

# *The Role of ASEAN in Establishing Regional Maritime Security*

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**Abstract**— Southeast Asia is a geographically important strategic location. In particular, as it is a very important location in terms of the international maritime transportation route through the sea, it is receiving a lot of attention from national and other non-state actors in the region. This article analyses many challenges that can affect maritime security conditions in Southeast Asia by applying DIME. Internationally, China's economic growth has had an impact on the arms race in the Asia-Pacific region. China's economic revival and military build-up in the Asia-Pacific region have actually changed US interest in the region. In particular, China's claim to ownership of much of China's East and South Seas represents a challenge to liberalism in the Asia-Pacific maritime region. Conflicts between China and some countries (Japan, Taiwan, Vietnam, Philippines, Malaysia, and Brunei Darussalam) have arisen in East Asia and the Pacific South Sea at China's insistence. On the other hand, ASEAN region is mostly island countries, so most of the challenges are related to non-traditional threats such as terrorism, rebellion and transnational maritime crimes (piracy, armed robbery, smuggling, illegal activities at sea, etc.). In addition, another challenging situation among ASEAN member states is border disputes. As a Southeast Asian national organization, ASEAN has a moral obligation and responsibility to address these issues in order to maintain regional maritime security. In addition, as a new frame work in terms of collective response, the ASEAN Political-Security Community (APSC) specifies that by 2025, a peaceful, safe and stable region in relation to maritime security will be built. Accordingly, in this paper, based on the SWOT analysis of ASEAN's role in maritime security in Southeast Asia considering internal factors (strengths-weaknesses) and external factors (opportunity threats), the strategic position of ASEAN should take a strength-opportunity strategy. As a result, ASEAN must adopt a strategy of combining strengths and opportunities, leveraging these strengths to capitalize on the opportunities it has to play a role in maintaining maritime security in Southeast Asia.

**Keywords**— ASEAN, Maritime, Security

## I. INTRODUCTION

Geographically, Southeast Asia region is located between two Oceans (Pacific Ocean and India Ocean) and two Continents (Asia Continent and Australia Continent). Most of Southeast Asia region is waters, comparing with its land area. This condition makes Southeast Asia waters become the busiest sea lane of the world, because 1/3 world trades and half-world fuel transportation transit in the Malacca Strait and play the central role connecting one region with other parts of the world. By its strategic position makes the Southeast Asia waters are traversed by international trade ships from all over the world. This is certainly an advantage for countries in the Southeast Asia region to improve the economy of their country. Aside from being a shipping line for international commercial vessels, the sea area also saves a wealth of natural resources that can be utilized by countries.

With all these advantages possessed, The Southeast Asia waters do not only have a high opportunity for all countries of the world, but also hold a high risk in the field of maritime security. Piracy or armed robbery against the ships, sea border problem between adjacent countries, maritime terrorism and conflict occurred among the Nations might become the main threat that have a strong impact to South East Asia's maritime security. Furthermore, geographically, the position of the Southeast Asian Countries,

which is close each other is at risk towards inter state conflict occurs either in the scope bilateral or multilateral. The main problem which often emerge is sea area problems among the countries. Among the problems are sea border problems and conflicts related with utilization of natural resources in the sea. Some of problems have been solved but many of them remain unsolved, and most probably become a “time bomb” on the future against a good relationship among ASEAN Country members.

Strategic environmental developments that occur at this time lead to competition for the use of natural resources, especially those from the sea, carried out by States due to the scarcity of natural resources that exist today. This certainly affects the conditions of maritime security that occur in Southeast Asian waters. Because as one of the strategic waters in the world, Southeast Asian waters have high economic potential so that it will attract the State and Non-State Groups to take advantage of the situation. Currently, the development of global security and strategic environment will greatly influence security in the Southeast Asian maritime region. The threat that needs to be watched out is the threat of the military, non-military and hybrid (a combination of military and non-military). These threats include terrorism, radicalism, separatism and armed rebellions, natural disasters, border violations, sea piracy and natural resources theft, epidemics, cyber-attacks and espionage, trafficking and drug abuse as well as conventional war or armed conflicts. With a maritime domain of around 80 percent, a coastline of 173,000 km, as well as an important world trade route with tens of thousands of commercial vessels passing through the waters and seas in the region each year, maritime issues are one of the important issues in ASEAN. ASEAN as an organization of Countries in the Southeast Asian region which has been established since 1967 has a moral obligation to play a role in dealing with various problems that occur in the Southeast Asia region, especially in keeping maintain regional maritime security. Since its establishment, ASEAN consists of 10 Country members, namely Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippine, Thailand, Singapore, Brunei Darussalam, Myanmar, Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam. Based on the above conditions, the research purposes are firstly, to analyse the development of the strategic environment to obtain threat predictions, and secondly, to analyse ASEAN's roles in maintaining Southeast Asia maritime security. Analysis of the strategic environment development is carried out using the DIME Method (Diplomacy, Information, Military and Economics) to determine the types of threats that occur and the formulation of the role of ASEAN using analysis of Strengths, Weakness, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT Method).

## II. THEORITICAL FRAMEWORK

### 2.1 *Maritime Securitt Theory*

Maritime Security is one of the important issues in 21st century. Major actors in maritime policy, ocean governance and international security have in the past decade started to include maritime security in their mandate or reframed their work in such terms . After terrorist attacked on Twin Towers World Trade Centre US on September 11th 2001, Maritime Security became the important issue as associated fear over the spread of maritime terrorism. Since then, US as first country launched its Maritime Security Policy in 2004. Then North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) included its Maritime Security Strategy in 2011. In 2014, United Kingdom (UK), the Europe Union as well as African Union launched Maritime Security Strategy. International Maritime Organization (IMO) as world maritime organization, through its Maritime Safety Committee (MSC) included Maritime Security as a main concern.

The term “Maritime Security” can conjure up different meanings to different people and organizations depending upon their organizational interest, or even political or ideological bias . So that it can make different perception on people, organizations as well as countries in what certain condition can be referred to Maritime Security, what threat should be included as Maritime Security threats and finally what reaction should be undertaken on certain situation in the name of Maritime Security. Christian Buerger on his article “What is Maritime Security” proposes 3 frameworks by which one can grasp the commonalities and disagreements that the concept of Maritime Security entail. First, framework intends to map the relation maritime security with another concepts. Second, the framework provides the understanding how different threats are included in Maritime Security. And the last one, framework provides security practice theory which aims at understanding what actions are undertaken in the name of maritime security.

### 2.2 *Diplomatic, Information, Military, Economics (DIME) Theory*

In the context of Warfare Strategy, to enhance national power is known the term of DIME. This framework can guide strategists in which element to apply when and to what degree (one can say that strategy is choosing the appropriate elements of power and determining their application to achieve certain interests). Military power will provide deterrence effect to the regional countries so that it can deny all threats. Furthermore, the military power will support diplomacy effort gaining adequate

bargaining position in solving inter-states dispute. With the strong bargaining position will strengthen information warfare and protect economic development from other threat, especially to create security stability and secure economic assets. In the context Maritime Security Strategy, Defence, Information, Military and Economic (DIME) are also element power factors that at least can be taken in consideration by countries or other actors in maritime security policy. So that, this theory can be applied to analyse threats in the field of DIME associated with Maritime Security. On this writing, DIME Theory is used to analyse strategic environment development. Strategic environment development will be analysed in level Global, Regional and ASEAN itself.

### **2.3 Strength, Opportunities, Weakness, Threats (SWOT) Analysis Theory**

Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) analysis indicates a framework for helping the researchers or planners to identify and prioritize the business goals, and to further identify the strategies of achieving them. The internal analysis is used to identify resources, capabilities, core competencies, and competitive advantages inherent to the organization. The external analysis identifies opportunities and threats by looking at the general environment.

## **III. RESEARCH METHOD**

On this research, writer uses Qualitative Methods and Descriptive Analysis to formulate the ASEAN's role in maintaining Southeast Asia maritime security. Firstly, strategic environment developments that has effect to the ASEAN maritime security will be analysed using DIME (Diplomacy, Information, Military and Economic) Method. Secondly, ASEAN's role to cope with the strategic environment developments will be analysed using SWOT (Strength, Weakness, Opportunity and Threat) Method. The final result that writer wants to suggest is what steps ASEAN should to take to play a role in maintaining Southeast Asia maritime security.

## **IV. RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

### **4.1 Maritime Strategy Environment Analysis**

Some of the cases above are examples of cases among ASEAN countries with respect to border area, especially sea border area. Border dispute resolution among ASEAN countries is no easy due to some reasons as follows: 1) The fundamental problem is that there are still political and economic gaps among the countries. On the political side there are still countries with authoritarian regimes, semi-authoritarian regimes and some countries that are already democratic. And on the economic side, there are some countries still concern on improving the welfare of its people, some countries still concern on its internal security and some countries have already become developed country. 2) All countries in ASEAN have different politic block with respect to country relationship between one country with its alliance. This factor also influences decision taken by some countries when they have to deal with some issues, especially regarding border problems. 3) Nowadays scarcity of natural resources become main issue over the world. This fact is also supported by the fact that geographically most of area in South East Asia region are sea and contain a lot of natural resources which can be managed by countries for the prosperity of their people, so that border area especially sea border issue become a sensitive issue among the countries. Area sovereignty problem is a sensitive issue as no single country is willing to lose its territory over other country. In neither the ASEAN Political-Security Community Blueprint (2009-2015) nor Blueprint 2025 does not explain specifically about border dispute resolution, but ASEAN itself has already committed that territory border problem between dispute countries must be solved in proper way and prevent the problem broad into military conflict by strengthen the cooperation, behaviour and responsibility. Reluctance to touch more on the issue of border dispute indicates that there is still a large amount of resistance to loosen the sovereignty matters. Border problems have the potential to cause conflict. This should be eliminated as much as possible by resolving border disputes. The loss of the border dispute makes sovereignty more secure.

### **4.2 DIME Analysis**

Based on DIME analysis there many challenge situations that can affect to maritime security condition in South East Asia Region. On the global area, the raise of China's economic has the effect to its military raising in Asia Pacific region. The China's interest in the Asia Pacific region is motivated by the importance of commerce for the country's growth, since China's leadership sees economic development as a matter of regime survival as well as the presence of the US in the region and the emerging problems of the contested territories. China's economic and military rising in the Asia Pacific region indeed makes US must switch his concern to this region, especially when China used its rising to claim some sea area in East and South Sea, and that

meant disruption of US freedom at sea in Asia Pacific region. The struggle of these two countries to fight for their influences in the Asia Pacific region will certainly be very influential on the South East Asia maritime security condition.

### 4.3 SWOT Analysis

Based on SWOT analysis on the ASEAN's roles in South East Asia regional maritime security which consider internal factors (strength-weakness) and external factors (opportunity-threat), strategic position of ASEAN's roles shows Strength and Opportunity strategy. It means that the type of strategy should undertake is how to use strengths to take the advantage of opportunities. Even though based on SWOT analysis that ASEAN's strengths and opportunities weight is more in number than its weakness and threat in related with its roles in South East Asia regional maritime security, it does not mean that can ignore all weaknesses and threats which exist.

Using the SWOT method to analysis the ASEAN's roles in regional maritime security, writer uses these following phases:

Designing external and internal factors matrix. On this process, the important thing is to determine the internal factors (strength and weakness) and external factors (opportunities and threat) of the ASEAN as Organization for South East Asia States. Based on strategic environment developments which have analysed by DIME method, some internal factors and external factors of ASEAN are as follows:

- a. Strength Factors: 1) In the ASEAN Organization has already been Legal Frame Work (in term of Soft Law and Hard Law), Sectoral Bodies and ASEAN Mechanism that concern to maritime security not only in regional maritime security itself but also beyond it. 2) ASEAN Organization has already conducted some cooperation activities either in External Relation (beyond member states) or among ASEAN Member States that concern to maritime security not only in regional maritime security itself but also beyond it. 3) ASEAN leadership has a capability to build a regional institutionbuilding. ASEAN have the ability to bring 'willing parties together...for the benefit of all' and to use 'the power of ideas to shape the way participants...understand the issues at stake and to orient their thinking about options available' particularly in terms of the process to be followed to find ways of managing problems and the factors to be considered in determining solutions.
- b. Weakness Factors: 1) Non-interference in the domestic affairs of members is one of ASEAN Way as a principle in dealing with dispute resolution among ASEAN member states. This way receives some critics due to make it difficult to ensure that many goals established in the numerous declaration and agreements that members have signed would be fully implemented. Therefore, ASEAN has no tested formal dispute settlement mechanism nor any means of requiring members to follow through on ASEAN commitments . Especially dealing with sovereignty problems among member states, it could be inhibitor of maritime cooperation in South East Asia. 2) ASEAN consists of various member states that have political and economic gaps among them. This condition makes some disputes occurred among member states are not easy to be solved. 3) All countries in ASEAN have different politic block with respect to country relationship between one country with its alliance. This factor also influences decision taken by some countries when they have to deal with some issues.
- c. Opportunity Factors: 1) ASEAN, even collectively, poses no threat to any of its neighbours. This condition makes in many ways see ASEAN as neutral territory to meet and negotiate. While none of the major powers trust any of the other, they can all trust ASEAN, both because of the norms it espouses and because its members cannot, either singularly or collectively, dominate any other state in region. Hence, ASEAN essentially met the expectations of the follower states in promoting regional cooperation to manage regional problems . 2) As the South East Asia regional waters is very valuable for international trading, especially international shipping line such as cargo ships, tanker ships, etc, so that there are many international organizations which concern on maritime security involved by supporting maritime security information sharing. These organizations such as International Maritime Organization (IMO), International Chamber of Commerce-International Maritime Bureau (ICC-IMB), etc. 3) There are also many countries make multilateral agreement which concern on Asia maritime security. These multilateral agreements such as Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships in Asia (Re-CAAP) which is built on September 4 th 2006 and to date 20 states (14 Asian countries, 4 European countries, Australia and US) have become contracting parties to Re-CAAP. The other multilateral agreement is Western Pacific Naval Symposium (WPNS) which built in 1987 by purposing is to establish a forum where leaders of regional navies could meet to discuss

cooperative initiatives. The first meeting was held in 1988. To date 21 states (12 Asian countries, 4 American countries, 1 Europe countries, Australia, New Zealand, Tonga, Russia) have become member states and 6 countries have become observers (Bangladesh, Colombia, India, Mexico, Pakistan, UK). The existence of these multilateral agreements could strengthen the cooperation with ASEAN in maintaining regional maritime security through information sharing, naval exercise, diplomacy and other activities.

- d. Threat Factors: 1) The raising of China military activities and US Rebalance Policy in Asia Pacific region as well as Sea Area dispute between China and some countries in Asia due to China claiming on some Asia Pacific waters could raise tension among dispute countries and risk on military action threat in South East Asia regional waters which could endanger South East Asia regional maritime security. 2) The large of waters region in South East Asia and its value on international shipping lines also bring non-traditional security concerns (non-military) pose a more immediate threat. These threats include terrorism and insurgency, transnational maritime crime (such as piracy, armed robbery, smuggling, illegal act at sea, etc), harm to the maritime environment. 3) Based on the strategic environment development, beside military and non-military, nowadays the most probably threats which must be faced is Hybrid War. Hybrid War is a military strategic which integrate conventional warfare, asymmetric warfare and cyber warfare. The form of this war such as nuclear attack, biologic and chemical weapon attack, the using of improvised explosive device and information warfare, etc. These threats could come from state or non-state actors.

### V. CONCLUSION

As the South East Asia region, geographically, its position is very strategic, especially for the international trade routes by sea, so that there are many interests of the countries or other non-state actors on this region. This condition undoubtedly has a good effect for the countries which live around these regional waters to increase its prosperity either through international trading or explore its natural resources in the sea. But this condition also has consequences that a value region will always attract threats from outside or disputes among the countries which have interests on it. Based on DIME analysis there are many challenging situations that can affect to maritime security condition in South East Asia region, such as struggle for influence in Asia between US and China, non-traditional threat in s.e asia water region, sea border dispute among asean members, etc. Based on swot analysis on the Asean's roles in South East Asia maritime security which consider internal factors (strength-weakness) and external factors (opportunity and threat), strategic position of asean's roles shows strength and opportunity strategy.

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