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BACKGROUND PAPER

Topic: Addressing Islamic State Attacks and Recruitment in Southeast Asia

United Nations Security Council

Denisse Garcia, Valentin Arzola



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Committee Background



United Nations Security Council, United Nations (UN) organ whose primary responsibility is the maintenance of international peace and security. The Security Council originally consisted of 11 members—five permanent members (the Republic of China [Taiwan], France, the Soviet Union, the United Kingdom, and the United States) and six nonpermanent members elected by the UN General Assembly for two-year terms. An amendment to the UN Charter in 1965 increased council membership to 15, including the original five permanent members and 10 nonpermanent members. Among the permanent members, the People's Republic of China replaced the Republic of China in 1971, and the Russian Federation succeeded the Soviet Union in 1991. The nonpermanent members are generally chosen to achieve equitable representation among geographic regions, with five members coming from Africa or Asia, one from eastern Europe, two from Latin America, and two from western Europe or other areas. Five of the 10 nonpermanent members are elected each year by the General Assembly for two-year terms, and five retire each year. The presidency is held by each member in rotation for a period of one month.

Each member has one vote. On all “procedural” matters—the definition of which is sometimes in dispute—decisions by the council are made by an affirmative vote of any nine of its members. Substantive matters, such as the investigation of a dispute or the application of sanctions, also require nine affirmative votes, including those of the five permanent members holding veto power. In practice, however, a permanent member may abstain without impairing the validity of the decision.

The composition of the Security Council has been a contentious matter, particularly since the end of the Cold War. Critics have argued that the Security Council and its five permanent members reflect the power structure that existed at the end of World War II, when much of the world was under colonial rule. Reform efforts have remained elusive but have centred on efforts to make the work of the Security Council more transparent and on demands by important non-permanent members, such as Brazil, Germany, India, and Japan (the so-called G-4), to obtain permanent membership—or at least have special status within the Security Council. One proposal put forward by the G-4 countries was to increase the membership of the Security Council to 25 seats by adding six new permanent members, including one each for themselves and two for Africa.

Introduction of the Topic



Following the defeat of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, U.S. attention turned to radical Islamist groups in Southeast Asia, particularly those in the Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore that are known or alleged to have ties to the Al Qaeda terrorist network. For more than a decade, Al Qaeda has penetrated the region by establishing local cells, training Southeast Asians in its camps in Afghanistan, and by financing and cooperating with indigenous radical Islamist groups. Indonesia and the southern Philippines have been particularly vulnerable to penetration by anti- American Islamic terrorist groups.

Members of one indigenous Al Qaeda affiliate, Jemaah Islamiyah, is known to have assisted two of Al Qaeda's September 11, 2001 hijackers and have confessed to plotting and carrying out attacks against Western targets, including the October 12, 2002 bombing in Bali, Indonesia that killed approximately 200 people, mostly Western tourists. The Bali attack signalled a shift in Jemaah Islamiyah's tactics, from targeting Western military and government installations to focusing on "softer" targets such as tourist resorts, Western business, and schools serving Westerners. The August 2003 bombing of the J.W. Marriott Hotel in Jakarta, thought to be carried out by Jemaah Islamiyah, appears to fit this pattern. Arrests in Thailand and Cambodia in the spring and summer of 2003 may indicate that the network has established and/or stepped up operations in those countries, as well as Laos and Burma.

To combat the threat, the Bush Administration has pressed countries in the region to arrest suspected terrorist individuals and organizations, deployed over 1,000 troops to the southern Philippines to advise the Philippine military in their fight against the violent Abu Sayyaf Group, increased intelligence sharing operations, restarted military-military relations with Indonesia (including restoring International Military Education and Training [IMET]), pledged hundreds of millions in aid to Indonesia and the Philippines, and has signed a multilateral counterterrorism agreement with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). The responses of countries in the region to both the threat and to the U.S. reaction generally have varied with the intensity of their concerns about the threat to their own stability and domestic politics. In general, Singapore, Malaysia, and the Philippines were quick to crack down on militant groups and share intelligence with the United States and Australia, whereas Indonesia and Thailand began to do so only after attacks or arrests revealed the severity of the threat to their citizens. That said, many governments view increased American pressure and military presence in their region with ambivalence because of the political sensitivity of the issue with both mainstream Islamic and secular nationalist groups. Indonesia and Malaysia are majority Muslim states; the Philippines has a sizeable and historically alienated and separatist-minded Muslim minority.

Evolution of the Topic



The governing system is strictly hierarchical. At the top of JI stands the emir. Four councils answer to the emir – the managing, religious and disciplinary councils, and the council that issues fatwas. JI has divided the whole country and Southeast Asia into territorial zones called mantiks. Mantik I is responsible for Singapore and Malaysia; Mantik II is responsible for Indonesia (not including Sulawesi); Mantik III is active in the Philippines, eastern Malaysia, Sulawesi and in the eastern part of Kalimantan Island; and Mantik IV is responsible for Australia. There is a division of powers between them, with Mantiks I and IV dealing with financial matters, Mantik III indoctrinating and training fighters and Mantik II carrying out the actual terrorist acts. Each mantik has several underground terrorist cells of four to five people forming a hierarchical structure. The cells are usually led by the disciples of the JI founders or Afghan war veterans who fought on the side of the mujahidin. The second level are field commanders and the lowest level are the fighters who are sometimes recruited to carry out one-off terrorist attacks. These are usually young men trained at Islamic schools linked to Dar al-Islam.

Indonesian radicals from JI have links with international terrorist organizations (such as al-Qaeda) as well as with regional organizations such as Abu Sayyaf, the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, Misuari Renegade Group (MRG/MBG) and the Philippines Rajah Sulayman (RSM) movement. These links are not formal or organized and are based on personal relationships struck up during spells in Afghanistan, at training camps in Pakistan, on Mindanao, etc. What they share with JI is the main goal of creating an Islamic state in Southeast Asia as part of the single worldwide Islamic Caliphate. In spite of the international actions to freeze the assets of terrorist organizations, JI is still capable of supporting its activities financially thanks to the money coming from various Islamic funds in the Middle East and individual donors such as Ali Khelaiv Abdudah and Muhammad Jibril, contributions made by its supporters and members, as well as money allocated by al-Qaeda, which has set up its "investment" base in the region. Without the support of this international terrorist structure, JI would have ceased to exist. Because of the difficulties that have arisen in recent years in drawing support from international sources, JI has been enlisting criminal sources to finance its cells.

Evolution of the Topic



Cooperation between the United Nations and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) is vital to maintaining international peace and security and combating global menaces such as climate change and the spread of terrorism, the heads of the two organizations told the Security Council today, as some delegates described the regional bloc's consensus-building approach, known as the ASEAN Way, as an example to follow. "At this time of increasingly complex challenges for global peace and security, cooperative and inclusive multilateral efforts, including strong partnerships between the United Nations and regional organizations, are essential," said United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres in his briefing to the 15-member organ. He noted that, since its formation in 1967, ASEAN has been involved in many regional initiatives in quiet diplomacy, conflict-prevention and peacebuilding in conflict situations.

ASEAN's engagement with the United Nations on the situation in Myanmar's Rakhine State is crucial in helping to advance concrete steps in line with humanitarian principles and the recommendations of the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State, he said. Welcoming the constructive dialogue between ASEAN and China to maintain regional peace and maritime security, he said he looks forward to the conclusion of a code of conduct in the South China Sea to help prevent maritime and territorial disputes. Going forward, ASEAN and the United Nations could jointly explore developing early warning arrangements and threat analysis, including for wellunderstood threats stemming from inequality and exclusion, as well as emerging threats in areas such as hate speech and cybersecurity, he said.

As 4 ASEAN member States rank among the 10 countries in the world most affected by climate change, it is also important for the two entities to strengthen ties and take urgent action. Also addressing the Council was Dato Lim Jock Hoi, ASEAN Secretary-General, who said that SouthEast Asia was able to evolve away from being described as "the Balkans of the region" to a community that provides opportunities for all despite diverse political, economic and social systems. This transformation was achieved through the ASEAN Way, by which member States have committed to peaceful relationships with each other, guided by mutual respect, non-interference and peaceful dispute settlement. ASEAN has incorporated external Powers into its established rules, notably through accession to the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation, enabling the bloc to reap the peace dividend, he said. With a combined gross domestic product (GDP) of \$3 trillion, it accounts for 3.5 per cent of the global economy in nominal terms. With almost 650 million people – half of them under age 35 – and a rapidly growing middle class, it is an attractive market.

External Actions



A complementarities road map (2020-2025) was adopted in 2019 to promote synergies between the ASEAN Community Vision 2025 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, he said, also citing humanitarian assistance, prevention and control of infectious diseases and counter-terrorism efforts as among the areas where ASEAN and the United Nations have pursued cooperation.

The bloc has also contributed some 5,000 troops to date to United Nations peacekeeping missions. In the ensuing debate, the two Council members from South-East Asia presented their views, with Indonesia's delegate observing that the ASEAN Way ended distrust and set off a remarkable cycle of peace and prosperity. ASEAN can address emerging nontraditional security challenges by countering terrorism and violent extremism, cybercrimes and illicit drug trafficking.

For its part, Indonesia is working towards establishing a South-East Asian network of women peace negotiators and mediators. "These are just snippets of ASEAN's role in maintaining peace and security. It is no coincidence that, for the past 53 years, guns have fallen silent in South-East Asia," he said. The representative Viet Nam, Council President for January and Chair of ASEAN in 2020, speaking in his national capacity, said that the regional bloc's long experiences in shaping norms should be shared to inspire and reinforce peaceful and friendly relations in various corners of the world. "Successful stories of ASEAN could complement efforts of the United Nations in the maintenance of international peace and security," he said, calling for Council support to enhance ASEAN members' participation in peacekeeping operations.

Several speakers, expressing concern about the plight of the Rohingya, urged the Government of Myanmar to create the conditions for their safe, voluntary and dignified return, provide justice to victims and hold the perpetrators of rights violations to account. They also encouraged ASEAN and China to form a code of conduct to manage South China Sea maritime and territorial disputes, with the United States' representative asserting that China's provocative behaviour raises serious doubts about its intentions to agree to an effective code. China's delegate said that his country has always supported navigational and oversight freedom and it is worrying that the United States, under such a pretext, sent military ships to the Sea – a provocative act that represents the biggest security risk in the area. While China is a firm defender of regional peace, the United States has hundreds of military bases around the world and has deployed hundreds of thousands of military forces outside its territory. The Russian Federation's delegate said that using today's meeting to propose a vision for regional dispute resolution based on narrow national interests is unacceptable, particularly by States located many thousands of miles away.

There is likewise no value in raising the Rohingya issue, which should be resolved bilaterally, he added.

Committee Focus



Cooperation between the United Nations (UN) and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) is crucial for maintaining international peace and security, as well as addressing global challenges like climate change and terrorism. Here are the key points to be addressed by this committee:



Strengthening Partnerships:

The UN and ASEAN must collaborate closely to enhance multilateral efforts.

Strong partnerships between the two organizations are essential in an era of complex global challenges.



Myanmar's Rakhine State:

ASEAN's engagement with the UN regarding the situation in Myanmar's Rakhine State is vital.

Concrete steps aligned with humanitarian principles and recommendations from the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State need to be advanced.



Regional Peace and Maritime Security:

Constructive dialogue between ASEAN and China is crucial for maintaining regional peace and maritime security.

The conclusion of a code of conduct in the South China Sea would help prevent maritime and territorial disputes.

Conclusion

In conclusion, dealing with the Islamic State's attacks and recruitment in Southeast Asia needs urgent attention and actions from the Security Council.

As the document mentions, the region is facing significant security issues, and tackling the threat from extremist activities requires collaborative and focused assistance. We urge delegates to prioritize sharing information and efficient partnerships to aid regional cooperation.

The importance of addressing the root causes like socio-economic differences, religious intolerance, and political instability cannot be underestimated. Encouraging educational initiatives and promoting community resilience and dialogue are crucial to reduce the appeal of extremist ideologies. As the Security Council gathers to discuss this issue, it's vital to emphasize a comprehensive strategy that combines diplomatic, economic, and social aspects. Success in countering the influence of the Islamic State in Southeast Asia depends on a united front, resilient policies, and sustained commitment.

Delegates are encouraged to actively participate in constructive dialogues during the upcoming Security Council sessions to address the complexity of the Islamic State's attacks and recruitment in Southeast Asia. Collective security and regional stability rely on the council's ability to overcome differences and adopt effective strategies.

The represented international community must show unwavering determination in facing the terrorist challenges in the region. Intelligence cooperation, preventive measures, and addressing underlying causes are crucial and require joint action from all member states. Emphasizing a balanced approach that combines security strategies with addressing socio-economic and political roots fostering radicalization is crucial.



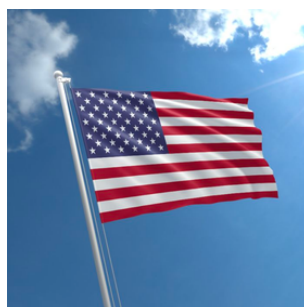
Participation List



United Kingdom



France



United States Of America



India



Pakistan



Nepal



China



Sri Lanka



Uzbekistan



Iran



Bangladesh



Bhutan

Participation List



Mongolia



Turkey



Syria



Russia



Thailand



Iraq



Israel



Jordan

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