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ASEAN (in)Security Community:

Arms Modernization and Collective Identity Building in Southeast Asia¹

Mohamad Rosyidin

Department of International Relations, Universitas Diponegoro

The existence of arms modernization can be regarded as the high degree of security dilemma among states. In Southeast Asia, the fact that defense budget escalation followed by the military modernization may be the biggest obstacle to create an ASEAN Security Community. Unfortunately, there have been a little attention on the issue studying the correlation between arms modernization and the prospect of ASEAN Security Community. This paper seeks to fill the gap by analyzing how arms modernization in Southeast Asia is counterproductive to the ASEAN Security Community development. Using constructivism in International Relations, this paper argues that arms modernization among several ASEAN member states hinders collective identity building as a fundamental factor behind the security community. This argument implies that the formation of ASEAN Security Community will not create long-lasting peace in the region. This paper suggests that ASEAN should focus on collective identity formation to strengthen its own body institution rather than merely declare in a formal treaty.

Keywords: Arms modernization; ASEAN Security Community; collective identity

Introduction

ASEAN Security Community, or ASEAN Political-Security Community (APSC) has established two blueprints. The first blueprint was established in 2009 to “provides a roadmap and timetable to establish the APSC by 2015” (ASEAN Secretariat, 2009). Thus, the blueprint became a guidance for ASEAN member states to pave the way for the establishment of APSC in 2015. However, the reality is far beyond the expectation. ASEAN is not ready to develop a full-fledge security community which “ensure that countries in the region live at peace with

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one another and with the world at large in a just, democratic and harmonious environment” (ASEAN Secretariat, 2003). In 2016, ASEAN established APSC Blueprint 2025 “to elevate ASEAN political and security cooperation to an even higher level” (ASEAN Secretariat, 2016). The key difference with the previous blueprint is the outward-looking orientation of ASEAN role that enhance its centrality by playing actively and constructively at the global stage.

The establishment of APSC aims to ensure regional security where conflicts among ASEAN members should be settled through peaceful process. This includes dialogue and put aside suspicious one another. One of crucial issues about the future of Southeast Asian security that has been neglected by many analysts is arms modernization. Most existing studies on arms modernization in Southeast Asia have been trying to explain why states increase its military expenditure to purchase more weapons. For example, Tan (2004) stated that ASEAN military build-up is motivated by the national interest to protect economic resources. Meanwhile, Bitzinger (2007) examined the link between arms modernization in Southeast Asia and the ‘fear syndrome’ concerning China’s rise. Instead of anticipating threat from ASEAN fellow members, amplifying defense posture is a policy against China’s rise. There has been no study analyzing the link between military reinforcement among ASEAN states and the future of ASEAN security community. A longstanding analysis only mentioned that arms modernization among ASEAN members can lead to “a sense of insecurity compounded by their traditional distrust and suspicion that exist among them” (Yusof, 1996, p. 12). Meanwhile, Acharya (2013) also mentioned that arms modernization is one of the challenges of the establishment of ASEAN Community. Unfortunately, Acharya did not analyze further how it occurs. In short, there is no work that specifically focuses on the relationship between the arms modernization and the prospect of the establishment of ASEAN Security Community.

This paper seeks to fill the gap by analyzing the linkage between arms modernization among ASEAN states and the prospects for the establishment of ASEAN Security Community. Using constructivist perspective in the study of International Relations, this paper argues that arms modernization among

ASEAN members hinders collective identity building among ASEAN countries as an essential foundation to establish a security community. Furthermore, this paper argues that the establishment of ASEAN Community in 2015 would be a premature policy due to the unpreparedness of the member states to reduce the degree of suspicion and pattern of conflictual relationships. Constructivist suggests that the initial requirement to form a strong and enduring security community is to develop 'We-feelings' among themselves. Yet, recent trend of arms modernization in the region prevents the effort to build collectivity.

This paper will be divided into several parts. The first section will highlight the perspectives of constructivism that would be useful in explaining the security community. This section focuses on the concept of collective identity formation as a crucial factor behind a security community. The second part will distinguish concept of arms modernization and other overlapping concepts such as arms race, arms dynamics, arms build-up, and arms procurement. The third section will review the trend of arms modernization in Southeast Asia by focusing on the policies of the ASEAN member countries in strengthening their defense posture. The fourth section is an analysis that would link arms modernization and the prospect of the establishment of the ASEAN security community and how its implications for long-term peace-building efforts in Southeast Asia. The fifth part is conclusions and recommendations.

The role of collective identity in the security community

In international security studies, a group of states which are bound by a sense of solidarity is commonly recognized as a security community. The standard definition of security community proposed by Karl Deutsch (1957) in his classic work as "a group of countries that do not intend to fight each other and resolve problems peacefully." The security community is thus a mechanism for peaceful resolution of disputes without the use of military instrument. The aim of the security community is to anticipate and to resolve internal threats and conflict among themselves by non-violent ways. This concept differs from alliance which is formed to counter external threats (Acharya, 1991, p. 161). With this regard, NATO could be regarded as an alliance rather than a security community. In addition to the logic of threat, the security community and the military alliances

are different where the former is guided by the spirit of solidarity while the latter by the strategic interests. In other words, solidarity within a security community constituted by the meanings, understandings, and identities that create 'cognitive region' (Adler, 2005, p. 182) while strategic interests refer to rational calculation of individual countries.

Constructivism has major contribution to the study of security communities. Constructivist adopted sociological approach to explain the formation process of the security community. One of the constructivist useful concepts is collective identity. Collective identity can simply be understood as the feeling of each state as part of a greater entity. Affiliation to a group requires loyalties that create shared understanding as well as interest. Collective identity is the basis for solidarity, community, and loyalty that drives the same interests (Wendt, 1994, p. 386). As Wendt (1999, p. 229) put it, a positive identification of one state to another makes the differences become blurred. If states no longer perceive each other differently, then their relationship is characterized as a friendship. The pattern of relationships that are characterized by similarities rather than dissimilarities creates 'We-feeling' or solidarity as previously mentioned.

Collective identity is a crucial factor behind the formation of a security community. Adler and Barnett (1998, p. 38) formulated an analytical framework treating collective identity as intervening variable. This means collective identity does not determine the establishment of security community. There are many other factors such as the presence of an external threat, international dynamics, and intensive interaction contributing to the establishment of security community. Nevertheless, the collective identity plays an important role in the process of how states are committed to not use a military approach when resolving conflicts. The existence of collective identity creates a sense of mutual trust among states. Conversely, mutual trust among states strengthen collective identity. This mutual constitution creates friendship culture that is very important for the prospects of inter-state relations in a security community. Despite not a determining factor of the security community, collective identity is a 'necessary condition' that determines the success or failure of a community to create peace

among its members. In short, without collective identity there is no community at all.

Based on the framework formulated by Adler and Barnett above, we could apply it to analyze the development of ASEAN as a security community. In his study, Amitav Acharya traced the origins of ASEAN using constructivist approach. According to him, ASEAN is a product of the common perception of an external threat (Acharya in Adler and Barnett, 1998, p. 203). During the Cold War, ASEAN was formed by five countries: Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, and the Philippines in response to the threat of communism exported by the Soviet Union. The common perception is a factor that allows the countries in the region agreed to form a regional organization that functions like a fortress to prevent the spread of the influence of communist ideology. As an ideological fortress, ASEAN was not oriented towards the far-out threats (Soviet Union or China), since communism in Southeast Asia had already infiltrated the region. At that time, the infiltration of communism manifested in the emergence of rebel movements were backed by communist countries such as Vietnam and China. Thus, the five countries realized the communist threat within the region so they were trying to prevent the spread of this threat by establishing ASEAN.

Once ASEAN formed, Southeast Asian countries had a regional organization that serves as an 'information bridge' to facilitate cooperation among countries in the region in various fields, especially economics and socio-cultural. The cooperation that had developed intensively then strengthen ASEAN as an organization that embodies a common interest. However, the increasing economic cooperation among ASEAN members did not automatically creates a sense of solidarity among its members. Conflicts among ASEAN states occur frequently primarily on the border issue. According to the adherents of liberal and constructivism, the increasing interaction among states can lead to the creation of solidarity. Yet, this does not occur in Southeast Asia. Despite cooperation in various fields takes place intensively, ASEAN member states remain unable to unleash themselves from narrow-minded policies. Enduring conflicts among ASEAN members reflect the low level of solidarity even if cooperation in almost all aspects have been well-developed.

The low level of solidarity among ASEAN members can be understood by looking at the norms they are embraced. ASEAN has been adopted norms that recognize the sovereignty of each member or 'norms of non-interference' or widely known as 'ASEAN Way'. Unlike the European Union, ASEAN adopted the principle of non-interference that prevents the creation of a sense of 'We-ness'. This characteristic makes ASEAN is categorized as a 'pluralistic security community'. Emmerson (2005, p. 171) defines a pluralistic security community is made up of sovereign states as opposed to the amalgamated security community consisting of the countries that had surrendered its sovereignty to the larger community. With the principle of non-interference adopted since the establishment of ASEAN, "[H]istorically the ASEAN region has been a thin and pluralistic security community" (Emmerson, 2005, p. 180). Pluralistic security community does not seek to erode the sovereignty among member states (Acharya, 2001, p. 156). Because the sovereign pluralistic security community is inviolable, it is much difficult to build collectivity in the genuine meaning. On the contrary, an amalgamated security community has shared understanding and shared interests which is relatively easy to build collectivity among its members. As a pluralistic security community ASEAN collectivity can be created through the development of collective identity that can unite their perceptions and interests in managing conflicts among themselves.

Arms modernization and other concepts

Before examining the trend of an arms modernization in Southeast Asia, we need to distinguish several confusing and overlapping concepts: 'arms race', 'arms dynamics', 'arms build-up', and 'arms procurement'. Arms modernization is defined as "the relevant upgrade or improvement of existing military capabilities through the acquisition of new imported or indigenously developed weapons systems and supporting assets, the incorporation of new doctrines, the creation of new organizational structures, and the institutionalization of new manpower management and combat training regime" (Tellis in Tellis and Wills, 2005, p. 15). Thus, arms modernization is the domestic policy of a country in the field of defense. In addition, arms modernization is not limited to the strengthening of the weapon system hardware. Arms modernization covers very broad and

comprehensive strategic policy. Arms modernization also overlooks the issue outside the scope of the domestic policy of a country such as the reactions of other countries respond to the military's modernization policy. Arms modernization is another term to describe 'arms dynamic' or 'arms build-up'. Buzan and Herrings (1998, p. 5) defines arms dynamic as "the entire set of pressures that make-actors (usually states) acquire both armed forces and change the quantity and quality of the armed forces they possess." This policy is intended to safeguard national security and not to dominate others.

Arms race, on the other hand, is defined as "the participation of two or more nation-states in competitive or interactive apparently increases in the quantity or quality of war materials and/or persons under arms" (Smith, 1980, p. 255). Arms race reflects the self-help behavior of states when responding to the actions of other states which are also doing the same thing. In other words, arms race is a reaction when states are threatened by others. This situation follows the logic of the security dilemma where increasing security by one state causes others feel insecure so constrained to increase its own security. This condition can be so dangerous and potentially lead to war. Gray (1971, p. 41) mentioned four fundamental conditions of an arms race. First, two or more parties are engaging in an antagonistic relationship. Second, they develop armed forces to combat or deter others. Third, there is an intense competition in terms of quantity and quality of military power. Fourth, rapid increase in quantity and quality of weapons.

Bitzinger (2010) in his article argued that the escalation of defense spending in Southeast Asia cannot be considered as arms race. Purchasing weapons does not entail mutual hostility and intention to dominate or defeat others as the Cold War logic. Rather, the massive arms purchasing among ASEAN members is more accurately described as 'military modernization'. However, this paper argues that the desire of a state to have strong military capabilities would most-likely rise suspicion that leads another state perceives it as potential threat. Although policies to strengthen the defense posture is exclusively domestic sphere, but the policy may trigger other countries do the same thing (Gray, 1971, p. 40).

The latter concept is arms procurement or defense industrialization. Arms procurement is part of a military modernization. In an effort to improve the military capabilities of a country, the government takes steps to support the strengthening of military combat capability. Building a strategic industry in the field of defense is a step often adopted by the government. Investment in the defense industry means reducing reliance on imported weapons from big powers. Similar to the concept of military modernization, arms procurement is an instrument of self-defense or 'self-sufficiency' principle (Evans, 1988, p. 296).

So far it can be concluded that basically arms modernization is different from other concepts alike. While arms modernization is domestic policy of a country to upgrade its military equipment, arms race is foreign policy which involves competition among states in terms of weaponry. While arms modernization focuses on states intention and capability to enhance its weaponry system, arms race represents the security dilemma that is not present in the definition of military build-up or arms dynamics. Regardless of these conceptual differences, this paper argues that there is a possibility of arms race in Southeast Asia. In a globalization characterized by massive interaction among international actors, the domestic policies taken by a state can easily affect others. Arms modernization policies under the pretext of self-defense even potentially be interpreted differently by other countries. That is why this paper assumes that the individual policies of ASEAN countries in the field of collective defense can be seen as a phenomenon that has led to an arms race. As Aaron Beng (2014, p. 59) has argued, the dividing line between the arms race and arms dynamics are 'gray area' in which it is very difficult to determine whether the escalation of defense spending and arms purchasing is considered as arms race or not.

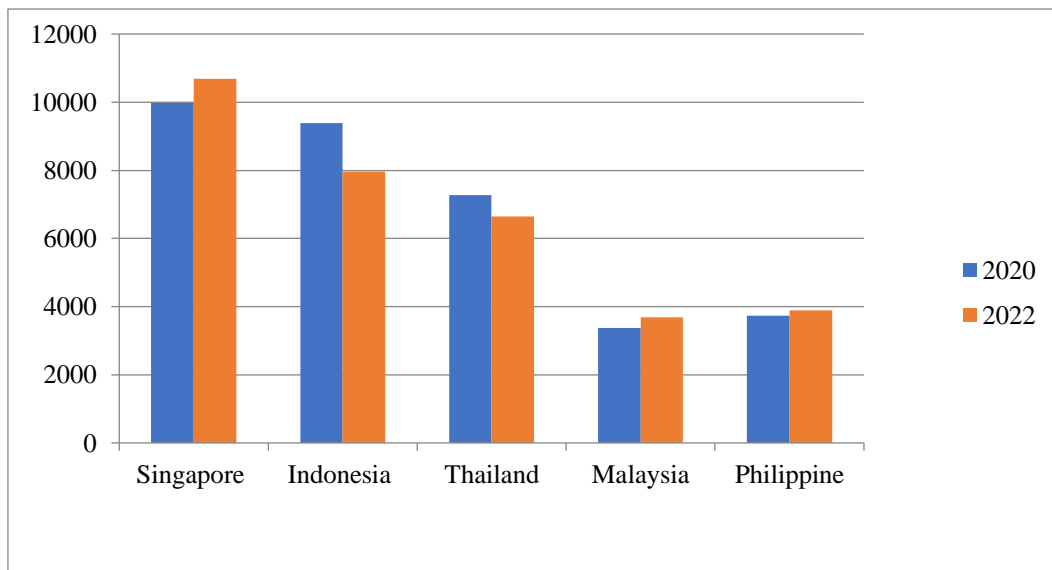
Arms modernization in Southeast Asia: current trend

In terms of underlying factors, arms modernization in Southeast Asia differs from other areas that are generally motivated by the fear of external threats. Acharya (1988) identified three factors that underlie the tendency of an arms modernization in Southeast Asia. First, Southeast Asian countries remained struggle with the problem of internal threats such as separatism and ethnic, religious, and cultural conflicts. Domestic instabilities triggered Southeast Asian

countries to increase their military strength. Second, Southeast Asian countries had intention to break out of dependence on security umbrella of a great powers. The presence of US military bases in a number of Southeast Asian countries is not long-lasting. By increasing their own military capabilities, Southeast Asian countries were ready in case the security umbrella of the great powers can no longer guarantee their security. Third, conflict in Indochina. This area has long often characterized by conflict. Indochina countries such as Vietnam, Cambodia, and Thailand are quite vulnerable hit by armed conflict. Therefore, several Southeast Asian Countries need to strengthen their defense capabilities to prevent armed conflicts.

The analysis above is no longer relevant to explain current affair in Southeast Asia. With the rise of China's influence in international sphere, Chinese threat has been an important factor affecting military modernization policy in Southeast Asia. The increase in the defense budget becomes the primary indicator that reflects how ASEAN countries attempt to anticipate impending threats. The data from SIPRI in 2021 shows that the military budget of some ASEAN countries has increased amid the pandemic of Covid-19. Singapore's military budget is the largest in Southeast Asia, with US\$ 10,683 million or 2.98 per cent of GDP, Indonesia US\$ 7,965 million or 0.7 per cent of GDP, Thailand US\$ 6,654 million or 1.32 per cent of GDP, Malaysia US\$ 3,682 million or 1.06 per cent of GDP, the Philippines US\$ 3,898 million or 1.04 per cent of GDP (SIPRI 2021). Comparing to 2020, Indonesia and Thailand reduce their defense spending in 2021. In 2020, Indonesia allocated US\$ 9,387 million or 0.86 per cent of GDP, while Thailand allocated US\$ 7,268 million or 1.46 per cent of GDP.

Figure 1. Military budget of five ASEAN countries 2020-2021 (in US\$ million)



Defense expenditure is not the only indicator of arms modernization. The most important is how ASEAN countries spend their budget to upgrade their weaponry. Singapore, the largest defense spender in the region, has continuously been upgrading its military muscle by purchasing various weapons system from great powers. Singapore's acquisition of four 218SG submarines from Germany was intended to enhance state's capacity in dealing with maritime security challenges in the region (Strait Times, 2019). In 2020, the US government had approved to sell 12 F-35B Joint Strike Fighter jets to Singapore which cost around US\$ 115 million each. The purchase aims not only to protect Singapore's sovereignty but also to contribute to regional peace and stability (Strait Times, 2020). In order to weaponize its jet fighters, Singapore has signed a US\$ 630 million deal with the US government to provide Raytheon AIM-120-7/8 Advanced Medium Range Air-to-Air-Missiles (AMRAAMs) including hundreds of guidance kits for bombs, various bombs, 20 Joint Attack Direct Munitions (Flight Global, 2022). In addition, Singapore has acquired four Close-Range Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (CR-UAV) to protect Singapore from threat either during peacetime or wartime (Mindef, 2022). Given the fact that Southeast Asia has succeeded in preserving peace and stability for more than five decades, Singapore's massive arms modernization is quite puzzling. However, according to Singapore's Defence Minister Ng Eng Hen, as a small and vulnerable country, Singapore must build its military power as strong as possible; "Singapore's philosophy is to make friends with all countries and seek no enemies. But we are

realists too, and keen observers of history and events around us, and especially what happens to small, vulnerable states” (Strait Times, 2022).

Indonesia also strengthens its air force by purchasing 42 Rafale fighter jets from France worth US\$ 8.1 billion and 36 heavyweight F-15 Eagle EX fighter jets from the US worth US\$ 13.9 billion. Indonesia’s aspiration to become a strong nation is the underlying cause of this decision (Ronodipuro, 2022). At the same time, Indonesia also plans to buy two Scorpene-class submarines from France. Since Indonesia has limitations in developing a blue water fleet, submarines are ideal substitution for surface vessels. In addition, Indonesia’s maritime security only capable to maintain its presence within its territorial waters instead of beyond its borders (Honrada, 2022). Nevertheless, Indonesia does not neglect the strategic role of warship in modern military strategy. That is the reason why Indonesia’s Defence Minister Prabowo Subianto bought eight warships from Italy. An Italian-based shipbuilding company, Fincantieri announced that it sells six new FREMM Class frigates and two second-hand Maestrale Class frigates including its logistics (CNBC Indonesia, 2021). In order to strengthen its naval force, Indonesia also modernizes its 41 old warships worth US\$ 1.1 billion in 2022. This program results from the cooperation between Ministry of Defence and PT PAL. According to Chief of Information Officer TNI AL, Rear Admiral Julius Widjojono, the modernization program is very crucial and indispensable since the rapid arms modernization between countries both at the regional and the global level is taking place (Republika, 2022).

Aside from Singapore and Indonesia, other ASEAN fellows also modernize their military posture by purchasing weapons from great powers. Vietnam, for example, has long been relying its defence system on Russian supplies. From 1995 to 2019, Russia had exported US\$ 7.38 billion worth of its weapon system or 84 per cent of its total arms export to Vietnam (Storey, 2021). In 2016, Vietnam bought 64 T-90 main battle tanks. In 2018, Vietnam signed a US\$ 1 billion deal to purchase Russian-made fighter jets, surface ships, and submarines. In 2020, Vietnam signed US\$ 350 million deal to buy 12 Yak-130 combat training jets. This contract becomes the first step for Vietnam to acquire Su-30SM and Su-35 from Russia (Hanoi Times, 2020). Currently, Malaysia plans

to buy Tejas light combat aircraft from India to replace its MiG-29 fighter jets (Free Malaysia Today, 2022). Likewise, Thailand shows its interest to buy four F-35s cost US\$ 413 million although the US government has not yet come to a final decision on that (Reuters, 2022). Thailand also signed a US\$ 410 million deal with China for the procurement of submarines amid the refusal of Germany to export diesel engines for China's submarines due to European arms embargo (Wall Street Journal, 2022). Previously, Thailand had acquired 120 armoured vehicles from the US which estimated cost of US\$ 175 million (Reuters, 2019).

Aside from China factors and security situation in the South China Sea, Southeast Asia's arms modernization does not diminish fear and suspicion among ASEAN member states. In other words, the policy of arms modernization is also due to the efforts of ASEAN states to anticipate threats to each other, due to many cases of disputes among themselves. Indonesia, for example, has a relatively less harmonious relationship with Malaysia. Both Thailand and Cambodia in a couple of times involved in a border-issue conflict that destabilize the region. Meanwhile, Singapore has always been felt as a 'lilliput' which is surrounded by big countries, giving a reason to have the strongest defense capabilities in Southeast Asia. As Collins (2000, p. 127) has argued, the Southeast Asian countries can be classified as the 'weak' countries not because of material capabilities they possess, but because they have not been immune from the security dilemma.

The impact of arms modernization on the prospect of ASEAN security community

Constructivists generally hold an optimistic view on the prospects of security community. Constructivists believe that states sometimes are not always suspicious of one another like realists does. States can reduce the degree of suspicion and build a shared commitment to create peace among themselves. However, this paper argues that the fact is not always so. Constructivist can be pessimist on the prospects of security community based on the argument that collective identity is a necessary condition for the existence of a security community. Without collective identity, the security community would fail to promote peaceful conflict resolution. This is not to say that sovereignty should be

blamed as the obstacle to the formation of such a community. Rather, states within a region should develop collectivity before they develop a security community. In short, constructivists are skeptical of the security community with lack of trust among its members.

In fact, collective identity building is not as easy as theory prescriptions. In Southeast Asia where the diversities are very large, collective identity seems like a jargon or symbolic. ASEAN Community motto “One Vision, One Identity, One Community” is not accompanied by strategies to build a solid foundation; ASEAN do not concern on how to build ‘One Identity’. It is ironic since one of the pillars of the ASEAN Political-Security Community is to “ensure that the peoples and Member States of ASEAN live in peace with one another and with the world at large in a just, democratic and harmonious environment” (ASEAN Secretariat, 2009, p. 1). ASEAN is in fact aware of the importance a sense of solidarity or ‘We-feeling’ by pursuing strategic measures such as Confidence Building Measures (CBMs). As stated in the ASEAN Political-Security Community blueprint, strategic measures that can be performed such as bilateral defence department staff exchanges, joint military exercises and joint research. However, these measures remain unable to reduce mistrust between one country and another.

In addition, the term of ‘arms modernization’ does not appear in ASEAN Political-Security Community blueprint. No single term of ‘arms modernization’ was found in the manuscript. ASEAN apparently neglect arms modernization as a factor that could hinder their commitment to build a community. As mentioned earlier, CBMs only limited to staff exchanges at the level of defense agencies and military elites. If we refer to the standard definition of CBMs as “measures that address, prevent, or resolving uncertainties among states,” then arms modernization should be a concern of many countries. Neither people exchange nor joint military exercises and research which are important, but ASEAN states should reduce their efforts to enhance military posture because it represents fear and strategic rivalry in the region.

Arms modernization in Southeast Asia is directly related to the prospect of an ASEAN Security Community. Arms modernization could lead to culture

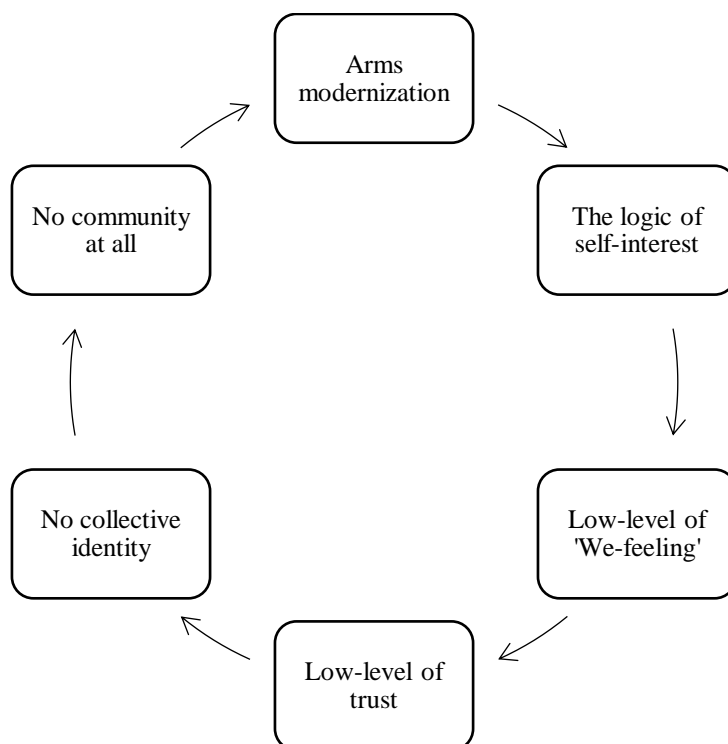
of rivalry among ASEAN states. Wendt (1999) called the culture of rivalry in international politics as Lockean culture. In Lockean 'logic of anarchy' states respect sovereignty of other countries and do not intend to conquer. Yet, the main characteristic of Lockean culture in international relations is states perceive each other as potential threat (Rosyidin, 2014, p. 21). Nevertheless, Lockean culture does not prevent states to cooperate despite fear and suspicious remain present in inter-state relations. Because strategic rivalry is dominated the logic of inter-state relations, Lockean culture is not appropriate condition to develop a security community.

Lockean culture is prominently present in Southeast Asian international relations. Although there is quite intensive cooperation, the strategic rivalries among ASEAN countries are also quite high at the same time. The increase of military budget followed by arms purchasing in order to strengthen the defense posture reflects this condition. In contrast to the commitment to build a security community that will ensure peace in the region, ASEAN fails to restraint its member from self-help policy. ASEAN fails to realize that one of the prominent characteristics of security community is "the absence of a competitive military build-up or arms race involving reviews their members" (Acharya, 2001, p. 17 and Acharya in Adler and Barnett 1998, p. 216). According to Acharya, the reason why the arms modernization should be eliminated is because it is "a key indicator of whether states have developed 'dependable expectations of peaceful change' and thereby overcome the security dilemma."

We can easily understand the arguments above with the line of argument below. The figure shows the pattern of inter-state relations in Southeast Asia. Arms modernization leads to low level of 'solidarity' or 'We-feeling' among ASEAN members. Then, low level of 'We-feeling' represents the Lockean culture characterized by rivalry rather than solidarity. This in turn leads to lower trust among ASEAN members. Mutual trust is a fundamental prerequisite for the formation of a security community because without trust how the countries within a community might be able to manage conflict peacefully and effectively. Massive arms modernization in ASEAN members represents visible lack of mutual trust among them so it is difficult to build a collective identity in Southeast

Asia. The absence of collective identity would make ASEAN Security Community no longer qualified as a 'community' in the real sense. Rather than being considered as a community, ASEAN remains follow the logic of the security dilemma that preserve rivalries among states leading to arms modernization policy.

Figure 2. Cyclical relations between arms modernization and the prospect of ASEAN security community



The model implies that arms modernization has negative impact on the prospect of peace in Southeast Asia. It seems logical since arms modernization in Southeast Asia is associated with the high level of suspicion among ASEAN countries. Ganeshan (in Rolfe, 2004, p. 117) stated that ASEAN has failed as a security community because of “the prevalence of intramural threat perceptions and the large number of outstanding bilateral issues that have the propensity to deteriorate into violence.” He added, “defense doctrines and weapon acquisitions of many ASEAN states are premised exactly on such conceptions of threat.” This argument supports the assumption that the military budget escalation of ASEAN countries followed by arms purchasing is anticipatory efforts to the threat perceived.

This is in contrast with the statement of the government elite. In celebration of 67th TNI anniversary in 2012, Yudhoyono said the Indonesian arms modernization is not intended to trigger an arms race in the region. Yudhoyono said,

[A]s I often convey in various international forums, there is no intention for us to encourage an arms race in the region. Nor is it our intention to be an aggressive military nation. In every opportunity, I underline the foreign policy that we possess the which is always guided by the desire to increase of the friends and to not be enemies, or “million friends, zero enemy” (Army Recognition, 2012).

In his speech at the Jakarta International Defence Dialogue (JIDD) in 2012, Yudhoyono asserted that Indonesia’s growing military budget is “a normal process of military modernization, and not as an arms race. Still, we must make sure that these armaments are accompanied by greater trust and confidence between nations, and especially between their militaries” (The Jakarta Post, 2012). Similarly, defence minister during the Yudhoyono administration, Purnomo Yusgiantoro in his speech at the Shangri-La Dialogue 2014 stated, “[W]e in Indonesia are quite mindful that our quest for more security does not need to lead to more insecurity for others. It is always better for the strategic intentions to be rightly understood - not wrongly perceived - by others. Transparency and clarity will lessen reduce misunderstanding and mistrust” (The Jakarta Post 2014). Although these statements are intended to convince neighboring countries that the Indonesian military modernization for the sake of self-defense, but other countries are also doing the same thing and this is inevitable. Recently, Indonesia’s Defence Minister Prabowo Subianto asserted that arms modernization is inevitable due to the fact that those who do not prepare for war will always be occupied by others (CNN Indonesia, 2021). His statement probably refers to a realists classical adage “*Si vis pacem, para bellum*” (translated as “if you want peace, prepare for war”) coined by a Roman military author Publius Flavius Vegetius Renatus.

The trend of arms modernization in Southeast Asia is also exacerbated by the fact that most people in the ASEAN countries still perceive each other as a

threat. Growing public opinion tends to see the source of the greatest threat comes from their neighboring countries. Research conducted by Benny (2012) on Indonesian society public opinion showed that patriotism and nationalism determine the perception of threat in the region. According to the study, 95 per cent of the respondents should be angry if there are other countries who have occupied the territory of Indonesia, while 92 per cent of respondents are willing to protest if government do not express decisive policies during conflict. The majority of the public also perceives the neighboring countries as the major threats. Two neighboring countries perceived as a source of the greatest threat to the people of Indonesia are Malaysia (60.5 per cent) and Singapore (20.4 per cent). Meanwhile, research conducted by Roberts (2007) also supports the argument that high degree of suspicion among ASEAN members drives arms race in the region. Myanmar, Singapore, and Indonesia are the three countries that have low level of trust to other countries. In elite government level, 59.8 per cent respondents said 'do not trust' other countries. Regarding the prospect of armed conflict between ASEAN countries, Cambodia, Thailand, and Singapore are the three countries who see the potential for conflict in ASEAN is quite large, with 28.6 per cent 41.7 per cent and 46.7 per cent respectively.

The results of this study support the claim that the culture of inter-state relations in Southeast Asia are still overwhelmed by fear and rivalry. Consequently, this provides fertile ground for countries efforts to strengthen its military capabilities in case friction that lead to armed conflict occurs. Bilveer Singh (2007, p. 212) in his article argued,

intra-ASEAN security concerns are also uppermost in explaining ASEAN's defence procurements. This has been true in the past and is also true at present. While ASEAN member states have been reticent about threats emanating to members from within the ASEAN organization, the foreign and defence policies of the member-states, as well as the pattern of arms procurement, would tend to indicate that more often than not the enemy the ASEAN states are trying to overcome comes from within the organization rather than from without, even though this is never openly stated or identified.

Regional arms modernization might not lead to war between ASEAN member states. Yet, it reflects the low level of trust among them in managing

regional issues. Instead of using existing institutional arrangements, ASEAN countries focus on increasing their defence posture. This tendency brings a negative impact to the prospect of peace (peacemaking and peacebuilding) in the region. In addition, prioritizing on arms modernization would increasingly hinder ASEAN's problem-solving mechanism such as ARF and TAC (Annisa, 2015).

The findings of this study imply that ASEAN Security Community would not create long-term peace in Southeast Asia due to the absence of collective identity. This argument is consistent with previous studies that are skeptical about the future of the ASEAN Security Community. For example, sceptics have argued that ASEAN is an 'imitation community' "that are essentially rhetorical shells that give form but no substance to domestic and international arrangements" (Jones and Smith, 2006, p. 44). Similarly, Khoo (2004, p. 43) also criticized that "ASEAN is best explained as an institution that has its members locked into a vicious pattern of negative interaction." ASEAN failure as a security community is also caused by the lack of 'commitment institution' (Guan, 2004 and Rosyidin, 2013) and has no institutional maturity to resolve the conflict but rather rely on bilateral mechanism (Ganesan, 1995). Jones and Nicole (2015, p. 26) argued, "the contradiction between official consensus and actual practice has a damaging effect. The longevity of the institutional arrangement by no means entails progress, but rather the recourse to process without resolution." This paper supports such arguments even though has a different perspective. Using constructivism does not mean optimistic all the way down. Constructivism can be pessimistic to the security community because constructivist emphasizes on the importance of collective identity as a pre-condition of a security community development. Thus, this paper complements existing explanations related to ASEAN Security Community obstacles.

Conclusion

This paper argued that ASEAN's commitment to establish a (mature) security community is not an unreasonable policy. ASEAN has a long history in managing conflict between members peacefully. However, many factors remain

hinder to create a robust ASEAN Security Community. As the former Directorate-General of ASEAN of the Indonesian Foreign Ministry, I Gusti Agung Wesaka Puja stated, the ASEAN Security Community is not an institution that formed in 2015, but it is something like gradual development (Puja, 2013). Among many problems faced by ASEAN, the absence of collective identity becomes the main limiting factor. Collective identity is not only important but also that ASEAN has absolute trust between each other when resolving conflicts among themselves. In this context, arms modernization among ASEAN countries is counterproductive in the process of collective identity building. The arms modernization tends to preserve culture of individualism and sharpen the strategic rivalry that could lead to security dilemma. ASEAN's commitment to establish ASEAN Community amidst arms modernization can be considered as a premature decision. In a contemporary situation in the South China Sea coupled with the arms modernization among ASEAN countries, the establishment of ASEAN Security Community is most likely just a formality rather than substantial. This is not to say that ASEAN's arms modernization would likely create war between them. Nor it would likely to lead to arms race among ASEAN member states. This finding implies that creating a security community without a strong foundation of collective identity is a myth. The massive trend of arms modernization in Southeast Asia reveals the fact that there is no collective identity among ASEAN countries. They have been dictated by realist dictum of self-help motivation rather than prioritizing regional interests.

This paper agreed that the ASEAN Security Community is not an end itself but an instrument to bring about peace in the region. Yet, creating instruments cannot simply be done by signing the agreement. ASEAN has a reputation as a regional institution that good at making promises that they cannot keep. With regard to domestic issues, for example, its member states tend to avoid relying on ASEAN institutions due to belief that domestic problems should be managed domestically (Suzuki, 2019). As Mattli (1999, p. 12) argued, signing an agreement does not produce integration. In other words, there are commitments that must be adhered to and implemented the treaty in order to give impact to the parties involved in it. Much more important than that, ASEAN countries should

not be too hasty to declare the ASEAN Security Community. The reason is quite simple: ASEAN is not ready yet to become a community. However, the decision was already taken. This paper suggests ASEAN should strengthen its structural foundation instead of signing the declaration. One of the structural foundations is to build ASEAN's collective identity. ASEAN has not much time left to build the foundation and the ASEAN Security Community. As a result, ASEAN Security Community will be established with or without a collective identity.

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