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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Pendulum swings rather than paradigm shifts: Southeast Asia's securitisations and the global war on terror

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Abstract
Two decades into the 'war on terror', attention is rapidly shifting away from terrorism. Increasing geopolitical competition between the US and China and Russia's war in Ukraine prompted talk about a watershed moment in global politics marked by a return of great power competition. To what extent has this paradigm shift – from terrorism to 'traditional' considerations of military security from external invasion – taken place in Southeast Asia? Building on securitisation theory, this article argues that the war on terror did not mark a universal historical-political period as it is often presented. In Southeast Asia, so-called non-traditional threats such as terrorism have concerned states since their independence. Therefore, Southeast Asia continued to prioritise 'traditional' security threats alongside 'non-traditional' ones in what is commonly described as its comprehensive approach to security. Consequently, when the 'return to geopolitics' began influencing military doctrine and preparation amongst NATO countries, a similar shift was absent in Southeast Asia. We argue that the region has seen varied emphases on non-traditional versus traditional security threats but did not experience the paradigm shift suggested by the US-dominated security narrative. Southeast Asia's comprehensive security constellation underscores the need for a more pluralistic and eclectic approach to the study of international relations.

Keywords: global war on terror; great power competition; non-traditional security; Southeast Asia; terrorism

Introduction

Following the terrorist attacks on 11 September 2001, the United States (US) proclaimed a global 'war on terror'. Some credit this as a watershed to the extent of a world war, either the third or fourth depending on the count; with the First World War as between the Central Powers and the Allies from 1914–1918, the Second World War between the Axis and the Allies from 1939 to 1945, and a third world war, according to some, the Cold War between the western-democratic-capitalist bloc and the communist bloc from 1947 to 1991 – inclusive of the attendant 'hot' proxy wars such as the Vietnam War and the Korean War.[1] Referring to the global war on terror, James Woolsey, former director of the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), stated in 2003 that 'We are now fighting World War IV, a war that will last longer than World Wars I or II'.[2] However, regardless of the number, unlike the First or Second World Wars or the Cold War, which were focused upon traditional military security, the war on terror was one of non-traditional security.

[1]Eliot A. Cohen, 'World War IV', *The Wall Street Journal* (20 November 2001); 'It's still World War IV', *The American Interest* (19 November 2015).
[2]James Woolsey, 'A long war', *The Wall Street Journal* (16 April 2003).

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Non-traditional security contrasts against the traditional paradigm where 'security threats were viewed through the prism of state survival and conceived mainly in terms of interstate military conflict'.[3] These non-traditional security threats, in turn, tend to be non-military in character, transnational, and also threaten non-state referents such as humans, whether as an individual or as the community writ large.[4] Examples include piracy, transnational crime, natural disasters, pandemics, and terrorism. The non-traditional security agenda became increasingly important upon the pivotal September 11 attacks. To be sure, the 'deepening' and 'widening' of the concept of security had taken place prior to the end of the Cold War, problematising the traditional understanding of security.[5] Nevertheless, the stark images and videos of the collapses of the twin towers of the World Trade Center in New York and the subsequent war on terror reified the concept of 'non-traditional security'. As an example, searching the 'Politics and International Relations' section of Cambridge University Press for 'military security' returned only about 64 per cent of the results for 'non-traditional security'. Of the more than 13,000 results for the latter, about 2,000 were from 1981–2000, whilst the later two decades from 2001–20 returned almost four times as many.[6]

The paradigm shift from traditional to non-traditional security translated into new roles for the military. As opposed to the undisputed primacy of the armed forces in dealing with the traditional security challenges of military intervention by another state or interstate war, oftentimes, the military can be more tangential players in combating non-traditional security threats, which they did by increasingly pivoting to operations other than war. Furthermore, whereas militaries involved in traditional security operations are typically antagonistic, the transnational character of non-traditional security often means that militaries have to cooperate to combat the threat in such operations,[7] which comprise missions such as humanitarian aid and disaster relief, dealing with pandemic outbreaks, or counterterrorism operations. Singapore, for example, recognising that security threats are more likely to be non-traditional than traditional, transformed the role of its military from one focused upon territorial defence to a 'full-spectrum force' capable of responding to a large array of non-war missions as well as conventional war.[8]

Notwithstanding the rise of non-traditional security, various global landmarks seem to 'herald a new era of big-power rivalry'.[9] Chief amongst these, arguably, are Russia's annexation of the Crimean peninsula in 2014 and its subsequent invasion of Ukraine in 2022 and China's actions in the South China Sea coupled with the build-up of its military power, as well as the concomitantly growing tensions between these two states and the US. Writing in *Foreign Affairs* in 2020, Elbridge Colby, a former US Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense, called for the US to refocus 'its attention on great-power competition' and away from 'problems of the "global commons"' like terrorism or

[3]Shahar Hameiri and Lee Jones, 'The politics and governance of non-traditional security', *International Studies Quarterly*, 57:3 (2013), p. 462–73.

[4]Ralf Emmers and Mely Caballero-Anthony, 'Introduction', in Ralf Emmers, Mely Caballero-Anthony, and Amitav Acharya (eds), *Studying Non-traditional Security in Asia: Trends and Issues* (Singapore: Marshall Cavendish Academic, 2006), pp. xiii–xix (p. xiv); Mely Caballero-Anthony, 'Non-traditional security and infectious diseases in ASEAN: Going beyond the rhetoric of securitization to deeper institutionalization', *The Pacific Review*, 21:4 (2008), pp. 507–25 (p. 510).

[5]David A. Baldwin, 'Security studies and the end of the Cold War', *World Politics*, 48:1 (1995), pp. 117–41; Barry Buzan and Lene Hansen, *The Evolution of International Security Studies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

[6]Cambridge University Press, 'Cambridge Core' (2023), available at: {https://www.cambridge.org/core/}.

[7]Such cooperation does not, however, mean that there is a complete absence of conflict or competition amongst the militaries involved; see Jun Yan Chang and Nicole Jenne, 'Velvet fists: The paradox of defence diplomacy in Southeast Asia', *European Journal of International Security*, 5:3 (2020), pp. 332–49; Alan Chong and Jun Yan Chang, 'The international politics of air disasters: Lessons for aviation disaster governance from Asia, 2014–2015', *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, 31:3–4 (2018), pp. 249–71; Erik Lin-Greenberg, 'Non-traditional security dilemmas: Can military operations other than war intensify security competition in Asia?', *Asian Security*, 14:3 (2018), pp. 282–302.

[8]Weichong Ong, 'Peripheral to norm? The expeditionary role of the third generation Singapore armed forces', *Defence Studies*, 11:3 (2011), pp. 541–58; Jun Yan Chang, 'Singapore's defense metamorphoses', *The National Interest* (3 October 2023).

[9]'The new geopolitical epoch', *The Economist* (26 December 2022); see also Andrew Futter and Benjamin Zala, 'The return of nuclear great power politics (or why we stopped worrying about terrorists and the bomb)', in this Special Issue of the *European Journal of International Security*.

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climate change.[10] Coupled to this, the US withdrawal from Afghanistan in 2021, two decades on from the beginning of the war on terror, might have drawn the terrorism era to a close, as noted in the introduction of this Special Issue.[11] Is this another security paradigm shift back to traditional security concerns or a 'return of geopolitics'?[12]

This article critically examines the extent to which these supposed universal paradigms of 'non-traditional security' and the 'return of geopolitics' are reflected in the security of Southeast Asia. We do this by considering the securitisations of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the region's premier multilateral forum, and its member states, especially the degree to which they are concerned with traditional and non-traditional security. Specifically, the Copenhagen School's securitisation theory, which analyses the construction of issues as matters of security,[13] allows us to study how ASEAN and its component states have represented concerns of terrorism and geopolitics, or other matters, as issues of security, and having done so, what they have consequently done about these, particularly in terms of their military practices. In this manner, securitisation theory is a useful tool to determine the security concerns of these regional states, and concomitantly Southeast Asia's contemporary regional security constellation – a discourse linking different levels and sectors of security.[14]

In so doing, we demonstrate that the 'new' security threats were never 'non-traditional' in the region, thereby challenging the idea that there is a global approach to security as such. The overarching question and theme of this special issue, 'What the War on Terror Leaves Behind', does not technically apply to the region thus, ironically. Rather, a diverse set of threats including interstate war, piracy, food security, and terrorism have crucially concerned Southeast Asian states since their independence. At the same time, even as Southeast Asian states pivoted towards combating terrorism owing to the greater urgency and prominence of the issue following the September 11 attacks, the increased focus on non-traditional security threats did not mean that traditional security faded into the background. Neither 'non-traditional security' nor the 'return of geopolitics' has constituted a paradigm shift for the region. Instead, although the pendulum sometimes swings between traditional and non-traditional security in Southeast Asia, regional states have always been, and will continue to be, concerned with both traditional and non-traditional threats. This is the region's customary security constellation of 'comprehensive security'.[15]

The article proceeds in four parts. The next section discusses the Copenhagen School and our methodology. Subsequently, we deliberate the impact of the war on terror in Southeast Asia, demonstrating that this falls short of a paradigm shift since traditional security concerns remained as paramount in the region. We further support our argument in the third section by illustrating Southeast Asian states' continual focus on non-traditional security, including terrorism, despite an increased emphasis on geopolitical considerations in relation to their careful management of rising Sino-US rivalry and the war in Ukraine. Together, these prove the continuity of *both* traditional and non-traditional security within Southeast Asian securitisations. The final section

[10]Elbridge Colby and A. Wess Mitchell, 'The age of great-power competition: How the Trump administration refashioned American strategy', *Foreign Affairs*, 99:1 (2020), pp. 118–30 (pp. 118–19).

[11]Harmonie Toros, Lee Jarvis, and Richard Jackson, 'Introduction: What the war on terror leaves behind', in this Special Issue of the *European Journal of International Security*.

[12]Walter Russell Mead, 'The return of geopolitics: The revenge of the revisionist powers', *Foreign Affairs*, 93:3 (2014), pp. 69–79; see also Stefan Auer, 'Carl Schmitt in the Kremlin: The Ukraine crisis and the return of geopolitics', *International Affairs*, 91:5 (2015), pp. 953–68.

[13]Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver, and Jaap de Wilde, *Security: A New Framework for Analysis* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1998); Ole Wæver, 'Securitization and desecuritization', in Ronnie D. Lipschutz (ed.), *On Security* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), pp. 46–86.

[14]Barry Buzan and Ole Wæver, 'Macrosecuritisation and security constellations: Reconsidering scale in securitisation theory', *Review of International Studies*, 35:2 (2009), pp. 253–76 (p. 256).

[15]See Ralf Emmers, 'Comprehensive security and resilience in Southeast Asia: ASEAN's approach to terrorism', *The Pacific Review*, 22:2 (2009), pp. 159–77.

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summarises the argument, reflects on the security constellation of Southeast Asia, and contributes further to the field by discussing the implications of our argument for the study of international security.

Securitisation theory and methodology

We leverage securitisation theory in order to determine regional security concerns. In the classical Copenhagen School formulation of securitisation, issues become matters of security when a security actor articulates an existential threat towards a referent object for an audience, regardless of whether said threat is military-centric or not. Such a speech act thereby moves the issue beyond the bounds of normal politics into the realm of extreme politics – or security – so as to enable exceptional actions to deal with the issue.[16]

Various critics of this classical securitisation emphasise that the Copenhagen School sometimes vacillates between the role of the securitising actor and the audience in terms of when exactly the issue becomes security: whether upon the utterance by the former or acceptance by the latter.[17] Generally, however, for the Copenhagen School, security is self-referential. That means the speech act demonstrates an illocutionary logic wherein the performance is located within the linguistic representation itself, rather than a perlocutionary reasoning depending on the context and circumstances during interactions with the audience of the performance.[18] Although this self-referential understanding of security has been criticised as elitist and 'top-down',[19] it nevertheless serves our purpose in this article with regard to understanding the security concerns of states, regardless of whether domestic audiences actually agree to such.[20]

Furthermore, to capture meaningful securitisation instead of simply rhetoric or just noise, a criticism common to ASEAN and its member states, we complement the Copenhagen School's analytical emphasis on the speech act with the Paris School's practical and sociological approach. According to the Paris School of security studies, inspired by French sociologists like Michel Foucault and Pierre Bourdieu, security is 'designed through different technical or physical modalities'.[21] The Paris School offers two important specifications that inform the revised securitisation theory we utilise in this article.

[16]Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde, *Security*, pp. 23–6.

[17]For instance, Jonathan Bright, 'Securitisation, terror, and control: Towards a theory of the breaking point', *Review of International Studies*, 38:4 (2012), pp. 861–79; Adam Côté, 'Agents without agency: Assessing the role of the audience in securitization theory', *Security Dialogue*, 47:6 (2016), pp. 541–58; Matt McDonald, 'Securitization and the construction of security', *European Journal of International Relations*, 14:4 (2008), pp. 563–87.

[18]Thierry Balzacq, 'The three faces of securitization: Political agency, audience and context', *European Journal of International Relations*, 11:2 (2005), pp. 171–201; cf. Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde, *Security*, p. 23.

[19]For example, Philippe Bourbeau, 'Moving foward together: Logics of the securitisation process', *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, 43:1 (2014), pp. 187–206 (p. 191); Jef Huysmans, 'What's in an act? On security speech acts and little security nothings', *Security Dialogue*, 42:4–5 (2011), pp. 371–83 (p. 375).

[20]Since the Copenhagen School's formulation of securitisation theory, there have been many and different types of criticism against it, whether regarding its context, process, or consequences; see Claire Wilkinson, 'The Copenhagen School on tour in Kyrgyzstan: Is securitization theory usable outside Europe?', *Security Dialogue*, 38:1 (2007), pp. 5–25; Mark B. Salter, 'Securitization and desecuritization: A dramaturgical analysis of the Canadian Air Transport Safety Authority', *Journal of International Relations and Development*, 11:4 (2008), pp. 321–49; Rita Floyd, 'Towards a consequentalist evaluation of security: Bringing together the Copenhagen and the Welsh schools of security studies', *Review of International Studies*, 33:2 (2007), pp. 327–50, respectively. See also, Matt McDonald, 'Emergency measures? Terrorism and climate change on the security agenda', *European Journal of International Security* in this Special Issue. However, this section is not meant to be a holistic literature review of securitisation; owing to the constraints of space, it focuses on revising the securitisation frame for the purposes of this article.

[21]Thierry Balzacq, Sarah Léonard, and Jan Ruzicka, '"Securitization" revisited: Theory and cases', *International Relations*, 30:4 (2016), pp. 494–531 (p. 504); see also Didier Bigo, 'Security and immigration: Toward a critique of the governmentality of unease', *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political*, 27:1 Supplement (2002), pp. 63–92. However, one of the 'progenitors' of the 'Paris School', Didier Bigo, dislikes the category owing to the geographical spread of the affiliated authors across the world, preferring to instead think of 'PARIS' as an acronym: Political Anthropological Research for International Sociology; see Didier Bigo and Emma McCluskey, 'What is a PARIS approach to (in)securitization? Political Anthropological Research for International

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First, the Paris School posits the possibility that exceptional measures may not necessarily be required to deal with security threats. Rather, and oftentimes, routine and mundane security practices may be considered appropriate.[22] For example, the systemic failures in airport processes leading to the terrorist attacks on 11 September 2001 meant a consequent emphasis on terrorism assessments and prevention regarding aviation, such as regular screening measures in airports. Exceptional measures may also transform into mundane and everyday practices once they have become institutionalised.[23] Overall, the 'logic of exception' and the 'logic of routine' may both inform security practices to deal with an issue.[24]

Second, security practices themselves create security and do not merely follow from the enabling speech act emphasised by the Copenhagen School.[25] Practices are understood here as 'patterned actions that are embedded in particular organized contexts and, as such, are articulated into specific types of action and are socially developed through learning and training'.[26] Practices are thus institutionalised and differentiated from 'action', which is purposeful but not socially organised, and from 'behaviour', which is a meaningless action. For example, running in a field without an apparent goal is behaviour, whereas running in a field to kill someone is an action. Running in a field as part of an infantry squad to kill the enemy in a battle, however, is a practice. Practices can hence be seen as meta-actions. Even as the speaking of security facilitates the construction of security on top of the measures adopted to deal with the issue, such doing of security further reifies that the issue is, indeed, a matter of security to be taken seriously. The securitising actors are therefore also the security practitioners as much as the ones labelling an issue as 'security'. Studying the security practices themselves enables us to 'understand practices in relationship to the practitioners as subjects' as well as in relation 'to the signifiers they ground',[27] so as to enhance our comprehension of which issues states have securitised through what they have done or are doing about it. An example illustrating this is Salter and Mutlu's case study of the securitisation of access to the island of Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean. Here, the speech act in declaring Diego Garcia as paramount to national security worked hand in hand with the actual practices of forcibly relocating the island's inhabitants, enabling the construction of a military base there as well as its routine operation.[28]

Our revised approach to securitisation for this article thus incorporates both securitising speech acts and security practices, whether through extreme or mundane measures. The compatibility between the two demonstrates the actual logic of discourse beyond the linguistic since the 'analysis of discourse understood as the study of the preconditions for social action must include the analysis of practice understood as the study of social action itself'.[29] As Pouliot also stressed: 'the Copenhagen School asserts that security is practice; but in restricting its focus to traditional

Sociology', in Alexandra Gheciu and William C. Wohlforth (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of International Security* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), pp. 116–30.

[22]Bigo, 'Security and immigration'; Huysmans, 'What's in an act?'

[23]Uriel Abulof, 'Deep securitization and Israel's "demographic demon"', *International Political Sociology*, 8:4 (2014), pp. 396–415; Jun Yan Chang, 'Conscripting the audience: Singapore's successful securitisation of vulnerability', in Shu Huang Ho and Graham Ong-Webb (eds), *National Service in Singapore* (Singapore: World Scientific, 2019), pp. 83–103.

[24]Bourbeau, 'Moving foward together'.

[25]Jef Huysmans, *The Politics of Insecurity: Fear, Migration and Asylum in the EU* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2006). This is, however, not to say that the Copenhagen School disregards security practices entirely. As noted above, exceptional security practices are important for the classical Copenhagen School securitisation.

[26]Emanuel Adler and Vincent Pouliot, 'International practices: Introduction and framework', in Emanuel Adler and Vincent Pouliot (eds), *International Practices* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 3–35 (p. 6).

[27]Raymond D. Duvall and Arjun Chowdhury, 'Practices of theory', in Emanuel Adler and Vincent Pouliot (eds), *International Practices* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 335–54 (pp. 351–3).

[28]Mark B. Salter and Can E. Mutlu, 'Securitisation and Diego Garcia', *Review of International Studies*, 39:4 (2013), pp. 815–34.

[29]Iver B. Neumann, 'Returning practice to the linguistic turn: The case of diplomacy', *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, 31:3 (2002), pp. 627–51 (pp. 627–8); see also Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*, 2nd ed. (London: Verso, 2001); Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, trans. C. K. Ogden, with an introduction by Bertrand Russell (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., 1922).

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discourse analysis, it evacuates the practical logics that make the securitizing discourse possible'.[30] It is through these speech acts and security practices that ASEAN and its member states construct issues as matters of security, an exceptional situation going beyond mere political concerns or the blanket rhetoric of 'national security'.

We apply this revised securitisation framework to ASEAN and its member states via discourse analysis, examining their strategic and security-related linguistic representations, as well as their security practices. We focus on these in the context of two events other than the war on terror, the Russo-Ukrainian war and Sino-US competition. Both are typically said to be of global significance. For instance, Bilahari Kausikan, once Singapore's top civil servant in charge of the foreign affairs ministry, writes in *Foreign Affairs* that the 'Russian aggression in Ukraine and competition between China and the United States have made the world more uncertain and dangerous'.[31] Whilst these are surely not the only momentous matters of global security, they, along with the war on terror, serve as a useful foil for us to investigate the extent to which the 'non-traditional security' and 'return of geopolitics' models have penetrated the region via securitisation.

In terms of sources, we started by selecting the appropriate primary documents to study the textual representations of security by individual Southeast Asian states and by ASEAN. These latter ASEAN documents, including statements and other declarations at summit meetings, provide a useful overview of the exceptional matters of regional security. As for the former, we collected security and defence documents of individual ASEAN states, such as white papers and other security and strategic publications, together with relevant speeches by state representatives in national, regional, and global international contexts such as the United Nations (UN), the G20, and the East Asia Summit. These allow us to examine in greater detail what each Southeast Asian state sees as, and says are, their security challenges, and how they deal with these.

As part of the discourse analysis, these securitising speech acts were subsequently matched to security practices to investigate how these practices also constructed security. We devoted our attention to how Southeast Asian militaries have contributed to mitigating the extreme security challenges as identified by the state. In particular, we analyse to what extent military preparation, doctrines, and set-ups have been geared towards conventional war and operations other than war. Information on these security practices, including military missions and tasks, was also gleaned from the documents described above as well as existing studies. The latter were a valuable source of relevant security discourses and practices especially regarding the two-decades-long war on terror.

Although we have comprehensively consolidated such data for the entire Southeast Asian region as far back as the written records and other public information were available, the empirical evidence presented in the following sections is necessarily selective owing to the breadth of information for the 10 ASEAN member states as well as the organisation itself. Each succeeding empirical section demonstrates our argument with examples from selected Southeast Asian states, followed by the region's overall position as demonstrated through ASEAN. Despite these limited samples, we have chosen our illustrations with care, for both the individual Southeast Asian states as well as for ASEAN, such that they are representative of the dynamics of the Southeast Asian states and the regional security constellation. The next section details the findings from the discourse analysis with regard to terrorism and non-traditional security challenges in Southeast Asia.

Swinging towards the second front of the war on terror

Although the concept of 'non-traditional security' consolidated after the 11 September 2001 attacks and the subsequent war on terror, such security challenges, including terrorism, were not novel to

[30] Vincent Pouliot, 'The logic of practicality: A theory of practice of security communities', *International Organization*, 62:2 (2008), pp. 257–88 (p. 265).

[31] Bilahari Kausikan, 'Navigating the new age of great-power competition: Statecraft in the shadow of the U.S.–Chinese rivalry', *Foreign Affairs* (11 April 2023), available at: {https://www.foreignaffairs.com/united-states/china-great-power-competition-russia-guide}.

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the region. Armed insurgencies were already a major concern in the independence processes of the various Southeast Asian states. For instance, Malaysia and Singapore went through an armed communist insurgency from 1948 to 1960, with the state of emergency lasting throughout. Radical Islam as a threat also pre-dated the 11 September 2001 attacks and the Bali bombings of 2002, such as an attack in the Philippines by the Moro Islamic Liberation Front in 1997, which killed six people. As Kadir notes, 'violent extremist activities, led by and championed by Islamist groups, have existed for most of the region's history', and different processes of Islamic radicalisation have been under way since at least the 1980s.[32] When Singapore's defence ministry outlined the security challenges of the new century in 2000, it correspondingly highlighted that 'unconventional threats in the form of terrorist acts and subversion will continue to be a potential danger', with the Singapore military ready to 'be called upon to deal with them'.[33] Indeed, the 'non-traditional security' concept 'owes much to the postcolonial approach and security thinking from the Third World' itself, with these threats 'representative of the kind of contemporary challenges that seriously affect people's security in the developing world',[34] whether these were insurgencies, terrorism, or other issues as outlined above.

Nevertheless, as the war on terror deepened, Washington declared Southeast Asia as this war's 'second front', after the dominant area of operations in the Middle East. This security narrative constructed all terrorist groups and activities as part of a transnational, external threat, even though 'Southeast Asia's terrorist presence is far from monolithic and does not directly correlate to the Middle Eastern version, as groups vary in their purpose, targets, and geographic reach'.[35] The first mention of terrorism in statements by the ASEAN chair also pre-dated the war on terror, with the ASEAN heads of state calling for the intensification of 'individual and collective efforts to address transnational crimes such as drug trafficking, money laundering, *terrorism*, piracy, arms smuggling and trafficking in persons' in 1998.[36] Naturally, therefore, despite the overall securitisation of terrorism within Southeast Asia, the regional response to being the 'second front' was varied and inconsistent.

In this, Indonesia was a crucial node. It was both a 'model of moderation' in the Muslim world, as well as a source of Jemaah Islamiyah (JI)-linked terrorism with presumed connections to Al-Qaeda.[37] Nonetheless, in spite of Indonesia itself being subject to the 2002 Bali bombings and the 2003 Marriott Hotel bombing by the JI, Indonesia grew more critical of the military emphasis of the war on terror, especially after the US invaded Iraq in 2003.[38] Overall, Indonesia's securitisation of terrorism was erratic. Although then-Indonesian president Megawati Sukarnoputri 'expressed solidarity' with the US and condemned the 11 September 2001 attacks, she 'equivocated over Indonesia's political commitment to fighting international terrorism, in order to appease domestic political constituencies'.[39] Similarly, even as Indonesia introduced various new measures, such as an

[32]Suzaina Kadir, 'Mapping Muslim politics in Southeast Asia after September 11', *The Pacific Review*, 17:2 (2004), pp. 199–222 (p. 204).

[33]Singapore Ministry of Defence, 'Defending Singapore in the 21st century' (2000), p. 8.

[34]Mely Caballero-Anthony, 'Understanding non-traditional security', in Mely Caballero-Anthony (ed.), *An Introduction to Non-traditional Security Studies* (London: Sage, 2016), pp. 3–19 (p. 5).

[35]Amitav Acharya and Arabinda Acharya, 'The myth of the second front: Localizing the "war on terror" in Southeast Asia', *The Washington Quarterly*, 30:4 (2007), pp. 75–90.

[36]'Ha Noi Declaration of 1998', ASEAN Secretariat (1998), available at: {https://asean.org/ha-noi-declaration-of-1998-16-december-1998/#:~:text=We%20reaffirm%20our%20view%20of,our%20part%20of%20the%20world}, emphasis added. Sheldon W. Simon, 'ASEAN and multilateralism: The long bumpy road to community', *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, 30:2 (2008), pp. 264–92 (p. 270), had earlier erroneously indicated ASEAN's first mention of terrorism as after the 2001 terrorist attacks in the US.

[37]Anthony L. Smith, 'A glass half-full: Indonesia-U.S. relations in the age of terror', *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, 25:3 (2003), pp. 449–72 (p. 449).

[38]David Capie, 'Between a hegemon and a hard place: The "war on terror" and Southeast Asian–US relations', *The Pacific Review*, 17:2 (2004), pp. 223–48 (pp. 227–30).

[39]Andrew Chau, 'Security community and Southeast Asia: Australia, the U.S. and ASEAN's counter-terror strategy', *Asian Survey*, 48:4 (2008), pp. 626–49 (p. 637).

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anti-terror law to give the police greater powers, a police counterterrorism unit – Detachment 88 – and a joint task force comprising different security services, including the military, it also allowed the free roaming of regional terrorist leaders within the country.[40]

Moreover, from 2003 to 2006, Indonesia took the opportunity to crack down exceptionally hard on an armed separatist group, the Gerakan Aceh Merdaka, in Aceh. Comprising 30,000 soldiers and 12,000 police officers, this operation was the biggest such deployment in Indonesia's history. However, despite Indonesia foreign minister Marty Natalegawa referring to the grouping as 'a bunch of terrorists', seemingly buying into the global securitisation narrative on the terrorism threat, Indonesian officials 'also emphasised that their military operation was in service of Indonesia's territorial integrity'.[41] Hence, the securitisation of terrorism in Aceh was evidently concerned with Indonesia's policies of *Hankamrata* (Total People's Defence and Security), *Wawasan Nusantara* (Archipelagic Outlook), and *Ketahanan Nasional* (National Resilience) rather than just transnational terrorism per se,[42] with these concepts providing 'an overarching grand strategy that not only reasserted an old connection between territorial warfare, total war and total resources but also connected them with Indonesia's distinct reality as the largest archipelagic state in the world'.[43]

In contrast, Singapore took a tougher stance in its securitisation of terrorism. For example, Singapore's 2004 national security strategy against terrorism was a securitising move that was specifically addressed to 'the people of Singapore': 'Transnational terrorism poses a serious and prolonged threat to Singapore's national security', such that 'we have to prepare for a long-drawn campaign against terrorism', including coordinating between the armed forces and the police and increasing their capabilities.[44] Security practices to combat terrorism included reforming the Singapore National Security Coordination Centre in 2004, in addition to deploying military personnel to routinely patrol, harden, and protect key installations across the city. Moreover, it broke up a JI terrorist cell that had plotted to bomb embassies and metro stations in Singapore and, in an extreme measure, placed many of the suspects under detention without trial, where they remained for several years. Singapore also supported the US Regional Maritime Security Initiative to counter maritime terrorism and deployed a military detachment to Afghanistan from 2007 to 2013 to support the International Security Assistance Force, the Singapore military's 'longest overseas deployment'.[45]

Singapore's securitisation of terrorism was further conflated with the piracy and sea robberies common to the Malacca and Singapore straits. In 2003, Tony Tan, then Singapore's deputy prime minister, 'noted that the Singapore government had "been dealing with the problem of piracy for some time, and there are methods and tactics associated with terrorism which [it] can identify"'.[46] The security practices subsequently adopted as preventive measures included stepping up police and military patrols and the launch of a regular multilateral 'Malacca Straits Patrol' coordinated between its navy as well as the Indonesian and Malaysian navies in 2004. Moreover, in response

[40]Bilveer Singh, 'The challenge of militant Islam and terrorism in Indonesia', *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, 58:1 (2004), pp. 47–68.

[41]Megan Price, 'The long way round: How the war on terror influenced the politics of international legitimacy and Indonesia's military action in Aceh', *Critical Studies on Terrorism*, 15:4 (2022), pp. 846–66 (p. 856).

[42]See also Łukasz Fijałkowski and Jarosław Jarząbek, 'Between emergency and routine: Securitisation of military security in Iran and Indonesia', *Third World Quarterly*, 40:9 (2019), pp. 1670–88.

[43]Vibhanshu Shekhar, *Indonesia's Foreign Policy and Grand Strategy in the 21st Century: Rise of an Indo-Pacific Power* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2018), p. 6; see also Dewi Fortuna Anwar, 'Indonesia's strategic culture: *Ketahanan Nasional, Wawasan Nusantara and Hankamrata*', *Australia-Asia Papers*, 75 (1996).

[44]Singapore National Security Coordination Centre, *The Fight against Terror: Singapore's National Security Strategy* (Singapore: Singapore National Security Coordination Centre, 2004), pp. 3–8.

[45]Singapore Ministry of Defence, *Two Thousand Two Hundred and Sixty-Three Days: 2007–2013* (Singapore: Singapore Ministry of Defence, 2013), p. 5.

[46]Quoted in Mark David Chong, 'Securitising piracy and maritime terrorism along the Malacca and Singapore Straits: Singapore and the importance of facilitating factors', in Nicholas Tarling and Xin Chen (eds), *Maritime Security in East and Southeast Asia: Political Challenges in Asian Waters* (Singapore: Palgrave, 2017), pp. 43–84 (p. 73).

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to these and other non-traditional security challenges, the Singapore military underwent broad reforms to become 'a strong and integrated force that operates across a full spectrum of operations', enabling it to 'protect our nation against direct [military] threats, and also respond flexibly in peacetime to transnational security challenges posed by terrorism, piracy and natural disasters'.[47] This third-generation transformation of the Singapore military into a full-spectrum force contesting conventional war and performing operations other than war demonstrates the comprehensiveness inherent within the state's grand strategy in dealing with traditional and non-traditional security challenges.[48]

Despite Singapore's strong and successful securitisation of terrorism, the response to the war on terror at the ASEAN level was mixed overall. ASEAN condemned the 11 September 2001 attacks and called on its members to ratify all relevant anti-terrorist conventions and deepen cooperation.[49] In January 2002, the ASEAN chiefs of intelligence held an extraordinary meeting to discuss the regional terrorist threat, pledging further multilateral cooperation in sharing intelligence and best practices in law enforcement to combat terrorism, including a workshop in Indonesia and training by Singapore. However, such securitisation was superficial. ASEAN only adopted a limited number of substantial measures to combat terrorism and was typically slow in such implementation.[50] For instance, the ASEAN Convention of Counter Terrorism was adopted in 2007, several years after the idea of a regional treaty had first been voiced by Indonesia, and it took another six years until it was ratified by all members. As mentioned above, this reflected the fact that Southeast Asia's political Islam had been far more diverse and complex than the war on terror narrative, which linked Muslim religiosity with violent radicalism. Moreover, the emphasis on the global dimension of international terrorism also overstated the cross-regional and transnational networks of local Southeast Asian terrorist groups.[51]

Furthermore, functionally, as one observer wrote, 'the reality is that regional cooperation in countering terrorism has not been well coordinated, due to the constraints of conflicting national interests, domestic politics and *mutual suspicions*'.[52] For example, although Singapore supported the US's Regional Maritime Security Initiative, its closest neighbours, Indonesia and Malaysia, both had misgivings about it owing to worries regarding the presence of foreign troops in their sovereign waters, what this would signal about their own capabilities, and how this could increase resentment from the local Muslims.[53] As a counterfactual, had there been a strong, unified threat perception, this might have trumped considerations of sovereignty, and interstate quarrels over other issues would have lost their significance. This, however, was clearly not the case. As Ryamizard Ryacudu, then Indonesia's minister of defence and a retired general, satirically suggested: 'If the terrorists in

[47]Singapore Ministry of Defence, '3 G SAF', *Singapore Ministry of Defence*, n.d., available at: {https://www.mindef.gov.sg/web/portal/mindef/defence-matters/defence-topic/defence-topic-detail/3g-saf}.

[48]See Jun Yan Chang and Shu Huang Ho, 'Mind the gap: The curious case of everyday civil-military relations in Singapore', in Alan Chong and Nicole Jenne (eds), *Asian Military Evolutions: Civil-Military Relations in Asia* (Bristol: Bristol University Press, 2023), pp. 90–109; Benson Chian, 'Should the SAF maintain its existing focus on full-spectrum dominance or, should the organisation return to its core deterrence and war-fighting mission?', *Pointer: Journal of the Singapore Armed Forces*, 41:2 (2015), pp. 32–41.

[49]'ASEAN Declaration on Joint Action to Counter Terrorism', ASEAN Secretariat (2001), available at: {https://asean.org/2001-asean-declaration-on-joint-action-to-counter-terrorism/}.

[50]Rommel C. Banlaoi, 'Counterterrorism cooperation between China, ASEAN, and Southeast Asian countries: Current status, challenges, and future direction', *China Review*, 21:4 (2021), pp. 141–70.

[51]Jennifer Mustapha, *Writing Southeast Asian Security: Regional Security and the War on Terror after 9/11* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2019), pp. 100–13.

[52]Andrew Tan, 'Southeast Asia as the "second front" in the war against terrorism: Evaluating the threat and responses', *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 15:2 (2003), pp. 112–38 (p. 130), emphasis added; see also See Seng Tan and Kumar Ramakrishna, 'Interstate and intrastate dynamics in Southeast Asia's war on terror', *SAIS Review of International Affairs*, 24:1 (2004), pp. 91–105.

[53]Ian Storey, 'Securing Southeast Asia's sea lanes: A work in progress', *Asia Policy*, 6 (2008), pp. 95–128 (pp. 113–14).

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Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore can train together in the Philippines, then the Southeast Asian states should also engage in joint training, exercises and operations.'[54]

At the same time, the region's securitisation of terrorism was not solely military-centric, as opposed to the war on terror. Rather, regional counterterrorism practices generally reflected existing non-military approaches to confronting radicalism and militancy locally, although these were naturally updated following the 11 September 2001 attacks.[55] Then Malaysian prime minister Mahathir Mohammad argued that 'we should fight [terrorists] not just by direct action but more by winning the hearts and minds of the people so as to reduce support for acts of terrorism'.[56] Other ASEAN states, too, advocated for an inclusive approach including community engagement, deradicalisation, and prison counselling programmes.[57] Singapore, despite its support of the extreme war on terror, also focused on routine efforts by domestic Muslim groups that 'included rehabilitation of those arrested'.[58] In comparison, such 'softer' measures as part of a more holistic approach were typically adopted by the US only after the onset of the quagmires in Afghanistan and Iraq. Given Southeast Asia's strategy to prevent and counter the long-standing threat of terrorism thus, it is not surprising that a recent report by the UN Counter-Terrorism Committee noted that the region has demonstrated the effectiveness of 'the whole-of-society approach to countering terrorism and violent extremism conducive to terrorism'.[59]

Not only was counterterrorism in the military sphere reluctantly embraced by Southeast Asian states, it was also far from ASEAN's sole focus. The securitisation of terrorism was often associated with other non-traditional security issues, in particular, transnational crime. As early as 1997, the ASEAN interior ministers adopted the 'ASEAN Declaration on Transnational Crime', drawing 'terrorism, illicit drug trafficking, arms smuggling, money laundering, traffic in persons and piracy' together as issues affecting 'regional stability and development'.[60] ASEAN's conceptualisation of transnational crime was initially predominantly fixated upon the abuse and trafficking of drugs, mitigated by the use of domestic police forces, but this changed and expanded over time, such that this securitisation of criminal matters 'legitimized the intervention of the military and security forces' in the ASEAN member states, even though the 'implementation of common measures' at the ASEAN level may have been more superficial and stunted,[61] as with regard to counterterrorism itself.

Terrorism or transnational crime and other non-traditional security concerns aside, throughout the war on terror, even as Southeast Asian states increasingly pivoted to operations other than war, they continued to prepare for armed conflict between the ASEAN members as a contingency. This is in spite of the various academic descriptions of ASEAN as a security community,[62] or its

[54]Ryamizard Ryacudu, 'Terrorism in Southeast Asia: The need for joint counter-terrorism frameworks', *Counter Terrorist Trends and Analyses*, 10:11 (2018), pp. 1–3.

[55]Emmers, 'Comprehensive security and resilience in Southeast Asia,' p. 160.

[56]Cited in Jonathan T. Chow, 'ASEAN counterterrorism cooperation since 9/11', *Asian Survey*, 45:2 (2005), pp. 302–21 (p. 307).

[57]Sidney Jones, 'Terrorism in Southeast Asia ten years on', in Brian L. Job (ed.), *CSCAP Regional Security Outlook* (Singapore: Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia Pacific, 2012), pp. 12–17.

[58]Mohamed Bin Ali, 'Countering violent extremism: The Singapore experience', in Shanthie D'Souza (ed.), *Countering Insurgencies and Violent Extremism in South and South East Asia* (London: Routledge, 2019), pp. 191–205.

[59]United Nations Security Council, 'Letter Dated 23 November 2021 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee Established Pursuant to Resolution 1373 (2001) Concerning Counter-Terrorism Addressed to the President of the Security Council,' S/2021/972 (24 November 2021), p. 72.

[60]'ASEAN Declaration on Transnational Crime', ASEAN Secretariat (1997), available at: {https://asean.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/ASEAN-Declaration-on-Transnational-Crime-1997.pdf}.

[61]Ralf Emmers, 'ASEAN and the securitization of transnational crime in Southeast Asia', *The Pacific Review*, 16:3 (2003), pp. 419–38.

[62]For instance, Amitav Acharya, *Constructing a Security Community in Southeast Asia: ASEAN and the Problem of Regional Order* (London: Routledge, 2001).

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self-declaration of an ASEAN Community by the end of 2015.[63] The so-called long peace of ASEAN or the absence of war in the region[64] is not due as much to what Deutsch terms the 'dependable expectations of "peaceful change"', but rather to 'a low level of capacity to fight' that 'assure[s] states of their common desire to avoid war and gives rise to mutual recognition and toleration'.[65] This has, nevertheless, not stopped the ASEAN states from securitising traditional security and preparing for conventional military conflicts, especially with regard to potential sovereignty flashpoints. In 2018, for instance, Singapore deployed its navy and police in response to Malaysia 'unilaterally extend[ing] its port limits into Singapore's territorial waters, with frequent violations of said waters by Malaysian governmental vessels'.[66] After these incursions, Singapore remarkably inaugurated a new Maritime Security and Response Flotilla in 2021 to deal with 'maritime security threats' which, as the government warned, have 'grown in scale and complexity'.[67] Likewise, ASEAN's 2002 Bali Concord II announcement of the ASEAN Community by the ASEAN heads of state referred to 'strengthening national and regional capacities to counter terrorism, drug trafficking, trafficking in persons and other transnational crimes'. Significantly though, it also recognised the importance of confidence-building measures, preventive diplomacy, and other instruments to resolve conflict between states.[68] Furthermore, mirroring traditional security practices, regional militaries have engaged in a military build-up in recent years that includes 'transformational weapons that promise to fundamentally change the conduct of warfare and which could greatly increase its destructiveness'.[69] Traditional security considerations remained important to Southeast Asia throughout the period in which counterterrorism was a declared priority in the West.

Yet, in an ironic twist, despite the ASEAN securitisation of military conflict, its securitisation of terrorism and other non-traditional issues has concomitantly served to reduce the risk of armed conflict, since ASEAN members identify non-traditional security as an appropriate area for greater military cooperation. This defence diplomacy forms part of the region's continuous approach towards confidence and trust building in an effort to form a (security) community to ameliorate the security dilemma. ASEAN has thus made strides towards promoting cooperation in non-traditional security and counterterrorism, which are seen as 'safer' fields of engagement to promote peaceful relations between states.[70] For instance, in 2018, ASEAN launched the 'Our Eyes Initiative' to further counterterrorism cooperation in response to the siege of the Filipino town of Malawi by affiliates of Daesh. Beyond, counterterrorism is an expert working group under the extra-regional ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting-Plus (ADMM-Plus) ambit, with military field training exercises from time to time, such as the one held in China in 2019. In the next section, we

[63]For criticisms of these, see Chang, 'Essence of security communities'; David Martin Jones and Nicole Jenne, 'Weak states' regionalism: ASEAN and the limits of security cooperation in Pacific Asia', *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific*, 16:2 (2015), pp. 209–40; cf. Stéphanie Martel, 'The polysemy of security community-building: Toward a "people-centred" Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)?', *International Studies Quarterly*, 64:3 (2020), pp. 588–99.

[64]Timo Kivimäki, 'The long peace of ASEAN', *Journal of Peace Research*, 38:5 (2001), pp. 5–25.

[65]Nicole Jenne, 'The domestic origins of no-war communities', *Journal of International Relations and Development*, 24:1 (2020), pp. 196–225 (p. 196); cf. Karl W. Deutsch, 'Political community and the North Atlantic area', in Brent F. Nelson and Alexander Stubb (eds), *The European Union: Readings on the Theory and Practice of European Integration* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2003), pp. 121–43 (pp. 123–5).

[66]Jun Yan Chang, 'Not between the devil and the deep blue sea: Singapore's hedging', *International Studies Quarterly*, 66:3 (2022), pp. 1–12 (p. 7).

[67]Aqil Haziq Mahmud, 'Navy unveils new maritime security flotilla, with armed ships that can go alongside vessels quickly', *CNA* (26 January 2021).

[68]'Declaration of ASEAN Concord II', ASEAN Secretariat (2003), available at: {https://asean.org/speechandstatement/declaration-of-asean-concord-ii-bali-concord-ii/}.

[69]Richard A. Bitzinger, 'A new arms race? Explaining recent Southeast Asian military acquisitions', *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, 32:1 (2010), pp. 50–69 (p. 61). We note, however, that Bitzinger's description of the 'arms dynamic' as a 'form' is an erroneous characterisation of it when it is actually a continuum in Barry Buzan and Eric Herring, *The Arms Dynamic in World Politics* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1998).

[70]See for example 'ASEAN Comprehensive Plan of Action on Counter Terrorism', ASEAN Secretariat (2017), available at: {https://asean.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/ACPoA-on-CT-Adopted-by-11th-AMMTC.pdf}.

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continue our examination of regional security concerns via securitisation theory, but in a reverse manner, by starting with the traditional security approach analysing the impact of two geopolitical events of global significance, the Russo-Ukrainian war and Sino-US competition.

Swaying to geopolitics

It is widely acknowledged that geopolitical competition and conflict between states were key drivers in the creation of ASEAN from the very beginning.[71] The details of these 'traditional' threat perceptions may have changed over time, but as the previous section demonstrated, they were present even when the war on terror dominated the global agenda. Today, they continue to drive efforts towards ASEAN's twin historical goals of preventing conflicts from heating up and forestalling any extra-regional actor from taking advantage of intramural frictions, tasks made harder by the so-called return of geopolitics paradigm. Global attention arguably began shifting towards geopolitical confrontation in the context of worsening relations between the US and China, especially in light of China's more assertive international positioning since the 2008 global financial crisis.[72] US president Donald Trump's 'America first' policy grew to be increasingly at odds with Beijing's expanding global influence, with headline-grabbing trade and tech 'wars' between the two.[73] Under the Biden administration, such great power competition has continued unabated. At the same time, the return of interstate war in the form of the Russian military invasion of Ukraine only served to emphasise such a 'return of geopolitics'. This section analyses how Southeast Asian states have securitised competition between the US and China, whereas a similar process of securitisation failed to occur for the Russo-Ukrainian war.

ASEAN and its member states, at the geographical centre of great power rivalry between the US and China, have clearly securitised the geopolitical competition between them whilst also struggling to maintain good relations with both. For example, during his speech at the 2019 Shangri-La Dialogue, Singapore's then prime minister Lee Hsien Loong warned of 'a more divided and troubled world' ahead for all states, whilst stressing the need to 'build a broader regional and international architecture of cooperation'.[74] Singapore thus stepped up regular political engagement and defence cooperation with both the US and China, including an enhanced Agreement on Defence Exchanges and Security Cooperation with China, as well as renewing its agreement with the US over use of Singapore's facilities for another 15 years, both in 2019. The Singapore military has also undertaken counterterrorism exercises and training with its US and Chinese counterparts, such as Singaporean and US divers doing maritime counterterrorism during Exercise Pacific Griffin in 2021, or Singaporean and Chinese soldiers participating in Exercise Cooperation featuring counterterrorism in an urban environment in 2019.

Overall, thus, within the securitisation of interstate rivalry, Southeast Asian states also sought to move beyond military-centric balancing or bandwagoning.[75] Whilst hosting the 2022 G20 summit, Indonesian president Joko Widodo stressed that: 'We should not divide the world into parts'

[71] Mely Caballero-Anthony, 'Mechanisms of dispute settlement: The ASEAN experience', *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, 20:1 (1998), pp. 38–66 (p. 45).

[72] Analysts differ as to when exactly this 'new assertiveness' happened, with the timeframe ranging from 2008 to 2010. For 2008, see Michael D. Swaine, 'Perceptions of an assertive China', *China Leadership Monitor*, 32 (2010), pp. 1–19; for 2009, see Michael Yahuda, 'China's new assertiveness in the South China Sea', *Journal of Contemporary China*, 22:81 (2013), pp. 446–59; for 2010, see Alastair Iain Johnston, 'How new and assertive is China's new assertiveness?', *International Security*, 37:4 (2013), pp. 7–48. Nonetheless, the common thread is that China's growing assertiveness came in the wake of the global financial crisis.

[73] Jun Yan Chang, 'Of risk and threat: How the United States perceives China's rise', *The Chinese Journal of International Politics*, 16:3 (2023), pp. 357–81. Chang argues that these were but a logical continuation of the US approach towards China due to the lack of results in previous policies.

[74] For instance, Hsien Loong Lee, 'PM Lee Hsien Loong at the IISS Shangri-La Dialogue 2019', *Singapore Prime Minister's Office* (2019), available at: {https://www.pmo.gov.sg/Newsroom/PM-Lee-Hsien-Loong-at-the-IISS-Shangri-La-Dialogue-2019}.

[75] See Chang, 'Not between the devil and the deep blue sea'; cf. Jürgen Haacke, 'The concept of hedging and its application to Southeast Asia: A critique and a proposal for a modified conceptual and methodological framework', *International Relations*

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and 'must not allow the world to fall into another cold war'. Rather, Jokowi said, 'we can be wise, assume responsibility and show leadership'.[76] Amongst other initiatives, Indonesia hosted a large-scale multilateral naval exercise, Komodo, in June 2023, bringing together the US and China. As Emmerson puts it: '"Don't force us to choose between China and the United States," or words to that effect, have become an entrenched mantra in statements by more than a few Southeast Asian leaders'.[77]

Such securitisation is likewise replicated by ASEAN. As an example of a securitising move here, following the visit to Taiwan by then US Speaker of the House, Nancy Pelosi, the ASEAN foreign ministers issued a statement stressing that 'ASEAN is concerned with the international and regional volatility … which could destabilize the region and eventually could lead to miscalculation, serious confrontation, open conflicts and unpredictable consequences among major powers', and therefore calling for the 'wisdom and responsibility of all leaders to uphold multilateralism and partnership, cooperation, peaceful-coexistence and healthy competition for our shared goals of peace, stability, security and inclusive and sustainable development'.[78] Multilateralism, whether through diplomatic or military arenas, is a crucial security practice of ASEAN and the Southeast Asian states, to build trust and confidence in order to cope with geopolitical competition. The various ASEAN-centric institutional fora such as the East Asia Summit provide ASEAN with some means to manage the great powers, however effective they may be.[79] The ADMM-Plus also practised defence diplomacy and cooperation, such as the 2015 Maritime Security and Counterterrorism Field Training Exercise, involving '3,000 personnel, 18 ships, 17 helicopters, two maritime patrol aircraft along with Special Forces' from the 18 member states, including the US and China.[80] Through such defence cooperation in areas of non-traditional security, the ADMM-Plus further aims to bridge the national sensitivities towards exercising in more conventional arenas of traditional security.

Simultaneously, ASEAN continued to securitise non-traditional security threats alongside inter-state conflict. Its 2021 security outlook publication, the fifth of its kind, first notes that: 'In regard to security concerns, all ASEAN Member States share the view that [*sic*] COVID-19 pandemic has had a devastating impact nationally and regionally'. It then stresses 'concerns from traditional security such as the competition between major powers and territorial disputes including in the South China Sea'. Concurrently, the document continues to mention terrorism as a major concern: 'Even as the region struggles to respond and recover from the COVID-19 pandemic, terrorists have continued their attacks such as the bombings in Jolo, Philippines in August 2020 and in Makassar, Indonesia in March 2021.' It summarises that '*all* ASEAN Member States have identified competition between major powers, non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, terrorism and violent extremism, transnational crimes and natural disasters as shared security concerns'.[81] Further demonstrating the continuity of such terrorism threat perceptions and securitisation, under the ADMM-Plus umbrella, China and Thailand had co-hosted a counterterrorism exercise involving more than '800 military personnel, 10 aircraft, and more than 60 armored vehicles' earlier in 2019.[82]

of the Asia-Pacific, 19:3 (2019), pp. 375–417; Stephen M. Walt, *The Origins of Alliances* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990 [1987]).

[76]Quoted in Yerica Lai, 'Jokowi opens G20 summit with a call for wisdom, end of war,' *The Jakarta Post* (14 November 2022).

[77]Quoted in Shannon Tiezzi, 'Donald Emmerson on Southeast Asia's approach to China,' *The Diplomat* (2020), available at: {https://thediplomat.com/2020/08/donald-emmerson-on-southeast-asias-approach-to-china/}.

[78]'ASEAN Foreign Ministers' statement on the cross strait development', ASEAN Secretariat (2022), available at: {https://asean.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/final-ASEAN-FMs-Statement-on-Cross-strait-tention.pdf}.

[79]See John D. Ciorciari, 'ASEAN and the great powers', *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, 39:2 (2017), pp. 252–58; Evelyn Goh, 'Great powers and hierarchical order in Southeast Asia: Analyzing regional security strategies', *International Security*, 32:3 (2007/8), pp. 113–57.

[80]Prashanth Parameswaran, 'Singapore, Brunei to host multilateral military exercise in May', *The Diplomat* (2016), available at: {https://thediplomat.com/2016/04/singapore-brunei-to-host-multilateral-military-exercise-in-may/}.

[81]'ASEAN Security Outlook', Association of Southeast Asian Nations (2021), pp. 5–7, emphasis added.

[82]Zhuo Chen, 'China hosts largest land-based ADMM-plus joint counter-terrorism drill', *China Military* (14 November 2019), available at: {http://eng.chinamil.com.cn/2019special/2019-11/14/content_9677835.htm}.

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In comparison, the region's securitisation of military conflict with regard to Sino-US competition did not carry over to the Russo-Ukrainian war. From the start, Southeast Asia's response to the invasion was rather muted. After initially bland statements that called for peace without even naming Russia, the Philippines and Cambodia made critical statements about the Kremlin's actions in Ukraine. The only state that was quick to call out Russia as the aggressor was Singapore, which is also the only ASEAN member state that has imposed sanctions. At the opposite end of the spectrum to Singapore is Myanmar's military junta, which openly supports Russia, particularly since it has relied on Russian weapons to stay in power following the coup in early 2021. The responses of other Southeast Asian states fell somewhere in between these extremes.[83]

With such diverse views amongst its member states, it is no surprise that ASEAN itself has also been guarded in public comments, absent any strict securitising moves. A foreign ministers' statement issued two days after the invasion used the unthreatening and rather general language known from ASEAN declarations on other conflicts. It simply expressed deep concern over the hostilities, calling 'on all relevant parties to exercise maximum restraint and make utmost efforts to pursue dialogues' and 'peaceful resolution' according to the principles of international law.[84] In its subsequent statements, ASEAN also abstained from explicitly denouncing Russia for its violation of international norms whilst stressing human security considerations. The joint declarations of the ADMM in June and the ADMM-Plus in November 2022 did not even mention the war.[85]

Instead, for many of the ASEAN states, though the military security aspect was not unimportant, securitisation in relation to the Russo-Ukrainian war focused more on non-traditional security, with evidently deep concerns about the war's implications for economic security. Malaysia's then prime minister Ismail Sabri Yaakob, in a nationwide televised interview, pointed out how the war impacted 'other countries not involved in the conflict' through 'dwindling supply of certain products, rising inflation and spikes in prices of goods'.[86] The Philippines' president Ferdinand Marcos Jr. likewise echoed this when he was asked to comment on the war during the APEC Summit: 'It was made even clearer here in Apec, how the effects have been so far-reaching and profound and to the detriment of many economies and the food supply of everyone in the world.'[87] In terms of security practices, Southeast Asian states therefore looked towards mitigating the economic impact from the Russo-Ukrainian war, including by diversifying their food or energy imports.[88] Malaysia exceptionally restricted the export of chickens to Singapore in May 2022, leaving these for its domestic market instead to secure supplies amidst rising prices caused by a shortage of poultry feed from Ukraine.

On the whole, regional military developments demonstrate both traditional and non-traditional security concerns. In recent years, most ASEAN states have made important investments in military equipment, especially for naval and air forces. This is notably the case in those states for which China is a more direct security concern, such as Vietnam or the Philippines, over potential conflict areas such as the South China Sea.[89] Following Russia's invasion of Ukraine, one observer even

[83]Sebastian Strangio, 'How Southeast Asia is responding to the Russian invasion of Ukraine', *The Diplomat* (2022), available at: {https://thediplomat.com/2022/02/how-southeast-asia-is-responding-to-the-russian-invasion-of-ukraine/}.

[84]'ASEAN Foreign Ministers' statement on the situation in Ukraine', ASEAN Secretariat (2022), available at: {https://asean.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/ASEAN-FM-Statement-on-Ukraine-Crisis-26-Feb-Final.pdf}.

[85]'Joint declaration of the ASEAN defence ministers on defence cooperation to strengthen solidarity for a harmonised security', ASEAN Secretariat (2022), available at: {http://admm.asean.org/dmdocuments/2022_Jun_16th%20ADMM_Phnom%20Penh_22%20June%202022_1.%20Joint%20Declaration.pdf}; 'Phnom Penh vision on the role of defence establishments in support of Covid-19 recovery', ASEAN Secretariat (2022), available at: {http://admm.asean.org/dmdocuments/2022_Jun_16th%20ADMM_Phnom%20Penh_22%20June%202022_8.%20Phnom%20Penh%20Vision%20on%20the%20Role%20of%20Defence%20Establishments%20in%20Support%20of%20COVID-19%20Recovery.pdf}.

[86]Bernama, 'PM: M'sia will continue spreading message of peace on international stage', *New Straits Times* (21 August 2022).

[87]Daniza Fernandez, 'Bongbong Marcos says Russia–Ukraine War is "unacceptable"', *Inquirer* (19 November 2022).

[88]Linda Yusliman, Raul Dancel, Nadirah H. Rodzi et al., 'Asia hit by food security fears amid war in Ukraine', *The Straits Times* (16 June 2022), available at: {https://www.straitstimes.com/asia/asia-hit-by-food-security-fears-amid-war-in-ukraine}.

[89]See Felix K. Chang, 'Comparative Southeast Asian military modernization', *The Asan Forum* (1 October 2014), available at: {https://theasanforum.org/comparative-southeast-asian-military-modernization-1/}.

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highlighted that 'the idea that the region [Southeast Asia] should rely more on self-help than external assistance in the event of conflict seems to be getting a boost from the war'.[90] Nonetheless, a more detailed look reveals that despite the increase in Southeast Asian defence budgets in absolute terms, these have remained stable as a percentage of total government spending or even decreased,[91] demonstrating the absence of any abrupt or fundamental change in the military's orientation and employment. Rather, Southeast Asian militaries have continued to operate in a more comprehensive manner as opposed to a prioritisation towards conventional war. The far-reaching involvement of the armed forces in Southeast Asia's response to the Covid-19 pandemic is just one example of how the ASEAN states, collectively and individually, have sought to boost their militaries' humanitarian aid and disaster relief (HADR) capacities.[92] Overall, Southeast Asian militaries concentrate on both conventional war and operations other than war. The next section examines the region's security constellation in light of such diverse securitisations.

Summary and discussion: Southeast Asia's comprehensive security constellation

Political commentary in recent years, particularly since Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine, suggests that the world has entered a new era of geopolitical conflict, leaving behind the two decades marked by the global war on terror. This motivated, in part, this Special Issue, to consider the lingering effects of the war on terror. On the contrary, as we argued in this article, these paradigm shifts have not taken place in Southeast Asia. Although regional states had generally securitised terrorism through discourse and practice after the 11 September 2001 attacks, along with the broader gamut of non-traditional threats, such shifting emphasis clearly fell short of constituting a paradigm shift for the region. Terrorism and other threats such as piracy or transnational crime had already been a long-standing concern for many Southeast Asian states, along with traditional security threats.

Similarly, despite attention swinging towards geopolitical competition and interstate conflict due to rising tensions between the US and China especially in the latter half of the 2010s, this did not mean that ASEAN states would disregard internal and transnational security concerns. Whilst Southeast Asian states have securitised Sino-US competition, remarkably, Russia's war in Ukraine has been discussed in the region mainly in relation to its detrimental effects on the global economy. This contrasts with the securitisation by the European Union and NATO, which have tended to emphasise Russia's obligation to restore stability. The differences became apparent in the US–ASEAN and EU–ASEAN Summits. The final communiqué of the latter simply noted about the war in Ukraine: 'There was a discussion on the issue.'[93] Furthermore, many NATO countries, which have increasingly focused on the Indo-Pacific as a theatre to counter China's growing influence in recent years, consider Southeast Asian states as important actors in the context of the Russian war, particularly given Beijing's siding with Moscow.[94] Several Western heads of state had pressured Cambodia, Indonesia, and Thailand, the respective hosts of the 2022 ASEAN, G20, and APEC summits, to exclude the Kremlin from these fora.[95] Southeast Asia's refusal to buy into such securitising moves was evident when, instead of securitising Russia as an outlaw, the three countries issued

[90]William Choong, 'Ukraine has Asia thinking about war', *Foreign Policy* (2022), available at: {https://foreignpolicy.com/2022/04/29/ukraine-russia-war-asia-china-military-defense-spending-geopolitics/}.

[91]International Institute for Strategic Studies, *Military Balance* (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, several years); Desmond Ball, Lucie Béraud-Sudreau, Tim Huxley et al., *Asia's New Geopolitics: Military Power and Regional Order* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2021).

[92]Angelo Paolo Luna Trias and Alistair D. B. Cook, 'HADR in Southeast Asia: Unpacking the military's humanitarian role', *RSIS Commentary*, No. 184 (23 October 2020).

[93]'EU–ASEAN commemorative summit 2022 Joint Leaders' Statement', Council of the European Union (2022), available at: {https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/60846/eu-asean-leaders-statement.pdf}.

[94]For instance, see Shaun Narine, 'Can NATO manage its ambitions in Southeast Asia, where memories of colonialism linger?' *South China Morning Post* (4 June 2023), available at: {https://www.scmp.com/week-asia/opinion/article/3222754/can-nato-manage-its-ambitions-southeast-asia-where-memories-colonialism-linger}.

[95]Ian Storey, 'Setbacks for Moscow, progress for Kyiv: The Russia-Ukraine war and its impact on the ASEAN, G20 and APEC summits', *ISEAS Perspective,* 117 (2002), pp. 1–11.

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a joint communiqué in which they stressed their determination to 'work with all our partners and stakeholders to ensure a spirit of cooperation' in order to aid the recovery from the economic fall-out of Covid-19.[96] Meanwhile, terrorism continues to be an important security consideration in the region. Southeast Asian militaries had therefore always contended with operations other than war, dealing with non-conventional challenges, in addition to preparing for conventional warfighting.

The security constellation of the Southeast Asian region is thus best described as one of 'comprehensive security', attending to both the 'traditional' and 'non-traditional' security threats. Dewitt identifies the 'term comprehensive or "overall" security' to have been 'coined in Japan during the 1970s', where it subsequently took root in some Southeast Asian states such as Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore, with a 'broader yet less ambiguous meaning' of going 'beyond military objectives and instruments'.[97] Compared to the Japanese notion, the Southeast Asian adaptation of comprehensive security is generally thought to be even more 'inward-looking', with national security not just directed externally, but concerning problems of domestic security internally, such as socio-economic development and separatism, amongst others.[98]

Such comprehensive security, a well-known concept in the region, is apparent when analysing the securitisations of Southeast Asian states and ASEAN. One notable example here is Indonesia, with its military's *dwifungsi* (dual function) role consisting of domestic security, including political unity, social stability, and economic development, on top of defence against external aggressors. *Dwifungsi* was an officially sanctioned policy during Indonesian president Suharto's New Order and has persisted in the military's role conception despite the democratic reforms since *Reformasi*.[99] Likewise, ASEAN's Bali Concord I, which was adopted at the first-ever ASEAN summit, declared all the disparate elements of subversion, poverty, disease, and calamities as part of, and important to, the region's security, stability, and resilience.[100] Simultaneously, the armed forces of the ASEAN states also generally perform functions relating to internal order and security, on top of the typical military security.

Southeast Asia's comprehensive security constellation thus comprises various security levels and sectors, including the state and its people, and extends across the military, political, economic, social, and environmental realms. This is not to say that these different levels and sectors are always equally important. Oftentimes, the state or the regime is prioritised, though this does not take away from the 'comprehensiveness' of how the state and its elites understand 'security'.[101] Similarly, both the traditional and non-traditional sectors are part of the regional security constellation, although the extent to which each has been emphasised has varied over time, as demonstrated in this article. Before the September 11 attacks and after, militaries of the regional states have performed warfighting roles as well as operations other than war. Although the watershed of the global war on terror reified the non-traditional security paradigm, for the ASEAN states, these 'non-traditional' security threats were not novel. Whilst the ASEAN states swung towards devoting more resources to combating these threats, exceptionally or routinely, traditional security threats continued to remain a prime consideration. In this manner, Southeast Asian states can be described as anachronistic relative to the Western European states for which non-traditional security was a paradigm shift away

[96] 'Joint Press Release of the Foreign Ministries of the Kingdom of Cambodia, the Republic of Indonesia and the Kingdom of Thailand', Indonesia Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2022), available at: {https://kemlu.go.id/portal/en/read/3571/siaran_pers/joint-press-rel%E2%80%A6-of-cambodia-the-republic-of-indonesia-and-the-kingdom-of-thailand}.

[97] David Dewitt, 'Common, comprehensive, and cooperative security', *The Pacific Review*, 7:1 (1994), pp. 1–15 (pp. 2–3).

[98] Emmers, 'Comprehensive security and resilience in Southeast Asia,' pp. 161–2.

[99] Dahlia G. Setiyawan, 'Business as usual despite reform: The Indonesian military under Jokowi', in Alan Chong and Nicole Jenne (eds), *Asian Military Evolutions: Civil–Military Relations in Asia* (Bristol: Bristol University Press, 2023), pp. 46–67.

[100] 'The Declaration of ASEAN Concord, Bali, Indonesia', ASEAN Secretariat (1976), available at: {https://asean.org/the-declaration-of-asean-concord-bali-indonesia-24-february-1976/}.

[101] This is also not to say that such 'comprehensive security' is truly 'comprehensive'; see Jun Yan Chang, 'Essence of security communities: Explaining ASEAN', *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific*, 16:3 (2016), pp. 335–69.

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from interstate competition and conventional warfighting,[102] before said European states pivoted back to interstate war.

More broadly, our argument in this article has three implications for the field of security studies and further research. First, when it comes to global security agendas or concerns, the approach we pursued in this study demonstrates how securitisations may vary at different levels. The Copenhagen School refers to securitisations of a larger scale or higher order, such as the international or universal, as macrosecuritisations, of which the global war on terror is an example. Such macrosecuritisations structure lower-level securitisations at the state level, but, as shown here, these 'normal' securitisations may still be localised and differ in nuanced manners from the overarching macrosecuritisation.[103] Seen from this perspective, Southeast Asia's ambiguous implementation of counterterrorism policies may not necessarily represent a failure but may instead reflect local security priorities.

Second, and relatedly, the 'war on terror' and 'return of geopolitics' paradigms are evidently not truly global but rather Western-centric. This harks back to the reality that the discipline of International Relations 'does not reflect the voices, experiences, knowledge claims, and contributions of the vast majority of the societies and states in the world, and often marginalizes those outside the core countries of the West'.[104] The comprehensive security constellation of Southeast Asia is not a binary one between 'traditional' and 'non-traditional' security as portrayed in the dominant narratives.

Such comprehensive security calls for a more pluralistic and eclectic research agenda open to complex empirical realities. Accordingly, Southeast Asia's security constellation is part of what Foot and Goh described as Asian 'dualities', 'apparently opposing forces' that characterise the region's international order.[105] These dualities, together with the 'hybrid' and 'contingent' outcomes they prompt, sit uneasily with the dominant Western-centric readings of international security. By focusing on long-term regional processes, our analysis revealed a marked deviation from Western security thinking and practice following the war on terror and the Russian war in Ukraine, despite Southeast Asia being deeply influenced by US foreign policies and US–China relations. Considering the region's strategically highly relevant position, bringing empirically grounded Asian experiences into the study of international security is key to assessing the future of regional terrorism policies and scholarship, as this Special Issue demands. This understanding becomes a prerequisite for the West as regards effective collaboration with Southeast Asia.

Nevertheless, the insight that the 'global' war on terror was less global than it has been assumed where it originated does not mean that it failed to leave its mark on Southeast Asia, especially with regard to its Muslim populations or the relationship with the West over Muslim politics.[106] Singapore, for example, continues to be leery of terrorist extremism and how that may affect its multicultural social harmony and social resilience.[107] Yet, because the war on terror never truly began in this particular region, the intensity of the changes it brought about was less of a rupture

[102] Jun Yan Chang, 'Globalisation's impact on navies in the Asia-Pacific: From the modern to the postmodern to the "Quatumodern"', in Walter Feichtinger and Benedict Hensellek (eds), *Armed Forces for 2020 and Beyond: Roles | Tasks | Expectations*, Research Report of the National Defence Academy 27/2015 (Vienna: Austrian National Defence Academy, 2016), pp. 125–43.

[103] Jun Yan Chang, 'The United States and the macrosecuritisation of the "China threat"', PhD thesis, University of Queensland (2020), pp. 193–4; see also Buzan and Wæver, 'Macrosecuritisation and security constellations'; Juha A. Vuori, *Chinese Macrosecuritization: China's Alignment in Global Security Discourses* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2024).

[104] Amitav Acharya, 'Global International Relations (IR) and regional worlds: A new agenda for international studies', *International Studies Quarterly*, 58:4 (2014), pp. 647–59 (p. 647).

[105] Rosemary Foot and Evelyn Goh, 'The international relations of East Asia: A new research prospectus', *International Studies Review*, 21:3 (2019), pp. 398–423 (p. 401).

[106] Kadir, 'Mapping Muslim politics'; Mustapha, *Writing Southeast Asian Security*.

[107] See Singapore Government, 'Social National Identity', SG101, available at: {https://www.sg101.gov.sg/social-national-identity/ourfundamentals}.

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than many mainstream accounts suggest.[108] Likewise, even as scholarly and political attention around the world is today mostly focused on geopolitical competition and interstate conflict, Southeast Asian states' responses to the perceived threat of terrorism carry on shaping social, political, and economic life in the region.

Third, and finally, based on the argument presented here, the overwhelming worries from Southeast Asian states over whether they might be forced to choose sides between the US and China appear puzzling.[109] After all, given the region's historical experience of refusing to practise alliance politics during the Cold War, the resistance against US pressure over the war on terror's 'second front', as well as the regional comprehensive security constellation, one may argue that the Southeast Asian states are already well practised in maintaining a certain degree of autonomy for themselves and the region.[110] This puzzle, however, remains outside the scope of this article and a subject for further study.

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[108]See Emmers, 'Comprehensive security and resilience in Southeast Asia'; Nicole Jenne and Jun Yan Chang, 'Hegemonic distortions: The securitisation of the insurgency in Thailand's Deep South', *TRaNS: Trans-Regional and -National Studies of Southeast Asia*, 7:2 (2019), pp. 209–32.

[109]Jonathan Stromseth, *Don't Make Us Choose: Southeast Asia in the Throes of US–China Rivalry* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 2019).

[110]See Jun Yan Chang, 'US security view of China is not black and white', *CNA* (23 April 2024), available at: {https://www.channelnewsasia.com/commentary/china-us-tension-choose-sides-security-threat-risk-4269211}.

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