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Multilateral Cooperation and NTS Governance



NTS-Asia
CONSORTIUM OF NON-TRADITIONAL SECURITY STUDIES IN ASIA

THE 4TH NTS-ASIA CONSORTIUM ANNUAL MEETING: "Bringing Back Multilateral Cooperation in NTS Governance" 25-26 March 2019

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Multilateral cooperation has long been a way to strengthen response to trans-boundary issues. Nevertheless, Brexit as well as US retraction from multilateral cooperation in several areas have given rise to questions over the relevance of multilateralism in addressing regional and global challenges, including non-traditional security (NTS) issues like climate change. It is thus worth revisiting why multilateral cooperation remains relevant to addressing the slew of NTS challenges facing Southeast Asia and how regional cooperation can be improved.

Multilateral cooperation is necessary for effective NTS governance in multiple ways. Firstly, NTS issues like migration, transboundary pollution and climate change are often transnational and are difficult for individual countries to limit the impacts within their respective borders. Sharing of information and data among countries concerned is crucial for effective governance of these challenges. For instance, member states of the Association of South-

east Asian Nations (ASEAN) are among those vulnerable to the consequences of climate change and many of them are seriously affected by trans-boundary haze. Governance of both issues requires weather and climate-related data. The ASEAN Specialised Meteorological Centre hosted by Singapore monitors weather and climate conditions as well as hotspots of forest fire by providing satellite images and data analysis. This is of importance for national governments in the region to prepare for and adapt to climate change effects, including extreme weather events.

Secondly, countries face different NTS threats and vary in their strength in dealing with these challenges. Regional cooperation can optimize the allocation of resources and capacity available in the region. Statistics show that Indonesia accounted for over 60 percent of the natural hazards that affected the ASEAN region between 2012 and 2019, while Singapore and Brunei were largely spared from the scourge.

The successive earthquakes and tsunami in the second half of 2018 overstretched Indonesia's disaster response system. After the earthquake in Central Sulawesi on 28 September 2018, the Indonesian government requested for international assistance and airlifting capacity was identified as one of the most needed. Singapore deployed two C-130 aircrafts to assist delivery of aid and evacuation of personnel. In addition, the Singapore Civil Defence Force (SCDF) sent two officers as part of the ASEAN Emergency Response and Assessment Team to evaluate the situation on the ground.

Thirdly, multilateralism broadens the basis for addressing NTS challenges. Countries tend to be more receptive to cooperation with other countries in the same region. For instance, in the aftermath of Cyclone Nargis in 2008, Myanmar's reluctance to accept international assistance was largely reduced by

the mediation and involvement of ASEAN and its member states. Eventually, the Myanmar government agreed to establish the Tripartite Core Group together with the UN and ASEAN to coordinate, facilitate, and monitor the international assistance.

Despite the questions over effectiveness, certain features of NTS challenges like transnationality and complexity determine that multilateral cooperation remains an essential component of NTS governance. With the involvement of multiple actors, effective multilateral cooperation rests heavily on coordination mechanisms. The development of the ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance since its establishment in 2011 provides a good example in this regard. Within a few years, the Centre has established procedures and rules for response, risk monitoring systems, emergency response team, as well as stockpiles

of relief items. All of these contribute to a timely and effective regional response to different types of disaster occurring in Southeast Asia. That the Centre was delegated by the Indonesian government to coordinate aid and assistance from the international private sector during the Central Sulawesi earthquake in 2018 shows how effective coordination can enhance the trust in multilateral cooperation.

The experience of Southeast Asia proves that multilateral cooperation is essential in dealing with NTS issues, particularly in terms of resource and capacity mobilisation. To encourage the support for and participation in multilateral cooperation, it is important to demonstrate how cooperation can enhance the quality and effectiveness of governance and coordination is key to that end.

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CLIMATE SECURITY

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2019 Environmental Science and Climate Change Conference

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ENERGY SECURITY

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Vancouver, Canada

Cape Cod Symposium on Addictive Disorders

5–8 September 2019
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HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE AND DISASTER RELIEF

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