

ASEAN: The Hotbed of Potential War? What are the Interventions Needed?

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Introduction

Throughout the month of September, SEAN-CSO focused on the topic of “ASEAN: The Hotbed of Potential War? What are the Interventions Needed?”. Although we know that ASEAN has a lot of potential starting from its economics, politics, and even socio-cultural sector, but ASEAN als has a lot of challenges and conflicts in its region. But, is it really a hotbed? How do we face these conflicts? This month we invited some experts to examine the situation in Southeast Asia in our webinar and in an interview.



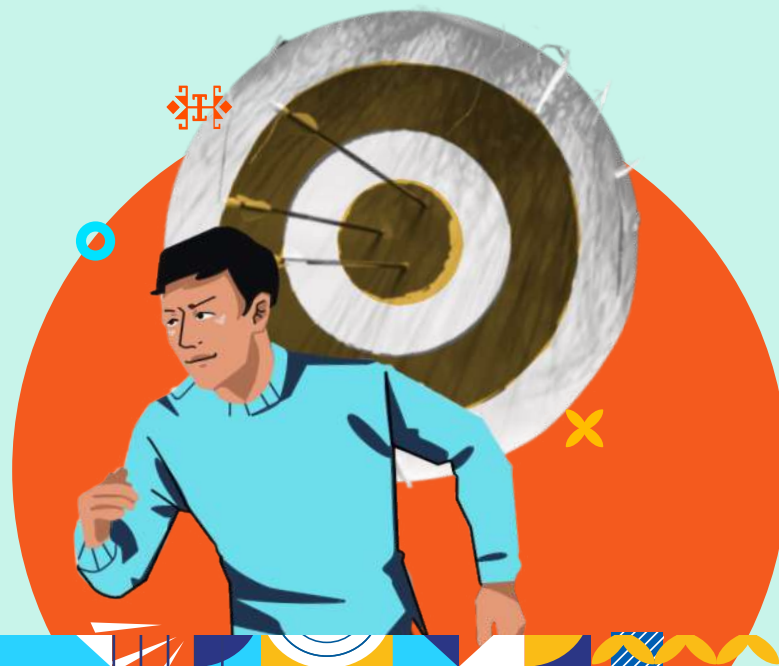
ASEAN: Potentials and Challenges

Southeast Asia is synonymous with ASEAN, an organization where nations of the region work together. There is potential for the nations to collaborate in economic and political sectors. Starting from economics, ASEAN has the Economic Community (AEC) and the new Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), the biggest trade bloc in the world. They account for almost 30% of the world's GDP.

Next up, in the political and security sector, would be digital youth activism. This is part of the non-violent resistance that is resistance targeting the opponent's sources of power, which include financial resources, legal legitimacy, citizen compliance, and so on (Sharp, 1973 in IIS, 2019). For example, the 2021 non-violent civil disobedience movements in Myanmar are powered by social media campaigns, demonstrations with symbols, and costumes from popular culture. A study by Maria Stephan and Erica Chenoweth (2008, 2011) in Kusumaningrum (2019) shows that the effectiveness rate of non-violent action is 53%, while resistance with violence is only 26% successful. With these digital resources and non-violent approaches available, there is a great potential for more ASEAN citizens' voices to be heard. It also means that critical issues can be raised and explored quickly without involving a high risk of violence.

Even with ASEAN's potential, they have met a lot of challenges. Tourism is a significant driver of the economic sector's accommodation, food services, wholesale, and retail trade, which heavily impacts Southeast Asian countries. This is evident with Cambodia, Thailand, Indonesia, Myanmar, and the Philippines recording an average 79.4% international arrivals decline in 2020 (ADB, 2022). The educational disparity between rural and urban areas is still high in the socio-cultural sector. The disparity also influences the issue of rapid urbanization as people from rural areas choose to migrate, searching for better living conditions. ASEAN countries also struggle to distribute wealth and development outside rural areas (Sheng & Thuzar, 2012).

In the political and security sector, the closest issue needed to be addressed by ASEAN is their one voice and centrality over the South China Sea and internal politics, such as the Myanmar situation. Because of the structure of ASEAN, no policy or agreement can be made without a consensus. Thus, if one member state goes



in a different political direction, it would impact ASEAN's collective work and ASEAN would eventually be unable to make decisions. In the case of the South China Sea and Myanmar, every member has a different opinion. Furthermore, delicate security

matters of the region still face difficulties due to complex and hierarchical bureaucracy. Therefore, it is interesting to observe how the ASEAN consensus will significantly impact the sector. The sustainability of security is essential to note in this group.

In Touch with Ahmad Afryan (ASEAN Youth Organization): ASEAN As An Opportunity for the Youth, Peace, and Security (YPS) Agenda

This October, SEAN-CSO had a chance to interview Ahmad Afryan, program director for ASEAN Youth Organization (AYO), a non-governmental organization founded in 2013 focusing on youth empowerment. AYO also participated in the ASEAN Work Plan for Youth, formulating the Youth Development Index in three specific areas of interest: youth opportunities, engagement and participation, health and well-being. Currently, they have 250 active members and 50.000 volunteers, spread over 15 chapters in SEA and five chapters outside the region. In this interview, we discussed the dynamics of peace in Southeast Asia from the perspective of the youth. It is important to note that Afryan's views only represent himself and AYO, and are not related to any ASEAN bodies.

Afryan viewed ASEAN as an opportunity. He argued that within the diversity of cultures, ethnicity and languages and even religions, ASEAN has enough resources to create various initiatives that make ASEAN unique.

Afryan also wants to remind the audience that the association's purpose is to maintain peace and stability in the region. Nevertheless, the people's awareness of the organization must be improved in order to collaborate and maximize their potential. Looking deeper into the subject of PCVE, Afryan believes that, in theory, peace is not just negative peace, but that it includes social development issues that are a challenge for ASEAN. He also highlighted human rights violations as a challenge for ASEAN. "Each member state has its differences in terms of sensitivities that could be the potential to create conflicts or maybe social disharmony." This is a potential for ASEAN youth to take a role in the peace and security agenda, for



which Afryan believes they are an essential part of the plan. “1/3 of the ASEAN population is youth, which in ASEAN is the age bracket between 15-35 (years old). They have great potential in their creativity and ability to adapt to this uncertainty,” he explains. Because the youth can become both victims and perpetrators, ASEAN bodies and member states must have them as strategic partners under the Youth, Peace, and Security (YPS) Agenda. He shared one of the strategies employed by the Philippines through their National Action Plan on the YPS Agenda, which was the first one in the region. In addition, he believes that a youth network that takes advantage of digital technology is

essential to mainstream the YPS agenda.

“Peace starts from within,” he believes. By equipping ourselves with information and inspiration from others in the region, people can gradually build better networks and cooperation. Furthermore, by being aware of what ASEAN can do, such as seed funding, internships, or other similar opportunities, youth can take part in maintaining peace and stability in the region. “Let’s use the momentum of the Youth, Peace, and Security agenda.” Afryan closes the interview with the final message: “Let’s collaborate with ASEAN Youth Organization to create more impact on the ASEAN youth across the region.”



Webinar Highlights

3 Ways to Utilize Creative Content to Deradicalise and Disengage VE

Is it true that ASEAN is the hotbed for potential war or conflict? On Wednesday, September 7th, 2022, we discussed the possibilities of potential conflict happening in ASEAN and the intervention needed. We invited our notable speakers: Greg Barton (Deakin University, Australia), Marcin Damek (Nanjing University, China). Unfortunately, Wai Wai Nu (Women Peace Network) couldn’t make it to the webinar. However, Don Pathan (The Asia Foundation, Thailand) also shared his insightful perspectives alongside Greg and Marcin in this webinar.

These are the conflicts happening in ASEAN recently:

1. The Myanmar Coup

In February 2021, Myanmar had to go through a coup d’état by the military (Tatmataw), against the ruling party, the National League for Democracy (NLD). The coup descended into chaos and became the international spotlight right away. Greg even said that this situation has sped up into civil war. “What’s happening in Myanmar is a human tragedy. We shouldn’t ignore that,” said Greg. This situation questioned one of ASEAN’s principles, non-interference. Thailand, according to Don, doesn’t have the luxury to speak frankly about what’s happening in Myanmar. This is because Thailand and Myanmar share a close border and back-door channels such as military to military or even people to people.

2. South China Sea Controversy

The controversy started as China claimed sovereignty of the South China Sea with the “nine-dash line.” This decision threatened five Southeast Asian countries (Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Vietnam) and Taiwan. Marcin said that this controversy started right after World War II, and the case dispute became more significant over time. Ultimately, China violated its sovereignty over the Philippines by interfering with their fishing and petroleum exploration area. The Philippines then brought this case to court in 2016 and won the case. From Marcin’s perspective, this decision touched on the concept of national integrity, which for China, it is essential.

3. Southern Thailand Conflict

When talking about Southern Thailand’s peace process, Don mentioned that Southeast Asia has a lot of proxies, such as proxy war buffer zones. Malaysia became the facilitator in the Southern Thailand conflict, but it received critics saying that Malaysia isn’t an honest broker because of its proximity. According to Don, Southeast Asia, textbook-wise, thinks that it’s important to have a mediator as involved as possible during the peace process. By the textbook, it is more important for ASEAN to have a mediator than to be more practical and It can be concluded that there are potential conflicts within ASEAN, and there is no guarantee that ASEAN will be free from conflict. However, ASEAN as an organization and a regional cooperation has its way of achieving peace within its region.

SEAN-CSO Workshop 2022

After two years of pandemic, SEAN-CSO was finally able to organize a face-to-face workshop again, this time in The Philippines. The event was held from 14-16 September in Manila and 19-20 September 2022 in Cebu City.

In Manila, a wide range of SEAN-CSO members were invited to the meeting, including representatives of key civil society organisations and researchers from Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, Philippines and Australia. There were several panel discussions, in which we shared experiences, developed knowledge, evaluated initiatives, and explored potential collaborations among CSOs. We also introduced the new website for the very first time in front of the members. The new website enables members to create their own profile, submit their own research, events, and articles regarding P/CVE works in their area of expertise. This was done to



create a single platform that could accommodate the CSO's needs in promoting their own contents and works. Lastly, we did group activities using Padlet and Mentimeter, which helped us to formulate the next 5-year strategy of SEAN-CSO.

Meanwhile, in Cebu, we gathered with local organisations in Mindanao and the Philippines to share their experiences working in the P/CVE field. As known, there are severe and continuous threats of violent extremism in Mindanao. SEAN-CSO facilitated the forum to find out the needs of

CSOs working in the P/CVE field and assessed the risks of violent extremism in Mindanao. In the end, it was a fruitful discussion and we were eager to explore any further cooperation as well.

Through these workshops, SEAN-CSO recognized the importance of networking and was willing to expand this network bigger and better. Interested to join the SEAN-CSO network? Stay tuned on our social media and website for further information.



Member Highlights

Al Qalam Institute for Islamic Identities and Dialogue in Southeast Asia of Ateneo de Davao University

The Philippines

Established in 2011, the Al Qalam Institute for Islamic Identities and Dialogue in Southeast Asia is a resource and research center of the Ateneo de Davao University that works in the ways of FIRE: Formation, Instruction, Research and Engagement in achieving its vision of understanding Islam, the Muslims and peoples of Mindanao that are culturally linked to other Southeast Asian communities, and becoming an organization that actively contributes toward fortification of spirituality thereby strengthening a sense of belongingness to a bigger humanity and cocreating and nurturing a society founded

on social justice, gender equity, multiculturalism, religious pluralism and sustainable peace and human development.

It has five goals: First, it creates platforms for intrafaith and interfaith dialogue. Second, it helps articulate and present issues and concerns of Muslim communities through multisectoral caucus and consensus building. Third, this institute tries to engage



with government structure, mechanisms, and laws to achieve inter-civilizational dialogue and peacebuilding. Fourth, it facilitates research studies and academic endeavours regarding Islamic knowledge production, preservation, and promotion. Lastly, it links with local and international partners to facilitate educational and cultural exchanges.

IMAN Research

Malaysia

IMAN Research works on security and peacebuilding, after originally working on PCVE. The work they do is in alignment with their three pillars: society, beliefs and perception.

This organization has been spearheaded by researchers with experience in areas such as P/CVE, ethnic-religious issues, social policy, and community resilience for more than 20

years. IMAN was the strategic partner and advisor for the national symposium on violent extremism in 2019. This event was hosted by the Minister of Education of Malaysia and funded by UNESCO. As for now, IMAN, alongside PeaceGeneration, has been conducting the monthly webinars for SEAN-CSO. Please do visit our website www.imanresearch.com for more information.



Are you the one that SEAN-CSO are looking for?

If you are an academic, NGO officer, or Human rights activist that has knowledge and/or experience in the field of secondary and tertiary interventions, and would love to spread positive messages to prevent and oppose violent extremism in Southeast Asia through creative ideas, then, you are eligible to apply to our new program SEAN-CSO Content Contributors.

Not only can you spread positive messages, but you can also have this additional benefit:

- Incentive up to USD\$150.
- The article will be published on the SEAN-CSO website, social media, and newsletter.
- Special merchandise from SEAN-CSO.

To read more of the requirements, you can click this post on our linkinbio. We provide the link for our guidelines and application, or you can simply visit our website at:

bit.ly/SEAN-CSOContentContributorINFO



Final Webinar

National Action Plans: A Whole of Society Approach or Solely Government Effort

Wednesday, October 26th 2022



Event Time:

03:00 PM Jakarta Time

04:00 PM Kuala Lumpur Time

07:00 PM Melbourne Time

Speakers:

Mimi Fabe (National Police College, Philippines)

Badrul Hisham Ismail (IMAN Research, Malaysia)

Shashi Jayakumar (RSIS, Singapore)

Moderator:

Aizat Shamsuddin (KMU, Malaysia)

Register at :

bit.ly/NationalActionPlans

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Funding Opportunities

Youth Interfaith Leaders Fellowship
on Climate Change

► <https://bit.ly/SEANCSO-YouthInterfaith>

Niwano Peace Foundation Grant

► <https://bit.ly/SEANCSO-NPF>

United Nations Trust Fund

► <https://bit.ly/SEANCSO-UNTF>

Direct Aid Program

► <https://bit.ly/SEANCSO-BaliDAP>

Synergy in Harmony

Walk together for a better world



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Would you like to be featured in the next SEAN-CSO Newsletter or in our upcoming social media campaign?

If you have stories, research, or programs focused on Preventing or Countering Violent Extremism, contact us at:

sean-cso@peacegen.id

