



**ROUNDTABLE ON  
THE FUTURE OF THE  
ADMM/ADMM-PLUS AND  
DEFENCE DIPLOMACY IN  
THE ASIA PACIFIC**

Policy Report  
February 2016

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STUDIES

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Edited by Sarah Teo and Bhubhinder Singh  
February 2016

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting (ADMM) marks its 10th anniversary in 2016. The establishment of the ADMM in 2006 is arguably an achievement in itself given that past suggestions for multilateral defence initiatives had been met with reluctance and resistance from Southeast Asian countries. While the ADMM is not the only multilateral forum for defence diplomacy and cooperation, it stands out for being the top-level ministerial defence mechanism that is directly accountable to the ASEAN leaders. Moreover, it is to date the only formal platform to annually convene all 10 defence ministers of the Association. With the launch of the ADMM-Plus in 2010—currently a biennial meeting involving the defence ministers of the ASEAN countries<sup>1</sup> and their eight dialogue partners<sup>2</sup>—defence diplomacy in the region undoubtedly developed a step further.

Both the ADMM and ADMM-Plus contribute towards the realisation of an ASEAN Political-Security Community (APSC), which is itself one of the three pillars that make up the ASEAN Community.<sup>3</sup> The agendas of the ADMM and ADMM-Plus, as well as their associated mechanisms such as the ADMM-Plus Experts' Working Groups (EWGs) focusing on specific non-traditional security areas and the ASEAN Defence Senior Officials' Meetings, have thus far concentrated on enhancing confidence building and practical cooperation among regional countries to combat transnational security challenges. While the forums have arguably done well in these areas, they continue to face challenges arising from the evolving political dynamics in the region, the capacity gaps among member states, as well as the overstretching of limited resources across several similar security-related mechanisms.

To examine in detail the strengths and weaknesses of the ADMM and ADMM-Plus and trace the forums' evolution, the Regional Security Architecture Programme, Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies (IDSS), S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS), hosted a roundtable on “The Future of the ADMM/ADMM-Plus and Defence Diplomacy in the Asia Pacific” on 17 November 2015 in Singapore. The aim of the roundtable was to take stock of the ADMM and ADMM-Plus meetings, in terms of the successes, challenges and the way forward. In light of these objectives, two questions were posed to structure the discussions at the roundtable. They were:

- What are the strengths of and challenges facing the ADMM and ADMM-Plus?
- What are the future direction and areas for defence cooperation in the region?

The 12 articles in this volume penned by experts from the region and beyond capture the discussions and debates at the roundtable. Five articles tackle the two questions directly from ADMM perspective, and four more articles from the ADMM-Plus perspective. There are two articles that focus on ADMM and ADMM-Plus cooperation specifically in humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HADR) and military medicine, respectively. These two issues have been selected for deeper discussion given the urgency of having effective mechanisms to manage the impact of natural disasters in the region. Finally, this volume also includes an article that provides an historical overview of how the ADMM and ADMM-Plus have developed since they were established.

The discussions at the roundtable and articles here reveal a consensus among all participants of the importance of the ADMM and ADMM-Plus meetings to the regional security architecture, and to the member states' national strategies. The emergence of both meetings have been positive

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<sup>1</sup> Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam.

<sup>2</sup> Australia, China, India, Japan, New Zealand, Russia, South Korea and United States.

<sup>3</sup> The other two pillars are the ASEAN Economic Community and ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community.

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developments, and the level of cooperation achieved, albeit in the realm of non-traditional security, has been impressive taking into account their relative short lifespans. All states should continue to work hard and invest adequate resources to strengthen these meetings. However, the participants also noted several challenges. These are discussed as follows along with the policy implications.

First, major power rivalries and interests continue to pose a challenge to ASEAN centrality. The fact that many ASEAN countries remain reliant on their respective bilateral relations with the dialogue partners for their security needs could potentially result in the Association being vulnerable to divisions among the member states. The absence of a joint communiqué—a result of a disagreement over the South China Sea disputes—during the 2012 meeting of ASEAN's foreign ministers in Cambodia is a case in point.

In this regard, there is a need to ensure that the ADMM continues to take the lead in ADMM-Plus cooperation and speak with a single voice—as reflected in another disagreement over the South China Sea issue, this time at the Third ADMM-Plus in November 2015. Rather than being stymied by divisions among the ASEAN states, the lack of a joint declaration at the Third ADMM-Plus was precisely because the ADMM member states stayed united vis-à-vis the extra-regional partners. At the same time, there is a risk that the extra-regional partners could lose interest in the ADMM-Plus process should the ADMM overplay the ASEAN centrality card. The ADMM should thus be conscious of maintaining a balance between preserving ASEAN centrality in the ADMM-Plus and engaging the dialogue partners in a meaningful way.

Second, the cooperative atmosphere built by ADMM and ADMM-Plus initiatives in the non-traditional security areas appear yet to have positive spill-over effects in other domains. Practical cooperation conducted within the frameworks of both forums have made considerable progress, particularly since the ADMM and ADMM-Plus have access to military assets, personnel and resources which could be mobilised for exercises and operations. The ADMM-Plus is also considered more geographically focused than the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), which makes it easier for joint activities to take place. These characteristics of the ADMM and ADMM-Plus have resulted in enhanced cooperation especially in the areas of HADR, defence interactions and establishing networks among defence and security agencies.

However, a trust deficit remains in the region over traditional security issues in particular, such as the South China Sea territorial disputes. Political sensitivities also continue to limit regional defence cooperation to the non-traditional security areas. While the ADMM and ADMM-Plus have typically shunned addressing the more controversial issues, the forums are likely to face increasing pressure to move beyond functional non-traditional security cooperation as regional political dynamics evolve. It would thus be prudent for the ADMM to start thinking about how it could deal with the more politically sensitive issues in a manner that it is comfortable with, rather than having to scramble for a stopgap solution when pressured by elements beyond its control.

Third, and related to the above point, the ADMM would need to intensify measures to enhance transparency among its member states. While the establishments of the ADMM and ADMM-Plus are

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remarkable achievements for a region that had historically rejected multilateral defence cooperation, it is perhaps time to take on more actionable initiatives within these frameworks to improve mutual understandings and share information. Preparing and publishing the ASEAN Security Outlook—which is already listed as a deliverable in the ADMM Three-Year Work Programme—would be a useful way for the ADMM countries to exchange perspectives and enhance transparency. This would help to reduce the trust deficit in the region, and lay the foundations for management of the more politically sensitive issues.

Fourth, the ADMM currently faces an inconsistency in terms of its institutional capacity, meaning that the agenda and achievements of the ADMM would vary from year to year depending on the capacity and leadership of the country that assumes the ADMM Chair. Consequently, there is a need to narrow the capability gaps among the ASEAN countries, to ensure that the performance of the ADMM remains relatively consistent from year to year. With more consistent leadership, the ADMM would also be able to remain more united in the face of extra-regional interests and agendas.

Fifth and finally, the ADMM and ADMM-Plus should work at consolidating present cooperation. Both forums have proposed many initiatives to drive practical cooperation, but not all have been implemented. To sustain the momentum for ADMM and ADMM-Plus cooperation in the long-term, it would be necessary to review existing mechanisms and assess their progress. Simply suggesting more initiatives without actual consideration of member states' limited resources would not benefit the ADMM and ADMM-Plus. In this regard, the ADMM might perhaps also consider dissolving initiatives that no longer have any value-add. At a broader level, this consolidation of existing cooperation should also take into account the complementarity of the ADMM and ADMM-Plus agendas with that of other security-related mechanisms.

By examining the strengths, challenges and future of the ADMM and ADMM-Plus, this volume hopes to contribute to a better understanding of the dynamics in the two forums and the ways in which they could continue to enhance defence diplomacy and cooperation in the region.



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## THE ADMM AND ADMM-PLUS: PROGRESSING SLOWLY BUT STEADILY?

*See Seng Tan*

The evolution of defence and security cooperation within the ADMM and its appendage, the ADMM-Plus—comprising the 10 ASEAN defence ministers and their counterparts from Australia, China, India, New Zealand, Japan, Russia, South Korea and the United States—has been incremental and steady, perhaps even remarkable by ASEAN standards. While their impact on strategic considerations such as security dilemmas in the region has likely been minimal, not least because of their limited objectives, they have made some inroads in strengthening regional capacities and enhancing interstate collaboration in select non-traditional security areas such as disaster relief, military medicine and counter-terrorism, among others.

This paper aims to do three things. First, it reviews early trends in defence regionalisation that served, directly or indirectly, as the building blocks for the subsequent formation of the ADMM and ADMM-Plus. Second, it traces the evolution of the ADMM and ADMM-Plus from their respective inceptions to the present. Finally, it concludes with some observations and questions going forward.

### **Pre-ADMM trends in defence regionalisation**

Since the 1970s if not earlier, the ASEAN states have had no qualms exploiting the space between collective defence and non-security-oriented regionalism through bilateral security cooperation with one another, such as border security agreements and intelligence exchanges. During the 1980s, then Singapore Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew mooted the idea for an ASEAN defence trilateral, even quadrilateral, which was roundly rejected by his ASEAN counterparts. Subsequent calls were made by the Indonesian and Malaysia Foreign Ministers—Mochtar Kusumaadmatdja and Abu Hassan Omar—for an ASEAN “military arrangement” and “defence community,” respectively. By 1989, bilateral military exercises between the so-called “core ASEAN states”—Indonesia, Malaysia and

Singapore—had become sufficiently thick to merit being described by then Indonesian Vice-President Try Sutrisno as a “defence spider web.”

At the Fourth ASEAN Summit in Singapore in 1992, ASEAN formally included security issues in its agenda. By the mid-1990s, trilateral defence cooperation involving Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore became relatively commonplace. The establishment of the ARF in 1994 paved the way for regular consultation among Asia Pacific defence officials and practitioners through mechanisms like the ARF Defence Officials’ Dialogue and the ARF Security Policy Conference. Beyond the formal ASEAN auspices, various military-to-military interactions and activities that have been regularised include the ASEAN Chiefs of Defence Forces Informal Meeting (ACDFIM), the ASEAN Chiefs of Army Multilateral Meeting, the ASEAN Navy Interaction, the ASEAN Air Force Chiefs Conference, the ASEAN Military Intelligence Meeting and the ASEAN Armies Rifles Meet. The Western Pacific Naval Symposium (WPNS) also deserves mention. Formed in 1988, the WPNS has led to important developments like the endorsement for the Code for Unplanned Encounters at Sea—a non-binding agreement on a standardised protocol of safety procedures, basic communications and basic manoeuvring instructions for ships and aircraft during unplanned encounters—at the 14th WPNS held in Qingdao, China on 22 April 2014.

In 2002, the London-based International Institute for Strategic Studies, with help from Singapore’s Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies—later rebranded as the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS)—initiated the Shangri-La Dialogue (SLD), whose success has spawned a number of imitations in the region, such as China’s Xiangshan Forum, Russia’s Moscow Conference on International Security and Malaysia’s Putrajaya Forum. Early proposals by various stakeholders to upgrade the SLD to a formal ministerial forum for the Asia Pacific were rejected by ASEAN, however. More than anything, the SLD chipped

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away at the conventional wisdom held by ASEAN that the region was not yet ready for a defence ministerial platform. Finally, in 2003 at the Ninth ASEAN Summit in Bali, the Bali Concord II was unveiled which cast a vision for an ASEAN Security Community; later changed to the APSC. Crucially, the APSC Blueprint and its accompanying Vientiane Action Plan (VAP) envisaged the establishment of the ADMM and ADMM-Plus as key planks in the realisation of the APSC.

### Evolution of the ADMM

The First ADMM was held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia in May 2006. Its stated aims were as follows: to promote regional peace and stability through dialogue and defence and security cooperation; to provide “strategic-level guidance” for defence and security cooperation within ASEAN—and, with the consequent formation of the ADMM-Plus, between ASEAN and its dialogue partners; to promote mutual trust and confidence through enhancing transparency and openness; and to contribute to the establishment of the APSC and promote the implementation of the VAP. The Second ADMM was held in Singapore in November 2007. It adopted three papers—the ADMM-Plus Concept Paper; the Protocol to the ADMM Concept Paper; and the ADMM Three-Year Work Programme for 2008–2010—which collectively charted the anticipated development of the ADMM and ADMM-Plus. The Third ADMM was held in Pattaya, Thailand in February 2009. It adopted papers on the deployment of ASEAN military assets and capabilities for humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HADR), on the principles of membership for the ADMM-Plus, and—an initiative proposed specifically by Thailand—on cooperation between ASEAN defence establishments and civil society organisations on non-traditional security challenges. In addition, the ADMM Retreat was held in Bangkok that November, where ministers discussed the proposed ADMM-Plus.

The Fourth ADMM was held in Hanoi, Vietnam in May 2010. It adopted papers on

the ADMM-Plus, namely, on its configuration and composition and on its modalities and procedures, which set the stage for the inauguration of the ADMM-Plus that same year. The Fifth ADMM was held in Jakarta, Indonesia in May 2011. At that meeting, the defence ministers affirmed the importance of freedom of navigation in regional waters in accordance with international law, and committed their countries to the full and effective implementation of the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (DOC), with an eye towards adopting a Code of Conduct for the South China Sea (COC). They also concurred on setting up a joint committee to coordinate the deployment of ASEAN military assets for HADR. The Fifth ADMM accepted papers on the ADMM’s three-year work plan for 2011–2013, on the establishment of a network of ASEAN peacekeeping centres (an initiative proposed by Indonesia), and on the development of a mechanism for regional defence industry collaboration (an initiative proposed by Malaysia). The Sixth ADMM was held in Phnom Penh, Cambodia in May 2012. While the ASEAN Foreign Ministers’ Meeting that took place later that July would likely go down in memory as ASEAN’s day of infamy with its failure to issue a joint statement—the first time that had ever happened in the history of ASEAN—the ADMM in May went about its business as usual. It accepted a paper reviewing the frequency of ADMM-Plus meetings—which recommended that ADMM-Plus meet biennially rather than triennially—and supported the inaugural meeting, which met in June 2012, on the establishment of a network of ASEAN peacekeeping centres.

The Seventh ADMM met in Bandar Seri Begawan, Brunei Darussalam in May 2013. It adopted initiatives on the respective establishments of an ASEAN Defence Interaction Programme and a Logistics Support Framework. The ADMM Retreat in August that same year led to the agreement to step up practical cooperation between militaries to achieve a higher level of trust and confidence with each other, and to institute practical measures to ease tensions in the South China



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Sea first proposed at the Seventh ADMM, including establishing a hotline to defuse tensions at sea as well as a “non-first use of force” agreement. The defence ministers emphasised that these measures would help to reduce the fallout from miscalculation and misunderstanding while the COC is being developed. The Eighth ADMM took place in Naypyidaw, Myanmar in May 2014. It adopted the ADMM three-year work plan for 2014–2016, the Concept Paper on Establishing a Direct Communications Link in the ADMM Process—meant essentially as a permanent, rapid, reliable and confidential hotline available to ASEAN defence ministers, which could also be used to coordinate regional responses to emergencies and crises—and the Additional Protocol to the Concept Papers for the Establishment of an ADMM and the ADMM-Plus, which would refine and clarify the working mechanisms and procedures of the ADMM and the ADMM-Plus. The Eighth ADMM also acknowledged the adoption of the terms of reference for the Consultative Group of ASEAN Defence Industry Collaboration, which could start the implementation of collaborative activities.

The ninth and most recent ADMM was held in Langkawi, Malaysia in March 2015. It adopted concept papers on the ASEAN Militaries Ready Group on HADR and on the establishment of the ASEAN Centre of Military Medicine (an initiative proposed by Thailand). The defence ministers agreed to cooperate to counter the “imminent threat” of terrorist or extremist organisations and radical groups—the threat posed by the Islamic State (IS) being very much the focus at the meeting—through information sharing, surveillance and promoting public awareness. The Ninth ADMM also issued a joint statement that reaffirmed the commitment of ASEAN states to address common security challenges. The South China Sea merited a mention, with the 10 ASEAN states underscoring “the importance of freedom of navigation in, and over-flight above, the [South China Sea] as provided for by universally recognised principles of international law, including the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of Sea.” That

same month, the EWG on Peacekeeping Operations held a workshop on Strengthening Cooperation through Exchanging Capabilities in Humanitarian De-mining in Siem Reap, Cambodia.

### Evolution of the ADMM-Plus

The inauguration of the ADMM-Plus took place in October 2010 in Hanoi on the basis of papers endorsed by the Fourth ADMM. The ADMM-Plus started off as a triennial arrangement but since 2013 it has become a biennial arrangement on the basis of a recommendation made by the Sixth ADMM. The ADMM-Plus originally identified five areas of practical cooperation for itself, namely, maritime security, counter-terrorism, HADR, peacekeeping operations and military medicine. A sixth area, humanitarian mine action, was added in 2013. Six EWGs help to facilitate efforts in each of those areas. The EWGs on Military Medicine and Maritime Security conducted a table-top exercise in July and September 2012 respectively.

A number of key developments took place in 2013. The Second ADMM-Plus met in Bandar Seri Begawan in August. Earlier in June, the militaries of all 18 ADMM-Plus member countries participated in a massive HADR/military medicine exercise, which involved 3,200 personnel, seven ships, 15 helicopters as well as military medical, engineering, search and rescue teams, and assets. This was followed by a counter-terrorism exercise in Sentul, Indonesia in September and a maritime security field training exercise in Sydney, Australia from September to October. The EWG on Peacekeeping Operations held a table-top exercise in Manila in February 2014.

The Third ADMM-Plus met in Kuala Lumpur in November 2015. Although joint declarations are not mandatory for the ADMM-Plus, the initial plan to issue one was however scrapped owing to disagreements among the Plus countries over whether to include mention of the South China Sea in the statement. Widely (and wrongly)

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reported in the international press that the failure to issue a declaration was reminiscent of a disunited ASEAN's failure in Phnom Penh in July 2012, the key difference this time was that all 10 ASEAN states—including the four South China Sea claimant states—stood firmly united against the inclusion of the South China Sea in the proposed joint declaration, while ensuring its mention in the Chairman's Statement issued by Malaysia in its role as ASEAN Chair for 2015. Two other activities held in February 2015 included a combined field training exercise on maritime security and a counter-terrorism initial planning conference.

### Conclusion

The track records of the ADMM and ADMM-Plus reflect a number of relatively successful achievements at the functional and/or operational levels. On the other hand, the apparent willingness of the Plus countries to use the Third ADMM-Plus setting to engage in diplomatic jousting underscores the likelihood that the ADMM-Plus is not ready to be a forum for strategic issues. At least three implications can be drawn here.

First, the achievements can be viewed as a vindication of ASEAN's decision to focus its energies on "harvesting the low-hanging fruits" of regional cooperation in the non-traditional security domain. Be that as it may, those achievements did not necessarily translate into substantive cooperation when needed, as the lack of a concerted ASEAN response in HADR to Super Typhoon Haiyan (or Yolanda) in November 2013 glaringly showed. Second, the achievements presumably serve as evidence that national defence establishments, given their mission-mindedness and the military assets and resources at their disposal, do better than their foreign policy counterparts in making regional security cooperation work. At the very least, they suggest that functional initiatives possibly offer fewer disincentives against cooperation, even though they are not necessarily free from sovereignty and non-interference considerations. Finally, even if ASEAN unity prevailed at the Third ADMM-Plus in Kuala Lumpur, are future ADMM-Plus gatherings at risk of emulating the ARF as a venue for big power megaphone diplomacy? Indeed, does ASEAN unity matter when big powers no longer seem willing to play by the house rules at ASEAN-led meetings?

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## STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF THE ADMM AND ADMM-PLUS

*Tan Seng Chye*

### **ASEAN's establishment and its principles: political and defence diplomacies in ASEAN defence cooperation**

ASEAN's establishment in August 1967 was a result of the founding member countries' desire to build a peaceful and stable region away from Cold War tensions and major power rivalry, and to promote closer economic and socio-cultural cooperation among its members. This was an important historical development as prior to that, the founding members were engaged in bilateral conflicts. In order to foster peace and stability, the ASEAN members promoted trust and confidence and conflict prevention. They also adhered to the principle that ASEAN-level cooperation must not be affected by the member countries' bilateral cooperation with external powers. This principle and the "ASEAN Way" have helped to facilitate cooperation in ASEAN and build better relations among ASEAN members.

The 1971 Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality Declaration and the 1995 Treaty on the Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone were part of ASEAN's efforts to build regional peace and stability. The 1976 Bali Summit adopted the Bali Concord and the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia (TAC). While the Bali Concord promoted economic cooperation, the TAC codified relations between and among ASEAN countries, and ASEAN's relations with its dialogue partners. This is an instance of the conduct of political and defence diplomacies.

Since ASEAN's establishment, there has been no threat of war or open conflict among the

ASEAN countries as the militaries of the ASEAN countries have been engaged in ensuring domestic stability and state security. In the late 1980s and 1990s, political and defence diplomacies were conducted mostly at the bilateral level and they focused on building trust and confidence and improving bilateral relations among the ASEAN member countries. ASEAN-level military and defence cooperation were sensitive due to issues of sovereignty, equality and diversity of national outlooks, and various proposals for multilateral defence cooperation such as exercises, meetings or an ASEAN peacekeeping force, were rejected.

### **ASEAN countries' sensitivities**

ASEAN integration and community building, particularly in the APSC, will face many hurdles and can only progress gradually. For political and security cooperation, ASEAN countries have to take into account national sovereignty, national pride, levels of confidence and trust, national interests and concerns including national capacities, as well as the impact of domestic politics on foreign and defence relations. Even in HADR cooperation, such concerns will surface and not all ASEAN countries have the capacities and capabilities to respond to HADR, search and rescue and other non-traditional security challenges. ASEAN is wary of major power rivalry and intervention in the region. ASEAN will tread carefully as such rivalry could raise tensions in the region and affect ASEAN unity and cohesion, and even challenge ASEAN centrality in the regional architecture.

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### ADMM and ADMM-Plus

#### *ADMM*

The establishment of the ADMM in May 2006 enabled discussions of defence cooperation at the ASEAN level. The three Three-Year Work Programmes of the ADMM have focused on exchange of perspectives, improving and deepening mutual trust, better understanding of each other's defence and security policies, confidence building, practical cooperation including with the Plus countries, and establishing communication procedures among the defence and military establishments of the ASEAN countries. The ADMM-initiated meetings of the chiefs of defence forces, chiefs of the three branches of the military, chiefs of intelligence, and exchange visits of defence colleges, have enhanced defence diplomacy, strengthened interpersonal relations and cooperation, and promoted better understanding of each other's policies. These ADMM initiatives have promoted a conducive atmosphere for cooperation among the militaries of the ASEAN countries as well as for economic and socio-cultural cooperation.

However, military cooperation at the ASEAN level remains limited due to ASEAN countries' sensitivities and national sovereignty concerns such as the differences in approaches to national defence and cooperation, as well as in the levels of defence development, equipment and operational procedures. Hence, political and defence diplomacies are necessary to manage cooperation and good relations among the ASEAN countries. Even anti-piracy cooperation in the Malacca Straits is referred to as coordinated naval and air patrols, rather

than joint patrols, and user states of the Straits can only provide technical assistance to enhance safety of navigation in the Straits. ASEAN-level defence cooperation will continue to progress very gradually due to diversity in national ideologies, concerns and outlooks of the militaries of the ASEAN countries, and the differences in the levels of development. Due to the diversity of member states, ASEAN will never be like the European Union where the organisational structures and policies are supranational in nature.

The ADMM has engaged in cooperation on non-traditional security issues but not on traditional security issues which could involve major power rivalry and could affect ADMM-Plus cooperation. The ADMM-Plus meeting in Kuala Lumpur on 4 November 2015 saw ASEAN maintaining its unity by not issuing a joint declaration, as certain major powers wanted certain wordings to mention the South China Sea which ASEAN could not agree to. In the recent past, the ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Meeting and the ASEAN Leaders' Summit have stated ASEAN's position on traditional security issues. Although ASEAN has expressed concern that developments in the South China Sea could affect peace and stability, it nevertheless wants the disputes to be managed and resolved peacefully through negotiations in accordance to international law including the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, the 2002 DOC, and the COC when completed. ASEAN also does not want the disputes to dominate its extensive areas of cooperation, including with its dialogue partners.

The ADMM's publication of the ASEAN Security Outlook will support efforts and

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reflect member states' commitment to promote greater transparency, confidence building and understanding of regional security challenges and perceptions in Southeast Asia. Promoting closer cooperation and understanding among the militaries of the ASEAN countries will help to prevent open conflicts in ASEAN.

The ADMM could also consider the establishment of an ASEAN Crisis Monitoring and Coordination Centre (ACMCC), as proposed by the Track II Network of ASEAN Defence and Security Institutions (NADI)—a think tank group to support the ADMM Track—at its Second Annual Meeting in 2008. While the Information Fusion Centre and the Regional HADR Coordination Centre based at the Singapore Changi Naval Base have enhanced cooperation among the ASEAN and Plus countries in HADR and maritime security, an ACMCC can be more effective in responding to HADR and other NTS challenges beyond the military sector by linking up national-level HADR centres in the ASEAN countries. Other new issues proposed by NADI for the ADMM's consideration include aviation security, cybersecurity, counter-terrorism, as well as enhanced HADR cooperation in capacity building and technology transfer.

### ***ADMM-Plus***

Inaugurated in October 2010, the ADMM-Plus is a platform for ASEAN and its eight dialogue partners to strengthen security cooperation for peace, stability, and development in the region. The defence ministers had then agreed on five areas of practical cooperation to pursue under this new mechanism, namely maritime security, counter-terrorism, HADR, peacekeeping operations and military medicine. To facilitate cooperation on these areas, five EWGs were established. A new EWG on Humanitarian Mine Action was established on 7 May 2013.

The ADMM-Plus has focused on non-traditional security issues and not traditional security issues. In recent years, non-traditional security issues have posed the greatest challenges to the ASEAN countries and the welfare of their peoples. These issues include natural disasters, earthquakes, tsunamis, transnational crimes, people smuggling, piracy, and pandemics among others. In the ADMM-Plus process, ASEAN's lead role must be maintained. This is in line with ASEAN centrality in the multi-layered regional architecture. ASEAN's cooperation with its dialogue partners has progressed well because it involves economic, socio-cultural, and functional cooperation, and non-traditional security cooperation to meet the challenges facing the regional countries and their peoples. In the ADMM and ADMM-Plus processes, foreign and defence diplomacies are at play to foster good relations and cooperation.

In the future, ASEAN must continue to take the lead in the ADMM-Plus, particularly in HADR, and should strengthen capacity building and the transfer of expertise to build up ASEAN's capability to respond more effectively to the challenges of non-traditional security issues at the national and regional levels. The ADMM should also expand its areas of cooperation and explore ways in which the militaries of the ASEAN countries can play a more effective role in responding to non-traditional security challenges. In this regard, NADI has submitted several relevant inputs and policy recommendations that are ahead of the curve, for the ADMM to enhance its cooperation in new areas, including with the Plus countries.

***Mr Tan Seng Chye is Senior Fellow at RSIS.***



## PROSPECTS AND CHALLENGES OF THE ADMM

*Tang Siew Mun*

The formation of the ADMM in 2006 marked an important milestone for ASEAN cooperation. Heretofore, ASEAN had been inimical to forging formal intra-mural security ties, and preferred to engage extra-regional security partners to bolster their security preparedness and capabilities. ASEAN's first foray into security multilateralism came in the formation of the ARF in 1994. The ARF was created as a mechanism to "foster constructive dialogue and consultation on political and security issues of common interest and concern; and to make significant contributions to efforts towards confidence-building and preventive diplomacy in the Asia-Pacific region." In essence, it was a forum to engage extra-regional parties. The ADMM was the first intra-mural formal institution dedicated to defence and security, and was preceded by the ACDFIM which was established in 2003.

The ADMM occupies an important space in regional security. As useful as the ARF is, its unwieldy membership of 27 states and entities is a liability when it comes to practical cooperation. Its inherent diversity makes it unsuited for the role of enhancing Southeast Asian security as its *raison d'être* extends beyond the region. Conceptually, the ARF conflates Asian security under a homogenous umbrella and is unable to reconcile the various regional security complexes (Northeast, Southeast and South Asia). The value of the ADMM stems from its geographical cohesiveness, which provides an avenue for regional security cooperation. The ADMM serves the regional interest and provides an avenue for the ASEAN defence ministers to discuss and exchange views on Southeast Asian security issues and concerns.

The ADMM also marks a growing sense of comfort within ASEAN to discuss and cooperate on security matters, and elevates security cooperation on par with other sectoral regional cooperation. The establishment of the ADMM brings the defence ministry on par with other ministries that had formed formal meetings earlier: energy (1980), law (1986), transport

(1996), transnational crime (1997), tourism (1998), telecommunication and information technology (2001), arts and culture (2003) and science and technology (2005). It also highlights the important point of having the defence establishments regain the initiative and ownership on defence and security cooperation. Prior to the establishment of the ADMM, defence issues were presented and represented by the leaders and the ministries of foreign affairs. The ADMM provides an avenue for the defence ministers to hold regional discussions directly without having to utilise the moderating function of the ministries of foreign affairs, which is still the case in ARF. The establishment of the ADMM also paved the way for the institutionalisation of the ACDFIM. The ACDFIM had been meeting informally since 2003 and continued to do so until 2015 when the decision was made to change and upgrade the status of the meeting to a formal meeting.

The ADMM succeeded in narrowing the ARF's geographical footprint and diverse membership by establishing the ADMM-Plus. The ADMM serves as the core for the ADMM-Plus. Formed in 2010, the ADMM-Plus brings ASEAN's eight dialogue partners in a collaborative framework to strengthen Southeast Asian security and defence cooperation. The ADMM-Plus provided a geographical focus that was lacking in the ARF, which enables the dialogue partners to engage with ASEAN directly and more effectively. ASEAN centrality is also reaffirmed by the ADMM's role in facilitating security cooperation with its dialogue partners.

The ADMM, however, suffers from three major drawbacks. First, the ADMM is ill-equipped to undertake the role as a provider of regional security. ASEAN's collective military force pales in comparison to the capacity of hypothetical threats from India and China. Second, ASEAN is not a military alliance and has not subscribed to a regional framework for collective security. How will ASEAN respond if an extra-regional party attacks one of its member states? Third,

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by the same token, the ADMM appears to be an institution in search of a mission. The fact that ASEAN member states place a higher premium on their external security partners as their security guarantor points to the limited role played by the ADMM in traditional security. How could the ADMM even attempt to undertake a regional security role when ASEAN is hamstrung by its non-interference policy? These constraints effectively confine the ADMM's role to non-traditional security areas. For a region that has traditionally looked beyond its borders to solicit security partners, it is a challenge for the ADMM to stake out a role that is beyond the member states' comfort zone. Indonesia's frustration at Thailand's refusal to allow ceasefire monitors during the latter's dispute with Cambodia over the Preah Vihear bears testament to ASEAN's resistance to expanding its political-security remit. Taking a leaf from Ambassador Bilahari Kausikan's characterisation of ASEAN as a "cow, not a horse," it is useful to put ASEAN's limitations in context when assessing the ADMM's position and role.

There is a noticeable shift in momentum in the quantity and quality of functional cooperation from the ARF to the ADMM. As the ARF continues to debate the modalities to move beyond confidence building, the ADMM had hit the ground running by acting on tangible initiatives such as the ASEAN Defence Industry Collaboration and the ASEAN Peacekeeping Centres Network. A hotline connecting the region's defence ministers had also been established. In spite of these developments, the ADMM has to keep within the practicalities of regional politics. The ASEAN Peacekeeping Force (APF) proposal, for example, ran into a diplomatic brick wall while being served with the reminder that security policy cannot operate independently or ahead of foreign policy. It is one thing to improve training and share best practices as was the intent of the ASEAN Peacekeeping Centres Network, but it is entirely a different proposition with respect to the APF as the creation of a regional

peacekeeping force would require a common policy and entails a degree of sharing of national resources. From an institutional perspective, the ADMM (and by extension the ADMM-Plus) is "peeling" itself from ARF as it has the distinct advantage of control over resources and manpower to implement initiatives. At the same time, it is unrealistic for the ADMM to be entirely independent from the political processes at the national level. In this respect, the ADMM has to undertake the due process of national consultation and coordination with, among others, their foreign affairs counterparts to ensure that defence diplomacy does not run counter to foreign policy.

The nature and form of ASEAN leadership itself presents a unique set of challenges for all ASEAN institutions, including the ADMM. Leadership of all the ASEAN sectoral bodies follows the ASEAN Chair which serves for a 12-month term. Continuity is a challenge. For example, will Lao PDR, which assumes the ADMM chairing responsibilities in 2016, continue to work towards the APF proposal considering that it has not participated in any form of multilateral peacekeeping? The institutional leadership challenge is compounded by the absence of a regional military power that could serve as anchor to drive and sustain security cooperation.

The ADMM is a late bloomer in the context of ASEAN cooperation, and the forging of defence cooperation represents the regional organisation's maturity and comfort level. It would no doubt face criticisms for its shortcomings, but its successes at inculcating and sustaining habits of cooperation will overshadow all scepticism.

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## DEFENCE DIPLOMACY IN SOUTHEAST ASIA: A REVIEW

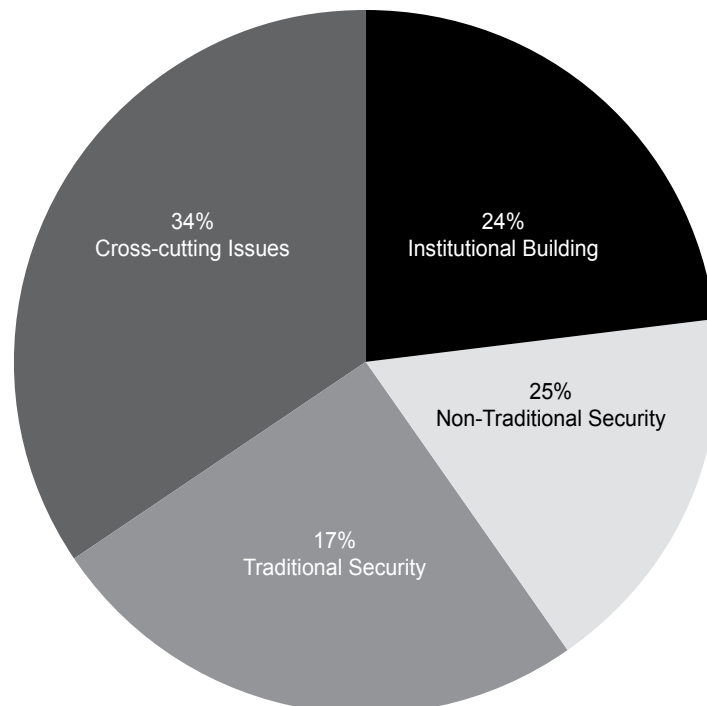
*Iis Gindarsah*

In the Asia Pacific, there has been a plethora of multilateral venues for defence interactions. They take place in the form of either formal meetings or informal exchanges, and are initiated by both ASEAN and the external powers. Reflecting the post-Cold War conception of defence diplomacy, these forums generally stress on building amicable relationships among defence establishments in the region. Focusing on the ADMM, this essay specifically seeks to review recent developments of defence diplomacy in Southeast Asia.

Unlike the extra-regionally sponsored defence talks, ASEAN-centred consultative platforms have brought a significant change to the

regional security order. The “ASEAN Way” that involves consensus building and a non-confrontational approach is deemed as the most acceptable strategy to preserve regional peace and stability. In the view of a former Indonesian Defence Minister, the ADMM is a regional means to achieve two key objectives.<sup>1</sup> First, the ASEAN-centred defence talks help to enhance “technological parity” among Southeast Asian countries, through ensuring that domestic political developments and economic progress become mutually reinforcing. Second, with the rise of China and India, the ADMM-Plus allows the creation of “strategic space” to accommodate the interests of extra-regional powers in the region.

**Figure 1: Focus of ASEAN's official documents, 2009-2014**



*Source: Data collated from ASEAN's official websites.*

<sup>1</sup> Sudarsono, Juwono. “The Role of Indonesia in the Region and the World.” *The Jakarta Post*, May 3, 2010.

## DEFENCE DIPLOMACY IN SOUTHEAST ASIA: A REVIEW

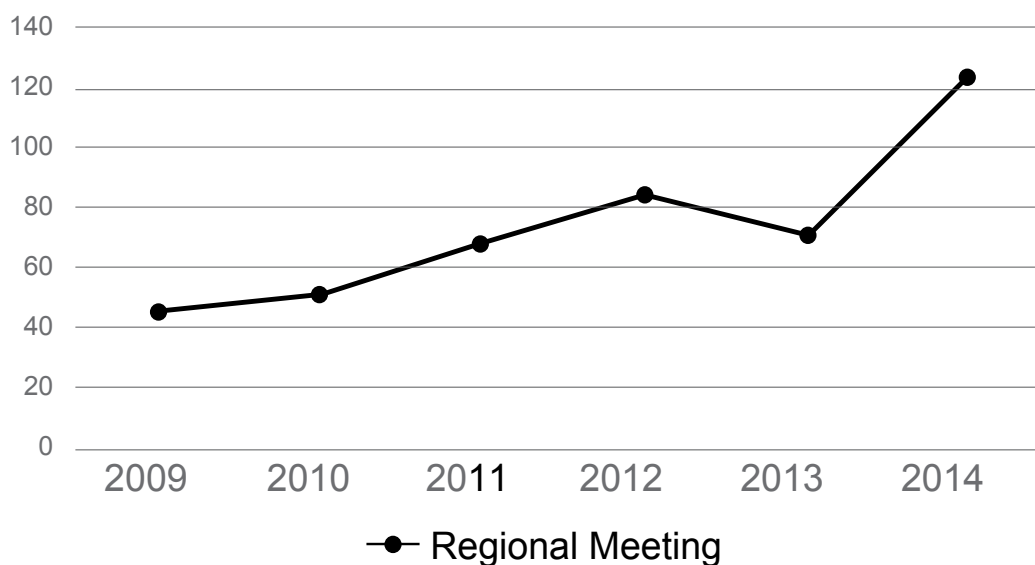
*Iis Gindarsah*

According to a regional analyst, ASEAN's cooperation on transboundary security issues has helped create the "building block" for defence regionalism in Southeast Asia.<sup>2</sup> A review of the agenda or focus of ASEAN's official documents shows that over the past six years, the regional grouping has issued a total of 149 publications. These official papers principally seek to address traditional and non-traditional security problems, while undertaking measures to develop institutional mechanisms in the region.<sup>3</sup> Interestingly, the largest portion (34 per cent) of ASEAN's publications covers cross-cutting issues (see Figure 1). This clearly highlights that the distinction between

traditional and non-traditional security issues are increasingly blurring for Southeast Asian countries.

Cooperation among Southeast Asian defence establishments has grown steadily over the past 10 years. Between 2009 and 2014, ASEAN had organised an average of about 75 security or defence consultative forums a year (see Chart 1). This included the ADMM, the ADMM-Plus, the ACDFIM and the ARF. Out of the recorded 447 meetings, intra-ASEAN defence and security interactions constituted the most intensive event (37 per cent) of multilateral defence diplomacy in the Asia Pacific. The

**Chart 1: ASEAN's defence and security dialogues**



*Source: Data collated from the official websites of ASEAN and Indonesian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.*

<sup>2</sup> Laksmana, Evan A. "Regional Order by Other Means? Examining the Rise of Defense Diplomacy in Southeast Asia." *Asian Security* 8, no. 3 (2012): 251–70.

<sup>3</sup> While the traditional security-oriented documents deal with issues such as the South China Sea, the strengthening of the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation, and the implementation of the Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone, the non-traditional security documents cover food security, human security and transnational organised crimes, among other issues.

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decision of ASEAN leaders to transform the region into a Political-Security Community by the end of 2015 appears to have presented a greater opportunity for reinforcing the regional security architecture.

The ADMM has become more institutionalised and regularised in recent years. Supporting the objective of the APSC, Southeast Asian defence ministers work through a rolling three-year programme to strengthen intra and extra-regional defence cooperation. To date, the ADMM has undertaken a number of strategic initiatives, including the adoption of concept papers on the establishment of defence industrial collaboration, a peacekeeping centres network and, no less significant, the establishment of a direct communications link for information exchanges in the event of crises.

Work in HADR, in particular, has been progressing at a significant pace. The ASEAN defence ministers have adopted various concept papers to advance cooperation in HADR. Follow-up workshops promoting cooperation among ASEAN defence establishments and civil society organisations in the context of non-traditional security and the use of ASEAN military assets and capacities in HADR, as well as a HADR table-top exercise, were subsequently conducted in view of implementing these initiatives.

Nonetheless, some still doubt the ability of the ADMM to tackle critical security challenges. First, the complex nexus between traditional and

non-traditional security issues would potentially complicate the strategic landscape in Southeast Asia. While historical concerns among regional countries have not yet disappeared and maritime boundaries are highly contested, issues such as illegal fishing, maritime piracy and shipping route vulnerabilities have overlapped with the growing demand for marine resources and energy.<sup>4</sup> Recent studies also suggest that climate change could exacerbate the fault lines of geopolitical competition and regional vulnerabilities to transnational threats, including organised crime and illegal migration.<sup>5</sup> In addition to the regional haze debacle, increased refugees from conflict-torn countries—including Myanmar—would strain bilateral ties among Southeast Asian countries.

Second, maritime problems increasingly pose a significant challenge to regional security and stability. While armed robberies at sea continue to plague Southeast Asian sea lanes, it is likely difficult—though not impossible—for ASEAN countries to upgrade the existing bilateral coordinated sea patrol into an integrated regional mechanism due to concerns over maritime boundaries. Specifically, recent tensions between China and Southeast Asian claimants in the South China Sea have complicated ASEAN-China relations and potentially weakened the unity within the regional association.

Third, recent trends of regional arms build-up could further deepen the “trust deficit.” Between 2010 and 2014, defence spending in Asia

<sup>4</sup> Schofield, Clive, and Ian Storey. “Energy Security and Southeast Asia: The Impact on Maritime Boundary and Territorial Disputes.” *Harvard Asia Quarterly* 9, no. 4 (2005): 36–46.

<sup>5</sup> Jasparro, Christopher, and Jonathan Taylor. “Climate Change and Regional Vulnerability to Transnational Security Threats in Southeast Asia.” *Geopolitics* 13, no. 2 (2008): 232–46; Lee, James R. *Climate Change and Armed Conflict: Hot and Cold Wars*. London: Routledge, 2009.



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rose by 27.2 per cent, from US\$270.6 billion in 2010 to US\$344.2 billion in 2014.<sup>6</sup> With that huge funding, regional countries have procured cutting-edge weapon systems such as upgraded fourth-generation jetfighters, ocean-going naval combatants, a new class of submarines, and a range of sophisticated missile systems. Although one can contest which type of weapons are “order-enhancing” or “order-upsetting,” the main concern here is that a state’s decision to modernise its military could deepen the “security dilemma” of other states and increase the likelihood of regional conflict.

Given Southeast Asia’s changing strategic environment, there is a need for regional countries to engage in difficult security issues—in a gradual and manageable way. While the ADMM has taken steps forward in improving regional confidence building measures, it should also provide a much-needed

platform to promote practical cooperation among the ASEAN armed forces. This implies the important role and ability of the ACDFIM to outline relevant activities for the implementation of decisions made by the regional defence ministerial forum. The ACDFIM, for instance, could prepare a regional procedure to share information about unilateral or bilateral military exercises as part of confidence building measures in Southeast Asia. It would also be important to intensify exchanges among key officials and industrial stakeholders to operationalise the existing ADMM initiative on defence industrial collaboration.

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<sup>6</sup> International Institute for Strategic Studies. *The Military Balance 2015*. London: Routledge, 2015.

## CHALLENGES FOR THE ADMM AND ADMM-PLUS: A PHILIPPINE PERSPECTIVE

*Raymund Jose G. Quilop<sup>1</sup>*

The ADMM has convened for nine times since 2006 and the ADMM-Plus has met for three times since 2010. Both serve as platforms for security dialogue but more importantly for promoting practical cooperation among defence establishments in ASEAN and with its eight dialogue partners.

These two platforms are in a unique position to promote the strategic message that defence ministers—whether within ASEAN or between ASEAN and the Plus countries—are for cooperation rather than conflict and that it is possible to bring these defence ministers together in dialogue. The promotion of practical cooperation, or at least the avowed claim to promote practical cooperation, seems to distinguish the ADMM and the ADMM-Plus from other regional cooperative mechanisms.

To promote practical cooperation, initiatives have been undertaken within the ambit of these two mechanisms. For the ADMM, the following initiatives are worth noting: (i) cooperation with civil society in HADR; (ii) the use of military assets in HADR; (iii) an ASEAN Peacekeeping Centres Network; (iv) ASEAN Defence Industry Collaboration; (v) an ASEAN Defence Interaction Programme; (vi) a Logistics Support Framework; (vii) an ASEAN Militaries Ready Group; and (viii) a Direct Communications Link (DCL), with the DCL by far the most tangible manifestation of practical cooperation as an actual communication infrastructure is slated to be set up.

For the ADMM-Plus, the promotion of practical cooperation is through the various EWGs, which since they were established in 2011 have had the practice of undertaking at least two activities each year. Five EWGs were established a year after the ADMM-Plus was first convened, on maritime security, counter-terrorism, HADR,

peacekeeping operations and military medicine. After the first cycle of co-chairmanships, another EWG was established in 2013 (humanitarian mine action), bringing the total number of EWGs to six.

The establishment of EWGs was meant to ensure that the ADMM-Plus would be in a position to actually promote practical cooperation, in an attempt to avoid the path of other regional mechanisms—such as the ARF—of being more of talk shops rather than undertaking actual projects or activities. While the ADMM and the ADMM-Plus appear to have the greatest momentum in terms of regional cooperative mechanisms, particularly in the defence and security sector, certain challenges exist.

Foremost is the challenge of ensuring synergy between the ADMM and the ADMM-Plus. While the ADMM serves as the core of the ADMM-Plus, there is a need to ensure that the activities done within the ADMM and the ADMM-Plus complement each other. Ideally, the ADMM and the ADMM-Plus should have the same set of initiatives, only that the ADMM-Plus has more states involved. Unfortunately, this is not the case. A look at the current list of initiatives in the ADMM and the ADMM-Plus indicates that each of these platforms have different sets of initiatives.

The difference is due to the differing needs of the countries involved in both the ADMM and the ADMM-Plus. Moreover, what is relevant for the ADMM-Plus countries may be different from what is needed by the ADMM states. However, it should not be forgotten that the ADMM-Plus was established mainly to contribute in building the capacity of the ADMM countries to address security challenges. Thus, the primary consideration of the ADMM-Plus should be

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<sup>1</sup> The views expressed in this commentary are solely of the author and do not reflect the official position of the Department of National Defense, Republic of the Philippines.

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what is most needed by the ADMM states. The ADMM being the core of the ADMM-Plus means not only being at the centre but also driving the agenda.

Relatedly, and as a consequence of having different set of initiatives for the ADMM and the ADMM-Plus, there is the challenge of ensuring that activities are manageable and that ASEAN states are not overwhelmed. Having yearly activities for each of the ADMM initiatives and activities for the ADMM-Plus EWGs twice a year would constrain resources of the ADMM members and subject their personnel to unnecessary activity fatigue.

A related challenge that must be addressed is the readiness of the ADMM-Plus to dissolve some of the EWGs, specifically when new ones are created. As the second cycle of co-chairmanships is about to end in 2017, the Philippines has proposed at the ADMM Retreat in Malaysia in November 2015 the establishment of an EWG on Cyber Defence and Security. The question that now begs to be answered is will the ADMM-Plus establish the proposed EWG without doing away with one or two of the existing EWGs? Yet, not to establish this proposed EWG simply because it would further stretch resources would deprive the ADMM-Plus of the opportunity to promote practical cooperation to address an emerging but equally urgent security concern: cybersecurity threats.

A consequent challenge resulting from the quest of ensuring ASEAN centrality in the ADMM-Plus involves striking a balance between having ASEAN lead the process and cultivating a sense of ownership by the Plus countries. If certain matters are merely shared to the Plus countries

for their consideration without due consultation, the acceptability of such proposals to the Plus countries could decrease. ASEAN states need to remember that maintaining ASEAN centrality is not merely a case of the ADMM first agreeing on certain matters, then presenting them for acceptance by the Plus countries.

On the other hand, allowing the ADMM's discussion of certain matters with the Plus countries could result in the latter dominating the process and weakening ASEAN centrality. The inability of the Plus countries to agree on certain items in the proposed joint declaration of the Third ADMM-Plus which was held in Malaysia in 2015 is a case in point. There is therefore the challenge of avoiding a situation where the major powers dominate the ASEAN-led mechanism that is the ADMM-Plus. If it was one of the thrusts of ASEAN in the 1970s to prevent Southeast Asia from being the playground of the big powers, it should remain the thrust of the ASEAN members today to prevent the ASEAN-led mechanisms from being dominated by the major powers.

Engaging the Plus countries is one of the fundamental considerations for the ADMM in establishing the ADMM-Plus. The Plus countries have also shown remarkable interest in engaging the ADMM, to the extent that despite the existing ADMM-Plus mechanism, there is increasing demand from the Plus countries for an ADMM Plus One modality. Such informal meetings between a Plus country and the ADMM have not only been held on the sidelines of the ADMM or the ADMM Retreat, but also in the respective Plus countries, such as the U.S.-ASEAN Defense Forum in Hawaii in 2014 and the China-ASEAN Informal Meeting in Beijing in 2015.

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While a set of guidelines regarding engaging the Plus countries—informal meetings can now only be held in an ASEAN country during the years when the biennial ADMM-Plus meeting is not convened—was adopted in March 2015, it is anticipated that the Plus countries would continue to invite the ADMM ministers for informal dialogues outside of ASEAN. Although such informal meetings have thus far only been conducted with the United States, China and Japan, it is not farfetched to think that meetings of a similar nature could soon be proposed by the other Plus countries.

Meanwhile, there are other Asia Pacific states that have signified interest in being part of the ADMM-Plus. While the ADMM ministers have made the decision in 2014 to deepen cooperation among the current members of the ADMM first prior to accepting new members, how long should the ADMM-Plus wait before opening up the membership? Too long a wait for interested dialogue partners could make them lose interest but too soon an acceptance may see the ADMM-Plus following in the footsteps of the ARF which could compromise the deepening of defence cooperation among

current members. The challenge therefore is how to strike a balance between deepening and widening cooperation within the ADMM-Plus.

Finally, there is the challenge of ensuring that beyond serving as security dialogue mechanisms and promoting practical cooperation, both the ADMM and the ADMM-Plus can create synergy with other regional fora such as the ARF. The two defence mechanisms should also be able to feed inputs into the ASEAN Summit and the East Asia Summit (EAS), the leaders' fora that mirror the memberships of the ADMM and the ADMM-Plus respectively.

Both the ADMM and the ADMM-Plus have great potential in being key regional defence and security cooperative mechanisms. For these mechanisms to be optimally utilised, however, challenges need to be addressed.

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## THE FUTURE OF THE ADMM

*Vu Tien Trong*

Since its establishment about 10 years ago, the ADMM has been considered a successful ASEAN-centred mechanism. The ADMM has been building an important initial foundation for multilateral defence cooperation among ASEAN countries and between ASEAN and its key partners, through providing a platform for strategic dialogue at the defence ministerial level and creating frameworks for practical cooperation among regional militaries. However, a changing geopolitical environment requires the ADMM to progress beyond its basic mandate of dialogue and practical cooperation to deal with security issues that have emerged. In the next 10 years, the ADMM's evolution will enter a new phase.

### **Contributory factors to the ADMM's development in the next decade**

The ADMM's development would be influenced by several factors. First, peace, cooperation, connectivity and integration remain the dominant trends in the region. The movement towards an ASEAN Community at the end of 2015 will promote further regional cooperation in many areas, including in defence and security. As part of the APSC, the ADMM needs to contribute more to the peace, stability and development of the region.

Second, the Southeast Asian region continues to be the theatre where major power rivalries intensify. Countries will simultaneously cooperate and compete with each other in various issues, both bilaterally and multilaterally. The ADMM is thus facing challenges in maintaining internal solidarity and unity and centrality, especially within the broader regional cooperation of the ADMM-Plus.

Third, the region continues to confront security challenges. Territorial disputes in the East Sea<sup>1</sup> are clouded with unpredictability and uncertainty.

Meanwhile, non-traditional security challenges are rising and becoming more multi-dimensional. Security risks such as natural disasters, terrorism and cyber insecurity, are increasingly complicated and transnational. To perform its leading role in sustaining regional peace and stability, the ADMM could promote practical cooperation and move towards concrete solutions as well as actions to deal with common security challenges. These solutions and actions need to be manifested in tangible outcomes.

Fourth, ASEAN is an association of small and medium countries with different political institutions and defence organisations. ASEAN member countries also have different levels of development with varying national priorities and interests. Such differences constitute an obstacle to cooperation. Additionally, ASEAN has limited resources, thus requiring the ADMM to cooperate with external partners to mobilise more resources and gain technical expertise and experience to effectively address various security challenges. Therefore, the ADMM needs to harmonise the diverse interests of ASEAN members as well as its external partners and make use of available resources in a suitable and effective manner.

### **The future of the ADMM**

It is expected that the ADMM, which is regarded as part of the regional security architecture, will continue to serve an important role in combining and utilising resources to successfully handle security challenges as well as maintain peace and stability. The general development trends of the ADMM are to strengthen and expand its organisational structure and institution, as well as intensify on-going priority areas of cooperation for visible results. At the same time, the ADMM has created new cooperation frameworks for coping with emerging security issues, as well as fostering linkages with other

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<sup>1</sup> [Editor's Note] The East Sea is Vietnam's name for the South China Sea.



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ASEAN defence and military meetings, and with the ADMM-Plus. Specifically, the ADMM's future could be shaped according to the following aspects.

First, following the establishment of the ASEAN Community, the ADMM needs to develop—in addition to the existing Three-Year Work Programmes—a long-term strategy over a five or 10-year period to keep track of its cooperation and ensure that its progress is compatible with the broader development of the APSC.

Second, confidence building remains the main task of the ADMM. Confidence and trust among members are needed for a higher level of cooperation. Dialogue and consultation need to be maintained and developed for mutual strategic trust, common understanding and political will in the cooperation for peace, stability and prosperity of the region. In addition to the existing formal dialogue mechanisms, the ADMM could consider various forms of informal meetings, irregular exchanges, and direct communication link-based talks to discuss and resolve current and emerging security issues in a timely manner.

Third, cooperation should be cemented in a more practical and effective manner. The ADMM could continue on its current mechanisms and initiatives with improvements in the efficiency and effectiveness of its activities, and at the same time, widen its cooperation fields to meet the requirements as set out by the fast-changing regional situation. The ADMM should strengthen operational cooperation in selected areas of feasibility and necessity, such as HADR, which has developed into a model for practical cooperation under the ADMM. In addition, the ADMM should remain the driving force in setting up frameworks for cooperation. Any new areas of cooperation should be considered in the ADMM first, and then opened to the participation of extra-regional partners or the ADMM-Plus.

To deepen practical cooperation in the various areas, the ADMM needs to establish working groups for individual cooperation areas—these could be in the forms of Joint Working Groups, Joint Consultation Groups, or Expert Working Groups. The ADMM could also continue to establish joint training and coordinating centres following the proposals of the ASEAN Centre of Military Medicine, Regional Training and Mine Demining Center, the Logistics Support Center, among others. These centres could play a coordinating role and support the ADMM's activities. Considering the current regional situation, the ADMM may also consider strengthening and broadening cooperation in some new potential areas in the future, including counter-terrorism, cybersecurity, training cooperation, search and rescue among others.

Fourth, the ADMM should not leave aside sensitive issues such as the East Sea disputes but manage them with an appropriate approach. The ADMM could play an essential role in creating favourable conditions for reducing tensions and the risk of conflicts. The ADMM should advocate a peaceful settlement of territorial disputes in the East Sea on the basis of international law and through concrete initiatives such as the establishment of direct communication links or hotlines, codes of conduct, and practical cooperation of different forms to build trust and avoid miscalculations and confrontations.

Fifth, the ADMM needs to work in close coordination with other ASEAN military meetings as well as the ARF defence officials' meetings and conferences, for strengthening connectivity and information sharing, and encourage interaction between Track 1 and Track 2 (i.e. Track II Network of ASEAN Defence and Security Institutions). Specific measures would include: (i) gradually formalising ASEAN military meetings by having them incorporated into the framework of the ADMM to ensure

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synchronised connection between the policy level of the ADMM and the implementation level of the ASEAN military meetings in practical cooperation; (ii) establishing a dialogue forum of defence officials and scholars at the Track 1.5 level which would focus on formulating strategic suggestions for the development of the ADMM; and (iii) implementing information sharing mechanisms between the ADMM-Plus and the ARF.

Sixth, the ADMM should continue strengthening its centrality in the ASEAN defence cooperation channels. To this end, the ADMM needs to enhance its solidarity, devote constant efforts towards common interests, adhere consistently to ASEAN's principles, harmonise the respective national and regional interests, as well as move towards practical and effective cooperation.

### Conclusion

In view of the changing geopolitical environment, the ADMM should move forward in a more practical and effective way in order to keep its strategic relevance. The ADMM needs to strengthen its dialogue mechanisms and practical cooperation through institutionalisation, which would enable it to deal with security challenges and maintain peace, stability and development in the region.

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# STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF THE ADMM-PLUS: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR COOPERATION

*Luke R. Donohue*

## Introduction

The United States is working with our Indo-Asia Pacific partners to strengthen regional security institutions and encourage the development of an open and effective regional security architecture. Southeast Asia and ASEAN remain U.S. national security priorities and the ADMM-Plus is the primary multilateral defence forum, at the U.S. Secretary of Defense level, in the region. As such, the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) is enhancing its engagement in the ADMM-Plus, a forum for candid and transparent discussion of shared security concerns. Defence ministers have agreed to enhance practical cooperation in six areas of regional security: namely, maritime security, HADR, peacekeeping operations, counter-terrorism, military medicine, and humanitarian mine action. The DoD looks to enhancing collaboration and eventual burden-sharing in these and other areas of shared security concerns.

## Strengths

In terms of specific strengths, the DoD views the ADMM-Plus as an excellent forum to discuss shared security concerns and pursue options in establishing a regional security architecture. Although nascent, the fact that it is defence-led and structured, focused on practical cooperation, lends itself to further capability development and building areas of shared capacity with Southeast Asian partners. Because the ADMM-Plus is based on the ADMM, it provides the DoD with formal insights into the views of the 10 Southeast Asian defence ministers and gives the U.S. Secretary of Defense, the Geographic Combatant Command, and the U.S. Mission access to the Southeast Asian defence partners' most senior leadership. The DoD views the ADMM-Plus as a successful mechanism in building up a pattern of mil-to-mil engagement among 18 countries in less than two three-year work cycles. The ADMM-Plus is halfway through the second three-year work cycle (i.e. about four-and-a-half years in), and

planning for three major 18-country exercises in 2016—no small feat. The exercises, each combining maritime security/counter-terrorism, HADR/military medicine, and peacekeeping operations/humanitarian mine action will work to further strengthen ties between partners and may lead to further collaboration to address shared security concerns and reduce risk.

## Weaknesses

However, challenges remain. Some dialogue partners use the focus on practical cooperation as an excuse to avoid talking about “hard” defence policy issues. They are of the view that these policy issues lie in the domain of the ministries of foreign affairs. However, the actions that cause anxiety are conducted by the defence forces of certain member states. For example, the rising anxiety over the South China Sea territorial disputes has many partners looking at their cooperation in the ADMM-Plus EWG on Maritime Security in a whole new light. It is expedient to fall back on the ASEAN consensus principle as issues like territorial disputes arise and make collaboration in areas like maritime security more complex. Further, the focus of workshops and practical exercises necessarily has to be on non-contentious issues—meaning those problems where everyone can agree are a problem. For example, the Maritime Security EWG focuses in great part on counter-piracy, not some of the other more obvious maritime issues in the region. Similarly, the Counter-terrorism EWG is unable to get too much into the specifics of countering violent extremism/counter-recruiting of specific member states, given the ASEAN principle of non-interference.

## Maritime security

The ADMM-Plus provides the DoD with an opportunity to take active steps to highlight the importance of peaceful resolution of disputes and emphasise the need for adherence to international rules and standards. Within these venues, the DoD is candid with regional

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counterparts in raising U.S. concerns about excessive maritime claims and the means through which they pursue them and their territorial claims. The ADMM-Plus Maritime Security EWG could be used to develop a more effective defence and military response to maritime strategic challenges in the Asia Pacific region. These common areas of interest could then be further explored to develop practical initiatives for defence and military cooperation. Enhancing maritime cooperation, identifying risks, and sharing information are currently underdeveloped at a multilateral defence-to-defence level in the region. Enhanced cooperation is fundamental to maintaining good order at sea, addressing risk, and sustaining peace and stability. The EWG offers increased opportunities for sharing information related to threats to regional maritime security, and the DoD encourages these efforts.

### **HADR**

HADR is a major concern in the context of emerging non-traditional security challenges. Many of the ADMM-Plus member states are reacting to and addressing the devastation from frequent disasters. HADR is also an area where the ADMM-Plus partners continue to demonstrate great collaboration and support that sets the example for sharing security burdens in other areas as well. The EWG on HADR looks to enhance cooperation and ensure effective implementation of HADR activities within the framework of the ADMM-Plus to minimise damage caused by natural disasters. The EWG remains focused on establishing specific and effective mechanisms for HADR cooperation, mutual understanding, development of and adherence to standard operating procedures, capacity building, coordination, and regional response mechanisms.

### **Peacekeeping**

The ADMM-Plus member countries' contributions to peace support or peacekeeping operations address a number of the region's security challenges. ADMM-Plus member countries can expect an increasing demand for peacekeeping operations, ranging from small niche contributions to larger scale deployments in support of new or on-going missions. This is no small undertaking, however. A stronger security architecture desired by all the ADMM-Plus members could be developed through the following initiatives: (i) build confidence among the ADMM-Plus member countries to strengthen cooperation in peacekeeping operations; (ii) establish a network of peacekeeping experts and chiefs of peacekeeping operations centres within the ADMM-Plus; (iii) take stock of the region's present peacekeeping capabilities; (iv) build upon existing initiatives on military cooperation in peacekeeping and establish a database and other means for consolidation of information and discussion on important issues; (v) identify, develop and/or strengthen core competencies of the ADMM-Plus militaries in peacekeeping; (vi) formulate a framework for regional cooperation in peacekeeping pre-deployment preparations (training, education, equipping) to ensure member countries' readiness to send peacekeeping units when the need arises; and (vii) improve knowledge of civil-military cooperation requirements and the corresponding doctrine necessary for peacekeeping operations.

### **Counter-terrorism**

Terrorism is a regional and global transnational threat. Defence forces play a significant role in combating such a threat. In this regard, regional and international defence cooperation is fundamentally important. The EWG on Counter-

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terrorism aims to enhance cooperation within the framework of the ADMM-Plus. Cooperation builds closer ties, trust, transparency, and understanding. Focusing on strengthening the regional capability for countering terrorism threats will further draw members closer together and the second and third order benefit of enhanced counter-terrorism capacity will serve in other areas of mutual security concerns. It is important to address the challenges of low-level competency and capability by agreeing on what the critical partner gaps are, finding consensus on what to develop, when, and how much, and codify regional standards in employing capability to address the risk. This will enhance situational awareness, establish close working relationships between partner defence and security forces and civil authorities, and result in a safer and more secure region.

### **Military medicine**

The medical services play a critical role in our respective armed forces. They are entrusted with the health and medical protection of our forces, as well as the provision of medical support for military training and operations. In recent years, the demands placed on medical support systems have increased, with many countries taking on a more prominent international profile by contributing medical units to HADR missions, as well as to peace support operations. The EWG on Military Medicine could start by focusing on enhancing practical cooperation in the area of medical support operations, particularly in HADR. This could be done in coordination with the EWG on HADR where necessary. This is an area where militaries have a comparative advantage as the military is usually one of the first responders to a disaster scene, being equipped with the resources and capabilities to bring speedy relief and assistance to the affected population.

There is scope to build up regional capacity and cooperation in this area, which would in turn contribute towards building trust and mutual understanding among the ADMM-Plus countries.

### **Conclusion**

Despite significant threats to stability in other regions of the world, the DoD is continuing to implement the defence side of the rebalance to the Asia Pacific region. Multilateral cooperation is an essential element to this effort and with ASEAN at the centre of the regional security architecture, we can all work together to build habits of cooperation and interoperability. Particularly through the ADMM-Plus, the DoD will continue to be an active member of the regional security architecture as a key element of its commitment to the region. U.S. long-term interests reside in a secure and stable Asia Pacific that lays the foundation for collaboration and pursuit of U.S. economic interests. The emerging strength of the ADMM-Plus far outweighs the weaknesses found. The weaknesses highlighted in this short article are those one would find in any emergent, complex organisation with competing interests, unique cultures, language, history, and values and norms. The fact that the momentum remains positive and the region's larger powers see ASEAN as the centre of gravity for the Indo-Asia Pacific speaks of the potential of this forum.

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## THE ADMM-PLUS: ANCHORING DIVERSIFIED SECURITY COOPERATION IN A THREE-TIERED SECURITY ARCHITECTURE

*Ken Jimbo*

### ADMM-Plus in 2015: strategic impasse or unmet expectation?

The Third ADMM-Plus in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia in November 2015 was widely referred as a “failure” given major disagreements among the defence ministers over issuing the joint declaration. Many observers have criticised this development, noting that it represented the ADMM-Plus’ institutional inability over reaching a consensus on common principles, norms and goals on the disputes in the South China Sea, especially when national interests are at stake. Some recalled the ASEAN Summit in 2012 in Cambodia, where we saw ASEAN’s failure to issue a joint communiqué, also due to the disagreement over the South China Sea.<sup>1</sup> Subsequent failures would lead to a perception that the ASEAN-led dialogue model and the concept of ASEAN centrality are irrelevant in addressing real security concerns.

The author does not necessarily subscribe to these views. Although its institutional strengths and weaknesses must be squarely assessed, the ADMM-Plus remains the only regional body to: (i) ensure regular multilateral meetings among the defence ministers of 18 countries—an appropriate size to discuss Asia Pacific security as compared to the ARF with 27 countries; (ii) engage defence officials and militaries for practical cooperation including multilateral trainings and exercises; (iii) assure appropriate inter-governmental coordination through the annual ASEAN Defence Senior Officials’ Meeting-Plus and its Working Group;

and (iv) enhance functional cooperation through the recommendations of the EWGs which cover six issue areas. Through these functions, one must not underestimate the building-block opportunities for the ADMM-Plus member states to cultivate regional capacity to deal practically with intra-regional security issues.

However, the ADMM-Plus faces three major fault lines (or a triple-mismatch) as demonstrated in the 2015 meeting.

### (1) Mismatch on common positions

The ADMM-Plus is unable to reach a consensus beyond modest common denominators among its participants. The ADMM-Plus has not taken the initiative to transform zero-sum issues into positive-sum, but instead prefers to avoid confronting such issues. For example, in the 2015 ADMM-Plus, Malaysia’s original draft of the joint declaration incorporated the term “freedom of navigation,” which China had agreed with.<sup>2</sup> However, adopting such ambiguous wording was clearly not in the favour of the United States and “a number of ASEAN countries,” as they insisted that the “South China Sea” must be clearly mentioned. Then, it was reported that China “lobbied to keep any reference to the South China Sea out of the declaration.”<sup>3</sup> Obviously, there was a mismatch between achieving the “modest consensus” and addressing serious concerns with the appropriate terms.

<sup>1</sup> Parameswaran, Prashanth. “China Blocked ASEAN Defense Meeting Pact Amid South China Sea Fears: US Official.” *The Diplomat*, November 4, 2015. <http://thediplomat.com/2015/11/china-blocked-asia-defense-meeting-pact-amid-south-china-sea-fears-us-official>.

<sup>2</sup> Torbati, Yeganeh, and Trinna Leong. “U.S., Japan push for inclusion of South China Sea in defense forum statement.” *Reuters*, November 4, 2015. <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-asean-malaysia-idUSKCN0SS07F20151103#wU0wL3lvTyWks8t3.97>.

<sup>3</sup> Dyer, Geoff. “Plans for US-Asian Statement Scrapped over South China Sea Spat.” *Financial Times*, November 4, 2015. <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/0402105a-82a8-11e5-8095-ed1a37d1e096.html#axzz3tiOVmT5v>.



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### (2) Limited linkages between ADMM and ADMM-Plus for risk/crisis management

ASEAN's model of engaging external major players has provided opportunities for it to export its norms and rules to wider regional arrangements. However, as major power rivalries play out in the South China Sea, ASEAN's internal coordination has been significantly slow to provide platforms for region-wide risk management. For example, the ADMM in 2015 has agreed on a number of important security cooperation measures, including setting up hotlines (i.e. the direct communications initiative) to help defence officials communicate quickly in a crisis situation.<sup>4</sup> There were also proposals to expand the Code for Unplanned Encounters at Sea (CUES) to be adopted in the ADMM-Plus, which encompassed white shipping and a similar protocol for the air.<sup>5</sup> Expanded application of these practical measures of the ADMM to the ADMM-Plus was much expected but did not take shape in 2015.

### (3) Resource shortages pose a challenge to joint action

The ADMM-Plus has organised several military-to-military exercises. In 2013, it conducted practical exercises in the areas of HADR, military medicine, counter-terrorism and maritime security. In subsequent years, it has also conducted a Maritime Security Field Training Exercise and a table-top Exercise

by the EWG on Peacekeeping Operations. Malaysia's ambitious proposal on the ASEAN Militaries Ready Group on HADR to form a military team under the ASEAN banner for quick deployment to crisis areas has the potential to cultivate ASEAN's collective capacity for military deployments.<sup>6</sup> However, it is still a long-way ahead until ASEAN and the ADMM-Plus can take joint action for practical deployment in times of crisis. The realisation of such mechanisms would require significant capacity building and upgraded exercises.

### Opportunities and challenges for ADMM-Plus as Tier-3 security cooperation

In order to pursue practical development of the ADMM-Plus to anchor diversified security cooperation in the Asia Pacific region, it is important to frame the ADMM-Plus as one of the important pillars in the three-tiered regional security architecture.<sup>7</sup> The first tier consists of defence cooperation mechanisms such as treaty alliances (e.g. U.S. military alliances in Asia) that protect core national interests. The second tier consists of functional cooperation mechanisms, dialogues, and task-oriented/action-oriented initiatives.

The third tier consists of region-wide cooperation based on rules and charters, such as the ADMM-Plus, ARF and EAS. Each tier has its own function but is also interrelated with other tiers and functions as part of the whole

<sup>4</sup> Parameswaran, Prashanth. "ASEAN Sets Up New Hotline Amid South China Sea Tensions." *The Diplomat*, November 4, 2015. <http://thediplomat.com/2015/11/asean-sets-up-new-hotline-amid-south-china-sea-tensions/>.

<sup>5</sup> Ministry of Defence, Singapore. "Dr Ng Urges ADMM-Plus to Abide By Common Principles and Norms, and to Foster Mutual Trust." *Official Releases*, November 4, 2015. [http://www.mindef.gov.sg/content/imindef/press\\_room/official\\_releases/nr/2015/nov/04nov15\\_nr.html#.VmaRtk3os5s](http://www.mindef.gov.sg/content/imindef/press_room/official_releases/nr/2015/nov/04nov15_nr.html#.VmaRtk3os5s).

<sup>6</sup> *Bernama*. "Malaysia Proposes ASEAN Ready Group For Defense Cooperation." November 19, 2014. <http://asean2015.bernama.com/newsdetail.php?id=1086637>.

<sup>7</sup> Jimbo, Ken (ed.). *Ajia Taiheiyō no Chiiki Anzen Hoshō Ahkitekucha* [Japanese]. Trans. *Regional Security Architecture in the Asia-Pacific*. Tokyo: Tokyo Foundation, 2010.

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architecture. As part of Tier-3, the ADMM-Plus should anchor norms and rules, and codify security cooperation in the Asia Pacific. However, such norms and rules need to be crafted through practical cooperation in Tier-1 and Tier-2.

Tier-2 cooperation has a unique and distinctive nature. It does not restrict the participation of any states in the region (i.e. open participation), and generally the mission and objectives of such cooperation do not target any third parties (i.e. impartiality). This tends to avoid a security dilemma, which is often a result of Tier-1 security cooperation.

Tier-2 cooperation functions most effectively by applying the assets and experiences of the existing alliances and partnerships in Tier-1. Joint planning, information sharing, command and control and enhanced interoperability are the basics of joint operations commonly needed for Tier-1 and Tier-2 cooperation. Tier-2 enhances the operational requirements for Tier-1 (among allies), and at the same time invites new partners as catalysts to promote mil-to-mil cooperation without provoking regional tensions. By inviting them to become associate members of Tier-1 without formally labelling them as such, a country could expand its network of like-minded states.

Tier-2 cooperation would become a foundation for Tier-3 (region-wide) cooperation. Various trainings and exercises under the ADMM-Plus and the ARF Disaster Relief Exercise are primary examples of transferring the Tier-2 experiences and know-hows to the region-wide level. Rules and norms agreed in Tier-2

cooperation are also important assets to be legitimised in Tier-3. The Code of Conduct in the South China Sea between ASEAN and China, CUES, military-to-military confidence building mechanisms between the United States and China, and Maritime and Air Communication Mechanism between Japan and China should be foundations for region-wide norms and rules building.

### **Basic approach: Japan-U.S. alliance strategy for Tier-2 cooperation**

#### ***Enhance Japan-U.S. cooperation to operationalise and build capacity***

Tier-2 cooperation will facilitate the Japan-U.S. alliance to respond to a diverse range of situations more effectively. Although the high-end operational readiness should be directly covered by the series of bilateral joint training exercises, Tier-2 cooperation will significantly complement the alliance functions. These include long-range deployment and transport capabilities, joint sea-basing operations, integrated supply chain managements and logistics.

#### ***Enhance regional networks***

As mentioned earlier, Tier-2 provides opportunities to expand networks of like-minded states through military cooperation. Policymakers and defence sectors in the region are eager to expand non-traditional security cooperation without provoking controversy and inciting mistrust. It is important for the Japan-

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U.S. alliance to carefully craft the strategic effect of such networks. Cooperation with Australia and India would enhance situation awareness and operational access across the region. Cooperation with Southeast Asian littoral states (especially the Philippines and Vietnam) would enhance the commitment of Japan and the United States to build their capacity.

### ***Enhance region-wide frameworks***

It is important for the Japan-U.S. alliance to nurture the regional capacity to respond to large-scale disasters. This would be the major tool to enhance confidence building among states as well as to create capacity to deal with the

events, which might cause major economic and societal damages in the region. This approach could also be a means to engage the People's Liberation Army of China in constructive security cooperation. Encouraging China to participate in both the U.S.-led HADR exercises as well as region-wide exercises should be regarded as a way to mitigate tensions and enhance interactions among military counterparts.

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## THE FUTURE OF THE ADMM-PLUS

*Guo Xinning*

The ADMM-Plus came into being as a result of a common desire among Asia Pacific countries to build a practical platform aimed at enhancing regional multilateral cooperation. As stated in the ADMM-Plus Concept Paper:

“[Asia Pacific countries] now face a set of complex transnational security challenges on traditional and non-traditional security issues, such as terrorism and humanitarian assistance and disaster relief. Cooperation between countries, both within ASEAN and with countries in the larger Asia-Pacific, is required to address these challenges for the benefit of ASEAN countries. At the same time, non-ASEAN countries are also keen to engage ASEAN in the area of defence and security. Open and inclusive multilateral security frameworks are needed to facilitate the channels of communication and cooperation, both within ASEAN and between ASEAN and countries outside Southeast Asia.”<sup>1</sup>

Initially, some international observers seemed to have little expectations for the ADMM-Plus in view of the complicated geopolitical and geostrategic configuration in the Asia Pacific, as well as the difficult process of security cooperation within various Track 1 and 2 platforms in the past. Yet, those pessimistic observers might have to change their perceptions of the ADMM-Plus given the concrete and substantial progress it has achieved, especially in the area of practical cooperation. Through the ADMM-Plus, participating countries have improved mutual understanding and enhanced security confidence. Another important development is the substantial cooperation programmes that have been carried out in various areas of

non-traditional security, such as field training exercises in HADR, military medicine, counter-terrorism and maritime security, as well as a table-top exercise in peacekeeping operations. Consequently, the international community might accept that the ADMM-Plus has become an effective platform for practical cooperation among the participating countries' defence establishments.

The ADMM-Plus has great potential as a platform for security dialogue, as it includes major players that are deeply involved in Asia Pacific regional security. Despite the vast amount of differences in terms of security interests, perceptions as well as approaches towards multilateral security dialogue, regional countries share a very important common ground. They have a common stake in regional peace and stability and wish to improve their respective security environments through the process of multilateral security dialogue and cooperation. This will serve as a solid foundation and driving force for the future developments of the ADMM-Plus.

However, planning for the ADMM-Plus' future should be approached with a cautious attitude. As in cases of other Track 1 and 2 security cooperation platforms, there will inevitably be some factors that might influence the process of ADMM-Plus.

### Gap of political trust

Confidence building among nations is always a long process that cannot be completed overnight. Through joint efforts by member countries of the ADMM-Plus, various partnerships have been gradually formed and mutual trust has been deepened. Nevertheless,

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<sup>1</sup> “ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting-Plus (ADMM-Plus) Concept Paper,” adopted at the Second ADMM, Singapore, November 13-15, 2007, accessed November 29, 2015, [https://admm.asean.org/dmdocuments/4.%20Annex%20G\\_ADMM-Plus%20Concept%20Paper.pdf](https://admm.asean.org/dmdocuments/4.%20Annex%20G_ADMM-Plus%20Concept%20Paper.pdf).

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this does not necessarily mean the lasting problem of political mistrust has been solved for good. Major powers are suspicious of each other while small or medium-sized countries have apprehensions over the strategic intentions of major powers. The gap of political trust will continue to impact the scope and pace of security cooperation.

### **Territorial disputes**

Several extremely complicated territorial disputes exist in the Asia Pacific. These issues involve not only geostrategic, economic and security interests, but also national sentiments of the concerned countries. These disputes are presently under control, because the involved countries have a common interest in preventing possible armed conflicts which will negatively affect all parties. However, some of the disputes could escalate from time to time if improperly handled and subsequently affect the atmosphere for cooperation.

### **Difficulties in achieving a coordinated ASEAN position**

The ADMM-Plus follows the “ASEAN Way” in its functioning, meaning that an agreement must be sought from all ASEAN members before any proposals can be implemented. As dictated in the Concept Paper, “[t]he ADMM-Plus will uphold ASEAN’s principles of non-interference, consensus-based decision making, national and regional resilience and respect for national sovereignty.”<sup>2</sup> ASEAN members have great differences in terms of security interests, political considerations as well as priorities on security cooperation. As a result, the coordination of positions has been extremely difficult. In the past years, cooperation has been mainly focused in areas that are less sensitive, or in areas where

member countries have common interests. With ever-deepening cooperation, such coordination will be increasingly difficult.

In order to mitigate the negative impact of the abovementioned factors upon the process of cooperation, it is very important to learn from past experiences and lessons of the ADMM-Plus and other platforms of multilateral regional security cooperation. The “ASEAN Way” of managing complicated security issues, although a little bit slow in obtaining concrete outcomes, might remain a useful approach. It creates an easy atmosphere, adopts an inclusive and open approach, as well as prioritises a realistic attitude and a pace comfortable for all members. The “ASEAN Way” has proven to be an effective approach for various ASEAN-sponsored initiatives or platforms to navigate through the complicated regional security environment and achieve designated objectives. Amid the fundamental changes to the Asia Pacific geostrategic landscape, the “ASEAN Way” will continue to be relevant in regional multilateral processes.

Looking to the future, there is good reason to feel optimistic. There is much potential to further cultivate ADMM-Plus cooperation, against the backdrop of a stronger desire for multilateral security cooperation among Asia Pacific regional countries as well as past achievements made. In planning the ADMM-Plus’ future, it is better to have a clear roadmap and timetable. This would involve sorting out possible areas and feasible ways of cooperation so as to have a clear picture of what can be done at the present stage and what can be done in the future. As the driving and leading force of the process, ASEAN should take the initiative in providing a feasible roadmap and timetable.

Currently, it seems more important for the ADMM-Plus to consolidate present cooperation.

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

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Past ADMM-Plus activities, such as the various exercises, are mainly conducted based on the initiative or willingness of individual countries. Sustaining the cooperative momentum still depends on the desire of the member countries. To avoid a fine start but a poor finish, ways and measures should be found to regularise or institutionalise the existing programmes under the ADMM-Plus framework.

For furthering substantial cooperation, feasibility studies on institutional arrangements such as information sharing initiatives or establishing coordinating centres are highly desirable. This is particularly so for joint operations in medical aid in case of the occurrence of pandemic diseases and humanitarian disasters, and in fighting against piracy and terrorism.

New areas of cooperation should be explored to give new dynamics to the ADMM-Plus process.

For example, a certain kind of resource sharing mechanism or arrangement could be made among ADMM-Plus countries with existing peacekeeping training centres so that the region could benefit. Another possible area for cooperation could be dealing with illegal immigration among the border defence forces of member countries.

In sum, the ADMM-Plus, as proved by its past experiences, is not just a talk shop. It has made some achievements, especially in terms of providing a platform for confidence and trust building, as well as a vehicle for conducting substantial cooperation. Given the complicated regional geostrategic landscape, a pragmatic or realistic approach is needed to maintain the momentum of cooperation.

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## THE ADMM-PLUS: MOVE BACKWARDS TO MOVE FORWARD

*Euan Graham*

The ADMM-Plus comprises the 10 ASEAN members and eight dialogue partners, namely Australia, China, India, Japan, New Zealand, Republic of Korea, Russia and the United States.

The Third ADMM-Plus meeting was held in Kuala Lumpur on 3–5 November 2015. Malaysia chose “ASEAN: Maintaining Regional Security and Stability for and by the People” (channelling Abraham Lincoln) as the theme. The meeting attracted international attention for its failure to agree upon a joint declaration. This was damaging for ASEAN’s image as the convening body for Asia’s multilateral security architecture, especially since it recalled the failure of the 2012 ASEAN Summit in Cambodia to reach an agreement on a summit communiqué.

As in 2012, the dividing issue was once again the South China Sea, demonstrating the limits to ASEAN’s consensus-based approach. China was opposed to including a reference to the South China Sea, whereas the United States and others were in favour. One important difference from 2012, however, was that this time ASEAN itself remained united. ASEAN was able to unify around a Chairman’s Statement that did include mention of the South China Sea, in deference to the wishes of Vietnam, the Philippines and the Malaysian Chair. The chairman’s statement does not require consensus across ADMM-Plus members. Since there is no formal requirement to issue a joint declaration, future ADMM-Plus meetings would do well to abandon this convention, since it is more likely to polarise than unify its members.

According to the Malaysian Ministry of Defence, the “ADMM aims to promote mutual trust and confidence through greater understanding of defence and security challenges as well as enhancement of transparency and openness.”<sup>1</sup> Although inaugurated only in 2010, the ADMM-Plus already has more momentum behind it than the foreign minister-led ARF or other ASEAN security forums. The setback in Kuala Lumpur, while a reminder of the ADMM-Plus’ inability to deal with sensitive inter-state security concerns, is unlikely to fundamentally challenge its niche within the regional security architecture as the official forum for a “Defence Ministers meeting in the East Asia Summit format.”<sup>2</sup>

The ADMM-Plus serves two main purposes. The first is confidence building, which is meant to be delivered by “significant interactions,” extending to field exercises conducted under ADMM-Plus auspices, between the Plus countries and the defence establishments of ASEAN member states. The second, equally important objective from ASEAN eyes, though it receives less public attention, is to provide a conduit to “promote capacity-building in the region in the fields of defence and security.”<sup>3</sup>

The ADMM-Plus agenda is designed to concentrate on “practical” areas for defence cooperation that fall within the categories of non-state and transnational security. The ADMM-Plus currently has six foci for defence cooperation: maritime security, counter-terrorism, HADR, peacekeeping operations, military medicine, and humanitarian mine action. Each area has a dedicated EWG.

<sup>1</sup> Ministry of Defence, Malaysia. “ADMM.” Accessed November 29, 2015. <http://admm.mod.gov.my>.

<sup>2</sup> Department of Defence, Australia. “Minister for Defence – Intervention at the ASEAN-Plus Defence Ministers’ Meeting (ADMM-Plus).” August 29, 2013. <http://www.minister.defence.gov.au/2013/08/29/minister-for-defence-intervention-at-the-asean-plus-defence-ministers-meeting-admm-plus>.

<sup>3</sup> “About the ASEAN Defence Ministers’ Meeting (ADMM-Plus).” *ADMM*. January 15, 2015. <https://admm.asean.org/index.php/about-admm/about-admm-plus.html>.

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The deliberate avoidance of sensitivities in the ADMM-Plus is one clear difference from the SLD, which has actively sought to eke out a niche as the forum for “no-holds barred” discussion of Asian security issues at the ministerial/chief of defence force level. The ADMM-Plus’ future roles and functions need to be understood in relation to the evolving division of labour between the formal Track 1, as well as quasi-official forums, such as the SLD and a plethora of derivative security and defence dialogues now hosted across the region.

Australia has been an enthusiastic supporter of the ADMM-Plus from the start, assigning it a central role within “the evolving ASEAN-centric security architecture,” which Canberra identifies as “vital to ongoing maintenance of stability in the region.”<sup>4</sup> The 18-state membership of the ADMM-Plus admits all of the key states within Australia’s geo-strategic framework of the Indo Pacific. Australia is a strong supporter of the EAS, and as a reflection of its matching membership sees the ADMM-Plus as a central pillar of its defence engagement.

Australia hosted the inaugural ADMM-Plus maritime security exercise off Jervis Bay in September–October 2013 during its co-chairmanship with Malaysia of the Maritime Security EWG. Since 2014, Singapore and Australia have co-chaired the EWG on Counter-terrorism. Canberra views its current co-chairmanship as an “opportunity to continue building regional capacity, foster interoperability, build links and relationships and enhance information sharing.”<sup>5</sup> This will culminate in

a large-scale maritime security and counter-terrorism exercise, to be held in Singapore and Brunei in May 2016.

Terrorism is already a significant focus for bilateral cooperation between Australia and Singapore.<sup>6</sup> This will grow further, as the focus of counter-terrorism is likely to shift from combating the IS in the Middle East to returning foreign fighters and affiliated groups in Southeast Asia. As Malaysian Defence Minister Hishammuddin Hussein said, even before the Lebanon and Paris attacks, the “IS militant threat is real and, if not handled properly, has the potential of turning this region into the biggest catastrophe the world has ever seen.”<sup>7</sup>

Hyperboles aside, terrorism is a natural and appropriate focus for the ADMM-Plus defence ministers’ discussions. On a secondary level, terrorism provides a convenient and cooperative agenda for the ADMM-Plus to displace the focus of attention from the much more divisive issue of the South China Sea. However, concerns about the encroachment of Chinese naval and civilian vessels within Malaysia’s exclusive economic zone may explain the Malaysian Chair’s willingness to include references to the South China Sea in the Chairman’s Statement.<sup>8</sup>

One noteworthy Bruneian initiative to arise from the ADMM is the establishment of hotlines or direct communications links among the ASEAN defence ministers. I was personally involved at the time in preparatory meetings and research on this.<sup>9</sup> The hotlines concept was subsequently endorsed at the ADMM and appears to be

<sup>4</sup> Department of Defence, Australia. “Minister for Defence.”

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Lowy Institute for International Policy. “Canberra’s Singapore swing.” *The Interpreter*, June 30, 2015. <http://www.lowyinterpreter.org/post/2015/06/30/Canberras-Singapore-swing.aspx>.

<sup>7</sup> *The Star*. “IS threat among focus at ADMM-Plus next month.” October 27, 2015. <http://www.thestar.com.my/News/Nation/2015/10/27/IS-threat-among-focus-at-ADMMPlus-next-month>.

<sup>8</sup> Sario, Ruben. “Ahmad Zahid: ‘Regional superpower’ encroached into Malaysian territory.” *The Star*, November 14, 2015. <http://www.thestar.com.my/News/Nation/2015/11/14/Zahid-regional-superpower-encroach>.

<sup>9</sup> Graham, Euan. “Maritime Hotlines in East Asia.” *RSIS Policy Brief*. Singapore: S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, 2014.

## THE ADMM-PLUS: MOVE BACKWARDS TO MOVE FORWARD

*Euan Graham*

moving forward towards a progressive rollout. This takes the ADMM potentially out of its confidence building comfort zone into the more controversial, but necessary, area of crisis management. In due course, hotlines could be extended beyond the ADMM to the Plus partners. However, other ADMM-Plus activity areas, such as Malaysia's proposal on peacekeeping, have apparently stalled.

Other ADMM-Plus work-streams, like HADR, are helpful in building confidence, interoperability and capacity across the 18 member defence forces in Asia's disaster-prone regions. But there are concerns around duplication, since it is already a crowded field at the multilateral (ASEAN, ARF, EAS) level. Singapore has

also taken the initiative to launch its own multinational HADR centre at Changi Naval Base, the Regional Humanitarian Coordination Centre, which sits outside of the formal ASEAN structures.<sup>10</sup> It is not obvious how the ADMM-Plus plans to position its EWG disaster management activities in relation to these potentially overlapping initiatives.

The ADMM-Plus has reached a stage where, in order to maintain its credibility going forward, further consolidation of existing initiatives is required before floating new proposals. In this sense, it may therefore be necessary to move backwards in order to move forward.

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<sup>10</sup> Ministry of Defence, Singapore. "Fact Sheet: Changi Regional HADR Coordination Centre (RHCC)." Last modified February 13, 2015. [http://www.mindef.gov.sg/imindef/press\\_room/official\\_releases/nr/2014/sep/12sep14\\_nr2/12sep14\\_fs.html#.VjYJUNDfjdk](http://www.mindef.gov.sg/imindef/press_room/official_releases/nr/2014/sep/12sep14_nr2/12sep14_fs.html#.VjYJUNDfjdk).

## ONE ASEAN, ONE RESPONSE: ADMM AND ADMM-PLUS CONTRIBUTIONS TO HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE

*Alistair D. B. Cook*

Since the establishment of the ADMM in 2006, the regional association has developed multiple avenues for cooperation on humanitarian assistance. Yet, coordination between these avenues remains underdeveloped. The most significant development is the legally binding ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response (AADMER), which came into force in 2009. Two years later, ASEAN member states established the ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on disaster management (AHA Centre) in 2011. Under this Agreement, the ASEAN Secretary-General is designated as the ASEAN Humanitarian Assistance Coordinator and the AHA Centre is the operational coordination arm of AADMER. It is therefore important to further develop these two roles to promote a whole-of-ASEAN approach to humanitarian assistance.

Even as the ASEAN Community was launched at the end of 2015, it is important to look towards tangible policies to realise this vision. At the 2014 ADMM Retreat on 19 November, it first considered the Concept Paper on a ASEAN Militaries Ready Group on HADR (MRG) to be established for quick deployment to countries affected by a disaster emergency<sup>1</sup> under the ASEAN banner. As this initiative moves to fruition, it will be important for MRG members to commit to the Standard Operating Procedure for Regional Standby Arrangements and Coordination of Joint Disaster Relief and Emergency Response Operations (SASOP) to share information on assets and capacities of ASEAN countries, which are important inputs into disaster preparedness and response plans. As these activities fall under the AADMER and its operational arm, the AHA Centre, it would assist in sharing the necessary information to the regional coordinating body to promote a comprehensive approach.

With the emergence of the MRG, it will be important to ensure that sufficient financial and human resources be put in place to support the humanitarian assistance coordination efforts. At present, the AHA Centre receives an annual contribution of US\$30,000 from ASEAN member states totalling US\$300,000 for operating costs. As a result, direct contributions do not cover the current level of coordination activities, which in actuality, needs further development. While the AHA Centre was able to go beyond the region and receive donations from dialogue partners as part of its first Work Programme, the continuation and reliance on external funding sources for its operations is unsustainable.

It is therefore important to consider the financial burden placed on this operating environment. If the AADMER is to be more robustly implemented, it needs to be matched with the necessary funds. As a dialogue partner recently made clear at the AADMER Strategic Policy Dialogue in Singapore, it is time for ASEAN member states to look again at the financial situation of the AHA Centre as it is unlikely that dialogue partner donations will continue in the same way for much longer. This conversation has also already begun within ASEAN to transform the financial situation of the AHA Centre. Several issues should be considered in this conversation, which can inform the engagement of the ADMM and ADMM-Plus in regional humanitarian assistance cooperation initiatives.

First, the financial transformation of the AHA Centre will need to go beyond national contributions as currently framed. A reconceptualisation of national contributions to take into account the private and people sectors would open up significant resources to transform the AHA Centre's prospects to deliver more effective coordination. This would

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<sup>1</sup> Under AADMER Part 1 – General Provisions – Article 1.7, a “disaster emergency” means a situation where a Party declares that it is unable to cope with a disaster.

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recognise the multi-stakeholder humanitarian landscape in this region, which in turn would encourage the development of more civil-military understanding. The ADMM and ADMM-Plus, through their various initiatives, could facilitate the convening of sustained interactions between civilian agencies and militaries engaged in humanitarian assistance. This would ensure that more predictable and institutionalised relationships are able to form between these two key stakeholder communities to develop more effective and financially sustainable humanitarian preparedness and response plans. Furthermore, it would allow for the promotion of a whole-of-government approach to HADR in ASEAN, which encourages stakeholders to identify their own strengths and coordinate with others according to theirs, both across government departments and with international organisations.

Second, the ADMM and ADMM-Plus could consolidate its humanitarian assistance activities into one streamlined strategy with benchmarks for HADR, military medicine and humanitarian mine action. The more consolidated the ADMM-Plus EWGs are, the more effective limited funds will be in coordinating those efforts. Indeed, the 2013 ADMM-Plus HADR/Military Medicine Exercise in Brunei Darussalam illustrated this effectiveness.

Third, the Second Joint Task Force to Promote Synergy on HADR and subsequently as part of the MRG, proposed the development of guidelines on the use of the ASEAN flag or logo when deploying assets and human resources to humanitarian emergencies. If the ADMM implements this proposal, it would assist in moving the debate beyond simple differentiations between bilateral and multilateral efforts and what constitutes an “ASEAN response.” In turn, this would allow for innovative strategies to further develop a “One ASEAN, One Response.”

Fourth, it is essential that the ASEAN Secretary-General as the ASEAN Humanitarian Coordinator is given sufficient remit to provide leadership in disaster emergencies. At present, the lag-time for a consensus statement to be given in the aftermath of a disaster is significant and poses a hurdle to the region becoming a HADR leader as other institutions have more efficient mechanisms in place. One way to overcome this challenge would be for the ASEAN Secretary-General to issue a statement in the immediate aftermath of a disaster on behalf of the region. This would significantly speed up the availability of resources as countries look to the region for signposts to know when to activate their responses.

Lastly, innovative branding strategies such as the ASEAN Secretary-General being a “first-mover” in recognising a disaster situation is one area that would engage ADMM-Plus dialogue partners to further their involvement in the ADMM process. This engagement is part of broader commitments to further defence multilateralism in the region, such as the recent U.S. government commitment to move its Pacific Partnership from a bilateral to multilateral effort. It would therefore dovetail efforts of the ADMM and ADMM-Plus if these commitments were to form part of a platform of activities that promotes linkages between the dialogue partners and ASEAN member states. Further development of ASEAN regional arrangements would consolidate the capacity building that has taken place to date, and continue the shift in decision-making on HADR efforts away from the corridors in Geneva and New York to this region.

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## MILITARY MEDICINE COOPERATION UNDER THE ADMM-PLUS: PROGRESS, CHALLENGES AND WAYS FORWARD

*Kaewkamol Pitakdumrongkit*

The ADMM-Plus is a platform for ASEAN and its eight dialogue partners to strengthen their practical security and defence cooperation. Established in October 2010, the collaboration covers six areas including in military medicine.

While there is no global consensus on the definition of military medicine, the term generally refers to the deployment of required medical services to areas in need of such support. Hence, military medicine is applied to not only war zones but also military operations other than wars (MOOTWs) such as disaster relief and other humanitarian missions. In the ADMM-Plus context, military medicine collaboration has geared towards providing medical assistance in MOOTWs.

The EWG on Military Medicine was inaugurated in Singapore in July 2011 to support the ADMM-Plus process. Seven EWG meetings on military medicine have so far been convened, with the latest one taking place on 14–18 September 2015 in Vladivostok, Russia. Like in the other areas of cooperation, the EWG on Military Medicine has two ADMM-Plus members—one an ASEAN nation and the other a dialogue partner—serving as the Co-Chairs with a cycle of three years. In the first cycle (2011–2013), Singapore and Japan were the Co-Chairs. In the second cycle (2014–2016), Thailand and Russia assumed Co-Chairmanship.

### Progress to date

#### *First cycle (2011–2013)*

Since its inception, substantive progress has been made in fostering coordination and interoperability among the members' military medical services in HADR and other missions. In this cycle, three EWG meetings on military

medicine were convened. The discussions mainly focused on how to prepare regional capabilities for HADR medical responses and to improve collaboration among the officers in the field.

Major achievements during this period include the establishment of the national points of contact (POCs), the common framework for information sharing, and the inventory of medical support capabilities. Standard Operating Procedures for Joint and Combined Medical Operations (SOPs-MM) were also developed to enhance the effectiveness of disaster medical assistance. Moreover, joint table-top exercises (scenario-based) were conducted. Such collective efforts led to a successful launch of the joint HADR/Military Medicine exercise in Brunei Darussalam in June 2013, which involved about 3,200 personnel, seven ships, and 15 helicopters from 18 ADMM-Plus nations. In October 2013, Singapore and Japan handed over Co-Chairmanship to Thailand and Russia at the Third EWG meeting on military medicine in Singapore.

#### *Second cycle (2014–2016)*

Collaboration in the current period aims at building upon the foundations laid out in the previous cycle. The objectives include deepening information sharing, creating the ASEAN Centre for Military Medicine (ACMM) (formerly named ASEAN Military Medical Coordination Centre), and developing the ASEAN Military Medical Handbook. A joint HADR/Military Medicine exercise is scheduled to be held in 2016 “and will be directed to improvement of cooperation between medical units of different states in disaster relief operations.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Ministry of Defence, Russian Federation. “Cycle of meetings of the ADMM-Plus military medical expert group started in Saint Petersburg.” May 28, 2015. <http://eng.mil.ru/en/mcis/news/more.htm?id=12036638@egNews>.



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The following progress has been made. First, the members agreed to grant national POCs permanent positions. Second, the Handbook is being composed and will tentatively include the ACMM's functions and mechanisms, as well as the SOPs-MM for different kinds of cooperation under ADMM-Plus (e.g. HADR, maritime security). Lessons learned from the response to Typhoon Haiyan in 2013 are being incorporated into the SOPs.<sup>2</sup>

On 16 March 2015, at the Ninth ADMM in Langkawi, Malaysia, the ASEAN defence ministers agreed to adopt the Concept Paper on the Establishment of the ACMM, which was informally opened in Bangkok, Thailand in October 2015. The ACMM's main functions are coordinating cooperation and providing information, hence it will interact more regularly with national POCs to deepen information sharing among the members. Moreover, the ACMM is expected to assist the existing AHA Centre during crisis times by undertaking activities relating to military medicine. Because disaster relief involves many aspects (e.g. launching search and rescue missions, building or repairing necessary transportation), it was agreed that a division of labour between the AHA Centre and the ACMM should occur to enable both entities to better provide assistance in a timely fashion. (For more detailed interaction between the two centres, see Appendix.)

### Challenges and ways forward

Despite the accomplishments above, cooperation on military medicine is facing certain challenges which can undermine its future progress. It is thus important to find ways to move forward, especially on how to improve the interoperability of joint medical services

to enable the timely deployment of required medical support.

### *Feasibility of the SOPs-MM*

Creating the SOPs-MM is vital to the advancement in military medicine collaboration. As mentioned earlier, the SOPs are still incomplete. The first challenge would thus be the development of feasible SOPs. Without them being applicable to real-world settings, ADMM-Plus joint assistance is unlikely to take place, jeopardising the platform's goal of enhancing practical security cooperation.

The difficulty in crafting practical SOPs mainly stems from the differences that states have in their operative medical conducts, as well as domestic rules and regulations. Such differences can result in tensions and disrupt the drafting process.

To alleviate potential conflicts, member states should increasingly share information especially in the form of past military medicine experiences. Such information would help the members better identify room where standardisation can be made. In cases that standardisation is infeasible, harmonisation of rules and regulations should be considered as a second-best option.

### *Synergies between military medicine and HADR cooperation*

As military medicine and HADR are closely linked, synergies should be created between the two areas, especially between the ACMM and AHA Centre in crisis times to boost the effectiveness of joint ADMM-Plus operations.

<sup>2</sup> In early November 2013, Typhoon Haiyan struck the Philippines, claiming more than 6,000 lives and injuring more than 27,000 people. While individual ADMM-Plus members such as Singapore, Japan and South Korea provided support to the crisis-hit areas, the disaster triggered no joint response from the ADMM-Plus. This led critics to express doubts over whether the ADMM-Plus process produced any real-world results. However, one should not dismiss the process entirely as it provides a forum where the countries can work together and deepen commitments to cooperation on military medicine.

## MILITARY MEDICINE COOPERATION UNDER THE ADMM-PLUS: PROGRESS, CHALLENGES AND WAYS FORWARD

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More channels of communication should be established to increase communication between personnel in both military medicine and HADR. Activities of the AHA Centre and the ACMM should also be more clearly defined, to reduce overlapping responsibilities and tasks between the two entities. Hence, the drafting of the SOPs-MM should take into consideration the details of the existing SASOP to lessen potential overlapping work.

### ***ACMM details***

Although the ACMM has already been set up, its details are still being negotiated. As reflected in the Joint Declaration of the Ninth ADMM in March 2015, the senior officials were tasked “to work out the operational details and modalities for its implementation.”<sup>3</sup> Moreover, although it was agreed that Thailand would solely bear the operating costs of the ACMM for the first year, funding sources for the following years are subject to future discussion. If some members view that certain functions and activities of the ACMM undercut their sovereignty, or disagree on the sources of funding and how the financial burden is shared, conflicts may arise and block the ACMM’s development.

ADMM-Plus countries must consult closely with each other to ensure that the ACMM does not ultimately undermine their national sovereignty. Regarding some functions of the ACMM such as border clearance of medical supplies or immigration policy of medical services personnel which is beyond the scope of Defence Ministry, other agencies (e.g. customs agencies, Ministry of Foreign Affairs) should be involved. Such inter-ministry and inter-agency collaboration should also be fostered to enable ADMM-Plus members to more effectively provide joint medical services in crisis times.

On funding matters, issues such as whether the ACMM is allowed to receive financial support from other international organisations or non-ADMM countries, and the types of activities for which external funding will be accepted, must be seriously addressed. The sharing of the financial burden among the 18 members must also be considered.

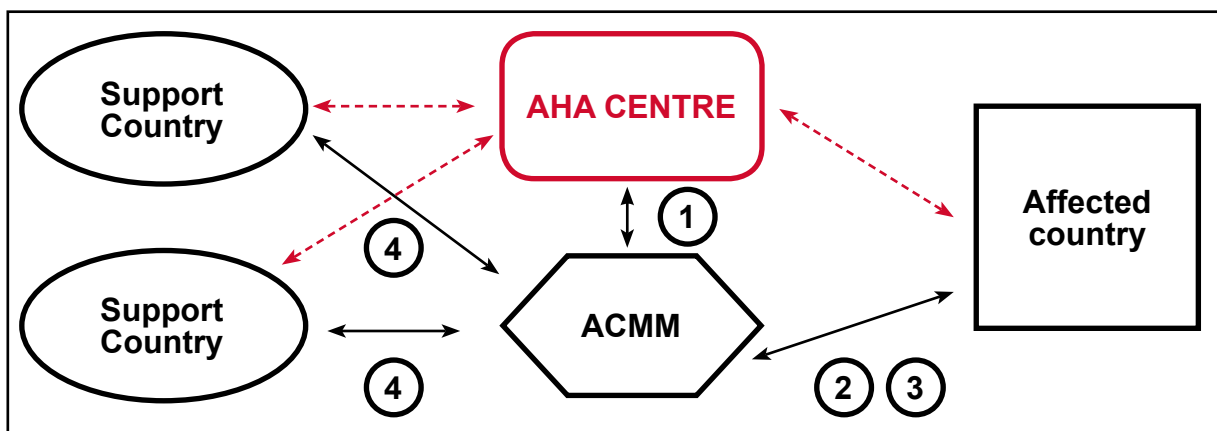
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<sup>3</sup> “Joint Declaration of the ASEAN Defence Ministers on Maintaining Regional Security and Stability for and by the People.” Ninth ADMM, Langkawi, Malaysia, March 16, 2015.

### Interactions between AHA Centre and ACMM in crisis situations

The ACMM's functions are to coordinate cooperation and provide information. When a disaster occurs, the ACMM liaises with the AHA Centre to identify the military medicine tasks from the latter (denoted as 1). The ACMM also deploys medical assessment teams to the host country (or an affected, crisis-hit nation) to identify specific areas in the field in need of medical assistance (denoted as 2). After field assessments, the teams will convey the information back to the ACMM (denoted as 3). The latter then matches support countries' assistance/capacities to the affected nation's needs (denoted as 4). Decisions to deploy medical assistance and to accept the support are to be made respectively by the supporting and host nations.



Source: Author's illustration.

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