

**ASEAN-China Maritime Cooperation:
Maintaining Maritime Security and Regional Stability
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Abstract

Globalization depends on the free flow of sea-based shipping. International shipping underpins the prospect of further beneficial growth in world trade, particularly in Asia Pacific region. This provides both an opportunity and a challenge since sea-based globalization is vulnerable to disruption. Therefore, the international shipping needs to be stable and secure. For this reason, some major powers in Asia Pacific such as the US, China and Indonesia have launched their respective strategy in securing maritime in the region. This paper mainly seeks the common concerns between Asia Pacific governments and the role of ASEAN in promoting the maritime cooperation. Their common concerns most likely derive from challenges and threats that come from the sea and at the sea due to lack of maritime security and governance ashore, such as those happened in the South China Sea and Straits of Malacca. Accordingly, this paper proposes an inclusive and comprehensive collaboration between ASEAN member states and China, involving other major powers in Asia Pacific for the maintenance of good order at sea. This maritime partnership is vital for securing the economic development and prosperity as well as maintaining peace and stability in the region.

Keywords: Maritime Silk Road, global maritime fulcrum, maritime security, maritime cooperation.

Introduction

Globalization depends on the free trade system that clings to the secure and free flow of goods on sea-based shipping. Maritime is therefore essential and becomes symbol of globalization for goods to be distributed, sold and consumed worldwide. Moreover, international shipping underpins the prospect of further beneficial growth in economic and world trade. But to have that effect, it needs to be predictable, traceable, compliant with detailed pick and delivery schedules, stable and secure.² Nonetheless, the emerging of Asia Pacific region as the center of maritime strategic is also

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² See Geoffrey Till, *Seapower, A Guide for the Twenty First Century, Second Edition*, Oxon, Routledge, 2009, pp, 1-6.

associated with an increasing numbers of transnational threats, which particularly happened at sea.³ For this reason, some countries in Asia Pacific region such as China and Indonesia have published their initiatives to secure and maintain the stability of their sea territories. This is in addition to US Rebalancing Strategy in Asia Pacific launched in 2011, which is mainly aimed to secure the US access in passing through the Strait of Malacca and South China Sea.

In September 2013, President XI Jinping initially introduced the Silk Road Economic Belt concept, followed by the initiative to build a close and strategic cooperation between China and ASEAN Community, particularly in maritime cooperation. This is important as China proposes the construction of a 21st Century Maritime Silk Road to promote regional interconnectivity and economic integration.⁴ A year later, in front of 10 ASEAN member states and its counterparts namely China, the US, Japan, India, South Korea and Australia, President Jokowi launched the idea of making Indonesia as the Global Maritime Fulcrum. Jokowi's doctrine mainly derives from the idea that in the geo-economic and geo-political world shifting from West to East and with the strategic position of Indonesia, the Indonesian seas would have an increasingly important role.⁵

With the abovementioned maritime strategic policies, this paper accordingly proposes an open and comprehensive maritime cooperation between China and ASEAN member states. Open means that this partnership should be inclusive and give opportunities to all states in the Asia Pacific region to become strategic partners. Whereas comprehensive means that this maritime cooperation aims to resolve traditional threats related to sea management as well as to counter non-traditional threats mainly happened at sea.

³ W. Lawrence S. Prabhakar, "Maritime Strategic Trends in the Asia Pacific: Issues and Challenges," in Lawrence, Joshua Ho, and Sam Bateman (eds.), *The Evolving Maritime Balance of Power in the Asia-Pacific, Maritime Doctrines and Nuclear Weapons at Sea*, Singapore: Institute of defence and Strategic Studies, NTU, 2006, pp. 35-68.

⁴ "Chronology of China's Belt and Road Initiative," can be accessed through http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2015-03/28/c_134105435.htm

⁵ Indonesian President Joko Widodo's Speech in 26th East Asian Summit, 29 April 2015, in Kuala Lumpur.

The inclusive and comprehensive maritime cooperation in the region should be realized in three notions confirming the strategic and significance of Asia Pacific Maritime. First, Pacific Ocean, including South China Sea and Strait of Malacca, has an abundant inventory of natural resources that is surely advantageous for the maritime countries but also vulnerable at the same time as there is a significant number of transnational crimes. Secondly, the needs to protect the marine resources and the Sea Lanes of Communications (SLOC) in Pacific Ocean have encouraged some states to modernize their navies, which in turn provokes security dilemma and creates instability in the region. Eventually, there are common concerns amongst Asia Pacific states on economic development as well as stability and security maintenance.

This paper will also further elaborate on the role of ASEAN in collaboratively handling challenges on security and maritime issues. In this regard ASEAN is important, as the institution has become a primary driving force that is responsible to maintain peace, prosperity, security and stability, particularly in Southeast Asia and Asia Pacific region. Moreover, this paper will explain the contention amongst ASEAN member states regarding the South China Sea management and how they might resolve the debate. To deeply understand the issues, this paper will be divided into 4 (four) parts: introduction, the significance and vulnerability of Asia Pacific maritime, the role of ASEAN and scope of cooperation, and eventually conclusion with recommendations.

The Significance of Asia Pacific Maritime Cooperation

Lawrence S. Prabhakar confirmed in his article that Asia Pacific region is a globalized maritime environment.⁶ His idea implies that in the last decades Asia Pacific region has emerged as a global strategic maritime. Yet, the region coupled with its seas is also vulnerable with both traditional and non-traditional threats. This part will explain at least three notions to confirm the strategic and significance of Asia Pacific region and its maritime that accordingly call the Asia Pacific states for a comprehensive collaboration on maritime management.

⁶ *Ibid.*

First, Asia Pacific waters, covering the western part of Pacific Ocean specifically Strait of Malacca, East and South China Sea, has an abundant inventory of natural resources that is surely advantageous for the island countries. But this situation is also vulnerable at the same time as a significant number of transnational crimes happen in the region particularly at sea. Secondly, the needs to protect the maritime resources and the Sea Lanes of Communications (SLOC) in Indo Pacific Ocean have encouraged some states, along with the increased of national economic prosperity, to modernize their navies. However, this situation in turn provokes security dilemma and creates instability in the region. Eventually, there are common concerns amongst Asia Pacific states on their national economic development as well as regional and global stability and security maintenance.

With regards to the abundances of oil and gas in South China Sea, there are some assumptions and estimation on the numbers of oil and gas undiscovered resources. In 2010, for example, the US Geological Survey (USGS) estimates that South China Sea may contain anywhere between 5 and 22 billion barrels of oil and between 70 and 290 trillion cubic feet of gas. The Chinese National Offshore Oil Company (CNOOC) was more optimistic to estimate the potential resources in South China Sea. Using their own research project, in November 2012, they estimate the area holding around 125 billion barrels of oil and 500 trillion cubic feet of natural gas. Moreover, in 2013 the US Energy Information Administration (EIA) launched an estimation of approximately 11 billion barrels of oil reserves and 190 trillion cubic feet of natural gas reserves in the area.⁷ However, this various estimation confirms the richness of western part of Pacific Ocean.

In addition to oil and gas reserves under the sea, the abundance fish and other marine outcomes resulted from the sea in South China Sea certainly benefits states that locate nearby the sea. In 2010, for example, China's total aquatic production reached more than 60 million tons from its EEZ (Economic Exclusive Zone), a

⁷ South China Sea Overview, accessed through http://www.eia.gov/beta/international/analysis_includes/regions_of_interest/South_China_Sea/south_china_sea.pdf on 24 Oct 2015

significant increased from 47,5 million tons in 2004 and 7.5 million tons from 1999.⁸ In 2013, Chinese fisheries production reached 61.3 million tons and more than 13.8 million tons aquatic plants captured from its maritime.⁹ From the table below we can see the massive production of South China Sea that benefits the East Asia and Southeast Asia countries.

Table. 1 East and Southeast Asia Fisheries and Aquatic Plants Production 2013

No	Countries	Fisheries (tons)			Aquatic Plants (tons)		
		Capture	Aquaculture	Total	Capture	Aquaculture	Total
1	China	17,371,823	43,553,502	60,925,325	283,292	13,564,679	13,847,971
2	Japan	3,656,854	608,800	4,265,654	84,500	418,365	502,865
3	South Korea	1,597,874	402,141	2,000,015	8,566	1,131,305	1,139,871
4	North Korea	215,000	64,050	279,050		444,300	444,300
5	Indonesia	6,101,725	3,819,732	9,921,457	17,136	9,298,474	9,315,610
6	Malaysia	1,488,705	261,274	1,749,979		269,431	269,431
7	Philippines	2,331,721	815,008	3,146,729	400	1,558,378	1,558,778
8	Vietnam	2,803,800	3,207,200	6,011,000		87,280	87,280
9	Thailand	1,843,747	1,056,944	2,900,691	-	-	-
10	Singapore	1,645	5,165	6,810	-	-	-
11	Brunei	4,000	830	4,830	-	-	-
12	Cambodia	639,468	90,000	729,268	-	-	-

Source: World Fisheries Production, FAO 2013

With its EEZ covering the Strait of Malacca and southern part of South China Sea, Indonesia gained nearly 10 million tons of fisheries and more than 9 million tons of aquatic plants. This captures makes Indonesia became the second biggest country enjoying the benefit from South China Sea fisheries resources after China. Vietnam also enjoys the massive production of South China Sea as it gained more than 6 million tons of fisheries, both captured and aquaculture fisheries. The Philippines

⁸ FAO Fisheries Statistics, 2011 and World Fisheries Production, by Capture and Aquaculture, 2013 can be accessed through <http://www.fao.org/fishery/statistics/en>

⁹ World Fisheries Production, by Capture and Aquaculture, 2013 can be accessed through <ftp://ftp.fao.org/FI/STAT/summary/a-0a.pdf> on 24 Oct 2015

gained more than 3 million tons for fisheries and 1,5 million tons for aquatic plants in 2013, while Thailand gained nearly 3 million tons of fisheries. The massive production of South China Sea undoubtedly becomes an endowment for countries located nearby the waters.

With a proper management, maritime countries would enjoy economic development from their waters. However, the abundance of marine productions may trigger the illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing and other transnational crimes. This is a threat for any island countries if they are lack of control and weak at protecting their water and its marine resources. In the case of Indonesia, to protect its marine production and perform deterrence from illegal fishing vessels, the current Indonesian minister for maritime affairs and fisheries, Ms. Susi Pudjiastuti, firmly arrested more than 35 vessels with China, Vietnam and Philippines flags by September 2015.¹⁰ This policy should be taken as according to Indonesian Ministry of Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, Indonesia lost about USD 23 million per year due to illegal fishing.¹¹ However, this robust policy has become a concern for Chinese, Vietnamese and the Philippines governments that forces them to have negotiation with the Indonesian government recently.

Second notion about the importance of Asia Pacific maritime is that South China Sea, coupled with the Strait of Malacca, not only important for their marine outcomes, but also for their strategic position in connecting states and for Sea Lanes of Communications (SLOC). This is to confirm that South China Sea, passing the Strait of Malacca, is significant for transportation and connectivity as well as trading system. Stretching from Singapore and the Strait of Malacca chokepoint in the southwest to

¹⁰ See "Menteri Susi tangkap 22 Kapal China" (Minister Susi arrested 22 Chinese vessels) from <http://bisnis.tempo.co/read/news/2014/12/08/090627197/menteri-susi-tangkap-22-kapal-ikan-cina>; see "Menteri Susi tangkap 16 kapal asing sepanjang September 2015" (Minister Susi arrested 16 foreign vessel throughout September 2015" accessed from <http://www.cnnindonesia.com/politik/20151002133734-32-82341/menteri-susi-tangkap-16-kapal-asing-sepanjang-september-2015/>

¹¹ "Indonesia kerepotan Berantas Illegal Fishing," (Indonesia finds Difficulties in combating Illegal Fishing) can be read in <http://www.politikindonesia.com/index.php?k=wawancara&i=55554-Ida-Kusuma-Wardhaningsih:-Indonesia-Kerepotan-Berantas-Illegal-Fishing>

the Strait of Taiwan in the northeast, the South China Sea is one of the most important energy trade routes in the world. The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) confirms that in 2013 approximately 30% of the world's sea-based trading¹² and nearly 60% of oil products and global liquefied natural gas (LNG) travel from Strait Hormuz and Strait of Malacca, to South China Sea.¹³

The report from US Energy Information Administration (EIA) also justifies that more than 15 million barrels oil per day flowing from the Persian Gulf, through the Strait of Malacca and South China Sea, to Asian countries as well as the US.¹⁴ In comparison, the world's most important chokepoint for maritime transit, the Strait of Hormuz between the Persian Gulf and Arabian Sea, had an oil flow of about 17 million barrels per day in 2011. The number of 15 million barrels per day significantly increased from the last two decades. In 1993, according to the Center for Naval Analysis, about 7 million barrels per day of oil and petroleum products, which is equivalent to 20% of world seaborne oil trade, passed through the Strait of Malacca. Moreover, The Strait of Malacca holds important role since it is the main entrance and the shortest sea route from Persian Gulf to East Asia.

However, the globalized maritime emphasizes not only on states' economic development but also on the increasing numbers of transnational crimes, which mainly happen at sea. Thachuk and Tangredi defined transnational crimes as crime activities perpetrated by non-state actors that not only go beyond national borders but also have global impact.¹⁵ They then distinguish the transnational crime perpetrators into two types of non-state actors, namely terrorist groups and organized criminal groups. With regards to terrorist groups, their activities nowadays are more intensely

¹² UNCTAD, *Review of Maritime Transport*, 2013, p. 37. The review can be accessed through http://unctad.org/en/PublicationsLibrary/rmt2013_en.pdf

¹³ US Energy Information Administration, "World Oil Chokepoints," November 2014, can be accessed through http://www.eia.gov/beta/international/analysis_includes/special_topics/World_Oil_Transit_Chokepoints/wotc.pdf

¹⁴ U.S. Energy Information Administration analysis based on Lloyd's List Intelligence, Panama Canal Authority, Eastern Bloc Research, Suez Canal Authority, and UNCTAD.

¹⁵ Kimberley L. Thachuk and Sam J. Tangredi, "Transnational Threats and Maritime Responses," in *Globalization and Maritime Power*, Washington DC: National Defense University, 2002, p. 57-77.

carried out, publicly targeted and globally directed. They are also using same methods conducted by organized crime groups to finance their organizations such as drug trafficking, arms smuggling, money laundering, human trafficking, and piracy.¹⁶ In the case of maritime Asia Pacific, terrorist attacks have become an issue since some Southeast Asian states have to deal with radical and terrorist groups, such as Indonesia, Thailand and the Philippines.

In relation to piracy threats, as reported by the International Chamber of Commerce International Maritime Bureau (ICC-IMB), there were 513 pirate attacks in the Strait of Malacca, Singapore, Indonesian and Malaysian coastal waters from 2003 to 2006.¹⁷ It was nearly 36% of all piracy attacks in all seas in the world. However, the ICC-IMB in 2011 reported that the number of piracy crimes in the Strait of Malacca Singapore, Indonesian and Malaysian coastal waters has dropped into 240 attacks in 2007-2010.¹⁸ This might happen as littoral states - Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore - has conducted joint patrol to protect Strait of Malacca since July 2005. Yet this numbers increased into 453 incidents in 2011-2014.¹⁹ Indeed, the pirate attacks remain a concern for Asia Pacific states as more than a third of 134 global incidents of piracy and armed robbery against ships in the first six months of 2015, took place off the coast of Indonesia.²⁰

To assure the free flow of goods and to safeguard the oil and petroleum supply as well as to protect marine productions and sea territory, Asia Pacific states then justify the development of their naval power. Along with the increased of economic prosperity, some states in the region modernize their military power and enhance their military budget. As China 2015 Defense Paper confirms that the threats for its maritime surely come from both state and non-state actors, the Chinese government plans to gradually shift its PLA Navy's focus from "offshore waters defense" to the

¹⁶ *Ibid*

¹⁷ ICC IMB Piracy and Armed Robbery Against Ships, 2007 Annual Report.

¹⁸ ICC IMB Piracy and Armed Robbery Against Ships, 2010 Annual Report.

¹⁹ ICC IMB Piracy and Armed Robbery Against Ships, 2014 Annual Report.

²⁰ *Maritime Piracy Reports 2015*, can be accessed through <https://www.icc-ccs.org/news/1111-maritime-piracy-report-reveals-continued-se-asian-attacks-against-small-tankers>

combination of "offshore waters defense" with "open seas protection." As its economic has grown over the last decade, the Chinese authority allows PLAN to build a combined, multi-functional and efficient marine combat force structure. This is to conclude that PLAN will enhance its capabilities for strategic deterrence and counterattack, maritime maneuvers, joint operations at sea, comprehensive defense and comprehensive support.²¹

However, Chinese PLAN modernization and an increase in military spending with the justification of its security and defense have provoked similar reaction from the unhappy or being threatened neighbors. The lack of navies' arrangement in the region has also become another concern, as there is no mechanism to supervise the naval power development of Asia Pacific states. Regarding this, Rousseau argues that the weak position of one's military power increases the perception of threat that leads to security dilemma and military competition.²² In turn, military competition may trigger military alliances between major and middle powers, and intensifies the tension amongst Asia Pacific states. This is true as in the case of Japan, Vietnam and the Philippines that have conducted joint military exercises with the US as they remain had problem with China in overlapping claims on East and South China Sea.

Eventually, the importance of South China Sea and Strait of Malacca for sea-based trading system and SLOC, and the increase numbers of transnational crimes endangering the economic prosperity in Asia Pacific states, coupled with instability due to arms dynamic in the region have become common concerns mainly for Asia Pacific states. This common concern is to confirm the third significance of Asia Pacific maritime. For this reason, major powers in Asia Pacific and Southeast Asia have launched their strategy either to safeguard their water territories and interests or to guarantee their access through the waters.

In front of the Asia Pacific leaders during East Asia summit in November 2011, President Obama specifically explained the US rebalancing strategy in Asia Pacific to

²¹ Chinese Military Strategy, 2015, can be accessed through <http://eng.mod.gov.cn/Database/WhitePapers/>

²² Ka Po Ng, *Interpreting China's Military Power: Doctrine Makes Readiness*, NY, Taylor & Francis, 2005, pp. 1-14.

secure and protect their vital interest in the region. To reflect his intention, the US Strategic Defense Guideline 2012 justifies the US military to continue their leadership in promoting stability and security regionally and globally by building stronger partnership with capable allies. According to US authorities, this partnership is to reassure that the presence of US military personnel and capability in the region is to maintain peace and stability collaboratively as well as to safeguard the access to and the use of global commons through seas not only for the US interest but also for Asia Pacific states' interests.²³

As a response to US initiative, in September 2013 Chinese authorities also proposed a framework and cooperation mechanism to bring China, Central Asia, Russia and Europe as well as South East Asia together in building "Silk Road Economic Belt and 21st century Maritime Silk Road." With regards to South East Asian countries, in front of Indonesian parliament members in October 2013, President Xi emphasized the Chinese government's initiative to finance infrastructure construction and promote regional interconnectivity and economic integration by establishing the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB). This initiative is particularly focused on the China-ASEAN maritime partnership, with the basis of mutual trust and good-neighborliness, win-win cooperation, togetherness, mutual understanding and friendship, and openness and inclusiveness.²⁴

Similarly, as a new elected President of Indonesia, Jokowi declared his intention to bring Indonesia to become the Global Maritime Fulcrum at his first speech before East Asian leaders in November 2014.²⁵ This concept is particularly built with five pillars to rebuild the Indonesia's maritime culture, to maintain and manage marine resources, to develop maritime infrastructure and connectivity, to enhance maritime diplomacy and to develop its maritime defense forces. With the idea that Indonesia

²³ US Department of Defense, *Sustaining US Global Leadership: Priorities for 21st Century Defense*, 2012 can be accessed through http://archive.defense.gov/news/Defense_Strategic_Guidance.pdf

²⁴ Speech by Chinese President Xi Jinping to Indonesian Parliament, in 2 October 2013, can be accessed through http://www.asean-china-center.org/english/2013-10/03/c_133062675.htm

²⁵ "Jokowi Launches Maritime Doctrine to the World" can be read through <http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2014/11/13/jokowi-launches-maritime-doctrine-world.html>

lies strategically between Indian and Pacific Oceans passing the Strait of Malacca and South China Sea, Jokowi's Global Maritime doctrine shortly provoke China and the US to approach this country. Both are proposing comprehensive strategic partnership with Indonesia particularly in maritime cooperation, as the US recently invited President Jokowi to come to Washington discussing the possibility of joint maritime exercises in Pacific Rim.²⁶

The Role of ASEAN and Scope of Maritime Cooperation

The importance and vulnerabilities of South China Sea and Strait of Malacca coupled with its management is of common concerns for the Asia Pacific States. Despite their different standing-positions regarding the issue of East and South China Sea management, all countries in the region believe that cooperation is vital in maintaining regional as well as global peace and stability. From their white defense papers, we can conclude that most of ASEAN states as well as US and China want a cooperative and comprehensive integrated action as well as a series of confidence-building measures and self-restraint in achieving mutual interests. This part will essentially describe the important role of ASEAN in the realization of the cooperation and the need to arrange an inclusive maritime cooperation between ASEAN and its counterparts in the Asia Pacific region, mainly China, South Korea, Japan, Australia, New Zealand and US.

ASEAN, as one of regional associations in Asia Pacific region whose aim is to promote regional peace, prosperity and stability, has a great opportunity to facilitate and accommodate both major powers' and its member states' interests in Asia Pacific maritime in such collaborative way. Although ASEAN was initially established to enhance the economic, social and cultural cooperation among its members as written in its 1967 Bangkok Declaration, security has greatly remained at the core of its

²⁶ "Global Maritime Fulcrum and the US-Indonesia Partnership," can be read through <http://thediplomat.com/2015/10/how-the-global-maritime-fulcrum-can-elevate-the-us-indonesia-partnership/>

existence.²⁷ Indeed, the former Singapore Prime Minister, Lee Kuan Yew also mentioned in his memoirs that in its development, ASEAN was banding together more for political objectives, stability and security.²⁸ This is true as in the case of South China Sea dispute.

As a contending issue between China and four ASEAN members namely Vietnam, the Philippines, Malaysia and Brunei Darussalam, South China Sea overlapping claims have threatened the regional peace and stability as well as the economic development. This situation justifies claimants to enhance their naval activities, in the name of territory and natural resources protection from both traditional and non-traditional threats. As far as regional peace and stability is concerned, ASEAN has played its role by discussing the issue in many summits and dialogues. The first workshop initiated by Indonesia was conducted in 1990 to manage potential conflict in the South China Sea. Afterwards, the issue of South China Sea and its management has been discussed every year in ASEAN's leaders joint communiqués and Chairmen's statements.²⁹

In 1992, ASEAN as a united posture eventually succeeded to bring China to sign the Declaration on the South China Sea, then followed by the 2002 Declaration on the Conduct of Parties on the South China Sea. Both agreements essentially called for a peaceful resolution of jurisdictional disputes by peaceful means, without resorting to force, the exercise of self-restraint, possible cooperation in maritime safety, marine environmental protection, search and rescue operation, action against transnational crimes and the application of the principles of the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation as the basis for a code of conduct for the South China Sea dispute.³⁰ This is also to

²⁷ Rodolfo C. Severino, *Southeast Asia in Search of an ASEAN Community: Insights from the former ASEAN Secretary-General*, Singapore: ISEAS, 2006, p. 161.

²⁸ Lee Kuan Yew, *From Third World to First – The Singapore Story: 1965 – 2000*, Singapore: Times Media Private Limited, 2000, p. 370.

²⁹ "Documents on ASEAN and South China Sea," in <http://cil.nus.edu.sg/wp/wp-content/uploads/2011/06/Documents-on-ASEAN-and-South-China-Sea-as-of-June-2011.pdf>

³⁰ The 1992 ASEAN Declaration on the South China Sea, <http://cil.nus.edu.sg/rp/pdf/1992%20ASEAN%20Declaration%20on%20the%20South%20China%20Sea.pdf> and The 2002 ASEAN Declaration on the Conduct of Parties of South China Sea,

confirm that ASEAN has become a primary driving force institution that is responsible to maintain peace, prosperity, security and stability, particularly in Southeast Asia and Asia Pacific region.

With regard to its responsibilities in maintaining peace, stability and security in the region, ASEAN also has several mechanisms where all members may have dialogue and consultation on common political and security issues as well as significantly contribute towards confidence building and preventive diplomacy. This is to mention the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting (ADMM) and ADMM Plus with Australia, China, India, Japan, New Zealand, South Korean, Russia and US as ASEAN counterparts. These forums are main forums for security and defence dialogue amongst ASEAN member states and between ASEAN and its counterparts.

Nonetheless the ASEAN leaders, for the first time, failed to reach an agreement on how to manage the South China Sea dispute in their meeting in Cambodia, in 2012. The debate continued as the current forum of 10 ASEAN Defense Ministers and its counterparts from Australia, China, India, Japan and the US also failed to reach joint statement on the issue.³¹ The contention and a prolonged processed of South China Sea Code of Conduct are of signals that the division amongst ASEAN members regarding South China Sea management has sharpened. Moreover, the partnership of ASEAN member states with different counterparts in Asia Pacific might trigger the disunity of ASEAN. This is not to mention the bilateral agreements that ASEAN countries made with external major powers.

<http://www.asean.org/asean/external-relations/china/item/declaration-on-the-conduct-of-parties-in-the-south-china-sea>.

³¹ "ASEAN Defense Chiefs Fail to Agree on South China Sea Statement," can be read through www.reuters.com/article/2015/11/04/us-asean-malaysia-statement-idUSKCN0ST07G20151104#owkWXsCfiTQDh0w.99

Such partnerships are described in the following table:

Table. 2 ASEAN Countries' Partnerships

Partnership	ASEAN Countries	ASEAN Counterparts	Area of Cooperation
RIM Pacific (RIMPAC)	Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand.	US, Australia, Japan, Korea, New Zealand, India, Canada, Chile, Colombia, France, Norway, Peru, Mexico, Netherlands, Tonga, and UK	Maritime and military exercises
Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP)	Brunei Darussalam, Malaysia, Singapore, and Vietnam	Australia, Canada, Japan, New Zealand, US, Chile, Mexico and Peru	Trade, investment and economic
Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP)	Brunei Darussalam, Myanmar, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam	Australia, China, India, Japan, South Korea and New Zealand.	Trade, investment and economic
Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC)	Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam	Australia, Canada, Japan, South Korea, New Zealand, US, China, Mexico, Papua New Guinea, Chile, Peru, Russia	Economic, free trade agreement proposal
East Asian Summit (EAS)	Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam	Australia, China, India, Japan, New Zealand, Russia, South Korea, US	Forum to discuss economic cooperation, energy, climate change, and internal ASEAN issues.

With regards to the above partnerships and the failure to achieve an agreement on

South China Sea issue amongst ASEAN members, both ASEAN and China need to consider the establishment of Asia Pacific Maritime Partnership. This partnership should involve all ASEAN countries and all its counterparts in Asia Pacific region, mainly China, South Korea, Japan, Australia, New Zealand and US. The Asia Pacific Maritime Partnership will enhance mutual trust amongst ASEAN countries and between ASEAN countries and its counterparts in Asia Pacific, particularly with China and gradually reduce the tension in the region relating to South China Sea issue. Although ASEAN Regional Forum and ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting Plus have discussed the issue of South China Sea, both dialogues focus on more-narrowly maritime issues.

The Asia Pacific Maritime Partnership can be initially conducted by having discussion on comprehensive issues focusing on safety of navigation and seas management, as a way to confidence building measures. In addition, the forum may also discuss about the further maritime cooperation including activities such as information sharing, technological cooperation, exchange of visits of related authorities, maritime connectivity and capacity building, infrastructure and equipment upgrading, seafarers' training, marine-science research, marine environment protection, eco-tourism promotion, disaster relief, illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing countermeasures, as well as security at sea and ports improvement.

Conclusion

The importance and vulnerability of Asia Pacific region coupled with its maritime, has urged major powers in the region to launched their respective maritime and defence strategy in order to promote national prosperity and security as well as regional stability. As an actor in the region, ASEAN should also play its role according to its responsibilities by looking at the common concerns of its members and counterparts. With regards to the South China Sea issue, ASEAN has conducted some mechanisms to resolve the problem, yet it failed to achieve an agreement on the issue recently. Therefore, with a good political willingness ASEAN and China might establish Asia Pacific Maritime Partnership, involving other pacific states and

ASEAN counterparts, mainly South Korea, Japan, Australia, New Zealand and the US, which aims to resolve traditional threats as well as to counter non-traditional threats. Essentially, this partnership is important for confidence building measures with the objectives to enhance mutual trust amongst the members and to establish a foundation for further maritime cooperation.

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