

Defence Diplomacy and Cooperation: Contribution to Brunei and Region

Overview

Defence diplomacy constitutes a tool of foreign policy and often plays an important role in its contribution to the nation's and even region's peace, prosperity, security and stability. The paper presentation aims to share the importance of defence diplomacy and cooperation in contribution to Brunei's national security but also in fostering security and stability in the region and beyond. Further to this, it will also look at the positive trends in the region's defence diplomacy and cooperation. In particular, the paper will highlight the importance of defence diplomacy under the ASEAN framework and conclude with some thoughts on suggestions for NADI recommendations with regards to enhancing defence diplomacy through the ADMM.

Importance of Defence Diplomacy and Cooperation to Brunei

His Majesty *Titah* during the proclamation of independence on 1 January 1984, stated "the maintenance of friendly relations among nations on the principles of mutual respect for the independence, sovereignty, equality and territorial integrity of all nations free from external interference". In essence diplomacy through the building of friendship and cooperation plays a fundamental principle and intrinsic value embedded in Brunei's policy.

For Brunei, defence diplomacy has always been one of the imperative operational objectives of its national security strategy as part of the integrated approach towards the achievement of the country's long term national development vision, the *Wawasan 2035*. There are three main goals in the *Wawasan 2035*, as follows:

- a. To make Brunei a nation which will be widely recognised for the accomplishment of its educated and highly skilled people as measured by the highest international standards.
- b. To achieve quality of life that is among the top 10 countries in the world.
- c. To build a dynamic and sustainable economy with an income per capita among the world's top 10.

The mission of defence is one of the strategic outcomes under the goal of high quality of life - which is upholding sovereignty and stability. In this regard, a National Security Committee, in which the Ministry of Defence is one of the core members, is responsible to look after the formulation and implementation of Brunei's strategies and initiatives towards the achievement of this strategic outcome. In delivering its mission, defence diplomacy is one of the 3 pillars of the nation's defence strategy.

Benefits of Defence Diplomacy to Brunei

Defence diplomacy comes in various forms and activities among its defence officials and the Royal Brunei Armed Forces. This could generally fall into bilateral and multilateral relations and cooperation built within the ASEAN security architecture. Through close cooperation, dialogue and other interactions, the four main outcomes that contributes to Brunei's defence strategy are namely increase in trust and confidence, improve capacity building, contribute to regional peace and stability and raise the RBAF profile in general.

The Ministry of Defence have signed on MOUs with 18 countries including major powers and set up a modest number of Defence Attache offices in 9 countries. Through its bilateral and multilateral defence diplomacy, Brunei has continued to build on relations and held various types and levels of interactions with over 60 countries. All these provides opportunities to build cooperation and the various exchanges provided Brunei valuable benefits through the sharing of information, learning of best practices and experiences. The RBAF's involvement in cooperative deployments in the IMT and UNIFIL serves as Brunei's commitment and contribution to peace and stability in the region. The experiences have also been beneficial in building a professional workforce.

The high priority placed on the importance of friendly relations is illustrated with its regional membership in ASEAN a week after Brunei regained its full independence on 1 Jan 1984. This also underscores the importance of ASEAN as a platform where Brunei could address common concerns through cooperation in economic and social development but also promoting political solidarity and security community. In support and commitment to ASEAN, His Majesty as the Defence Minister has stressed on the importance of preventive diplomacy in addressing challenges in the region. Under its ADMM Chairmanship in 2013, Brunei has championed Direct Communications Link, Logistics Support framework and became ADMM Plus EWG co-chairman together with New Zealand on Maritime Security. The first major ADMM Plus exercise on MS/HADR between international armed forces was also held in 2013 that brought had multiplied effect. One example is the close network among ASEAN military medicine officials that enabled them to communicate directly to coordinate response during the aftermath of Haiyan.

Growing Regional Defence Diplomacy and Cooperation

There are several regional defence diplomacy led mechanisms and levels: ASEAN framework, US led, and Track 2. Overall, the regional defence diplomacy and cooperation is quite extensive and non-exhaustive. In the pre-ADMM, security issues were dealt under the ARF umbrella and the ASEAN Ministerial Meeting (AMM) or Foreign Ministers. ASEAN led defence diplomacy started much later informally under the ambit of the ARF Defence Officials Dialogue (DOD) in 2002. Military interactions began earlier through informal means between chiefs of ASEAN defence forces and chiefs of military services.

Between the years of the ADMM and ADMM Plus establishment, this saw the defence sector gaining momentum in its cooperation. Other spill overs, could be seen with the ASEAN-Japan Vice Minister Defence Forum or Toyko Defense Forum which usually shares its outcome in the ARF. Regional coordinated response practical exercises were held with ARF DiREX which is co-hosted by ASEAN and non-ASEAN member in ARF. The drive behind this could be attributed to ASEAN's experience in assisting Myanmar during Cyclone Nargis. It was indeed a wake-up call where no one country could stand alone when natural disaster strikes. This underscores the need for better coordination among ASEAN, and pushed implementation of the ADDMER forward thus saw the strengthening of cooperation in HADR flourished in the ADMM and ARF.

Post ADMM saw numerous practical cooperation through the ADMM and ADMM Plus Expert Working Groups (EWGs) being established. This is not inclusive of the various ADMM initiatives such as ASEAN Defence Industry Cooperation, Direct Communication Links and Logistics Support Framework. Further deepening of exchanges is seen among top levels as ASEAN defence ministers held further interactions with its dialogue partners and this brought prospects for closer cooperation in the ADMM Plus. Even the military diplomacy expanded including junior officers exchange programmes and 1st multinational military exercises were held during this period. As military roles evolve with the current environment, the military are becoming more involved in non-conventional activities and saw cooperation at the regional level instrumental to provide support when addressing transnational security challenges.

In comparison to pre-ADMM, the level of comfort, readiness to be open, willingness to share has improved and is a welcoming trend in the region. This is certainly reflected with the increasing Track 2 or more specifically track 1.5 becoming more prominent as a platform to share views and perspectives on security issues. As ASEAN continue to be an inclusive and open regional security architecture, it also brings the broader dynamics of major power relations to the forefront. Coincidentally, it is again through defence diplomacy that ASEAN pursues to manage the situation and set an agenda that befits ASEAN member states.

The proliferation of meetings is often used as a signal that diplomacy is in full swing. Yet more importantly for the ASEAN led security framework is the substance. The achievements or milestones of each regional activities or initiatives carried out lies in the contribution to building ASEAN Political Security Community (APSC) and to respective ASEAN member states defence relations.

Contribution of ASEAN Defence Diplomacy

In observation, the ASEAN led defence diplomacy contribution is increasingly important for the region and its member states. Firstly, it adds value to respective efforts of ASEAN member states in protecting and defending its sovereignty. Defence diplomacy through ASEAN and its cooperation works as another layer that need not necessarily ran in parallel to bilateral defence diplomacy. It brings wider opportunities to enhance relations, build common ground on issues of concerns and deepen cooperation based on the principles and values shared and adhered to by ASEAN.

Therefore, regional diplomacy practice does not intend to dilute nor replace bilateral defence diplomacy. Through the various interactions and engagements of training, exchanges, courses and programme, all these avenues instill understanding between defence and military, thus further deepen trust and confidence. More often than not, cooperation also builds a nation's capability through sharing of information, learning best practices and experiences. The current patterns of cooperation that saw mini-lateral that involves three or more countries in ASEAN working together or with other non-ASEAN countries which in turn further contributes to regional capability in addressing transnational and NTS security challenges.

Secondly, the establishment of defence diplomacy over time builds on ASEAN led architecture and expands and enhance cooperation. ASEAN arguably do not fulfill a security community or security regionalism broadly understood in theory. Over the past fifty years, ASEAN has developed and progressed in its unique mold conscious of its differences. The ADMM and ARF remains an important platform for ASEAN and allows its member states to continue to have a voice to shape and influence the region’s future. In this regard, relations must continue to be deepened to enhance the comfort level among ASEAN through interactions at all levels among its defence and security officials. The security architecture noticeably is in silos which derived from the distinct three pillars and sectors conduct activities that may often duplicate. Within APSC itself, it is important to enhance synergy between ADMM, ADMM+, and ARF to address the cross-cutting issues comprehensively and effectively.

Finally, ASEAN defence diplomacy supports the assurance of regional peace and stability. Deepening of ADMM diplomacy and cooperation essentially improve the region’s capability to respond to the security challenges. The positive momentum of ADMM cooperation needs to be constantly build upon through better management of its initiatives in order to improve responses to challenges in the region. In doing this, ADMM should continue to encourage and promote preventive and practical measures in its cooperation which thus contributes to a positive security environment in the future. Added to this, in line with the ASEAN Forging Ahead 2025, ADMM has to consider ways to promote strategic dialogue through greater sharing of views and perspectives.

Ways to Strengthen ADMM’s Contribution

The work of the ADMM is reported to the APSC Council who will then submit progress and developments of the various sectors under APSC to the ASEAN Summit. It is imperative for the ADMM to know what it wants and lead the ADMM Plus. In strengthening ADMM’s contribution, it may need the ADMM to further streamline its work and better manage ADMM initiative through means to measure its initiatives and efforts that would build on the overall regional response. The three suggestions for NADI recommendations to ADMM are:

Suggestions	Rationale	Ownership
Scorecard on the implementation of ADMM Work Programme	<input type="checkbox"/> ADMM must stock-take its ADMM Work Programme in particular to assess the progress of initiatives, relevance and added value to ADMM <input type="checkbox"/> In providing such document, it will provide a benchmark on the success of defence diplomacy and a guide to enhance ADMM’s work	<input type="checkbox"/> ASEAN Secretariat for submission as a document to be updated by ADSOM WG, approved by ADSOM and endorsed by ADMM <input type="checkbox"/> Inputs by ADMM Chair & ADMM EWG co-chairman will be useful
Information Paper on cross cutting issues in	<input type="checkbox"/> This supplement the Scorecard on other	<input type="checkbox"/> ASEAN Secretariat information paper to update ADMM on the

<p>ADMM and ARF or other initiatives under APSC pillar</p>	<p>information required to assess ADMM's work</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Updates of cross-cutting issues in various security platforms particularly maritime security, HADR, countering terrorism and cyber security would provide insight on initiatives from various sectors would enable ADMM to build on to the overall regional response 	<p>progress on cross-cutting issues</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Inputs by ADMM EWG Co-Chairman will be useful
<p>Standardised information in promoting strategic dialogue and understanding of individual's perspectives</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Consideration to agree on standardised sub-headings to encourage sharing of information of each ASEAN member state's contribution in ADMM and the APSC in the ASEAN Security Outlook and ARF Security Outlook publications 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> ADMM and respective ASEAN member states