General Assembly 4 – Special Political and Colonisation

Combating Terrorism in Southeast Asia

Forum: GA4

Issue: Combating Terrorism in Southeast Asia

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Introduction

Southeast Asia is a subregion of Asia geographically located north of Australia, south of China, east of India and west of Papua New Guinea. It consists of two parts, the mainland and maritime, and is comprised of 11 countries: Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar (Burma), Philippines, Singapore, Timor-Leste, Thailand, and Vietnam. Bordered by the Indian Ocean on the west and the Pacific Ocean on the east, it is characterised by heavy seismic and volcanic activities due to its presence on the intersection of geological plates. It has a current population of around 663,241,040, which is equivalent to 8.59% of the total world population. ("Southeastern-Asia Population (LIVE)")

Characterised as an 'emerging terrorist hotspot' by the 2018 Global Terrorism Index,

Southeast Asia has experienced a 'second wave' of Islamist terrorism in several countries over the last five years. While the first wave of terrorism occurred between 2002-2008, with 575 overall deaths from the Philippines' Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) and Indonesia's Jemaah Islamiya (JI), the second wave has come from ISIL-affiliated groups and separatist movements in Indonesia,

Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines and Thailand, causing 292 deaths in 2017 alone. ("Global Terrorism Index 2018") As a result, the region recorded a 36 per cent increase in deaths due to terrorism from 2016 to 2017 as a whole. The spread of ISIL-affiliated groups and the increase in alliances and ties between militant groups is also a major cause of concern as it "facilitates the exchange of talent, skills and material resources", which in turn increases the effectiveness and frequency of terrorist acts. (Mokhtar)

Definition of Key Terms

Terrorism/Terrorist Act



In accordance with the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1566 (2004), terrorist acts are described as:

"criminal acts, including against civilians, committed with the intent to cause death or serious bodily injury, or taking of hostages, with the purpose to provoke a state of terror in the general public or in a group of persons or particular persons, intimidate a population or compel a government or an international organization to do or to abstain from doing any act, which constitute offences within the scope of and as defined in the international conventions and protocols relating to terrorism, are under no circumstances justifiable by considerations of a political, philosophical, ideological, racial, ethnic, religious or other similar nature." (See Appendix A)

Note: there is no universal agreement on the definition of the term 'terrorism'. This definition is simply to be used as a guide or suggestion.

Southeast Asia

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Violent Non-State Actors

Violent Non-State Actors (VNSA), also known as non-state armed actors or non-state armed groups, are individuals or groups wholly or partly independent of state governments which threaten to use force and violence to achieve their goals. Examples of these include terrorist groups, liberation movements (insurgencies), criminal organisations, and militias.

Extremism

Extremism is the advocacy of extreme political, social or religious beliefs and views. Often, these beliefs and views can conflict with democratic norms and values, such as freedom of speech or basic human rights, and encourage the rejection of tolerance and diversity. There are many different cases of extremism and extremist groups, but Islamist terrorist organisations (ISIL, Al-Qaeda), many of which are operating in Southeast Asia, are examples of extremist groups.

Fundamentalism



A form of a religion, especially Islam or Protestant Christianity, that upholds belief in the strict, literal interpretation of scripture and the firm adherence to a set of principles or ideals. ("Definition: fundamentalism") Fundamentalism is an example of an extremist movement, and it is important to remember that fundamentalist Islam or Christianty is not representative of the Islamic or Christian religion as a whole, rather it is an extreme interpretation of it. Fundamentalism also does not necessarily incite violence but its ideology is often used as an excuse to use force or violence, such as in fundamentalist terrorist groups. In Southeast Asia, the most common form of terrorist groups are fundamentalist Islamist organisations such as ISIL or Jemaah Islahmiyah.

Separatism

Separatism is the advocacy of the separation of a particular group of people from a larger body on the basis of ethnicity, religion, or gender. ("Separatist") An individual, group or movement that adopts this is called (a) separatist. Separatist groups are different from fundamentalist or extremist groups in that their goal is to separate from a larger body (usually the current government) and not promote a certain ideology or belief; however their methods may also include terrorism, and in some cases, they may ally with other extremist militant or terrorist organisations.

Radicalisation/De-radicalisation

Radicalisation is the process through which an individual comes to adopt radical political, social, or religious ideas and beliefs. (Schmid) There is a difference between *violent* and *non-violent* radicalisation; someone who is firm in their own beliefs can sometimes adopt a position that, while radical, is not opposed to democratic norms and values. ("Definition: Radicalization") *Non-violent* radicalisation can be extremely beneficial in some cases as it stimulates progress in democratic societies, such as with Martin Luther King and Gandhi, who challenged established beliefs via a radical critique of certain aspects of the social system. *Violent* radicalisation causes people to adopt extremist belief systems with the willingness to use, encourage or facilitate violence in order to further a particular cause, ideology or worldview, which is why it is generally negative. ("Definition: Radicalization") It is also the main cause of terrorism, being the process by which many terrorist organisations recruit new members. By contrast, de-radicalisation, the process of causing someone to adopt more moderate beliefs, is a solution to terrorism as it aims to counter terrorism at its roots.

General Overview



Terrorism has long been considered the ultimate threat to international peace and security. Targeting innocent individuals to incite fear into the governments and population of countries, terrorist organisations can be either widespread networks across the world, or small militant groups confined to a region. Based on the 2018 Global Terrorism Index, the total number of deaths due to terrorism has been decreasing around the world since 2014, while the distribution of these attacks has in turn been increasing. In 2001, 50 countries experienced at least one death from terrorism, and this number dropped to 39 in 2004. However, since then 60 countries have experienced at least one fatal attack in every year since 2012, the trend peaking in 2016 with 79 countries. ("Global Terrorism Index 2018") And not only measuring its impact on the population, the estimated economic impact of terrorism in 2017 was US\$52 billion, although analysts suggest the true impact is likely to be much higher. ("Global Terrorism Index 2018")

In Southeast Asia, characterised as an emerging terrorist hotspot by the 2018 Global Terrorism Index, the region is experiencing a second wave of Islamist terrorism in several countries. With the Philippines ranked 10th in the scale of countries most affected by terrorism in 2017, and both the Philippines and Myanmar recording the highest number of deaths from terrorism in 2017 since 2002, the threat of terrorism in the region is likely to keep increasing. ("Global Terrorism Index 2018") The presence of several fundamentalist Islamist terrorist groups, some directly linked to larger organisations such as ISIL or Al-Qaeda, have already caused major incidents with 292 deaths across 348 incidents recorded in 2017 alone. While the first wave of Islamist terrorism occurred between the years 2002-2008 with the Philippines' Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) responsible for 301 deaths and Indonesia's Jemaah Islamiya (JI) responsible for 274 deaths, the second wave first hit in the year 2015, coming from ISIL-affiliated groups and separatist movements in Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, and Thailand. (see Appendix B)

Analysts warn that ISIL and other Islamist terrorist organisations are setting up a 'second front' in the Southeastern region, due to several beneficial factors: borders are poor and easy to travel through, many countries are ruled by weak central governments, and recruitment is facilitated by discontent among the smaller Muslim population. (Mokhtar) Even while enforcement and security measures have been strengthened, and many terrorist networks weakened or destroyed, Islamist militant groups continue to use online propaganda to not only conduct recruitment in the region but encourage foreign fighters to travel to outposts in the region. Ordinary civilians around Southeast Asia, namely in the Philippines and Indonesia, are also encouraged to join the 'jihad', or armed struggle, against the West by committing attacks in their homeland, often done with common household objects such as knives, vehicles or home-made explosives. (Mokhtar) Reports show that propaganda is not only done online or through social media, but also in prisons, where arrested



members of terrorist groups are left in overcrowded cells, and can further spread their ideology. Another threat remains the potential for alliances between networks and organisations, as can be seen with several terrorist groups in Southeast Asia having formally pledged their allegiance to ISIL in 2016. ("Global Terrorism Index 2018") This not only increases their credibility, but also enables them to receive supplies, training and even coordinate attacks. This can be seen with the siege of the city of Marawi in May 2017, where militant groups, aided by ISIL, banded together and took control of the city; they were only pushed out five months later by the Filipino army. This demonstrates the widespread reach of ISIL and similar organisations in the region.

Following the 2001 World Trade Center attacks, the United States has sought to help reduce terrorism in Southeast Asia by promoting collaboration between countries, sharing intelligence, forces and facilities. ("Terrorism in Southeast Asia") In the Philippines, they have also conducted several civic action projects to turn the local populace against terrorist groups. While these efforts have been successful in apprehending known-terrorist members and reducing the overall impact of terrorism, the root-problem of the region still remains.

Major Parties Involved

Indonesia

Indonesia has suffered the worst of terrorist attacks in the region. Frequent terrorist-linked bombings and attacks have occurred in the last five years during the second wave of Islamist terrorism in the region, enacted by radicalised individuals linked to ISIL or Jemaah Islahmiyah. Since the disastrous Bali bombings in 2002, responsible for the highest record of deaths (202) the country has increased arrests, trials and investigations, most notably the arrest and trials of several perpetrators of the Bali bombings as well as top leaders from the JI organisation. Recently, after the 2009 July bombings in Jakarta, the government has also sought to introduce tougher anti-terror measures, including stronger laws that would lengthen detentions for suspects. ("Terrorism in Southeast Asia")

However, these improvements have not stopped all terrorism; Indonesia's attractiveness to Islamist terrorist groups appears to derive primarily from weak central government control and social instability from its overwhelmingly Muslim population. And although the majority of Muslim Indonesians follow a moderate form of Islam, fundamentalist Islamic theology is growing in



popularity in Indonesia, as extremist groups take advantage of the country's internal problems. ("Terrorism in Southeast Asia")

Philippines

The Philippines have also suffered from numerous deadly terrorist attacks, and recently (May 2017), the five-month long siege of Marawi city, seized by ISIL-linked militant groups. This was caused by Muslim discontent in the region of Lanao del Sur, who declared the city a caliphate of ISIL. This growing discontent in the Muslim population is not uncommon in the widely Christian country, and makes individuals prone to radicalisation and recruitment from terrorist organisations. The Philippines are also threatened by their own fundamentalist Islamist terrorist group, Abu Sayyaf, which operates in the western fringes of the big island of Mindanao and on the Sulu islands, and is linked to many killings and kidnappings. ("Terrorism in Southeast Asia")

Following the worst attack on record in 2004, when the *SuperFerry* exploded in Manila Bay, causing 116 deaths, the country has made effort to fight against terrorism, with the help of the United States. Indeed, the American-Filipino cooperation is an example of the USA's greatest counterterrorism efforts in Southeast Asia, as they have committed troops for certain operations (in 2005, the United States committed about 450 troops to support two AFP (Armed Forces of the Philippines) operations), as well as the provision of intelligence, communications and training; they have also conducted several civic action projects to improve the lives of the local populace, turning them against groups such as Abu Sayyaf. ("Terrorism in Southeast Asia")

Thailand

Thailand suffers from terrorism linked to insurgent groups in its southern provinces. These groups are for the most part separatists in the majority-Muslim provinces to the south, which include Yala, Narathiwat, Pattani, and to a lesser extent Songhkla. In 2009, it was estimated that around 3,400 deaths were attributed to conflict between separatist groups and security forces, and since 2011 these insurgents have been responsible for 189 terror-related deaths. ("Global Terrorism Index 2018") However, while similar to jihadist fundamentalist groups, these groups are different in the sense that their goal is to achieve independence from the government, which stems from the long-maintained belief of mistreatment on the part of the largely Thai-Buddhist population compared to that of the smaller Malay-Muslim population. Therefore there is less of a risk for them to forge



alliances with ISIL or other jihadist organisations, and some Pattani-Malay commanders even see affiliating with them as detrimental for their goals of political autonomy.

Thailand, similar to other Southeast Asian countries, has also received help from the United States to combat terrorism. This mainly includes the daily exchange of facilities and information in one of the closest bilateral intelligence relations in the region, however Thailand also reportedly provided a black site where U.S. CIA officials were allowed to secretly hold suspected terrorists (2006). ("Terrorism in Southeast Asia") While international help is useful, the real problematic is still the instability of the capital and government, that have not yet been capable of elaborating a coherent strategy to effectively deal with the southern insurgency.

United States of America

Following the World Trade Center attacks in 2001, the United States of America made enormous effort in counter-terrorism around the world. Viewing Southeast Asia as an 'emerging terrorist hotspot', especially for jihadist groups such as al-Qaeda and ISIL, they have contributed to combating terrorism in that region in several ways. In the Philippines, they have provided intelligence, communications support and troops to aid the AFP (Armed Forces of the Philippines) in several operations. In the long-term, they have also conducted several civic action projects to improve the lives of the local populace, turning them against fundamentalist groups. ("Terrorism in Southeast Asia") They have the closest bilateral intelligence relations with Thailand, sharing information and facilities daily, and hold a Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty (MLAT) with Malaysia, which allows authorities from each nation to assist each other in criminal proceedings and investigations.

Additionally, they have diminished restrictions for Indonesia in 2005, allowing them to participate in IMET (International Military Education and Training), and restarting a non-lethal Foreign Military Sales. However, many governments view increased American pressure and military presence in their region with hesitancy because of the political sensitivity of the issue. ("Terrorism in Southeast Asia")

ISIL

ISIL (Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant), otherwise known as ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and Syria), is a Salafi jihadist terrorist organisation with a particularly violent ideology, that claims to be a caliphate and possess religious authority over all muslims. ("The Islamic State (Terrorist Organization)") Inspired by al-Qaeda, the organisation responsible for the disastrous September 11 attacks in 2001, it was later publicly expelled from it. However, they soon grew to be a highly organised and dangerous group, responsible for several major terrorist attacks directed against Westerners in Europe,



Australia, United States, Canada and Northern Africa. In 2016, it was estimated that 1,200 deaths outside of Syria and Iraq, where ISIL conducts regular military operations, were caused or inspired by the terrorist organisation. (Yourish)

In Southeast Asia, ISIL is a main problem as many Islamist militant and terrorist groups have formally pledged allegiance to them in 2016, and have thus been receiving financial and material aid from them. In 2017, the siege of Marawi in the Philippines was coordinated and supported by ISIL, enabling ISIL-affiliated militant groups Abu Sayyaf, the Maute group, and Bangsamoro Liberation Front to seize the city and hold it for five months before the Filipino army finally wrestled back control. ("Global Terrorism Index 2018") Recruitment and radicalisation is also one of their many strengths, fueled by their savvy use of technology and social media, and a major concern among the Rohingya populations in Myanmar's Rakhine State and the insurgency of Muslim Malays in Thailand's southern provinces.

Jemaah Islahmiyah (JI)

Uncovered in the weeks after the September 11 attack due to its extensive ties to the Al-Qaeda organisation, Jemaah Islahmiyah is a fundamentalist Islamist terrorist organisation established in Indonesia, discovered to have cells in Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand, as well as in Australia and Pakistan. The origins of the network date back to the 1960s, when its co-founders, clerics Abu Bakar Baasyir and Abdullah Sungkar, began demanding the establishment of *sharia* (Islamic) law in Indonesia. ("Terrorism in Southeast Asia") Since then, the organisation has grown to carry out bombings in Jakarta, Manila, and Thailand during the year of 2000. They are also thought to be responsible for the 2002 Bali bombings, the deadliest attack in Indonesia's history with 202 deaths. Their connection with the Al-Qaeda organisation is shown to have withered to nothing, although there was a period (1997-2002) when there were very close, with overlapping membership, shared training camps, financial support and maybe even attack coordination.

Having reached their peak in the years 2002-2008 with 274 deaths, when the first wave of terrorism crashed into Southeast Asia, JI has since then been weakened by the intervention of several governments in the region. However, analysts warn that they are not to be underestimated, as individual members still remain scattered throughout the region, highly trained and capable of acts of violence. ("Terrorism in Southeast Asia") Additionally, the more moderate factions appear to be refocusing on education and indoctrination, leading the organisation to remain under tight surveillance.



Timeline of Key Events

Date	Description of event
September 28th, 2001 October 12th, 2002	Creation of Counter-Terrorism Committee within UN
	Bali bombings: 202 deaths, 209 injured
August 5th, 2003	Jakarta Mariott Hotel bombing: 12 deaths, 150 injured
February 27th, 2004	SuperFerry 14 bombing (Philippines): bomb planted onboard ship, 116 deaths
September 9th, 2004	Australian Embassy bombing (Jakarta): 9 deaths, 150 injured
May 28th, 2005	Tentena market bombing (Indonesia): 22 deaths, 50 injured
October 1st, 2005	2nd Bali bombings: 25 deaths, 101 injured
July 17 _{st} , 2009	Jakarta hotel bombings: 8 deaths, 50 injured
June 15th, 2017	United Nations establishes the Office of Counter-Terrorism
May 23th, 2017 - October 23rd 2017	Marawi siege: ISIL-backed terrorist organisations seize the city and fight the Philippine government, leading to a five-month long siege with more than 1,000 deaths and 300,000 displaced
27th January 2019	Jolo church bombing in Philippines: 20 deaths, 102 injured

UN involvement, Relevant Resolutions, Treaties and Events

The United Nations have made several attempts to address worldwide terrorism and to some extent terrorism in Southeast Asia; listed below are relevant resolutions:

Creation of Counter-Terrorism Committee (CTC), 28 September 2001 (S/RES/1373)



- Condemnation of the terrorist bombing in Bali, Indonesia, 14 October 2002 (S/RES/1438)
- Threats to international peace and security caused by terrorist acts, 8 October 2004 (S/RES/1566)
- [List of organisations designated as terrorist organisations by the United Nations], 17
 December 2015 (S/RES/2253)

Additionally, the United Nations established the Office of Counter-Terrorism, which was created following the adoption of General Assembly resolution 71/291 on 15 June 2017. The Office has the function of providing leadership on General Assembly counter-terrorism mandates, enhance cooperation throughout the 38 Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact (former CTITF) Task Force entities, facilitate and improve resource mobilisation for UN counter-terrorism efforts, and ensure that counter-terrorism remains a priority across the UN system. ("Office of Counter-Terrorism")

Previous Attempts to solve the Issue

Although not much has been done to combat terrorism in the specific region of Southeast Asia, the United Nations have done much for terrorism worldwide. The creation of the Counter-Terrorism committee has helped focus those efforts, as having a group of specialists focusing on one particular issue, terrorism, means that communication and action is more direct. However, the most effective UN action would be the list of recognised 'terrorist organisations', namely the Taliban, Al-Qaida and its associate ISIL. Adopted through resolution 2253 (2015), the United Nations thus targeted these listed organisations (and associated individuals and entities) through travel and arms embargoes, as well as financial sanctions and asset freezing. ("UN Designated Terrorist Groups") This means that these organisations can be weakened, hindered and declared unlawful in all member states, which limits the reach of Islamist terrorist organisations seeking to recruit or establish outposts in Southeast Asia. However, these general resolutions still do not make a large enough impact in the region specifically.

Outside of the United Nations, there was an association established for Southeast Asian countries, called *The Association of Southeast Asian Nations*, or ASEAN. Established on 8 August 1967 in Bangkok, Thailand, it aims to promote cooperation, peace and stability between the member



nations, as well as their collaboration and mutual assistance. ("About ASEAN") Their efforts in combating terrorism in the region consist of facilitating the exchange of information/intelligence between nations on terrorist networks and their movements, developing regional capacity building programmes to enhance the investigation and detection of terrorist acts, as well as the general discussion and exploration of ideas to expand counter-terrorism. (Pushpanathan) While this is a good foundation for the future vision of the region, it is more complicated in practice.

Several countries within the region have also cooperated with the United States of America, exchanging intelligence and at times collaborating on several operations. While this has helped with the arrest and trial of several known terrorist members, it is not a long-term solution. The civic action projects that the United States have also conducted in the Philippines, to protect the local populace against radicalisation and turn them against regional terrorist groups or online recruitment, seem to be a better solution.

Possible Solutions

One of the main issues of the Southeastern region, and why it is more prone to terrorism, is the flexible borders and lax border controls. These allow local and foreign terrorist members to travel and escape from the authorities through neighbouring countries, while also facilitating ties and collaboration between different terrorist groups. (Mokhtar) Increasing visa requirements, as well as tightening border security, is the first step to limit terrorist movement throughout the region. The second step to consider would be to increase online surveillance and social media information filtering. Often, recruitment and radicalisation is done online or through social media platforms, especially with organisations such as ISIL. Limiting these, or perhaps increasing online surveillance to take down any inappropriate content that might incite to violence, would limit the amount of members inclined to join terrorist organisations. The only difficulty would be doing so while still respecting the right of privacy and freedom of speech; it is a delicate balance.

Furthermore, civic action projects, such as the ones conducted by the USA in the Philippines, help improve the quality of life of the local populace, decreasing their chances of being radicalised and recruited. These projects should be continued and expanded to the rest of the region; workshops or lectures on terrorism and its consequences could also be implemented in schools, to educate the younger generations and deter them from being recruited later on in life. Finally, a last solution to consider would be de-radicalisation centres. First tested in European countries such as France, these centres are solutions for terrorist members that have been arrested, tried and imprisoned. (Willsher)



Instead of leaving them in overcrowded cells where they can further spread their ideology, if they were de-radicalised, then they would be able to reintegrate society; this system could also help locate individuals at risk or in the process of radicalisation, and pull them out before it is too late. While terrorism in Southeast Asia may not be considered the most pressing threat just yet, it is important to continue to monitor the situation, promote cooperation between countries, ASEAN and the United Nations, and start integrating peaceful long-term solutions.

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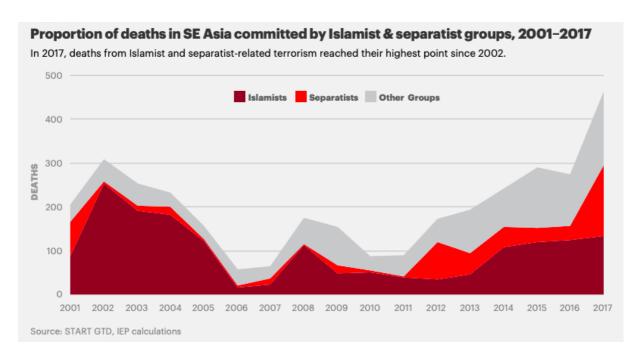
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Appendices

Appendix A

United Nations. Security Council resolution 1566, S/RES/1566 (8 December 2004), available from https://www.undocs.org/en/S/RES/1566(2004).

Appendix B



Source: ("Global Terrorism Index 2018")



