths.

The elements outlined above are certainly not exhaustive. There remain broader agendas and pathways that should be the subject of further dialogue between states authorities, their partners and their own people. To be sure, the East Asian region continues to face many challenges ahead.

These include:

- Developments in domestic politics that seem to show a sliding back toward more authoritarian regimes (Philippines, Thailand, Cambodia)
- Intractable problem in Myanmar' Rakhine state and the plight of the Rohingyas
- International/regional challenges to the rules based regimes like the disputed maritime areas in the South and East China Seas.

To conclude, within the context of the region there still needs more serious efforts to coordinate the mosaic of security architecture and to realize the vision of a 'caring, just, democratic'<sup>2</sup> and inclusive ASEAN and the wider Asian community. But just as the seeds have been planted and the shoots are starting to grow, more efforts should now be focused on nurturing whatever progress has been made in advancing human security for all.

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<sup>2</sup> ASEAN Political and Security Blueprint

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### REFLECTION GROUP MONOPOLY ON THE USE OF FORCE

The Reflection Group »Monopoly on the use of force 2.0?« is a global dialogue initiative to raise awareness and discuss policy options for the concept of the monopoly for the use of force. Far from being a merely academic concern, this concept, at least theoretically and legally remains at the heart of the current international security order. However it is faced with a variety of grave challenges and hardly seems to reflect realities on the ground in various regions around the globe anymore. For more information about the work of the reflection group and its members please visit: <http://www.fes.de/de/reflection-group-monopoly-on-the-use-of-force-20/>

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The Think Pieces serve a dual purpose: On the one hand they provide points of reference for the

deliberations of the reflection group and feed into the final report of the group in 2016. On the other hand they are made available publicly to provide interested scholars, politicians and practitioners with an insight into the different positions and debates of the group and provide food for thought for related discussions and initiatives worldwide. In this sense, they reflect how the group and selected additional experts »think« about the topic and hopefully stimulate further engagement with it.

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